

Division for Palestinian Rights

Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine

MONTHLY MEDIA MONITORING REVIEW

July 2010

Monthly highlights

- Israeli forces demolish homes in two Jordan River Valley towns ([1 July](#))
- UN African Meeting on the Question of Palestine opens in Rabat ([1 July](#))
- President Obama welcomes Israel's new policy on Gaza ([6 July](#))
- Eiland Commission says mistakes had been made during the Gaza flotilla raid ([11 July](#))
- Israeli bulldozers destroy at least six Palestinian buildings in East Jerusalem ([13 July](#))
- President Mubarak meets separately with President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu in Cairo after conferring with US Special Envoy Mitchell on a direct talks path ([18 July](#))
- EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Ashton tours Gaza ([18 July](#))
- Israel submits report on "Operation Cast Lead" to the UN, saying its army was taking steps to reduce civilian casualties and restrict the use of white phosphorous ([19 July](#))
- UN Human Rights Council names panel of three experts to investigate Gaza aid flotilla raid ([23 July](#))
- Prime Minister Netanyahu says no extension for settlement construction moratorium beyond September 2010 ([26 July](#))
- Arab League endorses direct talks ([29 July](#))
- Rocket hits residential area of Ashkelon; Israel retaliates with air strikes on Gaza, killing Hamas commander ([30](#) & [31 July](#))

I

Israeli troops detained three Palestinians in Hebron. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

US Special Envoy George Mitchell arrived in Ramallah for ongoing talks on borders and security in a bid to convince Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas to return to direct negotiations with Israel. Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said that there would be no toward [direct] negotiations until "progress is achieved on the issue of the 1967 borders, the two-State solution, and an end to Israel's arbitrary procedures, arrests, settlements and closures". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

According to a spokesman for the Russian Federation's Foreign Ministry, the Russian Federation would deliver 50 armoured personnel carriers to the Palestinians in the near future. (*Reuters*)

Israeli officials said that 160 truckloads of goods would be permitted into Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing during the day. A Palestinian official said that three of the trucks would be loaded with tool supplies for the Gaza power plant, with the remainder destined for the agricultural and commercial sectors. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Quartet Representative Tony Blair said that he expected construction materials to start flowing into the Gaza Strip in two to three weeks. (*AP*)

The Israeli military said that the results of an internal investigation into the Gaza flotilla raid would be delayed by a week for "technical reasons". (*AFP*)

Israeli forces detained three Silwan residents as Israeli troops increased their presence in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood, causing tensions to rise. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The following statement was issued by the Spokesperson for UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Roberterry: "We are closely following reports that four Palestinian legislators have received orders for their forcible transfer from East Jerusalem by the Israeli authorities. We are concerned at all measures which may heighten tension in the city and at the potentially broad consequences for Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem. We call on Israel to respect its obligations under international law." (www.unesco.org)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said that the settlement building freeze could not continue beyond September. He added that concessions had not brought peace and only more international pressure. He said that territorial exchange was the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

(Jerusalem Post)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu announced his willingness to accept a German mediator's proposal to release 1,000 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Gilad Shalit. Hamas official Ayman Taha said in response that "Hamas is not in a hurry to finalize the prisoners' exchange. The German mediator who brokered the talks has not handed us any new offers except the one we recently turned down. Netanyahu is talking about an old offer that we had rejected". (AP, Xinhua)

Israeli forces demolished dozens of homes in two Jordan River Valley towns. The Israel Defense Forces claimed the areas were closed military zones, but village representatives said that "[t]hese are agricultural and pastoral lands that are the main livelihood of hundreds of families." (Ma'an News Agency)

Under the theme "Strengthening the support by African States for a just and lasting solution of the question of Jerusalem", the two-day United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine opened in Rabat under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Opening statements were made by Taib Fassi-Fihri, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco; Bader Al-Dafa, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Council for Western Asia, speaking on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Zahir Tanin, Head of the Committee's Delegation and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN in New York; and Ahmed Qurei, Member of the Executive Committee of the PLO and representative of Palestine, among others. (Division for Palestinian Rights)

Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, Al-Mezan and Adalah accused Israel of violating the principles of medical ethics and international law. Their report argued that there was a consistent Israeli policy of distinguishing between life-threatening cases and cases that affect quality of life as a basis to deny Palestinians exit from the Gaza Strip for urgent medical treatment. (Wafa)

2

PA President Abbas said in an interview with Israeli journalists that he had proposed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that an international force under NATO or UN auspices reinforce Palestinian security forces in a future Palestinian state. (AP)

In response to Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman's statement that there was "no chance" of establishing a Palestinian state by 2012, US Special Envoy Mitchell stated: "We will continue until [the two-State solution] is achieved for the simple reason that it is in the interest... of the people of Israel, the Palestinian people and all the people of the region, and it is in the interest of the United States". (AP)

Frustration among refugees in Gaza had reached a "bursting point" with further unrest likely, unless Israel lifted its blockade immediately, said Filippo Grandi, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (AFP)

Israeli officials informed their Palestinian counterparts at the Gaza crossings that all terminals would be closed during the day. (Ma'an News Agency)

Palestinian health experts studying the impact of Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip said in a series of studies appearing in *The Lancet* that the blockade threatened to cause long-term damage to Palestinians' health, with many children at risk of stunted growth or malnutrition. (Reuters)

The scope of the Turkel Committee's investigation would be widened following the request of the committee's head, Israeli Judge Ya'akov Tirkel. The committee, however, would not question soldiers or examine the Government's approval of the raid. (Haaretz)

Israel had reportedly signalled in secret meetings between Turkish and Israeli officials that it may compensate and apologize to the families of some of the victims of the Gaza flotilla raid. (Hürriyet)

A prominent settler group launched a campaign entitled "A Promise is a Promise" to urge Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to resume construction in the occupied West Bank when the building moratorium expires in September. (AFP)

5

IDF troops arrested three Palestinians during operations in the West Bank overnight. (The Jerusalem Post)

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad urged Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak in a meeting to grant Palestinian security forces a wider mandate in the West Bank. (Haaretz)

The Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, Saeb Erekat, said that the proximity talks with Israel had not yet made tangible progress. "I was surprised by the US statements which talk about progress. I made contacts with and asked the US Administration for clarifications about (this) progress," he said. (Xinhua)

French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak discussed ways to relaunch the stalled peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. "We looked at initiatives it will be possible to take," Mr. Mubarak said. (AFP)

Hamas leader Ahmad Yousef said that Hamas was close to wrapping up arrangements with Egypt to sign a proposal that would end the rift with Fatah. Mr. Yousef said that efforts had been ongoing to "resolve the confusion" over Hamas' hesitancy in accepting the agreement. (Ma'an News Agency)

A delegation of European Foreign Ministers had accepted Israel's invitation to visit the Gaza Strip and said that it was an "important opportunity" to monitor the implementation of measures announced by Israel. "The Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Italy, Britain and Spain ... have positively reacted to the idea of making a visit to Gaza", a joint letter sent to Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman stated. (DPA, Reuters)

Israel published a list of goods, mainly weapons and materials that can be used to make them, that would not be allowed into the Gaza Strip under a policy to ease its blockade of the Palestinian territory. Israel was allowing virtually all consumer goods but it would continue to ban most travel and exports and restrict the import of desperately needed construction materials. (AP, Reuters)

The European Campaign to Lift the Gaza Siege announced that seven European vessels would join the second Gaza aid Freedom Flotilla to break the Israeli blockade. The Brussels-based organization said in a press statement that dozens of campaigners of various nationalities as well as ships and vessels had applied to join "Freedom Flotilla II". (Xinhua)

6

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu arrived in Washington, D.C., for a summit with President Obama that could see a strong push for direct peace talks with the Palestinians. Mr. Netanyahu would then proceed to New York where he would meet with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. (AFP)

The readout of President Obama's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu at the White House [indicated](#) that the two leaders had discussed the proximity talks and ways to advance it to direct talks. They agreed that the ultimate goal was a comprehensive Middle East peace between Israel and all its neighbours. Mr. Obama welcomed Israel's new policy on Gaza and explored with Mr. Netanyahu additional steps that could be taken in coordination with the PA and international partners to improve life for the people of Gaza. They also discussed how to prevent the flow of weapons to Hamas and secure the release of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. Mr. Obama reiterated the US policy toward Hamas, emphasizing that Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements and recognize Israel's right to exist if it was to play any constructive role in achieving Middle East peace. (www.whitehouse.gov)

