



# Update on Conflict and Diplomacy

16 FEBRUARY–15 MAY 2016

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*This update is a summary of bilateral, multilateral, regional, and international events affecting the Palestinians and the future of the peace process. More than 100 print, wire, television, and online sources providing U.S., Israeli, Arab, and international independent and government coverage of unfolding events are surveyed to compile the quarterly Update. The most relevant sources are cited in JPS's Chronology section, which tracks events day by day. JPS Chronologies are archived on the JPS website at [www.palestine-studies.org](http://www.palestine-studies.org).*

**Highlights of the Quarter:** The phase of violence that began in Jerusalem in 9/2015 continues to dissipate while the Israeli govt. further expands and extends its crackdown on the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), as well as on the Palestinian minority in Israel and left-wing Israeli activists. Multilateral initiatives designed to address the violence breakdown, contributing to fears of resurgence, particularly along the Gaza border, and also in Jerusalem at the approach of the Jewish holidays. At the same time, Israeli and Palestinian leaders negotiate new economic and security arrangements but direct negotiations on final status issues remain at an impasse. The French peace initiative gathers momentum and support, except from the Israeli government. Palestinian national reconciliation founders and Pres. Mahmoud Abbas struggles to consolidate his power amid rising challenges.

## THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

With most diplomatic initiatives stalled, the Palestinian *habba* (surge or revolt in English) continued to dominate international and local media. However, there was an ebb in characteristic knife attacks, stabbings, and car rammings against Israeli soldiers, settlers, and civilians; carried out by mostly young Palestinians, the series of non-coordinated individual attacks took place in the context of the tightening siege of Gaza, continued abuse of

West Bank residents at the hands of settlers and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, unceasing takeover of Palestinian land and homes, and the explosive situation around Haram al-Sharif (see "Jerusalem at Boiling Point," online supplement to *JPS* 45 [2]). While there were fewer Palestinian and Israeli casualties this quarter, lingering tension in the oPt centered on Palestinian access to Haram al-Sharif during the Jewish holidays fueled fears of another flare-up.

The ebb in the violence allowed some negotiating space between the 2 sides on

lower-level economic and security issues if not on major diplomatic ones. Meanwhile, the Palestinians focused on continuing multilateral diplomatic efforts, particularly the French peace initiative, which took shape this quarter.

## REVOLT AND RESPONSE

Having intensified in conjunction with the Jewish holidays in 9/2015, the protests, clashes, and individual attacks that characterized the *habba* decreased during the quarter, leading to substantially fewer casualties: 32 Palestinians and 2 Israelis were killed as a result of such incidents this quarter, compared with 92 and 16, respectively, the previous quarter. This 66% reduction in overall fatalities followed on a 50% reduction from the previous 3 mos. Likewise, the number of injuries also decreased, from a peak of 7,392 Palestinians in 10/2015, to a monthly average of 2,192 in 11/2015–1/2016, and down to 514 in 2/2016, 348 in 3/2015, and 286 in 4/2016, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Similarly, the number of Israelis injured also decreased this quarter, from 115, 50, 41, and 16 in each of the 4 mos. leading up to 1/2016; to 8 in 2/2016, 27 in 3/2016, and 21 in 4/2016.

As in the previous 2 quarters, individual incidents—stabblings, alleged/staged stabblings, vehicular collisions, and car rammings, as well as shootings, largely instigated by Palestinian youths—produced most of the casualties. Conflicting Palestinian and Israeli media coverage of these events continued to exacerbate underlying tensions and anti-Israeli attacks garnered much support among the Palestinian public (see “Palestinian Opinion” below). With the number of individual incidents decreasing, however, a handful of high-profile events drove unrest during the quarter.

The most prominent incident occurred in Hebron on 3/24, when IDF troops shot and

killed 2 Palestinians after they allegedly stabbed and moderately injured an Israeli soldier in the Old City. The killings would likely not have stood out had a Palestinian human rights activist not captured 1 on video. The footage of an IDF soldier shooting a Palestinian in the head after he had been disarmed, detained, and incapacitated sparked an international outcry. Palestinian officials, who had been condemning the extrajudicial nature of IDF responses to similar incidents, said the footage demonstrated the disproportionate violence meted out by the Israeli army over the previous 5 mos. After the footage circulated on social media, some Israeli officials also condemned the killing, and PM Benjamin Netanyahu authorized an internal investigation into the incident. However, the govt.’s response was in stark contrast to Israeli public reaction. The Palestinian human rights activist who filmed the killing received death threats and other forms of harassment over the following weeks, and Israel’s Channel 2 News published a poll, on 3/26, showing that 57% of the Israeli public opposed their govt.’s efforts to prosecute the shooter, Elor Azaria. Ultimately, an IDF tribunal downgraded (3/31) the charges from murder to manslaughter, and Azaria’s trial began on 5/9. (See Photos from the Quarter.)

Although there were fewer anti-Israeli Palestinian attacks during this quarter, the Israeli govt. ramped up its ongoing crackdown, and, as in previous quarters, continued its policy of withholding the bodies of Palestinians killed after allegedly perpetrating violence against Israelis. This policy continued to provoke Palestinian ire, particularly in East Jerusalem, and it also stirred controversy within the Israeli govt. When the quarter opened, Israeli police had returned only 1 Palestinian’s body to his family in East Jerusalem. During the 1st half of the quarter, they returned 3 more (the family rejected 1 on the grounds that it had been

frozen, violating the terms of an agreement with the Israeli authorities).

In the second half of the quarter, the policy came under question amid an ongoing dispute between DM Moshe Ya'alon and Public Security Min. Gilad Erdan, who held jurisdiction over Palestinian corpses withheld from families in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, respectively. Ya'alon and the majority of Israel's security establishment espoused a more lenient attitude, believing that withholding corpses only led to more violence, while Erdan and the Israeli police enforced strict restrictions on any returns and placed caps on the size of funerals. According to sources in his office, on 3/28, Netanyahu ordered Ya'alon to stop returning any bodies to the PA or families in the West Bank but neglected to explain the order, leading to its inconsistent application (e.g., a body was returned to Hebron on 4/15). The next mo., Netanyahu appeared to reverse his position, saying (5/4) that Ya'alon and Erdan had been empowered, as of 5/1, to decide whether or not to return any bodies. As of 5/9, the Israeli authorities were still withholding the bodies of 15 Palestinians, according to OCHA.

The Israeli govt. expanded its crackdown in other ways during the quarter. On 3/2, Netanyahu formally asked Atty. Gen. Avichai Mandelblit to approve his proposed policy of deporting to Gaza families of Palestinians who commit serious crimes against Israelis. Then, after 7 Palestinians and 1 U.S. citizen were killed in a series of attacks on 3/8–9, he said (3/9) that Israel would complete the construction of the separation wall in the s. Hebron hills and that he would pursue legislation aimed at deterring Palestinians from entering Israel illegally (1 of the attacks, on 3/8, was carried out by a Palestinian working in Israel without proper permits); the PM also pledged to shut down Palestinian media outlets that in his view incited

violence and to deny work permits to the families of Palestinians who committed serious crimes against Israelis.

Over the next few weeks, Netanyahu's proposals took effect: Israeli forces shut down (3/10) *Falastin al-yawm* in Ramallah; conducted (3/10) widespread raids inside Israel, arresting over 250 Palestinians without proper permits and 27 Israelis suspected of assisting them; ordered (3/14) the closure of a construction site near Haifa on charges of harboring Palestinians; and closed down (3/31) a factory in the Negev that employed Palestinians working in Israel illegally. Israel's security cabinet approved (3/10) Netanyahu's proposal to complete the separation wall near Hebron (work had largely stopped since 2007). By 4/15, hundreds of Palestinian work permits had reportedly been revoked for security reasons. Additionally, the Knesset passed (3/14) into law, 44–16, an amendment designed to deter Israelis from transporting, employing, or otherwise assisting Palestinians working in Israel illegally. Specifically, the law imposes fines of up to NIS 75,000 (around \$19,340) and prison sentences of up to 2 years for 1st-time infractions by Israelis convicted of employing or otherwise accommodating Palestinians, with punishments increasing for more serious infractions. Police were also authorized to shut down offending businesses for as many as 30 days. In addition, the new policies empowered courts to extend closures or cancel permits.

The Israeli govt. also increased efforts to marginalize or undermine political opponents, including Israeli anti-occupation activists, other left-wing civil society groups, and Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI). After its introduction last quarter (see *JPS* 45 [3]), the Knesset passed, 55–53 (3/28), the 1st reading of the “suspension bill,” which would allow a 3/4 majority of Knesset mbrs. (MKs) to suspend 1 of their

colleagues if he or she incited terror or racism, or otherwise undermined Israel as a Jewish and democratic state (Netanyahu spearheaded the bill after criticizing 3 Palestinian MKs for visiting the East Jerusalem family of a Palestinian whose body was being withheld by the Israeli govt.). In a related development, Israel's Interior Ministry revoked (5/10) the residency status of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement leader Omar Barghouti, effectively barring him from traveling abroad. The ministry alleged that his "center of life" was in the West Bank and not his family home in Acre. Furthermore, the Israeli govt. approved (4/10) a phased plan to strengthen law enforcement in the so-called Arab sector. The plan would invest billions of NIS into the construction of 10 new police stations, the renovation of 10 more, and the hiring of 2,600 new police officers by 2020. Erdan, the plan's chief designer, said it would narrow the social gaps between Palestinians and Jews in Israel and increase economic integration, but the PCI and their representatives criticized the plan for serving the state's needs, rather than those of the Palestinian minority.

Meanwhile, Channel 2 aired a report (3/17) claiming that the anti-occupation group Breaking the Silence routinely collected classified military intelligence over the course of its work, which included interviewing former IDF troops about their experiences. Netanyahu criticized (3/17) the group and Ya'alon ordered an investigation into the allegations. According to an Israeli security official (3/23), Shin Bet completed a preliminary probe into the report and found that Breaking the Silence collected only low-level classified military intelligence. Public outcry against the group continued throughout the quarter.

Further exacerbating tensions in the West Bank, the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC) resumed its practice of punitively cutting the

power supply to various Palestinian cities in response to unpaid debts. From 3/31 to 4/5, the IEC temporarily cut power to parts of Jericho (3/31), large swaths of Bethlehem (4/4), and parts of Hebron (4/5; see Chronology for details). IEC officials said (4/4) that the PA and the Jerusalem District Electricity Company (JDECO) owed NIS 1.7 b. (around \$449 m.) to the Israeli govt., with the PA allegedly owing NIS 300,000 and JDECO the remaining NIS 1.4 b. After a series of negotiations between Israel's main political parties, including Joint List chair Ayman Odeh, the IEC announced (4/6) that the power cuts had been indefinitely suspended. JDECO agreed to pay NIS 60 m. (\$15.7 m.) to the IEC by 4/12, and the PA immediately transferred NIS 20 m. (\$5.2 m.). They also agreed to resolve disputes over tariffs and interest rates in future negotiations. Although the power cuts ended, and Israel's High Court of Justice temporarily banned (4/20) the IEC from using this form of punishment, the looming threat of punitive reductions in other public services fueled Palestinian unrest.

#### **PRESSURE INCREASES IN JERUSALEM AND GAZA**

##### ***Tension at Haram al-Sharif***

Although violence decreased overall during this 3-mo. period, 2 major flashpoints at the end of the quarter threatened to break the uneasy, relative calm. The 1st arose in Jerusalem with the approach of the Passover holiday. Since Palestinian access to Haram al-Sharif during the Jewish holidays was the initial trigger for unrest in 9/2015, nervous anticipation increased among govt. officials and in media reports in late 4/2016. Right-wing Jewish activists' visits to Haram al-Sharif, Israeli arrest raids and house searches in Palestinian neighborhoods, and Israeli settlement growth in the city all continued apace. Another source of tension

centered on stalled Israeli-Jordanian talks over the implementation of a 10/24/2015 agreement to install new surveillance infrastructure at the sanctuary. Scant and conflicting reports of progress appeared during the quarter, but neither side seemed eager to compromise.

The sticking points had become clear early in the quarter. On 2/28, senior Jordanian and Israeli officials said negotiators had made progress and that a delegation of Jordanian technicians would soon arrive in Jerusalem to finalize technical details. The 2 sides concurred on a couple of main points: cameras would be placed in the large plazas and other outdoor locations around the sanctuary, but not inside al-Aqsa Mosque as Israel had requested; they would also broadcast simultaneously to Israeli and Jordanian control rooms. However, disagreements remained. Jordanian officials said that the cameras would live-stream activity around the sanctuary but Israeli officials denied this. In the wake of these reports, another Jordanian official denied (2/29) any talks were going on at all and almost 1 mo. passed before further details were made public.

Three weeks later, Jordanian minister of state for media affairs and communications Mohammad Momani said (3/18) that cameras would be installed shortly, and the minister of awqaf and Islamic affairs Hayel Dawood indicated (3/20) that Jordan planned to set up 55 cameras to monitor only the outdoor areas of the sanctuary, reiterating that the cameras would broadcast live over the Internet. Since no Israeli officials commented on these reports, it was unclear whether they represented new understandings or if Jordanian officials were merely restating their positions. Despite more such reports based solely on Jordanian comments, the overall lack of tangible progress increased tensions. The International Crisis Group, for example, reported (4/7) that the

“relative calm” at Haram al-Sharif was “deceiving,” and that it could “crumble” unless Jordan and Israel implemented their agreement to install cameras, making “no other measures” possible.

