

Division for Palestinian Rights
***Chronological Review of Events Relating to the
 Question of Palestine***
 Monthly media monitoring review
 June 2006

Monthly highlights

- Secretary-General calls for a full investigation of killing of civilians on a beach in Gaza. ([9 June](#))
- Middle East Quartet endorses EU-proposed “temporary international mechanism” for direct aid to the Palestinian people. ([17 June](#))
- Palestinian Authority President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh reach agreement on manifesto implicitly recognizing Israel. ([27 June](#))
- Israel begins assault on the Gaza Strip following abduction of an Israeli soldier by Palestinian militants. ([28 June](#))

1

Israeli forces arrested 12 Hamas members in Bethlehem overnight, including the head of the group in the city, Muhammad Suliman Halika, and his deputy, Muhammad Musalam Halika. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Two Israeli soldiers were wounded when three explosive devices were detonated under their armoured vehicle during an arrest operation in Jenin. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility. An Islamic Jihad member, Mason Hadid, was arrested. (*AFP*, [www.idf.il](#))

An Israeli civilian was slightly hurt when Palestinians opened fire and punctured the windscreen of his car near the “Ofra” settlement, north-east of Ramallah, *Army Radio* reported. (*AFP*)

Hundreds of Palestinian armed police officers protested outside the Palestinian Legislative Council building in Gaza City to demand overdue salaries.

A group of new recruits went on a brief rampage, smashing windows and climbing on the roof of the building, before security forces pushed them away. (*AFP*, *AP*, *Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA)*, *Reuters*)

Palestinian Authority (PA) Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, in an interview, described the Arab Peace Initiative as “an impractical initiative”. He reiterated his opposition to a referendum on the National Reconciliation Document, calling it a waste of money. (*AP*)

Islamic Jihad’s armed wing, the Al-Quds Brigades, said in a statement that it supported the National Reconciliation Document, an initiative drawn up by faction leaders imprisoned by Israel. (*AFP*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Ynetnews*)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing in Beijing, after the closing of the China-Arab Cooperation Forum. According to Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao, Mr. Al-Zahhar said his Government would take a “serious and positive attitude” towards resuming talks under the 2002 Arab peace initiative. “The Palestinian Government is elected by the Palestinian people according to the law, so it should be respected by the international community,” Mr. Liu said, adding that China would “continue to try its best to provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinians” and had “never labelled Hamas a terrorist organization”. (*DPA*)

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said in an interview with *Yediot Ahronot* that he was opposed to a phased implementation of his “realignment plan.” “I am against stages. This process will be difficult and painful... I think working in stages will lead to upheavals among the population and I am against that”, Mr. Olmert said. He also said he planned to meet with PA President Abbas towards the end of June, adding, “But I do not intend to abandon the conditions imposed on the reopening of negotiations laid out in the Road Map and by the Quartet.... I am going to meet Abu Mazen [Mr. Abbas] to see if he has the means to respect these conditions. If that is the case, there will be negotiations. If not, we will act independently”. (*AFP*, *Ynetnews*)

PA President Abbas and Head of the PLO Political Department Farouk Kaddoumi had agreed to subordinate the Palestinian diplomatic missions abroad to Mr. Kaddoumi’s department, *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* reported. (*Ha’aretz*)

Speaking at a press conference, PA President Abbas said he had agreed with Prime Minister Olmert during a telephone conversation to hold a meeting, but no date had been set. “We must meet, negotiate to reach a peaceful political solution in conformity with the Road Map”, he told reporters. (*Xinhua*)

2

Israeli troops arrested a Palestinian in a Nablus hospital. He had been wounded in an IDF operation on 31 May. (*AP*)

Palestinians hurled three Molotov cocktails at IDF troops operating in a village east of Tulkarm, the IDF said. No one was injured. (*Ynetnews*)

Palestinians opened fire at IDF soldiers north of Nablus. There were no reports of injuries or damage. IDF soldiers uncovered and detonated an explosive device placed on a road near the Askar refugee camp east of Nablus. (*Ynetnews*)

Six protestors were wounded in clashes with Israeli security forces during an anti-separation wall demonstration near the West Bank village of Bil'in. (*Ynetnews*)

Israel began laying the foundations for the "Maskiot" settlement in the Jordan valley. (*AP*)

PA security officer Salim Abu Safiya said PA presidential guards would soon replace the officials that currently operate the Gaza Strip crossings. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that 40,000 PA employees would receive some of their overdue wages over the weekend, and that the remaining 125,000 would receive advances. (*AP*)

3

Senior Hamas militant Abdel Hadi Siyam was wounded in Gaza City in a drive-by shooting, PA security officials said. (*AP*)

Palestinian militants fired two Qassam rockets at southern Israel, damaging vehicles, the IDF said. The IDF fired artillery at the northern Gaza Strip. (*AP*)

Deputy Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) Speaker and senior Hamas member Sheikh Ahmed Bahar called upon Palestinian factions to reject the National Reconciliation Document as "harming some Palestinian national interests" and "oppressing the Palestinian people and their cause".

(*Xinhua*)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades announced the deployment of 2,500 militants to the streets of Jenin to protect it from Israeli attacks and to protect Fatah members. A PA Cabinet spokesman denounced the move as illegal. (*Xinhua*)

Hamas' armed wing, the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the Popular Resistance Committees, and two cells belonging to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades circulated a statement saying: "The national banks were created to serve the interests of the Palestinian people. If their mission has changed and they become an instrument of the siege, we will treat them as those who besiege the Palestinians." (*AFP*)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh told a press conference in Gaza City, "Any referendum taking place in the Palestinian territories is illegal," adding "from a political point of view, the referendum needs intensive study." (*Xinhua*)

4

IDF troops staged an incursion into Ramallah in an arrest operation. (*AFP*)

A pregnant woman was killed in Gaza City and two Hamas militants were wounded, one fatally, when masked gunmen opened fire on their car. A gun battle between Fatah and Hamas loyalists ensued, PA security officials said, and three bystanders were killed. (*AP*)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades said in a statement: "The Martyrs Brigades in the Gaza Strip decided to deploy a protection unit of 1,250 fighters," adding that their objective was to "protect the Palestinian resistance from aggressions of Zionist special units. They will be deployed on the borders of the Gaza Strip." (*AFP*)

The Bank of Palestine announced that it was opening its ATM network, and PA employees had begun withdrawing money. PA Finance Minister Omar Abdul Razeq had said that the PA would deposit some \$330 in the accounts of the 40,000 lowest-paid workers. The other 125,000 employees would have to wait. (*AP*)

Following talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert told a press conference in Cairo: "I intend to meet with Chairman Abbas in order to make continuing progress according to the Road Map... If this does not happen, and we conclude that it is not happening, then we will have no option but to search for ways to move the situation in the Middle East." Mr. Mubarak said, "The aim is to alter the situation in the Middle East towards peace and direct it towards peace and security through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians." (*AFP, DPA*)

"The evacuation of the illegal West Bank [settlement] outposts will begin in a few weeks time," Israel's Justice Minister Haim Ramon said. He said that the ministerial committee, established to find ways to prevent new unauthorized outposts, was scheduled to submit its recommendations to the Government in about one and a half months. (*Ynetnews*)

5

An explosion in the Jabalya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip destroyed a house, killing a Hamas member and wounding two other people, hospital officials said. The IDF denied involvement. (*AP*)

Hamas militants stormed a Palestinian TV broadcast facility in the southern Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunis, destroying equipment in a shooting rampage, employees said. There were no reports of injuries. (*AP*)

Israeli forces arrested nine Palestinians during an incursion in the Ramallah district. (*International Press Center (IPC)*)

Israeli forces arrested three Islamic Jihad members during an operation in Jenin. (*www.idf.il*)

Israeli forces arrested two Palestinians near Hebron and another in Biddya, south-west of Qalqilya. (*Wafa*)

Three Palestinians from Dura, south-west of Hebron, were wounded when Israeli forces fired at a car they were travelling in. Also, an Israeli special unit arrested 11 Palestinians in Anabta, east of Tulkarm. (*Wafa*)

Israeli bulldozers demolished two Palestinian houses in Tubas. (*Wafa*)

Two members of the Popular Resistance Committee were killed and three bystanders wounded in an Israeli air strike on a car in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. The two were identified as Imad Assaliya, 27, and Majdi Hammad, 25. The Israeli army confirmed it had carried out the strike against Mr. Hammad, whom it accused of having been involved in the launching of projectile rockets and other attacks against Israel. (*AFP, AP, Reuters*)

A total of five Qassam rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel's western Negev. Two landed in Sderot, another two outside the town, and a fifth within the Gaza Strip, causing no injuries or damage. (*Ha'aretz*)

Two Arab Bank branches in Gaza City closed after coming under siege from PA civil servants who had not received their salaries in their bank accounts, a bank official said. The Palestinian Banking Association published an advertisement in local papers saying banks still had not received money from the PA. The sole exception was the Bank of Palestine, where about 10,300 civil servants held accounts. (*AFP, AP*)

At the conclusion of a meeting with the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union (EU), Javier Solana PA President Abbas stressed that the deadline for the factions' decision on the National Reconciliation Document would not be postponed. "If anyone wants to amend this document, then we will not reach any results," Mr. Abbas told reporters. Fatah officials had said earlier that Hamas had until midnight to accept the document. "The approach is to treat this document as a sacred document, and that is something we don't accept," responded Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri. "The EU continues to be the most important donor to the Palestinians. More money will be given in the year 2006 than 2005," Mr. Solana said. (*AP, Wafa, Ynetnews*)

Israel's Foreign Ministry is telling Israeli public figures not to attend the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, scheduled to be held in Moscow on 8 and 9 June. "It would be inappropriate for Israeli officials and senior figures to participate in seminars organized by this entity [Palestine, Decolonization and Human Rights Section of the United Nations Department of Public Information] at the same time that the Israel Government is working to eliminate it," Ministry sources said. (*Ha'aretz*)

Former PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia held talks with Syrian President Hafez Assad on the current developments in the Palestinian arena.

Five Qassam rockets were fired towards the southern Israeli town of Sderot. One of them landed near a school, and a woman passing by sustained slight injuries from shrapnel. Another rocket landed on a house, penetrating the roof. The Israeli army responded by firing artillery at the northern Gaza Strip and blamed Hamas for direct involvement in the attack. The accusation was the second over the past week. The first was made after Hamas gunmen were said to have fired Qassam rockets that landed near the Sderot house of Defence Minister Amir Peretz. Sources said Israel would take the apparent Hamas involvement into account when considering retaliation against Qassam cells. (*Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

Israeli forces arrested overnight two Fatah operatives, two Islamic Jihad members and a Hamas member in Nablus; four members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in Ramallah; two Islamic Jihad members in Qabatiya, and an Islamic Jihad member in Tulkarm. Also, Israeli police arrested a Fatah operative in Beitunya, south-west of Ramallah. (www.idf.il)

Six Palestinians were wounded when the Gaza City headquarters of the Fatah-dominated Preventive Security Service came under mortar attack. The wounded included members of the security service and cleaners working in the compound, medical sources said. None of them was in a serious condition. Fatah officials accused Hamas of being behind the attack. (*AFP, AP*)

During a meeting with PA President Abbas, the PLO Executive Committee endorsed the National Reconciliation Document and authorized Mr. Abbas to call a referendum. Committee member Yasser Abed Rabbo said, "President Abbas has informed the PLO leadership that he is going to prepare for the referendum by the end of the week and he will announce this at a press conference before the weekend.... We are giving enough time, about three days, for our brothers in Hamas to reconsider their position." The referendum would be held 40 days after the announcement.

Mr. Abed Rabbo said negotiations with Hamas could continue until the day of the vote. (*AFP, AP, Reuters*)

Hamas Political Bureau Deputy Chief Moussa Abu Marzouq said Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh had offered to host talks between Hamas and Fatah. "We don't know if Fatah has accepted, but Hamas is ready to hold talks in Yemen at the highest level," Mr. Abu Marzouq said.

(*Reuters*)

According to the results of a poll released by Birzeit University in Ramallah, 77 per cent of Palestinians supported the "prisoners' document," which calls for a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The poll also indicated a dramatic drop in support for Hamas. Of the respondents, 37 per cent said they would vote for Hamas if parliamentary elections were held today, compared to 50 per cent in April. Also, 37 per cent said they would vote for Fatah. The poll indicated that 83 per cent of Palestinians also supported the creation of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders. (*Ha'aretz*)

An Israeli military spokeswoman said Israel carried out two air strikes in northern Gaza, targeting a building used by the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) as a training base. A PRC source said militants managed to escape from the building before the missiles were fired. (*Reuters*)

A Hamas gunman was seriously wounded in an exchange of fire with Fatah fighters in Gaza City, medics said. (*Reuters*)

Two Israelis were stabbed and wounded near the West Bank settlement of "Alon Shvout", south of Bethlehem, by two Palestinians who fled after the attack, military sources said. (*AFP*)

A 19-year-old Israeli sustained light wounds after being stabbed by a Palestinian near the West Bank settlement of "Bat Ayin". The IDF and police officers were searching the area for the attacker, who fled the scene. (*Ha'aretz*)

Four Palestinians were killed and three injured as Israeli soldiers stationed near the Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing in the Gaza Strip opened fire on them, according to Palestinian medical sources. *Israeli Radio* quoted army officials as saying that their soldiers saw "three suspicious figures approaching the security fence ... in a probable attempt to infiltrate into Israel." Palestinian security sources said the seven Palestinians were officers from the PA national security service and had been on patrol near the crossing when they came under fire from machine guns mounted on Israeli tanks just over the border. (*AFP, Aljazeera, BBC, DPA, Ha'aretz, Xinhua*)

Twelve Palestinians were arrested in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including two from Ramallah, suspected of the 1996 murder of an Israeli woman and her teenage son from the settlement of "Beit El". (*Ha'aretz*)

Senior Fatah and Hamas lawmakers met at an Egyptian diplomatic building in Gaza and issued a joint statement pledging to reduce tensions and continue talks. Hamas agreed with Fatah to withdraw a private militia from public areas in the Gaza Strip. Under the arrangement, the militia is to be inducted into the PA police force. (*AP*)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz ordered the investigation of the killing of the Amen family and agreed to pay the medical bills of survivors.