The IDF reported that Israel's Military Advocate General had [decided](#) to indict a number of officers and soldiers for their conduct during "Operation Cast Lead", including a disciplinary hearing for the use of civilians in operational activity by a lieutenant colonel; indictment of an IDF staff sergeant for manslaughter; criminal investigation into the circumstances of a specific incident and disciplinary action against an IDF captain for his failed

professional judgment in authorizing an attack against a “terror operative”. (www.idf.il)

In Bethlehem, the Palestinian Dairy Council accused Israel of imposing a political ban on meat and dairy products and preventing West Bank produce from being sold in Jerusalem. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

European Union Representative Christian Berger handed over 48 vehicles to the Palestinian Civil Police worth a total of €5 million. Mr. Berger said that the donation would improve the ability of the police to safeguard law and order in the West Bank (*Wafa*)

According to a report recently released by the Arab Water Council, Israel was utilizing 90 per cent of water in the Palestinian territories and around 85 per cent of it was being pumped to Jewish settlements. (*The Egyptian Gazette*)

According to a recent B'Tselem report, settlements controlled more than 42 per cent of the West Bank. Much of that land had reportedly been seized from private Palestinian landowners in defiance of an Israeli Supreme Court ban. (*AP*)

A *New York Times* examination of public records in the United States and Israel had identified at least 40 American groups that had collected more than \$200 million in tax-deductible gifts for Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem over the past decade. (*The New York Times*)

PA Minister of Prisoners' Affairs Issa Qaraqi was denied entry into Israel and stripped of his VIP card permitting him to cross Israeli military checkpoints. Mr. Qaraqi had been on his way to a meeting in Nazareth with a follow-up committee on the cases of Palestinian prisoners inside Israel holding Israeli IDs. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry welcomed the Israeli measures on easing the Gaza blockade as important steps in the right direction. He hoped that these measures would stimulate commercial activities and allow a substantial increase in the amount of construction materials into the Gaza Strip. (*UN News Centre*)

7

Hamas authorities arrested five suspected collaborators with Israel as part of a campaign against informers in the Gaza Strip. (*The Washington Post*)

PA President Abbas said that he wanted an Israeli “signal” on the key issues of security and borders before heeding US calls for a resumption of direct peace talks. “We have presented our proposals to both the Americans and Israelis and we are waiting for an Israeli impression and reaction,” he told reporters. (*AFP*)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that Prime Minister Netanyahu was blocking the way to direct negotiations because of his refusal to meet Palestinian demands for a full freeze on Israeli [settlement] construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, adding that the Palestinians would also like to see some progress in the indirect talks. He told *Voice of Palestine*, “Netanyahu must decide if he wants peace or settlements. He cannot have both”. (*Haaretz*)

Hamas Spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that “going to [direct] negotiations gives cover to the [Israeli] occupation”. He also said that Mr. Obama’s statement concerning easing the “Israeli occupation siege of the Gaza Strip and welcoming it” meant that Israel and the US wanted to keep the siege imposed on Gazans, adding, “We want the siege to be completely lifted.” (*DPA*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. A brief UN statement issued by Mr. Ban’s Spokesman after the meeting said, “They discussed the Middle East peace process, the question of Gaza closures, and Lebanon and the recent report on resolution 1701, among other topics”. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu pledged that the future of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank would be among the first issues to be negotiated if the Palestinians agreed to resume direct peace talks without preconditions. “We reject the call. The era in which we held negotiations while Israel continued its unilateral procedures away from the references of peace no longer exists and has gone forever,” said Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO. (*CNN, Al-Quds*)

Israeli settlers uprooted several trees and attacked Palestinian residents with stones in the West Bank town of Nablus. PA Chief of Settlement Activity in the northern West Bank, Ghassan Daghlal, said that the Israeli army had sealed the main road between Nablus and Ramallah for over an hour to evacuate the settlers from the area. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Clare Kaplun, Spokesperson for the Human Rights Council, denied reports that the Council had finalized appointments to the international team that would investigate the recent killings on the Gaza aid flotilla. Ms. Kaplun said, “The [Council’s] President is still in process of appointing members”. (*DPA*)

The Israeli Defense Ministry announced that it would hold the six ships from the 31 May Gaza aid flotilla at least until it had completed its investigation into the deadly raid on the *Mavi Marmara* . (*AP*)

The easing of the land blockade of the Gaza Strip applied only to goods, not people, the State informed the Israeli High Court of Justice during a hearing on an appeal to allow a Palestinian woman from Gaza to study at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank. (*Jerusalem Post*)

According to a UN [report](#), 85 per cent of the Israeli security wall’s route was located in the West Bank and only 15 per cent was on the pre-1967 Green Line. Once completed, 9.4 per cent of West Bank land would be on the Israeli side of the barrier. (*Jerusalem Post*)

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Health Organization and UNRWA warned in a [report](#) entitled “The Impact of the Barrier on Health” that the unabated construction of the wall continued to have adverse effects on the everyday lives of Palestinians. (*The Los Angeles Times*, www.ochaopt.org)

8

A spokesman for the PA, Ghassan Khatib, said: “There has to be justification for moving from indirect to direct talks. We have negotiated directly for 18 years but Israel has shown no readiness to end the occupation.” (*The Irish Times*)

After meeting with Quartet Representative Tony Blair, Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa said that indirect talks were failing and that he saw no chance for a shift to direct negotiations. Mr. Moussa also said that the Arab Peace Initiative follow-up committee would meet on 29 July to evaluate the results of the indirect talks. (*AP*)

US President Obama said in an interview with an Israeli television station that he thought it may be possible to achieve a Middle East peace deal in the next few years and urged Israel to seize the chance. “We probably won’t have a better opportunity than we have right now”, Mr. Obama told *Channel 2* television. (*Reuters*)

“We both believe that moving to direct talks as soon as possible is in the best interest of Israelis, Palestinians, the region and the world”, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said alongside Jordan’s Foreign Minister, Nasser Judeh, but Amman warned against any “provocations” to slow the momentum. (*AFP*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics released [data](#) showing that the number of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was estimated at 4.05 million, with about 2.51 million in the West Bank and 1.54 million in the Gaza Strip. (*Xinhua*, www.pcbs.gov.ps)

Israeli authorities were expected to partially open two crossings into the Gaza Strip during the day for the transfer of approximately 140 to 150

truckloads of aid. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Palestinian Dairy Council accused Israel of imposing a politically motivated ban on West Bank meat and dairy products from being sold in Jerusalem. The announcement that West Bank produce no longer fit the specifications for entry into Israel came on the heels of a PA campaign to rid Palestinian markets of goods produced in illegal settlements. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

9

US President Obama spoke with PA President Abbas on the telephone and noted the positive momentum generated by the recent improvements on the ground in Gaza and in the West Bank, the restraint shown by both sides in recent months and progress in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian proximity talks. He and President Abbas reviewed ways to advance to direct talks in the near term. Mr. Obama noted that Special Envoy Mitchell would travel to the region soon and meet with President Abbas to build on this momentum. (www.whitehouse.gov)

A ship commissioned by a Libyan charity organization was making preparations to set sail to Gaza loaded with aid. The Moldova-flagged cargo ship *Amalthea* would leave by 10 July from the port of Lavrio, south of Athens, carrying 2,000 tons of food and medical supplies, officials from the organization told AP. There would be 27 people on board. The Latvian-flagged, Greek-owned cargo ship *Hope* would depart from Lavrio in the afternoon, loaded with food and medicine provided by Libyan leader Muammar Al-Qadhafi, the Libyan embassy said. (*AP, DPA*)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said, "It is time for the international community to assist in reversing the damage caused by the wall and its regime," during the commemoration of the sixth anniversary of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the separation wall. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A Palestinian prisoner accused of affiliation with the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades' Bethlehem branch had been sentenced by an Israeli military court to two life terms and 25 years. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Bil'in protest leader Adeeb Abu Rahma was being held in Israeli custody until the prosecution's appeal against him was heard, despite having served his term in full, a statement read. Mr. Abu Rahma, organizer of the weekly anti-wall protests in Bil'in, had been sentenced to 12 months, given a further 12 months suspended sentence and ordered to pay a fine, in the first of a series of trials against Palestinian protest organizers. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The trade unions at India's Cochin Port had agreed to boycott Israeli ships and cargo in protest of the siege of Gaza, Indian media reported this week. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

10

"Israel will not let the [Libyan] boat reach Gaza", Israeli Minister without portfolio Yossi Peled told Israel's *Public Radio* after the freighter had set sail from the Greek port of Lavrio, south of Athens. Allowing boats to reach the Gaza Strip without being checked would have "very serious consequences" for Israel's security, he said. (*AFP*)

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) called for an end to US aid to Israel if that country continued its colonization of the West Bank. (*Wafa*)

