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# UPDATE ON CONFLICT AND DIPLOMACY

16 FEBRUARY–15 MAY 2011

COMPILED BY MICHELE K. ESPOSITO

*The Quarterly Update is a summary of bilateral, multilateral, regional, and international events affecting the Palestinians and the future of the peace process. More than 100 U.S., Israeli, Arab, and international print, wire, television, and online sources are surveyed to compile the Quarterly Update. The most relevant sources are cited in JPS's Chronology section, which tracks events day by day.*

**Highlights of the Quarter:** *Palestinians continue a diplomatic offensive in anticipation of the 9/2011 target for de facto statehood; Israel launches a counteroffensive; Fatah and Hamas sign a unity agreement; the U.S. vetoes a UNSC resolution on Israeli settlements (Obama's first veto); ongoing Obama-Netanyahu tensions over the stalled peace process, with each weighing the launch of new initiatives; Richard Goldstone "reconsiders" conclusions of the UN's "Goldstone Report" on Operation Cast Lead; U.S. special envoy George Mitchell resigns; Palestinian refugees stage a "March to Palestine" to commemorate the Nakba; new Israeli legislation targets Israeli Palestinians and the Israeli Left; U.S. universities charged with tolerating anti-Semitism under Title VI; ongoing antigovernment protests and government crackdowns regionwide (the Arab Spring), including the spiraling events in Syria of particular importance for the Palestinian-Israeli situation.*

## THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

This quarter, in the absence of peace talks, the Palestinians focused on building and securing international recognition of a de facto Palestinian state. As part of this effort, Palestinian Authority (PA) pres. Mahmud Abbas for the first time opened serious talks with Hamas on forming a national unity government. (Last quarter, Abbas accepted the resignation of his cabinet over the leak of key Palestinian negotiating documents, the "Palestine Papers," which were widely seen as highlighting the PA's willingness to concede to Israeli and U.S. pressure, seriously undermining domestic support for Abbas; see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159. PA PM Salam Fayyad was reappointed to form a new government by 3/7.) Meanwhile, Israel, the U.S., and several European states weighed launching new initiatives to revive the peace process. A major factor in the timing and decision making of the parties throughout the quarter was the

regional instability generated by the ongoing popular demonstrations across the Arab world (the "Arab Spring") challenging entrenched governments to undertake serious reforms or step aside.

As the quarter opened, Israel maintained a tight siege on Gaza that kept Gazans hovering just above a humanitarian crisis. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) enforced a 300-meter no-go zone inside the full length of the Gaza border and limited the Palestinian fishing zone off Gaza to 500–1,000 m off Bayt Lahiya and Rafah and 3 naut. mi. elsewhere—restrictions that placed 17% of Gaza's total landmass, including 35% of its viable agricultural areas, and 85% of the maritime areas allocated to the Palestinians under the Oslo accords off limits to Palestinians. In the West Bank, Israel's easing of restrictions on Palestinian movement between major population centers (begun in summer 2009) continued, and IDF operations remained relatively low. As of 2/15, at least 7,749 Palestinians (including 51 Israeli Arabs and

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19 unidentified Arab cross-border infiltrators), 1,102 Israelis (including 354 IDF soldiers and security personnel, 220 settlers, and 528 civilians), and 65 foreign nationals (including 2 British suicide bombers) had been killed since the start of the al-Aqsa intifada on 9/28/00.

### ***Paving the Way for UN Recognition***

As the quarter opened, the PA had shifted its diplomatic focus to achieving international recognition of a de facto Palestinian state. The PA's 2008–11 development plan, as revised by PM Fayyad and endorsed by the international community in 2009, aimed to build the structures of a viable Palestinian state by 9/2011 in hopes that a final status agreement could be achieved by then. When negotiations stalled in fall 2010 over Israel's refusal to halt settlement construction while talks were ongoing, the PA expanded this effort to include a multifaceted diplomatic effort to secure international recognition of the PLO's 1988 unilateral declaration of statehood by arguing that the PA could function independently if the occupation were lifted. Bilateral approaches to Latin American, European, and Asian countries resulted in numerous upgrades of status for PLO missions abroad and statements of support for the Palestinian initiative (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159), laying the groundwork for a resolution on recognition to be submitted to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) at the 9/2011 opening session in New York.