Ultimately, PM Abdullah Ensour said (4/18) that Jordan had decided to halt camera installation at Haram al-Sharif, citing Palestinian complaints and reservations. Further reports said that Jordan planned to hire 150 additional inspectors to work for the Islamic Waqf instead. An Israeli official responded (4/19) to the announcement, saying that “Israel’s support [for the initiative] remains unchanged,” and that it was “regrettable” that the PA did not support the plan.

In the absence of a final agreement on surveillance, tension escalated throughout 4/2016. The Israeli messianic extremist organization Temple Institute said (4/12) that it had secretly conducted a Jewish wedding at the sanctuary that morning, violating the ban on Jewish religious ceremonies there. After MK Jamal Zahalka (Joint List) called (4/14) for Palestinians to obstruct Jews’ visits to Haram al-Sharif during Passover, Netanyahu formally asked Mandelblit if Zahalka’s comments constituted “incitement,” which would be grounds for an ethical complaint and a potential suspension. Israel’s police commissioner then wrote (4/17) to Netanyahu saying that he had “decided to continue [the PM’s] ban on [MKs] going up to [Haram al-Sharif] until further notice.” In the 3 days leading up to the start of Passover on 3/22, Israeli forces conducted intense raids across East Jerusalem, arresting 52 Palestinians, issuing arrest summons to 18, and sparking clashes that led to at least 16 Palestinian injuries. The Israeli authorities also placed restrictions on Palestinian travel during the holiday: Gazans’ weekly visits to Jerusalem were suspended; West

Bank and Gazan border crossings were closed on 4/22–30, except for emergency medical or humanitarian cases; and al-Ibrahimi Mosque was closed on 4/25–26.

Passover, which Jewish Israelis observed from 4/22–4/30, came and went with relatively little violence. Every day of the Passover week saw verbal or physical clashes at Haram al-Sharif between right-wing Jewish activists and Palestinian worshippers (see Chronology for details). Hundreds of Jews toured the sanctuary, and many were arrested or expelled after attempting to perform religious rites in contravention of long-standing practice. Overall, no serious injuries were reported, and life in the city returned to a relative calm.

### ***Cross-Border Violence in Gaza***

Since the Israeli assault on Gaza in summer 2014 (see *JPS* 44 [2]), sporadic bouts of cross-border violence have repeatedly broken the cease-fire between Hamas and Israel. While internationally mediated efforts to negotiate a long-term truce, or *hudna*, failed, neither side appeared willing to instigate another large-scale military operation. At the same time, reconstruction efforts advanced slowly (see “Gaza Reconstruction” below), humanitarian conditions in Gaza continued to deteriorate, and officials on both sides were voicing increasingly bellicose rhetoric.

This quarter, another round of cross-border violence broke out, contributing to overall tension across the oPt that illustrates the fragility of the cease-fire. On 4/18, the Israeli govt. lifted its gag order on news that the IDF had recently discovered a tunnel leading from Gaza into s. Israel (they destroyed the tunnel on 4/19). The news was released in the context of death of some 12 Palestinians in tunnel-related incidents last quarter, raising new questions about Hamas’s intentions and Israel’s anti-tunneling

capabilities. Hamas’s military wing responded (4/18), by describing the tunnel concerned as “just a drop in the ocean of what the resistance has prepared for the defense of its people and the liberation of holy places, land, and prisoners.” Two weeks later, Netanyahu toured (5/3) an area along Gaza’s border, igniting a 5-day period of sustained violence that led to the death of 1 Palestinian and the injury of 4 others (see Chronology for details). Armed Palestinians fired rifles and mortars at Israeli forces along the border fence on a daily basis, and the IDF used artillery and air strikes against Hamas and Islamic Jihad positions across Gaza. The IDF also conducted unspecified operations in their unilaterally defined buffer zone on Gaza’s side of the border that were presumed to be anti-tunneling activities. The worst attacks came on 5/5, the day the IDF announced that it had captured and interrogated a Hamas fighter and discovered another tunnel.

After 5 days of violence, Hamas and Israel reportedly agreed (5/7) on de-escalating the tension, following diplomatic overtures by Hamas toward Egypt, Qatar, and the UN (although it remained unclear whether the latter had any role in mediating the agreement) and relative calm returned to the border. Israeli officials said (5/8) that they planned to continue anti-tunnel operations, and they lifted (5/10) another gag order on the news that a 2d Hamas operative had been captured and interrogated, but there was no resumption of violence.

### **PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI TALKS**

With violence subsiding across Israel and the oPt, Israeli and Palestinian officials embarked on several bilateral initiatives, making progress on new, lower-level economic and security arrangements, if not on the diplomatic front.

## **Diplomacy**

Neither the Palestinian leadership nor the Netanyahu govt. altered their positions on resuming bilateral negotiations this quarter: PA pres. Abbas maintained that Israel would have to halt settlement construction and release the 4th batch of Palestinian prisoners as agreed to in the previous round of U.S.-mediated talks in 3–4/2014 (see *JPS* 43 [3]), while Netanyahu insisted that there would be no direct talks unless the Palestinians dropped their preconditions and restored “quiet” in the oPt (see *JPS* 45 [3]). With progress stalled diplomatically, both Israelis and Palestinians pursued other initiatives (see below).

One noteworthy incident in early 4/2016 summed up the state of play. Without altering his stance on the previously formulated minimum conditions for talks to resume, on 3/31 Abbas indicated that he would be open to meeting with Netanyahu “anywhere, anytime.” In response, the Israeli PM invited (4/4) Abbas for a meeting in Jerusalem, adding “any day he can come, I’ll be here.” Netanyahu’s Twitter account posted a message later that day elaborating on the invitation: “I heard Pres. Abbas say that if I invite him to meet, he’ll come. So I’m inviting him. I’ve cleared my schedule.” The PLO Negotiations Affairs Dept. Twitter account responded with “Negotiate what exactly?” The ostensible transparency of the exchange revealed both sides’ eagerness to appear open to talks and their simultaneous unwillingness to compromise, at least in public. This quarter witnessed no major information leaks of secret Israeli-Palestinian talks.

## **Economics**

Early in the quarter, reports surfaced that Israel’s finance minister, Moshe Kahlon, had held talks with his PA counterpart, Shukri Bishara, to shore up the economy in the oPt. On

2/21, the Israeli press reported that the 2 officials had met several times in recent weeks and that Kahlon was preparing a series of recommendations for Netanyahu, including 1 that would permit Palestinian doctors to train at Israeli hospitals and Palestinian entrepreneurs to apprentice with Israeli technology companies. Kahlon then met with Netanyahu on 2/24, and the PM allegedly approved several steps to improve Palestinian economic security, including a direct transfer of NIS 500 m. (around \$128 m.) in withheld tax revenues to alleviate the PA’s reported NIS 1.5 b. (around \$384 m.) debt.

On 4/12, the IDF’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) Unit announced that it had approved a Palestinian request to build a power plant near Jenin. According to COGAT, the plant would produce “a qualitative shift in electricity consumption, which will have a positive impact on all aspects of life.” A senior Palestinian official said (4/12) that the plant would cover 50% of the West Bank’s electricity needs. The project was estimated to cost \$620 m., with an expected completion date of 2019. The plant’s fuel is to come from Israel’s offshore Leviathan natural gas field.

Separately, Israeli political and military officials were alleged to be discussing opening a seaport off Gaza’s coast, according to a report in *Haaretz* on 2/24. Netanyahu and Ya’alon opposed the proposal, but senior IDF officers favored it, especially if Hamas pledged to uphold the cease-fire in exchange. There was no further progress on the seaport proposal, although it did come up in Turkish-Israeli reconciliation talks this quarter (see “Turkey” below).

## **Security Coordination**

Despite increasing unpopularity among the Palestinian public, PA Security Forces (PASF)



The smoking remains of a fire sparked by a “controlled detonation” carried out by Israeli forces at a money-changer’s shop in Ramallah. During a predawn raid on the shop that violated security agreements between the PA and Israel, the shop’s safe was blown up because the money-changer “failed to comply with the army instructions to open” it, an IDF spokeswoman said. (14 April, Abbas Momani/AFP/Getty Images)

maintained their security coordination arrangement with the IDF in the mos. that followed the eruption of the *habba* in 9/2015 (see “Palestinian Opinion” below). Palestinian efforts to renegotiate the terms of security coordination came to light this quarter as the PA sought to alleviate pressures from the Israeli crackdown on West Bank Palestinian cities and to quell the violence. According to a report in *Haaretz* on 3/14, the Israeli govt. and the PA had held secret talks on reducing the IDF’s presence in Area A, comprising 18% of the West Bank, slated to be under full PA administrative and security control. At the 1st meeting, on 2/9, senior Palestinian officials had reportedly issued an ultimatum: end IDF operations in Area A or we will end security coordination. In response, their IDF counterparts advanced a proposal that would

have limited such operations, starting with Ramallah and Jericho as testing grounds. The proposal was apparently approved higher up in the chain of command, but then Netanyahu and Ya’alon demanded that it include Palestinian recognition of Israel’s right to operate in Area A to stop “bomb-ticking cases,” or Israeli-defined emergencies. That demand proved to be the sticking point for the PA, since it would have contravened Oslo Accord provisions establishing Areas A, B, and C.

Despite the Palestinians’ rejection of the initial Israeli proposal, negotiations on security arrangements continued with Israeli officials and Western diplomats saying on 4/6 that progress had been made. But according to reports on 4/18, Shin Bet opposed the talks, and the wider Israeli security establishment was unwilling to make any major compromises to



its initial position. Netanyahu and Ya'alon said (4/20) that, no matter what, the IDF would “maintain the possibility of entering Area A, and anywhere necessary, according to operational needs.” On 5/3, PLO secy.-gen. Saeb Erakat said that the talks were stalled because Israel refused to allow the PASF to take over full security control in Area A, and also because of Israel's response to the French peace initiative (see below). Under growing public pressure from the Palestinian public, the PLO Exec. Comm. decided the very next day to curtail security coordination with Israel. PASF troops were instructed to implement the decision “under supervision of the Palestinian political echelon,” and PA security agencies were given responsibility for deciding how best to proceed. On 5/7, a Fatah official elaborated on the decision saying that the comm. would reconsider if Israel pledged to end incursions into Area A.

It remained unclear how serious the PA and PASF were about modifying the security coordination arrangement. On 5/4, senior IDF officers reported that the PASF had been taking a more active role in stopping the ongoing violence. They said Palestinian troops were responsible for around 40% of all arrests of Palestinians suspected of committing serious crimes against Israelis in recent mos., marking a 30% increase over the figure they reported in 1/2016.

#### ISRAELI SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY

At the same time the Israeli govt. was advancing economic and security talks with the Palestinians, it was also expanding and strengthening its settlements in the West Bank. Frequent reports of new settlement construction and confiscations of Palestinian land for the purpose of expanding settlements appeared throughout the quarter, making a

mockery of Netanyahu's expressions of support for a 2-state solution.

On 3/29, the Knesset passed the 1st reading of 2 bills providing economic incentives for settlement growth. The 1st bill would reduce bureaucratic restrictions on home purchases in settlements, ensuring that settlers did not pay taxes to both the govt. and the Civil Admin. The second would entitle settlers to tax breaks if they were eligible for a capital investment grant.

In terms of confiscations, the Israeli authorities seized 2,342 dunams (580 acres) near Jericho (3/10) and 115 dunams (28 acres) near Salfit (4/21), describing the 2 areas as state land; notified (4/22) Palestinians living near Nablus of the decision to confiscate 5,000 dunams (1,250 acres) of land nearby, retroactively authorizing a number of settlement outposts; and, according to a PA official on 3/21, residents of the Nablus area were informed that a further 1,200 dunams (around 296.5 acres) would be confiscated for the benefit of the nearby Eli settlement. (COGAT later disputed the figure, saying that only 612 dunams were set to be confiscated.)

In terms of new settlement construction, Israeli NGO Peace Now revealed (4/12) that the govt. had advanced plans for 674 new settler residences in the 1st 3 mos. of 2016, marking a 250% increase over the comparable period in 2015. The next day, the Israeli press reported that Netanyahu and Ya'alon had recently approved the construction of 267 new settler residences across the West Bank but Netanyahu's office denied (4/14) the reports, saying “almost all of the permits are intended for the upgrading of existing buildings.” Peace Now disproved that claim with photographic evidence. Later, *Haaretz* published (5/7) a leaked govt. plan for a new settlement near the illegal Amona outpost, scheduled for evacuation by the end of 2016. The plan was reportedly

being advanced to stem criticism from settlers and defenders of Amona who had waged a campaign to win authorization for the outpost.

In a related development, Israel's High Court of Justice ruled (3/2) that the govt. must return 1,700 dunams (around 420 acres) of unused land near Ramallah to its Palestinian owners whose lawyers had argued that the govt. seized the land in the late 1970s and early 1980s with plans to establish settlements but had never used it.

## BROADER DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES

### *Palestinians' Unilateral Efforts*

As they focused their energies on the French peace initiative (see below) for much of the quarter, the Palestinians also maintained ongoing efforts in international institutions, particularly at the UN Security Council (UNSC).