11

"I think there can be a solution [by 2012]," Prime Minister Netanyahu said in an interview. "It may be implemented over time, because time is an important factor of getting the solution, both in terms of security arrangements and other things." (*The Jerusalem Post*)

PA President Abbas said in a speech that he had no incentive to resume direct talks. "We have presented our vision and thoughts and said that if progress is made, we will move to direct talks, but that if no progress is made, it will be futile," he said. "If they (the Israelis) say 'come and let's start negotiations from zero', that is futile and pointless," he added. (*AP*)

"The Jerusalem situation, I think, is a time bomb if it continues in this way", Ahmed Qurei, Member of the Executive Committee of the PLO, told a forum of mostly Israeli academics in Jerusalem, referring to the expansion of settlements and plans to demolish Palestinian homes to make way for more construction. "It has an impact on the Palestinian people... and on trust on both sides", he added. (*Reuters*)

Israeli soldiers issued orders barring residents of four small villages in the southern West Bank from their land, Beit Ula's Mayor, Suleiman Al-Adam, said. The villagers stand to lose more than 5,000 dunums of land, on which more than 60 Palestinian families depend for their livelihood. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

More than 400 Israeli settlers under military guard entered a village near Nablus prompting its closure, for what an Israeli military spokeswoman described as a visit to holy sites. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Eiland Commission's report presented to IDF Chief of General Staff Lt. Gen. Gaby Ashkenazi said mistakes had been committed at all levels of command, from top officers to commandos, *Yediot Ahronot* reported. The investigators said that the Israeli navy had failed to sufficiently consider the possibility the troops could encounter violent resistance during the Gaza flotilla operation. (*AFP*)

Humanitarian aid, including similar initiatives such as the recent Freedom Flotilla to Gaza, must continue to alert the world to the inhumane conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Malaysian Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, told a conference on Gaza. (*Xinhua*)

12

Israeli authorities detained two Palestinians from villages near Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces arrested three Palestinians during an incursion in the towns of Qabatiya and Shuhada, in the West Bank. (*The Palestine Telegraph*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu was to offer Palestinians a package of "confidence-building measures" to resume direct talks. He would consider stopping, or minimizing, army incursions in PA-controlled cities, allow the PA police control in a wider area of the West Bank, remove some roadblocks and allow the PA to build a new road, *Haaretz* reported. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

Hisham Youssef, Chef de Cabinet for the Arab League Secretary-General, said in statements that indirect negotiations were ongoing, denying a report stating that the talks had stopped, said *MENA*. (*Xinhua*)

The European Union and Oxfam launched an aid project in six West Bank communities that had been severely affected and impoverished by the occupation. The project was designed to turn ordinary residents into advocates for their rights and services. The three-year, €533,780 project would directly benefit 13,270 Palestinians residing in the villages of Fasayel, Jiftlik, Zbedat, Oja, Walajeh and Jaba'a. (*Wafa*)

The Jerusalem municipal planning committee approved the construction of 32 new apartments in the "Pisgat Ze'ev" settlement. "We will continue to plan and build in every neighbourhood in this city and we will not allow external forces to intervene", said Elisha Peleg, a member of the committee. (*Haaretz*)

Locals reported that "Kiryat Arba" settlers had attacked an elderly Palestinian man who was transferred to a hospital with head injuries. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

At the hearing to address a petition by Gush Shalom against the Tirkel Committee's limited authority, the Israeli High Court of Justice said it would consider widening the panel's mandate if its members sought to probe persons or events outside of their jurisdiction, including IDF soldiers. Uri Avnery, a veteran Israeli peace activist, called the ruling a victory, as it opened the door to questioning the military commanders of the raid. (*Haaretz*)

Israel had started construction on a new section of its separation wall that Palestinian residents say could destroy their village of Walaja, on the

southwest edge of Jerusalem, which was to be completely encircled and cut off from most of its open land, according to an Israeli Defense Ministry map. (AP)

Israeli Premier Netanyahu had asked former US President Bill Clinton to join mediation efforts. Under the proposed deal, Mr. Clinton would visit Gaza and meet with senior Hamas leaders in a bid to finalize a prisoner swap, *Ma'an News Agency* reported. The Gaza authorities said they had received no information on Mr. Clinton's potential visit to the enclave. (Ma'an News Agency)

13

IDF security forces arrested 11 wanted Palestinians during operations in Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

A Palestinian woman was killed and five others were injured by Israeli artillery fire in the residential area of Juhor Addik, east of Gaza City. (Ma'an News Agency)

A meeting between Egyptian President Mubarak and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, scheduled for 13 July, had been postponed to 18 July, Egyptian and Israeli officials said. An Egyptian presidential source said that a separate meeting between Mr. Mubarak and PA President Abbas, scheduled for 15 July, had also been pushed to 18 July. (AFP)

Israeli bulldozers destroyed at least six Palestinian buildings in East Jerusalem, breaking an unofficial moratorium on such demolitions since the end of 2009. PJ Crowley, a US State Department spokesperson, said: "The US has made it clear that it disagrees with some Government of Israel actions in Jerusalem... including home demolitions, and has urged all parties to avoid actions that could undermine trust. We continue to oppose and we will make clear to the Government of Israel that we oppose unilateral actions that prejudice negotiations." (www.state.gov)

Israel razed an inhabited Palestinian home in East Jerusalem for the first time in eight months. The European Union criticised the demolition, calling the move an obstacle to peace. (AFP, Reuters)

The Israeli police refused to carry out a court order to evict Jewish residents of the Beit Yonatan building in East Jerusalem, the city's legal adviser said. The order, which had not been executed, was issued two years ago. (Haaretz)

A humanitarian aid convoy organized by Jordanian trade unions had left Amman en route to the Gaza Strip. The convoy, comprising about 25 vehicles, was being manned by 150 activists from Jordanian trade unions and opposition parties. It would travel to the Red Sea port city of Aqaba before being ferried to the Egyptian town of Nuweiba. It would then travel by land to the Rafah border crossing. (DPA)

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu welcomed the fact that the Eiland Committee's investigation into the 31 May raid on the *Mavi Marmara* acknowledged that "mistakes" had been made, but said that Israeli commandos had committed "a crime" and Turkey would therefore continue to push for an international probe. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The IDF was preparing for the forceful interdiction of a Libyan-sponsored aid ship reportedly headed for the Gaza Strip. "The navy just began its process of trying to stop the ship," a military spokeswoman said. "At this time, the process of communicating with them has begun." The Libyan organizers of the aid ship said that an Israeli military vessel had confronted the ship and ordered it to change course for the Egyptian port of el-Arish.

(AP, Haaretz)

A group of French, US and Moroccan lawyers had filed a case against Israel with a Moroccan prosecutor to have senior Israeli figures arrested if they ever step foot in Morocco for their role in the offensive in the Gaza Strip in December 2008 to January 2009. According to a spokesman for the lawyers, Khalid Soufiani, the complaint accused former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Defense Minister Ehud Barak of breaching laws that protected civilians. (AFP)

14

A 13-year-old Palestinian was shot and wounded by Israeli forces as he was collecting scrap metal near the heavily guarded Gaza border. (AFP)

According to a senior Egyptian official, Egyptian President Mubarak postponed his planned meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu over Israel's recent demolition of illegal Palestinian structures in East Jerusalem, and not on account of the President's ailing health as had been claimed by Israeli officials. (Haaretz)

PA President Abbas was to meet Egyptian President Mubarak in Cairo on 18 July. "The meeting would discuss recent developments in the Palestinian arena, especially the peace process and the results of indirect negotiations with Israel," said Barakat Al-Farra, the Palestinian ambassador in Cairo. (Wafa)

PA President Abbas met with Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov and Prime Minister Boiko Borisov in Sofia. Mr. Parvanov said that they had discussed the Middle East peace process and that his country had always supported the creation of an independent Palestinian State, *Bulgarian National Radio* reported. According to a Foreign Ministry statement, Foreign Minister Nikolay Mladenov and his Palestinian counterpart, Riad Malki, discussed the possibility of Bulgaria providing support for the training of Palestinian students and representatives of the PA security forces. (www.sofiaecho.com)

The IDF had told the PA that it was willing to consider a request to permit Jewish Israelis to visit a number of West Bank cities as part of an effort to strengthen the Palestinian economy. The announcement followed OC Central Command Maj.-Gen. Avi Mizrahi's visit as a guest of the PA to Jenin, which had seen a dramatic drop in terrorism since Israel, the PA, the US and the Middle East Quartet began a project called the "Jenin Model", under which Israel had scaled back its military operations and PA security forces had taken over. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The European Commission said that it had agreed to an additional financial package worth €71 million for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Ahead of her trip to the region on 18 July, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton said, "Further to our direct financial support through payment of PA civil servants' salaries and social benefits, this package reinforces our support to the institution-building efforts made by the Palestinian Authority towards establishing a future State of Palestine." (www.europa.eu)

