

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

***Monthly Highlights***

- Quartet principals agree on direct aid to Palestinians. ( [9 May](#) )
- Palestinian national dialogue commences. ( [25 May](#) )
- First Gaza Strip ground incursion since disengagement. ( [30 May](#) )

***I***

Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian woman in an arrest operation in Tulkarm. Eitaf Zalut, a 42-year-old housewife, was shot dead when Israeli soldiers entered her house and opened fire to force the surrender of an Islamic Jihad militant suspected of hiding inside. Some of the bullets penetrated the house, fatally wounding Mrs. Zalut. Two of her daughters were injured. The IDF apologized for the killing and said that an investigation would be launched. (*Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, WAFA, Xinhua*)

The IDF detained some 23 "wanted" Palestinians in raids across the West Bank and discovered two explosive devices in Nablus. IDF troops also arrested five Palestinians in a Jericho raid. IDF heavy artillery shelled the northern Gaza Strip in response to a Qassam rocket that landed south of Ashkelon the previous night. (*Ha'aretz, Xinhua*)

The Shin Bet accused Hamas of being behind an attempted bomb attack on the Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing in the Gaza Strip. The army said the plot to attack the crossing last week was carried out by the Popular Resistance Committees, under Hamas' direction. Hamas spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri denied the allegation. He said that Hamas affirmed the Palestinian people's right to "self-defence" but had nothing to do with the attempted bomb attack. The attack was foiled by Palestinian security officers. (*British Broadcasting Company (BBC), Ha'aretz, Xinhua*)

Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas said that he would not seek a second term as President when his current mandate expires in 2009. (*Xinhua*)

Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) Deputy Speaker Ahmed Bahar called upon Palestinian factions to join the Hamas-led Cabinet and form a coalition Government. (*Xinhua*)

Hamas legislator Salah Al-Bardaweel, travelling as part of an unofficial Palestinian parliamentary delegation with other lawmakers from parties unconnected to Hamas, said that France had denied him a visa. He said that the group was to travel to France, Norway, Spain, Germany, Italy and Austria. He planned to apply for a visa with other European countries so he could join the delegation. (*Reuters, Xinhua*)

The head of the Palestinian Labour Union, Shaher Saeed, said that 68 Palestinian workers had been killed by Israeli troops during the last two years.

He also said that at least 300,000 Palestinian workers were unemployed. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics said the unemployment rate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was over 50 per cent. (*Xinhua*)

King Abdullah II of Jordan told PA President Abbas that Amman "rejected" Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Olmert's unilateral approach to resolving the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, according to a statement. The king also promised that "Jordan, in coordination with Egypt, planned to stage a fresh effort at the international level (...) with the aim of mustering support for the resumption of the peace process and rebuilding confidence between Israelis and Palestinians. President Abbas expressed appreciation over the Jordanian aid. He also said, "We will send a message for the Israeli people and the Palestinian people that we are ready to negotiate with the Israeli Government on the basis of the [Road Map](#)." (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA), Petra, Palestine News Agency (WAFA), [www.petra.gov.jo](http://www.petra.gov.jo)*)

Hamas was holding meetings with representatives of European and Scandinavian countries, according to Hamas Deputy Head of the Political Office Musa Abu-Marzouk. He said contacts were taking place in Damascus and other places. The Europeans' intent was to ascertain Hamas' actual positions and to convince the group to recognize Israel, accept all agreements signed with it and end its commitment to violence. Mr. Abu-Marzouk emphasized that Hamas refused to recognize Israel but was willing to discuss issues related to calm and stability. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

A delegation from Islamic Jihad arrived in Cairo for talks with Egyptians officials, said Khaled al-Batsh, one of Jihad's senior figures in the Gaza Strip. (*Agence France-Presse (AFP)*)

The US Treasury Department Under-Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Stuart Levey, arrived in Israel to coordinate efforts by the

United States of America to isolate Hamas. (Reuters)

2

An explosion in a Palestinian security base in the northern Gaza Strip killed two security officers and injured another three. (DPA, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

Three Palestinians were wounded by Israeli artillery shelling of the Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. According to medical and security sources, one of those injured was in serious condition. (AFP)

The IDF arrested 11 Palestinians, including a blind man, in Nablus, Bethlehem, Qalqilya and Tulkarm. (Wafa)

Hundreds of combat support items were found in a shipping container sent from China to the Gaza Strip, custom officers at the Ashdod Port said. (Ynetnews)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, speaking at the opening of the weekly cabinet meeting, accused the US of blocking the arrival of aid. "The money is there and we are examining ways to ensure it reaches us," the Prime Minister said. (AFP)

Prime Minister Haniyeh appealed for the first time to militants not to launch attacks against border crossings. "I stress the need to protect the vital needs of the Palestinian people, including the crossings, the gateways to the outside world, and avoid creating any disruptions ... so that our private sector, the ministries and the Government can continue to be able to bring in the needs of our people," Mr. Haniyeh said at the beginning of a Cabinet meeting. (Reuters, The Jerusalem Post)

The Secretary-General of the Hamas-led Cabinet, Mohamed Awad, said that PA President Abbas is to meet PA Prime Minister Haniyeh at a gathering to be attended by all Palestinian factions. "The President and the Prime Minister will set a date for dialogue aimed to achieve national unity and deal with the current difficulties", Mr. Awad told Voice of Palestine radio. (Xinhua)

Moussa Abu Marzouk, Deputy Chief of Hamas' Political Bureau said, "When Israel agrees to the Arab [peace] initiative, Hamas will make a decision." (AP)

Khaled al-Batsh, one of Islamic Jihad's senior figures in the Gaza Strip, said during his visit to Cairo that stopping the group's attacks against Israel was "not on the table". (Xinhua)

Israeli Vice Premier Shimon Peres told The Jerusalem Post, "I think that Olmert will meet with Abbas after the establishment of the Government ... maybe after his visit to the US, because he said that we are going to try for a while to reach a bilateral agreement." (AFP)

IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz said in an interview with Ha'aretz that he was opposed to ground operation in the Gaza Strip. "We were in Gaza for 38 years and in all these years of fighting, we never managed to cut the number of Qassams to zero.... There is one school of thought in the defence establishment that argues [that] we need to re-enter Gaza to curtail the Qassams.... They fail to understand the price that this would entail." (Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh said, "We know that there are obstacles, maybe by the American administration, in front of even the new mechanisms we have thought about and the mechanisms we may think to use" to transfer foreign aid to pay salaries to PA employees. (Reuters)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar said that he would ask Muslims around the world to donate one dollar each to the Palestinian people during the upcoming Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Conference of Foreign Ministers. (AFP)

The Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement, James Wolfensohn, in his final report to the Middle East mediators, questioned the decision of western powers to cut all aid to the PA. After spending over \$1 billion a year on assistance to the Palestinians, much of it to build government institutions and an economy needed to create a "viable Palestinian State", he asked, "Will we now simply abandon these goals?" (Reuters)

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

"The Secretary-General expresses his deep appreciation for the efforts extended by Quartet Special Envoy, James D. Wolfensohn, whose mandate finished at the end of April. Mr. Wolfensohn's experience, wisdom and dedication were instrumental in helping to ensure a peaceful Gaza disengagement and establishing a framework for the future revival of the Palestinian economy. The Secretary-General has relied extensively on Mr. Wolfensohn's expertise and advice and his contribution to efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. He extends his warm gratitude to Mr. Wolfensohn and is confident that he and other members of the Quartet will continue to seek his advice and counsel."

(UN press release SG/SM/10439)

Yemeni Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qirbi, in talks with visiting PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, appealed to the international community to respect the choice of the Palestinian people and support the setting up of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital. (Xinhua)

Sweden's members of Parliament were planning to meet with two Hamas officials during their visit to the country later in May, said Yvonne Ruwaida, a member of the Green Party. "We want a dialogue," she said. (AFP)

3

The IDF arrested nine Palestinians in Bethlehem, Jenin and Tulkarm. (Wafa)

Two Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli forces arrested overnight 13 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank: five Fatah members in Nablus; a wanted "Tanzim" member in Qalqilya; four Islamic Jihad members and a Hamas member in Bethlehem; a PFLP member in Beit Sahur, east of Bethlehem; and an Islamic Jihad member in Sawahira, north-east of Bethlehem. (www.idf.il)

Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson said that Hamas PLC spokesman Salah Muhammad al-Bardawil and Hamas official Mohammad al-Rantisi would not be allowed entry into Sweden. "We have no national interest in inviting them and will therefore follow the guidelines that Hamas leaders cannot have visas to visit Schengen countries," he told reporters. French Foreign Ministry spokesman Denis Simonneau had earlier announced a similar decision. (AFP)

Fatah militants announced the formation of a 2,000-strong militia. "We formed the new force as a challenge to the force Hamas has formed and which we regard as illegal," Al-Muata'sam Billah, a spokesman for the militia, said. (Reuters)

PA Deputy Prime Minister Nasr al-Sha'ir told Voice of Palestine radio that the Cabinet would soon present a new political vision to the world in an effort to break international isolation. "When we present it to the world, we will see if the goal was to punish the Palestinian people or to find a solution to the crisis," he said. (Xinhua)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said: "The Palestinian Government urges Arab and Islamic nations and all honest people to express solidarity with our people by voicing their refusal of the American policy of starving and blockade against the Palestinian people," adding, "Supporting Palestinians could be achieved by organizing mass protests and rallies in the occupied Palestine or outside it, next Friday". (Xinhua)

PLC Speaker Abdel Aziz-Dweik said that an internal dialogue among Palestinian factions would begin on 20 May. He told reporters that he had sent a letter to PA President Abbas requesting him to hold the dialogue based on the outcomes of the previous meeting held in Cairo last year.

(International Press Centre (IPC))

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said in an interview: "Egypt is engaged in consultations with all Palestinian factions in an attempt to get them to close ranks and speak with one voice, which is something that would confirm the existence of Palestinian peace partner." (AFP)

French President Jacques Chirac wrote to the members of the Quartet asking them to back the creation of a World Bank account to channel aid to the Palestinians. Mr. Chirac said it was essential for the Quartet members to reach an agreement on the fund at their next meeting on 9 May. "Action is necessary, even urgent. The international community has a responsibility that it must not seek to evade," Mr. Chirac said in the letter. (AFP, AP)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said in a statement, "The Arab League has no problem [in transferring funds to Palestinians], but there must be an agreement between the Palestinians so that we ensure the money goes to those who deserve it," referring to disagreements between PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh over which branch of Government should control the donations. (AP)

4

An Israeli force discovered an explosive device near Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem. The device was detonated in a controlled manner. (www.idf.il)

A three-year-old Palestinian boy was wounded by an Israeli settler in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Wadi Al Hassein in Hebron. (IPC)

Israeli forces conducted an arrest raid in Huwara, south of Nablus, and arrested seven Palestinian teenagers. (IPC)

Hamas said that it was recruiting and training a security wing that had been outlawed by PA President Abbas. "We recruited 2,000 fighters, which form the core of the new force, whose principal task will be to support police and national security," PA Interior Ministry spokesman Khaled Abu Hilal said. "The Minister sent a letter to President Abbas explaining that this force is part of the police and not a new security service, and President Abbas has made no objection," he added. (AFP)

Prime Minister-elect Ehud Olmert said in a major policy speech to the Knesset: "The borders of Israel that will be formed in the coming years will be significantly different from the territories under Israel's control today." Describing the existence of "scattered settlements" in the West Bank as contrary to Israel's national interests, Mr. Olmert said that their removal was necessary. "This does not mean the entire settlement movement was all for naught. On the contrary, the achievements of the settlement movement in its main concentrations will be forever an inextricable part of sovereign Israel along with our united capital Jerusalem," he added. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

Israeli political sources said Prime Minister-elect Olmert planned to begin implementing the "convergence plan" to define Israel's permanent borders in the West Bank within two years. (Ha'aretz)

The approval of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's Government came after he reiterated to the Knesset that he was determined to set Israel's final borders even without negotiations, and that this would entail the dismantling of smaller Jewish settlements scattered across the West Bank. Mr. Olmert told Parliament that he intended to hold on to large settlements as part of his "consolidation" plan. Mr. Olmert was to meet with US leaders in Washington later this month to try to win backing for his West Bank plan. He had said that he would not proceed without broad international support. The new Government was sworn in after winning the confidence of 65 Knesset Members. (AP)