Three generations – a grandmother, mother and son – were killed, and a four-year-old daughter and uncle were paralyzed, when an Israeli missile aimed at a Palestinian militant hit the Amen family car by mistake last month. (*AP*)

Reuters reported that the EU was set to offer a US\$ 42 million-a-month aid mechanism for Palestinians that would provide up to \$30 million in cash allowances directly to some workers, bypassing the Hamas-led PA. Diplomats have said that the EU proposal was limited in scope because Washington argued that aid would take pressure off Hamas. The proposal still needed the approval of the EU's Quartet partners. UNRWA Head of the Gaza Operations John Ging said, "Sewage treatment plans are struggling to remain operational, fuel for water pumps is running out....

We urgently need to get the funding mechanism, promised by the Quartet, operational now." (*Reuters, Ynetnews*)

The United States Agency for International Development said a shipment of food supplies from the United States would be delivered to the Palestinian people during the second week of June. (*Wafa*)

During talks in Islamabad between Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, Mr. Aziz announced the provision of US\$ 3 million in Pakistani aid for the Palestinian Government. Prime Minister Aziz said Pakistan remained steadfast in its support for the Palestinian cause and wanted a complete withdrawal of Israel from occupied Arab territories and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. The meeting was attended by Pakistani Minister for Foreign Affairs Mian Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri.

(*Associated Press of Pakistan*)

PA President Abbas met with US Assistant Secretary of State David Welch. At a joint news conference after the meeting, Mr. Abbas said that the United States would not intervene in a Palestinian referendum, saying that the referendum was the Palestinians' internal affair. Mr. Abbas said that he would not invite any side to monitor the referendum. Mr. Welch said that the United States would continue supporting President Abbas to reach a two-State solution. "We will keep contacts with the Quartet committee and the European Union to secure aid deliveries to the Palestinians."

(*Xinhua*)

In Jerusalem, visiting Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer said in a special address to the Knesset that Israel and the Palestinians should resume negotiations within a United Nations framework and based on the Road Map. He said that his country was willing to aid negotiations with "support in whatever form". (*Cihan News Agency, DPA*)

Hamas and Fatah would resume talks today to try and reach an agreement on the National Reconciliation Prisoners Document and on stopping the violence between the two organizations. Arab world figures are trying to mediate between PA President Abbas and Hamas Political Bureau Chief,

Khaled Mashaal. The latter is the main opponent of the document, demanding that the Fatah and Hamas negotiations take place in one of the Arab countries and not in the OPT. (*Israel Radio*)

Doctors for Human Rights said that the PA health care system was on the verge of collapse and was not capable of treating dozens of children in need of heart operations and bone marrow transplants, *Israel Radio* reported. PA Health Minister Bassem Naim said that he was interested in cooperating with all the relevant Israeli authorities and asked for help in funding the children's treatment. Doctors for Human Rights had donated a sum of NIS 120,000 to Shifa Hospital in Gaza. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel had learned that Palestinians were taking advantage of the weapons smuggling tunnels linking Egypt with the Gaza Strip to sneak millions of euros into the territories to ease the financial crisis. The money mostly came in 500 euro bills to minimize its volume. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had asked Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to fight the smuggling, official sources in Jerusalem said. (*Ynetnews.com*)

In an address at the graduation ceremony of the nineteenth military and police sciences classes of Muta University in Karak, King Abdullah II of Jordan said, "Anyone who believes that it is possible to settle the Palestinian issue at the expense of Jordan should know that Jordan will never be a substitute homeland for anybody, and that the Palestinians' homeland and their State should be on Palestinian soil, and nowhere else ... Jordan is Jordan, and Palestine is Palestine.... A unilateral step by Israel would raise question marks and a sense of insecurity not only among the Palestinians, but among all the partners of the peace in the region." The King also said that some sides were "trying to draw support from some States to harm this country or sabotage ties between the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples." (*AP, DPA, The Jordan Times*)

8

Israeli Air Force helicopters overnight attacked several roads in the northern Gaza Strip allegedly used by militant Palestinians to gain entry into the border area and fire small rockets, Israeli sources said. The air force also distributed pamphlets in the Gaza Strip warning Palestinian civilians to stay clear of areas where rockets were launched. (*AFP, DPA, Ha'aretz*)

Palestinians fired three Qassam rockets into Israel. One hit the infirmary of the Kibbutz Nahal Oz, causing damage but no casualties. Another landed in a yard in front of the town of Givim, causing some damage and sending a woman into shock. The third caused some damage to a factory in the industrial zone of Sha'ar Hanegev. PRC claimed responsibility for the rocket launchings. (*AFP, Ha'aretz, Xinhua*)

The IDF arrested nine Palestinians in overnight raids in the West Bank. One Palestinian suffered injuries. (*Ha'aretz, Wafa*)

A Palestinian wounded by IDF fire died of his injuries, bringing to four the number of people killed in the shooting on the Gaza-Israel border the day before. (*AP*)

An Israeli air strike killed Jamal Abu Samhadaneh, 43, head of Hamas' security unit and a leader of the PRC. He and other militants had been about to enter a training camp in the former "Rafiah Yam" settlement when four missiles struck, killing him and three others and wounding 10. The IDF said it had struck the camp because militants there were planning a large-scale attack on Israel. Mr. Abu Samhadaneh was reportedly an explosives expert and a suspect in the fatal 2003 bombing of a US convoy in the Gaza Strip, as well as the killing of a settler and her daughters in May 2004. (*AP, Reuters*)

Hamas Government officials called the killing of Jamal Abu Samhadaneh a direct assault on the PA and vowed to continue resistance against Israel, while the PRC vowed revenge. Hours after the strike, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip fired two rockets into Israel, hitting a building in Sderot, but causing no casualties. Tens of thousands of Palestinians flocked to a Gaza Strip stadium for Mr. Abu Samhadaneh's funeral, some firing in the air and calling for revenge. (*AP*)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz ordered the IDF to step up targeted killings of Palestinians involved in Qassam rocket attacks against Israel, *The Jerusalem Post* reported. The order was reportedly made after three rockets launched from the northern Gaza Strip landed in southern Israel earlier in the day. (*The Jerusalem Post, Xinhua*)

The Hamas-led Government's 3,000-member (security) force remained in the streets of the Gaza Strip despite a deal with Fatah to remove it from public places. A spokesman for the PA Interior Ministry said the force had been repositioned, but there had been no change on the ground. (*AP, BBC*)

PLC Deputy Speaker and senior Hamas member Ahmed Bahar called on Palestinian factions to continue talks over the "prisoners document", which he said was a "good base for dialogue." He also said, "We do not want to participate in the talks to hear threats such as going for a referendum which will lead to many political dangers." (*Xinhua*)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar told *AP* in Islamabad, "We are going to make an end of these sanctions with patience and by such [a] campaign I think we will succeed." (*AP, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert told Jordan's King Abdullah II that he would seek a negotiated peace with the Palestinians and meet soon with PA President Abbas. At a press conference held after their meeting, King Abdullah said, "A negotiated settlement that leads to a viable and contiguous, independent Palestinian State, on Palestinian territories, will help establish a just, comprehensive Middle East peace that provides security and stability to every Arab and Israeli, man, woman and child. It is a peace that people on both sides will defend and protect now and in the future." Mr. Olmert said that Israel was committed to the Road Map and to advancing the bilateral track with the Palestinians. He added, "I intend to meet with Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas... Should the Palestinians not meet their obligations ... we will have no other alternative but to look for other ways". Mr. Olmert also said that Israel would do whatever possible to help alleviate the financial plight of the Palestinian people. (*AP, The Jerusalem Post, Xinhua, www.petra.gov.jo*)

Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres stressed Jordan's role in carrying out Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's "realignment plan." He said that Israel should coordinate future withdrawals from the West Bank with Jordan. "Israeli policy has to take into consideration the fact that Jordan is the closest country to us, and not only geographically," he added. (*Ynetnews*)

A statement from the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population said Israel would not allow some 15.5 tonnes of medicines and medical supplies to reach the Gaza Strip via the Karem Abu-Salem (Kerem Shalom) checkpoint, despite an earlier agreement. The Israeli authorities announced the checkpoint closed until 11 June. (*MENA*)

Israel allowed seven trucks with Egyptian food aid to enter the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing after the passing of the goods had been blocked for more than a month. The 66 tonnes of flour and sugar had been donated by the Islamic Sharia Association. Further relief aid donated by the Egyptian Red Crescent was expected to start flowing through the crossing on 11 June. (*AFP*)

The father of a Palestinian girl injured in an Israeli air strike had been granted permission to enter Israel to visit her in hospital, the Defence Ministry said. The four-year-old girl, Maria Amen, was being treated in an Israeli hospital for wounds sustained in an air strike on Gaza City on 20 May, which killed her mother, brother and grandmother. Defence Minister Amir Peretz agreed to let Maria's father, Hamdi Amen, enter the country to visit her. In the past, Israel had barred relatives of Palestinians killed in Israeli attacks from entering the country for fear they would try to carry out revenge attacks. (*AP*)

The fourteenth International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, entitled "New Challenges in the Middle East Peace Process and Israeli Palestinian Dialogue" and organized by the United Nations Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, opened in Moscow. A message from the Secretary-General was delivered by Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Shashi Tharoor. The Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the

9

An Israeli air strike killed three Palestinians identified as members of the PRC and wounded a fourth in the Beit Lahia area of the Gaza Strip. The IDF said that it attacked the militants after they had fired a homemade rocket into Israel, lightly wounding one man. A second air strike then hit the militants' car as they tried to speed away, killing three other militants. Palestinian officials, however, said the air strikes had targeted separate groups several kilometres apart from one another. There were no reports of injuries or damage caused by the rocket, which the PRC said was fired in retaliation for Israel's killing overnight of Jamal Abu Samhadana, a leader of the group. (AFP, AP)

Israeli shelling killed six Palestinians, including three children and a woman, and injured more than 30 during a family picnic on a beach in the northern Gaza Strip. Medical officials initially said nine people had been killed before lowering the death toll to six. The confusion apparently stemmed from the extensive damage to the bodies. The IDF said it had determined that aircraft and gunboats in the area had not fired the shells, but that ground forces might have been the source. It added that the IDF Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz, had ordered a halt in artillery fire in the area while an investigation was conducted. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

Hamas called off its unilateral ceasefire, which had been in place since February 2005, firing 11 rockets at Israel the next day. A statement by the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' armed wing, said that the attacks were in response to the killing of ten Palestinians, including three young children, by Israeli artillery fire. (AFP, AP)

PA President Abbas declared a three-day mourning period following the killing of seven civilians in the Gaza Strip, saying embassies around the world would be closed and flags would fly at half mast. (AP)

The following statement was issued by the Spokesman for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

The Secretary-General is deeply disturbed at the killing of civilians, including women and children, on a beach in Gaza earlier today, reportedly by Israeli forces, and calls for a full investigation. He extends his condolences to the bereaved families of the victims.

The Secretary-General reminds all concerned of their obligations under international humanitarian law to avoid placing civilians in danger, while urging the utmost restraint to avoid further escalation and bloodshed.

(UN press release SG/SM/10509-PAL/2050)

Reacting to the killing of civilians in the Gaza Strip, the US voiced "its regret for the killing and wounding of innocent Palestinians" and urged both sides to show restraint "and avoid all actions that could exacerbate tensions further". The Arab League condemned the attack as "unacceptable terrorism" and the foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council denounced what they called Israel's "criminal acts." Egypt and Jordan called the deaths "unacceptable". Russia said it was deeply shocked by Israel's "unacceptable" and "disproportionate" use of force. France also condemned the air raids as "disproportionate", while Spain expressed its "opposition to the use of force as a means of solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict". (AFP)

Morocco's King Mohammed VI, in a telephone call to PA President Abbas, voiced concern about chaos in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and offered his mediation towards ending the conflict, the Moroccan State news agency MAP reported. (Reuters)

PA President Abbas signed a decree to hold a referendum, the first-ever in Palestine, on 31 July. The referendum document will call for a national unity government, an end to attacks in Israel and the creation of a Palestinian State alongside Israel on land occupied by the latter since 1967. (AFP)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that he had sent President Abbas a letter saying that Palestinian law did not permit referendums and warning the vote would divide the public. He also said that hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees living in exile would not be able to vote. The letter favoured the continuation of the "urgent national dialogue based on the prisoners' document in order to reach a national agreement". "Such an agreement would enable the formation of a national unity government," it added. (AFP, AP)

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told reporters that Russia supported President Abbas' idea of holding a referendum on establishing a Palestinian State alongside Israel. (AP)

Al Qaeda's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahri, in a video aired on *Aljazeera* TV, urged Palestinians to reject the referendum on a statehood proposal that implicitly recognized Israel. (Reuters)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, in a *Yediot Ahronot* interview, offered Israel a long-term ceasefire in return for the establishment of a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with Jerusalem as its capital. The proposal would also be conditional on the return of Palestinian refugees. (DPA)

The United States has cancelled talks expected to approve measures leading to the payment of Palestinian salaries frozen after the Hamas Government came to power. A teleconference of the Quartet reportedly had been scheduled for 14 June, after the consideration of proposals discussed earlier in Brussels on a funding mechanism for the PA that would bypass Hamas. US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch said there was "no basis" for talks if funding measures included payment for the security forces. (The Guardian)

President Abbas had cancelled a plan to visit Indonesia in June because of the situation at home, an Indonesian Government spokesman said. (Reuters)

10

The death toll from a shelling at a beach in the northern Gaza Strip rose to eight after Mohammed Yussef Jneid, 29, died of wounds at a hospital in Beit Lahia. (AFP)

Israel expressed regret for the killing of eight civilians the day before, but stopped short of taking responsibility, saying an investigation was under way.