John Ging, head of the UNRWA Gaza Office, said that the latest electricity problem in Gaza "is a sad reflection of the divide on the Palestinian side". He added, "They have no credibility in demanding anything from anybody if they show such disregard for the plight of their own people". (*The New York Times*)

The Knesset's House Committee approved amendments to a bill stipulating that a referendum should be conducted before Israel could make any territorial concession, including a potential peace deal involving the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem. The amendments would have to pass two more votes in order to be finally adopted. (Haaretz)

In a statement, the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, condemned Israel's construction of 32 settlement units in East Jerusalem and its demolition of six Palestinian houses. (www.oic-oci.org)

The UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, expressed concern over reports of demolished East Jerusalem homes "At the current juncture, it is essential for all parties to respect international law, refrain from provocative actions and take positive steps to build

confidence and create an environment conducive to successful negotiations," he said. (AFP)

Israel defended its right to retaliate against aid ships attempting to breach its blockade of the impoverished Gaza Strip during a hearing of the UN Human Rights Council. "The blockade is legitimate under international law," insisted Israeli envoy Sari Rubenstein. (AFP)

Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh called for more pro-Palestinian "freedom flotillas" and urged the Gaza-bound Libyan aid ship *Amalthea* to continue toward Gaza. (The Jerusalem Post)

The Libyan-chartered ship *Amalthea*, which was carrying aid for Palestinians in Gaza, apparently set a new course for the Egyptian port of El Arish today after Israel's navy had threatened to seize the ship should it try to approach Gaza. (Reuters)

A "megafлотilla" was to try to breach the Gaza blockade by the end of the third quarter of 2010. Ten thousand people are already registered to board the 20 European ships that would be part of this new initiative. (La Tribune de Genève)

The UN Human Rights Committee concluded its consideration of the third periodic report of Israel on the measures undertaken by that country to implement the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Israel argued that the Covenant did not apply to its treatment of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza because those areas were outside the country's national boundaries. (www.unog.ch , The Jerusalem Post)

15

Israeli forces detained at least 23 Palestinians during raids in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

The United States had a "strong belief" that direct peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians would resume "at some point in time," State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said. (AFP)

US Special Envoy George Mitchell arrived in Israel to push for direct peace negotiations. Mr. Mitchell met Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak in the evening before talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the following morning. He was scheduled to meet the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah on 17 July 2010, before getting back to Mr. Netanyahu again on Sunday. (DPA)

The Fatah movement issued a statement warning that the "lack of credibility and confidence resulting from the Israeli rejection of the indirect talks, which have achieved no progress, will become entrenched ... if there is a transition to direct talks. That is something the Palestinian leadership has not and will not accept". Fatah leader Muhammad Dahlan added that Palestinians would not enter into direct talks until Israel addresses issues raised in proximity talks. (AFP, Ma'an News Agency)

Representatives of parliaments from around the world criticized Israel for its decision to deport Palestinian parliamentarian Mohamed Abu Tir from East Jerusalem. The chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's human rights committee, Rosario Green, urged Israel not to deport Palestinian lawmakers Mr. Tir, Mohammed Totah and Ahmed Abu Atoun after they were recently released from prison. (AP, The Jerusalem Post)

The council for Jewish residents in Silwan, in East Jerusalem, had secret plans to bring in about 2,500 youth to help prevent their expulsion from "Beit Yonatan", a heavily-guarded settler-occupied apartment building, should police attempt to force them to leave the disputed building, Channel 10 reported. (The Jerusalem Post)

A Libyan aid ship that tried to break Israel's blockade of Gaza, docked in the Egyptian port of El-Arish. The ship's sponsor, Saif al-Islam Al-Qadhafi, said that the boat had agreed not to go to Gaza after a deal had been struck with the Israeli Government that would allow Libya to send building and reconstruction supplies to the Palestinians. In an interview with *Asharq Al-Awsat*, Mr. Al-Qadhafi, the son of Libya's leader, Col. Muammar Al-Qadhafi, said that the Israelis had "agreed to let Libya spend \$50 million" through UNRWA. (The New York Times)

An IDF court convicted a former commander and a soldier involved in shooting a bound Palestinian at close range in Ni'lin two years ago. The affair had unfolded after Lt. Col. Omri Burberg was filmed holding the blindfolded and bound prisoner and ordering Staff Sgt. Leonardo Korea to fire a rubber bullet at his leg. (Haaretz)

A group of Israeli settlers torched agricultural land in Nablus. (Ma'an News Agency)

16

An Israeli military force consisting of at least 20 armoured vehicles invaded a village near Jenin, in the northern West Bank, and broke into residents' homes early this morning. (MEMC)

A delegation representing Christian communities in Jerusalem visited a sit-in tent outside the Red Cross Headquarters erected by three Palestinian lawmakers facing with expulsion from the city. Several international delegations had visited the protesters, including a group from the British House of Lords, EU ministers, Israeli peace activists, UN representatives and a Jordanian peace envoy. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman proposed a new plan aimed at ridding Israel of any responsibility for the Gaza Strip. According to the plan, Gaza, with European assistance, would become an entirely independent entity. A confidential document sent to Mr. Liberman stated that "we must discreetly approach the US, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and renowned international law experts to examine their terms for international recognition of an end to the occupation." (Ynetnews)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said that he was quite optimistic over the peace talks between the Palestinians and Israel. During his meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Al-Moualem, Mr. Moussa confirmed that the Arab Follow-up Committee meeting on 29 July would address the results of the indirect talks. (Xinhua)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman was reportedly promoting a plan, revealed by the Israeli media, for a "second disengagement" from Gaza, according to which Gaza would receive European assistance to become an entirely independent entity. In this way, Mr. Liberman believes, the world would finally recognize the end of the Israeli occupation there. Mr. Liberman's plan would allow ships inspected in Cyprus or Greece to dock in the Gaza Strip without being inspected in Israel first. Israel would also allow European countries to implement plans aimed at improving the lives of Gaza residents. Israel's border with the territory will be hermetically sealed. The PA and Hamas have rebuffed the Israeli plan, which had not been approved by Israeli Prime Minister or the cabinet. (Xinhua, Ynetnews)

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton, was to make her second visit to the Middle East, from 17 to 19 July. During her trip to the region, she would meet the leaders of both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, along with US Special Envoy Mitchell and Quartet Envoy Tony Blair. Ms. Ashton also planned to revisit Gaza, accompanied by six European Foreign Ministers. (www.consilium.europa.eu , Ynetnews)

While public attention had focused on the fierce diplomatic disputes between Israel and the United States over settlement expansion in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, security and military ties between the two nations had grown ever closer during the Obama administration. (The Washington Post)

Justice Jacob Turkel, head of the Israeli commission probing the Gaza flotilla events, issued letters to Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein and Brigadier General (Res.) Giora Eiland, asking them to turn over all correspondence pertaining to the operation. Mr. Turkel also asked for all the documentation pertaining to other decisions regarding the Gaza blockade. (Ynetnews)

Humanitarian and medical aid carried by a ship commissioned by Libya had been unloaded onto trucks in El-Arish, Egypt, and was expected to enter the Gaza Strip this evening, a security source said. The *Amalthea*, commissioned by Libya's Gaddafi International Charity and Development

Foundation, carried 2,000 tons of aid for Gaza and sailed from Greece on 10 July. (DPA)

IHH, the Turkish charity that led the Gaza flotilla last May, had extensive connections with Turkey's political elite, and the group's efforts to challenge Israel's blockade of Gaza received support at the top levels of the governing party, Turkish diplomats and Government officials said. (The New York Times)

The Israeli cabinet was expected to approve a series of measures on 18 July that would make it harder for Palestinians to acquire permanent residency or citizenship in Israel. The most notable would require Palestinians to declare their loyalty to "a Jewish and democratic state" before being granted Israeli citizenship. The measures would primarily affect Palestinian men and women who marry Israeli citizens and then seek citizenship on the basis of family reunification. (Haaretz)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman named Israel's envoy to Colombia, Meron Reuven, as Israel's temporary new ambassador to the United Nations. (Haaretz)

17

Two Palestinian reporters were wounded after being attacked by Israeli soldiers during a non-violent weekly protest held near Beit Ummar, in the district of Hebron. (The Muslim News)

18

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and PA President Abbas held separate meetings with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo after Mr. Mubarak had conferred with US Special Envoy Mitchell on a push for direct talks between the two parties. (AFP)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said, after talks with US Special Envoy George Mitchell, that "[The Palestinians] cannot automatically move from the indirect negotiations to direct negotiations without written guarantees [from Israel]". (Al Bawaba)