George Abed, the Governor of the Palestinian central bank, the Palestinian Monetary Authority, said the PA Finance Ministry requested a loan of \$100 million from the Authority, adding that the request was "under examination." He hinted, however, that the request would be turned down, underlining that Palestinian fiscal law prohibited borrowing from the Authority to finance budget deficits. (AFP, Reuters)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar met with Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa in Cairo to find a way to deliver a \$70 million in Arab aid to the Palestinians. Mr. Al-Zahhar said that the Hamas-led Government would not oppose the transfer of the funds to the PA presidency rather than his administration. Arab League officials had been examining a mechanism to pay salaries individually to each of the PA's 160,000 employees. Arab League Under-Secretary-General for Palestine Affairs Mohammed Sobeih had earlier said "It is very complicated and (...) there is no guarantee it will work. (...) More than €1.5 million (\$1.89 million) will be wasted on commissions" adding, "We are trying to work with a German bank because all the others have backed off under US pressure." (AFP)

Several initiatives by donor States to bypass the Hamas Government and transfer money directly to the Palestinians were being thwarted by the United States. The British Government, in partnership with the European Commission and the Arab League, suggested last week that donor States' money and the taxes collected by Israel for PA be transferred directly to the Palestinians through the Holst Fund, established in 1994 in the aftermath of the signing of the Oslo Accords. The Fund is managed by the World Bank. The British suggested that the funds be transferred to the account of a commercial bank that was not under PA supervision. Withdrawals from this account would be possible only for specific Palestinian needs approved by the donor States. The expenses would be supervised by an independent, reputable organization. At a meeting of the donor States' representatives in London last week, it transpired that, contrary to recent media reports, the Americans were preventing the transfer of funds for vital services via foreign foundations and non-governmental organizations. (Ha'aretz)

At the American Jewish Committee centennial dinner, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that the United Nations was an Organization within which, more and more, the State of Israel enjoyed the same rights and responsibilities as every other member. He expressed the hope that within his lifetime, just as in this country [the US], where Jews were accepted without question as full citizens, by all their fellow citizens, so Israel would be accepted without question as a member by the whole family of nations. He added that all knew what that meant: a peaceful Middle East, at the heart of which will be two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side, within secure borders, in peace and with mutual respect. (UN press release SG/SM/10443, UN News service)

Also at the American Jewish Committee 100th anniversary, President George W. Bush vowed to have no contact with the leaders of Hamas, which dominated the current PA Government. Acknowledging that Hamas was elected by the Palestinian people, Mr. Bush said, "Democratic leaders cannot have one foot in the camp of democracy and one foot in the camp of terror." He said Hamas must accept the demands of the international community to recognize Israel, disarm and reject terrorism, and "stop blocking the path to peace". German Chancellor Angela Merkel also spoke at the event praising Israel and the fast growth of a Jewish community to some 200,000 strong in her country. (AP)

5

A Palestinian man was killed during a stone-throwing demonstration against Israeli troops in Nablus, Palestinian medical workers said. The IDF said troops entered the city to arrest a man wanted by Israel. The 19-year-old Palestinian was shot and killed when a group of protesters threw stones at soldiers after the arrest, witnesses said. Palestinians said four men, including two members of a militant group, were arrested in the raid. (Ha'aretz)

At least three Palestinians were wounded during an IDF raid of the Balata refugee camp in the West Bank, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades members. The IDF exchanged fire with Palestinian gunmen and searched homes for wanted militants. Two wanted suspects were arrested, Israel Radio reported. Witnesses said that more than 30 jeeps and three bulldozers drove into the camp before dawn. Troops imposed a curfew and began searching homes. Bulldozers driving through narrow alleys tore down some shop windows and doors, residents said. Jeeps blocked the three entrances to Balata, which is adjacent to the city of Nablus. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades announced over loudspeakers that their men were surrounded by troops in some houses, and called for gunmen to come to their help. (Ha'aretz)

In the Gaza Strip, IDF troops fired artillery at Qassam launching sites after Palestinians fired three Qassam rockets at southern Israel. There were no injuries or damage. (Ha'aretz)

An Israeli air strike killed five Palestinians at a training camp used by militants in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli military said that the strike targeted a

camp used by PRC. The air strike scattered body parts and left pools of blood in a field just yards away from the home of Mumtaz Doghmash, the top militant commander in the PRC and sought by Israel for attacks. Mr. Doghmash was not at the scene, but a brother, Juma, and three cousins were among the dead, hospital officials said. It was the first such attack approved by Israel's new Defence Minister, Amir Peretz. It signaled that the practice would continue under the new Government. Mr. Peretz asked the army for assurances that no civilians would be harmed, Israeli security officials said. Outside the morgue, Palestinian militants who fired rifles in the air vowed revenge against Israel. "We will respond with waves of rocket firings into Israel and the Zionist settlements near Gaza," PRC spokesman Abu Sharif said. (AP, Reuters)

Thousands of Palestinians demonstrated in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in support of their Hamas-led Cabinet. Protestors gathered in Gaza City and in Ramallah after the main Friday prayers to express support for the Government, following an appeal from a pro-Hamas group under the slogan "better hungry than humiliated". (AFP)

PA President Abbas phoned Israeli Prime Minister Olmert to congratulate him on the approval of his Government and to urge him to resume peace talks quickly. Israeli Cabinet Secretary Israel Maimon said a meeting with President Abbas was possible, but ruled out negotiations as long as the Hamas-led PA refuses to recognize Israel or renounce violence. (AP, Reuters)

King Abdullah II of Jordan called Prime Minister Olmert to congratulate him for his newly-approved Cabinet and the two leaders agreed to meet after Mr. Olmert's Washington trip, Mr. Olmert's office said. (AP)

The European Commission was considering sending aid for specific purposes, such as health and education, directly to PA President Abbas and bypassing the Hamas Government, according to a European Union (EU) document. The document predicted a crisis in the Palestinian territories in the next two to three months, including "greatly increased unemployment and poverty levels, and possibly the breakdown of law and order." The document said that in such a crisis, the international community would have a strong imperative to intervene, adding "The dilemma is how to do this without engaging the (Hamas-led) Palestinian Authority." European Commission officials in Jerusalem declined comment on the report, but said that a decision on possible aid to the Palestinians was expected later this month. (AP)

Israel's High Court ruled that Israeli troops would have to remove three Jewish settler families from a Palestinian-owned home in the West Bank city of Hebron by 8 May. The court had initially ordered the squatters removed by Friday. However, army officials said that they feared that they would not be able to complete the task before the onset of the Jewish Sabbath at sundown Friday. After the court ruling, about 60 settlers scuffled with Israeli police at the home that was to be evacuated. The settlers shouted slogans against the removal of the squatters and slashed the tyre of a police car, the police said. (AP, Reuters)

Following Israeli Ambassador to Sweden Eviatan Manor's criticism that Stockholm's decision to grant an entry visa to PA Refugee Affairs Minister Atif Adwan to attend a conference in Malmoe, southern Sweden, "legitimizes terror and creates a negative situation" Swedish Prime Minister Goeran Persson told the *TT News Agency* that while his Government viewed Hamas as a terrorist organization, it did not mean that individuals could not be granted visas. "Our position concerning Hamas is crystal clear. It is an organization which we have categorized as terrorist and the new Government needs, of course, to recognize the State of Israel and distance itself from political violence. But the discussion about the fundamental right to receive a visa is something different," Mr. Persson said. (AFP)

In a statement issued on Fatah-linked web sites, the Syndicate of Employees of the Public Sector said that it would hold a two-hour warning strike the following day, to be followed by an open-ended walkout starting 11 May. The open-ended strike was to protest non-payment of salaries. It was not immediately clear how many of the 165,000 Government employees the union represented. "This protest is intended as a warning to the Palestinian Government," the statement said. The union demanded that the Government find a quick solution to the growing financial crisis. (AP)

6

A Palestinian was killed and two others were wounded, medics said, in Israeli artillery fire at Gaza that followed a series of rocket attacks on Israel.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment on the killing that came a day after Israeli media reports said that Palestinian militants had fired six home-made rockets from Gaza at southern Israel, causing no casualties. (Reuters)

Hundreds of Palestinian gunmen led a funeral procession for five PRC Palestinian militants killed in an Israeli air strike the day before. (AP)

Palestinian teachers at five schools went on strike to demand overdue paychecks from the PA. The teachers closed their schools, forcing hundreds of students to go home. The strike affected only a small number of the 210 schools in Hebron. Mohammed Qawasmeh, the top Education Ministry official in Hebron, urged the teachers to return to work, noting that the work stoppage came just ahead of the end of the school year. (AP)

Israeli artillery shelled the northern Gaza Strip in response to rocket fire that targeted Israel a day earlier, an Israeli military spokesman said. "At least 200 artillery rounds were fired over the past 24 hours into the sector from which six rockets were fired on 5 May at Israel." The Israeli army dropped leaflets warning Gaza residents that "Israeli army retaliation will be even harsher if rocket fire against Israeli territory continues" and cautioning Palestinians, "For your own security and that of those close to you, we warn you to stay away from areas from which rockets are fired." (AFP)

West Bank Jewish settlers attacked a group of schoolchildren south of Hebron, lightly wounding four students and an Israeli soldier escorting them, Palestinians and the army said. A few dozen residents of the "Havat Maon" settlement, located south of Hebron, threw stones, cement blocks and empty bottles at about 20 schoolchildren and soldiers. One settler also commanded his dog to attack the group, the army said. Relatives said the children were between six and 11 years of age. (AP)

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said that the [Road Map](#) should be amended as it had expired in 2005, the *Middle Eastern News Agency (MENA)* reported. "The Road Map needs to be modified because its expiry date was last year in 2005," Mr. Aboul Gheit said on the sidelines of an international forum on dialogue among civilizations and cultures held in Alexandria. Mr. Aboul Gheit expressed hope that a meeting of the Quartet on 9 May in New York would help activate the Road Map and resume the stalled peace talks in a bid to ease the suffering of the Palestinian people. (Xinhua)

A Hamas Cabinet minister thanked Sweden for granting him a visa to attend a conference in the country, calling the controversial decision "a political message," news reports said. "This good behaviour sends a political message to our people – there is someone who loves justice," Swedish media quoted PA Refugee Affairs Minister Atif Adwan as saying in a speech at a conference for refugee Palestinians in Malmö. (AP)

The Russian Federation delivered \$10 million in pledged emergency aid to the Palestinians by sending the money to the office of President Abbas. Palestinian officials said that the delivery of the aid could serve as a model for a European proposal to set up a fund, administered by the west, to funnel humanitarian aid to the Palestinians without dealing with Hamas. Mr. Abbas' office said that the money went to health and education programmes, including efforts to control bird flu, money for high school graduation examinations and assistance to Palestinian hospitals. The programmes were controlled by the health and education ministries. (AP)

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that Hamas had refused to take part in a Palestinian delegation visiting Jordan in protest over accusations that the movement was planning attacks on Jordanian soil. (AFP)

After a meeting between PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh, the latter told reporters that he agreed with President Abbas to continue discussing a solution to the financial crisis of the Hamas-led Cabinet. He said, following a three-and-a-half-hour meeting in Gaza, that there were issues yet to be resolved with Mr. Abbas. "This is the first meeting of its kind that is held between the Government and the President, after the Government was sworn in five weeks ago," he said, adding that he agreed with Mr. Abbas to form a joint ministerial panel to continue their debate on

resolving all outstanding issues. "I explained to President Abu Mazen [President Abbas] that the fiscal crisis wasn't created by the Government. It was created by some international bodies, mainly the United States of America and Israel," said Mr. Haniyeh. Meanwhile, Mr. Abbas' spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, told reporters after the meeting that the President's major concern was how to solve the crisis and end the suffering of the Palestinian people. (DPA)

7

Israeli artillery fire killed a 55-year-old Palestinian farmer in the Gaza Strip following a rocket attack on Israel, Palestinian medics and security forces said. The Israeli shelling was on a farmland in northern Gaza near the town of Beit Lahiya. (Reuters)

Israeli police clashed with Jewish settlers in the West Bank city of Hebron, leaving at least eight people wounded, as hundreds of forces prepared to evict a group of settlers illegally occupying a Palestinian-owned home. Police said that the fighting erupted when officers cleared out a crowd of protestors gathered outside the home. Five policemen and three settlers were injured and details on their conditions were not immediately available.

