

Division for Palestinian Rights
**Chronological Review of Events Relating to the
 Question of Palestine**
 Monthly media monitoring review
October 2007

Monthly highlights

- Israel releases Palestinian prisoners, mostly members of Fatah. ([1, 2 October](#))
- Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams meet in Jerusalem. ([3 October](#))
- IDF orders expropriation of over 1,100 dunums of land from villages located between East Jerusalem and the settlement of "Ma'aleh Adumim" for a new Palestinian road. ([9 October](#))
- Israel's Land Authority issues permits for the construction of 6,100 new apartments in the "Modi'in Ilit" settlement. ([10 October](#))
- European Parliament adopts resolution on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. ([11 October](#))
- In Ramallah, visiting US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says it is "time for the establishment of a Palestinian State". ([15 October](#))
- UN Special Rapporteur suggests that Secretary-General withdraw the UN from the Quartet if the latter fails to give regard to human rights. ([15 October](#))
- President Abbas discusses with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice the US proposed Middle East peace conference. ([17 October](#))
- 61 Israeli lawmakers sign petition against giving up any part of Jerusalem to the Palestinians. ([19 October](#))
- Israeli Defence Minister authorizes the reduction of power supplies to the Gaza Strip. ([26 October](#))
- President Abbas meets Prime Minister Olmert to seek common ground ahead of US-proposed Middle East peace conference. ([26 October](#))

1

Two fighters from Hamas' armed wing, Ahmad al-Amudi, 23, and Bilan Abu Shkayan, 20, were killed in a shootout with Israeli troops that lightly wounded a soldier at the Kami (Al-Muntar) crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel, medics said. An Israeli army spokesman said troops had returned fire at two people firing at soldiers and hit both men. (AFP)

A 13-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and injured by Israeli forces stationed near the Erez (Beit Hanoun) crossing between the northern Gaza Strip and Israel while he was waiting with his family for prisoners due to be released from Israeli jails. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces arrested 12 Palestinians in Ramallah, Qalqilya, Jenin and the Aida refugee camp near Bethlehem. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli border police and police forces evacuated most of the hilltops taken over by right-wing settlers in a declared attempt to establish unauthorized outposts. Several dozen activists were still in place at the outpost of "Shvut Ami," in the West Bank, having taken over a number of abandoned buildings. Throughout the day, the youths that took over four hilltops were evacuated by security forces. At "Harhivi," near the settlement of "Elon Moreh," IDF and police encountered resistance from settlers. (Ha'aretz)

The Israel Prison Service began the release of jailed Palestinians, sending 57 from the Ketziot prison in the Negev back to their homes in the West Bank. Another 30 prisoners were expected to be freed and sent home to the Gaza Strip later in the day. The 87 prisoners are mostly members of Fatah. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli officials said Israel was determined to move police to a new West Bank headquarters by the end of the year. The United States had blocked past Israeli efforts to develop the 12-square-kilometre area, known as E-1 and located just east of Jerusalem. Development plans envision 3,500 homes, several hotels and an industrial park there, but were frozen at the urging of the US. The E-1 project, if completed, would effectively cut off eastern Jerusalem from the West Bank. (AP)

Ha'aretz reported that, according to a senior Palestinian source, the Palestinian Authority (PA) would publicly call for the involvement of an international body to oversee the implementation of its agreements with Israel. The PA was expected to ask for such involvement during the peace summit in the US in November.

Israel was expected to accept the participation of a "third party" in the region, according to the source. The senior Palestinian figure said that the PA would agree to a formula in which the international body would function in a similar fashion to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. The makeup of the international body and its authority would be determined during the summit, but an agreement might be achieved even sooner, according to the source. (Ha'aretz)

Israel issued a message to Egypt over its decision to allow at least 80 Hamas members to cross into the Gaza Strip a day earlier, saying that some of the members had recently undergone extensive military training in Iran and Syria, according to security sources. Those crossing into the Gaza Strip included senior members of the organization's political leadership, Palestinian sources said. It was reported that Egypt had agreed to the crossing of Hamas members following a deal that had been struck with Egyptian intelligence and the group. (Ha'aretz)

2

Israeli military vehicles and bulldozers entered the northern West Bank city of Nablus, according to witnesses. The army entered the refugee camp of Balata, east of Nablus, and came under Palestinian militants' fire. No injuries have been reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

Three Qassam rockets landed in the Negev. No injuries were reported. (Ha'aretz)

Four members of Hamas' Executive Force were killed in Gaza City when their vehicle was hit by shelling from the Israeli Navy, said Hamas spokesman Ihab al-Ghossein. An IDF spokesperson told *AFP* that they were not aware of the incident. Hamas later released a statement saying: "Investigations are still under way to determine what caused the blast, who was behind it and who was killed." The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades said in a statement that three of the dead were members of their militia who were killed trying to launch an attack on Hamas. The group said the men died when Hamas militants fired a rocket-propelled grenade at their car.

Hamas' security forces arrested at least 15 relatives of the three men east of Gaza City, residents said. (*AFP, AP, The Guardian, Ynetnews*)

Israel released 29 Palestinian prisoners to the Gaza Strip after Israeli President Shimon Peres held up the release over the Gaza Strip militants' refusal to release captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. The released prisoners entered the Gaza Strip through the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing with Israel. Most of them were members of Fatah. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Interior Ministry of the former Hamas-led Palestinian Government had finished merging the Hamas Executive Force into the police apparatus in the Gaza Strip, according to spokesperson Ihab al-Ghossein. He said that the mission of the Executive Force "is now over, and it is time to include the force into the official police force that belongs to the Ministry of the Interior." He added that there were now 8,000 policemen, 200 of them in interior security, 700 in VIP protection, 200 in civil defence and 600 in national security. (*Xinhua*)

Nabil Amer, aide to PA President Mahmoud Abbas, told reporters that "in case President Abbas reaches an agreement with Israel, he would of course refer to the people," adding that "even President Abbas himself had been repeatedly saying this." (*Xinhua*)

Hundreds of settlers gathered at the ruins of the evacuated settlement of "Homesh" near the village of Silat Al-Dharir, near Jenin in the northern West Bank, to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Sukkot. Israeli police forces tightened security measures in the area erecting checkpoints and further impeding the movement of Palestinians in the area. Settlers had also been uprooting trees and erecting tents in the area. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The European Commission office in Jerusalem started paying allowances to over 35,000 Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In co-operation with the PA Ministries of Finance and Social Affairs, a total of €6.5 million was made available by the Commission through the Temporary International Mechanism. Payments were made to impoverished households, often headed by women and that included the elderly or family members with special needs. (*Wafa*)

3

A Hamas militant was killed when a tunnel he was digging in the northern Gaza Strip collapsed, Palestinian medical sources said. (*Xinhua*)

A Palestinian civilian in his early 20s was shot and killed by the IDF troops operating near Khan Yunis, Palestinian medics said. The IDF said soldiers in the area "identified an armed gunman, fired at him and identified hitting him" Another Palestinian was killed in Rafah by Israeli artillery fire, hospital sources reported. (*AFP, Wafa*)

Nine Palestinians were arrested by the IDF in Tulkarm in the Nur Shams refugee camp; two were arrested in a village east of Ramallah. (*Wafa*)

Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas met in Jerusalem, together with their negotiating teams, which would start work on a joint document ahead of the US-proposed international peace conference. The Israeli side was named by *Ma'an News Agency* as being made up by Prime Minister Olmert; his Chief-of-Staff Yoram Turbowitz, Vice Premier Haim Ramon, Head of Security Negotiations Amnon Shahak, Israeli Foreign Ministry's Ahron Ahronovitch, Head of the Defence Ministry's Diplomatic-Military Bureau Amos Gilad and Diplomatic Adviser to Mr. Olmert Shalom Turjeman, on the Israeli side. The Palestinian team was composed of: President Abbas, Ahmed Qureia, PLO Executive Committee member Yasser Abed Rabbo, Palestinian National Security Council member Jibril Rajoub, PLO Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat and Mr. Abbas' political adviser Akram Haniyeh. According to Israeli officials, Mr. Olmert was rejecting titles such as "declaration of principles" or "agreement of principles". Instead, he was proposing "declaration of interests." Mr. Olmert was also demanding that the document include a reference to President Bush's letter to Prime Minister Sharon of 14 April 2004, and the Road Map. A senior Israeli official told *AFP* that the working teams will follow up on the progress made during the previous meetings between Olmert and Abbas and will discuss the fundamental issues necessary for reaching the goal of a two-State solution. "The document will spell out the perceptions and understandings as seen together by both sides," he said. PLO Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that the teams' joint work "will focus on reaching an agreement on the core issues" that will constitute "the substance for the conference... Then we will begin negotiations on the details under a timeframe, which ought not to exceed six months, to reach a peace treaty." (*AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

The Governor of the Palestine Monetary Authority, George Abed, said that some Palestinian banks could be forced to shut their Gaza Strip branches by year-end due to Israel's financial restrictions. He said Gaza's supply of shekels could begin to run out starting next month and that Gaza residents could have trouble receiving funds from family members abroad. In an interview with *Reuters*, Mr. Abed said that the 42 bank branches operating in the Gaza Strip were struggling due to the economic deterioration, steep decline in imports and exports, and limitations on the supply of shekels used in day-to-day transactions. "There is a risk that several branches could close down before the end of the year if this continues", the former International Monetary Fund official said. (*Reuters, Ha'aretz, Wafa*)

The PA was preparing to wage a "financial war" by shutting off the flow of funds to its Hamas rival in the Gaza Strip, the *Al-Hayat* daily reported. According to the PA Finance Ministry, the Securities Exchange, and the Interior Ministry, Hamas had been receiving financial aid from abroad via commercial companies and currency exchanges, underground tunnels between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, charities, and the delivery of bags with cash through the Rafah terminal, although this route had not been used since the crossing was closed in June. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

According to a telephone poll of 470 Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, conducted from 25 to 27 September by Near East Consulting, a research firm based in the West Bank, 58 per cent of respondents said that they were afraid to express their political views following the Hamas takeover, and 60 per cent favoured the Hamas authorities led by Ismail Haniyeh. Sixty-four per cent said they trusted Mr. Abbas, while 36 trusted Fatah. Seventy-two per cent said they supported a final status agreement with Israel, and 55 per cent called on Hamas to change its position toward Israel. Nearly three quarters said they supported Mr. Abbas' call for new elections; 42 per cent said they would vote for Fatah, with 15 per cent supporting Hamas. (*AP*)