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton launched a tour of the Gaza Strip by urging Israel to throw open the territory's blockaded borders. Ms. Ashton stated at her first stop: "The position of the EU is very clear. We want to see the opportunity for people to be able to move around freely, to see goods not only coming into Gaza but exports coming out of Gaza." (AP)

The EU and the PA officially launched the Private Sector Reconstruction in Gaza programme. The EU would contribute €22 million to the programme to provide machinery, building materials and office furniture to businesses destroyed by the 2008-2009 Gaza war. (Ma'an News Agency)

Hamas lawmaker Mohammed Abu Tayr had rejected an Israeli offer to be released on bail on condition never to return to Jerusalem. (Xinhua)

Palestinian lawmaker Mustafa Barghouti announced that Israel had begun construction of 100 new settlement units in the district of Bethlehem. Another 32 units were planned for the Palestinian village of Tuqu, east of Bethlehem. He stated that settlement expansion had increased since Israel declared its moratorium on building. (Ma'an News Agency)

19

Shin Bet arrested five Palestinians accused of being members of a Hamas cell responsible for killing an Israeli policeman in the West Bank. (AP)

US Middle East Envoy George Mitchell travelled to the United Arab Emirates to speak with Prince Sheikh Muhammad bin Zaid Al-Nahayan of Abu Dhabi on peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. (AFP)

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu met Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal in Damascus. During the meeting, efforts were discussed to heal the rift between Hamas and Fatah. The Middle East peace process was also reported to be on their agenda. (AFP)

A high-ranking Israeli political source revealed that, during their last meeting, Prime Minister Netanyahu had shown President Mubarak a map for a Palestinian state with its borders for a final settlement. The source said that President Mubarak had rejected the map and advised the Israeli Prime Minister to amend it in a manner that would meet with the Arab demand. The report was denied shortly after by the Prime Minister's Office. (The Jerusalem Post, Asharq Al-Awsat)

The French Development Agency announced that it would grant €500,000 to the Palestinian Information Technology Association to launch an internationally-funded economic development project called "EnTeG: Enable Technology sector Growth in Gaza". The project aimed to help Gazan software developers use the Internet to circumvent Israeli export restrictions. (The Media Line)

Israel's Civil Administration began demolishing more than 20 farmers' sheds, homes and barracks in the Al-Farisiya area in the northern Jordan Valley. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Attorney-General Yehuda Weinstein informed the Supreme Court that the State planned to apply an Israeli law on abandoned properties to East Jerusalem, which would permit Israel to assume control over thousands of acres of properties "owned by people who moved to enemy States during the 1948 war" [refugees], as well as structures in East Jerusalem that belonged to Palestinians now residing in the [West Bank and Gaza]. (Haaretz)

The IDF demolished about 55 structures in the village of Farasiya in the Jordan Valley. The structures served 120 farmers, hired workers and their families. The Civil Administration said that it had declared the area a "live-fire zone" and posted eviction orders for 10 families in tents in June. "Since no appeal was filed in the following three weeks, and given the danger posed by the location of the tents, they were removed," the Civil Administration said. (Haaretz)

An Israeli military court ordered the release of Taisir al-Heib, the IDF soldier who was convicted in 2005 of killing British activist Tom Hurndall during a demonstration in Rafah in 2003. Al-Heib had been sentenced to eight years imprisonment, of which he had served five years. (Israel Hayom)

The Israeli Cabinet approved a provision that would require all prospective citizens living in Israel illegally to swear allegiance to a "Jewish democratic State". The new provision is an amendment to the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law, which makes it all but impossible for Palestinians to obtain Israeli citizenship. (Haaretz)

Jewish and Arab residents of Silwan described life in the area during a hearing in the Knesset Committee for the Rights of the Child. Palestinian parents told of arrests of children in the middle of the night and of them living in fear of settler violence and intimidation. They also complained of discrimination in the provision of services for children. Israeli settler parents also complained of violence, saying that their children must travel in armoured vehicles out of fear that rocks would be thrown at them. (Ynet News)

In a new report on the 2008-2009 war in the Gaza Strip, delivered to the office of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Israel said that its army was taking steps to reduce the number of civilian casualties in future wars and would restrict the use of white phosphorous. "The IDF has ... implemented operational changes in its orders and combat doctrine designed to further minimize civilian casualties and damage to civilian property in the future. ... In particular, the IDF has adopted important new procedures designed to enhance the protection of civilians in urban warfare, for instance by further emphasizing that the protection of civilians is an integral part of an IDF commander's mission," the report said. (Reuters, www.mfa.gov.il)

Expressing deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from Israeli occupation, the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution urging continued international attention to promote and protect their human rights, and intensified measures to improve their difficult conditions. By a recorded vote of 24 in favour to 3 against (Australia, Canada, United States), with 15 abstentions, the Council reaffirmed that occupation hindered Palestinian women's advancement, self-reliance and societal integration, and stressed the importance of increasing their decision-making in conflict prevention and resolution efforts. (UN News Centre)

The Israeli army conducted an incursion into the town of Abasan al-Jadeeda, east of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, with tanks, bulldozers and armoured vehicles, firing at a number of homes and causing damage. No injuries were reported. (IMEMC)

Israeli forces detained two Palestinians in Hebron. (Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF recently completed a series of final tests on the "Iron Dome system", which is geared to intercept short and medium-range rockets with a range of up to 70 kilometers. Senior IDF officers and other security officials said that the tests had been completed with great success. (Ynet News)

Russia delivered 50 armoured personnel carriers to Jordan to be transferred to the Palestinian security forces, the Russian Foreign Ministry stated. (AFP)

Fatah's Central Committee insisted that direct peace talks with Israel hinged on a complete halt to settlement building. "President Abbas has told US Envoy George Mitchell that there will be no direct negotiations unless Israel freezes the settlements in all Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem," Jibril Rajoub, Secretary of the Committee, said. "President Abbas will go to Cairo to personally inform our Arab brothers at the Arab League on 29 July about international efforts related to the direct and indirect talks," he added. (AFP)

Quartet Envoy Tony Blair said that both the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships should address their final status issues, which he explained were security for the Israelis and the occupation for Palestinians. "We need to develop the economic and security infrastructure to end the occupation step by step," he said. Mr. Blair also applauded the efforts of PA Prime Minister Fayyad and President Abbas "to take security into their own hands", and said that both sides must return to talks "knowing that the situation in the West Bank is better than it was a few years ago." (Ma'an News Agency)

PA Minister of Agriculture, Ismail Deiq, announced that the Italian Government had provided the Palestinian Authority with €30 million for the agricultural sector. In addition, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva signed a decision granting \$14 million for Gaza reconstruction efforts, Palestinian officials announced. (Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF was considering the possible lifting of a 10-year-long ban on visiting the West Bank by Israeli Jews. (RIA Novosti)

Israel's Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Elie Yishai, was to lay the foundation stone of a new administrative centre for Jewish settlements in the West Bank. (AFP)

According to John Ging, Director of UNRWA Gaza operations, Israel had not let in sufficient construction material under its new siege conditions in the Gaza Strip, and current levels were not even enough to complete limited UNRWA housing projects. (Ma'an News Agency)

A delegation of Palestinian officials had asked that the EU appoint a special commissioner for Jerusalem affairs and provide protection for the Palestinian citizens in the occupied city until it was transferred into Palestinian hands in an eventual peace agreement. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, Martin Nesirky, said that the Secretary-General had received information from Israel relating to the recommendations of the Goldstone Commission. (www.un.org)

21

IDF troops fired at suspected Palestinian militants who had approached Gaza's northern border with Israel. *Israel Radio* reported. According to Palestinian sources, one militant was killed on the spot, while the second died of wounds hours after the incident. Six militants remained hospitalized, the sources added. (Haaretz)

Al-Jazeera reported that most of the medical supplies and medicines sent into Gaza were damaged or past their expiration date. Mounir el-Barash, Director of the Donations Department in Gaza's Ministry of Health, said that only 30 per cent of the aid sent into Gaza had been used. (The Jerusalem Post)

Israel launched a diplomatic effort to keep the latest planned aid flotilla from sailing from Lebanon to Gaza. The Israeli Foreign Ministry instructed Israeli ambassadors to ask senior officials in the United States, United Nations, European Union and Egypt to pressure Syria and Lebanon to stop the flotilla. (Haaretz)

Israeli authorities demolished eight structures belonging to Palestinians in a residential area north-west of Ramallah. More than a dozen military vehicles carrying armed soldiers arrived mid-morning with military equipment to carry out the demolitions. (Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua)