The IDF troops were able to drag struggling settlers out of the Palestinian home. (AP)

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that the eviction of three settler families holed up in a Palestinian-owned house in the West Bank city of Hebron was the expression of the Government's uncompromising approach to lawlessness in the territories. "We will not reconcile ourselves to bullying and creating facts outside of the law, certainly not in sensitive areas like this," Mr. Olmert said. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz lifted a months-long closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, granting 13,000 workers entry to Israel. For the first time since the closure was imposed, 8,000 workers over the age of 35 with families would be allowed to return to work in Israel. Fifteen hundred workers over the age of 28 would also be allowed to return to work in the Atarot industrial zone in northern Jerusalem and 4,000 salesmen over the age of 35 with families, as well as an additional 750 salesmen, would also be granted permission to return to work in Israel. (Ha'aretz)

The World Bank warned donors that the financial crisis gripping the Palestinian Authority since Hamas won election was deeper than it first thought and could render the West Bank and Gaza ungovernable. In a report circulated among major donors, the World Bank also said that an existing aid programme could be expanded to pay for the salaries of employees of the Hamas-led Government. Western diplomats said the World Bank circulated the report ahead of the Quartet meeting in New York on 9 May. (Ha'aretz)

King Abdullah II of Jordan said that if a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was not achieved within two years, Palestinians might have nothing left to negotiate. "Everybody should remember that the time left for us to reach a peaceful settlement will be up two years," the King told the *Al-Arabiya* satellite TV channel. "I'm afraid that if this short time is over (...) Palestinians might have nothing left to negotiate," he added.

(AP)

8

Two Palestinians were wounded in an Israeli shelling on the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinian security sources and medics said. A vendor and a 15-year-old boy were moderately injured in the shelling, medical sources at Kamal Odwan local hospital reported. The Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Jihad, said in a statement that it had fired four home-made rockets at Ashkelon, a southern Israeli city. (Xinhua)

IDF troops raided Nablus and the nearby Balata and Askar refugee camps, ransacking Palestinian homes and arresting five Palestinian youths. (Daily News)

Israeli special units kidnapped a 21-year-old Palestinian in Bethlehem. (Wafa)

The IDF arrested 93 Palestinians who attempted to enter Israel illegally to seek employment, the *Ha'aretz* daily reported. IDF soldiers stopped a truck carrying about 93 Palestinians near the West Bank boundary. The Israeli Arab driver was detained for questioning, while the Palestinian labourers were also held up for interrogation. (Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh appealed for an end to the clashes between Hamas and Fatah after shootings that left three dead and 11 wounded.

The clashes broke out near the southern Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunis following a series of tit-for-tat kidnappings, police and witnesses said. Two followers of Fatah and one Hamas activist, all in their twenties, were killed in the violence in the village of Abasan, according to hospital officials.

A local security official was injured and in serious condition in a hospital. The sources said that at least one anti-tank rocket was fired. (AFP) The *New York Times* reported that a recent internal report by the World Health Organization (WHO) portrayed a health crisis that was bound to worsen as the financial ban of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority continued. The report forecasted a "rapid decline of the public health system towards a possible collapse" and "no access or limited access to preventive programmes" like immunization for a large part of the population. (The New York Times)

In a letter to the Quartet, PA President Abbas called on its principals to resume financial aid and reiterated his willingness to enter into immediate negotiations with Israel. (AFP)

Israeli Arabs dispatched 250 tonnes of humanitarian aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Aid trucks delivered cargoes of rice, sugar, oil and flour to Israeli army checkpoints outside Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm and other northern West Bank villages, said Abed Anabtawi, a spokesman for the Follow-up Committee, which represented the Arab minority in Israel and organized the food drive. (AFP)

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will host a high-level meeting of the Quartet on 9 May. The meeting at UN Headquarters in New York would be held at the principals' level and was expected to be attended by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, with the EU represented by its High Representative for a Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik of Austria, which currently held the EU Council presidency, as well as European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner. (UN News Centre)

The EU was getting ready to channel emergency funds to the Palestinians if talks at the Quartet meeting on setting up an international mechanism for easing their financial plight failed this week, senior officials indicated. Pressure for a swift agreement on supplying food and other aid directly to Palestinians, as well as money to pay the salaries of health workers and teachers intensified when President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh failed to resolve the crisis over the weekend. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, EU External Affairs Commissioner, who was in Egypt during the weekend, said: "We do hope there's a chance for a common agreement on this issue." She refused to set a deadline but admitted that the humanitarian crisis among Palestinians was worsening. Ms. Ferrero-Waldner confirmed that the EU, which in the past provided half of the aid to the PA, or \$500 million a year, plans to release \$34 million in humanitarian aid to be channelled through agencies (The Irish Times)

9

The IDF arrested 16 Palestinians in Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm and Bethlehem. (Wafa)

Ten Palestinians, including five children on their way to school, were wounded in renewed clashes between Fatah and Hamas members in the Gaza Strip. (AP, AFP)

The Israeli Navy intercepted three boats transferring 550 kilograms (kg) of explosives to the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army said after the news was cleared for publication. The incident took place on 2 May, on the Egypt-Gaza Strip border. (DPA, AP)

The World Food Programme (WFP) welcomed a donation of 1,000 metric tons of wheat flour from Japan for an extensive operation in Gaza. The donation had reached Gaza after being purchased in Egypt. (AP)



PA President Abbas urged the Quartet to rethink its suspension of direct aid to the Government. "Western and Arab donors should realize that the Palestinian people are suffering hardships and the international community, which believes in liberty, justice and human rights, should not be prepared to accept this situation," President Abbas told reporters at his West Bank Headquarters. (AFP)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice [announced](#) that the US would provide \$10 million in new medical assistance to Palestinians. The \$10 million will come from money the US took back from the Palestinians after Hamas won elections in January. A senior State Department official said the money included \$4 million in medicine and medical equipment for clinics run by non-governmental organizations. The remaining \$6 million will be delivered through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (Cable News Network (CNN), [www.state.gov/secretary](http://www.state.gov/secretary))

Representatives of the Quartet – UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, EU High Representative Javier Solana and Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, as well as European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner – met in New York to discuss the Middle East peace process and the looming humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The Quartet also met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdelehah al-Khatib, and Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal to exchange views on regional issues. (UN News Centre)

The Quartet issued a [statement](#) where it underscored its continued commitment to the principles of partnership and negotiation leading to a two-State solution, as embodied in the Road Map. It emphasized the need for both parties to avoid actions that could prejudice final status issues or undermine progress toward this goal.

The Quartet reiterated its grave concern that the Palestinian Authority Government had so far failed to commit itself to the principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map. The Quartet noted that the absence of a commitment to these principles had inevitably impacted direct assistance to that Government and expressed its deep concern about the consequences for the Palestinian people. The donor members noted their willingness to work toward the restoration of international assistance to the Palestinian Authority Government once it had committed to these principles.

The Quartet expressed its willingness to endorse a temporary international mechanism that was limited in scope and duration, operated with full transparency and accountability and ensured direct delivery of assistance to the Palestinian people.

(UN News Centre, UN press release SG/SM/10453)

Following the Quartet's meeting with regional partners in New York, the Secretary-General held a separate meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit; Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdelehah al-Khatib and the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Saud al-Faisal. They discussed the ongoing political environment in the Middle East, including the situation in Palestine, and developments in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Darfur. On Palestine, in addition to the political situation, the participants discussed the importance of the United Nations system continuing to provide assistance to the Palestinian people, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East's (UNRWA) critical role with the Palestinian refugees. They also discussed the importance for all to cooperate with UNRWA in fulfilling its mandate.

(UN News Centre, UN press release SG/SM/10450)

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) released [a study](#) entitled "The Palestinian war-torn economy: aid, development and state formation." The study said that deteriorating economic performance and declining living conditions under more intensive restrictions have left Palestinians frustrated by higher levels of poverty and unemployment and have damaged the already weak Government of PA.

It recommended that the PA complement short-term emergency responses with long-term planning and policies that focus on poverty reduction and employment growth. (UNCTAD/PRESS/PR/2006/007)

More than 30 Israeli artists and intellectuals signed a letter sent to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, urging him to order IDF soldiers to defend Palestinian children in the southern Hebron Hills from residents of the "Maon" settlement. (Ha'aretz)

10

Three Palestinians were wounded in Israeli artillery shelling in the northern Gaza Strip. A 20-year-old woman was seriously wounded in the bombardment which targeted an Israeli-declared "no-go" zone in the northern Gaza communities. Another woman and a boy were slightly injured in the shelling. In the West Bank, IDF troops arrested 12 Palestinians, including children, in the cities of Hebron, Nablus, Tulkarm and Bethlehem. (Wafa, Xinhua)

IDF removed a roadblock built by settlers from the "Havat Maon" settlement. In the Gaza Strip, three Qassam rockets were fired at Israel overnight. The Ahmed Abu Al-Riesh Brigades, a subsidiary of Fatah, claimed responsibility for firing homemade rockets into Israel. (Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

A nine-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and wounded in the chest during an Israeli incursion into Bani Na'im, east of Hebron. (Wafa)

An Israeli military aircraft fired two missiles at a training camp outside Khan Yunis that was used by the Abu Rish Brigades, loosely affiliated with Fatah. There were no casualties. (AP, Reuters)

Jordan had detained more than 20 Hamas members reportedly smuggling arms. Government spokesman Nasser Judeh accused the activists of plotting to destabilize the Kingdom. He said that the arrests took place three weeks ago when the police seized the weapons, which included missiles and rockets. (AP, DPA)

PA President Abbas outlawed the carrying of arms by militants, issuing a joint statement with PA Prime Minister Haniyeh to announce the measure.

"Anyone who carries arms will be considered an outlaw," according to Fatah spokesperson Ahmed Hilles, who told a joint press conference with Mr. Haniyeh, following an emergency meeting in Gaza City. After meeting with Fatah officials, Mr. Haniyeh said that the two groups [Fatah and Hamas] had agreed to work together to end the violence in the Gaza Strip. "I assure the Palestinian people that dialogue will be the only tool," Mr. Haniyeh said. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Farouk Kaddoumi made an "urgent call" for calm among Palestinians after renewed clashes in the Gaza Strip. Mr. Kaddoumi's statement called for "all supporters of [the] Fatah and Hamas movements in the West Bank, Gaza and everywhere to preserve the interests of our people and its national rights. In the interest of national unity, all resistance factions should close ranks with the Palestinian people and commit to calm and law." (Ha'aretz)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh said, "The Quartet brings from time to time conditions to force the Government to concede the rights and recognize the legality of the occupation. I believe the Government will remain faithful to the Palestinian rights and will keep seeking the equation that protects the Palestinian people. The financial crisis has never been a factor dividing the Palestinians. It will be a factor that unites them." (AP, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

PA spokesperson Ghazi Hamad said, "The Government appreciates the efforts deployed by the international parties to alleviate the economic siege imposed on the Palestinian people... but deeply regrets the Quartet's insistence on attaching preconditions to the Palestinian Government." (AFP)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said, "Israel was always in favour of giving money to the Palestinian population via the Palestinian Authority. This [Quartet] decision is only the first step in a process. They must decide how this fund will be set up, who will operate it and who will control it."

She also said, "As far as we are concerned, the Quartet's decision to give further humanitarian support to the Palestinian Authority, bypassing the Hamas Government, is definitely okay." (*Ha'aretz, Xinhua*)

PLO Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said he hoped the aid would reach PA "fast." "We call for the immediate delivery of aid to the Palestinian people to avoid an inevitable catastrophe," he said. Mr. Erakat also said, "We had hoped the Quartet would announce immediate continuation of aid to the Palestinian people because the continuation of the suspension of aid is leading to a humanitarian catastrophe." (*DPA, Ha'aretz, Reuters, Xinhua*)

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and senior members of his Cabinet said that the Hamas-led PA must renounce the use of violence, respect Israel's right to exist and respect previous mutual accords in order for talks to become a possibility. "We will wait for a month, two months, three months, six months, and if we see no change, then we will probably move forward even without an agreement. If the Palestinians do not accept these conditions, Israel will have to determine its borders by itself," Mr. Olmert said. Justice Minister Haim Ramon said that Israel would give the Palestinians until the end of 2006 to prove that they were willing to negotiate a final peace deal, and would unilaterally set its final borders by 2008 if they did not. (*AFP, AP*)

A joint platform, forged by senior Fatah and Hamas members imprisoned by Israel, was submitted to PA President Abbas. The document called for the establishment of a Palestinian State "in all the lands occupied in 1967." They did not renounce violence but said that Palestinians would "focus their resistance on the lands occupied in 1967." PA President Abbas would be authorized to lead negotiations with Israel, based on what was referred to as "Arab legitimacy." Any agreement would either be put before PLC or submitted to a referendum of Palestinians everywhere. Based on the programme, Fatah would join the Hamas Government. The negotiations were held in Israel's Hadarim Prison, where Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti and Abdel Khaleq Natche of Hamas were imprisoned. Mr. Abbas said, "This document is very important. I adopt the position of those heroes..." It includes a deep and realistic political vision that to a very large extent represents my point of view." Hamas spokesman Mushir al Masri said, "It could be a good base for a national platform and a national dialogue, but it still needs more discussion." (*AP*)

A Palestinian official said that petrol stations in the West Bank were running out of fuel after their Israeli supplier cut off deliveries over the PA Government's failure to pay bills. The Director-General of the Palestinian Petroleum Agency said that the Government did not hold fuel reserves.