PA President Abbas agreed in principle to renew mediation efforts between Fatah and Hamas, *Israel Radio* reported. He reportedly had answered a request by Egypt's Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman. The *Asharq Alawsat* daily reported that Hamas had also responded positively to Mr. Suleiman's mediation attempt. (*The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

4

Three Palestinian civilians were wounded in an Israeli air strike that targeted militants in the south of the Gaza Strip. The attack was directed at a car carrying a leader of the Islamic Jihad but missed its target and wounded three passers-by instead. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades said in a leaflet that they had fired one home-made rocket at Sderot. Meanwhile, the Popular Resistance Committees said that its militants had fired eight mortar shells at an Israeli crossing, southeast of the Gaza Strip, on the border with Egypt. *Israeli Radio* said that the rocket and mortar shells had fallen on vacant lands, causing no injuries or damages. (*Xinhua*)

PA Minister of Information Riyad Malki briefed reporters a day after PA President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert met in Jerusalem. He said that formal negotiations to create a Palestinian State could be completed six months after the US-sponsored Middle East conference and the agreement would then be brought before the Palestinian people, both inside the Palestinian Territory and abroad, for a referendum. He also said that the joint document, which would be presented to the summit in mid- to late November, would deal with final status issues such as borders, the fate of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees, but would not go into "the minute details". The details could be left for later and would spell out exactly how much land would be included in a land swap in return for the Israeli settlement blocks. The final-status talks would begin after the summit, but Prime Minister Olmert balked at setting a specific timeline for reaching a final deal. "The President believes that there should be a timeline... We do not need a long period," Mr. Malki added. An official in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, David Baker, said that Israel was serious about negotiating a deal, but that that was not merely a product of how much time had elapsed. The two leaders decided that the drafting teams would start next week. (*AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters*)

Five former US Department of State and Pentagon officials proposed that Hamas be a participant in final status talks between Israel and the Palestinians. In a six-page policy paper by the Israel Policy Forum, submitted to US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, they also suggested a series of peace conferences following the one in November. "Next month's conference should reaffirm that the goal is two independent and sovereign States, with borders roughly along the lines that separated Israel from the Arabs before the 1967 war", the paper said. It also called for a just solution to the refugee question but the refugees would be permitted to move only to the new Palestinian State, with compensation from Israel, the Palestinian State and other nations. The officials include Robert Pelletreau, a former US Ambassador to Egypt and former Assistant Secretary of State for the region; Edward Clark, a former Ambassador to Israel and Egypt; Thomas Pickering, a former Under-Secretary of State and Ambassador to Israel and Jordan; Samuel Lewis, former Ambassador to Israel; and Frederic C. Hof, Mideast official in the Pentagon.

The report was written and coordinated by Steven L. Spiegel, Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles. (*Ha'aretz*)

Basim Na'im, former PA Health Minister, said that a humanitarian disaster was looming in the Gaza Strip because supplies of 470 essential medicines would run out within a week. He also said that Israel had deliberately prevented food and medical supplies from reaching the Gaza Strip and that the suffering of certain patients

was increasing daily because they were not allowed to leave Gaza to receive treatment abroad. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The political adviser of former Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, Ahmad Yousif said, "There are European attempts to enable the Hamas leadership to hold official and semi-official meetings with Europeans, and there were recent calls by European organizations for contiguity with Hamas". He highlighted recent declarations of Presidents and Foreign Ministers from European countries reflecting their willingness to deal with Hamas, describing it as an effective element in the Palestinian political arena. "The West knows that President Abbas cannot take serious steps without Hamas' approval", the statement said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

5

The Israeli army said that it had killed an armed Palestinian man east of Gaza City near the Kissufim border crossing. An army spokesman said that the man had opened fire from the Palestinian side of the border fence toward a unit, which had shot back and killed him. (*AFP*)

Two Palestinians were injured as Israeli soldiers opened fire towards a taxi near the Deir Ballut checkpoint, west of Salfit, in the northern West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Thousands of Palestinians thronged military checkpoints on the outskirts of Jerusalem, trying to reach the Al-Aqsa Mosque for Ramadan prayers despite an IDF closure. At the Qalandiya checkpoint north of Jerusalem, IDF troops waved clubs, shouted and occasionally used stun grenades as Palestinians surged toward the roadblock. One elderly man fainted and was treated by an IDF medic on the scene. No serious injuries were reported. (*Ha'aretz*)

The US-proposed Middle East peace conference was scheduled to take place on 26 November in Annapolis, Maryland, *Ha'aretz* reported, quoting Israeli officials. The US, however, had yet to make an official announcement as to the conference's final date, location and participants and no immediate confirmation was available.

(*Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA)*)

US President Bush said, in comments aired on *Al Arabiya* television, that he was "very optimistic" that a Palestinian State could be set up alongside Israel and that next month's Middle East conference could lead towards peace in the region. (*Ha'aretz*)

Ashraf al-Ajrami, the PA Minister for Prisoners Affairs, told *Israel Army Radio* that he had met this week with Israeli Public Security Minister Avi Dichter and demanded that all Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails be freed in the coming months, including imprisoned Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti who is serving five life sentences. Mr. Dichter refused to respond to Mr. Ajrami's statements, according to the radio station. (*Ha'aretz*)

Lebanon issued an arrest warrant for Fatah al-Islam's Palestinian leader, Shaker al-Abssi, whose whereabouts were unknown, and 36 other militants. A Lebanese judge was handling the case over the standoff between Fatah-al-Islam and Lebanese troops that erupted in May at the Palestine refugee camp of Nahr al-Bared, in the north of the country, where 400 people had been killed, including 168 Lebanese soldiers. (*AFP*)

Hamas paid thousands of Gaza Strip security officials in cash rather than using banks, as Israel tightened a financial clampdown on the Palestinian territory. A senior official at Gaza's Hamas-run Finance Ministry said that by paying September salaries to some 20,000 security forces and civil servants in cash, Hamas had circumvented banks, some of which had come under Israeli-led pressure not to service Hamas. (*Reuters*)

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued a [press release](#) stating that violence, occupation, closures and poverty were having a dire effect on the schooling of Palestinian refugee children. Examination results of children in its schools in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan showed that the performance of children in UNRWA schools compared very favourably with that of their contemporaries in Government-run schools. In the Gaza Strip, however, independent testing revealed a worrying rate of failure in Mathematics and Arabic. (www.un.org/unrwa/news)

6

The military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the National Resistance Brigades, claimed responsibility for launching a home-made projectile at the Israeli town of Sderot. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli ground forces, accompanied by tanks and Apache helicopters, entered eastern Gaza city, witnesses said. Three bulldozers backed by four tanks razed installations in the industrial zone near the Al-Muntar (Karni) commercial crossing in the east of Gaza City. Residents in the area said that the helicopters opened fire to provide cover for the ground forces while children threw stones at the tanks. (*DPA*)

The IDF seized three Palestinian brothers in Nablus. A spokesperson for the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades said that the men were suspected of injuring an Israeli soldier with an explosive device that was thrown at an invading Israeli military vehicle in the Balata refugee camp, in Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The IDF arrested four Palestinians in the Ramallah and Hebron regions. Israeli soldiers came under fire in the Beit Ilma refugee camp in Nablus, and a grenade was thrown at IDF troops in Qabatiyeh, south of Jenin. Neither incident caused any casualties. (*Ha'aretz*)

The IDF blocked the majority of agricultural roads in the neighbourhood of Deir al Ghusun, north of Tulkarm, with huge mounds of earth. The closure resulted in hundreds of Palestinian farmers having been denied access to their land to collect crops and tend their fields at the start of the Palestinian olive harvest. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In an interview with Arab and Palestinian media, former PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, head of the Palestinian negotiation team, said that the joint document Israel and the Palestinians were negotiating would be the basis for the final settlement between the two sides. He said that unless the document was ready by the scheduled date of the US-proposed peace conference in Annapolis, Maryland, the Palestinians would have to reconsider whether they would attend. Mr. Qureia estimated that five to six months would be necessary to complete final negotiations, if they were conducted "seriously." (*Ha'aretz*)

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said that Hamas would ask Egypt and Saudi Arabia to reconsider their participation in the US-proposed peace conference.

According to *Al Quds*, an East Jerusalem daily, Palestinian groups who rejected the conference would meet in Damascus in opposition to any concessions the Palestinian Authority planned to make. (*Ha'aretz*)

7

A Grad-type rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip and landed near Netivot, a town out of reach of the shorter-range Qassam rockets. The rocket caused no casualties.

The Popular Resistance Committees claimed responsibility for the attack. Israeli military intelligence chief Amos Yadlin had told the Israeli Cabinet on the same day that Hamas opposed the US-proposed peace conference and would probably try to launch attacks in an effort to torpedo it. An analysis of the rocket that landed near Netivot indicated that it had been smuggled into the Gaza Strip rather than manufactured locally. Fatah sources told *Ha'aretz* that military organizations in Gaza had recently received a shipment of about 70 Grad rockets. In addition, at least 10 mortar shells were fired at Israel from Gaza. Eight of the shells landed in Kibbutz Kerem Shalom, and one hit a house, causing major damage, but no casualties. The other two shells landed in open areas in the Negev.