Another preliminary step before the UNGA session was Palestinian submission of a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution reaffirming the illegality of settlements (see Doc. A4 in *JPS* 159), carefully crafted using previous U.S. statements denouncing settlement construction (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159 for background). The measure was set to come to vote on 2/18. The day before (2/17), U.S. pres. Barack Obama personally phoned Abbas to urge him to delay the vote or agree to a compromise UNSC presidential statement (less than a resolution) criticizing settlements and urging the sides to resume negotiations. Obama warned that a U.S. veto could harm U.S. interests in the region and might prompt Congress to cut aid to the PA. If Abbas would accept a UNSC presidential statement, the U.S. would support a new Russian proposal for a fact-finding

mission on settlements and a proposed change in how the Quartet defines basic elements of the peace process; though Israel and the Palestinians each reportedly objected to aspects of the proposal regarding the Quartet, no details were released. Separately, White House spokesman Jay Carney stated (2/17) that the U.S. did not "accept the legitimacy of continued settlement expansion," believing settlements to be "corrosive not only to peace efforts and a two-state solution . . . but to Israel's future itself," but he refused to reiterate the standing U.S. policy that settlements are illegal.

In response, Abbas agreed to convene an emergency meeting of the PLO Executive Comm. (PLOEC) and Fatah Central Comm. (FCC) in Ramallah on 2/18 before the vote to consider Obama's proposal. That morning, U.S. Secy. of State Hillary Clinton phoned Abbas to press him once again to withdraw the resolution and to stress that U.S. aid to the PA was in jeopardy if the vote went ahead. Despite this, the PLOEC and FCC decided to push ahead with the vote saying: "The Palestinian leadership will reject American demands even if our decision leads to a diplomatic crisis with the Americans. We have nothing to lose." A PLO official commented (2/18) that it would be "a political catastrophe if we withdraw this resolution. People would take to the streets and topple the president."

In New York later that day (2/18), the U.S. vetoed the UNSC settlement resolution, which had been cosponsored by 120 Arab and nonaligned states (of the UNGA's 192 voting members). This marked the Obama admin.'s first veto and the first U.S. veto since 2006 (when the George W. Bush admin. vetoed a res. calling on Israel to halt Operation Defensive Shield). U.S. Amb. to the UN Susan Rice explained (see Doc. D2 in *JPS* 159) that while the U.S. believed settlement construction "is corrosive" and "violates Israel's international commitments," a resolution risked hardening divisions between Israel and the Palestinians and the UN was not the place to settle the conflict. British amb. Sir Mark Lyall Grant read a counterstatement on behalf of Britain, France, and Germany saying that the resolution would have advanced the peace process and that construction in the settlements, including in East Jerusalem, contravened international

law. The statement also laid out what successful Palestinian-Israeli negotiations “will need to achieve”: an agreement on borders based on the 1967 lines, with small adjustments based on mutually agreed land swaps; Jerusalem as a shared capital; and a just, agreed solution for the Palestinian refugees.

The Palestinian response to the veto was strong. When news broke on 2/19, spontaneous protests denouncing the U.S. were held in Bethlehem, Hebron, Jenin, Nablus, and Tulkarm. From Ramallah, FCC member Tawfik Tirawi called for a “Day of Rage” against the U.S. after Friday prayers on 2/25. (Fatah ultimately called it off, concerned that turnout would reflect support for Hamas.) On 2/20, some 3,000 Palestinians organized by Fatah demonstrated in Ramallah, waving banners and shouting slogans against the Obama admin. Concerned for the safety of its personnel, the U.S. consulate in East Jerusalem restricted staff movement from 2/19 through 2/21. On 2/23, PA Jerusalem Affairs M Hatem ‘Abd al-Qader (Fatah) declared that 28 local councils and municipalities in the Jerusalem district had agreed “to boycott the American consulate in Jerusalem and all the American institutions, American personnel, and diplomats in protest,” until the U.S. “changes its stance concerning the Palestinian cause, and especially concerning the issue of settlements, and apologizes to the Palestinian people and its president, Mahmoud Abbas”; however, no one in the PA confirmed or denied that this was an official PA decision.

In the days following the vote, Britain (3/7) and Denmark (3/9) upgraded the status of local Palestinian representations to missions, and Uruguay recognized (3/15) an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 lines. In addition, PA Tourism M Kholoud Deibas sent (2/20) a letter to all countries that Israel had invited to the International Tourism Conference in Jerusalem later in 2/2011 to urge them to boycott the event, stating that participation in the conference “constitutes recognition of occupied Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.” Meanwhile, Israel’s Jerusalem municipal authority approved (3/2) construction of 14 Jewish settlement housing units in Ras al-Amud in East Jerusalem—a move the UN denounced (3/2) as “provocative action that only serves to exacerbate tensions.”