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe [briefed](#) the Security Council on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". He said that the effort to move to serious Israeli-Palestinian negotiations aimed at achieving a two-State solution was once again at a critical juncture, and urged the parties not to miss the current opportunity to make progress and move to direct negotiations with active third-party involvement and close Quartet support. The briefing was followed by an open debate, during which Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, among others, delivered a statement. (UN News Centre)

22

Israeli forces shot to death an unarmed Palestinian man at the edge of the "Barkan" settlement, in the northern West Bank, Israeli military and Palestinian officials said. The Israeli military said that soldiers had seen three Palestinians approaching the settlement before dawn. Suspecting that one was armed, the soldiers opened fire, killing one man, according to the military. Ghassan Khatib, a spokesman for the Palestinian Authority, criticized the shooting of the man, identified as Bilal Abu Libdeh from Qalqilya, saying, "Israel must hold its soldiers accountable for illegal and unjustified killings. ... The Israeli practice of shooting first and asking questions later has become the norm when dealing with Palestinians." (The New York Times)

The IDF killed a fighter belonging to the Saraya Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, while he was on a mission near Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip, according to an Islamic Jihad statement. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA President Abbas said that he would decide in the next seven days whether conditions were ripe to proceed to direct peace talks with Israel. "We are not against direct negotiations. ... If there is progress by 28 July, we will present it to the Arab League. If there is no progress, we will tell the League that we will continue with the proximity talks until the end of the four-month mandate we received," Mr. Abbas told reporters in Ramallah. (Reuters)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said in a [statement](#) welcoming Greek Prime Minister George Papandreu: "I know that you're going today to see President Abbas and we discussed our commitment and our willingness to enter direct peace negotiations ... to seek a conclusion of a historic peace agreement. You have voiced your willingness to help us in that effort ... and I thank you for that." (www.pmo.gov.il)

The PA Ministry of Economy in Ramallah announced that 31 July would be the deadline for Palestinian merchants to clear their shops of settlement goods. Violations of the law prohibiting settlements goods carried a penalty of two to five years in prison and a fine of no less than 10,000 Jordanian dinars. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Kerem Shalom crossing was opened for the transfer of limited goods including commercial and agricultural sector items but not construction supplies. (Ma'an News Agency)

Egyptian security officials said smugglers in Gaza had cut hundreds of holes in an underground steel wall Egypt was building along the border to try to

stop them. (AP)

Israeli settlers set fire to olive trees in Saffa village near Ramallah. Residents and firefighters rushed to the scene, but Israeli soldiers did not allow them to access the land. More than seven square kilometres of land were burned. (Ma'an News Agency)

Three settlers stole a sheep from a young Palestinian shepherd from the village of Tuba in South Hebron Hills while he was watering flocks at a well located between the Israeli settlements of "Ma'on" and "Karmel". The shepherd said that although the IDF had been present during the incident, they had left the scene without intervening. (Wafa)

In letters to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council, Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations Gabriela Shalev called on Lebanon and the international community to prevent the aid ships *Junia* and *Julia* from departing and to discourage their nationals from taking part in such action. She accused the organizers of seeking to incite a confrontation and raise tensions in the region and said, "Israel reserves its right under international law to use all necessary means to prevent these ships from violating the ... naval blockade." (Haaretz)

The US State Department announced that it would upgrade its diplomatic relations with the PA by granting its mission (PLO mission) in Washington the status of a "general delegation", the same status enjoyed by Palestinian missions in most European countries. The mission's diplomats would now have diplomatic immunity and its offices would be able to fly the PLO flag. (Haaretz)

In an opening [message](#) to the UN Media Seminar on Middle East Peace in Lisbon, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to surmount domestic political pressures and take "bold steps" to achieve peace in the region. With proximity talks under way, "it is vital for the parties to refrain from provocations and seize this opportunity," Mr. Ban said. (UN News Centre)

The European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza, the organizers of "Freedom Flotilla 2," were reportedly in talks with leading athletes to take part in a new attempt to break the Gaza blockade. Potential participants include Spanish national soccer team captain Iker Casillas and tennis star Rafael Nadal. (Ynetnews)

23

The Israeli military had recommended that the Government allow the Palestinian Authority to import 50 armoured vehicles from Russia, Israeli media reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

Local and international protesters in Hebron were forced by the IDF to leave as dozens of settlers began building a new outpost in Hebron's Al-Buweirah neighbourhood between the city centre and the "Kiyrat Arba" settlement by placing mobile homes and sheds on the site. Clashes erupted and witnesses said that two photojournalists and four Palestinians had been detained. (Ma'an News Agency)

An Israeli official said that a decision had been made the previous day to allow the Turkish aid ships raided by the Israeli navy to leave without conditions. The Turkish Embassy was handling discussions on how to retrieve the ships from Haifa and Ashdod ports, another Israeli official said. In Vietnam, visiting Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said, "This was something Israel had to do anyway. There were certain steps Israel needed to take, and this was one of them." (Reuters)

The President of the UN Human Rights Council [appointed](#) three pre-eminent experts to an independent international fact-finding mission to investigate violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law resulting from the Israeli attacks on the Gaza aid flotilla on 31 May. The experts named were Judge Karl T. Hudson-Phillips (Trinidad and Tobago), Sir Desmond de Silva (United Kingdom) and Mary Shanthi Dairiam (Malaysia). (www.unog.ch)

Israeli former general Giora Eiland, who headed the Israeli military commission charged with conducting an internal investigation of the Gaza aid flotilla incident, was quoted by Israeli daily *Yediot Ahronot* as saying that bloodshed could have been reduced had the navy first cleared the *Mavi Marmara*'s decks with water dropped from the air. He also told *Army Radio* that it would have been possible to prevent the flotilla by political means, saying that Israel "could have opened the Gaza crossings in advance, before the Turkish flotilla." (Reuters)

Three Spanish activists who had participated in the Gaza aid flotilla filed a legal suit against Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in the Madrid High Court for alleged crimes against humanity committed in storming the flotilla. Antonio Segura, a lawyer for one of the activists, said that the legal action centred on the Spaniards' detention on the high seas, their subsequent interrogation and attempts to torture them in Israel, where they had been taken by force. (Reuters)

The eighteenth International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East [concluded](#) after two days of deliberations. (UN News Centre)

24

Palestinians fired four rockets into southern Israel, causing no injuries or damage. (Ynetnews)

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner expressed his country's readiness to hold direct dialogue with Hamas if it received an official request from the PA. (DPA)

25

The Israel Air Force struck three targets in the Gaza Strip, including an arms factory in the north and two smuggling tunnels in the south. There were no reports of injuries on the Palestinian side. The IDF Spokesperson's Unit said that the assault had been in response to the rockets and mortar shells fired at Israel. (Ynetnews)

Five Palestinians with improvised weapons were arrested south of Nablus. (Ynetnews)

PA President Abbas told *Voice of Palestine* radio: "The entire world is asking us to go for direct negotiations, but going to negotiations without a clear reference might make them collapse from the first moment". (AP)

The Israeli Cabinet [approved](#) the appointment two additional experts to serve on the internal Israeli committee investigating the legality of the deadly raid on the Gaza aid flotilla. The two members are Reuven Merhav, a former career diplomat, and Miguel Deutch, an Argentinean-born legal professor teaching at Tel Aviv University. (AFP, www.pmo.gov.il)

26

Residents reported that Israeli forces entered the northern West Bank village of Beit Furik and sealed off a military checkpoint at its main entrance. Witnesses said troops patrolling the village after the checkpoint had been closed then opened fire at random. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces raided the house of the Ministry of Civil Affairs Undersecretary, Ma'rouf Zahran, in Qalqilya, detaining his 18-year-old son, family members said. Mr. Zahran was not at home during the raid and remained abroad on an official visit to Turkey. (Ma'an News Agency)

The US Government Accountability Office said in a report presented to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs that the Israeli Government's conduct in recent years, including delaying the transfer to Palestinian security forces of AK-47 rifles, radios, vehicles and uniforms, hampered US efforts to train the forces in the West Bank. "The implementation of the US security assistance programs faces a number of logistical constraints that are largely outside of US control, and these security assistance programs outpace efforts to develop the limited capacity of the PA police and justice

sector,” the report said. (*Haaretz*)

A senior US envoy warned PA President Abbas that he must move quickly to direct talks with Israel if he wanted President Obama's help in setting up a Palestinian State, according to an internal Palestinian document obtained by AP. (*AP*)

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak. US State Department Spokesman Philip Crowley said, minutes before the private meeting, “They will review recent progress in our efforts to move from proximity talks to direct negotiations.” (*DPA*)