Hamas claimed credit for the mortar fire but not for the rocket launch, which it did not prevent. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli drones launched two missiles at a school in Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip. Israeli navy squadrons also opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats, west of the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Lahiya. No casualties were reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Ali Abu Rmaila, 45, from Jenin refugee camp, died of wounds he had sustained 90 days ago during an Israeli incursion. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The body of 30-year-old Rami Ayyad, a Palestinian Christian activist, was found in Gaza City. Mr. Ayyad, who had been kidnapped a day earlier, had been shot by his captors. The reasons for his killing were unknown, but Mr. Ayyad, who had worked for the Protestant Holy Bible Society, had been threatened by Islamic extremists in the past. About six months ago, his organization's Christian bookshop in Gaza City was bombed. (*AP*)

At the Israeli Cabinet meeting, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni opposed the fact that Israel was "being dragged into making strategic concessions to the PA just for the sake of arriving at the summit [US-proposed peace conference] with a piece of paper." Ms. Livni also stressed the importance of distinguishing between the extremists and moderates in the PA. Defence Minister Ehud Barak said of the negotiations prior to the peace conference: "It is important for us to be careful and level-headed with regards to the Palestinians... we have to think before we act." Addressing the voices of opposition coming from within his party and the Government regarding negotiations with the Palestinians, Prime Minister Olmert said, "We are holding different discussions, also within the Government, in order to reach an internal agreement on political matters." (*Ha'aretz*)

8

Seven Palestinian civilians were wounded overnight when an Israeli aircraft fired several air-to-surface missiles following an attempt to launch rockets by members of the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, to the east of Gaza City near the border with Israel. Witnesses said that instead of hitting Hamas militants, the missiles struck unarmed Palestinians, seriously wounding two. An Israeli military spokesman confirmed the raid, saying the missiles "struck an armed group preparing to fire mortar shells into Israel." (*AFP*)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for hurling a bomb and hitting an invading Israeli military jeep in Qabatiyeh, near Nablus. The Al-Nasser Salah ad-Din Brigades, the military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees, said that they had launched two projectiles at Ashkelon and eight mortar shells at a residential block east of Kerem Shalom military base near Rafah the day before. They also claimed responsibility for launching three mortar shells at the Israeli

military post of Nahal 'Oz, east of Gaza City. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Popular Resistance Committee claimed responsibility for launching a home-made projectile at the Israeli village of Shuva bordering the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

More than 200 settlers from the "Kedumim" settlement, near the West Bank city of Qalqilya, threw stones at Palestinian cars on the main road between Qalqilya and Nablus. The windshields of two taxis were smashed in the assault, according to a witness. Israeli sources said that the IDF had evacuated a settlers' outpost near Qalqilya. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert warned that Israel would have to take action to stop Palestinian militant rocket fire from the Gaza Strip. "We will have to do things on security issues, certainly after the defence minister presents his plans for putting an end to Qassam fire in the south," Mr. Olmert said in the Knesset. (*AFP*)

Israeli Vice Premier Haim Ramon expressed support for the transfer of Arab parts of Jerusalem to Palestinian control, but the offer appeared to fall short of Palestinian calls for a full Israeli withdrawal from key areas of the Holy City. The Israeli transfer would not include the Old City and the surrounding neighbourhoods, Mr. Ramon said. These were the key disputed areas, since the Old City contains the holiest site in Judaism, the Temple Mount, and the third holiest site in Islam, the Al Aqsa Mosque compound. Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat did not comment on Mr. Ramon's proposal, but said that there had been no agreements on Jerusalem in preliminary talks so far. "We have not started negotiations. It is premature to say anything about these issues," he said. (*AP, DPA*)

Top Israeli and Palestinian officials met to draft a joint statement to be presented at the US-proposed peace conference in November. The Palestinians wanted a detailed agreement and a time frame for implementing solutions to the thorniest issues – borders, refugees and the status of Jerusalem. Israel wanted a more vague document that would not touch on the core issues which they preferred to address in bilateral talks following the conference. Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said, "The road towards an agreement is still long and filled with hurdles and difficulties." (*AFP*)

Said Hasan, 32, a manager at Global Software in Ramallah, was denied entry into Israel to attend an executive Master of Business Administration programme, according to the Gisha Center, an Israeli advocacy group. Mr. Hasan was accepted to the Kellogg-Recanati International Executive MBA programme, run jointly by Northwestern and Tel Aviv Universities. The military refused a request by Tel Aviv University to give Mr. Hasan a permit, saying that Palestinian students may not enter Israel. The Gisha Center said that travel restrictions against Palestinians violated the rights of Palestinian students to access Israeli academic institutions. (*AP*)

9

The Popular Resistance Committees claimed responsibility for launching two home-made projectiles at the southern Israeli town of Sderot and two mortar shells at the Erez (Beit Hanoun) crossing. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the National Resistance Brigades of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for launching three home-made projectiles at the southern Israeli town of Sderot in a joint operation. The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the National Resistance Brigades claimed responsibility for launching a home-made projectile at the Israeli town of Netiv Ha'asarah, north of the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Hamas accused the Palestinian security forces of detaining seven of its members in the West Bank, saying some 1,300 Hamas members in total had been put in jail in the area since June. (*Xinhua*)

The IDF recently issued an order expropriating over 1,100 dunums of land from the villages of Abu Dis, Arab Al-Sawahra, Nebi Musa and Talhin Alhamar, located between East Jerusalem and the West Bank settlement of "Ma'aleh Adumim." The land was slated to be used for a new Palestinian road that would connect East Jerusalem with Jericho. That would "free up" the E-1 area between Jerusalem and "Ma'aleh Adumim" – through which the current Jerusalem-Jericho road runs – for the long-planned Jewish development consisting of 3,500 apartments and an industrial park. The Palestinians and the international community, including the US, have long objected to the E-1 plan which would cut the West Bank into two and sever East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. The order was signed on 24 September. (*Ha'aretz*)

Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hossam Zaki, in a statement, said that the plan [to confiscate Arab land] "proves the correctness of reports that Israel is planning to go ahead with its scheme to separate the northern parts for the West Bank from its southern ones." The seizure covered 110 hectares (272 acres) of land. The Israeli army said that the expropriation was based on "military grounds" and was designed to stop terrorist acts. Mr. Zaki said that the move was "extremely worrying" and appealed to the international community to get Israel to "stop playing with the fate and destiny of people in the region by throwing the option of a just peace out the window." (*AFP*)

Egyptian authorities allowed the entry of around 30 Palestinians into the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. The majority of the returning Palestinians were Islamic Jihad members. Some 5,000 Palestinians remained stranded in the Rafah crossing. (*Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua*)

PA Agriculture Minister Mahmoud Habash approached his Israeli counterpart, Shalom Simchon, through a third party, requesting him to revoke Israel's embargo on importing farming produce from the Gaza Strip. The trade embargo had been enacted by the Israeli Government as part of restrictive measures against the Hamas-led Government in the Gaza Strip. The Agriculture Ministry said that Mr. Simchon might meet with Mr. Habash in the next few days. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli soldiers stationed at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing refused an official Turkish delegation entry into the Gaza Strip. The delegation was scheduled to visit Beit Hanoun to sign an agreement on several development projects. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The head of the Palestinian Civil Affairs Department, Hussein al-Sheikh, announced an agreement with Israel to grant family reunions to 3,500 Palestinians ahead of the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday. PA President Abbas had been undertaking efforts to end the Israeli ban on family reunions in the Gaza Strip, Mr. Ash-Sheikh said.

"This is the first list from a number of Palestinian families pending approval," he added. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

10

Israeli soldiers killed a 22-year-old gunman from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Omar Ainabussi, in overnight clashes in Nablus, Palestinian security officials said.

A local leader of the same faction was also wounded, they added. An Israeli army spokesperson confirmed that security forces had identified hitting two Palestinian gunmen during an operation in Nablus overnight. (*AFP*)

A number of Israeli military vehicles conducted a limited incursion into Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. Five bulldozers razed agricultural land near the Erez (Beit Hanoun) crossing, according to witnesses. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli soldiers captured Hamas leader Adel Jarawish during an incursion in Bethlehem, a Palestinian security official said. (*AFP*)

Three Palestinians were injured, one seriously, and 10 were arrested in a large-scale Israeli military operation in Qalqilya involving more than 50 military vehicles.

Palestinian medical sources said that 13-year-old Mu'min Abu Sharib had suffered a bullet wound to the head. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces seized three Palestinians in Al-Am'ari refugee camp in Ramallah. Israeli forces also arrested a 50-year-old member of the municipal council and an 18-year-old in Bethlehem. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The IDF said that the number of rockets and mortars fired at Israel had increased dramatically since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, with nearly 650 mortar and 250 rocket attacks since 14 June. (*Ynetnews*)

Officials said Israel had agreed to grant residency permits to thousands of Palestinians who had been living "illegally" in the West Bank on expired visitors' visas, as a new confidence-building gesture to PA President Abbas. An Israeli army spokesman, Shlomo Dror, said Israel would complete the list of 5,000 Palestinians who would receive the status ahead of the Muslim Eid el-Fitr holiday later this week, adding that further lists would be approved in the future. A Palestinian official overseeing the negotiations with Israel on the matter, Hussein al-Sheikh, confirmed that Israel had informed him of the decision, but said that only 3,500 permits would be allowed. More than 20,000 Palestinians who visited the West Bank on tourist visas in recent years have been living in hiding from Israeli forces since their travel permits expired. Many of them were spouses or relatives of permanent West Bank residents. (*AP*)

PA President Abbas told *Palestine TV* in an interview that the size of territory the Palestinians wanted to get back was 6,205 sq km, the combined size of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, by Palestinian estimates. The Palestinians were ready to yield parts of the West Bank to Israel if compensated with an equal amount of Israeli territory, according to Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qureia. (*AP*)

The right of return must be included in all negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, European Union spokesperson Christiane Hohmann told Israeli reporters in Brussels. She said that the European Union supported the Arab Peace Initiative in full, including all of its clauses and that a number of top EU officials, including High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana and European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner, would take part in the mid-November peace conference. (*Ynetnews*)

The Government of New Zealand announced that it was to donate US\$750,000 to UNRWA's emergency programmes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The announcement followed a meeting in New Zealand between Prime Minister Helen Clark and UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd. (www.un.org/unrwa)

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European Commissioner for External Relations and the European Neighbourhood Policy Ferrero-Waldner told the European Parliament: "Despite committing to remove roadblocks, Israel has added 44 new inspection points." (*Ynetnews*)

In a letter to President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, former National Security Advisors Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft; former US Trade Representative Carla Hills; former Republican Senator Nancy Kassebaum-Baker; former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker; former UN Ambassador Thomas Pickering; former Democratic Representative Lee Hamilton, co-chair of the Iraq Study Group and Theodore Sorensen, an adviser to President John F. Kennedy, urged the Bush administration to focus on the "end game" between the Israelis and the Palestinians at the upcoming peace conference, and to begin a "genuine dialogue" with Hamas. (*Reuters*)

Israel's Land Authority had issued permits for the construction of 6,100 new apartments in the West Bank settlements in the first three quarters of 2007, four times as many as during the same period in previous years, *Israel Radio* reported. Most of the apartments were being built in the settlement of "Mod'in Ilit." (*DPA*)

Sixty-year-old Palestinian Saleh Hassan, who lives in Bethlehem, began a case against the Government of the United Kingdom in the UK High Court. He says his land had been confiscated by Israel to make way for the separation wall. He claims Israel uses military equipment bought in Britain to repress Palestinians and violate their human rights. (*BBC*)

Israeli labour laws would be applied to Palestinians working in West Bank settlements, Israel's High Court of Justice ruled. (*Ha'aretz*)

11

Israeli undercover troops shot dead a PA policeman who was driving with a "wanted" Islamic Jihad militant, who managed to escape, Palestinian officials said.