He estimated that supplies of petrol and cooking gas would run out within 24 hours. "There will be an economic catastrophe. Many factories, bakeries and transport will stop working," he said. (*Reuters*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told Israel *Channel 10 TV* that Israel was willing to allow tax and customs revenues it collected on behalf of the Palestinians to be used "for humanitarian needs such as medicines and health needs." She said, however, that Israel would not agree to use the funds to pay salaries of Palestinian Government employees. (*AP*)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced that two trucks, carrying about \$75,000 worth of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, had been sent to local clinics in the Gaza Strip, following a pledge of \$10 million in medical assistance made by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice the day before. (*Wafa*)

## 11

Israeli forces arrested 10 Palestinians in Nablus, three in Jenin, one in Bethlehem, and four in Hebron. In Jenin, five children were wounded by rubber-coated bullets fired by Israeli forces. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces arrested a "wanted" senior Islamic Jihad member in Jenin. ([www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

An Israeli special border guard force arrested a Palestinian in Tulkarm wanted for arms dealing. (*Ynetnews*)

Two Fatah members and three Hamas members were wounded in the northern Gaza Strip in four separate shooting attacks. Hamas and Fatah officials each blamed the other side for the violence. (*AP*)

PA President Abbas received an official invitation to visit Sweden from the Swedish Consul-General in Jerusalem, Nils Eliasson. (*Wafa*)

Israeli *Army Radio* reported that Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz had urged a reconsideration of the policy of isolating the Hamas-led Government due to the humanitarian crisis. "We need to help Abu Mazen [PA President Abbas] and we need to find ways of bypassing Hamas that will strengthen the leader of PA," Mr. Peretz was quoted as saying. Also, Mr. Peretz was reportedly considering easing the policy on transporting goods between Israel and the Gaza Strip, out of concern that the current stringent policy was causing humanitarian damage to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. (*Ha'aretz*)

"[Arab League Secretary-General] Amre Moussa called Mahmoud Abbas today and informed him that the League is not in a position to transfer the money offered by the Arab countries... This is due to the refusal of banks to transfer the money as a result of American and international pressure," said Hanna Amireh, a member of the PLO Executive Committee. The body had gathered \$70 million from Qatar and Saudi Arabia to alleviate the plight of Palestinians. (*AFP*)

US State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack said at a news briefing that Israel's decision to partially unfreeze PA tax revenues was "a good, positive step in addressing the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people. It certainly would be consistent with what the Quartet had called upon in its most recent statement up in New York on Tuesday." ([www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov))

## 12

Palestinians threw explosives at IDF troops in Tulkarm. Three Qassam rockets landed in Israel; no injuries were reported. (*Ha'aretz*)

A Palestinian militant was killed by Israeli forces during an incursion into Nablus, PA security officials said. (*AFP*)

Israeli border police officers fired rubber bullets at demonstrators protesting against the construction of the separation wall near Bil'in, wounding a French photographer and two members of the International Solidarity Movement. (*Ha'aretz*)

Speaking at a conference in Qatar, Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal said Hamas could close ranks with Fatah on the platform of "liberating Palestine, not recognizing Israel and adopting the path of Jihad and resistance." (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli Defence Minister Peretz denied a rift between him and Prime Minister Olmert after he had called for a reconsideration of the Government's policy of isolating PA. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

An Israeli court charged four Palestinians captured by the IDF in the Jericho prison raid on 14 March with the assassination of an Israeli Cabinet minister in 2001. PFLP leader Ahmed Saadat and another Palestinian, who were also captured during the raid, would be tried separately for unspecified security offences. (*AFP*)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, warning that the region was on the brink of a human rights and humanitarian crisis [called](#) on Israel and PA to respect core international human rights standards. She said "The rising number of lives lost, whether as a result of targeted killings or suicide attacks, home-made missiles or artillery fire, is unacceptable", adding "Civilians, particularly the most vulnerable, such as children,

women and the elderly, should not pay the price for the neglect of human rights and humanitarian obligations.” ([www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org))

The Israeli company that provided fuel to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip resumed supplies after a three-day stoppage that had led to fuel shortages, following a dispute over overdue payments. (AFP)

PA President Abbas will meet Russian Federation President Putin in Sochi on 15 May. ([www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru))

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said, “I don't understand why elections, which did not satisfy the United States, should lead to a campaign against the stability of the elected Palestinian Authority. Like the rest of the international community, we recognize the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority and are in favour of a State for the Palestinians.” (AFP)

The Government of Norway said that it would raise its contribution to UNRWA by 50 per cent in response to concerns about a possible humanitarian crisis. (AFP, UNRWA press release HQ/G/07/2006)

### 13

Israeli police zappers safely detonated a bomb belt containing 10 kg of explosives found during a raid in Nablus, the IDF said. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli police arrested 10 protestors after clashes broke out during a demonstration against the separation wall in the East Jerusalem suburb of Ram. (AP)

In a joint declaration, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Morocco's King Mohammed VI called on the Quartet to renew its efforts for peace in the region. They also underlined their “rejection of unilateral solutions.” (AFP)

PA Health Minister Bassem Naeem said, after meeting Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa in Cairo: “We, as an occupied people, are ready to talk to all sides in order to receive aid. This is not to say that we recognize the occupier but our dealings with the other side would be as an occupied people.” He appealed to the Arab League and the international community for \$4.3 million to prevent “a humanitarian and health disaster.” “I am in contact with European commissioners who are charged with studying this issue and I am discussing with them the best way to send the money the Arab League has directly to the Palestinian side,” Mr. Moussa said. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

India's Government announced \$2.23 million in aid to the Palestinians, saying it was concerned at hardships faced by the people there. (Reuters)

### 14

Seven Palestinians were killed by IDF undercover troops in the Jenin area, one of them a top-ranking Islamic Jihad commander, the IDF said.

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz said, “It was consistent with the policy of striking harshly at terrorism while trying to ease the situation of the Palestinian population as far as possible.” PA President Abbas condemned the operation as a “crime”. The Islamic Jihad said in a statement: “We confirm to the criminal enemy that we will continue our martyrdom operations and nobody can stop the martyrs.” (AFP, Ha'aretz)

An Israeli was slightly wounded when a small bomb went off outside the settlement of “Shilo”, north of Ramallah. (AFP)

A 10-year-old Palestinian boy was left paralyzed and two other children wounded when they were caught up in an attack by gunmen on a member of the PA security services in Gaza City, who was also wounded, medical sources said. (AFP)

The Israeli Navy intercepted a Palestinian boat carrying 450 kg of explosives near the Gaza Strip in an attempted smuggling operation, the IDF said. (AP)

PLC member Abu Shamala told reporters that Fatah was ready to participate in the PA Cabinet, but stressed at the same time the necessity of drawing a “national accord programme” that all Palestinian factions could agree on. Cabinet spokesman Ghazi Hamad termed the remark an “encouraging mutual approach.” (Xinhua)

The Israeli Supreme Court upheld the law that bans Palestinian wives under the age of 25 and husbands under 35 from joining their Israeli spouses. (AP)

### 15

Seventeen Palestinians were arrested in the West Bank. (Ha'aretz)

Two IDF bulldozers and two tanks briefly intruded into the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Hanoun, PA security sources said. (Xinhua)

A Palestinian farmer was wounded by Israeli artillery fire in the north of the Gaza Strip. (Wafa)

At least four Palestinians were wounded in an Israeli air strike targeting a pickup truck in the Little Abassan village, east of Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip. An unmanned Israeli aircraft fired at a car. Four persons in the truck were wounded in the blast, with one in critical condition, having lost both his legs. A spokesman for the Islamic Jihad said the group targeted by the air strike had been on their way to fire rockets. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas said in a [speech](#) before the European Parliament: “I tell our Israeli neighbours that we want to make a just and lasting peace with you.... Let's sit together at the negotiating table, away from dictation and unilateral solutions. Stop saying there is no Palestinian partner; the partner is there, and we extend our hands to make peace through negotiations only.” He added, “These absurd [Qassam] rockets are giving Israel an excuse to escalate its offensives against our people in the Gaza Strip. Israel seeks to drag us into a trap and then refuses to negotiate under the pretext of having no partner.” (Wafa, Xinhua, [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu))

At a speech to mark the 58th anniversary of the nakba or the “catastrophe” of the establishment of the State of Israel, PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that he would not be pressured to change his stance towards Israel. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades stated in a leaflet that it would spread “the intifada and resistance outside the Palestinian territories if the siege is not lifted.” (Xinhua)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz called for “serious” peace talks with the Palestinians before Israel resorted to unilateral moves to redraw its borders. He said, “I hope the [convergence] plan is carried out in agreement with the Palestinian side and with full international backing.” (AFP)

The EU hoped to have a financial mechanism in place by June to help meet the basic needs of the Palestinians, EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner said as EU Foreign Ministers met to discuss the “temporary mechanism”. (AFP)

The Head of the EU Commission Delegation to Israel, Ambassador Ramiro Cibrián-Uzal, said that the mechanism being developed by the EU would be crafted in such a way as to encourage Israel to funnel the PA tax revenues it was withholding through its channels and towards humanitarian aid.

A major objective, he said, was to provide a conduit for Israel to release the \$55 million a month in tax revenues it collects for PA. (The Jerusalem Post)

Opening talks with PA President Abbas, Russian Federation President Putin said: “I know that you are making tremendous efforts to restore a normal situation in the territories and create conditions for normal advancement (...). Russia has always been a reliable and consistent friend of the Palestinian people.” He said that he was pleased with the chance “to speak not only of the problems of advancing the Palestinian territories and a settlement with Israel but discuss the entire range of regional issues.” Mr. Abbas said he believed in the effectiveness of the Road Map; he expected “the new Israeli Government will start negotiations with Palestine because we are their partner and believe in a settlement in the region.” (Interfax)

Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation Carin Jämtin announced an increase in Sweden's financial support for UNRWA. “This year, our core support will be 230 million Swedish Krona (SEK) (\$31 million),” said Ms. Jämtin, who added that further emergency funding would also be available if necessary. Sweden is the Agency's third biggest donor after the EU and the US. Sweden provided over SEK 200



million in funding and SEK 40 million in emergency aid to UNRWA in 2005. UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd had arrived in Sweden for talks on the current challenges facing the agency. (Reuters, AFP)

PA Minister for Refugee Affairs, Atif Adwan, met with parliamentarians from Norway's Labour and Socialist Left parties. "He told us that the situation is becoming desperate and there is an urgent need for assistance," a Socialist Left official said. "Mr. Adwan also clearly said that the Palestinian Government is ready for negotiations and ready for compromise, but Israel must compromise, too. Hamas does not want to be the only side to be put under pressure," he said. Mr. Adwan also met the Head of the Foreign Ministry's Section for Middle Eastern Affairs. The Norwegian official reiterated that the PA must take steps to comply with the demands put forward by the Quartet. He added that Israel must respect previously concluded agreements, key United Nations resolutions and demands from the international community. (AFP, Xinhua)

PLO opened an office in Lebanon for the first time since the Israeli invasion in 1982, which led to the expulsion of PLO. A ceremony in Beirut was led by the new representative of PLO to Lebanon, Abbas Zaki, a member of Fatah. The ceremony was boycotted by Hamas in protest that it was led by a Fatah official. Mr. Zaki was expected to seek to improve the living conditions of more than 400,000 Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps in Lebanon. He had also been assigned by PA President Abbas to hold talks with Lebanese authorities on the United Nations demand for the disarmament of Palestinian militants in Lebanon. Lebanese Foreign Minister Fawzi Salukh attended the ceremony. (AFP, BBC)