### *The Quartet Considers Action*

Soon after the 2/18 UNSC session, the Quartet informed (ca. 2/20) Israel and the Palestinians that it intended to hold a senior-level Quartet session in mid-3/2011 on the sidelines of a G20 meeting in Paris to discuss possible Quartet action to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In preparation, the Quartet requested advance talks with each side separately in Brussels (rather than meeting with them together, as is usually the case) “to hear the[ir] stances on core peace-talk issues, as well as to attempt to come to an agreement regarding the negotiations’ resumption.” Abbas accepted the invitation, while Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu declined (despite a 2d, personal request by Quartet special envoy Tony Blair on 2/21) until the Quartet clarified its intentions. Netanyahu reportedly (*Ha’Aretz* [HA] 2/27, 3/1) was suspicious of the Quartet’s sudden, unexplained shift to bilateral meetings and was worried about pressure on Israel to accept unwanted terms for renewing peace talks.

At their meeting with Quartet reps. in Brussels on 3/2, Palestinian officials reiterated demands for a settlement freeze and an explicit statement that the terms of reference for borders would be the 1967 lines. Soon after, on a state visit to London, Abbas declared (3/9) that the Palestinians would welcome new Quartet peace parameters based on the British, French, and German joint statement presented by Lyall Grant at the UN on 2/18, saying that a Quartet initiative combined with a settlement freeze could open a route back to negotiations. Britain was eager to pursue the idea for the upcoming Quartet session. The U.S. and Israel did not comment.

### *Netanyahu Maneuvers*

By 3/2011, with Israel seeming to lose control of the peace process, PM Netanyahu feared that if he did not come forward with a new proposal to reclaim the diplomatic initiative, Israel would risk coming under extreme international pressure (a “diplomatic tsunami,” according to DM Ehud Barak) to make concessions. On 3/2, an Israeli official speaking anonymously told the *New York Times* (NYT; 3/3) that Israel had begun discussing with the U.S. a unilateral “phased approach to reaching a final status accord” in the absence of negotiations with the Palestinians. On 3/3, Israeli sources revealed (*Israel HaYom*

3/3) that Obama's chief Middle East adviser Dennis Ross and U.S. special envoy George Mitchell's adviser Fred Hoff were currently in Israel to discuss resuming negotiations and a possible major policy speech by Netanyahu. Another senior Israeli political source said (HA 3/3) that Netanyahu was expected to unveil a new plan in his address to the American-Israel Public Affairs Comm. (AIPAC) conference in Washington on 5/23 that would focus on a Palestinian state with temporary borders, new security arrangements, and maintaining settlement blocs. At the same time, Netanyahu reportedly (*Ma'ariv* [MA] 3/2, Israel Radio 3/7) put out feelers seeking an invitation to address a joint session of Congress, which he viewed as his preferred venue for unveiling his plan and hoped might accommodate him sooner than AIPAC. (Anonymous sources noted [NYT 4/21] that a Netanyahu decision to make a major address on the peace process before Congress rather than his own Knesset would be a strong indication that the initiative was primarily for public relations purposes and not very serious.) Abbas (3/3) and the PLOEC (3/2) quickly warned that the Palestinians would refuse any interim or partial solution and any offer calling for creation of a Palestinian state with temporary or undefined borders.

In the succeeding days, Israeli Dep. PM Dan Meridor stated (3/7) that Netanyahu's Likud party would support the transfer of more West Bank land to PA control as a vital Israeli interest. However, on a rare visit to the Jordan Valley on 3/8, Netanyahu stated that Israel's security depended on maintaining a military presence along Israel's eastern border, stating that "there is no alternative. [The Jordan Valley] will remain that way in any future situation and any future deal."

On 3/9, the Quartet without explanation postponed the senior-level meeting until 4/15. Anonymous Israeli officials hinted (3/9) that it was "not impossible" that the delay was to give Netanyahu time to formulate and present a new peace initiative. A Quartet official denied this (3/9) but gave no official explanation. As of 3/28, U.K. Foreign Secy. William Hague said Britain, France, and Germany remained eager to press for an international peace initiative at the forthcoming Quartet session, stating that interim arrangements alone would not resolve the conflict and

that serious progress toward final status must be made before 9/2011. Meanwhile, a lower-level Quartet delegation was set to meet with Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erakat in Ramallah ca. 3/10 and with Israeli chief negotiator Yitzhak Molcho in Jerusalem on 3/14. Molcho told Quartet reps. that Israel planned to make "a number of grand gestures" toward the Palestinians, but no details were released. By 4/12, Netanyahu was reportedly (MA 4/12, HA 4/13) considering various ways to entice the Palestinian back to the negotiating table, including transferring a large part of area C (full Israeli control) to area B (partial PA control) or transferring parts of area B to area A (full PA control).