Last quarter, the Palestinian leadership appeared to be preparing to abandon efforts to table a UNSC res. censuring Israel's settlements in favor of supporting France's peace initiative. With the U.S. veto the chief obstacle at the UNSC, the Palestinians settled for the promise of the U.S. admin. throwing its weight behind the French initiative before leaving office in 1/2017. Secy. of State John Kerry made it clear to Erakat on 2/21 that the U.S. would veto any UNSC res. censuring Israeli settlement policy or recognizing Palestinian statehood, but the Palestinian leadership nevertheless went ahead and informally circulated a draft to that effect in early 4/2016. *Haaretz* said (4/7) Western diplomats and Palestinian officials regarded the document as "relatively moderate," indicating that it was seen as a compromise measure, combining a draft UNSC presidential statement elaborated by the Palestinians in 2/2011 (see *JPS* 40 [4]) with an added provision criticizing Israeli settler-related violence. The officials also

indicated that Abbas was hoping to bring the draft to a vote while in New York for a climate conference in late 4/2016. Contrary to what Kerry had conveyed to Erakat on 2/21, a spokesperson for the State Dept. said (4/8) that the Obama admin. was undecided on whether or not to support the draft, allowing the Palestinian campaign to garner further support unimpeded.

Over the next 2 weeks, as consultations with several Arab states and other allies intensified, with the aim of finalizing the Palestinian draft ahead of Abbas's trip to New York, the U.S. firmly dispelled any lingering ambiguity over its stance and closed the door on the draft res. After 90% of the U.S. House of Reps. (394 mbrs.) signed (4/8) a letter calling on U.S. pres. Barack Obama to "oppose, and if need be, veto, one-sided UNSC resolutions," a State Dept. spokesperson updated (4/12) the U.S. position, saying that the admin. was "opposed to [the Palestinians' draft]."

The U.S. stance sparked rumors that the Palestinians were shelving their draft. Although the PA Foreign Ministry later denied (4/20) this, a senior Palestinian official was quoted (4/19) as saying deliberations continued on whether or not to halt the campaign. "The opportunity to go to the [UNSC] will always be there," the official said, "and we want to give a chance to the French initiative because, in the end, this is an initiative that serves us and not one that hurts us." At the time, French diplomats were reportedly arguing that there was no point in investing time and effort in a draft res. that would likely fail, due to lack of support or a U.S. veto.

The Palestinians continued denying that they were abandoning their UNSC efforts, but when Abbas arrived in New York and addressed the UN on 4/22, he made no announcement or push for a vote: "We are deliberating with international parties and [the] relevant Arab

ministerial committee to examine the content and timing for proposing a [UNSC] res. against settlement activity.” Abbas faced criticism from within Fatah and from Hamas, but held his ground. A PLO spokesperson later confirmed (4/26) speculation that Abbas had decided to concentrate Palestinian efforts on the French initiative. There were no further reports about a Palestinian-backed UNSC res. through the end of the quarter.

Outside the UN umbrella, the Palestinians continued cooperating with the preliminary examination into alleged war crimes committed in the oPt that International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Fatou Bensouda launched in 1/2015 (see *JPS* 44 [3]). ICC officials visited the region in 3/2016, meeting with Palestinian activists and lawyers, as well as PA officials on 3/19–21 in Amman. The Palestinians reportedly presented evidence relating to settlements and settler-related violence and to the environmental damage caused by Israel and its appropriation of natural resources. A PA official indicated (3/25) that the Palestinian leadership was trying to secure access to the Gaza Strip for the ICC delegation after Israel had denied them passage through the Erez border crossing. The PA began working with Egypt to get the delegates through the Rafah border crossing instead.

In a related development, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague announced (3/15) that the State of Palestine had joined its ranks, making it the 118th mbr. state. PCA membership allows the Palestinians to access new international dispute resolution services, such as guest tribunals and commissions of inquiry. The Palestinians filed their application to join on 12/29/2015, and their lobbying efforts overcame opposition from the U.S. and Canada. Israel’s Foreign Ministry criticized the announcement: “This is a legal

body which is not among the more important ones. What a waste that the Palestinians continue to invest efforts to be accepted into these kinds of bodies instead of returning to the negotiating table.”

### ***French Initiative***

In the absence of any serious Israeli moves toward bilateral negotiations, the Palestinian leadership threw its full support behind the French peace initiative this quarter. Major uncertainties hampered French efforts in the past, but as the initiative took on clearer contours, it gathered momentum, and the only remaining questions concerned U.S. participation and Israeli approval.

As the quarter opened, French diplomats were meeting with their counterparts all over the world to build support for their initiative. On 2/16, French amb. to Israel Patrick Maisonnave unveiled the details of the plan to Israeli officials: first, the French would hold consultations with the Israelis and Palestinians in 2–3/2016; second, they would convene an international support group in Paris with reps. from dozens of countries excluding Palestine and Israel in 3/2016 or 4/2016; and last, they would convene an international peace summit in 6/2016 or 7/2016 to launch a new round of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. The Israelis did not embrace the proposal; Netanyahu called (2/16) it “puzzling.” The U.S. was more open. After Abbas advocated for the plan in a meeting with Kerry on 2/21, the chief U.S. diplomat said (2/24) that “we’re trying to get some details of what exactly [the French proposal] is trying to achieve and how and what . . . the rules of the road would be.”

As support for the initiative grew in 3/2016 and 4/2016—an Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said (3/3) there was “no doubt” that Cairo welcomed it—the French further

clarified their plans. FM Jean-Marc Ayrault reversed his predecessor's position the previous quarter, saying on 3/9 that if the initiative failed, France would no longer plan to recognize Palestinian statehood. "There is never anything automatic," he said, adding that "[the initiative] will be the first step, there is no prerequisite." Israeli officials had criticized former French FM Laurent Fabius's ultimatum, and the new position was framed as a clear appeal for their support. Abbas met (4/15) with French pres. François Hollande in Paris and dropped the Palestinian bid to have the UNSC pass a res. censuring Israeli settlements (see above).

While they pushed hard for its support, the French did not find a receptive audience in the Israeli govt., even after dropping the recognition ultimatum. Updating the Israelis on 4/21, the French revealed that under their plan, they would: hold a preparatory meeting in early 5/2016; send invitations out for a ministerial-level conference to be held in Paris on 5/30; and get the conferees to agree on a statement of principles to guide the new round of talks. That same day, Ayrault gave an interview to *Haaretz* emphasizing the importance of Russian and U.S. participation and that of security arrangements at the venue. But their efforts were for naught. On 4/28, Netanyahu's office released a statement formally rejecting the French peace initiative. "Israel is ready immediately to begin direct negotiations with the Palestinians without any preconditions," the statement said, adding that "any other diplomatic initiative distances the Palestinians from the table of direct negotiations."

Despite Israel's rejection, the French continued to appeal for U.S. support. Toward the end of the quarter, a State Dept. spokesperson said (4/28) that the Obama admin. had not yet taken a position although it

was "certainly interested in talking . . . about ways in which we can try to get to a 2-state solution." Kerry, still undecided about whether he would attend the ministerial meeting or not, met with Ayrault in Paris on 5/9, and asked for the plan to be postponed, purportedly to accommodate his schedule. Ayrault was receptive, confirming (5/15) that the French were pursuing their plans despite Netanyahu's objections, and that he was open to postponing his 5/30 conference to enable Kerry to attend.

### OCCUPATION DATA AND TRENDS

The overall number of Palestinian and Israeli casualties remained relatively high this quarter, in comparison with the quarters leading up to the outbreak of the *habba* in 9/2015. But this quarter's totals were an improvement over the previous 3-mo. period: 47 Palestinians were killed as a result of Israeli actions (down from 107 last quarter), and 2 Israelis and 1 U.S. citizen were killed as a result of Palestinian actions (down from 15 last quarter). The comprehensive death toll since the beginning of the 2d intifada in 9/2000 reached 10,814 Palestinians (including 55 PCI and 19 unidentified cross-border "infiltrators"); 1,246 Israelis (432 IDF soldiers and security personnel, 244 settlers, and 562 others); and 71 foreign nationals (including 2 British suicide bombers). These numbers include individuals who died in noncombat-related incidents if their death was a direct result of Israel's occupation or of the ongoing conflict (e.g., ailing Palestinians who died while being denied access to medical care and Palestinians killed in smuggling tunnel accidents). Not included in this count are the 2 Palestinians killed by Egyptian forces this quarter. They died when Egyptian troops flooded a smuggling tunnel near Rafah (3/10; see Chronology for details).

## ***Overview of the Violence***

In keeping with the trend of subsiding violence, there were fewer individual-scale attacks, protests, and clashes across the oPt this quarter. Thus, the number of Palestinian fatalities in the **West Bank** and **East Jerusalem** as a result of Israeli actions also decreased: 22 Palestinians were killed during alleged or confirmed stabbings, shootings, or ramming attacks (see “The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict” above) and 1 was killed amid clashes with the IDF. The number of Palestinians injured over the course of the quarter generally followed the same trend, dropping from 601 in the 1st mo. (2/9–3/14) to 247 and 291 in the last 2 (3/15–4/11 and 4/12–5/9), according to OCHA.

In the **Gaza Strip**, 15 Palestinians were killed as a result of Israeli actions, down from 22 last quarter. None died during clashes with IDF troops along the border fence, the cause of most of Palestinian casualties in Gaza in recent quarters. Instead, 6 were killed due to circumstances resulting from the Israeli occupation (e.g., succumbing to medical complications while waiting for approval on their requests to travel abroad for treatment [2/17] or dying in a house fire that was started by a candle used for illumination during an occupation-related power outage [5/6]); 4 were killed during unspecified Hamas activities; 1 died after accidentally triggering a piece of unexploded Israeli ordnance; 3 were killed in Israeli artillery or air strikes; and 1 succumbed to injuries sustained while fighting IDF troops in 2006. Meanwhile, the number of Palestinians injured as a result of Israeli actions in Gaza was relatively consistent throughout the quarter, at 29 in the 1st mo., 31 in the 2d, and 20 in the 3d, according to OCHA.

Despite 1 short but sustained period of cross-border violence for 5 days, on 5/3–7

(see “Cross-Border Violence in Gaza” above), the overall number of casualties resulting from such incidents was comparable to last quarter’s; on the Palestinian side, 3 people were killed and 7 injured and on the Israeli side there were no casualties at all. On each of the 7 days that saw cross-border violence (3/11, 3/14, 5/3–7), armed Palestinians fired mortars or rockets into s. Israel, causing damage, and Israeli forces launched artillery and air strikes, causing the abovementioned casualties as well as substantial damage to Hamas and Islamic Jihad installations (see Chronology for details).

The IDF also strictly enforced Israel’s unilaterally defined buffer zone, or Access Restricted Areas, along the Israel-Gaza border, as it had in previous quarters. IDF troops opened fire 31 times on Palestinian farmers, shepherds, and quarry laborers working near the border fence, causing at least 10 injuries (2/22, 2/26, 2/28, 2/29, 3/7, 3/13, 3/18, 4/2 [2], and 4/11); opened fire on Palestinian land or property on 2 occasions, causing damage (3/29 and 4/2); and arrested at least 8 Palestinians attempting to cross into Israel for work (2/16 [3], 2/26 [3], 4/7 [1], and 4/21 [1]). The IDF also revealed (5/5 and 5/10) that 2 Hamas mbrs. had been arrested and interrogated after crossing into Israel, allegedly to attack Israeli soldiers or civilians; conducted at least 15 limited incursions to level land along the border fence (2/17, 2/18, 3/15, 3/21 [2], 3/31, 4/5, 4/7, 4/10, 4/12, 4/14, 4/16, 4/26, 4/27, and 5/2); and uncovered and demolished at least 2 tunnels leading from Gaza into s. Israel (4/18 and 5/5).

Israeli naval forces continued harassing fishermen off Gaza’s coast this quarter, both before and after the Israeli authorities extended the permitted fishing zone from 6 naut. mi. to 9 naut. mi. on 4/3 (see “Movement and Access” below). They opened fire on or otherwise

confronted Palestinian fishermen on 22 occasions (down from 32 last quarter), injuring 1 fisherman (4/8), arresting or detaining 31 (2/29 [9], 4/7 [2], 4/8 [4], 4/24 [2], 4/26 [2], 5/7 [2], and 5/15 [10]), confiscating 10 of their boats (2/29 [2], 4/8 [2], 4/24 [1], 4/26 [2], 5/7 [1], and 5/15 [2]), and destroying 1 (4/1).

### ***Movement and Access***

Continuing a yearlong effort to improve humanitarian conditions in the **Gaza Strip**, the Israeli authorities lifted 2 major restrictions on the movement of Palestinian people and goods into and out of Gaza this quarter. First, COGAT began permitting Gazans to travel abroad in late 2/2016 via the Allenby border crossing with Jordan, with the stipulation that they could not return for at least 1 year (*Haaretz*, 3/10). The new permits increased the existing weekly quota of up to 100 exit permits for Gazans in need of special medical treatment, traveling to conferences, or attending universities. However, those hoping to travel abroad still required permits from Jordan and thus remained subject to “detailed security assessment[s],” according to COGAT. Second, Israel also extended the fishing zone off Gaza’s s. coast from 6 to 9 naut. mi. on 4/3, as mentioned above (see “Overview of the Violence”). COGAT estimated that this measure could add as much as an annual NIS 400,000 (around \$106,000) to the Gazan economy. A leader of a Gazan fishermen’s union rejected (4/4) the figure, however, saying that such a benefit to the economy could only result from the extension of the fishing zone uniformly across Gaza’s entire coast. In a related development, a Palestinian official disclosed (4/14) that the Israeli authorities had agreed to allow taxis to be imported into Gaza for the 1st time in 9 years. Six vehicles destined for use as taxis were allowed in on 4/13, with 36 more approved for crossing.