PA President Abbas was to request an extension to US-mediated indirect talks with Israel from the Arab Peace Initiative Committee in Cairo on 29 July, a PLO official said. Executive Committee member Hannah Amireh told *Ma'an Radio* that Mr. Abbas would ask for talks to continue until 8 September, one month over the four-month deadline sanctioned by the Arab League. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas welcomed an EU [statement](#) issued on the Middle East peace process reaffirming support for a two-State solution. (*Wafa*, www.consilium.europa.eu)

Jordan's King Abdullah II assured PA President Abbas during a meeting that Jordan would continue to work with all concerned international and regional parties to overcome obstacles to peace and set the ground for direct Palestinian-Israeli talks that address all final status issues. (*Petra*)

France upgraded its diplomatic relations with the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinians had been represented by a “delegation” in France headed by a “general delegate”. French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said they would now have a “mission” led by an “ambassador, chief of mission,” in order to support efforts for creating a Palestinian State “and to guarantee its credibility”. (*AP*)

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton said that Israel must do more to allow goods in and out of the Gaza Strip. “We need to see more happening to improve the situation in Gaza, especially for exports to be allowed so that the Gaza economy can start to grow again,” Ms. Ashton told reporters on arrival at a meeting with EU Foreign Ministers. (*AP*)

Indian Express reported that an Indian vessel was set to join a new international campaign named “The Audacity of Hope” to press for an end to the Israeli naval blockade on the Gaza Strip. (*Wafa*)

Fifty-five Malaysian volunteers, including 30 medical specialists and officers, were to go on a 13-day humanitarian mission to the Gaza Strip during the coming Ramadan, organized by the Malaysia Putera Club. (*Bernama*)

Israeli settlers rioted to protest the demolition of a home built in the adjoining “Givat Ronen” outpost in violation of the building freeze. Dozens of armed settlers stormed the nearby Burin village, opening fire at Palestinian homes. Villagers clashed with the settlers and pelted stones at them. Two Palestinians and four settlers were injured. (*Haaretz*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinians from Nabi Salah, north of Ramallah, said settlers entered their town and perpetrated several acts of violence and vandalism, including breaking windows of homes and cars. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Israel would not extend the 10-month moratorium in West Bank settlement construction set to expire in late September. He said his Cabinet had declared the moratorium to encourage Palestinians to negotiate with Israel directly instead of through a US mediator and that after stalling for more than seven months, the Palestinians were now asking for more time. “This is unacceptable. The decision is limited in time. This has not changed and that's how it will be,” Mr. Netanyahu told an Israeli parliamentary committee, according to a meeting participant. (*AP*)

27

Israel said that it would buy more Iron Dome interceptors after it deployed its controversial anti-missile system starting in November, the Defense Ministry said. An Iron Dome interceptor is designed to combat short-range missile threats. First deployment would be along the border of the Gaza Strip. (*UPI*)

The top Hamas security official in Gaza said that he was considering setting up a bigger military force, first with volunteers and eventually with conscripts as well. Interior Minister Fathi Hamad raised the idea of a broad-based force during the inauguration of a new police building. (*AP*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu held talks with Jordan's King Abdullah II on the Middle East peace process during an unannounced visit to Amman, the Palace said. “The King and the Prime Minister discussed means to achieve progress in efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in line with a two-State solution,” the Palace said in a statement. “They also discussed ways to create the right environment for launching direct and serious peace talks between the Palestinians and Israel.” (*AFP*)

Hamas warned President Abbas not to relaunch direct peace talks with Israel, which it said “would only serve the Zionist occupation.” “We warn (President Abbas) of the consequences of returning to negotiations, either with Arab cover or under pressure from America, because this will deepen the divide and put our cause on the brink of collapse,” senior Hamas leader Salah al-Bardawil said in a statement. (*AFP*)

The US said that it was making a “full-court press” to encourage the Israelis and Palestinians to resume direct peace talks. State Department Spokesman Philip Crowley said: “We have a full court press underway to see if we can move to direct negotiations. We are hopeful that the parties will reach this point but I can't pinpoint a particular day on the calendar.” (*AFP*)

Saeb Erekat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that the key to direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations was in the hands of Netanyahu, who should choose between “settlements or peace”. (*Xinhua*)

The Hamas-led Transport Ministry in Gaza announced that it would begin allowing merchants to purchase cargo trucks from Israel. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Gazans living under the siege were being denied medical care, according to a recent [report](#) by Physicians for Human Rights – Israel. (*The Palestine Telegraph*, www.phr.org.il)

UK Prime Minister David Cameron described Gaza as a “prison camp” and appealed to the Israeli Government to allow the free flow of humanitarian goods and people in and out of the Strip. Mr. Cameron's comments came during a visit to Turkey. (*KUNA*)

The Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights issued a report on the latest numbers of Palestinians to lose their residency rights in occupied East Jerusalem due to Israeli restrictions and measures. The number of Palestinians who had been stripped of their residency rights since Israel illegally captured and occupied East Jerusalem in 1967 until mid June 2010 had reached 86,226 (14,371 families). (*IMEMC*)

Israeli police released Rabbi Yitzhak Shapira, head of the Od Yosef Hai Yeshiva and author of “The King's Torah”, who was arrested the previous day at his home in the West Bank settlement of “Yitzhar”. His book described how it was possible to kill non-Jews according to Jewish religious law. (*Haaretz*)

The UN had pledged to deliver to Gaza supplies from three cargo ships that participated in the aid flotilla in May. Flotilla organizers had agreed to a deal under which the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process would process the cargo for delivery to UN agencies in Gaza this week. (*The Irish Times*)

A European medical convoy named “Miles of Smiles 2” was set to arrive in Gaza on 7 August, organizers said. Coordinating with Egyptian authorities, the ships would arrive on Alexandria's shores on 5 August, before sailing to Al-Arish port and then onto Gaza. An organizer said that 70 European politicians would bring 50 ambulances and medicines worth €1 million, adding that the campaign was sponsored by former Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Al-Hus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli officials were surprised to learn that Turkey was working to prevent Lebanese ships from attempting to sail to Gaza in violation of the Israeli blockade. According to Israeli officials, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who visited Damascus and Beirut last week, asked the Lebanese Government to prevent the flotilla's departure as part of Ankara's efforts to ease tensions with Israel. (*Ynetnews*)

The five members and two observers on the Turkel Commission are men, but women's groups are demanding that this be changed. Itach Women Lawyers for Social Justice and WePower filed a petition with the High Court against Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Turkel Commission with a demand that they appoint a woman to the commission charged with investigating the Gaza-bound flotilla raid. (*Ynetnews*)

Israeli authorities demolished the homes of about 300 Bedouins in a village in the southern Negev desert. The entire village of al-Arakib was bulldozed, with many of the former residents' cattle, trees and belongings lost. (*Al-Jazeera*)

28

Israeli forces arrested seven Palestinians after raiding their homes in the city of Yatta in the West Bank. (*The Palestine Telegraph*)

Two Palestinians were injured in an ambiguous explosion in the Al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A Palestinian man was brought in for questioning after Israeli forces had found him carrying a 30 centimetre-long knife at a security crossing near the "Gush Etzion" settlement. (www.idf.il)

A document issued by the PLO's negotiation department urged the continuation of proximity talks until the end of the first week of September 2010, indicating that only progress on the issues of borders and security could make it possible to move to direct talks. (*Al-Ayyam*)

Israel accused PA President Abbas of imposing "impossible" conditions for moving to direct peace talks. "The Palestinians have set three impossible conditions: that the negotiations start from the point they left off at the end of 2008 ... that they be based on a total Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines, and that the freeze of [settlement] construction continue," Vice Prime Minister Silvan Shalom said. (*AFP*)

The United States reportedly urged Saudi Arabia and Syria to back the move to direct Middle East peace talks. US State Department Spokesman Philip Crowley said that Secretary of State Clinton, prior to Thursday's meeting of the Arab League, had had conversations with leaders in the region urging them to support the move to direct negotiations. (*AFP*, www.state.gov)

A Palestinian official said that President Abbas was likely to tell the Arab League that insufficient progress had been made to convince him to go to direct talks with the Israelis and ask for endorsement of his decision not to move to direct negotiations until the timeframe for the indirect talks came to an end. (*IMEMC*)

Syrian sources said that the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, Algeria, Qatar and the Sudan were opposed to moving to direct talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority ahead of the Arab Peace Initiative Committee meeting to be held in Cairo on 29 July. (*Al-Watan*)