While charting its own initiative, Israel went on the defensive against the Palestinian diplomatic offensive. Around 3/20, the Israel FMin. sent a classified cable to more than 30 Israeli embassies, particularly in Europe, directing them to lodge diplomatic protests against ongoing Palestinian efforts to rally support for recognition of statehood at the UN in 9/2011. Ambassadors were instructed to argue: (1) that supporting recognition would encourage the Palestinians to forgo negotiations, thereby violating the Oslo Accord's promise to seek an agreed solution; and (2) recognition would not lead to a Palestinian state, but instead could trigger a series of unilateral Israeli steps and violence on the ground. EU sources said (3/29) that they had requested Israeli clarification regarding such unilateral steps but "did not receive a serious response." Asked for comment, the Israeli FMin. said (3/29) that Netanyahu had not formally discussed the subject with his cabinet. An anonymous Israeli official told (3/29) the Associated Press, however, that possible steps discussed included: annexing major West Bank settlements, reducing Palestinian water access below agreed levels, and restricting the use of Israeli ports for Palestinian imports and exports. Separately, Israel began (ca. early 4/2011) mobilizing pro-Israel members of the U.S. Congress to "reach out to ambassadors" to explain that a vote endorsing statehood "would have repercussions in terms of relations with the United States."

Meanwhile, Israel's Jerusalem planning comm. gave (4/4) preliminary approval for 942 new settlement housing units in Gilo near Bethlehem and the Israeli DMin. announced (4/4) that it had finished new

zoning plans for several West Bank Jewish settlements, retroactively legalizing construction already underway. The State Dept. responded (4/4): "The U.S. is deeply concerned by continuing Israeli actions with respect to settlement construction. . . . [N]ot only are continued Israeli settlements illegitimate, Israel's actions run counter to efforts to resume direct negotiations." Israeli Interior M. Eli Yishai planned to hold a meeting of Jerusalem's planning comm. to discuss building 980 settlement housing units in Har Homa/Jabal Abu-Ghunaym and 600 units in Pisgat Ze'ev, but postponed (4/10) it under pressure from Netanyahu until 5/5 (after Passover).

### **Charting Ways Forward**

By mid-4/2011, Israel's diplomatic efforts were in full swing, increasing anticipation of a new Israeli initiative. Abbas had made his first serious overtures to Hamas proposing formation of a national unity government, and Hamas had responded with interest (see "National Reconciliation" below). Regional uprisings were spreading, including sustained violent clashes in Syria and U.S.-led NATO air strikes on Libya (see "Regional Affairs" below), increasing the sense of regional instability and prompting Netanyahu to warn (4/6) that the unrest would make it harder for Israel to make territorial concessions to the Palestinians that could endanger Israel's security. Behind the scenes, U.S. special envoy Mitchell sent a letter to Pres. Obama (4/6) stating his intention to resign; although he said in the letter that when he took the position in 1/2009 he had told the president that he would only take the job for 2 yrs., his decision was widely seen as reflecting his lack of faith that his mediation would result in peace. (The White House did not reveal the resignation until 5/13, to explain why Mitchell would not take part in a White House meeting between Obama and Netanyahu on 5/20; on 5/13, Mitchell aide David Hale was named interim special envoy.) In light of all these factors, the U.S. argued strenuously that the time was not right for a Quartet session and that the burden was on the Palestinians to return to the table (see *Washington Jewish Week* 4/17). Under U.S. pressure, the Quartet formally canceled the 4/15 meeting on 4/11, effectively blocking the British-French-German push for a Quartet peace initiative.

The next day (4/12), speaking at a conference in Qatar, Secy. of State Clinton announced that Obama would be "speaking in greater detail about America's policy in the Middle East and North Africa in the coming weeks," surprising the Israelis who immediately asked the White House if a U.S. peace initiative was to be announced, as had been debated within the U.S. admin. for nearly 3 mos. (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159). Although the White House said (4/12) that no decision had been made, Netanyahu stepped up efforts to garner an invitation to address Congress, where he could preempt Obama by offering his own plan. Some Israeli sources (see NYT 4/21) suggested that Netanyahu, given the escalating regional unrest, had been leaning toward maintenance of the status quo for the time being but that now, faced with a possible U.S. plan that would be tougher for Israel to accept, he was again considering getting his own initiative out first to make it more difficult for the U.S. to offer a competing plan. On 4/14, House speaker John Boehner (R-OH) invited Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress during his upcoming visit to Washington in late 5/2011.

