

Division for Palestinian Rights

Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine

Monthly media monitoring review
March 2011

Monthly highlights

- Israeli Defense Minister Barak says current Israeli Government not suitable for advancing the peace process with the Palestinians ([3 March](#))
- Britain to upgrade status of Palestinian delegation to full diplomatic mission level ([7 March](#))
- UN International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners, opens in Vienna ([7 March](#))
- Danish Foreign Ministry upgrades Palestinian delegation to Palestinian mission to Denmark ([9 March](#))
- Quartet envoys fail to secure agreement on resumption of peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians ([10 March](#))
- Israel approves construction of housing units in "Gush Etzion", "Ma'ale Adumim", "Ariel" and "Kiryat Sefer" ([13 March](#))
- Palestinian leadership to ask UN to recognize a Palestinian State with full membership ([20 March](#))
- UN Committee of Independent Experts reports Israel and Hamas have failed to make credible progress in investigating war crimes committed during Gaza conflict ([21 March](#))
- Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs briefs Security Council on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations ([22 March](#))
- PA President Abbas asks PLO Constitution Committee to begin drafting amendments to the PLO Charter that would include all Palestinian factions in the organization ([28 March](#))

I

A rocket-propelled grenade was fired at an IDF tank that was travelling towards Khan Yunis in Gaza. The missile was thwarted by the Trophy missile protection system, which was used for the first time during operational activity. IDF soldiers returned fire, and one Palestinian was injured. (*Ynetnews*)

According to witnesses, Israeli municipality inspectors accompanied by police conducted raids on Palestinian street vendors in East Jerusalem assaulting and detaining them. The inspectors also seized and destroyed the products the vendors were selling. (*Wafa*)

Israeli gunboats opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats in Rafah, south of Gaza, injuring at least one fisherman, according to local sources. (*Wafa*)

United States President Barack Obama held a meeting with 50 Jewish leaders from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations at the White House. He stressed Washington's support for Israel and its security. (*Haaretz*)

Israel was considering pursuing an interim peace agreement with the Palestinians, a senior official said, signalling that the Government may abandon efforts to secure a single, comprehensive accord. Saeb Erakat, a senior aide to PA President Abbas, rejected the notion of any non-final resolution. "This talk about interim agreement and 'phased path' is just a reflection of the fact that we don't have a partner for the end game in this Israeli Government," Mr. Erakat said. (*Reuters*)

Israeli diplomat Ilan Baruch wrote a farewell letter to Foreign Ministry staff in which he said that he felt he could not longer represent the Government's policy. Mr. Baruch, who had served as Ambassador, also said: "Over the past two years the political and diplomatic messages by the State's leaders, which have grown more pointed, have infuriated me and given me no rest. I find it difficult to represent them and explain them honestly". (*Haaretz*)

In Ramallah, Chinese Minister of Commerce, Chen Deming, and Palestinian Minister of Economy, Hassan Abu Libdeh, agreed to encourage Chinese organizations to invest in the Palestinian territory and to increase Chinese aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA). Mr. Abu Libdeh said that the PA and China signed agreements to ease the export of Palestinian goods to China. Mr. Chen was scheduled to meet with PA President Mahmoud Abbas. (*Xinhua*)

Acknowledging Israel's growing political isolation, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that settlement building in the West Bank must be cut back. "We are currently in a very difficult international situation," he told his Likud party. Regarding the recent UN Security Council draft resolution on settlements, Mr. Netanyahu said, "The American veto took great effort to achieve ... We cannot ignore it all and say there's no problem. Things are changing in the Middle East". Referring to demands by settlement leaders for expanded building, the Prime Minister said: "They don't understand the reality they are living in". (*The Australian*)

Israeli armed police and border guards prevented guests from entering the Capitol Hotel in Jerusalem where a one-day conference on "Defending Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem" was taking place. Police handed the organizers a warrant signed by the Minister of Internal Security, Yitzhaq Ahronovitch, addressed to the hotel administration. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Lebanese Minister of Labour, Boutros Harb, signed a decree implementing amendments to a labour law that was adopted in August 2010, which facilitated access of Palestine refugees to work permits and de-linking those permits from a work contract. The decree had been referred to the Council of State (Shoura) for

finalization as per the provisions of Lebanese law. ([UNRWA press release](#))

Released prisoners in Hebron called for job opportunities and support for prisoners in Israeli jails. Amjad Najjar, head of the Prisoner's Club in Hebron, said that the call was discussed during a meeting with the PA Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs, which focused on the difficult conditions of prisoners after their release.

(Wafa)

Gaza officials urged schoolchildren to leave classrooms if human rights lessons in UNRWA schools included information about the Holocaust. Hamas authorities also accused the UN agency of overstepping its humanitarian and relief role. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

2

A Palestinian militant was wounded by Israeli shells in south-east Gaza, witnesses said. (*Xinhua*)

Upon the orders of Israel's Civil Administration, 13 Israeli patrol cars and 3 military bulldozers had arrived in the hamlet of Khirbet Tana, east of Nablus, and demolished for the sixth time the tents and sheds recently re-built by residents, said Ghassan Daghlal, the PA official in charge of monitoring settlement activity in the northern West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas received a letter from General Hussein Tantawi, Head of the Egyptian Higher Military Council. General Tantawi stressed the deep ties and relations on all levels between Palestine and Egypt and the need to keep and preserve these ties. He said he looked forward to continued consultation and coordination. (Wafa)

PA President Abbas would start on 6 March an official visit to the United Kingdom, where he would meet British Prime Minister David Cameron and other British officials, as well as members of the Palestinian and Arab communities. (Wafa)

Quartet officials were to arrive in Israel next week to meet with advisers of Prime Minister Netanyahu in order to discuss new efforts to restart peace negotiations with the Palestinians. (*Haaretz*)

The Palestinians have yet to show that they can be Israel's partners in peace, a top US lawmaker [said](#), after talks with Quartet envoy Tony Blair. "Israel has shown through its actions that it is ready and able to make peace, but the Palestinian Authority has yet to demonstrate that it can be a partner for peace", said House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen [R-FL]. (*AFP, foreignaffairs.house.gov*)

British Prime Minister David Cameron reaffirmed his commitment to Israel, saying that his belief in Israel was "indestructible". Speaking at a dinner for the Community Security Trust, which monitors anti-Semitism and provides security for the Jewish community in the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister said that he wanted to build a strong and productive relationship with Israel. In reference to rocket and missile attacks from Gaza, he said that Israel had a right to protect itself.

"When rockets are being launched at Israeli citizens, and when children are in danger, Israel is within its rights to protect its people," he said. He also told guests that Israel had a right to search vessels entering Gaza. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

In two weeks, a meeting of foreign ministers of the Quartet was to take place in Paris where potential solutions to the core peace issues would be presented.

Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the purpose of the meeting would be to discuss the borders of a future Palestinian State and the security arrangements that Israel was demanding. (*Haaretz*)

PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki said that Palestinians were expecting some 150 countries to recognize a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders by September of this year. He said that 10 more States in the Caribbean region would be declaring their recognition of Palestine this month. (*ynetnews.com*)

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister, Fayssal Mekdad, told a visiting Norwegian parliamentary delegation that the policies of successive Israeli Governments such as ignoring Arab rights, usurping lands, continuing the occupation of the Syrian Golan and Judaizing Jerusalem showed that there was no Israeli partner for achieving peace. He called upon the international community to support the peace process. (*SANA*)

In his weekly radio address, PA Prime Minister Fayyad told Palestinians that, in preparing to appoint a new cabinet, he had met with all factions, adding that the new government would "necessarily reflect the most expansive national and social coalition [which would] create a vision to solve the national dilemma". Yousef Rizqa, political adviser to Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said that Mr. Fayyad's plan to create a new unity cabinet was "born dead; it is of no political value" since it had not been adopted by the Palestinian Authority. Mr. Fayyad acknowledged that the unity government was his own idea that could render the path to statehood unimpeded and allow a Palestinian coalition to call on the international community to live up to its promises to fully support an end to occupation and the establishment of a State in September 2011. "We can no more have a State without Gaza than a State without Jerusalem," Mr. Fayyad said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli authorities decided to partially open the Kerem Shalom crossing in southern Gaza while permanently closing the Kami crossing in northern Gaza. The complete [closure](#) of the Kami crossing would make the delivery of food aid to Gaza more difficult, according to UN agencies assisting Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, where over half the population was estimated to be food insecure. (*Hürriyet, IRIN*)

In a statement, the Palestinian Authority urged the international community to take action to halt settlers' violence and to "intervene with Israel over the violent and provocative actions by settlers, which the Israeli authorities refuse to control". Ghassan Khatib, Head of the Government Media Centre, urged the international community "to send a clear message to Israel that its tolerance of settler violence is dangerous and provocative". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli troops destroyed three water wells belonging to Palestinian villagers living near a sprawling Jewish settlement outside Hebron, witnesses said. (*AFP*)

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People would convene the United Nations International [Meeting](#) on the Question of Palestine at the United Nations Office at Vienna on 7 and 8 March. The theme of the meeting would be "the urgency of addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities". ([www.un.org](#), *Press TV*)

American folk music legend Pete Seeger had reportedly joined the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, a Palestinian movement which seeks to put economic and political pressure on Israel. According to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, the American musician expressed regret for his previous support of an event sponsored by the Jewish National Fund and threw his support behind the BDS movement at a meeting in New York last month. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Far-right Jews marched in a predominantly Arab suburb of Tel Aviv today, waving Israeli flags in what angry Arab residents condemned as a "provocation". Some 60 activists participated in the event in Jaffa, Tel Aviv's most southern neighbourhood, which was organized by an ultra-nationalist movement – "Our Land of Israel".