According to other reports, the victim was an Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades militant. (*AP, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

In the central Gaza Strip, IDF armoured vehicles crossed the border fence in pursuit of rocket launchers, the army and Palestinian witnesses said. When four armed Palestinians approached the forces, the troops shot them, the army said. Palestinian medical officials confirmed four people had been wounded, one of them critically. (*AP*)

In the northern Gaza Strip, two Israeli bulldozers backed by tanks and armoured vehicles invaded the area, destroying farms and chopping down trees, local residents said. Also in the area, Israeli aircraft struck a group of Islamic Jihad militants, who were trying to launch home-made rockets at southern Israel. Palestinian medics said that three militants were injured in the air strike. (*Xinhua*)

PA security services released 21 Hamas members who had been arrested in the West Bank, in a goodwill gesture ahead of Eid al-Fitr, security officials said. (*AFP*)

PA President Abbas met US Envoy C. David Welch in Ramallah in preparation for a visit by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to the region next week. Mr. Abbas used his talks with Mr. Welch, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, to ask Washington to persuade Israel to stop confiscating Palestinian land, PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said. (*AFP*)

"The IDF will have to enter parts of the Gaza Strip and stay there for a few months," outgoing Israeli Deputy Chief of Staff Moshe Kaplinsky told *Yediot Ahronot*.

"We will not be able to keep ignoring Hamas' strengthening in Gaza and the incessant rocket attacks for long... In order to dismantle the terror infrastructure, we need systematic treatment and the ground operation is a matter of timing," he said. Israeli officials said that an incursion would probably not come before a US-sponsored peace conference next month. (*AP, Ynetnews*)

In adopting a joint resolution on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, members of the European Parliament expressed their deepest concern about the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and its possible grave consequences. They called on Israel to fulfill its international obligations under the Geneva Conventions to guarantee the flow of humanitarian aid, humanitarian assistance and essential services, such as electricity and fuel, to the Gaza Strip. Members of the European Parliament called on the Council, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Commission to face up to their full responsibility on the implementation of the Access and Movement Agreement. The resolution urged the Council and the Commission to ensure, in compliance with the Association Agreements with Israel and with the Palestinian Authority, that international humanitarian law and human rights are fully respected in the area. (*www.europarl.europa.eu*)

The Israel Discount Bank said that it had stopped providing financial services to Palestinian banks in the Gaza Strip. (*AFP*)

Israel's Tourism Ministry re-established regular contact with its Palestinian counterpart, with the two offices reinstating a joint concerns committee that had been dissolved 21 months ago. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

"Our administration in Gaza is temporary," former PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said at the end of a public prayer in Gaza City. "There is a serious movement in the field of Palestinian dialogue and we have agreed to hold a dialogue with Fatah in one of the Arab capitals," he said. "There are no arrangements to hold any dialogue with Hamas in any Arab countries after the Muslim Holiday of Eid al-Fitr," Nabil Amer, an aide to PA President Abbas told a news conference in Ramallah.

(*Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua*)

"If the [upcoming peace conference] fails, we can expect a third and much more severe intifada," Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qureia was quoted as saying.

(*Ha'aretz*)

Some 51 per cent of Israelis supported talks between Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas, a *Ha'aretz* survey revealed. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat told Israel's *Channel 10* TV: "I really doubt the Americans will issue the invitation [to the Middle East conference] if decisions are not made by President Abbas and Olmert... I do not think we need negotiations anymore. Negotiations are over. It is time for decisions. We have never been closer to achieving the end game than we are now." He acknowledged that Fatah was not strong enough to retake the Gaza Strip by force, but insisted "once you produce an end game agreement, Hamas is down without firing a shot." (*AP*)

12

The European Union would support PA President Abbas if he reconciled with Hamas, Christina Gallach, spokeswoman for High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana said. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel's Public Security Minister Avi Dichter met with Quartet envoy Tony Blair and told him that he was pessimistic about the chances for success of the upcoming international conference. He said that the Palestinians had not fulfilled their obligations under the first stage of the Road Map, and that the meeting should take place only after they have done so. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Quartet Envoy Blair told *Yediot Ahronot* newspaper: "People say to me the status of both [President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert] is too weak to reach a deal, but to my mind that is not the issue... Olmert is endowed with courage and intelligence. The question is whether he can deliver a viable solution that has peace and security. If he can, his position is strong... With [Abbas] there is the same equation... If he is able to show his people that there is a realistic possibility to reach statehood, he will be strong." "If you cannot reach a deal with the current Palestinian leadership ... then the Palestinian with whom you will be able to reach an agreement has not yet been born," Mr. Blair said. (*Reuters*)

"Do not fall into the trap of the coming conference. Do not make new compromises on Jerusalem, on our sovereignty," former PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh told PA President Abbas, speaking to thousands of supporters. Hamas' Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal warned that Mr. Abbas and his allies "will find out that they are pursuing nothing but a mirage." (*AP*)

The Israeli army announced that for the next four days "Palestinian Muslim men over the age of 50, Muslim women over the age of 25 and children under the age of 16... [who live in the West Bank] will be authorized to pass into Israel for family visits." (*AFP*)

"The confiscated land is intended to build roads, given the completion of the security fence around Jerusalem, and has nothing to do with any expansion of 'Ma'ale Adumim'" Miri Eisin, an Israeli Government spokesperson, told *AFP*. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that she had asked Israel for "clarifications" over the confiscation orders. "We have to be very careful, as we are trying to move toward the establishment of a Palestinian State, of actions and statements that erode confidence in the parties' commitment to a two-State solution," she said. (*AFP, AP*)

13

A pre-dawn Israeli air strike in Beit Hanoun killed a Hamas militant and wounded at least five people, witnesses and Palestinian medics said. "There was an attack against a launching cell," an Israeli Army spokesman said. "They launched a mortar shell, and after they launched we attacked, and identified a hit." (*AFP*)

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei called on Muslim countries to boycott a US-sponsored Middle East peace conference, saying: "Efforts are being made to once again make an imposition on the Palestinian people in the name of peace... The result of all conferences, held in the name of peace, so far has been to the detriment of the Palestinian nation." (*AP*)

14

A member of the armed wing of Hamas was shot and seriously wounded in the Gaza Strip by what eyewitnesses said was Israeli fire. An Israeli military spokeswoman, however, said after an "initial inquiry" that the Army had had no knowledge of the incident. (AFP)

Israel Army Radio reported that the defence establishment was preventing the entry into Israel of six Palestinians from the Gaza Strip in urgent need of medical attention. The six, suffering from cancer or heart conditions, had twice requested permission to enter and had been denied both times due to "security considerations", according to the report. (Ha'aretz)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrived in Israel for a five-day visit to prepare for the upcoming international conference. Ms. Rice told reporters accompanying her that her visit was "to get an update on how the discussions are going ... to see what we can do to help advance that track." She cautioned: "I do not expect out of this meeting that there will be any particular outcome in the sense of breakthroughs on the [final] document." (DPA)

Prime Minister Olmert informed his Cabinet that Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni would head the Israeli team negotiating a joint declaration with the Palestinians ahead of the international conference. "Talks between us and the Palestinians should be balanced and cautious with the intention of reaching a joint statement during the international meeting, although such a statement was never a condition for holding the summit," Mr. Olmert said. "I believe that setting a timetable for [talks on the creation of a Palestinian State] would create problems rather than solve problems," Mr. Olmert told ministers. (AFP, DPA)

Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak told visiting US Secretary of State Rice that in any future arrangements, Israel must retain a security role in the West Bank. Mr. Barak told Ms. Rice that Israel would dismantle one permanent roadblock on the road connecting Bethlehem and Hebron as a gesture of goodwill toward the Palestinians. Industry, Trade and Labour Minister Eli Yishai told Ms. Rice that Jerusalem was not on the agenda and that any agreement in the upcoming conference on the core issues could cause the Olmert Government to collapse. "Today we have a PA with two heads. It is impossible to sign an agreement with only 40 per cent of the Palestinian people," he said, proposing to hold an economic conference instead. "I am convinced that the Palestinians need an independent country. The Annapolis peace conference will discuss the core issues, but the negotiations will be held in a direct manner," Ms. Rice responded. Later in the day, in a meeting with Prime Minister Olmert, she made it clear that she sought to reach agreements – both with Israel and the Palestinians – on the continuation of the preparation process for next month's peace conference. (Ynetnews)

15

A Palestinian child was reportedly shot and wounded by the Israeli army on the Gaza-Israel border line, in the central Gaza Strip. In the meantime, the IDF released four Palestinian fishermen it had taken prisoner the previous day. (IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF arrested two Palestinians in Hebron and Yatta, PA security sources said. (Wafa)

Israeli forces entered Bethlehem, Hebron, Nablus and Jenin, seizing several Palestinians. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert questioned whether Arab neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem should be defined as part of Jerusalem, hinting that Israel might be willing to divide the city. "Was it necessary to also add the Shuafat refugee camp, Sawakra, Walaje and other villages and define them as part of Jerusalem?" Mr. Olmert asked, during a Knesset ceremony marking the sixth anniversary of former minister Rahavam Ze'evi's assassination. (Ha'aretz)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said it was "time for the establishment of a Palestinian State," and described Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts as the most serious in years, at a news conference following her meeting with PA President Abbas. The international peace conference has to be substantive, Ms. Rice said. "We frankly have better things to do than invite people to Annapolis for a photo op." She said President Bush had decided to make ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict "one of the highest priorities of his Administration." Mr. Abbas said he had asked for US help in halting Israeli settlement expansion and construction of Israel's separation barrier. "No doubt that before we go to Washington the document will be ready," he said. "The negotiations should not be open-ended, but subject to a certain time period." (AP, Ha'aretz)

"In my most recent report to the General Assembly, which I will present later this month, I will suggest that the Secretary-General withdraw the UN from the Quartet, if the Quartet fails to have regard to the human rights situation in the Palestinian territories," UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories John Dugard told the BBC. (AFP)

Israel had put off plans to resume the controversial renovation work near the Mughrabi Gate in Jerusalem, Science, Culture and Sport Minister Ghaleb Majadle, who is responsible for the Antiquities Authority, told Israel Public Radio. "There is no doubt that resuming the work as ordered by a committee of five ministers would not create a favourable atmosphere while we are preparing to try and make peace with the Palestinians," he said. "This decision has been deferred until the entire Government decides on the matter." (AFP)