Israeli President Shimon Peres was to meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo on 1 August. They would discuss political issues and the possibility of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Fatah's parliament speaker Azzam Al-Ahmad said that the Ramallah-based government led by Salam Fayyad would be disbanded and a new Palestinian Authority cabinet would be formed next week. He said that President Abbas would consult with Palestinian factions over the new structure of the PA. Fayyad or another politician would be tasked with forming a government, he said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli authorities were to continue allowing aid into the Gaza Strip. Twenty-five truckloads of aid would enter through the Kerem Shalom crossing in southern Gaza, Palestinian liaison official Raed Fattouh said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Egypt denied visas to four Iranian lawmakers who had planned to travel to the Gaza Strip. (*AFP*)

Egyptian forces took control of 10 smuggling tunnels under the Egypt-Gaza border area of Salah Ad-Din in Rafah and thwarted a cement-smuggling operation. The cement was confiscated and the tunnels would be demolished, a security source said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli military was preparing to demolish a Jewish seminary building at the West Bank settlement of Yitzhar after residents lost an appeal against its destruction. (*Israel Army Radio*)

The Secretary-General had received reports from the Israeli, Palestinian and Swiss missions on Operation Cast Lead. (www.un.org)

29

Four Palestinian men were detained overnight by Israeli forces south of Nablus. An Israeli military spokeswoman said that she was not aware of these detentions, but cited two other detentions in the West Bank overnight. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA security forces arrested two Israeli soldiers, who entered Nablus by mistake. The soldiers were subsequently returned to Israeli-controlled territory. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel Radio quoted a source saying that Israeli President Shimon Peres had earlier this month sent former Minister of Justice Haim Ramon to see Sa'eb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO in a bid to convince the Palestinians not to move to direct talks. (*Haaretz*, *Israel Radio*, *The Jerusalem Post*)

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said on Egyptian television that the Palestinians had in recent days received a series of assurances from the United States with regard to both the general framework of negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian officials and "elements that govern the future of the settlements". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Hamas Spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri told reporters that Hamas no longer recognized Mahmoud Abbas as President. He also called on Abbas and Arab countries to reject negotiations with Israel and to condemn Israel's demolition of the Bedouin village of Al-Araqib. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas travelled to Cairo to attend a meeting of the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-up Committee that was expected to decide whether or not to endorse the move from proximity talks to direct negotiations. Despite pressure from the US and Israel, President Abbas was reportedly refusing to move to direct talks at this time. Egypt's state-owned news agency quoted President Abbas as saying: "When I receive written assurances [about] accepting the 1967 border and halting the settlement [building], I will go immediately to the direct talks." (*AP*, *DPA*, *Haaretz*)

At its meeting in Cairo, the Arab League endorsed in principle the move to direct talks, when President Abbas decided that the conditions were right to proceed. Speaking at a press conference after the meeting, Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said that the League had three requirements for supporting direct talks: a clear timeframe, specific terms of reference and a monitoring mechanism. (*AP*, *DPA*, *Reuters*, *The Jerusalem Post*)

Officials announced that two crossings into Gaza would be opened and that around 130 truckloads of goods were expected to pass through. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Residents and observers said that the Israeli Defense Ministry had increased the pace of its construction of the separation wall around the village of Al-Walajah, despite the petition filed by residents to get the Israeli High Court to change the path of the wall. (*IMEMC*)

With the protection of Israeli police, a group of settlers took over a building in the Old City of East Jerusalem and evicted three families or 50 persons from their apartments. Israeli National Police spokesman Mickey Rosenfeld said that two Jewish families had entered homes "based on documents claiming that they owned the property" and that the documents were currently being examined to determine their accuracy. Ownership of the building

had long been subject to a court battle, which the Palestinian residents said had concluded in their favour. (*Haaretz* , *IMEMC* , *Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu told Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos that it would be "politically impossible" for him to extend the moratorium on settlement construction, which was set to expire in September. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, issued [a statement](#) deploring the forcible take-over by Israeli settlers of a building in East Jerusalem and calling on the Israeli authorities to remove the settlers. He also called on the Government of Israel to heed the Quartet's call to refrain from provocative actions in East Jerusalem, including house demolitions and evictions. (*UN News Centre*)

30

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired a Russian-made Katyusha rocket into a populated residential area of Ashkelon. No casualties were reported. (*Xinhua*)

In a statement, a spokesperson for the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process condemned the attack noting that "indiscriminate rocket fire against civilians is completely unacceptable and constitutes a terrorist attack". (*UNSCO*)

Undercover Israeli soldiers shot at two Palestinians today, injuring one, north of the West Bank city of Ramallah. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Some 30 Palestinians protested in the West Bank village of Burin, south of Nablus. Security forces were alerted after receiving complaints from settlers that they had been assaulted by Palestinians who had been torching fields in the area. The Palestinians claimed that it was the settlers who had torched the fields. (*YnetNews*)

Following the Arab League decision to endorse direct negotiations, a senior Israeli source said that PA President Abbas would likely wait until September, when Israel's temporary settlement freeze expired, before declaring his own decision on the issue of direct negotiations with Israel. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Barak welcomed the Arab League announcement. Netanyahu declared that he would be willing to enter into "direct and honest peace talks" within days, adding that "by way of direct negotiations, a speedy peace agreement can be achieved". (*Haaretz*)

Hamas rejected the Arab League's decision to support direct Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. "We reject any cover for the resumption of the direct talks with the Zionist occupation," said Ismail Radwan, a senior Hamas leader. "This committee is not authorized to make concessions over the rights of our people." (*DPA*)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak was to meet UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip and Israel's settlement policy, UN Spokesman Martin Nesirky said. (*AFP*)

A study by Dirasat, the Arab Center for Law and Policy, indicated that various legal and institutional obstacles in Israel's municipal planning systems force Palestinian residents to resort to illegal construction. About a quarter of Arab towns and villages lacked detailed development plans, so residents had no hope of receiving building permits. (*Haaretz*)

Egyptian security sources said the security barrier along most of the 14-kilometer border with Gaza had been delayed by technical and administrative obstacles. They said that the barrier, expected to span 10 kms, would not be completed before 2011. (*MENL*)

Environmentalists claim that the hallowed spot along the Jordan River where Christians believed Jesus Christ was baptized had become too contaminated with Israeli sewage for human use. Israeli authorities vigorously dispute the claims, but the environmentalist group Friends of the Earth contended that the level of coliform bacteria from sewage in the river was dangerously high. (*The Washington Post*)

The Palestinian Water Authority today welcomed the adoption by the UN General Assembly of a resolution recognizing access to water and sanitation as a human right. Palestinian officials said the decision effectively add another violation of human rights to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met with Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak in New York. The meeting's [readout](#), published by the Spokesman of the Secretary-General, said that Mr. Ban had stressed the need to continue Israel's restraint on settlement activity and to extend it to East Jerusalem, among other steps that could help efforts to proceed to meaningful direct talks between the parties. After the meeting, Mr. Barak said, "We are hoping to start direct negotiations with the Palestinians soon, in order to move forward with an agreement which will be based on two nations for two peoples." He added, "The negotiations will not be simple, and courageous decisions will be required on our part and the Palestinians'. I hope everyone understands that both sides will need to make difficult decisions to establish historic peace in the region. We will need the help of the UN to go forward with the negotiations." (*The Jerusalem Post* , *UN News Centre*)

The United Nations Human Rights Committee declared yesterday in a non-binding resolution that Israel must lift its military blockade of the Gaza Strip so that Palestinians in the occupied territories could enjoy the human rights that Israel had pledged to uphold in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Committee also called on Israel to invite an independent fact-finding mission to investigate its 31 May raid on the Gaza-bound aid flotilla. (*Reuters*)

31

A commander of Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades (armed wing of Hamas) Brigades commander and rocket maker, Issa al-Batran, was killed and 10 Gaza residents were injured by a missile fired from an Israeli air fighter that targeted his caravan. The Israeli army said the air strikes on Gaza had been in response to the Grad projectile launched the previous day. The same night, Israeli warplanes fired missiles at the Gaza-Egypt border in Rafah, targeting smuggling tunnels. (*Haaretz* , *Ma'an News Agency*)

Two journalists and a teenager were injured in clashes between Israeli forces and protesters at the weekly anti-settlement rally in the Hebron village of Beit Ummar, said Palestine Solidarity Project Spokesman Mohammad Ayyad Awad. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, told *Haaretz* that the Palestinian Authority had submitted a far-reaching peace proposal to the Obama Administration that was more generous than that presented by Mahmoud Abbas to former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Mr. Erakat also said that the offer would end the conflict with Israel and resolve all Palestinian claims. He said he presented George Mitchell, the US Special Envoy to the Middle East, with a series of official documents that clarified the Palestinian position on all the final-status issues: borders, Jerusalem, refugees, water and security, saying "Thus far we have not received any answer from the Israeli side". (*Haaretz*)