Meanwhile, around 100 left-wing activists held a counter demonstration in another part of Jaffa, as several hundred policemen, aided by horse-mounted officers and a helicopter hovering overhead, held the two groups apart. (*DPA*)

3

The National Resistance Brigades, the military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, claimed responsibility for firing a C5K rocket towards an Israeli military guard tower, south of the Kissufim military base, north-east of Khan Yunis, on the Gaza-Israel border. According to an Israeli military statement, a projectile had hit the Sdot Negev Regional Council overnight but had caused no injuries. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

During his regular [press briefing](#), US State Department Spokesman P.J. Crowley said: "Does this [Israeli] Government have the ability to reach a framework agreement? Yes, it does. It is within the power of the existing Government to do this. As to whether the politics in Israel will enable that to happen, it's not my judgment to make". ([www.state.gov](#))

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that the current make-up of the Israeli Government was not suitable for advancing the peace process with the Palestinians.

Speaking in an interview with *Channel 10*, Mr. Barak called the Government coalition, which was dominated by right-leaning voices and parties, "problematic" in terms of advancing the peace process. (*Haaretz*)

Israel had concluded that a final peace deal with the Palestinians could not be reached at this time and was weighing alternatives to try to prove that it was interested in keeping peacemaking with the Palestinians alive, officials said. Israeli officials were currently meeting with international mediators, including US envoy Dennis Ross and representatives of the Quartet. Palestinians flatly rejected the idea of an interim accord as a way out of the current negotiations deadlock. "Anything less than an Israeli withdrawal from lands occupied in 1967 is unacceptable to us," senior Palestinian official Nabil Abu Rudeineh said. "We oppose the option of a State with provisional borders," he said. (*AP*)

The Al-Aqsa Foundation for Endowment and Heritage said that Israeli forces were "accelerating their steps to destroy the area of Umayyad palaces" near the

southern wall of the Al-Aqsa mosque. The Foundation added that the "Israeli occupation is carrying out excavations in the area at night, especially in one of the water wells in the area, which extends under Al-Aqsa Mosque and are covered with tents and plastic sheets". (*Arab News*)

Jerusalem Municipality officials approved the construction of 14 new housing apartments for Israelis in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Ras al-Amud. Head of the Palestinian Jerusalem Center for Social & Economic Rights Ziad Hamouri said that the construction in Ras al-Amud would be linked to the chain of Jewish settlements around East Jerusalem's Old City. (*AP*)

Israel's security forces and police had been preparing for the settlers' "Day of Rage" in response to the demolition of several illegally constructed outposts in the Gilad Farm on 28 February. Protesters briefly blocked Route 1 near Latrun and the train tracks from Ben-Gurion Airport to Modi'in. Settlers burnt tires at the entrance to Jerusalem, briefly blocking traffic. (*The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews.com*)

The Palestine Investment Fund (PIF) issued a statement denouncing the seizure of its branch and some properties in Gaza under directions from Hamas, demanding the movement to retract. The properties seized included the Hanadi commercial building, an office complex that accommodated UN agencies, the Gaza juice factory and the branch of the Palestinian Commercial Services Company owned by the PIF. The statement said that such acts were harmful to the national economy in general and to the economy of Gaza Strip in particular. (*Wafa*)

The IDF rearrested a Hamas lawmaker, five months after he was released from prison. Azzam Salhab was detained at an Israeli checkpoint on the road between Ramallah and Hebron. (*AFP*)

Egyptian authorities released 12 Palestinian prisoners, a spokesman for the families of the detained said, adding that all were en route to the Rafah crossing. An additional 32 men remained in Egyptian custody. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A delegation of senior Hamas officials left for Damascus for talks with the group's [Political Bureau] Chief, Khaled Mashaal, during which the issue of kidnapped IDF soldier Gilad Shalit would be discussed. The greatest success that the negotiations had produced up until now was a videotape of Mr. Shalit, which Israel received in exchange for releasing 20 female Palestinian prisoners. (*Haaretz*)

PA President Abbas' Fatah faction had demanded that he fire PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, according to a letter shown to *Reuters*. The letter, signed by senior Fatah officials, was sent to Mr. Abbas, but the President "did not take it seriously", a Fatah official told *Reuters*. (*Reuters*)

4

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu told PA President Abbas some five months ago that Israel demands that 40 per cent of the West Bank remain under its control for an extended period, Fatah Central Committee Member Nabil Sha'ath said, according to *Israel Radio*. Mr. Sha'ath added that Mr. Netanyahu also said that he would not listen to one word from Mr. Abbas and not a word about borders or refugees until the Palestinians agreed to recognize Israel as a Jewish State and its security needs. The senior Fatah member said that Malta was expected to be the next in a recent string of countries that had recognized a Palestinian State. He claimed that France, Spain, Sweden, Portugal and Slovenia all planned to follow soon thereafter. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton decided to leave the post of Special Envoy to the Middle East empty while she considered whether to scrap the position, diplomats said today. (*AFP*)

Facing growing isolation over the impasse in peace talks, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was planning a new initiative to set up a Palestinian State within temporary borders, press reports said. The Prime Minister was largely expected to announce his new diplomatic initiative during a visit to the United States in May, in an address to the US Congress or at the annual meeting of the pro-Israel lobby group AIPAC. (*AFP*)

Palestinian students and activists in Gaza initiated a campaign for Palestinian refugees aimed to harness the winds of change in the Middle East and mobilize the diaspora into action. On 15 May, the group said, more than one million people would participate in a global sit-in at Israeli embassies worldwide. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development said that Israeli authorities prevented a group of British volunteers from entering the West Bank. Israeli officers stopped the delegation of 12 Scottish Youth Initiative volunteers on the Jordanian border with the West Bank. The volunteers were interrogated for seven hours before Israeli officials denied them entry. The group was due to participate in a one-week youth exchange program between Nablus and its twin city Dundee. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

5

Palestinian negotiator Nabil Sha'ath said that he had received a promise from France that it would in September recognize a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders. "France postpones its recognition of a Palestinian State because it is exerting efforts to convince [all] European countries to recognize the State," Mr. Sha'ath said. (*Xinhua*)

During a visit by Chilean President Sebastian Piñera to the West Bank, PA President Abbas reiterated his opposition to the idea of a Palestinian State with provisional borders. He added that the time had come for Palestine to become a permanent member of the UN. (*DPA, The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli forces violently shut down a demonstration led by women north of Jerusalem, organizers said, injuring at least two women, including an international activist.

Border police fired tear gas and rubber-coated bullets at the protesters marking International Women's Day at the Qalandiya checkpoint, south of Ramallah. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

6

Speaking to journalists after [meeting](#) with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in Jerusalem, Chile's President Sebastián Piñera said that his country's recognition of Palestinian statehood was ultimately for the good of Israel, adding that, "We also think that the Palestinian people have the right to their own state, a free state, a democratic state". (*AFP, IMRA*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu had accused the international community of automatically siding with the Palestinians. He said that the Palestinians were refusing to make peace overtures, "instead preferring to take advantage of the international community's Pavlovian reflex in their favour". (*AP*)

Israel's National Security Council [Head] Uzi Arad stepped down after two years in the post. Israeli media reported that he could be replaced by Yaakov Amidror, a reserve Major-General who opposed Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and had in recent years called for the reoccupation of Gaza. (*AFP*)

King Abdullah II of Jordan said that the key to stability, peace and security in the Middle East was to find a just solution for the Palestinian issue. (*Petra News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu may move up a trip to the United States and present an interim peace plan to head off growing pressure on Israel, *Israeli Radio* reported. Defense Minister Ehud Barak urged Mr. Netanyahu to move faster in a bid "to move Israel out of its isolation". Israeli opposition leader Tzipi Livni had dismissed Mr. Netanyahu's new peace initiative, saying that his attitude towards peace talks showed an utter lack of leadership. (*AFP, Haaretz*)

The EU contributed €20 million to help the PA pay the February salaries and pensions of almost 85,000 Palestinian public service providers and pensioners, both in the West Bank and Gaza. (*Wafa*)

The Egyptian Ambassador to the PA, Yasser Othman, said that Egypt's military leadership was considering easing travel restrictions on Palestinians leaving the Gaza Strip. He said that no immediate changes had been planned, but "there are calls" in Egypt to reopen the crossing and changes would be considered when the situation in Egypt had stabilized. (*AP*)

Israel had given preliminary approval for renovations at a contested holy site in East Jerusalem where rebuilding had triggered violence in the past, a city official said.