## 16

The Islamic Jihad had claimed responsibility for firing a Katyusha rocket that had struck the Moshav Netiv Ha'asara, a community near Ashkelon, in the predawn hours. Dozens of chickens were killed and a water pipe was damaged. No persons were reported injured. (Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

IDF soldiers arrested 10 Palestinians in a number of areas in Hebron. A handicapped person was among those arrested. In a separate report, Ha'aretz said that the IDF arrested 23 "wanted" Palestinians, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad members overnight. (Ha'aretz, Wafa)

About 240 Palestinians working illegally in Israel were arrested in the Petah Tikva area, northeast of Tel Aviv. (Ha'aretz)

A senior Hamas activist was shot dead in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian medics reported. Mohammed Tatar, 25, was shot and killed as he was driving near the PA Prime Minister's office in Gaza City. No one had claimed responsibility for the attack. (Reuters)

PA President Abbas warned of a Palestinian "explosion of anger" if international donors did not move fast to restore aid cut off in recent weeks. "Life will be frozen ... and this would lead to a chaotic situation of which we cannot foresee the results," Mr. Abbas told a news conference after a speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. He also said that he hoped to start a "national dialogue" in the next few days that could lead the Hamas Government "to amend its platform" and conform with commitments to the peace process made by the previous Palestinian Government. (Ha'aretz, Reuters, The Jerusalem Post, Wafa, [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu), Ynet.news)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz had decided to reopen the Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing, which had been closed for most of the year. "Our war is on terror, not against the residents of the Strip," Mr. Peretz said. A formal announcement had yet to be made. (AP, Ha'aretz)

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that it would have been better had the disengagement from the Gaza Strip included an extensive pullout from the West Bank because an internal "rift exists regardless of the size of the withdrawal." "A large step was needed from the beginning," he added.

(Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that the EU was showing increasing pragmatism towards the Hamas-led Palestinian Government, praising the EU position towards "justice, fairness and the lifting of the siege on the Palestinian people." (Reuters)

The "convergence committee" that was drawing up a legal, economic and diplomatic framework for a withdrawal from the West Bank was about to complete its report, which would be followed by a more detailed draft plan. The committee members included Justice Ministry Director-General Aharon Abramovitch; Finance Ministry Director-General Yossi Bachar; IDF Deputy Chief-of-Staff Moshe Kaplinsky; Deputy Attorney General for International Affairs Shavit Matias; and attorney Daniel Reisner, former head of the international law branch of IDF. (Ha'aretz)

Discount Bank, an Israeli bank authorized to handle dealings with PA, announced that it was severing ties with banks operating in the Palestinian areas. Bank officials said that they made the decision out of concern that it could run afoul of anti-terrorism laws. They said that all ties would be cut by November 2006. (Ha'aretz)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) reported that gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 7.0 per cent in the first quarter of 2006 compared to the fourth quarter of 2005. It added that the first quarter of 2006 showed a decrease in the performance of the economy in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, not including East Jerusalem. The decline was in agriculture, fishing, hotels and restaurants, mining, manufacturing, water and electricity, wholesale and retail trade, health and social work and construction. (Wafa)

## 17

Three unarmed Palestinians were shot and wounded by Israeli forces north of the Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing when they tried to cross the fence into Israel. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli troops killed two members of the Islamic Jihad in a gun battle that broke out during an arrest raid in the Rafidiyah neighbourhood of Nablus.

An Israeli military source said that troops surrounded a house where suspected militants had been hiding, then exchanged fire with gunmen at the scene, shooting three of them. One was taken to a hospital in Israel, while another was arrested. Wafa reported that two women had been injured. (Ha'aretz, Reuters, Wafa)

IDF soldiers arrested five Palestinians in Hebron and Bethlehem. Meanwhile, in the northern West Bank, an Israeli court extended the prison terms of a number of Palestinian detainees in the "Kedumim" Investigation Centre. Continuing investigations were the reason given by the court. (Wafa)

The Hamas-led Palestinian Government said that it was activating a new security unit made up of militants despite the veto by PA President Abbas.

PA Interior Minister Said Siyam said the unit, headed by Jamal Abu Samhadaneh, had been named "Security Forces Support System." (AP, Reuters, The Jerusalem Post)

PA President Abbas ordered thousands of police to deploy throughout the Gaza Strip, hours after the Hamas-led Government deployed its own security force in Gaza. (Reuters)

French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said that France opposed "unilateral decisions" regarding the future borders between Israel and the Palestinian areas. He urged negotiations between Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas. Mr. Douste-Blazy, who was in Jerusalem, met with Mr. Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni to discuss efforts to revive the peace process. (Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Defence Minister Amir Peretz signed an order for a dozen "unauthorized" West Bank settlements to be dismantled, public radio reported, without specifying which settlements or when they were to be dismantled. (AFP)

According to figures released by the Israeli Defence Ministry, 336 kilometres (km) of the separation wall in the West Bank were considered operational, out of a total planned length of 790 km. An additional 102 km were in various stages of construction, 67 km were still at the paperwork level, and the building of 285 km was still awaiting court approval. Military officials said that it would take at least a year to complete the wall.

An additional 100 km would be completed by the end of 2006. (Ha'aretz)

Chinese Foreign Ministry officials said that PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar would attend a Sino-Arab forum in China this month. China

had urged Hamas to recognize Israel and hold peace talks. Hamas was reportedly considering holding talks without recognizing Israel. Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and officials from 22 Arab countries and the Arab League were to attend the forum in Beijing from 31 May to 1 June, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhai Jun said. (DPA, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

Doctors have warned that the PA health-care system would collapse without funding. (Ha'aretz)

During a meeting with UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd in Helsinki, Finnish Trade and Development Minister Paul Lehtomäki indicated that Finland was prepared to increase its funding to UNRWA from last year's €3.6 million (\$4.6 million). This year, Finland had paid some €2.5 million (\$3.2 million). (DPA, Xinhua)

18

Israeli forces arrested at predawn three Palestinians in Jenin and another in the Daheisha refugee camp in Bethlehem. (Wafa)

Six Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the northern Gaza Strip. One of the rockets landed near an Israeli army base in the western Negev.

There were no injuries or damage. (Ynetnews, [www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

Palestinian gunmen in the Gaza Strip fired seven Qassam rockets at Israel. Six of them landed in Israel to the south of Ashkelon and one hit near a strategic facility close to that city. No casualties or damage were caused. (Ha'aretz)

Two Israelis, a husband and wife, were injured when Palestinians fired shots at their car near the West Bank settlement of "Tapuah". The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades took responsibility for the attack. (Ha'aretz)

During an IDF raid on the Rafidiyeh neighbourhood of Nablus, two Islamic Jihad operatives were killed. The two men were identified as Mustafa Abdel Gani, 23, from Kafr Zeida near Tulkarm, and Othman Anza, 26, of Anza, near Jenin. Palestinian sources said that a 78-year-old man, Musraf Mubsalat, who lived in a house close to the scene of the operation, died of a heart attack during the raid. (Ha'aretz)

Thousands of police officers loyal to PA President Abbas marched through the streets of the Gaza Strip in a show of force, a day after the Hamas-led Government deployed a 3,000-strong army of militants. Mr. Abbas demanded that the Hamas-led Government take the new militia off the streets immediately, Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said. The policemen ran through the streets and conducted drills near Hamas patrols. The policemen were unarmed but were followed by commanders in jeeps, with their weapons raised in the air. There were no signs that the Palestinian police was getting ready to take on Hamas units. (AFP, AP)

After a day of tension in the Gaza Strip, the new Hamas security force clashed with fighters loyal to PA President Abbas. In the exchange of fire, two policemen were shot in the legs near the Parliament building and police headquarters, officials said. A Hamas gunman was also wounded.

Khaled Abu Hilal, spokesman for the PA Interior Ministry, said unknown gunmen opened fire on the police headquarters from a moving car. Police apparently thought the Hamas forces nearby were responsible and fired at them. An anonymous police spokesman rejected that version and blamed the Hamas force for starting the gunfight, which was confined to the Parliament area. Mr. Abu Hilal said all sides were working to calm the situation, and Egyptian diplomats were also involved. (AP)

Dozens of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades gunmen, firing in the air, forced PA Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Shaer to cut short a meeting in Tulkarm. Mr. Shaer was meeting with the Governor of the Tulkarm district when the building was surrounded by the gunmen. He was taken out of the building under police escort. (AFP, AP)

After meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal in Washington D.C., US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the Palestinian rival factions posed "a very dangerous situation" that Palestinian leaders must confront. She said that innocent Palestinians were being caught in the violence. "The Palestinian leadership has every obligation to get control of this," she said at the State Department. (<http://www.state.gov>)

An Israeli official, on condition of anonymity, said that Israel was prepared to release Palestinian tax revenues into a proposed international aid mechanism to avert the collapse of the Palestinian health sector and to pay some salaries. The Israeli official said that the money transferred by Israel would be given to specific Palestinian hospitals and clinics, and that an independent auditor would ensure that the money was not diverted to the Hamas-led Government or Hamas officials. The money could be used to pay salaries to doctors, nurses and other health workers who had not been paid in more than two months, the official added. (Reuters)

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told Kadima Ministers that he planned to present his convergence plan to the Bush Administration only after "three, or ten months". Mr. Olmert was scheduled to meet President Bush at the White House on 23 May. Mr. Olmert's decision to tone down his stance on the convergence plan might have been related to staunch opposition worldwide to Israeli unilateral moves in the Palestinian territories. He had received a message from the three returning envoys he had sent to Washington prior to his visit, namely Dov Weissglas, Yoram Turbowicz and Shalom Turjeman, which concerned the American stance on the plan. The US wanted Mr. Olmert to adopt a low profile on unilateralism and dedicate the next few months to negotiation efforts, although it had not retreated from its stated support of the plan in principle. (Ha'aretz)

Israel's Foreign Ministry summoned Chen Young Long, the Chinese Ambassador to Israel, to deliver a protest against Beijing's invitation to Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, the Foreign Minister of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, to attend a conference on Chinese-Arab relations there, Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Reggev said. (Ha'aretz)

During a meeting with visiting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero said that his country would help the Palestinian people in their efforts to seek peace. (El País)

The Malaysian national news agency *Bernama* reported that Malaysia would provide aid to the Palestinian Government. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that Malaysia had an obligation to help the Palestinian people and it would appeal to the United States and other western countries to change their stand against the Hamas-led Government. ([www.bernama.com](http://www.bernama.com))

19

Israeli forces shot and wounded a Palestinian in the arm and arrested five others in Anza village, north of Nablus. (Wafa)

Israeli forces wounded 26 protesters at a demonstration against the separation wall in Bil'in, west of Ramallah. One of them, Haitham al-Khateeb, suffered a fracture in his skull when a tear gas canister hit his head. (Wafa)

Five people were wounded in gun battles between Fatah and Hamas supporters, which erupted after top Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri was caught at the Rafah Terminal trying to bring €639,000 into Gaza. (Reuters)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh vowed not to disband a new Hamas-led security force and said that he was prepared to increase its size. "We do not intend to make one step backward. The force will stay and will be integrated into the police force. Their task is to protect internal security and if there will be a need to increase its number, we will do it," Mr. Haniyeh told worshippers at a mosque in Gaza City. (Reuters)

The New York Times published an interview with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert in which he said that Israel would buy drugs and medical equipment urgently needed by Palestinian hospitals in Gaza out of funds Israel was withholding from tax and customs receipts collected for the PA. (The New York Times)

Palestinian security forces confiscated €639,000 (\$817,000) from Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri, who was on his way back from Qatar to Gaza.