Meanwhile, the Israeli govt. instituted a handful of new restrictions on Palestinians’ movement and access in Gaza. COGAT suspended on 4/4 the import of cement to Gaza for private uses “until further notice,” accusing Hamas of diverting construction materials for its own purposes. Imports of materials and equipment for major international reconstruction projects were not affected by the new restrictions (see “Gaza Reconstruction” below). On 5/1, Israeli security officials said that they expected the restrictions to be lifted in the coming days, but by the end of the quarter these remained in effect. The other new restriction limited Friday visits to Jerusalem’s Haram al-Sharif by elderly Palestinians from Gaza. (Since the cease-fire that halted Israel’s summer 2014 assault on Gaza, Israel has permitted no more than 200 Gazans over 60 to travel to Jerusalem for Friday prayers). On 3/16, the Israeli authorities announced that they were indefinitely suspending the visits, starting on 3/18, due to alleged violations. They lifted the suspension on 4/15 only to reinstate it during Passover (4/22 and 4/29), leaving the policy in a state of flux. Finally, the Israeli authorities prohibited (3/29) imports and exports of gold 1 mo. after Hamas lifted its ban on the gold trade.

Based on NGO reports and data, the changes in the volume of people and goods entering and exiting Gaza during the quarter largely balanced each other out. New limitations in conjunction with eased restrictions meant that movement in and out of Gaza did not change. According to the Israeli NGO Gisha, the number of people exiting Gaza every mo. remained comparable to last quarter, with an average of around 14,395 from 11/2015 to 4/2015 (exits peaked at 15,388 in 1/2016 and sank as low as 13,137 in 4/2016). The volume of goods entering Gaza via the Kerem Shalom border crossing decreased over

the same period, from a monthly average of around 11,590 truckloads in 11/2015–1/2016 to around 9,886 in 2–4/2016 (the monthly average in 2015 was below 8,000 truckloads, however, so the latest decrease was relative). The same trend held for export of goods leaving Gaza: monthly exits peaked in 1/2016 with 288 truckloads, then fell to an average of 151 per mo. in 2–4/2016.

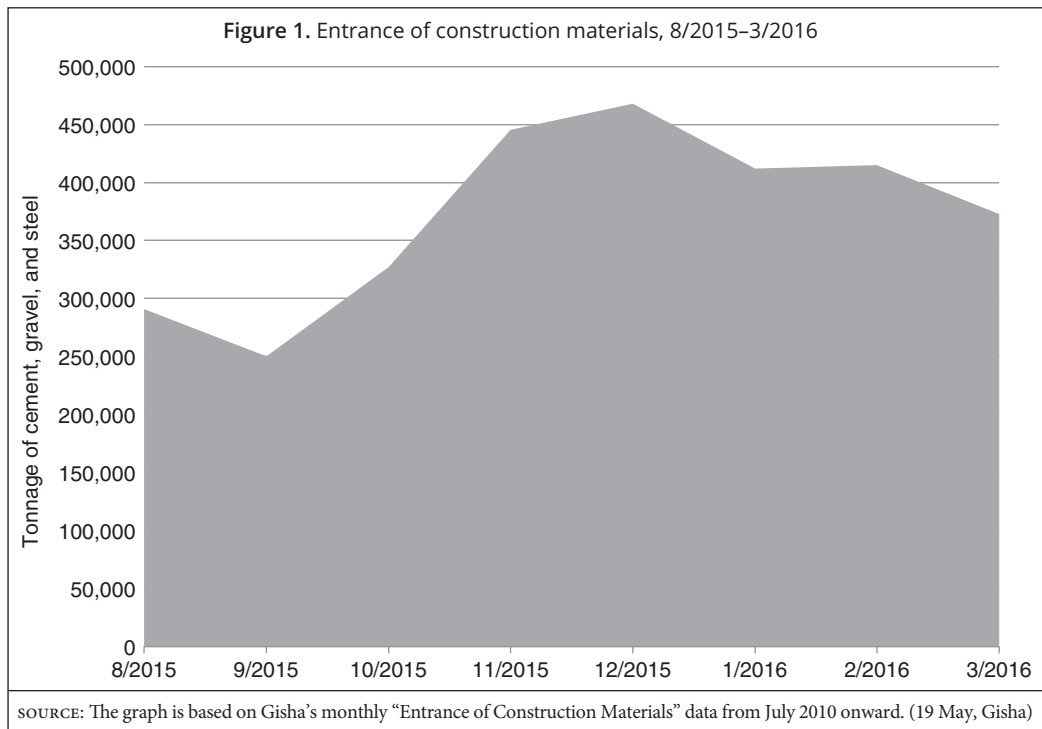
Given continued violence and tensions in the Sinai Peninsula, Egyptian authorities kept the Rafah border crossing largely closed. It was open for only 2 days this quarter (5/11–12), down from 5 days last quarter. According to OCHA, 739 people were allowed to exit Gaza at Rafah (down from 3,965), and 1,220 allowed to enter (down from 1,982).

Palestinian movement and access in the **West Bank** and **East Jerusalem** were also in flux this quarter. In addition to the IDF's daily raids, house searches, arrests, and flying checkpoints in the context of the occupation, Palestinians' freedom of movement was further restricted by collective punishment measures such as village closures and road blocks pursuant to Israel's crackdown in response to the *habba's* uncoordinated individual acts of violence. In addition, the Israeli authorities put in place further restrictions with the approach of Passover and other Israeli holidays. In a departure from previous practice, West Bank Palestinians were barred from entering or exiting Israel at Purim (3/23–26), except on humanitarian grounds (the Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings into Gaza were also closed on 3/23, with Erez staying closed through 3/25); Palestinian men under 50 were barred from entering Haram al-Sharif on 3/22–24. In addition to large-scale raids and searches in East Jerusalem before and during Passover (see "The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict" above), al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron was closed on 4/24–25 and Palestinians from the West Bank were barred

from crossing into or out of Israel again from midnight on 4/21 through 4/23 (Israel also closed the Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings into Gaza for multiple days during Passover). The Israeli authorities shut down all border crossings in and out of the West Bank and Gaza on 5/10–12 for Israel's Independence and Memorial Day celebrations.

Israel relaxed some of the restrictions it had put in place in late 2015, including the reopening of roads in Hebron's Old City (3/5) and in e. Hebron (4/7) after 4 and 5 mos. of closure, respectively. The Israeli authorities also opened the Shufa checkpoint near Tulkarm for 1 day a week, starting on 4/16, after shutting it down completely in 12/2015. In a related development, the Israeli Finance Ministry announced (4/21) that it was planning to improve conditions at border crossings in the West Bank as part of a wider effort to enhance Israeli-Palestinian economic ties. The plan involved a NIS 10 m. (around \$2.6 m.) investment in infrastructure improvements and new work permits for 7,800 Palestinian workers.

The Israeli authorities informed (3/9) 5 Palestinian food suppliers that their goods were no longer permitted to pass through the Beitunia crossing. It was the 1st time since a brief period in 2010 that Israel barred West Bank food products from entering East Jerusalem. While the Israeli authorities did not elaborate on the ban, an employee of 1 of the companies said that the gov't.'s justification was the absence of Hebrew labels on their products. In response, the PA cabinet decided (3/22) to ban the products of 5 Israeli food suppliers from entering the West Bank. COGAT commander Yoav Mordechai reportedly warned the Israeli political leadership that the 3/9 ban had the potential to "worsen the security situation and give a tailwind to anti-Israel boycotts" (*Haaretz*, 3/30), and a Palestinian lawyer indicated (4/13)



that an Israeli court had frozen the ban, thereby allowing Palestinian companies renewed access to Israeli markets.

### ***Gaza Reconstruction***

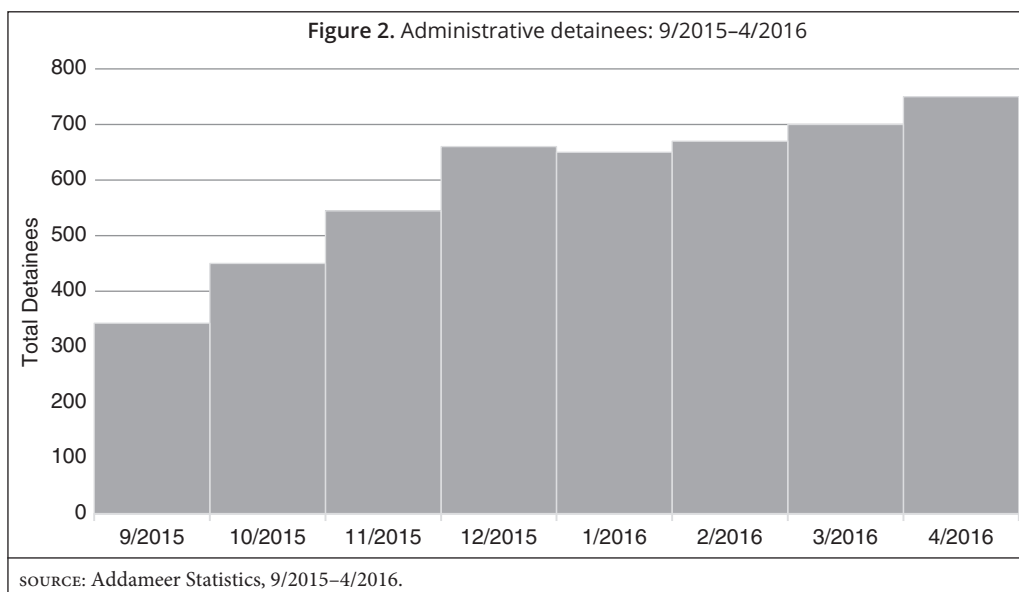
The reconstruction of Gaza following Israel's summer 2014 assault advanced slowly this quarter, further exacerbating severely degraded living and humanitarian conditions. The 2 main obstacles to reconstruction remained donor reticence and Israel's self-described security concerns (the Israeli govt. maintains a strangling check on all requests for construction materials via the joint UN-PA-Israel Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism or GRM; see *JPS* 44 [3]). Although UN special coordinator Nickolay Mladenov reported "tangible progress" while in Gaza on 2/17, monthly imports of construction materials declined throughout the quarter after

peaking in 12/2015 (see fig. 1). On 4/18, the World Bank reported that only 40%, or \$1.4 b., had been delivered of the \$3.5 b. pledged by international donors at the 10/2014 Gaza reconstruction conference in Cairo, an increase of only \$159 m. since the bank's previous assessment in 8/2015. The report estimated that if pledges continued at the current pace, they would be fulfilled by 2019, or 2 years behind schedule. Thus, as at 4/11, 75,000 Palestinians in Gaza remained internally displaced (23% of them living in the rubble of their damaged homes), according to OCHA, while only 3,000 of 18,000 destroyed or badly damaged homes had been rebuilt or repaired.

### ***Judaization of Jerusalem***

Amid high tensions in Jerusalem, the National Council for Planning and Building,





Israel's national zoning panel, approved (3/23) a plan proposed by the settler organization Elad to build a 16,000 m<sup>2</sup> archaeological center in City of David National Park adjacent to the Old City. The approval reversed the council's appeals subcomm. ruling restricting the size of the proposed center to 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Senior PLO Exec. Comm. mbr. Hanan Ashrawi harshly criticized (3/25) the measure, saying, "Once again, the chances for peace and the 2-state solution are being willfully destroyed and systematically dismantled by Israel and its illegal settlement enterprise."

### ***Palestinian Prisoners***

The overall number of Palestinians in Israeli custody leveled out at 7,000 during the quarter, according to Palestinian prisoners' rights NGO Addameer. However, even as the *habba* subsided, the percentage of prisoners held without trial grew steadily. The number of administrative detainees almost doubled from 343 in 9/2015 to 660 in 12/2015 (see fig. 2).