Municipal planners the previous week had approved a project to repair an earthen ramp near the Mughrabi Gate, connecting the Wailing Wall remnant of an ancient Jewish temple to a complex revered by Muslims and Jews, both of whom claimed the area as their own. (*Reuters*)

Israeli authorities handed notices to Palestinians in the Jenin area, extending the period of decisions that concerned land seizures to 2013. Israeli authorities gave landowners one week to file court appeals. Landowners called on specialized bodies and human rights organizations to intervene and stop such measures. (*Wafa*)

The Anglican Church said that Israel had refused to renew the residency visa of its top official in the Holy Land. (*AP*)

7

Britain would upgrade the status of the Palestinian delegation to London to the level of a full diplomatic mission in line with a number of other EU countries, Foreign Secretary William Hague [said](#). The decision put Britain in line with fellow EU members France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. (*www.fco.gov.uk, AFP, AP*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu's Likud party would support the transfer of more West Bank land to PA control, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor told *Army*

Radio, calling such a move a vital Israeli interest. (*Haaretz*)

The PA Ministry of Agriculture signed an agreement with Nablus area farmers to establish fish ponds funded by the Brazilian Government. (*Wafa*)

The PA and the Czech Republic signed a memorandum of understanding to support the MYWAS software project for water management and conflict resolution worth more than \$318,000 for three years. (*Wafa*)

On the occasion of International Women's Day, PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said, "Women's right to equality and respect of their rights and status is not negotiable". Mr. Fayyad also announced a paid holiday for women in all government institutions, local bodies and the private sector. (*Wafa*)

Palestinian women held rallies to commemorate International Women's Day. In Gaza, hundreds of women took to the streets urging Fatah and Hamas to end their rivalry and to close ranks to confront Israel's occupation, settlement activities and plans to "judaize" Jerusalem. The General Union of Palestinian Women released a statement commemorating the Day and urging Fatah and Hamas to reconcile. In Ramallah, Palestinian women marched from the Qalandia refugee camp towards an Israeli army checkpoint, where dozens of Israeli soldiers formed a human wall to stop the women from entering the checkpoint, located between Ramallah and Jerusalem. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA Minister of Social Affairs Majida Masri signed an agreement with the Representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) [in the Occupied Palestinian Territory], Barbara Piazza-Georgi, to support the Ministry's youth, gender and aging projects for the period 2011-2013 with financial aid amounting to \$100,000. (*Wafa*)

Despite razing orders issued by the Supreme Court, settlers from "Beit El" had built 48 housing units without permits on Palestinian private land since the end of the construction freeze. (*Ynetnews*)

At least 10 Palestinians were injured on Monday during clashes with Jewish settlers in a village in the northern West Bank, a Palestinian official and witnesses said. (*AFP, Reuters*)

According to a Government legal filing before the Supreme Court, Israel would be evacuating dozens of settler homes illegally built on private Palestinian land in the West Bank. The filing, in response to a five-year legal battle waged by settlement watchdog Peace Now, committed the Israeli Government to remove homes in six settlements. A government official said, "We have sent a government response to the Supreme Court and included in that response is a commitment by the Israeli Government to remove outposts and illegal construction on private Palestinian land by the end of this year". (*AFP*)

Israeli authorities were planning to demolish more than 100 Palestinian-inhabited houses in Jerusalem as part of the strategy to settle Jews, a Palestinian official said today. Hatem Abdul Qader, who was in charge of the Jerusalem file at Fatah, said that Israeli authorities had issued orders to demolish apartment houses in the mainly Palestinian district of Beit Hanina. (*KUNA*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in a message delivered by Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Maxwell Gaylard [said](#), that urgently addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners was "very important" to reaching a just and lasting peace, and he had publicly urged the release of prisoners — numbered in the tens of thousands — last year during a visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. He pledged at the gathering of nearly 100 representatives of Governments and parliaments, intergovernmental organizations, lawyers, civil society, and United Nations agencies that the Organization would continue to raise the issue with the Israeli leadership. He was speaking at the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, which was being held in Vienna under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Chairman of the Committee, Abdou Salam Diallo, said that the Meeting was the first such gathering organized by the Committee that was devoted exclusively to the sensitive, crucially important and highly emotional issue of Palestinian political prisoners. (www.unis.unvienna.org)

A new Palestinian group was recently created on Facebook calling for the independence of the Palestinian people using an original concept — writing the words 'Free Palestine' on Israeli currency notes. (*Ynetnews*)

The former lead singer of the rock band Pink Floyd, Roger Waters, was the latest artist to voice support for the boycott of Israel, in an effort to pressure the State to end its occupation of Palestinian land, and comply with international law and signed agreements. (*IMEMC*)

8

Prime Minister Netanyahu said that the IDF must maintain its presence along the length of the Jordan Valley in any future peace arrangement reached with the Palestinians as a safeguard against rocket attacks. The Jordan River was Israel's security border, Netanyahu told soldiers during a tour of the area. "Israel's line of defence begins here," he said. "If rockets and missiles break out here, they will reach Tel Aviv, Haifa and all over the State". (*Haaretz*)

IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Benny Gantz made an unannounced visit to the Jordan Valley base of the urban combat infantry unit Kfir Brigade. A team of army investigators arrived with Mr. Gantz to evaluate the training regime, officers' activities and soldiers' morale at the other four affiliated army bases of the Golani, Givati, Nahal and Paratroopers Brigades. (*Haaretz*)

British Foreign Secretary William Hague met with PA President Abbas at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. Speaking after the meeting, Mr. Hague [said](#), "We are convinced that there is an inescapable need for both parties to commit to negotiations based on clear principles, and for the United States and the Quartet to set out the parameters for a future settlement", adding that "In our view such a statement should include 1967 borders with equivalent land swaps, appropriate security arrangements for Israelis and Palestinians, a just, fair and agreed solution for refugees and Jerusalem as the capital of both States, so that urgent negotiations can lead to a framework agreement should aim to achieve a framework agreement by September this year as called for by the United States. And I pay tribute to the leadership of President Obama and the tireless efforts of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and US Envoy Senator Mitchell." Mr. Hague ended his statement by paying tribute to Israeli and Palestinian women who had endured decades of conflict on the occasion of the International Women's Day. (www.fco.gov.uk)

At a joint press conference with British Foreign Secretary William Hague in London, PA President Abbas hinted that he would resign if an independent Palestinian State was not established by September. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Foreign Ministry Spokesman Yigal Palmor said that Britain's upgrade of the Palestinian General Delegation was an "unhelpful measure" that would only strengthen Palestinian rejectionism. "They are refusing to renew direct talks and at the same time, they are getting these gestures that are encouraging them in their current policy". But PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki welcomed the move as a "good" step, which, however, was "not enough". He called for the recognition of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders. (*DPA*)

PLO Executive Committee member Hanan Ashrawi welcomed Britain's upgrade of the status of the [Palestinian] delegation in London to a mission, saying that the international community now acknowledged the need to legally recognize an independent Palestinian State. (*Wafa*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu was formulating a plan that would offer the Palestinians some limited "steps on the ground" in the absence of direct peace talks, an Israeli official said, adding that Mr. Netanyahu had not abandoned the goal of achieving a two-State solution. (*Reuters*)

Palestinians dismissed any attempt by Prime Minister Netanyahu to take interim steps towards peace. "Netanyahu is trying to escape from his obligations towards the peace process by talking about new proposals," said the official Spokesman of the PA Presidency, Nabil Abu Rudeineh. (*Haaretz, Reuters*)

In an interview with *Israel Radio*, Israel's opposition leader Tzipi Livni criticized Prime Minister Netanyahu for not divulging his peace plan to the Knesset opposition or the Israeli public prior to his addressing the US Congress where he was expected to deliver the details. She said that Mr. Netanyahu had not done anything to advance the peace process and that his plans would not address the changing situation in the Middle East. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The Czech Republic's Minister of Industry and Trade, Milan Hovorka, indicated the possibility of cooperation with the PA to contribute to building Palestinian institutions and infrastructure. He pointed out the contribution of his country to an energy project in Tubas and expressed its willingness to finance other projects in the coming years. (*Wafa*)

Only a week after razing structures in "Havat Gilad" settlement, the demolished structures had been rebuilt. Four additional new structures were also being rebuilt in the settlement. (*ynetnews.com*)

According to *Yedioth Ahronoth* daily, Prime Minister Netanyahu had submitted to his Cabinet a plan to build 50,000 settlement units in Israel, Jerusalem, and the West Bank over the next 18 months to curtail rising real estate prices. (*Petra News Agency*)

The Knesset approved a law that would levy harsh punitive fines on Israeli citizens who participated in campaigns to boycott Israeli institutions. The draft law included calls for imposing sanctions against foreign citizens and organizations that boycotted or organized such activities, with fines reaching up to NIS 30,000 (\$8,100), while foreign citizens could be banned from coming into Israel for 10 years. (*Haaretz, Wafa*)

The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held at the United Nations Office at Vienna under the theme "The urgency of addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities," was [concluded](#) with the adoption of the [concluding statement of the organizers](#). (UN News Centre)

9

Israeli forces arrested eight Palestinians from Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin and Hebron. Security sources said that Israeli soldiers had entered the villages of Ta'nak and Anin, and had set up checkpoints. (Wafa)

PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki said that the Quartet could postpone its meeting scheduled for that month until after Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's public announcement of his peace plans, which were not expected before May. (Wafa)

Denmark's Prime Minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, said that his country would upgrade the status of the Palestinian delegation in Copenhagen to the level of a mission in line with a number of other EU countries. Meanwhile, the Ministry said it was not considering recognizing the Palestinian State, as many Latin American countries had done recently. "With regards to formal recognition, the European Union has said many times it would take the step at an appropriate time, on the basis of the contribution the recognition would bring to (peace) negotiations and to the two-state solution," the Ministry said in a statement. (AFP)

Hamas proposed a new Palestinian unity initiative, which had been discussed with other factions at a meeting. The proposal called for a unified leadership to handle Palestinian affairs until Hamas and the Islamic Jihad were included in the PLO. Fatah boycotted the three-hour meeting and officials from other factions said that no progress had been made. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said that the new initiative showed that the movement was serious about restoring unity while Fatah spokesman Ahmed Assaf said, "After four years of split, we need decisions not initiatives". (Reuters)

Five hundred tons of gravel for UNRWA construction projects was transported into Gaza through the Sufa crossing, which had been closed by Israel in 2008.