PA President Abbas had ordered a criminal investigation of the incident. Mr. Abu Zuhri told the Arabic satellite TV station *Aljazeera* that the money was donated by people he met during a tour of Arab nations. According to Julio de la Guardia, a spokesman for a European Union contingent that monitors the Egypt-Gaza border crossing, travellers must declare all sums over \$2,000 (€1,600) and explain its origin. "He [Abu Zuhri] did not declare that money; he tried to smuggle it," Mr. de la Guardia said. Dozens of Hamas gunmen blocked the crossing after the money was confiscated. (AP)

20

Israeli forces arrested four Palestinians during raids on the Old City of Nablus and the Balata refugee camp. (Wafa)  
Three Palestinians were wounded in armed clashes in Gaza City between members of the PA preventive security force and the new force created by Hamas. (AFP)

Palestinian intelligence chief Tareq Abu Rajab, a top Fatah official, was seriously wounded when a bomb planted in an elevator he was taking at his headquarters in Gaza City exploded. His bodyguard died from his wounds shortly after the blast. Mr. Abu Rajab and five others in the elevator were seriously wounded. (AFP, AP, BBC, Reuters)

Islamic Jihad's most senior militant, Mohammed Dadouh, was killed when missiles fired by an Israeli aircraft struck his vehicle in Gaza City. Two Palestinian women and a four-year-old boy in a second car were also killed. The army said that Mr. Dadouh was responsible for firing homemade rockets and longer-range Katyusha rockets at Israeli towns. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

21

A 48-year-old Palestinian woman was shot dead during an Israeli raid in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus, a Palestinian security source said. The source said that an Israeli army unit in jeeps had been fired at by Palestinian militants as it attempted to enter the camp and responded in kind. An army spokesman confirmed the incursion and said that the Palestinians had opened fire but denied that the troops had shot back. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

Israeli forces shot and critically wounded in the neck a 12-year-old Palestinian boy in Tubas during a raid on the city. Four Palestinians were arrested during the raid. (Wafa)

A Palestinian was shot and injured in the leg by Israeli soldiers when they tried to disperse about 20 Palestinians who had gathered near the border fence between the Gaza Strip and Israel. (Ynetnews)

Israeli forces arrested six Palestinians near Hebron and two others in Tulkarm and Jenin. (Wafa)

A seven-year-old and an 18-year-old Palestinian were wounded by shrapnel from Israeli artillery fire. (Wafa)

Six Qassam rockets were fired at Israel. One of them landed in the Negev, and two women were treated for shock. Another rocket struck a high school in the southern Israeli town of Sderot, damaging an empty classroom but causing no injuries, the Israeli army said. The army responded by firing artillery at the rocket launching sites in the northern Gaza Strip. The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the rockets fired at Sderot, saying that the attack had been in retaliation for the killing by Israel of its member, Mohammed Dadouh, the previous day. (AP, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, BBC, Xinhua, [www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

Palestinian security forces discovered a 70 kg bomb in Gaza City planted along a route used by the motorcade of Rashid Abu Shbak, who last month had been appointed by PA President Abbas as director of internal security. The explosives were found as police conducted their daily inspection of Mr. Shbak's route. The bomb was later detonated by zappers. (AFP, AP)

A group calling itself Al-Qaeda in Palestine said it had carried out the bombing against Palestinian intelligence chief Tareq Abu Rajab the previous day and threatened more attacks in a statement posted on the Internet. (AFP, Reuters)

Palestinian schoolchildren from the West Bank village of Umm Tubba were assaulted by Israeli settlers from "Ma'on ranch," Palestinians said. The children, on their way to school, were being escorted by Israeli soldiers, who did not prevent the assault. (Ha'aretz)

The Israel Cabinet [decided](#) to transfer \$11 million worth of medicines and medical equipment to Palestinian medical institutions, financed by Palestinian tax and customs revenues withheld by Israel. (AP, Reuters, [www.pmo.gov.il](http://www.pmo.gov.il))

PA President Abbas said in a [speech](#) at the World Economic Forum on the Middle East: "The political negotiations with the Israeli Government are the historical choice of the Palestinian people and are the responsibility (...) of the Palestine Liberation Organization. (...) The Palestinian Government will not object to this." Mr. Abbas added that he was committed to putting the results of negotiations with Israel to a general referendum, saying, "Peace is not merely the signature of leaders, it will need the approval of the people, and hence came the idea of a general referendum." Mr. Abbas also said that he would chair a "Palestinian national dialogue" on 25 May with the participation of the Government. (AFP, Wafa)

PA President Abbas met with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres in Sharm el-Sheikh, on the sidelines of the [World Economic Forum on the Middle East](#). Ms. Livni said after the talks, "It is the Israeli Government policy not to punish the Palestinian people for their vote and to help the Palestinian people in any economic and humanitarian way that we could." She pointed out that the track of the separation barrier could be changed through negotiations, saying the wall's route was currently being determined by security considerations and it would be part of final status negotiations once those began. She also said Israel was willing to take "additional steps" regarding West Bank settlements in order to facilitate the establishment of a Palestinian State. She rejected, however, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit's proposal for formulating a new and improved peace plan, which he termed a "road map plus." Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that the two sides had agreed to meet again to lay the groundwork for a possible summit between PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert. (AFP, Ha'aretz, [www.weforum.org](http://www.weforum.org))

Israeli officials said that Israel had approved plans to expand four Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Three of the settlements, "Beitar Illit" and "Givat Zeev", near Jerusalem, and "Oranit", lie within areas that Prime Minister Olmert reportedly planned to incorporate within Israel's final borders.

Also, "Maskiot", an army outpost in the Jordan Valley, would be converted into a residential community, said Dubi Tal, a settler leader in the area.

The settlement watchdog group, Peace Now, said that although Israel frequently built new housing in existing settlements, the expansions of settlement boundaries were the first in years. The Defence Ministry said that the expansion orders had been signed by former Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz. (AFP, AP)

An Israeli military court laid 19 terrorism-related charges against Ahmed Saadat, the leader of PFLP, who was seized during an Israeli army raid on a Palestinian jail in Jericho. (AP, Reuters)

Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi pledged \$16 million in humanitarian aid and budget support to the PA at a news conference in

Sharm el-Sheikh on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum on the Middle East. He said that a Malaysian delegation would visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory to work out the details, and his Government hoped that the payment would go ahead as soon as possible. Malaysia's national news agency, *Bernama*, reported that PA President Abbas had accepted the Prime Minister's invitation to visit Kuala Lumpur "to discuss many things that could help Palestine." (*Reuters, www.bernama.com*)

Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said that sanctions meant to convince Hamas to recognize Israel and renounce violence could push Palestinians towards such poverty that they might reach a point where there would be little left to them but hatred. "Those people will be provoked into hatred with the sanctions imposed on them and they will have nothing else to lose by then. So we have to review the steps we have taken in that direction," Mr. Erdogan said on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum on the Middle East. "Turkey and Egypt have agreed that we have to provide aid to Palestine because this is a responsibility entrusted to us as a country in the Middle East (...) It's not in the form of finance. It's all about food and medicine. They will be allocated for distribution through the Palestinian Authority," he added. (*Reuters*)

Italy's new Foreign Minister, Massimo D'Alema, said in an interview published in the Italian daily *L'Unita* that his country would follow the rest of Europe in isolating Hamas. "We do not believe that a Government that denies Israel's right to exist can be a part of a peace process," Mr. D'Alema said. He said, however, that "It would not be acceptable for the international community or convenient for Israel for there to be a humanitarian collapse in the territories," adding it would be "wrong" for Israel to act unilaterally on redrawing its borders. (*AP*)

The Israeli Cabinet decided to create a ministerial committee under Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres to promote regional projects with Israel's neighbours. The committee would discuss a number of plans designated by Mr. Peres, including building an international airport for Palestinians in the Jordanian city of Aqaba. (*Ha'aretz*)

22

Israeli forces fired rubber-coated bullets at schoolchildren throwing stones at Israeli soldiers in Jenin, wounding a 12-year-old boy in the leg. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces arrested overnight six "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank: a "Tanzim" member in Siris, north of Nablus; a Fatah member in Beit Imrin, north of Nablus; a Hamas member in Iktaba, east of Tulkarm; a Hamas member in Ramallah; and two "Tanzim" members in Dura, south-west of Hebron. (*www.idf.il*)

The Israeli army fired artillery at sites from which Palestinians had been launching projectile rockets at Israel. (*www.idf.il*)

Israeli forces prevented Palestinian farmers from harvesting seasonal crops on their land in Tubas in the Jordan Valley. (*Wafa*)

An Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades militant, Mohammed Abu Taima, died of his wounds sustained in a gun battle between Fatah and Hamas gunmen, which erupted before dawn in the southern Gaza Strip town of Abassan, east of Khan Yunis. A second Fatah gunman was also wounded. (*AFP, AP, DPA*)

Palestinian police and Hamas militiamen traded heavy fire near Gaza City's parliament building, killing the driver of the Jordanian Ambassador in Gaza and wounding at least six people. The Ambassador, Yehiya Qarallah, was not in the vehicle at the time. At one point, Hamas gunmen holed up in two buildings under construction, hurling grenades and firing a rocket-propelled grenade at police. Other militants took up positions behind trees, cars and buildings, turning downtown Gaza into a battle zone. Hamas and Palestinian security forces gave conflicting accounts of how the fighting had started. The Preventive Security Service said Hamas militiamen had stopped one of its vehicles in the street and fired at the car. Hamas said some of its members had come under fire during a patrol and sought cover in the abandoned building, then fired back. (*AFP, AP, DPA, Reuters*)

Israeli police detained PA Minister of Jerusalem Affairs Khaled Abu Arafat and two other Hamas PLC members, Mohammed Abu Teir and Ahmed Abu Atoun, on suspicion of organizing a demonstration on the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound on 19 May. The three were all residents of the Jerusalem area. (*AFP, AP*)

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held its 294th meeting, during which it approved the provisional programme for the United Nations International Meeting on Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held at the United Nations Office at Vienna, on 27 and 28 June 2006. (*UN press release GA/PAL/1009*)

23

Israeli troops captured the West Bank commander of the Hamas military wing, Ibrahim Hamed, in Ramallah. He surrendered to the troops after they surrounded his hideout and threatened to demolish it with him inside. He is accused of masterminding suicide bombings that had killed more than 60 Israelis and wounded hundreds more. (*AFP, AP, Reuters, www.idf.il*)

Israeli forces arrested 12 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank: a "Tanzim" member in Qarawat Bani Zeid, north of Ramallah; a PFLP member in Beit Anan, south-west of Ramallah; two Hamas members in Idhna, north-west of Hebron; a Hamas member in Tarqumiya, north-west of Hebron; and five "Tanzim" members and two Islamic Jihad members in Bethlehem. (*www.idf.il*)

Israeli forces arrested 15 students of Al-Najjah University and a policeman in Nablus. Also, Israeli soldiers stormed at pre-dawn the Daheisha refugee camp in Bethlehem and arrested four Palestinians. Two others were arrested west of the city. (*Wafa*)

Israeli soldiers caused the death of a Palestinian at a checkpoint near Jerusalem, witnesses said. They said that Shehada Muheissen, 51, who was approaching a hospital in Jerusalem, was beaten up and severely assaulted by Israeli soldiers at the checkpoint, which led to his death later. Mr. Muheissen had a critical heart condition. (*Wafa*)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, leaders of Fatah and heads of smaller Palestinian factions met in Gaza City to try to end internal fighting. "We are concerned about ending this crisis. The term civil war does not exist in our dictionary (...) I assure our people that we can overcome these incidents. These incidents have taken place before and we have overcome the similar incidents," Mr. Haniyeh said at the start of the meeting. (*AFP, AP, Reuters*)

Egypt had suggested stationing Egyptian troops in the Gaza Strip to keep order between Hamas and Fatah, sources from the two factions said. (*DPA*)

In an interview with *Ha'aretz*, PA Prime Minister Haniyeh said, "If Israel withdraws to the 1967 borders, peace will prevail and we will implement a ceasefire (*hudna*) for many years (...) Our Government is prepared to maintain a long-term ceasefire." (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert was quoted by *Israel Radio* as saying that he would be "willing to devote six to nine months to find a Palestinian partner" before turning to his unilateral plan. (*Ha'aretz*)



IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee that he would not recommend Israel invade Gaza in an effort to prevent the firing of Qassam rockets. "Even if we sit in a plaza in the middle of Gaza City, there is no certainty that they won't continue to fire Qassams at Israel," Mr. Halutz said. He also said that economic pressure on the Hamas-led Government would fail to bring about its downfall, and that external pressures were liable to boost support for Hamas on Palestinian streets. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Israeli army conducted drills based on blueprints of ground operations in the Gaza Strip. "The large-scale exercise is meant to test the southern command and the Gaza division, including rescue services. The aim is to test our readiness for possible threats at times of escalation on the Gaza front," a military source said, adding, "The drill was scheduled ahead and it doesn't signal particular intentions." (*Ynetnews*)