Meanwhile, 2 high-profile hunger strikes drew attention to Palestinian prisoners' demands. As the quarter opened, journalist Muhammad al-Qiq was 84 days into a hunger strike protesting his administrative detention. He had refused Israeli offers to release him on 5/1 and to move him from the Emek Medical Center in Afula to a hospital in East Jerusalem. As his health deteriorated further and an Israeli court rejected (2/17) yet another petition for his release, al-Qiq's protest became a cause célèbre for the Palestinian political leadership. On 2/18, 2 PCI leaders—Shaykh Raed Salah, former head of the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, and Mohammad Barakeh, the chair of the Higher Follow-Up Comm. for Arab Citizens of Israel—visited al-Qiq in hospital. Their refusal to leave the premises on the order of Israeli police sparked a minor controversy that brought additional scrutiny to al-Qiq's hunger strike, already the object of fervent support among the Palestinian public. On 2/18, Palestinians held solidarity demonstrations at

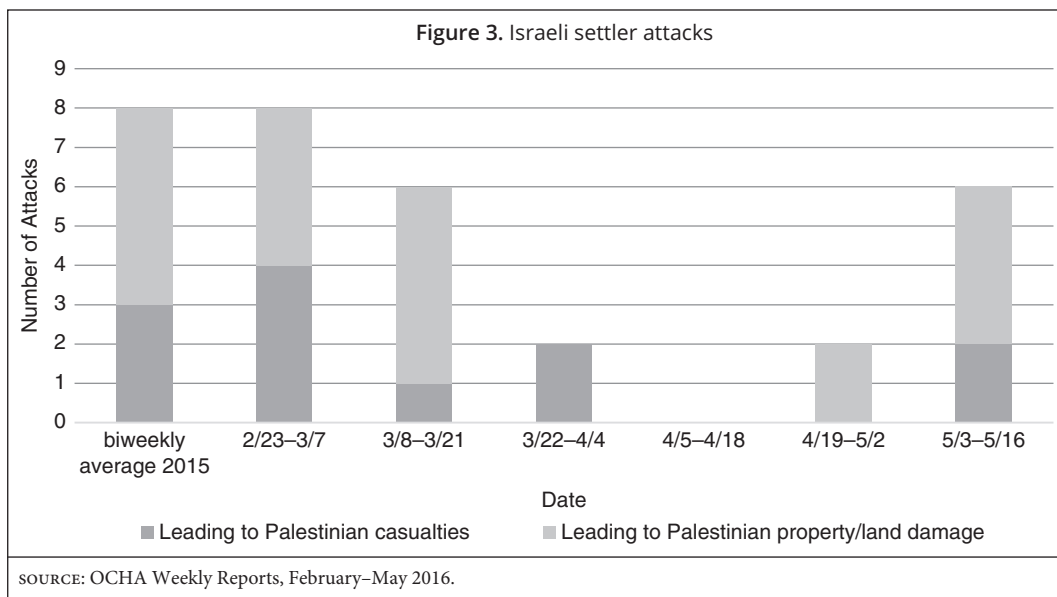
Birzeit University near Ramallah, in Israel’s Eshel Prison, and in Hebron. Eventually, al-Qiq and his representatives reached an agreement with the Israeli authorities and he ended his hunger strike on 2/26. Al-Qiq was granted early release, on 5/19, with family visits in the meantime, and he was also promised that his administrative detention would not be renewed.

Less than a week later, the Israeli authorities renewed their administrative detention of Sami Janazreh, a resident of al-Fawar refugee camp (r.c.), who launched (3/3) a hunger strike in protest. Although his case, unlike al-Qiq’s, was never the subject of serious conversations about the practice of force-feeding Palestinian prisoners in Israel, his strike provoked a similar outcry from the Palestinian public, particularly in response to Janazreh’s harsh treatment. As reported by Electronic Intifada on 5/6, the Israeli authorities repeatedly moved Janazreh between different prisons; denied him contact with his family; held him in solitary

confinement; and shackled his ankles and hands to his bed at Soroka Medical Center in Beersheba. By the end of the quarter, Israel’s High Court of Justice had postponed (5/10) its review of the case and Janazreh suspended (5/11) his strike for 1 week, but no resolution was in sight.

### SETTLER-RELATED VIOLENCE

For the 2d quarter in a row, there were relatively few instances of settler-related violence. OCHA reported 24 incidents in which Israeli settlers attacked Palestinians or their property between 2/23 and 5/16 (see fig. 3), a figure unchanged from the previous quarter. Of these attacks, 9 led to Palestinian injuries and 15 to Palestinian property damage, including theft (settlers reportedly stole a horse on 4/13 and 3 sheep on 5/10). An Israeli settler killed 1 Palestinian (2/23), and no settlers were killed as a result of Palestinian actions. Also worthy of note this quarter was the absence of reports on the vandalism or uprooting of Palestinian olive trees by Israeli settlers.



## DEMOLITIONS AND DISPLACEMENT

In the early mos. of 2016, the Israeli govt. demolished as many Palestinian structures in Area C of the West Bank (539) as it had in all of 2015 (453), according to OCHA on 4/8. The rapid pace of demolition continued throughout the quarter in many areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, with a total of 463 Palestinians displaced, down from 571 last quarter. Between 2/16 and 5/16, Israeli forces demolished 314 Palestinian structures in the West Bank (274) and East Jerusalem (40), something of a drop from last quarter's 340 (see *JPS* 45 [3]).

Within the broader trend indicated above, the Israeli govt. continued to demolish the homes of Palestinians alleged to have committed serious crimes against Israelis. Thus, IDF troops demolished 6 homes completely (2/22 [2], 3/7, and 4/3 [3]), and 3 others partially (3/30, 4/20, and 5/3) displacing at least 15 individuals. They also installed metal bars on the entrance of a Palestinian prisoner's home in East Jerusalem on 4/11. In a related development, the Israeli press reported (2/23) that the govt. had adopted Atty. Gen. Mandelblit's recommendation to stop punitive demolitions of homes if the families residing there were willing to turn in relatives accused of crimes.

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## INTRA-PALESTINIAN DYNAMICS

### NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

A new, Qatari-mediated Hamas-Fatah reconciliation process picked up steam at the end of last quarter, despite low expectations of success among the Palestinian public. After 2 days of meetings in Doha on 2/7–8 (see *JPS* 45 [3]), the 2 sides reached a tentative agreement on a number of contentious issues, including the administration of Gaza's border crossings (PASF troops would take control of the Rafah

border crossing, with Hamas staff supporting them). Lingering tensions remained, however, and the reconciliation process stalled this quarter.

Signs of strain between Hamas and Fatah appeared soon after the Doha meetings. On 2/25, employees of the Hamas-run govt. in Gaza declared a 1-day strike to protest unpaid salaries (they had not been paid in full since 6/2014, when the PA consensus govt. was sworn in). Then, senior Hamas official Mahmoud al-Zahar criticized (3/4) the Ramallah-based leadership, saying that even though the new govt. had "agreed to prepare for general elections," they had done "nothing."

Reps. of both sides returned to Doha for another round of talks later in 3/2016. On 3/26–27, they discussed "the question of govt. and related issues," according to a political analyst close to Hamas. Although the 2 sides agreed not to discuss the talks publicly, a senior Fatah official said (3/28) that agreement was reached on several topics, notably holding legislative and presidential elections within 6 mos. and forming a unity govt. that would operate within the parameters of the PLO's diplomatic program (i.e., pursue a 2-state solution and a negotiated settlement with Israel). Senior Hamas official Ziad al-Zaza refuted (3/29) these comments, however, saying that several "thorny" issues remained.

There were no reports of significant progress through the rest of the quarter. Despite another meeting in Gaza City on 4/7, no breakthrough was apparent and the 2 sides reverted to pursuing their own agendas.

### A QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP

With national reconciliation on hold and hopes for new elections dampened, high-ranking mbrs. of the Palestinian leadership jockeyed for position throughout the quarter, leading to intra-Palestinian stasis. Having repeatedly announced his imminent retirement

from public life, PA pres. Abbas continued his efforts to consolidate power ahead of any transition. He cut the PLO's funding for both the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) (4/11) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) (4/12); fired (4/26) the governor of Nablus, allegedly in response to a Facebook post criticizing his leadership; and established (4/3) a constitutional court by presidential decree. Fatah officials contended that the court would be independent and that it would only "monitor laws" (4/3) but Hamas officials and other critics alleged that it was an attempt to circumvent the Hamas-dominated Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC).

Meanwhile, renewed interest focused on imprisoned Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, with speculation that he could facilitate national reconciliation and succeed Abbas. Barghouti has been politically influential ever since he was incarcerated in 2002 and informal but frequent conversations about his role in the future of the Palestinian leadership culminated this quarter in a formal campaign. On 2/24, Barghouti's wife, Fadwa, who has occasionally spoken as his surrogate, announced that he intended to run for PA pres. in the next election. Two mos. later, Palestinian sources said (4/11) that a group close to Barghouti had created a plan ("The People's Peaceful Revolution"—for him to lead a nonviolent campaign to end the Israeli occupation, and that they had reportedly secured Hamas's support for Barghouti's presidential candidacy. Adding momentum to the campaign, on 4/12, the PLC, the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, and a number of other Palestinian organizations launched a bid to nominate Barghouti for the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, which would lend him international legitimacy and prestige.

Meanwhile, beyond the Palestinian political sphere, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry called (4/17) on Israel to release Barghouti from

prison. Although there were no further developments through the end of the quarter, these efforts buttressed Barghouti's position at the forefront of Palestinian politics.

## TEACHERS GO ON STRIKE

As Israel maintained its crackdown on Palestinian protest and enforced economically paralyzing measures such as electric power shutoffs in several Palestinian cities (see "The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict" above), and with humanitarian conditions in Gaza steadily deteriorating (see "Gaza Reconstruction" above), the PA struggled with increasing challenges to its rule this quarter.

In 1/2016, teachers began organizing on social media under the Arabic hashtag "#DignityForTeachers" in protest at the failure of the PA to implement an agreement it had reached with the union in 2013. Under that agreement, teachers were due to receive a 2.5% pay raise in 2/2016 in addition to still-owed back pay. Upon receiving their paychecks, showing only a 1.5% raise, they went on strike on 2/7. The PA blamed the discrepancy on an unanticipated reduction in foreign assistance since 2013 (the PA received \$1.2 b. in aid in 2012 and only \$700 m. in 2015) but the teachers were not appeased. As the strike wore on, they took to the streets and held sit-ins and other protests across the West Bank. On 3/7, an estimated 10,000 Palestinians marched through Ramallah in solidarity with the teachers. Besides the PA's failure to meet its obligations, the protesters were also dissatisfied with the failure of the teachers' union leadership to represent their grievances, including alleged unequal retirement benefits for women.

With over 200,000 Palestinian students forced to stay home and a series of negotiations failing to produce a compromise over a mo. of protests, Abbas pledged (3/12) to implement the 2013

agreement fully and promised the teachers a 10% raise, starting in the 2017–18 school year. He also offered to meet teachers’ demands for new representation “by democratic means.” While it was unclear how the PA would pay for the wage increase, the teachers suspended their strike later that day.

Also of note this quarter, the World Bank issued a report (4/18) estimating that under joint economic agreements pursuant to the Oslo framework, the PA was losing \$285 m. per year in tax revenue collected by Israel on its behalf.

## PALESTINIAN OPINION

*The following data comes from a poll conducted by an-Najah National University’s Center for Opinion Polls and Survey Studies (OPSSC) on 3–5 May 2016. The results are based on a survey of 863 men and women from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and 500 from the Gaza Strip. The complete poll, the 52d in a series, can be found at the OPSSC’s website, [www.najah.edu/media](http://www.najah.edu/media).*

1. After [Israeli PM] Netanyahu’s rejection of the French initiative calling for an international peace conference in the Middle East, do you support or reject the return of Palestinians to negotiations under the sole sponsorship of the U.S.?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
<b>1) I support</b>	25.6%	13.4%	21.6%
<b>2) I reject</b>	65.8%	75.2%	69.3%
<b>3) No opinion/I do not know</b>	8.6%	11.4%	9.6%

2. After Netanyahu’s rejection of the French initiative calling for an international peace conference in the Middle East, do you

**support or reject a Palestinian turn to the Security Council and the international organizations?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
<b>1) Yes</b>	58.4%	54.0%	56.8%
<b>2) No</b>	35.5%	34.0%	34.9%
<b>3) No opinion/I do not know</b>	6.1%	12.0%	8.3%

3. Do you believe that Israel will reduce its security activities in Area A if an understanding with the Palestinians is achieved?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
<b>1) Yes</b>	26.0%	21.6%	24.4%
<b>2) No</b>	69.5%	69.0%	69.3%
<b>3) No opinion/I do not know</b>	4.5%	9.4%	6.3%

4. Do you believe that Israeli security activities in Area A undermine and weaken the position of the PA?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
<b>1) Yes</b>	75.8%	54.2%	67.9%
<b>2) No</b>	19.6%	37.0%	26.0%
<b>3) No opinion/I do not know</b>	4.6%	8.8%	6.2%

5. Do you support or reject the measures that the Palestinian security apparatuses impose to curb the operations of Palestinian youth against Israeli targets?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
<b>1) I support</b>	37.7%	13.8%	28.9%
<b>2) I reject</b>	55.4%	75.2%	62.7%
<b>3) No opinion/I do not know</b>	7.0%	11.0%	8.4%

## 6. Do you support or reject the stabbing operations by Palestinian youth against Israelis?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
<b>1) I support</b>	39.5%	80.2%	54.4%
<b>2) I reject</b>	52.1%	8.8%	36.2%
<b>3) No opinion/I do not know</b>	8.3%	11.0%	9.3%

## FRONTLINE STATES

### EGYPT

As the quarter opened, Pres. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's govt. supported the PA's diplomatic initiatives within international institutions, but its relations with both Israel and Hamas remained strained.

In the context of an unstable situation in Sinai and the lack of progress on Palestinian national reconciliation, which al-Sisi has long upheld as a prerequisite for more frequent openings of the Rafah border crossing, the Egyptian govt. closed the crossing for all but 2 days (5/11–12) of the quarter. Of 30,000 Palestinian applicants, only 739 were able to exit Gaza for Egypt and 1,220 were able to enter. This marked the longest closure since 2007 and inevitably worsened Gaza's already precarious humanitarian status, thus intensifying pressures on the Hamas-run govt. and, in turn, heightening the tension between Egypt and Hamas.

Egypt's interior min. Magdy Abdel Ghaffar alleged (3/6) that Hamas had enjoyed "close coordination" with Muslim Brotherhood (MB) activists before they assassinated Egypt's public prosecutor on 6/29/2015, an accusation that further inflamed tensions between al-Sisi's fledgling govt. and the MB. Hamas immediately denied any such involvement (3/6), with a spokesperson countering that the "false"

connection between Hamas and the MB was meant to undermine Hamas and reflected "internal Egyptian disputes."