UNRWA Spokesman in Gaza Adnan Abu Hana said that amount was a small fraction of more than 70,000 tons of materials that had been waiting for clearance since 2007. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces raided homes in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan. (IMEMC)

An Israeli court ruled that the Palestinian Hamdallah family would have to evacuate part of their house in Ras al-Amud in East Jerusalem for Jewish settlers. The ruling came after an 11-year legal battle fought by the Hamdallah family to save their home, which had been built after 1989 and located near "Maaleh Zeitim", a settlement block composed of 100 Jewish families. (Wafa)

Israeli forces detained eight Palestinians during overnight raids in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Central Elections Commission appointed by the PA announced that voter registration for the municipal elections scheduled on 9 July had opened. Registration would not be carried out in Gaza. (Ma'an News Agency)

10

Two projectiles were fired from the Gaza Strip, one landing in the Eshkol Regional Council [area], east of Gaza, and the second, in the Negev Regional Council [area], in the northeast of Gaza, causing no injuries, the Israeli army reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces arrested five young Palestinians from the village of Husan, west of Bethlehem. The IDF also entered Al-Bathan village, north of Nablus, inspecting houses and collecting information. (IMEMC)

Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon said that the smuggling of arms from Egypt into the Gaza Strip had increased following the unrest in the Arab world. He said that Israel had observed "increased activity" in Gaza, accusing militants of "trying to take advantage of the uncertainties in the region to booster their capabilities to attack Israeli cities and Israeli citizens". (Ma'an News Agency)

Viktoria Kushnir, a spokeswoman for Ukraine's Interior Ministry, reported that a 42-year-old Palestinian engineer, Dirar Abu Sisi, had gone missing on 19 February after boarding a train bound for Kiev. According to Mr Abu Sisi's Ukrainian wife, he had been abducted by the Israeli secret service in order to sabotage a key electric power plant in the Gaza Strip where he worked as a senior manager. She denied speculation that her husband might have been "wanted" as a Hamas sympathizer and said that he had never engaged in politics or any violent groups. The Israeli group HaMoked, which defends the rights of Palestinians, says that Mr. Abu Sisi was being held in the Shikma detention centre, outside the coastal city of Ashkelon, since the day he was reported missing. Israel's prison service said that it had no information on the case and Shin Bet had declined comment, citing a gag order on the case. Mrs. Abu Sisi said that her husband had told her over the phone about a week after his alleged kidnapping that he was in Israel. His lawyer later told her that he was in custody in an Israeli prison. (AP)

A Quartet meeting planned for March to be held in Paris had been postponed as requested by the United States, Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [said](#) in a statement. The decision came while US Vice-President Joe Biden was in Moscow for talks with the Russian leadership. Mr. Lavrov said that Russia was against a pause in the Middle East peace process, especially amidst the unrest that had hit the region in the past few months. (www.en.rian.ru)

The official spokesman of the PA Presidency, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said that PA President Abbas had called upon the Quartet to support a European statement of declaration of principles to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The declaration, presented by Britain, Germany and France, had been announced by the British envoy at the UN Security Council meeting on 18 February after the US veto of a draft resolution on Jewish settlement building. He said that if the Quartet adopted the context of the European initiative, "it will be a step in the right direction and we will accept it and then it would be possible to return to peace negotiations," but if the Quartet accepted new proposals from Prime Minister Netanyahu, then "the volcano in the Arab region will flame more". (Xinhua)

Envoys of the Quartet failed, after a series of separate meetings, to secure agreement on a resumption of peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians. Talks with Israeli envoy Yitzhak Molcho were hosted by the US Embassy, with the US represented by David Hale, assistant to US Middle East Envoy George Mitchell. The EU was represented by senior official Helga Schmid, and Middle East envoys Sergei Yakovlev and Robert Serry also attended, representing the Russian Federation and the United Nations, respectively. The envoys later met with Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat. Richard Miron, Spokesman for Mr. Serry, said that the Quartet envoys were "seeing serious contradictions in the views of the parties on how to bring about resumed negotiations on all core issues, including borders and security". He added, "Quartet principles will meet in mid-April." (AFP)

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon said that Israel would absolve itself from all deals and commitments signed with the Palestinians should the PA declare a Palestinian State without reaching a comprehensive peace agreement with Israel. (IMEMC)

Reuters reported that Hamas had presented what it described as a new Palestinian unity initiative calling for a united leadership to handle Palestinian affairs until the PLO was restructured to include Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The proposal was raised with several factions at a meeting on the previous day. Fatah boycotted the three-hour session, and officials from other factions said that no progress had been made. (Reuters)

Sources at several diplomatic missions in East Jerusalem said that a group of men who appeared to be Israeli settlers had handed threatening letters to diplomats as they went through a military checkpoint by the West Bank city of Ramallah. The unsigned letter warned diplomats to "Go home!" and that "The meddling by the American Government and by the European Union is putting your stay at risk ... We never will make peace with Palestinian terrorists!" (AFP)

The Israeli military detained 17 Palestinians during overnight raids in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Palestinian Prisoner's Club said in a statement issued by the Club's lawyer that the bad conditions in the Nafha prison were deteriorating. Sick prisoners faced deliberate medical negligence and their visiting families were being strip-searched. The cells did not meet the minimum humanitarian elements such as ventilation, space and bed covers. The Club's lawyer pointed out that the conditions of isolated prisoners were very difficult and needed serious attention. (Wafa)

The Spokesman for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Ukraine, Maksim Butkevych, said that [Dirar] Abu Sisi, a Palestinian engineer who had reportedly vanished from a Ukrainian train on 19 February, had been in custody in Israel shortly after his reported disappearance. "What happened looks like a violent abduction and not a legal extradition or any other legal action on the part of authorities," he said. (AP)

11

Israeli forces destroyed wells and tents of Palestinian families in UmNir village near Hebron, leaving them homeless. (Ma'an News Agency)

Three children and their parents were murdered in an assault in their home in the "Itamar" settlement near Nablus. (AFP, Ma'an News Agency)

UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 Richard Falk [called](#) on Israeli authorities to stop illegally demolishing Palestinian homes in the West Bank. They were about to forcibly displace 15 families, consisting of 150 Palestinians, including children, by demolishing two apartment buildings in Beit Hanina, [north of] East Jerusalem. "This pattern of eviction, demolition, expansion of settlements and settlers' violent

expropriation of Palestinian homes in the occupied East Jerusalem violates fundamental human rights, as well as provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention governing belligerent occupation," Mr. Falk said, describing the development as "particularly disturbing". (www.unog.ch)

12

Prime Minister Netanyahu expressed "deep outrage" over the "Itamar" attack but also called for restraint. "Despite all the awful pain, I call upon all Israelis to act responsibly, with restraint, and not to take the law into their own hands," he said. In his response to the killings, Mr. Netanyahu also accused the PA of "daily incitement" against Israel. (AFP, Ma'an News Agency)

The Quartet [condemned](#) the murder of the Israeli settler family, and "emphasized the need to expedite efforts to achieve Israeli-Palestinian and comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace". (www.consilium.europa.eu)

The following statement was issued by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General condemns last night's shocking murder of an Israeli family of five, including three children, in a West Bank settlement. He calls for the perpetrators to be brought to justice, and for all to act with restraint. (UN News Centre)

13

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh established contact with Egypt's newly appointed Foreign Minister, Nabil Abdalla El-Arabi, to discuss bilateral relations. Mr. El-Arabi affirmed Egypt's interest in the Palestinian cause. (Ma'an News Agency)

Speaking at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that as the September deadline neared, "[Israel] stands to face a diplomatic tsunami that the majority of the public is unaware of", adding that there was "an international movement that may recognize a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders". "It's a mistake not to notice this tsunami. Israel's delegitimization is in sight, even if citizens don't see it. It is a very dangerous situation, one that requires action", the Defense Minister said, adding that "diplomatic initiative" would "reduce risks down the road". Mr. Barak also said that "Israel must say it is willing to discuss security, borders, refugees and Jerusalem, and then it could have a chance". (Haaretz, Ynetnews)

The office of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said, ahead of the burial of the family of five killed on 11 March, that Ministers had approved the construction of "several hundred housing units" in "Gush Etzion", "Ma'ale Adumim", "Ariel" and "Kiryat Sefer" ("Mod'in Illit"). (AFP, Ma'an News Agency)

PLO Executive Committee member Saeb Erakat said that the PA "strongly condemns the decision of the Israeli Government to speed up and increase the building of settlements". (AFP)

The spokesman of UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Roberterry expressed concern "after seeing media reports announcing 500 new housing units in the occupied West Bank. Settlement activity is illegal and such a decision is not conducive to efforts to resume negotiations and achieve a negotiated Israeli-Palestinian peace", he said. (AFP)

The US State Department said in a statement: "Continued Israeli settlements are illegitimate and run counter to efforts to resume direct negotiations". (Haaretz)

Some 158 truckloads of goods, wheat and animal feed were transported into Gaza, in addition to 217,300 kilograms of gas for domestic use. One truckload of tomatoes and two truckloads of flowers, all grown under a Dutch Government assistance programme, were exported and transported to Egypt. (Ma'an News Agency)

14

Israeli gunboats stationed off the coast of southern Gaza opened fire on Palestinian fishing boats without reported injuries, according to witnesses. (Wafa)

Cypriot President Dimitris Christofias arrived in Ramallah for an official visit, where he met with PA President Abbas. (Wafa)

PA President Abbas briefed UN Special Coordinator Roberterry on recent developments in the region, stressing the need to stop settlement activities in order to return to negotiations. He also called on Mr.erry to support Palestinian national rights on the political and humanitarian level. (Wafa)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman warned that Hamas would try to take over the West Bank, claiming that Hamas was stronger than Fatah even in the territory of the PA, *Army Radio* reported. "The [Palestinian] Authority is not interested in negotiations with Israel because some of them think that they can achieve far more in the international arena," he also told the Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee. (Haaretz)

Israeli soldiers toured the village of Awarta, adjacent to the settlement of "Itamar", where the killings of the Fogel family took place, calling over loudspeakers for all residents aged 15 to 40 to gather in the yard of the community's school. Over 300 residents were reportedly detained by Israeli soldiers overnight, among them two PA intelligence officers. An Israeli-imposed curfew remained in place on the village for the third day in a row, keeping Awarta residents locked indoors as a wide-scale military campaign continued. (Ma'an News Agency)

Settlers reportedly set fire to an agricultural field north of Ramallah, while a mob entered a town east of Qalqilya and set fire to civilian vehicles. (IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades said that its activists had no part in the slaying of five members of a settler family in "Itamar", saying they "oppose the targeting of civilians and killing of children no matter what the pretext may be". The Brigades came under scrutiny after an offshoot called the "Imad Mughniyya Group" sent a statement to media outlets claiming to have carried out the attack, but details from the statement did not match statements from investigators. Members of the group in Gaza later denied any involvement. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA President Abbas condemned the killings of a settler family saying that "this act was abominable, inhuman and immoral," in an interview with *Israel Public Radio*.