Maj.-Gen. Yoav Galant, the head of Israel's southern command, said the IDF had suspended artillery fire eight minutes before the explosion at the beach, which he said indicated his forces may not have been responsible, *Israel Army Radio* reported. (AP)

A Palestinian security officer, Maj. Basim al-Qutub, was shot dead in an attack his comrades blamed on Hamas. Four people were wounded after Hamas supporters fired on the car of Gen. Rashid Abu Shabak, the Palestinian director of internal security, on the sidelines of the Maj. Qutub's funeral. (AFP, Reuters)

A United States student was mistakenly abducted as an Israeli by Fatah militants in Nablus. According to a *Ha'aretz* report, the next day Fatah gunmen handed Benjamin Bright-Fishbein, 20, over to PA custody, which subsequently transferred him to the IDF at Huwara checkpoint. Mr. Fishbein, who is currently studying at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, went to Nablus as a tourist and was abducted by gunmen at a coffee shop there. (Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

PA President Abbas announced a referendum to be held on 26 July on a two-State proposal. Hamas rejected the decision and called on Palestinians to boycott the vote. "It was a declaration of a coup against the Government," said Mushir al-Masri, a leading Hamas legislator. Plans for a meeting between Mr. Abbas and Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal was cancelled after the announcement. (AFP, AP, DPA, Reuters)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, in an interview with *The Financial Times*, dismissed the upcoming Palestinian referendum as "meaningless" and rejected as a basis for negotiations the document that Palestinians would vote on, saying it was "far behind the basic principles that the international community [had] defined". (The Financial Times)

Julio de la Guardia, a spokesman for the EU Border Assistance Mission for Rafah Crossing Point, said three Hamas PLC members, including Sala

al-Bardaweel, the Hamas spokesman in the PLC, had openly brought €4.5 million into the Gaza Strip. "He declared the money, according to regulations, saying where the money came from and where it is going to be used," Mr. de la Guardia said. "He was let through with the knowledge of the Palestinian President's office. The whole thing was dealt with by the presidential guard." *AP* reported that the sum was €450,000 (\$569,000) in cash which was allowed in after Mr. Bardaweel signed a document stating that the money would be used for Government purposes. (*Reuters, Xinhua*)

11

An Israeli air strike killed two Hamas members and wounded three in the northern Gaza Strip. One of the killed men was identified as Salem al-Arabiya, a local commander of the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades. An IDF spokeswoman said the men had been "minutes away" from launching a Qassam rocket at Israel when they were killed. They were the first Hamas members killed by Israel since November 2005. In a separate development, a third Palestinian, identified as Ammar Shehab, a 24-year-old member of the Islamic Jihad, was killed in an explosion at his home in Jabaliya refugee camp. Later in the day, an Israeli missile was fired at a car in Gaza City, but Hamas members on board escaped unhurt. (*AFP, DPA, Reuters, Xinhua*)

Palestinians fired more than 20 rockets at southern Israel after midnight. One rocket critically injured a man at the Sapir Academic College in Negev, next to Sderot. Hamas' military wing in Gaza said it had fired most of the rockets. "We have decided to make Sderot a ghost town," said a Hamas spokesman who gave his name as Abu Ubeideh. Now that it had openly resumed its rocket fire, Hamas "and all of its supporters should expect a serious blow," said Maj.-Gen. Yoav Galant, the head of Israel's southern command. Defence Minister Amir Peretz visited the hospitalized man critically wounded by rocket fire, telling reporters afterwards: "No organization, no status will serve as cover for any source that is involved in planning or carrying out shooting." (*AP, Ha'aretz, Xinhua*)

Palestinian gunmen opened fire at the Atarot checkpoint between Jerusalem and Ramallah in the West Bank, killing one and wounding four others. Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld called the incident a "terrorist" attack. But *Israel Army Radio* said the shooting had been linked to a criminal dispute. Israel's rescue service said the victims were Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem who usually carry Israeli identification cards and have Israeli plates on their cars. (*AP, DPA*)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz told the Cabinet that the death of eight Palestinian civilians at a Gaza beach on 9 June might have "internal Palestinian causes", rather than being caused by Israeli artillery fire. An inquiry committee headed by Maj.-Gen. Meir Kalifi, deputy commander of the IDF ground forces, was established to probe into the circumstances of the incident and its initial findings, submitted to Mr. Peretz the previous evening, pointed to the Israeli shelling as the cause of the blast, but also showed that there was a gap between the time in which the shells were fired and that of the explosion on the beach. The committee was to submit its complete findings by 13 June. (*Ha'aretz, www.mfa.gov.il, Xinhua*)

The Jerusalem Post quoted a Palestinian security source as saying that Hamas operatives had cleared the debris from the explosion which killed Palestinian civilians at a Gaza beach two days earlier in order to frustrate the IDF's attempts to investigate the incident. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Yasser Abed Rabbo, a senior PLO official, criticized statements by Israeli Prime Minister Olmert dismissing the Palestinian referendum as "meaningless", telling the *Voice of Palestine* radio: "The statement shows that Olmert is not seeking a Palestinian partner for talks but attempting to weaken the PA. There is an ongoing Israeli attitude to marginalize the role of the PA and then to determine the fate of the West Bank and get back to the old Israeli policy that the Palestinians can never be partners. Israel is banking on the Hamas Government's political stance that opposes direct peace negotiations and rejects related international resolutions, because Israel doesn't want a partner." (*Xinhua*)

In a statement issued in the Gaza Strip, Abdel Khaleq Natche, the highest-ranking Hamas member held by Israel, said he was no longer a party to the prisoners' document. He accused President Abbas of "unacceptable abuse" of the document and exploiting it for political gain. Sami Abu-Zuhri of Hamas and Khaled al-Batash, a spokesman for the Islamic Jihad, said detainees from the two groups who had signed the document no longer supported it because it had been exploited "to cause controversy". They also said the prisoners opposed the call for a referendum on the document. (*AP, DPA*)

A report by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics said the Palestinian poverty rate reached 29.9 per cent in 2005 (43.7 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 22.3 per cent in the West Bank). The data for the first three months in 2006 showed the poverty rate at 29.4 percent, with about 47.5 percent of Palestinian families living below the poverty line. The Bureau also projected that 66.8 per cent of Palestinian families would live under the poverty line in the second quarter of 2006 due to a deepening financial crisis. (*Xinhua*)

"If Israel discovers that any Hamas official has given the green light to attacks, then there will be no one who enjoys immunity", MK Tzahi Hanegbi (Kadima), Chairman of Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, told Israeli radio when asked if PA Prime Minister Haniyeh could be a possible target. Mr. Haniya dismissed the statement as "proof of arrogance" the next day. (*AFP, Xinhua*)

PaITel, one of the biggest Palestinian companies, announced that it would distribute food coupons worth NIS 500 (\$112) to 40,000 Government workers who had not received salaries since Hamas came to power. Abdel-Malik Jaber, the head of PaITel, said employees of the Government who used to be paid NIS 1,500 (\$336) or less would get the coupons this week to buy milk, rice, sugar and other essentials. (*Reuters*)

In a meeting, IDF commanders had suggested that the air force increase its strikes against rocket launchers and leaders of militant groups, but Defence Minister Amir Peretz ruled out such an operation for a day or two in an effort to give the Palestinians more time to stop rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip. (*AP*)

12

Hamad Abu Gazar, 20, a member of Hamas's armed wing, the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, was killed in Rafah when fighting erupted after a funeral for a fellow Hamas militant who died overnight from wounds suffered 10 days earlier during a previous bout of Palestinian infighting. An hour later, unknown gunmen shot and seriously wounded security officer Ayman Abu Hatab, 28, on his way home from work. Hamas gunmen also fired rocket-propelled grenades and anti-tank rockets at the security headquarters. (*AFP, Ha'aretz, Reuters*)

Israeli forces arrested three wanted Fatah operatives in the Bethlehem area and an arms dealer in Tulkarm. (*Ha'aretz, www.idf.il*)

Israeli forces arrested two Palestinian policemen in Ethna, west of Hebron, and another Palestinian in Yatta, south of Hebron. (*IPC, Wafa*)

About 15 Qassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip landed in the Sderot area in southern Israel, slightly wounding a woman and damaging a vehicle. (*Ha'aretz, Ynetnews*)

Israeli bulldozers demolished a Palestinian house in Jenin. (*IPC, Wafa*)

Fatah gunmen briefly abducted a Hamas PLC member, Khalil Rabei, after attacking his Ramallah office and setting it on fire. PA President Abbas' personal guard granted refuge to Mr. Rabei and nine other Hamas PLC members and was ordered to escort them home safely. (*AFP, AP*)

Palestinian gunmen opened fire at Palestinian legislative offices in Nablus where the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades has a strong presence. It was not known who had fired the shots. (*AP*)

PA President Abbas ordered a "state of alert" in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Mr. Abbas also ordered security forces to prevent any armed groups, including a Hamas-controlled force, from patrolling the streets of Gaza, an official close to Mr. Abbas said. (*AFP, Reuters*)

Hamas PLC members challenged the legality of PA President Abbas' decree announcing the 26 July referendum, although it was unclear if they

could muster the necessary two-thirds majority to overturn it. They had delayed the motion until 20 June saying that they wanted to allow more time for dialogue with Mr. Abbas. Moussa Abu Marzouk, a senior Hamas leader in Syria, said Hamas would not agree to the referendum called by PA President Abbas "and would do its best to stop it". "Even if it's conducted, Hamas would not recognize it and would not accept its outcome whatever that might be", he added. (AP, DPA, Reuters)

Palestinian forces loyal to PA President Abbas, joined by hundreds of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades members, went on a rampage against the Hamas-led Government, riddling the parliament and Cabinet buildings in Ramallah with bullets and setting them alight. The rampage erupted hours after Hamas gunmen attacked a building belonging to the Fatah-dominated Preventive Security Agency in Gaza. No casualties were reported. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

PA President Abbas named Lt. Gen. Abdel Razeq Al-Majadeh, a former supreme commander over forces in the West Bank and Gaza, as military adviser and liaison to deal with the Hamas-run Interior Ministry. (AP)

The Palestinians are facing a spiralling humanitarian crisis because of an EU and US freeze on aid to the Hamas Government, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said. The ICRC was increasing by roughly a quarter its 2006 budget for its activities in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, bringing the overall figure to more than 52 million Swiss francs (US\$42 million). (AFP, Reuters, www.icrc.org) Prime Minister Tony Blair's official spokesman told reporters he had welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's preference for a negotiated settlement, "as that's our strong preference as well". "Let's be clear, everyone knows what the answer to the issue is, it is a two-State solution, and therefore the sooner both sides start talking about that, the better", the spokesman added. (AP, BBC)

During a joint press conference after talks with Prime Minister Tony Blair in London, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said, "I will do every possible effort to engage in a dialogue with the Palestinian representatives on the basis of these [Road Map] principles, and I will meet with [PA President Abbas] soon, within a few weeks, after some preparations, and I will appoint my representatives to prepare these meetings.... We are not impatient, therefore we are ready to give it some time and see that indeed the basic preconditions can be met by the Palestinians". He added that if Israel was not able to negotiate with Palestinians on the basis of the principles of the Road Map, it would "have to move forward, even without a Palestinian partner, in order to separate from the Palestinians, to pull out from areas in the West Bank, to realign Israeli settlements partly into the settlement blocks and partly into other parts of the State of Israel, and to leave a very large part of the territories, a contiguous part of the territories, for a Palestinian State to be created by the Palestinians". Mr. Blair said, "I don't want to go down any other path than a negotiated settlement, but the reality is this thing has got to be moved forward by negotiation, or we are in a stalemate that Israel is necessarily and realistically going to want to unlock... We either put our best effort into making sure that negotiated settlement becomes a reality, or we are going to face a different reality".

(AFP, AP, Reuters, www.number-10.gov.uk)

Germany welcomed PA President Abbas' call for a referendum, with Government spokesman Ulrich Wilhelm saying: "The German Government, like all other European Governments, welcomes any step that could make it easier for Hamas to comply with the three criteria set by the Quartet".

(AFP) EU Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner acknowledged that there was still disagreement within the Quartet on the international aid plan for Palestinians but said she hoped the scheme could be launched in a matter of weeks. She told a news conference that EU foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg had shown solid support for the plan, which she hoped to see reflected by EU leaders at a summit in Brussels on 15 and 16 June. Under the EU plan, the aid mechanism would provide up to \$30 million a month in cash "allowances" directly to Government employees who provide essential services, particularly health care. However, Western diplomats in Israel had earlier said that the United States had been pressing the EU to adopt a US alternative plan calling for welfare payments to poor Palestinians, who could use the money to cover medical bills and buy food. (Reuters)

UNICEF appealed for extra funds to meet the emergency health, education and protection needs of the Palestinians, revising its appeal amount from US\$8.4 million to \$22.7 million. (www.unicef.org)

13

An Israeli air strike on a car carrying militants in Gaza City killed 11 Palestinians and wounded more than 30. Although two of the victims were confirmed to be members of Islamic Jihad, the other nine were believed to be civilians, including two young brothers, four and eight years old, and their father. The Israeli military said it had targeted a car carrying Islamic Jihad terrorists on their way to launch longer-range Katyusha rockets at Israel. (AFP, AP, Reuters, www.idf.il)

Israeli forces overnight arrested 17 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank. (www.idf.il)

Defence Minister Amir Peretz said Israel would no longer exhibit restraint towards Palestinian militants involved in anti-Israel operations. "We will act with all our might and use all our means against any group that acts against us", Mr. Peretz said. (AP)

An Israeli military committee investigating the deaths of eight Palestinians in an explosion at a Gaza beach on 9 June would conclude that the military was not responsible, *Ha'aretz* reported. The committee was to present its findings to the Defence Minister and the Chief of Staff later in the day.