It was in this context that Hamas leaders sent a delegation to Cairo (3/12–15) for talks on improving bilateral relations. Although Egyptian security officials said (3/15) no meaningful progress was made, Hamas's leadership continued their efforts. In a direct appeal to al-Sisi, whose differences with the MB remained significant (*Asharq al-Awsat*, 3/21), Hamas reportedly ordered the removal from Gazan streets and mosques of portraits of senior MB officials. In a 2d round of talks (3/27), when relations had "improved noticeably" according to Egyptian commentators (4/11), Hamas reps. reportedly pledged to secure Gaza's border with Egypt and advance Palestinian national reconciliation with the PA (see "Intra-Palestinian Dynamics" above) while the Egyptians agreed to start talks with the PA with a view to the permanent reopening of the Rafah crossing under PASF control (Hamas had agreed to this in talks with PA officials last quarter; see *JPS* 45 [3]). By the end of the quarter, Hamas had taken steps to implement the new measures establishing (4/14) 3 new bases and a number of temporary structures along Gaza's s. border and redeploying (4/21) and beefing up (4/22) border patrols. Apart from the opening of the Rafah crossing for 2 days in early 5/2016, however, it was unclear that these steps had any effect on the well-being of Gaza residents.

Although the Israeli and Egyptian govts. continued to cooperate on security coordination between them during the quarter, 2 minor economic and diplomatic incidents blocked progress. Early in the quarter, Egyptian MP Tawfik Okasha invited Israeli amb. to Egypt Haim Koren to his home where the 2 officials had wide-ranging discussions (2/23) on culture,

economics, communications, society, and politics. The invitation reportedly surprised Koren, who had been largely ignored by the Egyptian parliament ever since being credentialed in 9/2014 (see *JPS* 44 [2]), and it incensed many of Okasha's colleagues. Fellow MP Kamal Ahmed threw (2/28) a shoe at Okasha during a legislative session and both men were then expelled from the plenum. In an attempt to de-escalate tensions, the Israel Football Association invited the Egyptian Football Association (EFA) to play a friendly match to "break the barriers between the 2 countries and to [foster] a peaceful atmosphere." The EFA declined (2/29) however, and then 465 of 595 MPs voted (3/2) to remove Okasha from Parliament permanently on the grounds that he had damaged Egypt's relations with its neighbors and violated the legislature's opposition to normalization of relations with Israel. In a related development, Israel's Supreme Court suspended (3/27) the Israeli govt.'s agreement with the consortium of companies—Noble Energy and the Delek Group—contracted to develop the offshore Leviathan natural gas field. The suspension complicated the consortium's agreement to supply natural gas to Egypt's Dolphinus Holdings (see *JPS* 45 [3]), and cast doubt over energy and economic ties between Israel and Egypt.

These minor controversies were overshadowed by Egyptian-Israeli coordination in the context of a broader regional realignment (see "Regional Affairs" below). While Saudi king Salman bin Abdulaziz was in Cairo negotiating and signing deals worth over \$24 b., including 1 to set up a "free-trade zone" in Sinai, the Egyptian govt. announced (4/9) that it was ceding control of 2 uninhabited Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia. Although the cabinet depicted this concession as a transfer *back* to Saudi Arabia, there was a public outcry in the

country. Since Egypt guaranteed Israel unfettered access to Red Sea shipping lanes as a part of the 1979 peace treaty, the handover of the islands threw into doubt Israel's relationship with the new Saudi-led Sunni axis opposing Iran. Uncertainties subsided on 4/12, however, when Israeli DM Ya'alon said that Saudi Arabia had pledged, in a written document, to respect the relevant provisions of the 1979 treaty and that Israel had approved of the island swap beforehand.

## JORDAN

After increasing media reports of such transactions, on 3/15, the Jordanian parliament passed a law barring the sale or lease of land to Israeli citizens in and around the ancient city of Petra. In a debate over the measure, many Jordanian lawmakers echoed the sentiments of their colleague, MP Assaf Shubki (relayed by Anadolu News Agency the same day): "Our national sovereignty is more important than foreign investments. . . . This law is a victory for the Palestinian people and it is the least we can do for them."

## SYRIA

Although UNRWA aid personnel were allowed into certain areas of Damascus at the end of last quarter (see *JPS* 45 [3]), and a U.S.-Russia-brokered cease-fire went into effect on 2/27, conditions for the Palestinian community in Syria did not improve this quarter, particularly in the Damascus Yarmouk r.c. where there were renewed outbreaks of fighting.

Because reliable reporting from Syria remains sparse, it was 8 days before the 1st international outlet reported on the 4/6 assault by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). According to Al Jazeera (4/14), around 5,000 civilians were trapped in areas of Yarmouk where fighting was going on, and newly formed armed Palestinian

groups were fighting alongside al-Nusra Front against ISIS (al-Nusra Front and ISIS had previously been allies in the fight for control of the camp). Some 50 ISIS fighters, 12 al-Nusra Front fighters, and 4 civilians were killed (2 of the civilians were allegedly decapitated by ISIS troops), according to the report, and at least 20 buildings were burned, including a hospital, leading a coalition of camp residents to call for a cease-fire on 4/13. The call went unanswered and, by 4/19, ISIS controlled about 70% of the camp, according to PLO envoy to Syria Anwar Abed al-Hadi.

A top Hezbollah commander was killed in an air strike outside Damascus on 5/10. Early reports said the Israeli air force was responsible, but neither Hezbollah nor Israel confirmed the news. The strike came 1 mo. after Israeli PM Netanyahu had made a rare acknowledgement of Israeli military operations in Syria. “We act when we need to . . . with dozens of strikes meant to deny Hezbollah game-changing weaponry,” he stated on 4/11.

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## REGIONAL AFFAIRS

### IRAN

The growing regional rift between the Saudi-led Sunni axis, on the one hand, and Iran and its allies, on the other, put the Palestinians in an increasingly precarious position this quarter, placing a strain on their relationship with Tehran.

Early in the quarter, Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League targeted Iranian and Palestinian ally Hezbollah, designating it a terrorist organization (3/2 and 3/11, respectively). An Egyptian official clarified (3/6) that Cairo would bar entry to Hezbollah leaders, as well as to Palestinians from Gaza with connections to Hezbollah. In response,

reps. of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the PA signed (3/8) a declaration in support of the Lebanese group, without, however, embracing Iranian policy. Earlier, Hamas had indicated (2/21) that it was ready for a reset in relations with Iran, and on 3/16 a Hamas source revealed that a delegation had met in secret with the head of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps, which had urged Hamas to stay neutral in the Iran-Saudi conflict. The Ramallah-based Palestinian leadership, meanwhile, had a more public spat with Iran. On 2/24, Iran’s amb. to Lebanon announced that Tehran planned to offer financial compensation to Palestinian victims of Israeli violence (the equivalent to \$7,000 would go to families of Palestinians killed in the recent *habba* and some \$30,000 to those whose homes had been punitively demolished (see “The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict” and “Occupation Data and Trends” above). While the Palestinians initially welcomed the announcement, an Iranian official’s statement (2/27) that experience had shown the PA not to be “reliable”—leading Tehran to decide that it would “send the money in its own way.” Bristling at the criticism, the PA accused Iran of interference in internal Palestinian affairs. The 2 incidents—unrequited outreach from Hamas and explicit disregard for the PA—left the Palestinian factions in limbo between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

### TURKEY

Turkish-Israeli reconciliation talks, resumed in 11/2015 after over 6 mos. of interruption (see *JPS* 45 [3]), stalled again this quarter. The 2 sides failed to overcome their differences on major issues, specifically, Turkey’s demand that Israel ease the Gaza blockade and the corresponding Israeli demand that Turkey stop enabling Hamas. The talks were placed on further indefinite hold by an upheaval in internal Turkish politics.



As the quarter opened, Turkish and Israeli representatives had just met (2/10–11) and expectations ran high. FM Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said (2/22) that reconciliation was practically at hand and that he expected the 2 sides to issue a joint statement in the “coming days.” However, lingering disagreements soon became apparent. After a Hamas official had expressed hope (2/25) that Turkish-Israeli reconciliation would result in a seaport being opened off the Gazan coast, Israel’s COGAT commander Mordechai clarified (2/26) that such a plan was not a part of the talks. Although Turkish negotiators were vocal about an easing of the Israeli blockade on Gaza, they did not mention a seaport.

Turkish-Israeli relations faced additional international pressures, especially in the wake of an attack in Istanbul on 3/19, allegedly the work of ISIS. First, on 2/18, Russia’s FM Sergey Lavrov had met with the dir. gen. of Israel’s Foreign Ministry, Dore Gold, to clarify Moscow’s reservations about the Turkish-Israeli reconciliation process, in the context of already tense Russian-Turkish relations since Turkey had downed a Russian jet over Syria in 11/2015. In addition, Moscow was reportedly concerned that it might lose its role as Turkey’s chief energy supplier. On 3/19, when a suicide bombing in c. Istanbul killed 5 people, including 3 Israelis, and injured another 36 people, rumors immediately started swirling that the attack might have deliberately targeted the Israeli victims. Netanyahu disclosed (3/19) that he had ordered an investigation into the matter and within 2 days, Turkish media reports said as much. Israel’s Counterterrorism Bureau issued (3/21) a travel warning to Israelis visiting Turkey and Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan eventually sent Israel’s pres. Reuven Rivlin a letter of condolence. The 2 leaders agreed (3/23) to cooperate on counterterrorism efforts, but

heightened tensions slowed the next round of Israeli-Turkish reconciliation talks.

In secret messages to the Israeli govt. in late 3/2016, Erdoğan reportedly expressed his desire for a deal to be reached quickly (*Haaretz*, 4/8), and the 2 sides prepared to meet again in 4/2016. Erdoğan reiterated the position in a speech at the Brookings Institution in Washington on 3/31, and indicated that he wanted Israel to “remove the embargo” on Gaza and allow Turkey to supply electricity to the territory via a power generator ship. Soon afterward, a Turkish delegation led by the undersecy. at the Foreign Ministry, Feridun Sinirlioğlu, met with their Israeli counterparts, led by Netanyahu’s personal envoy, Joseph Ciechanover, and the acting chair of Israel’s National Security Council, Jacob Nagel. After the meeting, held in London on the evening of 4/7, an Israeli official denied (4/7) that there were plans to allow Turkey special access to Gaza. Despite the absence of any significant breakthrough, a Turkish Foreign Ministry statement indicated (4/8) that progress had been made and that there would be an agreement “very soon.”

Through the end of the quarter, Israeli and Turkish officials insisted that the major outstanding issues had been resolved and that an agreement could be finalized during the round of talks set for mid-5/2016. Further raising expectations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) advised the Israeli govt. that it would then be allowed to open offices at the alliance’s Brussels headquarters and secure credentials for its diplomats. Since Turkey had blocked Israel from participating in any NATO initiatives in 2010, the Israeli govt. interpreted the move as an indication of Ankara’s commitment to reconciliation.

The 5/2016 talks were indefinitely postponed, however, after Turkish PM Ahmet Davutoğlu

announced (5/5) that he would be stepping down. A general election was called for 5/22, and the new govt. would be the one to carry on with the reconciliation process.

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## INTERNATIONAL

### UNITED STATES

#### *Continued Tension with Israel*

As Pres. Obama ushered in his last year in office, stalled talks about a new U.S. military aid program to Israel further strained U.S.-Israeli relations this quarter and unconfirmed reports suggested the admin. was realigning U.S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rumors to that effect had circulated since the spring 2015 Israeli elections when the admin. announced it was “reassessing” its position (see *JPS* 44 [4]). With the nuclear agreement with Iran all but secured, Obama seemed to be considering a new stance.

Early in the quarter, the *Wall Street Journal* reported (3/7) that senior admin. officials were talking about a final White House push for a 2-state solution, including a blueprint for future Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Among the options under consideration were: support for a UNSC res. calling on both the Palestinians and Israelis to compromise, which Washington had opposed in the past; a major policy speech from Obama himself; and a new joint statement from the Middle East Quartet. A White House spokesperson denied (3/8) that there had been any change to admin. policy but left open the possibility of “future engagement . . . as it relates to determining how to most effectively advance the objective we all share in achieving a negotiated 2-state solution.”

In another report at the end of the quarter (5/7), senior U.S. diplomats were described as indicating that the U.S. planned to endorse a

new Quartet document containing unusually strong language condemning Israel’s settlements, demolitions of Palestinian property, and property seizures in the West Bank. The document, which the Quartet was reportedly hoping to publish and get endorsed by the UNSC in 5/2016 or 6/2016, would highlight obstacles to a 2-state solution and include recommendations for restarting negotiations.

Meanwhile, in an unlikely development, 11 mbrs. of the traditionally pro-Israel Congress, including Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), wrote on 2/17 to Secy. of State Kerry asking him to investigate the “disturbing number of reports of possible gross violations of human rights by security forces in Israel.” *Politico*, which published the letter on 3/29, then reused language from the letter, including the phrase “extrajudicial killings,” in reference to the actions of Israeli forces in Israel and the oPt. Predictably, the letter drew condemnation from Israel and its allies in the U.S. PM Netanyahu called Kerry on 4/1 requesting that he state publicly that the Obama admin. did not consider recent IDF killings of Palestinians to be extrajudicial. Kerry made no such statement, however. Instead, his dept. assured (5/5) the 11 mbrs. of Congress that it was tracking all alleged Israeli violations of human rights.