Mr. Abbas said Palestinian security forces had joined Israel in hunting down the killer or killers who were still at large. Prime Minister-designate Salam Fayyad condemned the killings saying "an infant, two children and their parents were the victims, and as we have always rejected violence against our people, we reject it against others and we condemn it". (Ma'an News Agency, Haaretz)

The grieving settler community in "Itamar" will not seek violent revenge against the unknown assailants behind the murder of the Fogel family but will rather create a settlement outpost in their honour. (Haaretz)

The sole operating crossing for commercial goods transport into Gaza was opened for the import of 210 to 220 truckloads of aid and other goods. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israel had complained to the UN for allowing the premiere showing of a film on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at UN Headquarters. A red-carpet showing of "Miral" by award winning Jewish-American director Julian Schnabel is to be held at the General Assembly Hall. (AFP, Ynetnews)

The day before popular protests calling for unity were set to begin, hundreds gathered in Gaza City, Rafah and other locations in the Gaza Strip shouting "we will not leave until the rivalry is over". In Ramallah, 10 hunger strikers held a sit-in at the city centre for the second day, saying that they planned to sleep there. Gaza protesters marched through the streets of Gaza City calling on residents to join them in what organizers hoped would be a mass movement calling for an end to political division and elections for the Palestinian National Council, with the participation of Palestinians from across historic Palestine. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said that he supported the protests and that he had given directives to police to help create a "positive atmosphere" for the protesters to proceed. (Reuters, Ma'an News Agency)

Israel released prominent Palestinian anti-Wall activist from Bil'in, Abdullah Abu Rahmeh, who had served 16 months in prison. (Haaretz)

PA Minister for Prisoners' Affairs, Issa Qaraqe, arrived in Brussels for a European tour to internationalize the issue of prisoners. Mr. Qaraqe and the accompanying delegation, which included representatives from the Office of the PA President, Al-Haq, Defence for Children International and the Faculty of Law at Birzeit University, discussed with a group of human rights institutions the condition of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. (Wafa)

Thousands of pro-unity protesters were marching in Gaza City when a Hamas-organized rally arrived at the scene. A smaller demonstration, with an estimated 3,000 participants, was held in Ramallah. (Ma'an News Agency)

Actors Sean Penn and Robert De Niro joined stars who appeared at UN Headquarters for the premiere of the movie "Miral" on the Middle East conflict which Israel had tried to get cancelled. (Haaretz)

15

During a tour of the fence being constructed along Israel's border with Egypt, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that he had instructed the IDF to begin planning the construction of another fence along the border with Jordan. (Ynetnews)

After his meeting with PA President Abbas in Ramallah, the President of Cyprus, Demetris Christofias, [said](#), his country could not accept the settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the existence of the wall. Mr. Christofias also announced the donation of €1 million for the construction of a medical clinic in

the OPT. Following the talks, a number of bilateral agreements and memoranda between Cyprus and the PA were signed. (www.cyprus.gov.cy)

The Foreign Ministry of Uruguay said in a statement that it recognized an independent Palestinian State. However, the statement did not explicitly say whether the country recognized the 1967 borders and Foreign Ministry officials had declined to clarify the matter. (AP)

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé told the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee: "There's no point recognizing the Palestinian State on our own. It must be done together. ... Personally we're not there yet. I think that it's a possibility that should be kept in mind." (AFP)

After their meeting in Paris, G-8 Foreign Ministers "expressed serious concern about the current stalemate in the Middle East peace process". "In line with previous Quartet statements, they remain committed to the conclusion of a negotiated framework agreement on all final status issues by September 2011. They also share the hope expressed by President Obama that we can have an agreement that will lead to a new member of the United Nations – an independent, sovereign State of Palestine living in peace with Israel. There is no viable alternative to the two-State solution," said the [chairman's summary](#). (www.diplomatie.gouv.fr)

Caravan homes were installed by grieving settlers in an outpost 500 meters outside the boundary of the "Itamar" settlement near Nablus, in memory of the slain members of the Fogel family. (Ma'an News Agency)

The new PA Cabinet was to be announced next week, officials in Ramallah said. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israelis took to the streets to remember captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. The organizers said that they expected some two million people to participate. (Haaretz)

The Israeli security firm Hashmira, owned by the Danish concern G4S, announced that it would stop providing scanning equipment for Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank. The move came in the wake of public pressure in Denmark following a report from the Coalition of Women for Peace. (Haaretz)

The Norwegian trade union movement called on its Government to recognize the Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders and to boycott all settlement products.

The movement confirmed that if Israel did not end its occupation of the Palestinian territory, it would work for a boycott of Israel, including the arms trade, and research cooperation. (Wafa)

16

Israeli warplanes fired two missiles at a security compound in the Gaza Strip, killing three Palestinians and wounding four, Palestinian medical officials said. The Israeli military confirmed the air strike, saying that they had hit two "terror targets" in central Gaza in response to a rocket launched into Sderot, which caused no casualties or damage. Hamas officials said that the strike had targeted its security facility south of Gaza City. (Haaretz)

PA President Abbas said in a speech before senior members of the Fatah Party: "I declare that I am ready to go to Gaza tomorrow so as to end the split and form a new Government." He also declared that he would not run for re-election. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh had invited Mr. Abbas to visit the day before following parallel rallies in Gaza and the West Bank urging the Palestinian leaderships to reunite. Hamas swiftly welcomed the offer and its spokesman, Taher Nunu, said that Hamas was "considering the necessary arrangements for this visit". Muhammad Al Hindi, a leader of the Islamic Jihad in Gaza, urged the two parties "to translate this good will into practical steps to end the political split and unify our people". (AP)

The United States Agency for International Development announced an initiative to improve employment, entrepreneurship and civic engagement opportunities for Palestinian youth. The four-year programme will benefit up to 10,000 youths through training and work opportunities, according to the agency. (Ma'an News Agency)

The General Manager of Employment in the PA Ministry of Labour, Asef Sa'ed, confirmed that Israel had informed the Ministry of its agreement to issue 40,000 work permits for Palestinians from the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

At a meeting held in Amman under the auspices of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Arab experts took first steps towards taking international legal action against Israel for ongoing excavations near the Old City of Jerusalem, altering the identity of the City. Once the documentation is complete, the committee will draft a report and issue recommendations for a case to be brought before the International Court of Justice, according to an official at Jordan's Department of Antiquities. (The Jordan Times)

Israeli settlement trucks dumped several tons of waste on Palestinian agricultural land in Wadi Shahin, west of Bethlehem. (Wafa)

17

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad urged Hamas to accept PA President Abbas' initiative for reconciliation, Palestinian media reported. He said that forming a national unity Government with Hamas was "the way toward ending the division and reuniting occupied Palestine", adding, "I call on the Hamas movement to start carrying on with procedures to end Palestinian division to pave the way for reconciliation." (Wafa)

In a CNN interview, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu questioned how the PA could be "for peace with Israel and peace with Hamas that calls for our destruction".