Its tentative conclusion was that the explosion had been caused by a bomb planted by Hamas to ambush Israeli naval commandos operating near northern Gaza. (AP, *Ha'aretz*, Reuters)

PA Tourism Minister Judeh Murqos announced his resignation from the Hamas-led Government in protest against increased inter-Palestinian violence. (AFP, DPA)

At a press conference, IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz said that an investigation into the timing of Israeli shelling of Gaza and the shrapnel taken from victims showed his forces were not to blame for the 9 June blast on a Gaza beach. "We checked each and every shell that was fired from the sea, the air and from the artillery on the land and we found out that we can track each and every one according to a timetable and according to the accuracy of where they hit the ground", he said, adding, "We are very sorry for the deaths of the seven Palestinians, but that does not mean that we are responsible". Khalid Abu Hilal, a spokesman for the PA Interior Ministry, described Israel's denial of responsibility as a fabrication. At the same time, Ghazi Hamad, a Hamas spokesman said, "These Israeli allegations are false and lack any credibility". (BBC, Reuters)

At a press encounter at UN Headquarters in New York, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that he was shocked and saddened by the latest missile attack by Israel, which killed nine people and wounded about 40. He had always maintained that there had to be proportional use of force and that Governments needed to respect humanitarian international law. He offered his deepest condolences to the families that had lost their loved ones.

He also reminded the Palestinians that he had always asked them to stop the Qassam attacks. When asked about his comments on the findings of the Israeli investigation on the beach attack in the northern Gaza Strip, he said, "To find a mine on the beach is rather odd. With regards to an

international investigation of any kind, it would require the cooperation of the parties. We would need both the Israelis and Palestinian authorities to cooperate with such an investigation". (*UN News Centre*)

In a press briefing to *Wafa*, PA President Abbas condemned the Israeli attacks in Gaza. He said, "This Israeli military escalation against our dispossessed people comes simultaneously with the continued siege and international aid cut-off", adding, "Israel never stops its escalation at any moment and any day", adding "the Palestinian leadership is in constant contact with the Quartet and the international community and call on them to consider what happens to our people". (*IPC, Wafa*)

PA President Abbas briefed UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the Israeli military escalation against the Palestinian people. Mr. Abbas stressed the necessity to put an end to the Israeli atrocity that could lead the region to a state of anarchy and violence. He emphasized the importance of the resumption of international aid to the Palestinian people. (*Wafa*)

Speaking to members of the British Parliament in London, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said, "We will never agree to pull out of all of the territories, because the borders of 1967 are indefensible". (*Ha'aretz, Ynetnews*)

At a meeting with members of Britain's Parliament, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said that he had authorized a shipment of weapons to PA President Abbas. "I authorized last night the transfer of arms and ammunition to Chairman Abu Mazen in order to strengthen his presidential guard, so he can strengthen his forces against Hamas", adding, "I did this because we are running out of time and we need to help Abu Mazen". (*AP*)

After meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett commented on the security situation in the Occupied Territories: "I am greatly concerned by the increasing violence in the Middle East. All violence in Israel and the Occupied Territories acts as an obstacle to peace. Internal violence in the Occupied Territories and actions by the Israeli military have left civilians dead and injured. Just today, in Gaza, civilians, including children, have been killed by Israeli military action against a vehicle carrying rockets. Such casualties are completely unacceptable." (*The Foreign and Commonwealth Office*)

Ha'aretz reported that, in light of the international opposition to further unilateral steps by Israel, the Israeli Government had begun to draft an alternative plan that would essentially convert Prime Minister Olmert's unilateral convergence plan into a bilateral move carried out in conjunction with PA President Abbas. According to the plan now being drafted by the Prime Minister's Office and the Foreign Ministry, Israel would propose to Mr. Abbas that they reach an agreement to establish a Palestinian State with provisional borders in the Gaza Strip and about 90 per cent of the West Bank. The provisional border in the West Bank would match the route of the separation fence, except for the Jordan Valley, over which Israel would retain security control. (*Ha'aretz*)

After meeting EU officials drawing up the international plan to aid Palestinians agreed in principle by the Quartet, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that Israel saw a need to help ordinary Palestinians, but the money must not go through the Hamas-led Government. Ms. Livni said Israel would decide whether to release Palestinian tax revenues into the plan once the plan was complete. (*Reuters*)

The Israeli Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee approved the conditions for exceptions to the so-called "intifada law", passing the bill for requests, lodged a year ago, by about 2,000 Palestinians for Israeli compensation for damage caused during the intifada. The delays stemmed from a dispute between the Defence and Justice Ministries and the Committee over the formulation of the Law. The bill would establish a committee to discuss compensation beyond the letter of the law for injured Palestinians. The purpose of the "intifada law" is to minimize suits against the State by Palestinians hurt in the intifada. It absolves the state of responsibility for damage incurred due to military action in areas that the Defence Minister had declared conflict zones, or damage to a citizen of an enemy State or a member of a terror group. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Jordanian Hashemite Charity Commission sent a fifth aid convoy to the Occupied Palestinian Territory under King Abdullah's directives. Comprising eight trucks laden with drugs, medical supplies and milk, the convoy was donated by the Moroccan Government, the Algerian Physicians' Association, Jordanian medical drugs companies and others. (*Petra*)

14

A Hamas gunman was killed in the southern Gaza Strip after Hamas militants attacked the local commander of a Palestinian police force. The commander was shot in the legs seven times and moderately wounded. PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh, joined by senior security commanders, met for talks on the ongoing violence in Gaza City. "We deplore and regret these incidents", Mr. Haniyeh said. "We all are concerned and interested in stopping this deterioration. The Government is going to carry out its responsibilities, along with the security branches, in order to maintain law and order." (*AP*)

In Ramallah, dozens of PA employees burst into the Parliament building and pelted lawmakers with water bottles, tissue boxes and other small items. "We are hungry. We are hungry", the protesters screamed. Order was restored after about 45 minutes, and the parliamentary session resumed. (*AP*)

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for a Qassam rocket which landed south of Ashkelon, not causing any damage or casualties. Several other rocket launches appeared on IDF radars but no hits were located, possibly indicating that the rockets landed within the Gaza Strip. (*Ha'aretz*)

Chief of the Israeli Army's southern command Maj.-Gen. Yoav Galant said that Israel was examining ways to better ensure civilians were not hit in air strikes. "We will study how we can reduce such types of incidents in the future", he told *Army Radio*. (*AP*)

"There has been much speculation about the cause of the beach killings, but the evidence we have gathered strongly suggests Israeli artillery fire was to blame", said Sarah Leah Whitson, Director of the Middle East and Africa Division at Human Rights Watch. "It is crucial that an independent investigative team, with the necessary expertise, verify the facts in a transparent manner." (*Human Rights Watch*)

In an interview in the Gaza Strip, Ahamad Yusef, PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's political adviser, said Hamas was prepared to offer a 50- to 60-year ceasefire if Israel withdrew to the 1967 lines, and left open the possibility of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement in the distant future. Mr. Yusef went on to say that, "Renewing the suicide bombings does not serve the interests of the Palestinian Government", adding "The Government is against harming civilians on both sides, and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh has acted decisively to stop civilians from being harmed, and even to stop rocket fire." He said Israel was inviting the terror attacks. He said, "If Israel escalates the fighting, it should not be surprised when the killing harms it as well". (*Ha'aretz*)

PA President Abbas rejected an Israeli alternative plan for a Palestinian State with provisional borders, Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat told the Palestinian daily *Al-Ayam*. According to Mr. Erakat, the only viable option for peace was Israel's withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders and the establishment of a Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. (*Ha'aretz*)

"We agreed with [PA President Abbas] that members of the [Hamas] force should be appointed to the police.... There will be training for them to be part of the police," PA Prime Minister Haniyeh told a joint news conference with senior Fatah member Mohammed Dahlan. "The President and Prime Minister agreed to the withdrawal of all members of this force from the streets and junctions in the Gaza Strip," Mr. Dahlan said. (*AFP*)

After meeting French President Jacques Chirac in Paris, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert told reporters that his plan to set Israel's borders in the West Bank "cannot be stopped". He said, "The plan is inevitable, it will be implemented, hopefully by agreement, but it will be implemented" (*AFP, Ha'aretz*)

In Paris, French President Jacques Chirac, speaking at a press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, said that France and the EU were determined to help achieve a peace that was acceptable by both [the Israeli and Palestinian] sides, and one that would allow both sides to live in peace and security. He said that the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict had gone on long enough. "It is time to impose peace in the region," said the French President, "based on two States living side by side each other in peace". (*The Jerusalem Post*)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar returned to Gaza after a trip that took him to Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, China, Pakistan, Iran and Egypt with \$20 million in cash. Security officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that Mr. Al-Zahhar had turned over the money to the Palestinian Treasury. (AP)

World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz said: "The World Bank would like to facilitate the delivery of assistance that a number of donors are eager to provide so that the Palestinian people do not suffer from a lack of social services, particularly health and education," he said. "We are in active discussion with members of the Quartet and our board of executive directors to find both immediate and longer-term solutions." (AP)

Pope Benedict XVI called on Israelis and Palestinians to "bravely restart the path of negotiation". "The Vatican follows with much apprehension and pain the growing and blind episodes of violence that are currently covering the Holy Land with blood", said the statement. The Vatican also asked the "international community to rapidly put in place the necessary means for justified humanitarian support" and called on all parties to respect human life, particularly of unarmed citizens and children. (AFP)

Syria had renewed its call for a constructive national dialogue among all the Palestinian factions to avoid any provocative steps, during a meeting between Syria's Vice-President Farouk Sharaa and PLO Political Department Head Farouk Kaddoumi. (Xinhua)

A delegation of the Arab Group, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People met Secretary-General Kofi Annan to discuss the killing of Palestinians on a beach in the Gaza Strip. It is expected that the delegation will meet the President of the Security Council to ask the Council to assume its responsibilities to stop the Israeli attacks on the Palestinian people. (IPC)

Asked about the Secretary-General's position now that Israel had completed its investigation into the Gaza Strip beach deaths, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said: "At this point, there are differing accounts of what had happened, different investigations and we're watching this debate very closely".

Asked about press reports regarding the possibility of the Secretary-General sending a special envoy to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he said such reports were false. (UN News Centre)

15

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired four rockets into southern Israel, injuring one person and causing some damage, an Israeli military source said. Islamic Jihad took responsibility. (AFP)

The IDF arrested eight Palestinians, including three policemen, in the West Bank cities of Nablus and Tulkarm, security sources said. (Wafa)

Two Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops on the border of the Gaza Strip, a medic source said. The medic named the dead as Mohammed Abu Tanjara, 22, and Salam Abu Zubeida, 23. An Israeli military spokesperson said that an elite infantry unit on patrol intercepted and fired at the Palestinians preparing to plant a bomb. (AFP, The Jerusalem Post)

PA Information Minister Yusuf Rizqa returned from a tour of Arab States carrying \$4 million in cash, security officials at the Rafah Terminal reported. The international monitors in Rafah had threatened to leave over the incident. (DPA, The Jerusalem Post)

The PLO rejected Prime Minister Olmert's plan on unilaterally withdrawing from parts of the West Bank and drawing Israel's permanent borders. "We reject all these suggestions because we want a full permanent solution according to the international legitimacy resolutions", PLO Executive Committee member Yasser Abed Rabbo told the *Voice of Palestine* radio. He said that the solution should include a Palestinian independent State within the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the return of Palestine refugees. (Xinhua)

Hamas militants stopped firing rockets from the Gaza Strip towards Israel after Israel's threats to target the group's leadership, Israeli officials said.

"We sent clear messages ... and at the end, the firing of the rockets stopped", Maj.-Gen. Amos Gilad told *Army Radio*. Hamas issued a statement denying it had halted rocket fire, saying its militants had fired two rockets the previous day. That claim had been disputed by the IDF.

(AP, Ha'aretz)

A Ha'aretz investigation revealed that the IDF had intensified its use of house demolitions during West Bank arrest raids since Israel's High Court of Justice banned the IDF from forcing Palestinian civilians to go into the homes of barricaded fugitives as negotiators. (Ha'aretz)

Israel's High Court of Justice ruled that the 5-kilometre-long section of the separation wall protecting the West Bank settlement of "Tzofim" should be dismantled in six months. (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas denied media reports that Israel had transferred weapons to the PA presidential guards. (Wafa)

16

European leaders have endorsed an estimated €100 million aid package to Palestinians, to be divided on health, power supply and "a social safety net".

EU spokesperson Emma Udwin said she expected final approval from the Quartet and other donors within days. The EU wants to have a functioning mechanism by early July. There was no mention in the statement about paying the salaries of Palestinian Government workers. The fund will be managed by the World Bank and the EU representative working with the office of PA President Abbas. EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner said, "We Europeans are determined to play our part in preventing a humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian Territories". PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat welcomed the European decision and added, "We call on them to review their boycott of the Government and resume aid payments according to the customary means.... The European position is commendable but we need much more aid". (AP, AFP, AFX International, The Jerusalem Post, BBC)

Regarding the Hamas ceasefire offer, official spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri said, "We are not interested in making any offers and proposals....