In an interview with *The Jerusalem Post*, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's advisor for settlements, Uzi Keren, said Mr. Olmert's plans for the division of the West Bank involved the dismantling and relocation of 20 to 30 settlements and not the previously assumed evacuation of the vast majority of the settlements on the far side of the security barrier. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel's Supreme Court rejected an appeal by Palestinian residents of Al-Azaria, on the outskirts of East Jerusalem, against the construction of a new section of the separation barrier, which would cut them off from Jerusalem while encircling the major "Ma'aleh Adumim" settlement. Judges ruled that the Defence Ministry had taken adequate consideration of the wall's impact on residents while balancing the security needs of Israeli citizens. (*AFP*)

At a [joint press](#) conference at the White House, US President George W. Bush hailed Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's plans for Middle East peace as "bold ideas" that could be "an important step toward the peace we both support." However, he said a negotiated agreement "best serves Israelis and Palestinians and the cause of peace." Mr. Bush also urged Israel to approach Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as an alternative to dealing with the Hamas-dominated PA, saying Mr. Abbas "speaks out for peace and negotiations." Mr. Olmert said he would go forward with his plan "in the event that all other options may not be possible." President Bush said, "Hamas must recognize Israel's right to exist, must abandon terror, must accept all previous agreements," and, "No country can be expected to make peace with those who deny its right to exist, and who use terror to attack its population." On his part, Mr. Olmert said that if Hamas should abandon its refusal to recognize Israel and its embrace of violence, "they will find us a willing partner in peace." A series of secret talks between the US and Israel were expected to follow Mr. Olmert's visit. During these talks, elements of the convergence plan would be honed and translated into a practical programme. (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>)

The Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006 ([H.R. 4681](#)) was passed in the US House of Representatives by a vote of 361 to 37, with nine representatives answering 'present.' (*The Library of Congress*)

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said the Chinese Government hoped China-Israel relations would be unaffected by the attendance of PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar at the Second Ministerial Meeting of the China-Arab Cooperation Forum to be held in Beijing on 31 May and 1 June. Mr. Liu said that the Chinese Government had invited all members of the forum, including Palestine, according to the rules and conventions of the forum and it would respect the Palestinians' decision on the representative. (*Xinhua*)

EU Governments backed a new €34 million (\$43.4 million) emergency humanitarian aid package for the Palestinian people. The funds would be spent through United Nations aid agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the European Commission said. Before it could be disbursed, the aid package still needed approval from the European Parliament, which was expected to vote on the aid in June. European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel said in a statement, "Our humanitarian partners face increasing needs and this decision intends to reinforce our support." (*AP*)

Amnesty International said in its [annual report](#), "Israeli soldiers, police and settlers who committed unlawful killings, ill-treatment and other attacks against Palestinians and their property commonly did so with impunity. (...) Investigations were rare, as were prosecutions of the perpetrators, which in most cases did not lead to convictions." It also said, "Israeli soldiers and police at times intervened to stop settlers attacking Palestinians, often when Israeli or international peace activists were present. (...) However, in most cases they failed to intervene and often responded to settlers' attacks by imposing further restrictions on the local Palestinian population, as demanded by the settlers." It added that the reluctance to pursue the settlers or soldiers through the civil courts was not replicated when it came to the Palestinians, who were often tried before military courts sitting without a jury. "By contrast, Israel used all means at its disposal, including assassinations, collective punishment and other measures that violate international law, against Palestinians who carried out attacks against Israelis or were suspected of direct or indirect involvement in such attacks. (...) Trials before military courts often did not meet international standards of fairness, with allegations of torture and ill-treatment of detainees inadequately investigated," the report said. (*AFP*, [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org))

24

Four Palestinians were shot dead during an Israeli raid in Ramallah. Around 30 other people were wounded in the operation during which Mohammed al-Shubaki, the commander of Islamic Jihad in the Qalqilya area of the northern West Bank, was arrested. According to Palestinian security sources, the Israeli forces entered Ramallah to provide back-up for a unit of elite undercover soldiers who were already operating in the town. An Israeli army spokesman said the forces opened fire only after they came under attack from gunmen. (*AFP*, *AP*, *Reuters*)

Masked gunmen shot three Hamas members in Khan Yunis. One of the men later died of his wounds. (*AP*)

Some 1,000 Hamas gunmen marched through the streets of Gaza City. (*AP*)

Nabil Hodhod, a commander of the PA Preventive Security force, was killed in a car explosion in Gaza City. His deputy was wounded. (*AP*)

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman of the Palestinian presidency, rejected Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's statements at the White House. "These discouraging remarks aim to make changes on the Road Map peace plan in a way that helps Olmert carry out his plan," he told reporters in Ramallah. (*Xinhua*)

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari [briefed](#) the Security Council on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question." (*UN press release SC/8726*)

The Church of Scotland, a Presbyterian body, had called on European authorities and the World Council of Churches to clearly identify products from Israeli settlements in the West Bank to enable consumers to make informed choices, a church official said. The decision by the Church's General Assembly, which met in Edinburgh, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, came after delegates were informed that the church had no investments related to what it regarded as oppression of the Palestinians. (*Ha'aretz*)

25

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired two rockets into southern Israel, both of which exploded near Sderot causing no casualties or damage, IDF sources said. The IDF shelled the northern Gaza Strip. (*AFP*)

Israeli troops arrested 11 Palestinians, including five Fatah members, four Islamic Jihad members and two Hamas members. (AFP)

A gun fight between the PA security forces and Hamas gunmen in Gaza City left ten people wounded, witnesses said. One of the wounded, a security officer, later died. (AP)

IDF troops entered the Al-Bad Museum in Bethlehem, causing severe damage, according to Ministry of Tourism officials. Soldiers smashed several antiquities, the report said. (Wafa)

Speaking at the "Palestinian national dialogue" conference of senior Palestinian leaders, PA President Abbas said: "How can we resort to internal struggle while we are committed in our battle against the siege, the wall and settlements? All the Palestinians, from Hamas to the Communists, all of us agree we want a Palestinian State on the 1967 borders (...) If you don't reach an agreement within 10 days, I'm going to present the document [the political platform agreed upon by imprisoned senior Fatah and Hamas leaders] to a referendum in 40 days." PA Prime Minister Haniyeh said: "Today's meeting is aimed to boost our national unity and all of us are endangered as we live on harsh conditions with Western conspiracy (...) The area of agreement in political vision is very close, but we need to strengthen our national unity (...) There will never be a civil war on the Palestinian territories." PLC Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik said "Returning to the people is one of the most important principles in democracy," adding that the prisoners' document was a good basis for dialogue. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, The Guardian, IPC, Xinhua)

A statement from the UK Foreign Office said, "We condemn Israel's incursion in Ramallah on May 24 which left four Palestinians dead and tens injured. We continue to urge the Israeli Government to exercise restraint, avoid escalation of the situation, and ensure that any actions taken in the Occupied Territories are proportionate and in accordance with international law." (AFP, [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk))

Jordan's King Abdullah II said in a speech marking the anniversary of the country's independence: "We will not, on any day, under any circumstances, fail to support and assist the Palestinians until they attain their rights, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on Palestinian soil." (Petra)

The Israeli settlements in Hebron will grow and be linked to the "Kiryat Arba" settlement, Knesset Member Otniel Schneller (Kadima), who was helping to formulate Prime Minister Olmert's plan to unilaterally set Israel's final borders, said, adding "Hebron and Kiryat Arba are supposed to be part of the Israeli State." (Ha'aretz)

EU leaders of seven political groups, including the Christian Democrats, Socialists and Liberals, jointly decided to request "entry visas for all persons that it would invite for meetings and events, on the grounds that such visits would be to the EU and not to a member state," Mrs. Marjory van den Broeke, a Parliament spokesperson said. The EU had decided to avoid any political contacts with members of Hamas until the organization renounced violence, recognized Israel and all prior Palestinian agreements with it. (The Jerusalem Post)

26

Three Palestinian youths, two of them related, were killed and five others wounded in an explosion in Beit Lahiya in the Gaza Strip. The blast occurred after one of the youths picked up a stray IDF shell and brought it home, *Israel Army Radio* said. Earlier, another Palestinian was killed while working his fields near the Jabaliya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. IDF artillery hit him in the stomach. (AFP, BBC, The Jerusalem Post)

Palestinians fired three Qassam rockets at the western Negev from the Gaza Strip. No injuries or damaged was reported. (AFP, The Jerusalem Post)

The Hamas-led PA recalled a paramilitary force from the streets of the Gaza Strip. "We have withdrawn our forces from all locations after a decision from Interior Minister Said Siam," according to Yussuf Al-Zahhar, the commander of the force. (AFP, Aljazeera, AP, BBC, Ynetnews)

Hamas leader Adnan Asfur expressed reservations about parts of the [18-point document](#) recently agreed upon by senior Fatah and Hamas leaders jailed by Israel referring to "international resolutions as a basis to end the conflict," and "recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." Hamas would not be "blackmailed" into accepting PA President Mahmoud Abbas' proposals for Palestinian statehood that implicitly recognized Israel, a member of the movement's exiled leadership said. (AFP, Aljazeera, Reuters)

Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda welcomed a visit by PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, in a meeting to discuss future bilateral relations. Speaking at a [press conference](#), Mr. Al-Zahhar said, "We are not the government of Hamas. We are the government of Palestine."

Mr. Wirajuda said, "We know the constraints but during the meeting we found possibilities." Indonesia expressed the intention to establish a representative office in Palestine. Mr. Wirajuda also said Indonesia would give medicine and food aid to the Palestinian Government. (AP, The Jakarta Post, [www.dfa-dephu.go.id](http://www.dfa-dephu.go.id), Xinhua)

The [annual report](#) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories said poverty and unemployment continued to worsen despite a moderate economic upturn in 2005. While the economy rebounded moderately last year following a very sharp dip, four out of every ten Palestinians in the territories were living under the official poverty line of less than \$2.10 per day, while the absolute number of poor rose from 600,000 in 1999 to 1.6 million in 2005, the report said. (AP, [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org))

27

The PA sent a limited number of its new Hamas force back into the streets of Gaza City after withdrawing a day earlier. Spokesman for the militia Youssef Zahar said the force would remain on standby at fixed locations and resume limited patrols in the future. Fatah spokesman Tawfiz Abu Khoussa said the return of the force was "unacceptable and illegal." (AP, BBC)

Israeli soldiers shot a Palestinian ambulance carrying a woman in labour because the vehicle was behaving in a "suspicious manner," the army said. The Palestinian driver said that the ambulance's engine was damaged and they had to call another vehicle to take the woman to the hospital. (AP)

Israeli Labour MP Ami Ayalon met with PA President Abbas in Ramallah. Mr. Ayalon said Mr. Abbas' plan to call a referendum on the borders of a Palestinian State could affect the future of Israel's plan to withdraw from parts of the West Bank. "We could find ourselves in a situation where in two months time Abbas will hold a full mandate to negotiate with Israel on a peace agreement. This might deal a fatal blow to the Israeli concept of unilateral moves," according to Mr. Ayalon. "If the initiative is voted through in a referendum it could bring a stop to a lot of Palestinian terrorist activity," he added. (AFP)

According to Palestinian officials, Employment Minister Mohammed Barghouti and a delegation holding Swiss visas to attend an international conference in Geneva, were denied passage into Jordan at the border near Jericho. (AFP)

Hamas Political Bureau Deputy Chief Moussa Abu Marzouq said it was unacceptable for PA President Mahmoud Abbas to issue a 10-day deadline for Palestinian leaders to reach agreement on matters of national importance without consulting the PLC or encouraging dialogue among the parties.