He also said that he would be willing to negotiate with Hamas if the movement tore up its constitution and renounced a threat to annihilate Israel, dismissing that as all but impossible. (CNN)

The Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Ahmed Ben Helli, welcomed moves by the PA and Hamas to reconcile. He said, "This initiative shows that the Palestinian leadership is conscious of the supreme interest of the Palestinian people, and that's why we strongly support this move, also praising the "positive response of the brothers in Gaza to this initiative". (The Jordan Times)

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said that he raised the United Kingdom's serious concern over the announcement of 400 new units in the West Bank during his meeting with Israel's Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, telling him that it "runs contrary to peace". Mr. Hague also condemned last weekend's murder of five Israelis in the "Itamar" settlement. On the Middle East peace process, he said that the United Kingdom, together with France and Germany, had set out "our views on what those parameters should be" for the final status issues. (The Independent)

The Jerusalem Centre for Social and Economic Rights [reported](#) that Israel's Jerusalem municipality had decided to halt the collection of property tax from Palestinian holders of Jerusalem ID cards living outside the separation wall. The organization warned that such an act could be the beginning of an Israeli policy to revoke the Jerusalem residency rights of thousands of Palestinians. (Wafa, www.jcser.org)

Settlers issued a call on the Internet to visit three graves east of the village of Awarta, near the "Itamar" settlement. Israeli officials had blamed Palestinians for the murder of a settler family, and settler groups vowed revenge, prompting village council head Qais Awwad to warn residents to stay out of the streets. (Ma'an News Agency)

Danish Green Member of the European Parliament Margrete Auken wrote to EU Parliament President Jerzy Buzek revealing that the Anglo-Danish concern G4S, the world's largest security firm, was servicing the European Parliament, the Israeli checkpoints and settlements in the West Bank. The company had been at the centre of criticism from politicians in Denmark, including the Interior Minister. In addition, a decision by the city of Copenhagen to review its investments in the company had prompted the firm to announce on 11 March that it would end some of its operations in the OPT. (euobserver.com)

The Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened its 331st meeting. At the meeting, the Committee [discussed](#) the current situation in the OPT and developments in the political process. It took note of a report on the UN International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held at the United Nations Office at Vienna, on 7 and 8 March 2011. The Committee also approved the provisional programmes of the upcoming UN Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace and the UN Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace that would be held in Montevideo from 29 to 31 March 2011. (UN press release GA/PAL/1188)

18

The Israeli army had sealed off the West Bank until Monday night for the Jewish Purim holiday. Only medical and humanitarian emergencies would be permitted. (AFP)

The Kremlin said that PA President Abbas would be visiting the Russian Federation between 22 and 24 March. Mr. Abbas was scheduled to meet with the President Dmitry Medvedev on 22 March, the presidential press service said. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's office announced a day earlier that the Prime Minister would visit Russia on 24 March. The agenda of the talks was expected to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and on the Palestinian dialogue. (RIA Novosti)

UNRWA official Chris Gunness said that 16 protesters, who had taken refuge in a UN compound in Gaza a day earlier after fleeing from Hamas police, had left the premises and had called off a planned hunger strike. (AFP)

19

IDF tanks opened fire at Palestinians in an area near the Gaza border. Two 17-year-olds were killed. (*Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post*) According to Israeli police, 49 projectiles were launched toward Israel from Gaza. The Popular Resistance Committees said that the recent barrage, which it called operation "winds of change", was in response to "the offensive on Gaza". Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu vowed that Israel would use "all means necessary" to protect its citizens. Israel's opposition leader, Tzipi Livni, called for a new military campaign against Gaza. (*Ma'an News Agency*) The Al-Mezan Centre for Human Rights condemned attacks against journalists in Gaza by Hamas security forces, to prevent the publication of photos of the violent dispersal of peaceful assemblies which had been occurring around the Gaza Strip in recent days. (*ReliefWeb*)

20

Israel was holding a Palestinian engineer from Gaza who his wife said had been abducted from Ukraine, an Israeli court revealed. (*UPI*) Palestinians fired a guided anti-tank missile at an Israeli tank. The tank crew immediately returned fire, wounding at least one Palestinian. (*The Jerusalem Post*) Fatah denied reports that Egypt had started to work in support of PA President Abbas' expected visit to the Gaza Strip. (*Xinhua*) The UN will be asked to recognize a Palestinian State with full membership. The decision to go forward with the plan had been made by the Palestinian leadership and it was the "choice of President Mahmoud Abbas", PLO Executive Committee Member Saeb Erakat told *AFP*. However, he said that no date had been set for the move, which would request the UN to recognize a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, saying only that it would happen "as soon as possible". (*AFP*) Protesters resumed a hunger strike in Ramallah's Manara square as youth rallies in the West Bank and Gaza continued to demand national unity. Hamas called on protesters to end pro-unity rallies in the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*) A lawyer belonging to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights visited Dirar Abu Sisi, an engineer at Gaza's central power plant, who was in Israeli detention. Mr. Abu Sisi said that he was removed from a train compartment in Ukraine and flown to Israel handcuffed and hooded. (*AP, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

21

The Spokesman for Hamas' armed wing, Abu Obaida, said that his organization was once again ready to impose an unofficial ceasefire in the Gaza Strip "if Israel commits to stopping its aggression". (*Ynetnews*) Israel bombed a number of locations in the Gaza Strip injuring 17 people, among whom were 7 children and 2 women, said Gaza medical spokesman Adham Abu Salmia. The IDF had not yet confirmed the incidents. (*Ynetnews*) "[PA President Abbas] says he wants to visit Gaza not for dialogue but for the formation of a unity Government which will prepare for elections. This cannot be achieved in one visit; it needs dialogue and consensus from Hamas, Fatah and other Palestinian factions which have not been carried out," an adviser to Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said. (*Ma'an News Agency*) Islamic Jihad and Fatah leaders met in Gaza City and discussed President Abbas' planned visit to Gaza. Islamic Jihad leader Sheikh Nafth Azzam said that the meeting focused on ways to foster reconciliation. (*Ma'an News Agency*) Israeli forces detained four Palestinians inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyards. Tensions were high at the site, which was being visited by an ultra-orthodox Jewish group of proximately 40 people, guards said. (*Ma'an News Agency*) PA President Abbas said: "If the Israelis won't allow me to visit Gaza through the Erez crossing, I will go via the Rafah crossing. In fact I am ready to break my visit to Hungary and head to Gaza immediately if Hamas agrees." (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Both Israel and Hamas had failed to make credible progress in investigating war crimes committed during the conflict in Gaza, a UN Committee of Independent Experts said. In a [report](#) presented to the Human Rights Council, Mary McGowan Davis, head of the Committee, acknowledged that Israel had dedicated "significant resources to investigate over 400 allegations of operational misconduct in Gaza". However, only a fraction of these investigations had been completed. In addition, "there was no indication that Israel had opened investigations into the actions of those who designed, planned, ordered, and oversaw Operation Cast Lead", the report noted. "We remain extremely concerned by indications that the de facto [Gaza] authorities have not conducted any investigations into the launching of rocket and mortar attacks against Israel," she said. (*AFP, www.ohchr.org*) UNRWA official Chris Gunness told *Ma'an News Agency* that house demolitions during the first two months of 2011 had been running at double the historical rate. In East Jerusalem, Israel had zoned 13 per cent of the city for Palestinian building, "most of which is already incredibly built up," he noted. "They are forced to build without a permit." (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Human Rights Council held an interactive [dialogue](#) with Richard Falk, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. Mr. Falk lamented Israel's failure to implement the recommendations of the Goldstone report or to take account of the fact-finding report on the flotilla incident of May 2010. He drew the Council's attention to East Jerusalem, where Israeli settlers continued to take over Palestinian homes and expel Palestinians from their homes of decades and generations. (*www.ohchr.org*)

EU Representative to the Occupied Palestinian Territory Christian Berger and UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi signed an agreement between the EU and UNRWA worth € 40 million, during a special visit to the West Bank village of Al-Walaja, affected by the separation wall. The funds will contribute towards the Agency's human development work such as education, health and social protection. (*www.unrwa.org*) With the inauguration on 24 March in Rafah of a wastewater treatment plant, the Red Cross hoped to provide a long-term solution to the problem of water shortages in Gaza. The plant, constructed in cooperation with the Coastal Municipal Water Utility and the city of Rafah, will transform wastewater into a resource clean enough to be used in irrigation. (*ReliefWeb*)

22

A child, a teenager, and three adults were killed and others injured by Israeli artillery fire which hit a home east of Gaza City. Earlier, two Palestinians were injured in the same area in separate incidents involving artillery fire and a drone strike. An Israeli military spokeswoman confirmed the involvement of civilians in a strike that she said was directed against militants. (*Ma'an News Agency*) The Israeli Air Force struck a vehicle in the Zeitoun area in Gaza, killing four Islamic Jihad militants preparing to fire Grad missiles. (*Haaretz*) The Spokesman for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement:

The Secretary-General strongly condemns the killing of three Palestinian children and their uncle and the wounding of 13 other civilians by an Israeli tank shell in the Gaza Strip earlier today. He is very concerned at an escalating situation in Gaza and southern Israel. He reiterates as well his condemnation of rocket fire by Palestinian militant groups in Gaza, including from populated areas, against civilian targets in southern Israel. He calls on all to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. (*UN News Service*)

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said at a Berlin news conference, "We condemn the massive missile bombardment of Israel from the Gaza Strip in the strongest terms. We demand that Hamas cease such acts of violence immediately," adding, "Israel has the right to protect its citizens against terrorist activities like this. A new spiral of violence must be prevented at all costs." (*DPA*)

Russian Federation President Dmitry Medvedev [told](#) visiting PA President Abbas: "I would like you to know that Russia is interested in settling the Palestinian issue based on the principles I have outlined during my visit to the Palestinian Authority. I expect that despite the current difficulties, we will nevertheless be able to overcome negative trends." Mr. Abbas said that the next meeting of the Quartet was scheduled for 15 April. (*Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua, www.kremlin.ru*) Jamal Abu An-Naja, a Palestinian official responsible for the management of the export of vegetables and flowers from southern Gaza, said that cherry tomatoes from Gaza could now be found on European supermarket shelves. He said that under a Dutch-funded programme, Israel had agreed to allow the limited export of agricultural produce to Europe. Mr. An-Naja said that 10 farmers had taken the risk during the year to grow flowers and vegetables on around 25 dunums in the Gaza Strip. Much of the produce rotted as Israel allowed only the export of three truckloads of tomatoes. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs released a new report entitled "[Easing the Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip](#)". According to the report, "due to the pivotal nature of the remaining access restrictions, the easing of the blockade on the Gaza Strip since June 2010 did not result in a significant improvement in people's livelihoods, which were largely depleted during three years of strict blockade." ([www.ochaopt.org](#)) Israel would launch a campaign against a plan by the Turkish organization IHH and several European groups to send a flotilla to the Gaza Strip in May. Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister, Danny Ayalon, would summon foreign Ambassadors to the Ministry to seek their help in stopping this year's flotilla, which would have a fleet of at least 15 ships. The Ministry estimated that 16 ships would sail between the anniversary of the *Nakba*, on 15 May, and 31 May, the anniversary of last year's flotilla attack. (*Haaretz*) PA Minister for Prisoners' Affairs, Issa Qaraqe, said that the Israeli Naqab Prison administration had isolated three prisoners and transferred them to an unknown destination because they had gone on a hunger strike to support ending Palestinian division. (*Wafa*) Eight Palestinian prisoners appealed to all human rights institutions and the Red Cross for immediate intervention to stop Israel's decision to exile them from the OPT. (*Wafa*)

Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco [said](#) in his briefing to the Security Council that with Israeli-Palestinian negotiations remaining at a standstill and violence increasing on the ground, "we urge the parties to demonstrate leadership and rise to the challenge of making a historic peace...