The Council of the European Union issued its [conclusions](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/96535.pdf) on the Middle East peace process at its 2824th meeting in Luxembourg. (

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/96535.pdf)

The Palestinians are preparing to conduct their first census in a decade. Later this week, some 5,000 census-takers will begin work across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, first to count buildings, and, in December, to count people. Results are expected by February 2008. "We hope we can use these statistics in the negotiations," said PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat. "It is not only important for the political process, but also for building the institutions of the State." Hamas had also said that the census results were important and that it would cooperate. (AP)

Fatah spokesperson Jamal Nazzal accused Hamas of planning to sabotage future presidential elections in the Gaza Strip by allowing only Hamas candidates to run. (Ma'an News Agency)

Senior Japanese diplomats said that Japan had recently requested the US and Israeli Governments to allow it to participate in the international peace conference scheduled to take place next month. (Ha'aretz)

16

A Palestinian civilian and a militant were shot and killed during an Israeli raid in Nablus, Palestinian witnesses and doctors said. Three gunmen from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades were injured, two seriously, the group said. One of them, a local leader of the group, later died of his wounds, doctors said. He was identified as Bassem Abu Saria. The civilian, 72-year-old Abd al-Wazir, was shot as he left his house and later died of his wounds. IDF sources said that it was unclear whether Mr. al-Wazir was killed by the IDF or militant fire, but acknowledged that an uninvolved third party had been hit. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli forces entered the northern West Bank village of Qabalan, east of Nablus, and arrested four Hamas members, sources from the group said. In the town of Beit Ummar, north of Hebron, Israeli forces arrested more than 10 Palestinians. Israeli forces also detained a Palestinian in Qalqilya and another in the Jenin refugee camp. (Ma'an News Agency)

Security sources said that Egypt discovered two smuggling tunnels under its border with the Gaza Strip and arrested three Palestinians found in one of the passages. Large quantities of ammunition, 5 kg of heroin and a bomb, were found. (Reuters)

A Palestinian farmer from the West Bank village of Thill suffered a head injury after he was attacked by settlers near the "Kedumini" settlement. According to Palestinian reports, six settlers from "Havan Gilad" had camped out on a hill near the village of Thill and then hurled rocks at several Palestinian farmers who had been picking olives in the local orchards. (Ynetnews)

Following a meeting chaired by PA President Abbas in Ramallah, the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization rejected recent decisions by the Israeli Government for territorial expansion in Jerusalem. In a statement, they referred to the expropriation on 24 September of over 1,100 dunums of Palestinian land from four Arab villages located between East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The Palestinian leadership warned that they could report the ongoing Israeli violations of UN resolutions and the Road Map to the Security Council. (www.palestine-pmc.com)

PA Information Minister Riyad Al-Malki met in Ramallah with Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Yuriy Kostenko and the Ambassador of Ukraine to Israel. Mr. Al-Malki informed them of Israeli measures against Palestinians, including the establishment of the separation wall. Israeli-Palestinian meetings and the negotiation teams for the US-sponsored peace conference in November were also on the agenda of the meeting. Mr. Kostenko expressed his country's support for a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, adding that the Ukrainian President would pay a visit to Ramallah in mid-November. (Ma'an News Agency)

Hamas welcomed the comments made by John Dugard, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, regarding withdrawal of the United Nations from the Quartet. Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas spokesman, said that the statement was considered to be additional evidence of the bias of the UN and the Quartet towards the Israeli side and he called on Arab countries and Palestinian officials to take an equally bold stance over the international bias against the Palestinian side. (IMEMC)

After talks with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit promised Egypt's backing for the Middle East peace

conference. "[Secretary Rice] has helped us to understand the American objective. She shed a great deal of light on the current American efforts," he told reporters. "We feel encouraged regarding what we heard from Secretary Rice and promised her that we would help and we would help the parties as well in order to achieve the objective, which is launching the permanent status negotiations that would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian State on both the Palestinian territories," he added. (AP)

Germany's Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier [proposed](#) a European Union action plan for the Middle East in a commentary in *Handelsblatt*. "In order to swiftly generate the required momentum following an Israeli-Palestinian accord and the Middle East conference planned for the autumn, Europe needs to clearly spell out what contribution it intends to make to take this process forward," he said. The point of an EU action plan would be to highlight what the EU is doing to support the process now under way. "We should do everything we can to foster the ongoing dialogue and create a favourable political environment at regional and international level," he said. At the informal summit in Lisbon on 18 October, EU foreign ministers will discuss the Middle East in depth. (www.auswaertiges-amt.de)

The Peace Index poll carried out from 8 to 10 October indicated that 65 per cent of the Jewish public in Israel considered that from Israel's standpoint, it was impossible to continue indefinitely in the present state of relations with the Palestinians (29.5 per cent said it was possible to go on this way), and 62 per cent thought that among the issues on the Government's agenda, the Palestinian issue was the most urgent or moderately urgent (35 per cent saw it as somewhat not urgent or not urgent at all). Some 59 per cent opposed, in exchange for a peace agreement, transferring the Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty so that they could serve as the capital of Palestine, while 33 per cent supported it. Also, 87 per cent of the Jewish public were not prepared for the return of even a single Palestine refugee, 6 per cent were prepared for the return of up to 100,000, and 3 per cent were prepared for whatever number was decided, according to the findings.

(IMRA)

17

A Hamas militant was killed and at least six other Palestinians wounded by a tank shell during an IDF operation on the outskirts of Khan Yunis. At least two of those wounded were civilians. The Hamas militant was identified as 20-year-old Hazem Asfor. The IDF had confirmed that ground troops were operating in Gaza.

(Ha'aretz)

An IDF soldier was killed by Palestinian fire during an operation in the Gaza Strip. Mr. Kubani was shot from close range while his unit was manoeuvring between Palestinian homes on the outskirts of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza. (Ha'aretz)

Palestinian farmers and Israeli settlers clashed near the Elba checkpoint, west of Nablus. According to Palestinian sources, Israeli settlers blocked Palestinian farmers who had been on their way to collect their olive harvest. (Ma'an News Agency)

Four people were killed in clashes between Hamas security forces and a clan affiliated with the Fatah party, a Hamas official said. Two Hamas security men and two members of the clan were killed in the fighting that left over 20 people wounded on both sides. Hamas' security forces closed off the neighbourhood of al-Shojaiyah, east of Gaza City, to arrest wanted members of the clan. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli Public Security Minister Avi Dichter referred to the need for Israel to embark on a large-scale military campaign in the Gaza Strip. "We can either send the army into the Palestinian territories or face suicide belts in Tel Aviv," *Israel Army Radio* quoted Mr. Dichter as saying. (Jerusalem Post)

An Israeli system for shooting down Palestinian short-range rockets could be ready by 2010, Defence Minister Ehud Barak said. Mr. Barak, who had talks in Washington this week on a joint US-Israeli system for countering ballistic threats, said that the project's lowest tier – Iron Dome – was near completion. (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas told US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that Israel was hampering preparations for the US-proposed Middle East peace conference. Mr. Abbas made the comments after a second round of talks with Ms. Rice. (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas and visiting US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice ended their second meeting in a week in Ramallah without a joint statement. Mr. Abbas said that he would not attend a US-sponsored Middle East meeting without real prospects for results and accused Israel of hampering efforts. He also cautioned Secretary Rice that time was quickly running out for drafting a joint peace document with Israel. Ms. Rice said that despite her four days of shuttle diplomacy, the gaps between the Israelis and Palestinians were still large. President Bush would be sending National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley to the region next week.

Ms. Rice was scheduled to return in early November. (AP, www.palestine-pmc.com, Xinhua)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Bethlehem. Bethlehem's Governor, Salah Ta'mari, said that Ms. Rice was able to see at first hand the suffering of the Palestinians living under Israeli "security" measures. Ms. Rice visited the Church of the Nativity where she voiced hope that religion could be a force for reconciliation in the Middle East. She was also received by PA Minister of Tourism Khulud Du'aibis, and leaders of the Palestinian security services. (Ma'an News Agency)

Quartet Representative Tony Blair proposed the creation of a tripartite committee that would press for reforms in the Palestinian security organizations, and for improvements in the freedom of movement in the West Bank. This was one of the ideas that Mr. Blair had recently offered Israel's Prime Minister Olmert, as part of a plan of action. Mr. Blair, who called his plan "The Rapid Effect Project", believed that in the coming month or two, it would be necessary to carry out a series of high-profile actions that would create a feeling among the Palestinians in the West Bank that there were positive developments that would improve their lives.

(Ha'aretz)

In a [joint statement](#), France, Quartet Representative Tony Blair and Norway announced that they would co-host a special conference of donors for the Palestinians at the end of the year. "This conference will aim to mobilize the donors ... to provide political and financial support to the Palestinian Authority by creating the capacities and the conditions for building a viable Palestinian State," the statement said. (AFP, www.diplomatie.gouv.fr)

A report published on the occasion of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty by the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction stated that 2.2 million Palestinians, more than half the population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, lived in poverty, on \$500 or less a month per family. The hardest hit was the Gaza Strip, where almost 8 in 10 Palestinians (78 per cent) lived below the poverty line. The poverty rate in the West Bank was almost 50 per cent. The report blamed the Israeli restrictions on movement, international financial sanctions imposed on the Palestinian Authority and Israel's withholding of Palestinian tax and custom revenues as the primary reasons for the high rate of poverty. (DPA)

Palestinians launched their first census in a decade, covering thousands of homes in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. About 1,000 officials spread across towns in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, marking homes and offices in preparation for a head count in December. Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erakat said, "I am sure this census will help us in our negotiations. We speak about institution-building for an independent State, but this is a basic ingredient." (Reuters)

18

Israeli forces seized 22 Palestinians in the West Bank. They detained eight Palestinians affiliated with Hamas and Fatah in Nablus and the nearby Balata refugee camp. Fourteen were arrested during raids in Tulkarm, Ramallah and Hebron, *Israeli Army* radio reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi reprimanded Brig-Gen. Yair Golan, who formerly served as commander of forces in the West Bank, for allowing soldiers to use Palestinians as human shields during military operations in violation of a Supreme Court ban on the practice. Gen. Golan said that he had done it to avoid damage to property and risking lives – mainly Palestinians', but in retrospect, had admitted that he was wrong. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni met privately with the Palestinian negotiator heading the current talks, former PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia. Sources said that the talks were successful, and that the two sides were progressing in their negotiations over a joint agreement. Mr. Qureia had said, "There is no crisis at all."