When the occupation stops its killings and crimes against our people, then the factions may look into the issue in accordance with the interests of our people". He said that the ceasefire offer, announced by Cabinet spokesperson Ghazi Hamad in an interview with *Israel Radio*, represented the Government, and not the militant group itself. (Reuters)

PA President Abbas left the West Bank for meetings in Amman and Cairo as part of a brief regional tour, a source in his office said. Mr. Abbas was scheduled to meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Saturday before heading to Amman to meet King Abdullah II of Jordan on Sunday. (AFP)

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said it has more evidence that an Israeli artillery shell – not a bomb planted by Palestinian militants – killed seven civilians on a northern Gaza beach last week. HRW said the father of a 19-year-old Palestinian, injured in the blast, gave shrapnel taken from his body to HRW researchers, who determined that the shrapnel was a piece of fuse from an artillery shell. Also, HRW said it had checked the records of Gaza's Kamal Adwan hospital, which showed that the first casualties of the blast were admitted as early as 5.05 p.m. "If the records of the hospital are accurate, based on the time needed to despatch an ambulance and drive from the hospital to the beach and back, this suggests that the fatal explosion took place at the time when the IDF said they were firing artillery rounds", HRW said in a statement. "The likelihood that the Ghaliya family was killed by an explosive other than one of the shells fired by the IDF is remote", said March Garlasco, a senior military analyst at HRW. (DPA, The Jerusalem Post)

17

The Quartet issued a statement elaborating on an EU proposal for channelling aid directly to the Palestinian people. The "temporary international mechanism" would be limited in scope and duration and reviewed whether it is still needed after three months. "The mechanism facilitates needs-based assistance directly to the Palestinian people, including essential equipment, supplies and support for health services, support of the uninterrupted supply of fuel and utilities, and basic needs allowances to poor Palestinians". (UN press release SG/2114-PAL/2051, UN News Centre)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh described the atmosphere between Hamas and Fatah as "very positive". He said that significant progress had been

made on several points that were in dispute. A Fatah-Hamas agreement on the prisoners' document, a blueprint for a national unity government, could be reached within the coming two days, said PLC Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik. (*Ha'aretz*, AP)

18

Two Palestinian militants jumped out of a car in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya moments before it exploded, residents said. Three rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip, bringing to nine the number of rockets fired over the course of the day, an Israeli source said. One rocket hit the town of Sderot without causing casualties. However, it blew out the windscreen of several cars and destroyed electric pylons, causing power cuts. (AP, AFP)

IDF troops raided the towns of Al-Yamun, west of Jenin, and entered the old town of Nablus. (Wafa)

The Israeli Supreme Court rejected two efforts to change the route of the wall in East Jerusalem. In both cases, Palestinian residents argued that the wall would be built on private land and cut them from their "centre of life" in Jerusalem. One argued that part of the wall would be built on a cemetery still used by one of the villages. The cases were filed separately by residents of A-Sheikh and Kfar Anata. Daniela Yanai, a lawyer at Ir Amin, an Israeli advocacy group that deals with Jerusalem issues, said, "On the one hand, you have Israel expanding its land, but on the other hand pushing Jerusalem residents away toward the West Bank". (AP)

PA President Abbas said he was rallying Arab nations to block Israel's plan to unilaterally redraw its borders and instead support the US-backed proposal envisioning a Palestinian State. "We are working now and consolidating our contacts with Arab countries to remove Prime Minister Olmert's plan from the table and solidify the Road Map as basis for negotiations and dialogue", President Abbas said after meeting King Abdullah II of Jordan in Amman. (AP)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert rejected calls for an international inquiry into the blast on a Gaza beach nearly two weeks ago in which eight Palestinians were killed. "We will never agree to become subject to an investigation by international bodies", the Prime Minister told ministers during a Cabinet meeting. (AFP)

Thousands of Palestinian Government workers received packages from the United Nations. The 90,000 Palestinian refugees, who work in the public sector, had been living without salaries for almost four months. The workers and their families joined the ranks of 635,000 other impoverished Gazans, dependent on UNRWA for basic food products. "This emergency assistance is to meet the very basic humanitarian needs", said John Ging, UNRWA Gaza Field Director. (Al Quds)

PA President Abbas, in a meeting with Egyptian President Mubarak in Cairo, commenting on the EU aid, said, "The mechanism is not adequate because it must go through the Government.... Though we consider this a step forward, it is not enough because it cancels the role of the Government and cancels the role of the PA". (Ynetnews)

19

At least 10 Palestinians were arrested by the IDF in the West Bank. In the city of Salfit, Israeli soldiers arrested Nisreem Madhi, a 28-year-old mother of four. (Wafa, AFP)

An Israeli bus was attacked by unidentified Palestinians near the West Bank settlement of "Ofra", said the Israeli police. An Israeli was lightly injured in the attack. It was not clear how many Palestinians were involved in the incident. (Xinhua)

IDF soldiers arrested 12 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank. Israel's border police arrested 38 Palestinian residents of Hebron near Israeli settlements there. (Ha'aretz)

Defence Minister Amir Peretz ordered a review of the planned route of the wall after the president of the Israeli Supreme Court, Aharon Barak, accused the State of allowing non-security-related factors to influence the wall's route. "In no small number of places, the wall's objective is indeed annexation", said Col. (Ret.) Shahul Arieli, in an interview with *Army Radio*. (The Jerusalem Post)

The Jerusalem Post reported that Hamas called on the PLC to launch an investigation into the transfer of rifles and ammunition to forces loyal to the PA, charging that the move was intended to trigger civil war among the Palestinians. PA President Abbas had publicly denied knowing anything about the deal, announced by Israeli Prime Minister Olmert last week in London. (The Jerusalem Post)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh, speaking with journalists, said it was too early to speak of a national unity Government, but noted that a dialogue among Palestinian factions regarding the prisoners' document was "progressing seriously and positively". (Ynetnews)

The European Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, arrived in Israeli for a two-day visit to meet Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, PA President Abbas and other relevant officials on both sides. Ms. Ferrero-Waldner, speaking at a press conference in Jerusalem, called Prime Minister Olmert's realignment plan "a very courageous step", but said that a durable peace could only be achieved through dialogue and communications. Prior to her arrival, she issued a statement welcoming the Quartet's endorsement of the EU proposals for a "temporary international mechanism". (The Jerusalem Post)

Days after spiriting suitcases full of cash into the Gaza Strip, Hamas distributed emergency payments to thousand of civil servants. (AP)

Foreign Ministers of Islamic nations gathered for a meeting organized by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in Baku. The Foreign Minister of Malaysia, Syed Hamid Albar, said at the opening of the meeting, "Palestinian forces should not allow a civil war take place". Yemeni Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Kurbi said the victory of Hamas at the parliamentary elections in January was being exploited by Israel. "The victory of Hamas is a trump card in the hands of Israel, which does not want a dialogue with the Palestinian Government". (AFP)

PA President Abbas received US Consul General in Jerusalem, Jake Wallis, in Ramallah. (Wafa)

Justin Kilcullen, Director of Trócaire, the official overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland said: "The Irish Government is failing in its duties towards the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. The escalation in violence, which has occurred in the past week, must be matched by clear statements by the Irish Government and the EU to condemn such attacks from both sides and take appropriate action to stop the climate of impunity. This has not happened." (www.trocaire.org)

20

Palestinians fired two Qassam rockets, one landing inside the Gaza Strip, the second one exploding in a field outside Sderot in Israel (Ha'aretz)

The IDF resumed the shelling of the northern Gaza Strip. (Wafa)

Palestinians threw a bomb and opened fire at IDF troops operating in Nablus. There were no casualties. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli aircraft attacked a workshop in Gaza City, which the IDF said was a weapons-making factory operated by Hamas and used to make rockets.

No casualties were reported. (AP, Petra)

Three Palestinian children were killed in an Israeli air strike targeted at a car carrying Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades militants in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. Medics said 14 others, most of them children, had been wounded. The militants fled the car before it was hit.

Those killed were identified as Samia Sharif, 5, Mohamed Rouka, 6, and Bilal Hissi, 16. (AFP, AP, Reuters, Wafa, Ynetnews)

IDF soldiers arrested the wife of PA Deputy Cabinet Secretary Aziz Kayed in Ramallah, PA officials reported. (DPA)

"The Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, others and myself have reached the conclusion no one will be protected if the [Qassam rocket] terrorism continues," the Chairman of the Knesset Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee Tsahi Hanegbi told *Public Radio*. "Israelis are waiting for us to act", he added. (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas called for an immediate halt to Qassam rocket fire on Israel, warning that the Gaza Strip could otherwise come under ground assault. (AFP, Wafa)

A Jordanian Government official said Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas were scheduled to attend a breakfast meeting at a conference of Nobel laureates on 22 June, hosted by Jordan's King Abdullah II. (AP)

Head of Fatah's PLC faction Azzam el-Ahmad told the *Voice of Palestine* radio: "We still disagree on the essential points" with Hamas and "so far, there is no agreement over the controversial points in the dialogue that is ongoing in Gaza". Hamas delayed a PLC vote on the proposed referendum. "We want to give the ongoing dialogue a chance to succeed", Hamas spokesperson Mushir al-Masri said. (Reuters, Xinhua)

The IDF authorized an additional 3,000 Palestinian merchants to enter Israel. The new permits bring to 26,500 the total number of Palestinians authorized to enter Israel for work. Some 10,000 are merchants and 16,500 are labourers. All are from the West Bank, except for 300 merchants from the Gaza Strip. (AP)

The IDF denied reports that a fragment from an IDF 155 mm shell was found in the body of one of the victims of the blast on a Gaza Strip beach. (The Jerusalem Post)

Prime Minister Olmert's plan to draw Israel's borders unilaterally would not end violence, prominent Fatah PLC member Mohammed Dahlan told *Ha'aretz*. "I'm not saying whether there will be suicide bombings or not. But the conflict, the violence, the hostility, all will remain", he was quoted as saying. (Ha'aretz)

The IDF's Civil Administration in the West Bank formulated rules for contacts with the PA. Officials are forbidden to speak to PA ministers and ministry directors-general, as these are affiliated with Hamas. However, talks are being held with lower-ranking officials who are politically unaffiliated. Talks are also permitted with municipal functionaries who are not clearly affiliated with Hamas. The IDF had prepared a database of key PA contacts with whom contacts may continue. However, the directive is to reduce contacts to a minimum. (Ha'aretz)

Commissioner-General of UNRWA Karen AbuZayd told a meeting of the UNRWA Advisory Commission in Amman: "Since our last meeting in February, the security and humanitarian situation of Palestine refugee families in the occupied Palestinian territory has further deteriorated. In response, UNRWA has launched an emergency appeal to meet the immediate needs of Palestine refugees." (Wafa, UNRWA press release HQ/G/08/2006)

Israeli and EU teams are expected to begin talks on 20 or 21 June on the Quartet-approved "temporary international funding mechanism" designed to channel aid to the Palestinians. (The Jerusalem Post)

Western officials said that Israel had asked the EU to make Palestinians sign a document renouncing terrorism before they could receive EU help under the new aid programme. The proposal was one of several raised by Israeli officials in talks with EU teams. In addition, Israel had proposed running the names of Palestinian aid recipients through its own national security database. (Reuters)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said in a speech at the 35th Zionist Congress: "The demographic balance between Jews and Arabs in the Land of Israel is not static.... If we wish to ensure the existence and future of a Jewish and democratic Israel, we must act now, in the next few years, and shape the permanent borders of the State of Israel. I intend to seriously and thoroughly examine whether there is a possibility of doing so through negotiation and agreement with the Palestinians, since this possibility is preferable under all circumstances. However, I do not intend to wait forever. If this possibility proves to be impractical within a certain space of time, we will have to make decisions which will serve Zionist goals, and the most vital interests of the State of Israel." (www.pmo.gov.il)

21

Israeli troops shot and killed a 21-year-old member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Dawoud Katouni, and wounded at least one militant, in an arrest raid in the Ein Beit el Ma refugee camp near Nablus. The Israeli army said Mr. Katouni had been responsible for masterminding a suicide bombing near an Israeli settlement west of Nablus on 30 March 2006, which killed four Israelis. Later, 11 Palestinians were wounded by Israeli rubber bullets when troops staged an incursion into Nablus itself, according to witnesses and medical sources. (AFP, AP, Reuters, Wafa)

Israeli forces arrested overnight 12 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank. (www.idf.il)

Two Palestinian civilians were killed and 13 others, including five children, were wounded in an Israeli air strike in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. Israeli aircraft aimed for a car carrying militants on a mission to launch rockets at Israel but missed their target, instead sending a missile into a house. Those killed were a pregnant woman, Fatima Ahmed, 35, and her brother, Zakariya Ahmed, 45. (AFP, AP, Reuters, Wafa, Ynetnews) Yasser Dahlan, the nephew of Fatah PLC member Mohammed Dahlan, was wounded in an explosion in the Tel Al-Hawa neighbourhood of Gaza City. Mr. Dahlan was in his car with his fiancée and her mother, both of whom were also injured, when the explosion occurred near the headquarters of the preventive security service. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

Masked gunmen, believed to be Hamas members, shot and wounded two Fatah members in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. (Ha'aretz) The Israeli police was readying to evacuate dozens of "illegal" settlement outposts at the beginning of next month, sources said. The evacuation, still pending a Cabinet decision, was expected to begin with about 20 outposts, including "Skali Farm" and "Havat Maon" in the southern Hebron hills, the sources added. (Ha'aretz)

The following message was released by the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General:

"The Secretary-General deeply deplores the killing of three children and the injury of other bystanders in an attempted Israeli targeted killing of alleged militants in Gaza on 20 June. The Secretary-General calls on Israel to respect international law and to ensure that its actions are proportionate and do not put civilians at grave risk. The Secretary-General sends his condolences to the families of the dead and injured.

The Secretary-General is fully cognizant of Israel's legitimate security concerns in light of continuing rocket fire, which endangers Israeli civilians, and calls on the Palestinian Authority to do all in its power to halt such actions."