A decisive effort must now be made by the international community and the Quartet to bring the parties back to negotiating the final status issues towards implementing the two-State solution," he added. (*UN News Centre*)

Hamas protested against UNRWA plans to teach about the Holocaust in Gaza schools. Hamas education official Mohammed Asqoul said that "playing with the education of children in the Gaza Strip is a red line". (*Haaretz*)

In response to UN Special Rapporteur Richard Falk's statement that Israeli settlement building and eviction of Palestinians from homes amounted to "ethnic cleansing", Israel's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Aharon Leshno Yaar, said that Mr. Falk was an embarrassment to the Organization. "Israel doesn't participate with Falk," he said, adding that he usually leaves the room when he speaks. (*Haaretz*)

Former Israeli Ambassador to the UN, Gabriela Shalev, said that it was not certain that the US would once again use its [Security Council] veto against the recognition of a Palestinian State come September 2011. She feared that the Palestinians would use the "United for Peace" resolution to go to the General Assembly to obtain support for a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian State, presenting "an unprecedented obstacle to the peace process". (*The Jerusalem Post*)

23

Israel blamed a bus attack in Jerusalem on Palestinian militants. Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu warned militants not to test Israel's "iron will", and vowed a tough response to the bombing. (*AP*)

Israeli soldiers attacked a Palestinian funeral procession in Beit Ummar, north of Hebron, firing live and rubber-coated bullets, and arrested three Palestinians. (*Wafa*)

A bomb exploded at a crowded bus stop in central Jerusalem. A 59-year-old woman was killed and at least 30 people were wounded, three of them seriously. There were no immediate claims of responsibility but Israeli police blamed Palestinian militants. (*AP*, *Haaretz*)

Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Elaraby issued a statement demanding Israel to show self-restraint and to refrain from rushing into a military offensive against the Gaza Strip, stating that such an offensive would only lead to further tension and escalation and would not serve the interests of the Palestinians and the Israelis. (*IMEMC*)

PA President Abbas inaugurated the new headquarters of the Palestinian Embassy in Moscow. (*Wafa*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics [said](#) that the gross domestic product of the OPT increased by 9.3 per cent in 2010 over the previous year. (*Wafa*, [www.pcbs.gov.ps](#))

The following [statement](#) was issued by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General strongly condemns a bomb attack today adjacent to a bus stop in West Jerusalem, which has reportedly killed one woman and injured over 30 Israeli civilians, some of them seriously. Such attacks are unacceptable. The Secretary-General is deeply concerned and calls for an immediate cessation of acts of terrorism and violence against civilians in order to prevent further escalation and loss of life. (*UN News Centre*)

A new report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs entitled "[East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Concerns](#)", documented the humanitarian impact of Israeli policies on the estimated 270,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. The report also described how East Jerusalem had become increasingly isolated from the rest of the West Bank. ([www.ochaopt.org](#))

Israel's Minister of Information and Diaspora Affairs, Yuli Edelstein, requested Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg to shut down a page calling for a Palestinian uprising. The Facebook page launched less than a month ago had reached nearly 250,000 members supporting the launching of a third intifada on 15 May marking Nakba Day. (*Ynetnews*)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad met with the Arab Youth Media Forum, including journalists from Jordan, Tunisia, Iraq, and the OPT, in Ramallah. Mr. Fayyad praised the efforts of young journalists in highlighting the aspirations of the Palestinian people for freedom and independence. (*Wafa*)

The Knesset passed a law prohibiting State funds from being used to commemorate the *Nakba*. The new law, which allows the Finance Ministry to remove funds from municipalities or groups if they commemorated the *Nakba*, was widely condemned by civil liberty groups. (*IMEMC*, *The New York Times*)

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Five mortar shells and two Qassam rockets were fired by Palestinian militants towards southern Israel overnight and another rocket was fired the following morning, exploding in Ashdod. Meanwhile, Hamas officials reported at least three Israeli air strikes on smuggling tunnels and training camps. (*DPA*, *Haaretz*, *Ynetnews*)

The Israeli Air Force attacked four targets in the Gaza Strip, one strike reportedly targeting a major power transformer in Gaza City leading to electricity cuts in western areas of Gaza. Another air strike targeted the tunnels area in Rafah and a third one targeted an area in Tal Al-Hawa, wounding one person, Palestinian security sources said. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces arrested the Coordinator of the Popular Committee against the Separation Wall and Settlements, Bassam al-Tamimi, in al-Nabi Saleh, a village southwest of Ramallah. (*Wafa*)

A total of seven rockets were fired from Gaza which landed in open spaces in Ashdod, Eshkol Council area and Sderot. There were no reports of injuries or damage.

Israeli warplanes carried out a series of air strikes on targets in Gaza injuring one person. (*AP*, *Ma'an News Agency*, *Ynetnews*)

The office of PA President Abbas, who was on an official visit to Moscow, said that the President condemned the Jerusalem bus explosion. PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad also said in a statement that he "strongly condemns the terror attack in Jerusalem regardless of the identity of the perpetrators," adding that it would be despicable if any Palestinian party was involved. Hamas representatives in the Gaza Strip hailed the attack as a "natural response to Israeli crimes against Palestinians." (*The Jerusalem Post*)

After a bomb blast the previous day near West Jerusalem's central bus station, Israel's Police Commissioner Inspector-General Dudi Cohen placed the Jerusalem District Police and the Southern District Police on high alert, increasing their presence throughout the region, *Israel Radio* said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu arrived in Moscow for talks with the Russian leadership. During his meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, he said that Israel and Russia must "prevent the establishment of radical regimes which could threaten Mideast and world peace". Mr. Netanyahu thanked Mr. Medvedev for Russia's help during the massive Camel fire in 2010 and mentioned the current escalation, saying "now we need to put out more fires". (*AFP*, [www.kremlin.ru](#), *Ynetnews*)

Visiting US Defense Secretary Robert Gates told a joint news conference in Tel Aviv with his Israeli counterpart, Ehud Barak: "In virtually every case, the theme of [Middle East] demonstrations has been directed inward at problems in those countries." Israel should try to avoid "anything that allows extremists or others to

divert the narrative of reform... There is a need and an opportunity for bold action to move toward a two-State solution". Mr. Barak stated that Israel would not tolerate firings against its citizens and that "Hamas is the only one that is responsible for these attacks." (AFP, Haaretz, Reuters, The Jerusalem Post)

US Defense Secretary Robert Gates arrived in Israel in an effort to press Israeli and Palestinian leaders to restart peace talks. Mr. Gates was expected to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, President Shimon Peres and PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. (Reuters)

According to Palestinian liaison official Raed Fattouh, Israeli officials had authorized the opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing, announcing that 240 to 250 loads of goods, including 20 motor vehicles, 10 truckloads of cement and iron for UNRWA, and limited amounts of cooking gas would be allowed in. Mr. Fattouh had also been informed that a single load of camations, grown by Gaza farmers, would be permitted for export. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli authorities gave house demolition notices to two Palestinian residents from the town of Burqin, in the north of the West Bank. The Head of the Burqin municipality said that to date 70 residents had received demolition notices. (Wafa)

Israel's Permanent Representative to the UN, Meron Reuben, wrote to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon suggesting that his condemnation of the bomb attack did not go far enough. "In view of these troubling developments, Israel expects the Security Council, the Secretary-General, and the international community to condemn all of these attacks in very clear terms," the letter said. (AFP)

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US Defence Secretary Gates met PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in Ramallah. Mr. Gates said he was looking forward to discussing progress toward a two-State solution. Mr. Fayyad told Mr. Gates that Israel should end the occupation of the West Bank by September. Earlier Mr. Gates met with Israeli President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Netanyahu, who said that "We stand ready to act with great force and great determination to put a stop to [attacks]." (Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post)

UN diplomats said, on condition of anonymity, that Britain, France, and Germany were pressing for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the EU to propose the outlines of a permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian State, at a Quartet meeting in mid-April. (AP)

Israeli authorities ordered an immediate evacuation of Palestinian charcoal production fields west of Jenin. (Wafa)

Israeli forces evacuated a Palestinian family from its home in Ein Al-Hilwa, in the northern Jordan Valley, leaving the family homeless. (Wafa)

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PA President Abbas met with Hamas officials in Ramallah. The meeting, the first to involve Mr. Abbas in a year, had the goal of arranging a trip by Mr. Abbas to the Gaza Strip for more talks. Senior Fatah official Azzam al-Ahmed said that a positive discussion had been held but no headway had been made in arranging Mr. Abbas' visit. A senior Israeli Government official said that Israel would stop dealing with the PA if it brought Hamas into the Government. (AP, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency)

The EU would be making its first contribution this year to the PA's quarterly payment of social allowance to poor and vulnerable Palestinian households amounting to €9.4 million. The assistance would directly benefit 57,912 eligible Palestinian families, including 26,445 in Gaza. (Wafa)