#### *Aid to Israel and the Palestinians*

U.S.-Israeli talks on a new military aid agreement remained stalled this quarter evidencing the level of acrimony between the Obama admin. and the Israeli govt. Although officials on both sides repeatedly said that they wanted to see an increase in U.S. military aid to Israel—the memorandum of understanding (MoU) governing U.S. annual military aid disbursements, which currently guaranteed Israel \$30 b. over 10 years, was due to

expire—reports outlined a persistent disparity in the amounts involved.

In the early weeks of the quarter, top Israeli and U.S. military officials met to work out the terms of a possible agreement. Israeli DM Ya'alon met with U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff chair Joseph Dunford in Tel Aviv on 3/3 and Defense Secy. Ash Carter in Washington on 3/14, and they agreed to cooperate “in the cyber domain to enhance their nations’ cyber defense capabilities,” according to a Defense Dept. spokesperson.

Adding to U.S.-Israeli tensions was PM Netanyahu’s cancellation (3/7) of his plan to attend the annual American Israel Public Affairs Comm. (AIPAC) conference. *Haaretz* reported that Netanyahu was not interested in visiting Washington if Pres. Obama would not meet with him. A U.S. National Security Council spokesperson denied the report (3/7), clarifying that the Obama admin. had, in fact, invited Netanyahu to meet with the pres. on 3/18. Afterward, Israeli officials, speaking off the record, offered a different explanation, saying that Netanyahu did not want to be seen as interfering in the U.S. presidential campaign currently underway (see below). In the wake of the cancellation, U.S. VP Joe Biden visited Israel for further talks and urged the PM on 3/8 to conclude a deal with Obama even if the amount fell short of Israel’s request. Biden also pledged “unvarnished” commitment to Israel. Israeli dep. FM Tzipi Hotovely then cited (3/10) a new reason for the Israeli premier’s cancellation: “The PM wants to honor the U.S. pres. by going [to Washington] when there is a basis, good news on the matter of the U.S. aid package.”

As Netanyahu marshaled his supporters in the U.S. to pressure the Obama admin., new details from the negotiations were leaked to the press. On 3/30, Netanyahu conveyed to a congressional delegation led by Sen. Lindsey

Graham (R-SC) that he wanted to conclude a deal before Obama left office and the U.S. senator reportedly assured him that the admin.’s current offer was within U.S. means, implying that any increase would strain the govt.’s budget. The next day, an Israeli official said that Netanyahu might allow the talks to fail if there were any signs that the U.S. might support a Palestinian-backed UNSC res. censuring Israel’s settlements. Then, in 4/2016, a group of 83 U.S. senators sent Obama a letter calling on him to sign a new military aid agreement with Israel forthwith. After the U.S. press broke the story, a White House official responded (4/25), saying “we are preparing to sign [an agreement] that would constitute the largest single pledge of military assistance to any country in U.S. history.” The following week, citing anonymous U.S. and Israeli sources, Reuters revealed (5/3) that Israel was seeking a \$10 b. increase over the current 10-year MoU, including at least \$3.7 b. in annual aid, additional support for its missile defense programs, and the opportunity to lobby for more money on an ad hoc basis. The Obama admin. was offering no more than \$3.7 b., and balked at the prospect of annual lobbying for ad hoc projects.

While Israeli and U.S. negotiators were working out the terms of the new aid package to Israel, U.S. aid to the Palestinians was also in flux. On 3/12, PLO Exec. Comm. mbr. Ashrawi met with mbrs. of the Congress and other U.S. officials. She called on them to support the French peace initiative (see “The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict” above), and pressured House Republicans to lift their hold on \$159 m. in aid to the PA. Chair of the House Appropriations Subcomm. Kay Granger (R-TX) had reportedly requested the aid to be blocked in fall 2015 to protest the Palestinian statehood initiative at the UN and the PA’s payments to Palestinian

families whose imprisoned relative was convicted by Israel of committing serious crimes against Israelis. Later, Al-Monitor reported (4/19) that \$108 m. of the aid had been unblocked but that some mbrs. of Congress wanted to codify new restrictions on Palestinian aid into 2017 appropriations legislation.

Also of note: the U.S. consul gen. in Jerusalem, Donald Blome, announced (5/9) a new program by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide \$50 m. to Gaza over 5 years for humanitarian support, job creation, and capacity-building.

### ***The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and the 2016 Presidential Race***

Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump all but locked up the presumptive Democratic and Republican nominations for pres. this quarter. Both candidates clarified their positions on Israel and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in speeches delivered at the AIPAC conference in 3/2016, as well as in the lead-up to the New York state primary on 4/19.

Although Clinton was the front-runner for the Democratic nomination, her main opponent, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), had mounted a formidable challenge as the quarter opened. Sanders was winning states and accumulating delegates to the party's nominating convention on the strength of his progressive platform and his criticisms of growing U.S. economic inequality, pressuring Clinton from the left. With the tense U.S.-Israeli relationship in the news and the New York primary looming, both candidates sought to distinguish themselves on the question of U.S. policy in the Middle East. Clinton, Pres. Obama's former secy. of state, reiterated her long-standing fiercely pro-Israel position, telling AIPAC conference attendees on 3/21 that "the U.S. and Israel must be closer than

ever, stronger than ever." She condemned Hamas's rocket attacks, virtually ignored Israel's settlements, and generally pandered to conferees who interrupted her 55 times with applause, according to Salon (3/22). Sanders, on the other hand, did not attend the AIPAC conference. Although AIPAC organizers denied his request to deliver his speech via teleconference, he gave it anyway, while campaigning in Utah. The speech cleaved close to the Obama admin.'s policy, with Sanders calling for direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and a 2-state solution. Rhetorically, however, the Vermont senator diverged significantly from standard Democratic Party talking points on Israel and Palestine. Rather than pledging unyielding support for Israel, Sanders talked (3/21) about his time living on a kibbutz, described Israel's summer 2014 assault on Gaza as "disproportionate," and called for "achieving self-determination, civil rights, and economic well-being for the Palestinian people."

Sanders's speech put the Israeli-Palestinian conflict center stage in the Democratic primary battle, exposing a significant divide in the party. Over the course of 3 Israeli assaults on Gaza in the past 10 years, U.S. progressives had become increasingly frustrated with the Israeli govt. and more sympathetic to the Palestinians, and Sanders appealed to this growing constituency. Unsurprisingly, he came under fire from party elites, Israeli officials, and the Israel lobby. In an interview with the *New York Daily News's* editorial board, Sanders reiterated (4/4) his description of Israel's 2014 assault on Gaza as "disproportionate," said there was a wide consensus that the IDF's attacks were "indiscriminate," and erroneously referred to "10,000 Gazans" killed in the assault (in fact, 2,251 were killed and around 11,000 were injured, according to the UN; see *JPS* 44 [1, 2]). Former Israeli amb. to the U.S. Michael Oren

accused (4/7) Sanders of “blood libel”; the Anti-Defamation League urged (4/6) him to “correct his misstatements”; and Clinton herself criticized (4/10) him and justified the IDF’s assault, saying “ Hamas provokes Israel . . . and I think Israel has a right to defend itself.”

Amid controversy over the *New York Daily News* interview, the Sanders campaign hired (4/11) Simone Zimmerman as its national Jewish outreach coordinator. She had headed the campus arm of the liberal Zionist group J Street, J Street U, and was a leader in the anti-occupation If Not Now movement. The pro-Israel establishment immediately targeted Zimmerman, dredging up some of her old posts on social media platforms to delegitimize her. The Sanders campaign suspended her appointment on 4/14, hours before the Democratic debate in Brooklyn ahead of the 4/19 New York primary. Sanders did not temper his position on Israel, though. In the debate, he again highlighted the plight of the Palestinian people, drawing praise from U.S. Palestinian and progressive communities alike.

On the Republican side, Donald Trump faced no challenge to his position on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and by the end of the quarter he seemed to have assured the U.S. pro-Israel establishment of his dedication to their cause. Ahead of the AIPAC conference, however, uncertainty about his position arose. Trump had earlier stated (12/3) that he had “a real question as to whether or not both sides want to make [peace].” Then, on 2/16, he said he would be “neutral” on Israel and Palestine. Over the course of the quarter, he tacked further toward Republican orthodoxy and a full embrace of the current Israeli govt.’s positions. In his AIPAC conference speech (3/21), Trump pledged unconditional support for Israel and promised to strengthen sanctions on Iran. The same week, his 2 remaining Republican challengers—Sen.

Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Gov. John Kasich (R-OH)—dropped out of the race. In connection with Israeli settlements, Trump told the *Daily Mail*, “I think Israel, they really have to keep going, they have to keep moving forward,” he said, adding, “I don’t think there should be a pause.”

### ***The Ongoing Case of Israeli Spy Jonathan Pollard***

After convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard was released from prison last quarter (see *JPS* 45 [3]), his lawyers, Israeli officials, and several mbrs. of Congress appealed the terms of his parole. As the U.S. judicial system processed their complaints, the Israeli Knesset’s Ministerial Comm. on Legislation prepared to vote on a proposal that would award Pollard a lifetime stipend. Netanyahu intervened ahead of the 3/20 vote and had it postponed indefinitely. A source close to Netanyahu said (3/20) that the decision was made at the request of security officials, although it was clear that granting Pollard a stipend would have deleterious effects on the U.S.-Israeli relationship.

### ***Dani Dayan: A Settler Consul in New York***

Following the Brazilian govt.’s rejection of former settler leader Dani Dayan as amb. (see “Brazil” below), Netanyahu appointed (3/28) Dayan consul gen. in New York. Dayan immediately stirred controversy within the U.S. pro-Israel community when he told Israel’s *i24news* (3/27), “I prefer the attitude of AIPAC to that of J Street . . . the more anti-Israel you are, the more you are endorsed by J Street. That’s un-Jewish.” J Street criticized his appointment on 3/29, saying that “these kinds of slurs impugning our faith should simply be out-of-bounds for an official emissary of the Israeli govt.” On 3/31, Dayan issued an apology

on Twitter that J Street's pres. Jeremy Ben-Ami accepted in kind while acknowledging the growing divide in the U.S. Jewish community: "@danidayan really appreciate this. Have always valued engaging with you. Look forward to continuing to disagree in NY as we have in Israel!"

### ***The PA and PLO on Trial***

This quarter, the PA and PLO continued to appeal the U.S. District Court of New York's 2/23/2015 ruling finding them liable for \$655 m. in damages on terrorism charges brought by 10 families of U.S. victims of 6 attacks in Israel between 2002 and 2004. The 2d Circuit Court of Appeals heard the appeal on 4/12, when the Palestinians' lawyer, Mitchell Berger, argued that the district court did not have jurisdiction to rule on the matter in the first place. He said, "[The families'] own experts said the brunt of the injury, which is the key question, was on Israel, not the U.S." There was no ruling on the appeal this quarter.

### ***Legislative Crackdown on BDS***

Particularly at the state level, legislative crackdowns on the BDS movement, which had gathered momentum in each of the 3 preceding quarters, produced results. By the end of the quarter, legislatures in 20 states had considered bills that could undermine or destabilize BDS efforts. Consequently, 7 more states joined Illinois and South Carolina in putting anti-BDS laws on the books. Alabama barred (5/10) public contracts with companies that boycott anyone with whom the state enjoys free trade (including Israel); Arizona (3/17) and Georgia (3/26) specifically barred public contracts with companies boycotting Israel; Colorado (3/18), Florida (3/10), and Indiana (3/23) blocked their public employees' retirement funds from investing in companies that boycott Israel; and

Iowa (5/10) barred public contracts with such companies and prohibited its public employees' retirement fund from investing in them.

At the national level, there were fewer new crackdowns on BDS, and no major changes among congressional or executive priorities. The most noteworthy development was the signing into law (2/24) by the pres. of the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 (see S. 644 at [www.congressionalmonitor.org](http://www.congressionalmonitor.org) for more). This multifaceted trade bill, commonly known as the "customs bill," included AIPAC-approved provisions ordering U.S. courts to disregard judgments in foreign courts based on BDS laws, requiring the pres. to report annually to Congress on BDS activities in the U.S., and laying out 3 anti-BDS objectives for the U.S. to pursue in trade negotiations: to discourage potential trading partners from prejudicing U.S.-Israel commercial activity, to eliminate politically motivated nontariff barriers on Israel, and to seek the termination of state-sponsored boycotts of Israel, such as that of the Arab League. As he did after signing the Defending Public Safety Employees' Retirement Act (see H.R. 2146 and *JPS* 45 [1]), which contained similar provisions, Obama issued (2/24) a signing statement reiterating his specific opposition to BDS, as defined in the bill. Because anti-BDS provisions in S. 644 conflated Israel and "Israeli-controlled territories" (i.e., the oPt), they were contrary to his admin.'s policy opposing Israel's settlements; therefore, implementing that aspect of the bill would "interfere with [his] constitutional authority to conduct diplomacy." Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI) promised (2/26) to use Congress's "oversight capacity to ensure [the provisions] are faithfully enforced," but it was unclear how and when he planned to do so, and there were no further developments through the end of the quarter.

## INTERNATIONAL CRACKDOWN ON BDS

While U.S. state and federal legislatures were taking steps to undermine BDS, Israel and its allies around the world advanced similar measures. In mid-3/2016, reps. of 13 Latin American and Caribbean countries met in Miami for the Israel Allies Foundation's 2d annual Latin America Summit on Israel. They signed onto a res. encouraging their respective govts. to strengthen ties with Israel and to fight the BDS movement. Earlier, the UK govt. issued (2/17) new guidelines preventing local authorities and other publicly funded institutions from boycotting Israel or any other mbr. of the World Trade Organization, and Canada's parliament passed (2/22) a motion, 229-51, formally condemning the BDS movement.