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said, "We have to reach a joint document, and not a peace treaty, on the core issues, with specific parameters for solving these issues before convening the conference." (Ha'aretz)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that decisions reached at the upcoming US-sponsored Middle East peace conference should be brought before the Security Council for approval. Mr. Ban made these remarks during a meeting with Meretz Chairman Yossi Beilin in New York. Mr. Ban also said that he was pleased that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had expressed her intention to invite Syria to the conference. (Ha'aretz)

A political source in Israel said that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had reached an agreement with Palestinian and Israeli negotiators that the joint document that would be submitted to the peace conference in Annapolis would address final status issues. (Ma'an News Agency)

A group of stranded Palestinians protested on the Egypt-Gaza border, demanding to cross into Israel so they could reach their families in the Gaza Strip and other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The rally of a hundred Palestinians, included men, women and children, who carried banners calling on Israel to let them

in and facilitate their return through Israel to the Gaza Strip, witnesses said. Egyptian police blocked the streets of El-Arish with their vehicles to prevent demonstrators from marching through town. (*Ha'aretz*)

An Egyptian document distributed in the US Congress by a group of Egyptian generals visiting Washington for meetings asserted that Israeli soldiers cooperated with smugglers in allowing arms and military equipment into the Gaza Strip. The document was relayed to senior Israeli officials. (*Ha'aretz*)

The captors of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit rejected an Israeli offer to release 200 Palestinians in exchange for the soldier. Abu Mujahed, spokesman for the Palestinian Resistance Committees, said, "The Israeli occupation [was] not serious in negotiating" over the soldier. (*Xinhua*)

19

Israeli Special Forces arrested Jihad Abu Shousha at his house in the Al Jaradat neighbourhood of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. (www.imemc.org)

Mortar shells fired from the Gaza Strip caused damage to a structure north of the Strip. Near the Gaza Strip border, shots were fired at IDF troops. No one was injured. Meanwhile, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, claimed responsibility for launching a rocket-propelled grenade at an Israeli army unit east of Gaza airport. (*Ha'aretz*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas' Executive Force arrested five men belonging to the Jihad Al-Islam group in front of the Ar-Rahab Mosque, as well as the imam of the mosque and the wife of one of the leaders of the group. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Agriculture Minister Shalom Simhon (Labour) demanded that the Defence Ministry permit the transfer of 4,500 calves into the Gaza Strip. Mr. Simhon said that the calves, which were imported from Australia, would prevent starvation. Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai approved the gradual transfer of 1,500 of the 4,500 calves that were being quarantined in Israel. The transfer of the calves would also prevent the "flooding" of the Israeli market and substantial financial losses to Israeli farmers. Mr. Simhon said that Israel should also permit Palestinian farmers to export flowers and strawberries to Europe. (*ynetnews*)

King Abdullah II of Jordan expressed his strong support for the US-proposed Middle East peace conference during a meeting with US Secretary of State Rice in London. The King urged the US and the international community to support the Palestinian Authority by strengthening Palestinian institutions, saying that this would reflect positively on the peace process. (www.jordantimes.com)

Israeli lawmakers signed a petition against giving up any part of Jerusalem to the Palestinians. The petition was signed by 61 members of Israel's 120-member Knesset. Shas Party Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Elyahu Yishai said that if the division of Jerusalem was even mentioned at the peace conference in Annapolis, Shas would leave the Government coalition. (*AP*, *Ha'aretz*)

According to a joint report by B'Tselem and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, violent attacks against Palestinian residents of Hebron, carried out by both settlers and security forces, had risen sharply over recent months. The rise in violence had begun in March, when settlers took over a disputed house in Hebron after several years of negotiating with its Palestinian owners. The settlers had claimed that they owned the property while the Palestinians residents said that the deal had been a scam. Dozens of assaults against Palestinian residents of the area had been documented, which included garbage and bottles filled with urine having been hurled at them, threats and verbal abuses. (*Ha'aretz*, www.btselem.org)

20

Israeli forces in a military patrol boat shot dead two Palestinians in a boat off the Gaza Strip. A Hamas spokesperson said that the two were fishermen. Also in the northern Gaza Strip, an Israeli missile wounded three people. An IDF spokesperson said, "The IDF has carried out a ground attack against three gunmen approaching the fence (that separates the Gaza Strip from Israel). A Palestinian medical official said that the three Palestinians were civilians and that the surface-to-surface rocket had struck an apartment tower in the northern village of Beit Lahiya, an account the IDF disputed. (*AFP*, *Xinhua*)

Clashes between Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip killed at least three people, including a 13-year-old boy and a woman, and injured at least 40. Electricity was cut in parts of the Shijaiyah neighbourhood in the Gaza Strip. (*AFP*, *Xinhua*)

Israeli forces detained five Palestinians, including a local Hamas commander, in Nablus, in the northern West Bank. The other four were Fatah members. (*AFP*)

In Putrajaya, PA President Abbas held talks with Malaysia's Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, whose country heads the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Mr. Abbas said, "We are looking right now for the best coordinating mechanism in order to achieve the best result for the [US-sponsored] conference." He also noted that Malaysia had been invited to attend the conference. Mr. Badawi said, "Our commitment to support the struggle of the Palestinian people remains as strong as before. When we go (to the conference), we will go in full support for your cause." Mr. Abbas was scheduled to proceed to Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. (*AP*, www.bernama.com)

21

An Israeli air strike killed at least one Palestinian and injured three others in the northern Gaza Strip. (*Reuters*)

One person was killed and 12 were wounded when factional fighting flared again between Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip. The fatality was an Islamic Jihad member, a medical source said. (*AFP*)

Ghazi Hamad, former Hamas Government spokesperson, said in a letter posted in the Fatah website that the Hamas takeover in June was a "serious strategic mistake". Mr. Hamad said that he had decided to go public because his private appeals to Hamas leaders had been ignored. In the letter, Mr. Hamad said that Hamas paid a high price for the takeover of the Gaza Strip, including increasing international isolation and even tighter economic sanctions. "True, it resolved a security problem, but it created a thousand political problems that we did not need," he wrote. Hamas claimed the letter was a fabrication. (*AP*, *Ha'aretz*)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said that Israeli Prime Minister Olmert was never seriously threatened by an assassination plot by Palestinian militants and promised to do his best to rein in West Bank militias. Shin Bet Director Yuval Diskin had told the Israeli cabinet that Palestinian gunmen had plotted to kill Mr. Olmert when he travelled to the West Bank on 6 August for a meeting with PA President Abbas. (*AP*)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said that the US-sponsored conference was "not meant to be an event on its own or an event for an agreement or a historic breakthrough." Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman said that he warned the Bush Administration that "If, at the Annapolis conference, they deal with the core issues ... there will not be a Government and there will not be a coalition." (*Reuters*)

President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak said that his country had been working for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. He made the remarks during an interview with Austrian newspaper *Der Standard*. He said that Egypt had opened the way for peace 30 years ago and "we have spared no effort ever since to push forward the peace process." (*MENA*, *Xinhua*)

22

Four Hamas members were injured, two critically, when an Israeli artillery fired two missiles at the northern Gaza Strip area. Earlier, an Israeli aircraft struck a rocket launcher in the northern Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, a car carrying Hamas members exploded in the Gaza Strip, causing several casualties. Palestinians said that the blast was likely caused by a roadside bomb. (*Ha'aretz*, *Reuters*, *Xinhua*)

Members of Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for launching seven home-made rockets from Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip into Israel. No injuries or damage were reported. (*Xinhua*)

A Palestinian Centre for Human Rights press release denounced the violence between members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad and expressed concern over the recurrence of these incidents. It also called upon the authorities to investigate these incidents and to publicize the results of the investigations. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

About 1,000 prisoners rioted in an Israeli desert prison, attacking guards, torching the tents where they were housed and leaving some 30 people injured, Israel Prisons Authority spokesperson Ian Donnitz said. The violence broke out the previous night at the Ketziot prison in northern Israel when guards begun searching prisoners' bunks for contraband. About 2,200 Palestinian prisoners were serving sentences for security offences at the prison, according to Mr. Donnitz. In the West Bank, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesperson for PA President Abbas, accused Israel of conducting a "repression campaign" against the prisoners. He said that prison guards had used clubs, stun grenades and tear gas to disperse the crowd and that 250 had been injured. (*AP*, *Ha'aretz*)

Ashraf Ajrami, PA Minister for Prisoners' Affairs, said that the issue of release for Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails would be among the final status issues to be negotiated with Israel. He also criticized Hamas for paying monthly salaries only to Hamas prisoners in Israeli jails, adding that the Ministry paid a salary for every

single prisoner. (*Xinhua*)

After a meeting with the President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in Jakarta, PA President Abbas said, "Before the end of 2008, we will have found the real solution we have been hoping for." He also stressed the importance of reconciliation with Hamas. He said that Hamas "is a part of the Palestinian people and cannot be separated. Nobody denies that." President Yudhoyono said that Indonesia and South Africa, both currently holding non-permanent seats on the Security Council, as well as other Asian nations, were planning a separate conference focusing on capacity-building for the Palestinians, "so in the end, Palestine can be a sovereign country." (*AFP, The Jakarta Post*)

At a meeting in Paris, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert discussed the status of Jerusalem, Palestine refugees and other issues, according to Mr. Sarkozy's spokesperson, David Martinon. "Sarkozy indicated that as long as the security of the State of Israel is assured, then one has to show creativity and try to make some gestures," Mr. Martinon said. "Each side should have its own nation-State," Mr. Sarkozy told Mr. Olmert. "It is not reasonable for the Palestinians to demand both an independent State and also the refugees' return to the State of Israel, which even today has a minority of one million Arabs." (*Ha'aretz*)

Prime Minister Olmert had informed Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz that he intended to present any joint declaration formulated with the Palestinians to the Knesset for approval. In a letter, the Prime Minister said, "Every document which expresses Israeli commitment to a significant political-military matter ... will be brought before the Knesset ... in accordance with the accepted practice of the State of Israel." (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni called for the creation of a negotiations administration to handle ongoing work on the core issues after the US-sponsored conference. The group would be charged with handling concerns with their Palestinian counterparts over the division of Jerusalem, refugees and permanent borders. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israel allowed the entry of 151 canisters of nitrous oxide for medical use into the Gaza Strip, enough for several months, through the southern Sufa crossing. The transfer was made after Hamas leaders had announced that hospitals throughout the Gaza Strip had shut down their operating rooms owing to a lack of essential anaesthetic drugs. (*DPA*)

Israel's Finance Minister Ronnie Bar-On met in Washington with World Bank President Robert Zoellick, and urged him not to cooperate in any manner with Hamas and economic projects in the Gaza Strip. "We must adopt a policy of isolating the Gaza Strip, which is controlled by Hamas, from the West Bank, which is controlled by moderates," said the Finance Minister. (*Ha'aretz*)

Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders met at the home of Hamas leader and former PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar in an effort to avoid future clashes between the two groups. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli human rights group Gisha: Legal Centre for Freedom of Movement, and Gaza students petitioned Israel's Supreme Court to allow 670 Palestinians to leave the Gaza Strip for studies abroad, the group said. The petition was the first legal challenge to the Israeli Cabinet's decision to declare Gaza a "hostile territory," the director of the group said. (*AFP*)

23

Israeli aircraft attacked a car in the central Gaza Strip, destroying the vehicle and killing senior Hamas security official Mubarak al-Hassanat, a Hamas spokesman said.