(UN press release SG/SM/10526-PAL/2052, UN News Centre)

British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett condemned the Israeli air strike that had killed three Palestinian children in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip the previous day. "The killing of innocent civilians, and particularly children, is completely unacceptable. We strongly urge maximum restraint by the Israeli military to avoid further escalation of an already very tense situation. We call on the Israeli authorities to respect their obligations under international law and ensure that civilians, particularly children, are not harmed. In addition we call for an immediate halt to all rocket fire from the Gaza Strip on Israeli targets", Ms. Beckett said. (AFP, www.fco.gov.uk)

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on the Israeli air strike in the Jabaliya refugee camp: "Moscow expresses extreme concern over the actions of the Israeli military, of which mostly children and women become victims. While sharing Israel's security concerns, nevertheless we

consider the use of force against the civilian population inadmissible.” (AFP, AP, Xinhua, www.in.mid.ru)

Human Rights Watch said the Israeli army’s investigation of the Gaza beach explosion, that had killed eight Palestinian civilians on 9 June, was incomplete because it excluded important evidence. (AFP, Reuters, www.hrw.org)

The Kerem Shalom terminal between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, that bypasses Israel, was closed due to an Israeli security alert, leading to the closure of the Rafah Terminal. The regular teams of EU monitors who oversee the Rafah Terminal were unable to get to work because they usually cross the Kerem Shalom Terminal. “There are no monitors at Rafah, and therefore the Terminal is not functioning at the moment. Operations are suspended”, EU monitor spokesman Nigel Milverton said. (AFP)

The Hamas-led Palestinian Government started making cash payments to nearly 29,000 workers in the West Bank. They were to receive about \$300 each under the partial payout, which had started in the Gaza Strip on 19 June, officials said. The money was distributed by the Government-run post offices. PA Minister of Telecommunications Jamal al-Khudary, who oversees the post offices, said the payout included cash Hamas officials and Cabinet ministers had carried in suitcases across the Rafah Terminal from Egypt into the Gaza Strip in the past few weeks. (Reuters)

The following are excerpts from the statement of the EU-US summit held in Vienna: “We will continue to closely cooperate in the Middle East, notably through the Quartet. We welcome the temporary international mechanism to deliver assistance directly to the Palestinian people. We will continue to deliver humanitarian assistance and promote Palestinian democracy and civil society. Whilst recalling President Abbas’ commitment to a platform of peace, we will continue to urge the new Palestinian Government to commit to non-violence, recognise Israel’s right to exist and accept existing agreements and obligations. We will continue to call on Israel to ease restrictions on access and movement and to take additional steps including with respect to the Palestinian tax and customs revenues, to improve the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people.” (DPA, www.consilium.europa.eu)

At the Conference of Nobel Laureates held in Petra, Jordan, organized by the King Abdullah Fund for Development and the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, PA President Abbas said, “Israel must realize that we will not be able to accept a unilateral solution determined solely by its Government, which is building fences around the Palestinian population. We will demand the 1967 borders - no more and no less.” Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who was also visiting Jordan, responded by saying, “Israel would have sat at the negotiating table a long time ago and the Palestinians would have a State were it not for the Palestinian terror and the Qassam rocket fire. The way of terror and shedding blood does not promote peace.” (Petra - Jordan News Agency, Ynetnews)

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari briefed the Security Council on “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.” (UN News Centre; UN press release SC/8760)

John Dugard, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, who had recently visited the region, said in a statement, “There has been a substantial deterioration in respect of human rights in the OPT since Hamas won the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council earlier this year”. “Palestinians understandably find it difficult to comprehend the response of the Quartet and many Western States to the Palestinian elections. They argue that Israel is in violation of major Security Council and General Assembly resolutions dealing with unlawful territorial change and the violation of human rights ... and should accordingly be subjected to international sanctions. Instead, the Palestinian people have been subjected to possibly the most rigorous form of international sanctions imposed in modern times”, Mr. Dugard said. (AFP, Reuters, www.unhchr.ch)

Germany’s Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Heidemarie Wiecezorek-Zeul, said her country would grant €20 million (\$25 million) to an aid fund for the Palestinian people, in the interests of “freedom and more stability in the region”. Ms. Wiecezorek-Zeul said in Parliament that European nations had so far pledged €150 million for such funds, replacing official European Union aid that had stalled in March. (DPA)

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, said in a report, “Since 2005, internal displacement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has largely been the result of house demolitions and land confiscation by the Government of Israel in connection with the construction of the West Bank Wall. While displacement is ongoing, the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Territories has gravely deteriorated following sanctions taken by the Government of Israel and major donors against the new Palestinian Government.” (Wafa, www.internal-displacement.org)

22

Israeli forces arrested nine “wanted” Palestinians in the West Bank: two Hamas members in El Bira, north of Ramallah; two “Tanzim” members in Bethlehem; an Islamic Jihad member in Beit Ummar, south-west of Bethlehem; two “Tanzim” members and another Palestinian in Nablus; and a Palestinian in Dahariya, south-west of Hebron. (www.idf.il)

An Israeli navy vessel opened fire at two Palestinians swimming from the Egyptian side of Rafah to the Gaza Strip coast to smuggle weapons. One of them was hurt. (Ha’aretz, Ynetnews)

A Qassam rocket landed in Israel’s western Negev region. There were no injuries, but a greenhouse was slightly damaged. (Ynetnews)

The Rafah Terminal was reopened after a two-day closure owing to an Israeli security alert. EU monitors overseeing the Terminal had been unable to get to work for two days because of an ongoing alert at the Kerem Shalom Terminal, which they use to reach Rafah. The monitors were finally able to travel when the Israeli military opened Kerem Shalom to them and allowed an adjacent liaison office overseeing Rafah to reopen. (AFP, Reuters)

Israel Air Force commander Maj.-Gen. Eliezer Shkedy vowed that air strikes would continue as the most effective weapon against militants, albeit while counselling extreme caution to ensure that civilians were not harmed. “The [attacks from the air] are the most accurate alternative we have as long as there is no ground offensive. We will continue with the operations to deal with the Qassam fire. It must be remembered that since May we have carried out 15 such operations; this has brought results. We are a country that must fight terror at all times,” Major-General Shkedy said. (AFP, Ynetnews)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas met for the first time since Mr. Olmert took office in May, at an informal breakfast meeting in Petra, Jordan, hosted by King Abdullah on the sidelines of the Conference of Nobel Laureates. King Abdullah said peace negotiations needed to move forward on the basis of the Road Map, and expressed Jordan’s concern that the worsening economic and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Territory could adversely affect prospects for a resumption of peace negotiations, urging Mr. Olmert to facilitate the flow of funds and other aid. During a panel session after the meeting, Mr. Olmert said that he would meet with Mr. Abbas “in a matter of a few weeks”. “I am ready to go all along the way to make compromises and pull out of territory”, Mr. Olmert said, adding, “I have no commitment to return back to the

boundaries that are defined by Abu Mazen [PA President Abbas] or other Palestinians. There will be blocks of settlements that will remain, that cannot be evacuated, but there will be many, many parts of the territory [...] evacuated by Israel, and contiguous territory where the Palestinians will be able to realise their life-long dream of building their independent State". During the breakfast meeting, the two leaders and King Abdullah reportedly decided to promote the establishment of a free trade zone in the Jordan Valley. (*Petra - Jordan News Agency, Reuters, Ynetnews*)

The IDF panel looking into the deaths of seven Palestinians on the Beit Lahia beach in the Gaza Strip said at a press conference that tests of the two pieces of shrapnel removed from victims being treated in Israel showed "beyond all doubt" that they did not come from a 155 mm artillery shell. (*Ha'aretz*)

In his closing speech at the Caesarea economic conference held in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said that "pinpoint preventions" of terror attacks would continue, despite growing numbers of Palestinian civilian casualties. He said, "Israel will continue to carry out targeted attacks against terrorists and those who try to harm Israeli citizens". (*Ha'aretz*)

Egypt's official *MENA* news agency reported that Egypt was likely to supply power to the Gaza Strip soon according to a new agreement signed between Egypt and the PA. Under the agreement, the Gaza Strip would be linked to the Egyptian electricity grid, which could ensure power supply for Palestinians and for economic, social and infrastructure development ventures. (*Xinhua*)

A group of Government and opposition legislators in Chile launched a campaign to gather aid and medicine for people living in the Palestinian territories, officials said. "International humanitarian organizations have called on people to [help] avoid the worst possible calamity, and that is why we have echoed their words, launching a campaign to collect medicine and medical equipment for the Holy Land", said Jorge Daccarett, head of the Bethlehem-Palestine 2000-Chile Foundation. (*Xinhua*)

British rock star Roger Waters performed before an estimated 50,000 Israeli fans next to the Jewish-Arab village of Neveh Shalom in central Israel. Just before the end of the concert, Mr. Waters addressed his audience. "I believe we need this generation of Israelis to tear down the walls and make peace with their neighbours", he said, setting off a round of cheers. (*AP*)

23

IDF soldiers arrested a Palestinian in possession of a knife at the Hawara checkpoint, south of Nablus. (*Ynetnews.com*)

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired three homemade rockets into Israel. The Israeli army said there were no injuries or damage from the rocket fire. Yuval Steinitz, former chairman of the parliamentary Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, said that the Palestinian authorities had failed to prevent daily attacks by the homemade rockets and Israel must take steps to protect itself. "I call on the Government of Israel to wait no further, but to launch a comprehensive ground operation in Gaza for several weeks, to strike at the very foundations of the terrorist infrastructure", the lawmaker told *Israel Radio*. (*AP*)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz said that the Government must begin preparing now so that the convergence plan could be implemented in about a year and a half, and to this end, he favoured enacting a law to compensate residents of settlements slated for evacuation under the plan if they left voluntarily. Mr. Peretz wanted to see towns and neighbourhoods that agree to absorb settlers "twinned" with particular settlements in preparation for evacuation. This, he said, would enable entire settlements to move together and allow the destination communities to have housing, jobs and schools ready. He did not rule out absorbing evacuees in the large settlement blocks that will remain in Israel's hands, but he said that Israel must offer the Palestinians an exchange of territory for these blocks. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the armed wings of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine met at a conference in Ramallah, announcing that they had severed their commitment to a de facto truce in anti-Israeli attacks in order to avenge "massacres" committed by Israel. (*AFP*)

The Rafah crossing was briefly reopened, but an Israeli security alert prevented European monitors from bringing the border terminal to full capacity.

The crossing had been closed for most of the past three days, leaving hundreds of Palestinians stranded on either side of the Rafah crossing, many lying on the asphalt in the hot sun. PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh condemned the border closure. "This is part of the pressure on the Palestinian people", Mr. Haniyeh told reporters. "There is no excuse, there is no justification for closing it. The Europeans should come and the crossing should operate." (*AP*)

The European Commission said it will give €105 million to a new temporary fund set up for supplying direct aid to the Palestinians, with payments of needs-based allowances to people starting by early July. The EU aid to be channelled to Palestinians would include €10 million for the health sector, €40 million to cover fuel costs and an additional €40 million for the payment of "basic needs allowances" to Palestinians, the commission said. "I hope that other donors will soon make public their pledges to the mechanism", said EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, adding "We would be able to do more for the Palestinians if their Government committed itself to seeking peace by peaceful means". The EU will also be giving €12 million in technical assistance to the office of PA President Abbas and to autonomous Palestinian bodies, including the central election commission. (*DPA, europa.eu.int*)

24

Israeli commandos carried out the first arrest raid in the Gaza Strip since Israel's withdrawal last year, seizing two alleged Hamas militants. In the one-hour raid, two Palestinian brothers affiliated with Hamas were captured, the army said. Capt. Tal Levram, a spokesman for Israel's southern command, described the raid as an isolated incident and said it did not signal a new tactic in Israel's war with the militants. "They were involved in something that was supposed to happen very soon", he said of the arrested men, declining to elaborate. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri denied the two militants were Hamas members. (*AP*)

Palestinian militants fired five rockets toward the Israeli border town of Sderot, the army said. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage. (*AP*)

In the southern Gaza town of Khan Yunis, a Hamas activist and a Fatah security man were wounded in separate shootings. While there were no claims of responsibility, the violence appeared to be related to recent tensions between the two sides.

PA President Abbas held talks with Prime Minister Haniyeh on the "prisoners' document". They reached agreement on most of the central clauses, including limiting "resistance" operations against Israel to territories occupied since 1967. Participants said that more meetings were scheduled for 25 June. "The dialogue is moving in the right direction", said Nabil Abu Rudeineh, President Abbas' adviser. Ghazi Hamad, spokesman for the Hamas-led Government, said Hamas had agreed to compromise on "very important issues". Officials said the remaining area of disagreement focused on a proposal calling for the formation of a coalition Government. Mr. Abu Rudeineh said that there was a "consensus" to halt the rocket attacks so as to take away any "Israeli pretext" to attack. (*AP, Ha'aretz*)

25

Israeli helicopter gunships opened heavy machine-gun fire at Palestinian civilian homes in the city of Rafah, local residents reported. The attack caused material damage to many homes and panic among children and women. (*The Palestinian Information Center*)

Two Israeli soldiers were killed and two were wounded when Palestinian militants attacked an IDF post near the Gaza border, firing an anti-tank missile at the tank in which they were located. The casualties were identified as First Lt. Hanan Barak, 21, and Staff Sgt. Pavel Slutsker, 20.