"The Council was elected by the Palestinian people for such things," he said. According to Mr. Abu Marzouq, this did not mean that Hamas rejected the "prisoners' paper", which was Mr. Abbas' basis for agreement but that it contained good ideas that needed to be negotiated. (DPA)

28

A rocket fired by Palestinian militants from the northern Gaza Strip landed in an army base in southern Israel but failed to explode, military sources said. (AFP)

The PFLP announced that it had offered to join the Hamas-led PA. PFLP's political wing official Nasser Al-Kafarna told reporters that the group had informed PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh a few days earlier. (DPA)

The Swiss Foreign Ministry said that Switzerland would donate 1 million Swiss francs (\$819,000) to buy medicine for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to send two health experts there. The money would go directly to medical providers, with the distribution of medicines to be carried out in close cooperation with the WHO and other partners, according to the Ministry's humanitarian agency. Two Swiss specialists, a doctor and a logistics expert, left for a week-long visit to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. (AFP)

A Moroccan ship carrying 210 tons of humanitarian aid left Casablanca for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The gift to the Palestinian people was ordered by King Mohammed VI and consisted of five tons of milk, 50 tons of oil, 95 tons of sugar, 45 tons of rice and 15 tons of canned fish, Morocco's official *Maghreb Arab Press* (MAP) news agency reported. (AFP)

29

Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian in an exchange of fire on the line between Israel and the West Bank. The Popular Resistance Committees, a Palestinian militant group, identified the dead man as Abdel Moati Shukri, a group member. (AFP, AP)

Israeli police detained Kawla Haniyeh, daughter of PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh after she tried to visit an inmate at an Israeli prison, according to police. Prison Service spokesperson said that only the next of kin were allowed to visit Palestinian prisoners jailed in Israel. She was later released. (Reuters, The Jerusalem Post)

Israeli soldiers reportedly caught two Palestinians with a bag of explosives after a three-hour foot chase in the West Bank. (AFP, AP)

The national dialogue talks hosted by PA President Abbas made significant progress, according to participants. Abdel-Aziz Dweik, PLC Speaker, said, "I think that we can reach agreement within 10 days laid down by President Abbas. That's very possible." Independent MP Mustapha Bargouti said, "The atmosphere is very positive and we are beginning to draw close to an agreement." (AFP)

In an opening speech at the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Kuala Lumpur, its Chairman, Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, called for the immediate resolution of the Palestinian crisis, describing it as "one of the most profound tragedies of our time", adding "The so-called peace process now lies in tatters". Mr. Badawi called for the end of sanctions and said the conflict would not end until the rights of the Palestinian people were recognized. He called for the recognition of the Hamas-led Government and that it "must be engaged through contacts and dialogue, not shunned or ostracized and sanctioned." The Malaysian Government had announced that it would give \$16 million in aid to the Palestinian Government. (AFP, [www.bernama.com](http://www.bernama.com))

Turkish Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Gul said that Turkey supported a two-way solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and urged mutual dialogue to achieve that goal. He was speaking at a joint press conference with visiting Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. "The Road Map and the United Nations documents will guide the parties," added Mr. Gul.

Israeli Interior Minister Ronnie Bar-On said that the East Jerusalem residency of the four Palestinian lawmakers aligned with Hamas would be revoked unless they stepped down from their posts. The ultimatum was issued to PA Minister for Jerusalem Affairs Khaled Abu Arafat, and three Hamas MPs – Muhammed Abu Teir, Ahmed Abu Atoun and Mahmoud Totach. The Hamas leaders have rejected the Israeli ultimatum. (AFP, Aljazeera, BBC, The Jerusalem Post)

30

Israeli bulldozers demolished two houses in the West Bank town of Salfit. Backed by Israeli police and soldiers, the bulldozers tore down the houses of Mwaffaq Abdul Rahman and Abdul Azia Khater. The residents had to leave their houses without their belongings. (Wafa)

In the first ground operation since its disengagement in 2005, IDF troops killed at least seven Palestinians in a number of raids in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Three Islamic Jihad members and a Palestinian policeman were killed by IDF troops as they entered about three km into the Gaza Strip. Israeli troops operating in the West Bank shot and killed two Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades members while exchanging gunfire in Kabatiya, near Tulkarm and the nearby Balata refugee camp in Nablus. A third Palestinian, a member of the Al-Quds Brigade, died during an Israeli incursion at Kabatiya. (AFP, BBC, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

PA President Mahmoud Abbas condemned the recent killing of Palestinians and called on the Quartet to immediately intervene and halt the Israeli violence. The Hamas-led PA condemned the Israeli military operation as a "serious escalation and crime committed against the Palestinians."

Mr. Abbas arrived in Tunisia to start a three-day official working visit at the invitation of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. (AFP, Xinhua)

Prior to PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar's scheduled official visit, Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said, "China does not favour political isolation and economic blockade. But at the same time we urge Hamas to renounce violence, recognize Israel and accept agreements already reached." (Reuters)

Demolition orders for 18 buildings were handed to residents of the "Havat Ma'on" settlement outpost south of Hebron. The outpost was set to be the first of 24 to be evacuated. Six outposts among the 24 were the subject of a Peace Now petition before the High Court of Justice seeking the evacuation of these outposts. The six were "Ramat Gilad Hadegei," "Givat Assaf," "Ma'aleh Rahavam," "Mitzpe Lachish," "Givat Haroei (Aspirion Hill)," and "Mitzpe Yitzhar (Givat Yitzhar)." (Reuters, The Jerusalem Post)

Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar said, "If there are any differences between them [Hamas and Fatah] it is for them to sort it out. We support the Palestinian cause, the Palestinian struggle, the result of the free election, but we don't want to get involved in any dispute between them."

It had been reported that PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar left the Palestinian delegation on the eve of the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Kuala Lumpur in protest over the arrival of Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the PLO political department and head of the Palestinian delegation.

The two-day Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement ended with the approval of five documents, including one on [Palestine](#). (NAM/MM/COB/10). (AFP, [www.bernama.com](http://www.bernama.com), [www.e-nam.org.my](http://www.e-nam.org.my))

A quarter of the 160,000 Palestinian civil servants who had gone unpaid for the past three months were to receive their wages in the coming days, according to the PA Prime Minister Haniyeh. "The Finance Ministry will pay the full wages for a month to all government workers whose salaries are less than 1,500 shekels (\$330) a month," he said. Around 40,000 workers on the PA payroll would receive their full salaries. A group of around 1,000 civil servants had staged a protest in Ramallah over the non-payment of their salaries. (AFP, Ynetnews)

31

Islamic Jihad gunmen in the Gaza Strip said they had fired at Israel a new longer-range rocket they had manufactured, based on the Russian-made Katyusha, with a maximum range of 20 km (12 miles). (Ha'aretz)

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired Qassam rockets at southern Israel, despite IDF plans to step up ground operations by special forces in the northern Strip. One rocket landed near the home of Defence Minister Amir Peretz, who vowed that Israel would act to halt the Qassam fire.

"We will find a way to take action to prevent these organizations from firing toward Sderot and other communities," he said, adding, "Therefore, I hope that the [Palestinian] population understands that these organizations are bringing them toward a catastrophe." (Ha'aretz)



Israeli forces arrested four wanted "Tanzim" operatives in Jericho. ([www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

Israeli soldiers stormed the Balata refugee camp, east of Nablus, opening fire and wounding two Palestinian youths. They arrested six other Palestinians, including two women. Also, Israeli soldiers arrested three Palestinians in Qabatiya, south of Jenin, and a 15-year-old boy in Dahiriyya, south of Hebron. (WAPA)

Palestinians detonated a pipe bomb against an Israeli force operating near Al Khader, west of Bethlehem, causing no injuries or damage. Also, Israeli soldiers discovered two hand grenades during a security check of a Palestinian youth at the Beit Iba checkpoint, west of Nablus. ([www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

Three Fatah members were wounded by Hamas activists during an exchange of gunfire in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. (AFP)

An Israeli plane fired a rocket at a group of Palestinian militants. The group, travelling in their car in southern Gaza City, survived the Israeli attack, witnesses and security sources said. Security sources said the militants belonged to the armed wing of the Popular Resistance Committees. (Xinhua)

At its meeting in Tunis attended by PA President Abbas, the Fatah Central Committee agreed on holding a general referendum based on the National Reconciliation Document proposed by Palestinian faction leaders imprisoned by Israel should the national dialogue not reach an agreement. (WAPA)

PA Finance Minister Omar Abdul Razeq proposed to the Palestinian Parliament firing 11,500 Government employees and selling off Government investment assets in order to avert financial collapse. Mr. Abdul Razeq said Western aid cuts, Israel's refusal to release tax revenues, and US pressure on banks to hold up the Government's funds made it impossible for him to even submit a budget for next year. He said it was unclear what the Government's revenues would be and warned of an "economic disaster" if the financial pressure persisted. He proposed encouraging the early retirement of 500 workers and cutting Government fuel subsidies. (Reuters)

A promise by the PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh to pay salaries to 165,000 public employees excluded three quarters of the work force, PA Finance Minister Abdul Razeq said. He also announced new austerity measures that would pull belts tighter. Just a day after Mr. Haniyeh pledged to give all Government employees 1,500 shekels (\$333), Finance Minister Abdul Razeq said that the Government had raised money to pay only the 40,000 workers with the lowest salaries. (AP)

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Saudi King Abdullah opened talks in Sharm el-Sheikh in efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, the MENA news agency said. The talks would focus on "a resumption of negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and Egypt's push for a summit" between PA President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, MENA said. (AFP)

In a [press release](#), the United Nations and aid organizations working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory asked donor nations for additional funding amid a worsening humanitarian crisis. In November 2005, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and various non-governmental organizations asked the international community for \$215 million in their annual emergency aid appeal for programmes in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. They reviewed that plea just six months after first making it, saying an additional \$170 million would be necessary to avert disaster. The additional aid money would be channelled largely into job creation programmes, cash and food handouts for the needy and health care. (<http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/opt/>)

At a press conference in Jerusalem, Alvaro de Soto, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said a Palestinian initiative that would amount to a de facto recognition of Israel was unlikely to satisfy international demands of the Hamas-led Government. The initiative, drafted by imprisoned Palestinian faction leaders, called for a Palestinian State on the land conquered by Israel in 1967. He said that even if Hamas were to sign on to such a proposal, international sanctions would likely continue. "I see [the proposal] very much as an inter-Palestinian search for consensus," Mr. de Soto said, adding "I don't see it yet as an attempt by the Palestinian Government to address the three principles articulated by the Quartet." (AFP)

The Hamas-led Palestinian Government said that it had decided to offer Israel a long-term truce if Israel withdrew to the 1967 borders. "We seek solution and political vision and Israel seeks security for its people, so this makes the Israelis suggest the truce", Government spokesman Ghazi Hamad was quoted by *Voice of Palestine* radio. Commenting on Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's plan to unilaterally withdraw from the West Bank, Mr. Hamad did not oppose, saying, "If Israel wants to withdraw from the West Bank, then it can". (Xinhua)

Al-Ansar and the Martyrs of Palestine, two Islamic charities in Gaza, said that they had distributed more than \$1 million donated by Iran to 2,900 families in the Gaza Strip, including those of militants who carried out anti-Israeli suicide attacks, Al-Ansar President Nafez al-Araj said in a statement. This was the third such Iranian payment, according to the statement. Three months earlier, it stated, Iran gave \$1.1 million to 2,020 families in the West Bank. (AFP)

Chinese President Hu Jintao met with a group of Arab Foreign Ministers and officials of the League of Arab States, including PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, at a conference on strengthening Sino-Arab ties. China wanted to "further develop cooperation in all areas and earnestly promote the rapid development of our continuing friendly ties," Mr. Hu told the group. (AP)

In Beijing, PA Foreign Minister Al-Zahhar said that the Palestinian Government would study the Arab peace initiative with a "serious and positive attitude" to seek a just solution to the Palestinian issue. Mr. Al-Zahhar made the remarks while attending the ongoing second Ministerial Meeting of the China-Arab Cooperation Forum. (Xinhua)

PA President Abbas and Fatah officials held a meeting with Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and other officials in Tunis. Mr. Ben Ali promised to do all he could to help end the political, economic and financial "blockade" on the Palestinians, Palestinian officials said after the talks. The officials agreed on "the need to overcome difficulties so that [inter-Palestinian] dialogue leads to national concord" and a "propitious climate" to mobilize the international community on behalf of the Palestinians, Mr. Ben Ali's office said. Tunisian Foreign Minister Abdelwahab Abdallah and Head of the PLO Political Department Farouk Kaddoumi were among those who took part in the talks. (AP)

US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Scott Carpenter told reporters in Brussels that there was an "emerging consensus" on a special fund to channel money to Palestinians without passing through Hamas hands. "We are hopeful that something can emerge in the next three-four weeks or so," he said. He added that the money would not be used to pay for any Palestinian civil servant's salary. (AFP, AP, DPA)