The IDF confirmed the air strike, saying that the car was carrying a senior operative in the Popular Resistance Committees responsible for rocket and mortar attacks on Israel. (*AP*)

Israeli troops killed two Palestinians during a gun battle in the northern West Bank town of Jenin, according to witnesses and IDF reports. An IDF officer was wounded. Islamic Jihad said that the two dead men were members, and one of them was a top leader in the West Bank. (*AP, Ha'aretz*)

Two Qassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip struck Israel; no damage or injuries were reported. The IDF said that 15 rockets had been fired from Gaza into Israel in the past 24 hours. (*Ha'aretz*)

The IDF arrested six Palestinian militants in Jenin overnight. One Palestinian was arrested near Hebron. (*Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

Several students were injured when clashes erupted between Hamas and Fatah supporters at Al-Aqsa University in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip.

(*Ma'an News Agency*)

Eyewitnesses said that four Israeli bulldozers, reinforced by four military vehicles, razed farmland near Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Mohammed al-Ashqar, a member of Islamic Jihad wounded during a riot in an Israeli prison on 22 October, died in hospital. In Bethlehem, about 500 people staged a rally protesting his death and calling for the release of all Palestinians held by Israel. About 200 people joined a similar march in Ramallah, where mothers carried pictures of their imprisoned sons and others held posters of prisoners. "We want the prisoners, not negotiations," the crowd chanted. Hamas said in a statement, "We will not remain motionless in the face of the targeting of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. We have a number of ways to harm the enemy, including everything that pertains to the Gilad Shalit affair." The Popular Resistance Committees said in a statement that the most effective strategy for achieving the release of the Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails was to abduct more Israeli soldiers. (*AP, Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post, Wafa*)

Ynet reported that the US Government was planning to transfer \$410 million to the Palestinian Authority in an effort to strengthen President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad. Half of the aid would be directed at infrastructure, \$35 million would be transferred to the Food and Employment Bureau of UNRWA, and the remainder would be contributed to the PA's budget. (*Ynetnews*)

UNRWA said that the Government of Italy had [announced](#) that it would double its contribution to the Agency, bringing its assistance in 2008 to €10 million. The funds would support UNRWA's regular programmes, with a special emphasis on health projects. They would also be used to strengthen the Agency's internal management reform process, which would improve the quality of services delivered by the Agency. (www.un.org/unrwa)

PA President Abbas said in a speech to Indonesian scholars and diplomats: "We are going into this conference with optimism that we will reach a concrete outcome that is going to be positive for our people, which is long overdue." (*AFP*)

Col. Nir Press, head of Israel's Gaza Coordination Liaison Administration, denied Hamas' accusation that it was the Israeli blockade that had caused the drug shortage, which led to the suspension of all surgeries in the Gaza Strip. He described it as "a spin by Hamas and an attempt to put pressure on Israel by creating a humanitarian crisis." (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Two Palestinian boys were wounded by rubber-coated bullets as Israeli soldiers opened fire at a peaceful demonstration in Hebron protesting the death of a prisoner in an Israeli jail. (*Wafa*)

24

Israeli forces arrested five Islamic Jihad activists in Bethlehem. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli soldier was shot and seriously wounded at a bus stop outside the "Ariel" settlement in the West Bank by Palestinian gunmen in a drive-by shooting, an Israeli army spokesman said. The gunmen opened fire on other vehicles in the area, wounding an Israeli civilian, he added. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack. (*AFP*)

Two Palestinian youths were killed by Israeli shells in the area around Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. (*AFP, Reuters, Xinhua*)

Israeli military experts, led by Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai, have formulated a plan to gradually cut off electricity and fuel to the Gaza Strip in response to ongoing rocket fire from the area, Israeli officials said. The plan was expected to be approved by Defence Minister Ehud Barak the following day. It was not immediately clear when the decision would take effect. "It is clear that we have to cut off ... the supply of electricity and the supply of fuel. ... We will dramatically reduce the flow of electricity from Israel over several weeks," Mr. Vilnai told *Israel Army Radio*. (*AP*)

Israeli Minister without Portfolio Ami Ayalon told *Israel Army Radio*: "I say we need to invite Hamas to Annapolis, if from the beginning, they are prepared to receive any joint document signed by Abu Mazen [PA President Abbas] and Ehud Olmert. ... A call like this from Israel could bring the beginning of Hamas' disintegration because of the internal conflict which will occur." (*Ha'aretz*)

PA President Abbas met, during a stopover in the Indian city of Hyderabad, with India's envoy for the Middle East peace process, Chinmaya Gharekhan. Mr. Abbas stressed the importance for India to attend the international peace conference, saying that the country could assist in pressing the peace process forward.

(*Wafa*)

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe [briefed](#) the Security Council on the Middle East situation, including the Palestinian question. (*UN press release SC/9155*)

Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered south-east Gaza Strip, storming several houses and destroying agricultural land. (*Xinhua*)

The Shin Bet refused to allow a 21-year-old man from the Gaza Strip suffering from cancer and in need of immediate medical care to enter Israel, even though he had obtained permission from the IDF Coordination and Liaison Administration. The Shin Bet also arrested his father, who accompanied him to the hospital.

(*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak authorized the reduction of Israel's power supplies to the Gaza Strip in response to Palestinian rocket attacks. Israeli sources said that the Defence Minister's decision cleared the way for electricity cuts to begin immediately. "Because this is an entity that is hostile to us, there is no reason for us to supply them with electricity beyond the minimum required to prevent a crisis," Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai told *Israel Army Radio*. (*BBC, Reuters, Ynetnews*)

US National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley was scheduled to meet PA President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert separately on a visit to the region.

President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert were scheduled to meet on the following day at the Prime Minister's home in Jerusalem. (*AFP, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in a House of Representatives hearing, said, "Our concern is growing that, without a serious political prospect for the Palestinians that gives to moderate leaders a horizon that they can show to their people that indeed there is a two-State solution that is possible, we will lose the window for a two-State solution". (*AP*)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert played down expectations for the upcoming US-sponsored peace summit, saying that the gathering would not produce a binding peace agreement with the Palestinians and might not even take place. Speaking to a group of Jewish fund-raisers, Prime Minister Olmert said, "If all goes well, hopefully, we will meet in Annapolis ... but Annapolis is not made to be the event for the declaration of peace". He also said, "I do not know if the time for peace is ripe yet".

(*AP*)

US Security Coordinator Gen. Keith Dayton met with Palestinian security officials during his tour of Nablus. He said, "This is where the Palestinian State will get its first real test". The PA Head of Intelligence in Nablus, Abdullah Kneil, said that there was only one rifle for every 10 officers. PA officials said that 500 Palestinian police would take control of security operations in Nablus in November. (*AFP, AP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel's military intelligence research division predicted, in a document presented to the political leadership, that the PA would not be able to assert security control over the West Bank cities in the near future. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA President Abbas, speaking in Amman after talks with King Abdullah II, said, "There are meetings taking place between Hamas and Israel, there were meetings held at Ereẓ and there are ongoing meetings in other places". Defence Ministry official Shlomo Dror said, "This is absolutely untrue. We do not have any meeting with Hamas. Indeed, there is a strict policy of avoiding all contacts with Hamas". (*AFP, AP, Ha'aretz*)

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes [briefed](http://www.reliefweb.int) journalists in Geneva on the worsening humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. "The squeeze was tightening all the time", Mr. Holmes said. (www.reliefweb.int)

26

Two Israeli air strikes in the eastern Gaza City killed three militants and wounded five, medical officials said. Two of the dead belonged to the Saraya Al-Quds, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad. The third dead militant, identified as Mahmud Hasouna, 25, belonged to the armed wing of Hamas. Ground clashes with Israeli troops left two Palestinian gunmen dead: one, from Hamas, was killed near Jabalya and the other, from the Islamic Jihad, was in the southern Gaza Strip near Khan Yunis, medics said. Two Israeli soldiers were lightly wounded in the clashes. According to the *AFP* count, the deaths brought the number of those killed in Israeli-Palestinian violence since 2000 to 5,909 people, the vast majority of them Palestinians. (*AFP, Ha'aretz*)

The IDF said that Palestinian militants had fired at least 20 rockets and mortar shells towards Israel in the past 24 hours. (*AFP*)

Thousands of Islamic Jihad supporters rallied in Jabalya in the northern Gaza Strip to mark the twelfth anniversary of the killing its former leader, Fathi Shakaki.