One of the wounded soldiers, 19-year-old Cpl. Gilad Shalit, was abducted by the armed Palestinian men. Hamas' armed wing, the Popular Resistance Committees and the Army of Islam were three militant groups that admitted carrying out the assault, saying it was to avenge the deaths of 22 Palestinian civilians killed in an Israeli shelling and in a series of air strikes. (*AP, AFP, Ha'aretz*)

A special session of Israel's political-security cabinet unanimously agreed that the IDF was to begin preparing for military steps aimed at securing the release of the abducted soldier. The cabinet ministers authorized Prime Minister Olmert and Defence Minister Amir Peretz to determine when a military operation would be launched. The cabinet also agreed to continue employing diplomatic efforts and seeking international pressure to convince Palestinian militants to free the abducted soldier. (*Ha'aretz*)

Prime Minister Olmert ruled out negotiations with the Palestinians to secure the release of the abducted IDF soldier. Defence Minister Peretz warned the soldier's kidnappers against harming him, making a veiled threat that whoever would do so would pay with his life and the lives of his commanders. IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz said Hamas was tied "from head to foot" to the deadly attack on the IDF post just outside the Gaza Strip. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA President Abbas called a number of world leaders to brief them about the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in light of Israel's threat to invade the Gaza Strip. President Abbas phoned Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Saudi King Abdullah Al Saud, King Abdullah II of Jordan the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Khalifa al Nahyan, and Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. He also called US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana; the Spanish Foreign Minister, Migue Angel Moratinos; the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier; the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Store; the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Per Stig Moller; and the British Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett. The President said that an immediate investigation would be launched into the operation against the Israeli military post east of Gaza. He called on the international community and the Quartet to prevent Israel from exploiting the situation to invade the Gaza Strip. (*Wafa*)

Speaking at a press conference with Vice Prime Minister Nasser Al-Sha'er in Ramallah, PA Presidency Secretary-General Al-Tayyeb Abdul Raheem affirmed that the PA was seeking to maintain calm following today's attack in Rafah and to find an exit to the impasse following Israel's threats to invade the Gaza Strip. He said, "We were about to reach a political agreement but the last complications deteriorated the situation," affirming that all factions had agreed the previous day to stop launching rockets on Israel and abide by the calm. For his part, Mr. Al-Sha'er said it was supposed that all factions reach a crucial agreement tonight, expressing hope that security conditions would allow that. He also called upon the kidnappers of the Israeli soldier, urging them to release him immediately. (*Wafa*)

China's special envoy on Middle East issues, Sun Bigan, arrived in Cairo on the first leg of a week-long visit to the region, including Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territory. (*Xinhua*)

British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett said that an incursion into Israel by Palestinian militants, in which two Israeli soldiers were killed, delayed the prospect of peace in the Middle East. "I was very disturbed to learn of this serious terrorist attack", Ms. Beckett said in a statement. (*AFP, The Foreign and Commonwealth Office*)

The Islamic Jihad's military wing, Saraya al-Quds, said in a statement that the attack by Palestinian militants on an Israeli military post near the Gaza border was the Palestinians' right against Israeli aggressions. The group also called for a unified front to counter possible Israeli massive operations in the wake of Sunday's attack, urging Palestinian factions to end disagreements and focus on resisting the Israeli occupation. (*Xinhua*)

The following statement was issued by the Spokesman for the Secretary-General

"The Secretary-General is alarmed about the recent events in Gaza and Israel, and is following developments closely. He is concerned about the attack that took place yesterday, when Palestinian militants tunneled from Gaza into Israel, and killed two Israeli soldiers and took another hostage. He calls for the safe and immediate release of the captured soldier.

The Secretary-General urges all parties to exercise restraint at this grave moment, and to take all possible steps to avoid further escalation and bloodshed."

(*UN News Centre, UN press release SG/SM/10539-PAL/2053*)

26

Palestinians fired three Qassam rockets from the Gaza Strip towards Israel. Two of the rockets landed in the western Negev, but the third landed in Sderot, slightly injuring four people and causing a power outage. Eleven others were treated for shock. (*The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

Israeli forces arrested overnight 17 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank. (www.idf.il)

Palestinian medical sources reported that two Palestinian workers had been shot and killed by Israeli soldiers at the Sheikh Sa'ad checkpoint, south of Jerusalem. According to eyewitnesses, about 150 workers were waiting at the Israeli checkpoint while the soldiers were investigating the two men's identity. The two men then attempted to take a bypass road to avoid further delays when the soldiers spotted them and opened fire. (www.imemc.org)

PA President Abbas ordered his security services to launch a massive manhunt for a kidnapped Israeli soldier in the Gaza Strip, an official said. "President Mahmoud Abbas ordered Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, Interior Minister Said Siam and security service commanders to immediately launch a serious search today to release the soldier", the source said. (*AFP*)

Israel massed special units, tanks and infantry troops along the Gaza Strip border in preparation for a possible operation against Palestinian militants following the abduction of an Israeli soldier. Prime Minister Olmert issued the threat as Israeli and Palestinian officials worked diplomatic channels to gain the release of Cpl. Gilad Shalit. Speaking at a tourism conference in Jerusalem, Mr. Olmert said Israel's patience was wearing thin and that he held the entire Palestinian leadership responsible for the soldier's safety. "I gave the orders to our military commanders to prepare the army for a broad and ongoing military operation to strike the terrorist leaders and all those involved", he said, adding, "It should be clear. There will be immunity for no one". Palestinian Chief Negotiator and PLC member Saeb Erakat called for restraint "at a time when President Abbas is exerting maximum efforts in order to acquire the release of the soldier, alive and unharmed". (*AP*)

The PA Cabinet urged militant groups to maintain a ceasefire to avoid a possible Israeli retaliatory attack on the Gaza Strip following the abduction of an Israeli soldier in a Palestinian attack. Cabinet spokesman Ghazi Hamad said that Egypt had played an effective role in the issue of the soldier, and the Hamas-led Government had been holding contacts with other sides. (*Xinhua*)

An Israeli intelligence official, Yossi Beidatz, told a parliamentary committee that PA Prime Minister Haniyeh was in close contact with Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal and Mr. Shalit's captors, to secure his immediate release, said Israel KM Ran Cohen. (*AP*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni asked US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to press PA President Abbas to secure Cpl. Gilad Shalit's release. Ms. Livni convened an urgent session of foreign ambassadors from the UN Security Council member States to urge them to use any leverage with the PA to bring about the soldier's release, Ministry spokesman Mark Regev said. (*AP*)

En route to Pakistan, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told reporters about efforts to release the captured Israeli corporal: "There really needs to be an effort now to try and calm the situation, not to let the situation escalate and to give diplomacy a chance to work to try to get this release."

(*Reuters*)

The German Government called for the immediate release of a captured Israeli soldier and urged both sides to take steps to prevent the conflict from escalating. Germany's Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Jaeger called the attack at the Gaza border a planned attack aimed at torpedoing the

peace process in the Middle East. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier called the Israeli Government to express his sympathy and PA President Abbas to insist that those responsible be brought to justice. (AP)

France said that it was seeking the release of an Israeli-French soldier who was reportedly captured by an armed Palestinian group during the weekend, and had made contact with all parties involved. Deputy Foreign Ministry spokesman Denis Simonneau said: "We are in contact with all the concerned parties to find a solution to this situation". Mr. Simonneau said Cpl. Gilad Shalit had joint Israeli-French nationality, adding "Our embassy and our consulate-general in Haifa are taking action [and] have already made contact with his family by phone". (AFP)

Jordan warned the Palestinians that they risked seeing the world lose interest in their cause after a militant raid on an army post that saw two Israeli soldiers killed and one captured. Government spokesman Nasser Jawdeh told a weekly news conference, "This latest escalation, if not contained, will have very negative effects on the situation on the ground". (AFP)

Families of Palestinians jailed in Israel demonstrated in Gaza demanding that militants holding an Israeli soldier hostage trade him for the release of their relatives. (Reuters)

Three Palestinian groups demanded in a statement the release of women and children under 18 held in Israeli prisons, in exchange for the recently-abducted IDF soldier. The statement was faxed and signed by Hamas' military wing, the Saladdin Brigade and the Army of Islam. The latter two groups are offshoots of the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC). Mr. Abu Mujahid, a spokesman for the PRC, confirmed that the statement was authentic. (AFP, AP, BBC)

In a speech addressed to the Jewish Agency General Assembly in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Olmert said there would be no negotiations with Palestinian abductors of the Israeli soldier over releasing Palestinian prisoners in Israel. "I'm announcing here that we will respond to every terrorist.... The time heading toward a harsh, comprehensive and fierce operation is growing shorter", Mr. Olmert said. (Ha'aretz, www.pmo.gov.il)

Israeli Defence Ministry sources said that the planned evacuation of "illegal" West Bank outposts, originally slated to begin next week, would be delayed by seven days due to operational considerations, including the large concentration of forces around the Gaza Strip, in anticipation of a large-scale ground incursion. (Ha'aretz)

Israel's High Court of Justice ruled that the Government and the army must act to ensure the safety of Palestinian farmers working their fields and to prevent settlers from harming their land, property or persons. The ruling was made in response to a petition submitted by the residents of five Palestinian villages protesting against an Israeli army decision to keep farmers from reaching their fields in an effort to protect them from settler attacks. (Ha'aretz, Ynetnews)

27

Israeli forces arrested 43 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank. (www.idf.il)

About 3,000 troops, along with tanks and armoured vehicles, were massed along Israel's border with the Gaza Strip. Commanders said they were fully prepared and waiting for orders to move in. The army closed all crossings into Gaza, blocking all goods from entering or exiting. Merchants were prevented from leaving the area and fisherman from sailing off the coast. Egypt deployed 2,500 members of the Central Security Forces, who answer to the Interior Ministry, along its border with Gaza. It also imposed a night-time curfew on the inhabited areas along the border. (AP)

A spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees, Mohammed Abdel Al, said that the captured Israeli soldier was being held in a "secure place".

He also said that his group had taken an Israeli settler in the West Bank hostage. A settler from "Itamar" had been reported missing since 25 June, and police were examining a possible connection. (AP, Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh had reached agreement on a manifesto implicitly recognizing Israel, officials said. "All the obstacles were removed and an agreement was reached on all the points of the 'prisoners' document", Rawhi Fattouh, a senior aide to Mr. Abbas, said after factions meeting in Gaza initialled the accord. Mr. Fattouh said the two leaders would formally announce the deal later in the day.

Islamic Jihad said it still rejected several points in the document, including the concept of a Palestinian State limited to the West Bank and Gaza.

Jihad Khaled al-Batsh, a senior Islamic Jihad official, said that the group would issue a statement later detailing its final position. (BBC, Reuters)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics said that the estimated Palestinian population in the Jerusalem Governorate as of the end of 2005 was 402,712 or 10.5 per cent of the total population in the Palestinian Territory. (Wafa)

The United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace began in Vienna. Participants started to review the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to discuss the peace process and challenges ahead, as well as international efforts in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace. (UN press release GA/PAL/1012)

28

IDF tanks and soldiers moved into the Gaza Strip, taking up positions east of Rafah overnight under cover of tank shells, witnesses and PA security officials said. Israeli warplanes fired at least nine missiles at the Gaza Strip's only power station, cutting electricity to 65 per cent of the Gaza Strip, engineers at the station said. The IDF said in a statement that three bridges had been attacked "to impair the ability of the terrorists to transfer the kidnapped soldier". In Rafah, a shack where militants produced and stored rockets was on fire after Israel attacked it, witnesses said. Also in Rafah, Israeli aircraft fired missiles at an empty Hamas training camp, witnesses said. Israeli warplanes fired missiles at open fields in the northern Gaza Strip. (AP)

IDF soldiers, backed by armour, amassed across the border from the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun, after Defence Minister Amir Peretz authorized a ground operation. The IDF had distributed flyers warning residents of Beit Hanoun to leave their homes as the army would begin targeting populated areas. Flyers were also distributed to residents of the Sajaiyeh neighbourhood in Gaza City. (Ha'aretz)

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired four Qassam rockets into southern Israel, causing no damage. (AFP)

"We won't hesitate to carry out extreme action to bring Gilad [captured IDF soldier] back to his family," Prime Minister Olmert said. "All the military activity that started overnight will continue in the coming days... We do not intend to reoccupy Gaza. We do not intend to stay there.

We have one objective, and that is to bring Gilad home", he said. (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas condemned the Israeli incursion into the Gaza Strip. The President considered attacking civil infrastructure as a collective punishment against the Palestinian people and a crime against humanity. The PA Cabinet also condemned the offensive, calling it "unjustified", and warned that Israel's military action risked "many consequences". "So far, it has been proved that Israel cannot achieve what it wants through this widespread campaign", Cabinet spokesman Ghazi Hamad told reporters. At a news conference in Ramallah, PA Deputy Prime Minister Nasr al-Sha'ir denied his Government was involved in the abduction of Corporal Shalit. (AP, DPA, Wafa)

"We condemn the use of violence by both sides and consider that the only solution is a political dialogue", French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy told reporters. British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that the Israeli ground offensive into the Gaza Strip demonstrated the importance of restarting the peace process, "which is the only way to stop events like the terrible events of the last 24 hours". "We regret the reports about Israeli

incursion into Gaza, the total blockade of the Gaza Strip, and the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure”, Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Tasneem Aslam said in a statement. The Presidency of the EU said in a statement that it was deeply concerned about the current deterioration of the security situation in the Middle East, and urged all parties to show restraint. German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s spokesman Ulrich Wilhelm told reporters: “We call on both sides to exercise restraint”. (*AP, DPA, www.eu2006.at*) Secretary-General Kofi Annan told reporters: “Obviously, we cannot condone the use of Katyushas that place Israelis at risk, and the Israeli Government has a responsibility to protect its citizens, but it has to do so with restraint and, of course, it is understandable that they would want to go after those who kidnapped the soldier. But it has to be done in such a way that the civilian population are not made to suffer”. (*UN News Centre*)