Israel's strategic affairs minister Gilad Erdan, who also serves as public security minister, held an anti-BDS conference in Jerusalem on 2/21-22. More than 150 Jewish leaders from around the world attended the talks and coordinated their efforts. Afterward, Erdan presented a plan to Israel's Foreign Ministry outlining the need to hire 10 more anti-BDS officials to post at embassies around the world.

## UNITED NATIONS

There were a few noteworthy UN-related developments this quarter. On 3/24, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) approved, 32-0, with 15 abstentions, a res. condemning Israel's settlements and calling for the creation of a "blacklist" of all Israeli and international firms operating directly or indirectly in Gaza, the West Bank, or the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. According to *Haaretz* on 3/24, the Palestinians advanced the res. with the support of Pakistan, Egypt, and several other Arab countries. The report stated further that the Israeli, UK, and U.S. govts. had been trying for

several weeks to scuttle the measure, or at least have the "blacklist" provision removed. Ahead of the vote, a senior Israeli official said that the Palestinians might be open to removing the blacklist provision to secure the passage of the res. overall, but a senior Palestinian official denied this (3/24), saying the Palestinians were intent on keeping the provision in despite pressure from the U.S. and UK. In a similar incident later in the quarter, the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) passed (4/15) a res. condemning Israel's occupation in general; specifically calling on the Israeli govt. not to restrict Palestinian access to Haram al-Sharif; decrying Israel's arrests of Muslim worshippers at the sanctuary; and deploring Israel's sponsorship of archaeological excavations and public works in East Jerusalem. Israel criticized the res. harshly for weeks, complaining that it ignored Jewish claims to the site. Its complaints eventually drew a concession from the French govt. PM Manuel Valls said (5/11) that the res. was "clumsy" and "unfortunate," and Pres. Hollande sent (5/11) a letter to the leaders of the French Jewish community saying that French support for the res. was the result of a "misunderstanding."

Also of note: UNHRC pres. Choi Kyong-lim nominated (3/23) Canadian law professor Michael Lynk to succeed Makarim Wibisono, who resigned last quarter, as special rapporteur on the oPt (see *JPS* 45 [3]). Lynk was confirmed on 3/24.

## UNITED KINGDOM

In the lead-up to local elections across the UK on 5/5, the Labour Party came under renewed accusations of anti-Semitism after the schism within Labour between the old guard and the new progressive wing over new Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's break with the party's

traditional pro-Israel positions and rhetoric. Although hints of controversy surfaced amid Corbyn's rise to party leadership in 9/2015 (see *JPS* 45 [2]), it dominated the UK press in 2/2016 after former Labour leader Ed Miliband indefinitely postponed his planned address to the Oxford University Labour Club in protest at the club's decision to support Israeli Apartheid Week (2/22–28). Labour Club cochair Alex Chalmers resigned, claiming that many of the club's mbrs. had "some kind of problem with Jews" (*Guardian*, 2/17). As Labour's national students' group launched an inquiry into the alleged anti-Semitism, previous incidents came under reexamination. Gerry Downing's 8/22/2015 tweet about the "Jewish question" and Vicky Kirby's summer 2014 social media posts suggesting Hitler might be a "Zionist god" appeared to some critics as part of a trend rather than random incidents.

The controversy escalated in 4/2016. Labour suspended MP Naz Shah (4/27) after a conservative blogger dug up Facebook posts she made in 2014 suggesting that Israelis move en masse to the U.S. The party also suspended former London mayor Ken Livingstone (4/28) after he made comments, defending Shah; in an interview that day, Livingstone alleged that Hitler had supported Zionism "before he went mad and ended up killing 6 million Jews" and suggested that the Israel lobby had a "well-orchestrated campaign" to "smear anybody who criticizes Israeli policy as anti-Semitic." Amid intensifying complaints from Labour Party elders, Corbyn announced (4/29) an independent review of alleged anti-Semitism within the party, but the issue was far from settled at quarter's end.

## BRAZIL

After mos. of uncertainty, secret negotiations, and public hand-wringing over the Israeli

govt.'s nomination of former settler leader Dani Dayan as amb. to Brazil (see *JPS* 45 [2, 3]), the Israeli govt. relented this quarter. The Brazilian govt. refused to credential Dayan because of his background as a leader of the settler movement. Consequently, Israel's Foreign Ministry announced (3/17) that the govt. had begun looking for a new candidate, effectively rescinding Dayan's nomination. Although an Israeli spokesperson attempted to refute the announcement later that day, PM Netanyahu appointed Dayan consul gen. in New York on 3/28 (see "United States" above), ending the controversy and restoring Israeli-Brazilian relations.

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## DONORS

For the first time since 9/30/2015, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), the chief policy-level coordination mechanism for development assistance to the Palestinians, held a working meeting in Brussels on 4/19, chaired by Norwegian FM Børge Brende and presided over by European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini. The attendees considered reports from the World Bank, the UN special coordinator's office, the IMF, and other institutions. According to Brende's summary of the meeting, the comm. was concerned with the absence of Palestinian national reconciliation (see "Intra-Palestinian Politics" above) and observed that "economic development cannot be a substitute for a political solution." The AHLC also commended the PA and Israeli finance ministers for embarking on an effort to improve economic conditions in the oPt (see "The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict" above); welcomed the steps taken by Israel to lift restrictions on Palestinian movement and access, however insufficient, while underlining the "need to expand them significantly" (see "Movement



and Access” above); and called for increased efforts to accelerate the reconstruction of Gaza (see “Gaza Reconstruction” above).

The quarter saw several announcements of new financial support for the Palestinians. Japan signed (2/28) 2 agreements to provide almost \$220,000 in aid; the first, worth \$128,426, was for the Palestinian Environmental Friends Association to improve water quality in the s. Gaza city of Rafah and the second was for a \$90,009 grant to al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. Japan also donated (4/7) \$7 m. to support the UN Children’s Emergency Fund’s (UNICEF) programs for Palestinian children in the oPt. The EU was also active this quarter: Mogherini announced (3/1) that the European Commission had approved a €252.5 m. (around \$274 m.) package of assistance to the Palestinians, including €82 m. (\$91 m.) for UNRWA, with the rest going to the PA, in fulfilment of the first part of the EU’s pledged support for 2016. Then the EU announced (4/5) that it would contribute €15.3 m. (around \$17 m.) to the 3/2016 payments owed to the PA’s 66,000 civil servants and pensioners. Also, as mentioned above (see “United States”), the U.S. announced (5/9) a new 5-year, \$50-m. program for humanitarian support, job creation, and capacity-building in Gaza.

Additional aid, pledged throughout the quarter via UNRWA, came from the international community for Palestinian refugees in particular. The U.S. contributed (2/19) \$47.7 m. to the agency’s 2016 emergency appeal for programs in Syria. Sweden increased (2/23) its annual contribution by 15%, to \$40.6 m., and also announced (5/9) a SEK 65 m. (\$8 m.) contribution for programs in Syria and the oPt. The Korean International Cooperation Agency signed (2/26) an agreement pledging \$447,996 to support technical and vocational education and training in Gaza. Japan confirmed

(2/29) a \$38.21 m. pledge to support humanitarian efforts in Gaza, as well as education and health programs in the West Bank, Syria, and Lebanon; and the construction of a sewage network in ‘Aqabat Jabir r.c. in the West Bank, marking Japan’s largest 1-time donation ever. With \$38.1 m. from Saudi Arabia, UNRWA and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) agreed (3/15) on new home rehabilitation efforts in Gaza. Finally, the OPEC Fund for International Development committed (4/29) \$1.4 m. to infrastructure improvement in the Shu’fat r.c. in East Jerusalem.

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## BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS

*Over 170 Palestinian civil society groups launched the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in 2005. Its aim is to create an international campaign of boycotts, divestments, and sanctions against Israel “until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights.”*

### BOYCOTT EFFORTS

The cumulative impact of a decade of campaign activity bore fruit this quarter, lending additional momentum to new BDS efforts. Early in the quarter, the Israeli cosmetics company Ahava, a longtime BDS target, signed (3/9) a deal to move its main manufacturing facility from the West Bank to a nearby kibbutz in Israel. The company had indicated in 6/2015 that it was considering a move. Speculation arose in late 2015 and early 2016 that the proposed relocation was, in part, an attempt to make Ahava a more attractive target for acquisition by the Chinese investment group Fosun. Although the company made no public

statements to that effect, Fosun did acquire Ahava for \$77 m. on 4/10.

SodaStream CEO Daniel Birnbaum said (2/19) that pressure from the BDS movement had “some effect” in motivating his decision to relocate the company’s flagship factory from the West Bank settlement of Mishor Adumim to a facility in the Negev (see *JPS* 44 [2]). Although Birnbaum acknowledged that were it not for BDS, “we might have stayed there another year or 2” he also insisted that SodaStream “didn’t leave Mishor Adumim because of BDS.” Israeli NGO Gush Shalom published (3/27) Wiki Settlement Products, which included evidence that another 8 Israeli companies besides Ahava and SodaStream had moved operations from the West Bank to Israel in response to BDS pressure.

BDS efforts were successful outside of Israel as well. The Jordanian branch of UNICEF announced (3/1) that it had terminated its contract with British security company and longtime BDS target G4S, in response to activists’ protests. The following week, G4S announced (3/9) that it was planning on selling off its business in Israel. Although a company spokesperson said (3/10) that it was “entirely” for commercial reasons, BDS activists claimed the move as a victory. Later, the Jordanian branch of the UN Office for Project Services joined UNICEF in opting not to renew its contract with G4S (Jordan’s branch of UNHCR dropped G4S last quarter; see *JPS* 44 [3]).

Meanwhile, the movement to boycott Israeli academic institutions gathered strength on college campuses around the world. In the UK, the Edinburgh University Students’ Association passed (3/31) a res., 249–153, with 22 abstentions, supporting the academic boycott. Elsewhere, the City University of New York’s doctoral students’ council and University of Chile’s law students passed similar resolutions, on 4/15 and 4/25, respectively.

Also of note: a campaign started last quarter calling on Airbnb (a vacation rental service allowing homeowners to rent space to travelers) to shut down its operations in the oPt continued to gain strength (see *JPS* 44 [3]). By the end of the quarter, the campaigners’ petition had accumulated around 150,000 signatures, up from 20,000 at the end of last quarter.

## DIVESTMENT

Divestment-focused BDS efforts centered on college campuses this quarter, especially in the U.S. On the first day of Israeli Apartheid Week (2/29), 40 Columbia University professors signed and released a petition calling for the school to divest from companies deemed complicit in the Israeli occupation. Almost 2 mos. later, the University of Chicago’s undergraduate student govt. backed (4/12) a divestment res. after a “contentious debate and procedural wrangling,” according to the *Chicago Maroon*, the campus newspaper. The University of Minnesota’s (UM) student govt. passed (4/12) a similar res., calling for “transparency” and demanding that the school divest from “any company that profits off violations of human rights.” The UM res. did not highlight the Israeli occupation specifically, as campus activists wanted, but it was still seen as a marginal advance for their cause. Finally, New York University’s graduate student union approved (4/22) a res. calling for the school and its United Automobile Workers union affiliate to divest from all Israeli state institutions, including universities, deemed complicit in the occupation. NYU’s pres. said [4/25] that the school would not acquiesce to the students’ request.

There was 1 major BDS development in the U.S. outside of the academy. On 3/28, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) announced that it would, by the end of 3/2016,

dispose of its shares in Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, and Hewlett Packard Enterprise on the grounds that these companies failed to meet the UUA's new human rights standards because of their complicity with the Israeli occupation.

Outside the U.S., 58% of the 900 McGill University students who attended the Students' Society Winter General Assembly approved (2/22) a measure calling for divestment. The measure was ultimately defeated, however, in an online ratification process, and the university's vice-chancellor sent a message to alumni explaining that the "admin. of the university will have no part of the BDS movement." Later, Dalhousie University's student council unanimously approved (4/20) a motion calling for divestment in 9 companies deemed complicit in international human rights violations, including 4 connected with the Israeli occupation.

Meanwhile, the push within the University of California system to divest assets from the Israeli occupation suffered a high-profile setback. On 3/23, the UC Board of Regents unanimously approved a report and a corresponding "statement of principles against intolerance" that condemned anti-Semitism broadly and "anti-Semitic forms of anti-Zionism" in particular. Though the final draft

of the statement did not include a direct condemnation of anti-Zionism, as had earlier drafts, BDS activists criticized it for stifling their efforts and smearing their reputation. Director of the Chicago-based Palestine Legal Dima Khalidi said that BDS opponents had "succeeded in convincing the regents that Palestine advocacy is inherently anti-Semitic, and should be condemned" (*New York Times*, 3/26). UC's governing board approved the statement unanimously on 3/24.

## SANCTIONS

In the sole major sanctions-related development of the quarter, the Dutch party D66 called (4/16) on Dutch lawmakers to promote EU demands for Israel to halt settlement construction and stated that the EU-Israel Association Agreement "could be [partially] suspended" if the Israeli govt. did not comply. The call was backed by a 75% majority of the party and marked the first time a major Dutch political party has supported sanctions against Israel. At the time of the vote, D66 held 12 of the 150 seats in the lower house of the Dutch parliament, 10 seats of the 75 in the Dutch senate, and 26 of the Dutch seats in the European Parliament.