(*AFP*)

Palestinians set fire to a synagogue near the settlement of "Dolev" in the West Bank. (*Ha'aretz*)

In Jerusalem, PA President Abbas met Israeli Prime Minister Olmert to seek a common ground ahead of the US-proposed peace conference. Lead negotiators Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and former PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia were also present during the talks. Mr. Olmert and Mr. Abbas agreed that the joint document the Israelis and Palestinians were to draft ahead of the conference would refer to the Road Map. Mr. Olmert promised Mr. Abbas that he would not cut power to Gaza Strip hospitals or cause a humanitarian crisis, according to an official present at the talks who spoke on conditions of anonymity. (*Ha'aretz, Reuters*)

PLO Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that the Israeli Government's decision to start reducing power supplies to the Gaza Strip in response to rocket attacks was a "provocation" that would "double the suffering" of those living in the territory. Mr. Erakat called on the international community to "intervene immediately to protect the Palestinian people and compel Israel to comply with international humanitarian law". (*Ha'aretz, Reuters*)

27

Israeli forces entered the towns of Al-Yamun and Kufr Dan, west of Jenin, ransacking homes and searching for "wanted" Palestinians. (*IMEMC*)

Officials said that PA President Abbas had signed an anti-money laundering decree. Under the new regulations, violators would face three to 15 years in prison and fines of up to 600,000 shekels (\$125,000). Jihad Alwazir, the Deputy Governor of the Palestine Monetary Fund, said that the regulations had been put together with the help of the International Monetary Fund and were in line with international standards. "The prosecutors now have more means at their disposal," Mr. Alwazir said, adding that the new rules should reassure foreign banks that they could do business with their Palestinian counterparts without running afoul of US and Israeli counter-terrorism regulations. (*AP*)

28

Israel began cutting vital fuel shipments to the Gaza Strip, following through on a promise to step up pressure on Hamas after months of Palestinian rocket attacks.

Dor Alon, the Israeli energy company that sells fuel to Gaza, confirmed that it had received instructions from the Israeli Defence Ministry to reduce shipments. The Defence Ministry said in a statement that the Sufa crossing between Gaza and Israel, which is used for transporting cargo in and out of Gaza, had been closed. Its closing left only a smaller cargo crossing in operation. (*AP*)

29

Three Palestinians and an Israeli soldier were killed in the Gaza Strip as Israeli ground troops, backed by air support, pressed campaigns against militants firing rockets into Israel. An IDF spokeswoman confirmed that one Israeli soldier had been killed in clashes in the Gaza Strip and said that two more had been lightly wounded. Mohammed Hamad, 28, from the armed wing of Hamas, and Farid Abu Odeh, 44, were killed by Israeli fire in the Beit Hanoun area in the north. Another Hamas fighter, Ahmed Abu Tahun, 22, was shot dead by Israeli troops in a pre-dawn ground operation near the Sufa crossing with Israel. Local medics said that 21 Palestinians had been wounded, including one seriously. (*AFP*)

Israeli forces seized a Palestinian in the town of Anabata, near Tulkarm, and raided the nearby towns of Dhinnaba and Nur Shams. Also, Israeli forces seized 13 Palestinians in villages around Ramallah. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces raided two refugee camps near Nablus. The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, claimed that their fighters had injured an Israeli soldier in the Beit Ilma refugee camp. The IDF blew up a shop in the Balata refugee camp, seizing the owner and two others.

(*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli army vehicles and bulldozers raided the village of Qassa, west of Hebron. Local sources reported that the bulldozers had demolished animal sheds and huts in an attempt to force Palestinian farmers from the land. (*IMEMC*)

Ten Palestinians were arrested by Israeli forces in different parts of the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The National Resistance Brigades, affiliated with Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, affiliated with Fatah, in a joint statement, claimed responsibility for launching two home-made projectiles at the Israeli settlement of "Yad Mardakhai". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

During a visit to Jerusalem, European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner said that she was "very concerned" about Israel's decision to cut back fuel and electricity supplies to Gaza. While noting the "distress" caused to Israelis by Palestinian rocket fire, she said, "I think collective punishment is never a solution." Palestinian officials said that an Israeli tank had damaged one of nine pipelines pumping fuel into the Gaza Strip from Israel. (*AP*)

Palestinian Ambassador to Egypt Monther al-Dijani said that PA President Abbas would meet with President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt on 30 October to discuss the

upcoming peace conference in the United States. The two leaders would discuss Egyptian efforts to restart the stalled peace process, Mr. Al-Dijani was quoted as saying by the official *MENA* news agency. (AFP)

Israel's Supreme Court ordered the Government to justify its decision to impose economic sanctions on the Gaza Strip within five days, following a petition from 10 human rights groups. Nevertheless, the Court rejected a demand by the Israeli and Palestinian petitioners to freeze implementation of the sanctions. Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz would review a decision taken by Defence Minister Ehud Barak to enforce periodic electricity cuts on the Gaza Strip, his office said.

(AFP)

30

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades launched two projectiles at the Israeli military post of Nahal 'Oz near the eastern Gaza Strip. In a separate incident, the Al-Quds Brigades claimed responsibility for launching two home-made projectiles at the Kfar Azza kibbutz. (Ma'an News Agency)

Ten mortar shells fired from the Gaza Strip landed in a western Negev town, causing damage to a home. One woman suffered from shock. Hamas claimed responsibility for the barrage. In response, Israeli aircraft shelled a Hamas police station in the Khan Yunis, killing four Hamas policemen, Palestinian officials said.

The IDF confirmed the air strike. (AP, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency)

Egyptian authorities arrested three Palestinians, linked to the group that had kidnapped BBC journalist Alan Johnston on 12 March 2007, on their way to carry out bombings in Israel, a security source said. (AFP)

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak told *Israel Radio*, "Every passing day brings us closer to a broad operation in Gaza ... We are not looking forward to it and we would be happy if circumstances prevented it". (AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

PA President Abbas told the *Asharq Alawsat* daily that dialogue between Hamas and Fatah had not been resumed and none of the Fatah leaders had been delegated to hold talks with Hamas. He also said that he would not grant concessions during the Annapolis meeting. Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qureia said, "There are a number of conditions for the success of the Annapolis conference, mainly the implementation of phase one of the Road Map". (AP, Ma'an News Agency)

PA President Abbas said that he agreed with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and the US National Security Advisor Steve Hadley on forming a tripartite committee to implement stage one of the Road Map. (DPA, Ma'an News)

The European Union issued a [statement](#) on Israel's fuel shipment cuts to the Gaza Strip noting with concern Israel's decision to reduce the supply of fuel to Gaza and essential service to the civilian population. "While condemning the unacceptable and continued attacks on Israel's territory and recognizing Israel's legitimate right to self-defence, the EU underlines the need for carefully weighing the negative impact of such measures on a civilian population already living under very difficult conditions ... Mindful of the humanitarian and economic plight of the Palestinian people, the EU remains committed to continue its assistance and will do its utmost to ensure the provision of emergency and humanitarian assistance to the population of Gaza, whom it will not abandon", the statement said. (AP)

Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qureia told reporters that there would be no talks with Israel unless a deadline was set for establishing a Palestinian State: "The Israeli Prime Minister had announced that he will not accept a timeline, and we will not accept negotiations without a timetable". (AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had asked Max Gaylard, of Australia, currently serving as Director of Mine Action in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to serve as Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process ad interim. The Secretary-General had asked Mr. Gaylard to travel to the region during the week to lead the UN country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (UN press release SG/A/1106)

It was [announced](#) that UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, would be attending a Quartet meeting in Jerusalem on 1 November. He also plans to hold meetings with Israeli and PA officials. Mr. Pascoe is currently acting as the Secretary-General's envoy to the Middle East Quartet. (UN News Centre)

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom issued a statement saying that "measures taken by Israel in response to violent extremists should be consistent with international humanitarian law and not cause suffering to innocent civilians. We have raised these concerns at a senior level with the Israeli Government and urged them to act accordingly." (www.fco.gov.uk)

31

An 18-year-old Palestinian, carrying a pistol, knives and a suicide note, was arrested at an Israeli border patrol checkpoint outside the Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi (the Tomb of the Patriarchs) in Hebron. Israeli forces also detained a Palestinian east of Nablus and six others in the Salfit district. (Ha'aretz, Wafa)

The Director of the Preventive Security Service in Nablus, Akram Rajoub, said that two members of Hamas' Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades had surrendered voluntarily and denied news reports that the Security Service had stormed their houses and confiscated their weapons before arresting them. (Ma'an News Agency)

Envoys for PA President Abbas held talks with Vice-President Farouk Sharaa of Syria. The Palestinian delegation was headed by Rawhi Fattouh. On his arrival in Damascus, Nasser Yusuf, a member of the delegation, told reporters that the purpose of the visit was to brief the Syrians on the "latest developments on the Palestinian track." He criticized as "inappropriate" a planned conference in Damascus of Palestinian factions, aimed at countering the US-proposed conference.

(DPA)

Senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Zahhar said that Palestinian factions would hold a conference in the Gaza Strip in parallel with the Damascus wider conference.

"The preparatory committee has decided to postpone the holding of the Palestinian national conference [in Damascus] so that it takes place at the same time as Bush's American-Zionist conference," according to a statement from the organizers. (AP)

Hamas leaders in the West Bank, Faraj Rumaneh and Hussein Abu Quaik, called a news conference and distanced themselves from earlier comments by Gaza-based Hamas leader Nazir Rayan, who had said that "Abbas will fall like the autumn leaves ... We will pray this autumn in the *muqataa*." "We think they contradict Hamas policy, which calls for dialogue and national unity and reducing differences," they said. (AFP, AP)

Jamal Muhaisin, the Governor of Nablus, said: "Hamas knows very well that if they undertake any military action in the West Bank, it will be immediately suppressed." Mr. Muhaisin announced that the PA security services were to initiate a campaign to collect illegal weapons from Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Fatah. "Only the PA will possess weapons," he said. The first group of security officers, comprising 300, would be deployed in Nablus in the coming days, he said. (Ma'an News Agency)

President George W. Bush had proposed a six-fold increase in aid to Palestinians, including \$150 million in direct cash transfers to the PA. The \$435 million in additional aid was included in the President's supplemental request to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. (The Washington Post)

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier met with PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to present the EU plan for boosting the Middle East peace efforts.

Under the plan devised by Mr. Steinmeier, the EU would try to strengthen small and mid-sized Palestinian businesses, West Bank universities, the police and other institutions. Mr. Steinmeier also plans to meet with PA President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, as well as his Israeli and Palestinian counterparts. (AP)

The PA had demanded that Israel acknowledge the "Peres Letter," which accompanied the Oslo accords of 1993, and which promised to allow Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem to operate, Israel's Shin Bet security service said in an analysis for the political leadership. The Palestinians were demanding permission to renew the activities of their institutions in East Jerusalem, including the Orient House, which was closed down in 2001. (Ha'aretz)

Some 72.9 per cent of Israelis support the revival of negotiations with the Palestinians with the aim of reaching a final peace agreement within one year, an opinion poll said. A majority of 54.4 per cent also said they would support transferring Jerusalem's Arab neighbourhoods to Palestinian sovereignty, an almost complete withdrawal from the West Bank, and the release of all Palestinian militants held in Israeli prisons, but only as part of an overall peace agreement that declared an end to the conflict and to further Palestinian claims. (DPA)