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Two Palestinians were killed and three others were wounded in an IAF attack on the Jabalya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. Islamic Jihad said that the fatalities were its members. An IDF spokesperson confirmed an air strike on a group of militants. (Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF deployed for the first time the "Iron Dome" anti-rocket system near Beersheba, in southern Israel. (Haaretz, Ynetnews)

Israeli forces arrested a Palestinian man from Hebron. Israeli forces also arrested a 65-year-old Palestinian woman in Sheikh Jarrah, in East Jerusalem, for allegedly assaulting a settler. (Wafa)

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In a series of raids targeting Palestinian villages engaged in protests against the Wall, Israeli forces invaded the village of Beit Ummar near Hebron and seized 14 residents, including 7 children, from their beds. They also raided several towns and villages in the Jenin Governorate, interrogating Palestinian residents. A 40-year-old Palestinian policeman was detained in the village of Awarta. (IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency, Wafa)

Speaking in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that PA reconciliation with Hamas could spell the end of peace talks. "You can't have peace with both Israel and Hamas. Choose peace with Israel," Mr. Netanyahu said. (AFP)

PA President Abbas had asked the PLO Constitution Committee to convene as soon as possible, in Cairo or Amman, to begin drafting amendments to the PLO Charter, as laid out in the Cairo Declaration of 2005, which states that the organization would include all Palestinian factions, Wafa reported. (The Jerusalem Post, Wafa)

Israeli forces detained overnight 14 Palestinians from the southern West Bank town of Beit Ummar. Israeli forces also arrested 16 Palestinians during raids in Hebron, Ramallah and Qalqilya. (Ma'an News Agency, Wafa)

Palestinian Prisoners' Club said that 1,500 Palestinians in Israeli prisons had begun a 24-hour hunger strike to protest humiliation, harassment, strip searches of visiting family members, and a solitary confinement policy. (Wafa)

The Knesset had approved a law enabling Israel's Supreme Court to revoke the citizenship of those convicted of espionage, treason or aiding the enemy during war. (Haaretz).

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Five PLO factions met in Gaza City to discuss the latest developments and internal Palestinian situation. They also expressed support to PA President Abbas' initiative to achieve national reconciliation and form a national unity Government to prepare for the next legislative, presidential, and national council elections. (Wafa)

The Arab League is willing to host Palestinian reconciliation talks, Secretary-General Amre Moussa said, after a meeting with Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Zahhar in Cairo. (AFP)

The PA leadership said that Israel was trying to "bully" the UN over the admission of Palestine and dismissed as unacceptable Israeli threats to cut off ties with the PA if Hamas joined a Palestinian unity Government. (The Jerusalem Post)

PA President Abbas' aide, Azzam Ahmed, said: "Of course we need the American money. But if they [US] use it as a way of pressuring us, we are ready to relinquish that aid," adding "The President is working hard in order to bring about a unified Palestinian territory before he goes to the UN." Hanna Amerah, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, said Mr. Abbas was waiting for an official response from Hamas about his initiative to go to Gaza and expected an answer within a few days. For its part, Hamas was demanding further gestures from President Abbas before considering unity, including the release of Hamas prisoners detained in the West Bank, re-opening of closed Hamas charities and the lifting of a ban on Hamas activities. (AP)

Anwar al-Gharbi, the Chairman of the Swiss-based human rights group "Rights for All", petitioned Switzerland's Attorney-General to issue an arrest warrant against visiting Israeli President Shimon Peres for the war crimes identified in the Goldstone report. (The Jerusalem Post)

Three families in the Wadi Samra area of Jordan Valley were served eviction notices by the Israeli military, with a warning of demolitions in case of non-compliance after a three-day period. (IMEMC)

Palestinian detainees in the Israeli prisons of Jalbou'a, Ramon, Nafha and Beersheba announced that they had joined the hunger strike demanding that Hamas and Fatah respond to the popular calls to end the division. (Ma'an News Agency)

The United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace opened in Montevideo, under the theme "The urgency of realizing a two-State solution." Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in a message delivered by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, said: "Israel has the right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized and secure borders. A way must be found for Jerusalem to emerge as a capital of two States, Israel and Palestine, with arrangements for holy sites acceptable for all. And there must be a just and agreed solution to the prolonged plight of the Palestinian refugees." Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People Chairman Abdou Salam Diallo told the meeting: "The Committee welcomes... timely gestures [of diplomatic recognition] and hopes that other regions will follow soon, thereby helping the Palestinian people carry through with their independence and sovereignty." Uruguay's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Luis Almagro, spoke on behalf of the host Government, while a member of the PLO Executive Committee, Saeb Erakat, represented Palestine, and delivered the keynote address. (Division for Palestinian Rights, UN News Centre, UN press release)

Palestine refugees in Lebanon gathered in front of the UNRWA premises in Beirut to protest against the reduction of the Agency's services. Director of UNRWA Affairs in Lebanon Salvatore Lombardo supported the requests of the refugees and called on the international donor community to increase their financial support.

(Wafa)

Knesset members from both Arab and Jewish parties were among the nearly 1,500 people who participated in a protest march in Lod to mark Land Day, the anniversary of an uprising against Israeli land confiscations, which was also commemorated across the OPT. (Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews)

Following the request by the Israel's Minister of Information and Diaspora Affairs, Yuli Edelstein, Facebook removed a page calling for a Palestinian uprising which had garnered more than 350,000 supporters since its launch about a month ago. (AP, CNN, Haaretz)

According to the London-based *Jewish Chronicle*, the Jewish Music Institute at the University of London had turned down a grant from the British-Israeli Arts Training Scheme following intense pressure by pro-Palestinian groups threatening to picket the event entitled "Arts and Music of Israel". The campaigners included the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine, Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods, and the Boycott Israel Network. (Ynetnews)

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A member of the armed wing of the Islamic Jihad was killed while another Palestinian was seriously injured by an Israeli missile in Rafah. (IMEMC)

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay Luis Almagro and member of the PLO Executive Committee Saeb Erakat signed a joint agreement on the establishment of diplomatic relations and agreed to nominate Ambassadors by a set time. Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations Riyad Mansour and Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations José Luis Cancela signed a joint letter to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to disseminate the joint statement as an official UN document. (Wafa)

Prime Minister Netanyahu's top negotiator with the Palestinians, Isaac Molcho, made a secret trip to Moscow and met with Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in order to dissuade Russia from supporting in the Quartet the new EU initiative promoted by France, Germany and the United Kingdom. British Foreign Secretary William Hague had called on the US and the rest of the Quartet to present clear principles for the peace process, based on the new initiative, as soon as possible. (Haaretz)

Israel's Transportation Minister, Yisrael Katz, told *Army Radio* that Israel was considering building an artificial island with sea and air ports off the blockaded Gaza as a long-term solution to shipping goods into the enclave. (Reuters)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that in 2010, Israel built 6,794 settlement housing units, four times more than in 2009. (Ma'an News Agency)

Commissioner-General of UNRWA Filippo Grandi in his [address](#) at the eighth Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development Conference, applauded the Conference's focus on technological progress. UNRWA, he said, was working to incorporate such technological advances into its educational work with young Palestine refugees. UNRWA would soon be linking its electronic refugee registration system to a project for the preservation of some 18 million refugee documents spanning 62 years, representing "a priceless record of their origins, history, and identity". (www.unrwa.org)

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Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak visited the site of an "Iron Dome" missile defence battery in southern Israel, saying that although the system was an impressive feat, it had yet to be 100 per cent effective. (Haaretz)

Israeli forces detained Hamas-affiliated lawmaker Muhammad Maher Bader and three others in a raid on Hebron, a correspondent reported from the scene. (Ma'an News Agency)

During a meeting in Ramallah with members of the Council for Peace and Security who included former top IDF officers, PA President Abbas declared that the PA intended to work towards the establishment of a Palestinian State, and to win Israeli recognition. However, if no accord was reached between the two sides, and if serious talks did not resume, the PA would turn to the General Assembly in September and request recognition of an independent Palestinian State. (Haaretz)

Some Israeli diplomats were urging their Government to acknowledge a Palestinian State within provisional borders rather than wait for the Palestinians to seek UN recognition. The Foreign Ministry said that such views were among a variety being expressed in internal debate ahead of the General Assembly in September. (AFP)

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón told a delegation of the World Jewish Congress that his Government would not recognize Palestinian statehood as "a matter of principle." (The Jerusalem Post)

Officials said that Israel had opened registration for clothing and furniture manufacturers in Gaza to export goods to Europe. (Ma'an News Agency)

Hamas called the imprisonment and capture of Gaza engineer Dirar Abu Sisi a violation of international law. Hamas Spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri pleaded with Ukrainian authorities "to act in order to release Abu Sisi from the Israeli prison", while echoing Mr. Abu Sisi's claims that he was not connected to Hamas.

Mohammed Al-Assad, the Palestinian envoy in Ukraine, urged Ukrainian authorities to put pressure on Israel to ensure his safe return. (The Jerusalem Post)

PA Ministry for Prisoners' Affairs said that Israeli authorities had renewed the administrative detention of prisoner Hana Shalabi for six more months for the fourth time in a row. (Wafa)

The World Bank approved a \$3 million grant to the Palestinian Water Authority that will fund the know-how needed to design and implement a sustainable water resources management strategy. (Wafa, worldbank.org)

The United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace entitled "Engaging civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean for peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians" began in Montevideo. It was opened by Ricardo González Arenas, General Director of Political Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay. (Division for Palestinian Rights)