Concerning the reported agreement on the prisoners’ document, Israel’s President Moshe Katzav said: “The prisoners’ document is worthless to us. It is much less than Palestinian leaders like Arafat and Abu Mazen could do before”. White House spokesman Anthony Snow said: “We haven’t seen anything in print... But it’s pretty clear - our position on recognition of the Government, you’ve got to abide by the positions that’s been taken by the Quartet... you will recognize Israel’s right to exist, renounce terror, and abide by all past agreements. Those are the preconditions”. EU Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner stated: “This agreement is not an end in itself but has to be the start of a process that will see the different factions commit themselves to the principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations. We stand ready to work with a Palestinian Government committed to these principles”. “We have at least a small sign of hope that both sides have come nearer”, said German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The Quartet would back talks with Hamas party if the group recognized Israel, renounced violence and committed itself to a negotiated settlement, Britain’s Prime Minister Tony Blair told the House of Commons. (*DPA, IRNA, www.whitehouse.gov, Xinhua*) A PRC spokesman told *Aljazeera* that the kidnapped Israeli settler would be “butchered in front of TV cameras” if Israel didn’t stop its raid on the Gaza Strip. “The operation of kidnapping soldiers has started and is in a countdown”, spokesman Mohammed Abdel Al said. (*AP*)

29

IDF aircrafts fired missiles near Khan Yunis. Palestinian sources said a militant training camp appeared to have been the target. No casualties were reported. The IDF also struck a weapons warehouse run by Hamas and the Popular Resistance Committees in Khan Yunis. Palestinian witnesses said an IDF plane fired a missile at the Islamic University in Gaza City. No one was hurt. The IDF also bombarded seven roads that the military said were being used by Qassam launch crews, and Israel Navy vessels were involved overnight in shelling targets in the Gaza Strip. The IDF confirmed an air strike on a car in Gaza City targeting Islamic Jihad militants. Two militants jumped out of the car before it was hit, witnesses said. (*Ha’aretz, Xinhua*)

The IDF arrested 64 Hamas members, including 8 PA ministers, 24 PLC members and Hamas activists in the West Bank and East Jerusalem including Finance Minister Omar Abdul Razeq, Planning Minister Samir Abu Eishah, Local Government Minister Issa al-Jabari, Prisoner Affair Minister Wasfi Kabaha, Social Affairs Minister Fakhri Turkman, Jerusalem Affairs Minister Khaled Abu Arafah, Labour Minister Mohammed Barghouti and Religious Affairs Minister Nayef Rajoub. (*AFP, AP, Ha’aretz*)

Masked Palestinian gunmen blew a 4-metre wide hole in the border wall between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. (*Reuters*)

Two people in Israel suffered from shock when Palestinians fired a Qassam rocket into Sderot. (*Ha’aretz*)

The Popular Resistance Committees killed 18-year-old Israeli settler Eliahu Asheri, who had been missing since 25 June. (*AP*)

A Palestinian child was wounded when Israeli artillery fire hit a populated area in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. (*Wafa*)

Two Palestinian policemen at their post in the northern Gaza Strip were injured by Israeli shells. At a nearby post, two other policemen had earlier been injured by shrapnel from artillery shells. (*Ynetnews*)

Israel called off a planned ground invasion of the northern Gaza Strip, giving diplomacy another chance to free the captured Israeli soldier. (*AP*)

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired six rockets at southern Israel, four of which landed inside Israel, causing no injuries or damage. Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility. (*AFP, AP*)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed they had fired a rocket with a “chemical warhead” at Israel. The IDF said they had not identified any such rocket. “This was the first such attack”, the group said in a statement, promising “a new phase of military action to face the Israeli aggression”.

(*Ha’aretz, Xinhua*)

“The President strongly condemns the Israeli aggression, raids, siege and arrests of ministers and MPs”, PA President Abbas’ spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh said. “The President calls on the international community and the Quartet to intervene immediately to reinstate democracy.” Deputy PLC speaker Ahmed Bahar accused Israel of launching an “open war” to destroy his Government. A spokesman for Hamas’ armed wing said that the arrest of Hamas cabinet ministers and lawmakers would not “have an impact over the fate of the captive Israeli soldier”. (*AP, AFP, Ha’aretz, Ha’aretz*)

The following statement was issued by the Spokesman for the Secretary-General:

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned about developments in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territory, including the continued detention of an Israeli soldier by Palestinian militants; the killing by Palestinian militants of an Israeli civilian, whose body was found this morning; further rocket attacks against Israel; and Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip, which have resulted in a serious deterioration in humanitarian conditions there. He is also concerned that Israel has detained 64 Palestinian officials, cabinet ministers and members of the Legislative Council, who were elected in January.

The Secretary-General calls on the Palestinian Authority to do its utmost to secure the release of the Israeli soldier, and to end rocket attacks against Israel and other action by militants. The Secretary-General also calls on the Government of Israel to show restraint, to avoid actions that damage civilian infrastructure and that aggravate the hardship of the Palestinian population, and to abide by international humanitarian law. To prevent a further decline in the humanitarian situation, Israel should also act urgently to facilitate the import of essential medical supplies, food stuffs and, particularly, fuel into the Gaza Strip.

(*UN News Centre; UN press release SG/SM/10547-PAL/2054*)

Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a news conference that he and his G-8 counterparts were “united” in their demand that the Israeli soldier Shalit, held by Palestinian militants, be released. “We confirmed our support for the Quartet ... and called on the parties to take all the necessary steps to calm the situation”, he added. “With restraint, perhaps we can get back to a place where there can be hope for a peaceful resolution,” US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said. A G-8 statement said: “We condemn the extremist groupings responsible for these acts, and also those who put peace prospects in jeopardy. We also call on Israel to show maximum restraint in the conditions of the current crisis.

The practice of detaining elected Government members and legislative bodies of Palestine arouses special concern. We urge all the parties to defend civilians and not to increase their common suffering.” (*Interfax*)

“The [Jordanian] Parliament, while rejecting this [Israeli] aggression, calls on the international community and the peace-loving parts to defend freedom and justice and to interfere to stop this aggression”, a parliamentary statement said. “The Israeli serviceman must be released immediately.

This release will meet the Palestinian national interests”, Russia’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said. “The Palestinian administration, all Palestinian organizations and movements should do their best to stop terrorism and bombings in Israeli cities”, he added. “We urge Israel to exercise restraint and halt military action, and call on Palestine to release the hostage as early as possible”, said Jiang Yu, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman. Pope Benedict XVI said: “I am following with worry what is happening in the Holy Land and I pray that every kidnapped person be promptly returned to his family.” Abdul-Rahman Bin Hamad Al-Attiah, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council described Israeli actions as “barbaric acts of terrorism” and lamented the “international silence” on Israel’s offensive. (AP, Interfax, Petra)

Norway’s Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre condemned Israel for arresting members of the Hamas-led Palestinian Government and described the move as an “aggressive use of power”. “We must urge the two sides to avoid the logic of escalation. It is unacceptable to take hostages but that does not justify taking hostages on the other side.... We distance ourselves from that and find it alarming and unacceptable”, Mr. Støre said. (AFP)

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland said hundreds of thousands of civilians in the Gaza Strip were on the brink of a humanitarian crisis after Israel bombed the area’s only power plant in response to the kidnapping of a soldier. He said the bombing had cut 40 per cent of power to the Gaza Strip and further threatened to leave many of its 1.4 million civilians without water. More than 130 wells could be powered by fuel, but diesel supplies would run out in three days because Gaza’s borders had been sealed, he said. Mr. Egeland called the power plant bombing a violation of humanitarian law that brought needless suffering to innocent civilians. (AP, Reuters)

A report sent by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to UN agency chiefs said that the impact of an aid embargo on the Hamas-led Palestinian Government had been so great that the economy could suffer for years even if the administration changed and full assistance resumed. “Poverty and humanitarian degradation in the occupied Palestinian territory could reach unprecedented levels and will last much longer than the term of any single Government, irrespective of its political programme”, UNCTAD said in the report. (Reuters)

The EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel lamented the destruction by Israel of six electricity transformers at the Nuseirat power station in the Gaza Strip, which he said would take several months to replace. “The loss of electricity supplies to around 600,000 people is particularly serious because of the knock-on effects on other sectors.... A lot of people rely on electric pumps for their water and without this basic commodity, humanitarian needs are likely to increase very rapidly. Water shortages threaten the health of the population, especially children, the elderly and pregnant women”, Mr. Michel said in a statement. (AFP)

Amnesty International warned that Israel’s destruction of three bridges and electricity networks across the Gaza Strip had “left half the population of Gaza without electricity and reportedly also adversely affected the supply of water”. (AFP)

An agreement to launch a Palestinian-Israeli parliamentary dialogue with the participation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) had been reached in Strasbourg, PACE rapporteur on the Middle East Mikhail Margelov told Interfax. “I do not rule out that the first tripartite meeting may be held in Cairo or Istanbul before year-end. These countries have made the invitations”, Mr. Margelov said. (Interfax)

30

Israel’s air force struck more than 30 targets in the Gaza Strip, hitting the PA Interior Ministry, roads, bridges and power plants, in its ongoing response to the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier. Palestinian hospital officials said a 5-year-old girl had been wounded in an air strike in northern Gaza. The army also fired hundreds of artillery shells into the Gaza Strip. The pre-dawn attack on the Interior Ministry scored a direct hit on Interior Minister Said Siyam’s fourth floor office, which went up in flames. The ground floor office of Mr. Siyam’s bodyguard was also destroyed, while the first, second and third floors of the buildings were not damaged. Nobody was hurt. In a separate air strike, three Israeli missiles hit the office of Interior Ministry official Khaled Abu Ilal, who heads a pro-Hamas militia. (AFP, AP)

The army said it had attacked a cell that attempted to fire an anti-tank missile at Israeli forces in southern Gaza. Mohammed Abdel Al, 25, a local leader of Islamic Jihad, died of wounds he had suffered in the strike. (AFP, AP)

Three Palestinians were wounded in an Israeli air strike targeted at a car in Gaza City. An Islamic Jihad official said all the passengers of the car were members of the group. (AFP, AP, Reuters, Ynetnews)

Israeli troops shot and killed a Palestinian militant from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades during a fierce gun battle in Nablus. The soldiers surrounded a cemetery in the city, trapping four Brigades militants inside. Two of the militants were arrested, one fled and one was killed. Medical sources identified the dead militant as 23-year-old Mahmoud Zukiri. (AFP, AP, DPA)

A Qassam rocket landed near the southern Israeli town of Sderot. No injuries were reported. (Ha’aretz)

At the request of Algeria, the Security Council convened to discuss the growing crisis between the Israelis and Palestinians. Briefing the Council, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Angela Kane said that nothing justified the holding of hostages and Cpl. Gilad Shalit [the Israeli soldier abducted by Palestinian militants] must be released, and the Palestinian Authority must act to stop indiscriminate rocket attacks. Meanwhile, Palestinian civilians should not pay the price of those actions, and Israel must cease the destruction of civilian infrastructure, ensure the protection of civilians and allow humanitarian assistance to get through, she said. (UN News Centre, UN press release SC/8768, S/2006/458)

In its resolution entitled “Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories” (A/HRC/1/L.15) adopted after a vote with 29 in favour, 12 against and 5 abstentions, the Human Rights Council requested the relevant Special Rapporteurs to report to the next session of the Council on the Israeli human rights violations in occupied Palestine, and decided to undertake substantive consideration of the human rights violations and implications of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories at the next session and to incorporate the issue into subsequent sessions. (Ynetnews, www.ohchr.org)

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said in an interview with the *Al-Ahram* newspaper: “Egyptian contacts with several Hamas leaders resulted in preliminary, positive results in the shape of a conditional agreement to hand over the Israeli soldier as soon as possible to avoid an escalation. But agreement on this has not yet been reached with the Israeli side”. Mr. Mubarak said he had asked Israeli Prime Minister Olmert “not to hurry” the military offensive in Gaza, but to “give additional time to find a peaceful solution to the problem of the kidnapped soldier.” (AFP, AP)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said there would be no referendum on the National Reconciliation Document, following an agreement among Palestinian factions. (AFP)

Israel revoked the Jerusalem residency rights of four Hamas officials, including PA Jerusalem Affairs Minister Khaled Abu Arafah. The other three were Hamas PLC members, Mohammed Abu Teir, Ahmed Attun and Mohammed Totah. On 29 May, Israel had given the four officials 30 days to resign or face expulsion from East Jerusalem. Israeli Housing Minister Meir Sheetrit said, “Police now have the legal possibility to take them out of their houses into Palestinian territory”. The four men were among the 64 Hamas officials detained in a massive IDF operation the previous day. (AFP, AP, Ynetnews)

France called on Israel to free the captured Palestinian Ministers. “The Israelis must be very vigilant about the consequences of their actions”, Foreign Ministry spokesman Jean-Baptiste Mattei said during a regular briefing, adding, “A de-escalation must be started.... We await the liberation of these political officials”. (AP)

Ha’aretz reported that, according to orders issued by the head of the army’s Central Command, the main crossing between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the West Bank was now closed to Palestinians holding Israeli identity cards. (Ha’aretz)

United Nations agencies expressed concern at the humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip. Some 130,000 people had been without water for the

past few days, and the agencies said their top priority was the restoration of the fuel supply for sanitation pumps in Gaza, with only a few days' fuel left if supplies were not resumed. They added that they were also worried over supplies of essential medicines and food, with some medicines already being rationed because of shortages. The World Food Programme said that, because of the random closure of border crossings between Gaza and Israel, it had been unable to get enough food into Gaza. The current supply of wheat flour would only be enough to cover the current caseload of 160,000 people for about 10 days. *(UN News Centre)*

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics said that about 200,000 households in the Gaza Strip had lost access to electricity due to the Israeli bombardment of Gaza's only power plant. It also said the stock of basic foods would not last for more than two weeks. *(Wafa)*

Amnesty International said that deliberate attacks by Israeli forces against civilian property and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip violated international humanitarian law and constituted war crimes. "Israel must now take urgent measures to remedy the long-term damage it has caused and immediately restore the supply, at its own cost, of electricity and water to the Palestinian population in the affected areas.... As the Occupying Power, Israel is bound under international law to protect and safeguard the basic human rights of the Palestinian population", the organization said. *(Wafa, www.amnesty.org)*