By this stage, intensive Fatah-Hamas reconciliation talks were taking place behind the scenes, and on 4/27 the sides announced that they had reached a deal to form a national unity government, which they signed in Cairo on 5/4 (see "National Reconciliation" below). Netanyahu, as expected, denounced the deal as an obstacle to peace as of 4/27, saying the PA "must choose between peace with Israel or peace with Hamas" because Hamas aspired to destroy Israel and that "the very idea of reconciliation shows the weakness of the [PA]." (Abbas spokesman Nabil Abu Rudayna replied on 4/27 that the reconciliation was not Israel's concern: "Netanyahu must choose between a just peace with the united Palestinian people . . . and settlements.") To pressure Abbas to cancel the deal, Israel suspended (5/1) transfers of VAT taxes to the PA (see "PA's West Bank Rule" below) and Netanyahu sent (5/3) a message to Abbas via EU special envoy Tony Blair urging him not to sign the deal. When Abbas went through with the signing, Netanyahu called (5/4) it "a mortal blow to peace and a big prize for terror."

The U.S. initially stated (4/27) that it supported Palestinian reconciliation "on

terms which promote the cause of peace," but that Hamas "is a terrorist organization which targets civilians. To play a constructive role in achieving peace, any Palestinian government must accept the Quartet principles and renounce violence, abide by past agreements, and recognize Israel's right to exist." After the signing, Secy. of State Clinton said (5/5) the U.S. would not automatically refuse negotiations or contacts with a PA government that included Hamas or suspend aid as a result, saying the U.S. would have to see how the deal was expressed on paper and how it played out in fact before it would decide if this marked a true shift by Hamas and a deal that would actually hold.

Obama, who reportedly (NYT 5/6) had wanted to lay out broad terms for resuming peace talks in early 5/2011, before Netanyahu's visit, delayed making a speech in order to reassess his message after the unity deal was announced (4/27) and again after U.S. forces assassinated (5/1) al-Qa'ida leader Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan. Through the end of the quarter, senior admin. officials continued to debate whether the time was right for the U.S. to put forward a peace initiative, and if so, how detailed it should be. Anonymous admin. sources said (NYT 4/21) that any U.S. statement would be based around 4 principles: (1) a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders, (2) no right of return to Israel for Palestinian refugees, (3) Jerusalem as a shared capital, and (4) major security guarantees for Israel. On 5/14, the White House announced that Obama would give a major address on the Middle East at the State Dept. on 5/19 (the day of his meeting with Netanyahu), though sources said (e.g., NYT 5/12) that debate on whether Obama would mention the peace process was still ongoing. However, the sources expected Obama to focus on putting Bin Laden's assassination in the context of the Arab Spring to state that regional changes were heading in the right direction.

### *The "March to Palestine"*

Meanwhile, grassroots Palestinian activists inspired by the Arab Spring organized an unprecedented event to commemorate the anniversary of the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948. Organizing online (with more than 300,000 supporters) and through 10,000s of text messages sent (5/12) to cell phones in the West

Bank and Gaza, they urged Palestinians to march to the borders of Israel on 5/15 for a "March to Palestine Day." Egyptian activists also called on Egyptians to join in by marching to the Rafah border crossing, but Hamas leader Khalid Mishal publicly urged (5/12) against this from Damascus, saying "advocating the cause by taking a political stance, sending relief aid, boycotting, and sending prayers is a must at the moment. We do not ask you to march." In the run-up to the event, Palestinian online activists also called on Arabs across the Middle East to rally in support of Palestinian rights after Friday prayers on 5/13. In response, 1,000s of Egyptians turned out (5/13) in Cairo and 100s in Jordan, while small Palestinian rallies and clashes with Israeli police were reported in East Jerusalem (continuing on 5/14; see Chronology). With Syria in the throes of a major uprising (see "Regional Affairs" below), there were no demonstrations there.

On 5/15, 1,000s of Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria staged marches (mostly nonviolent, though there was some stone throwing) toward the Israeli border. In Lebanon, while troops, riot police, and UN soldiers deployed to prevent marchers from reaching the border, a large group succeed in reaching the fence near Hizballah-controlled Maroun al-Ras village, where they threw stones at IDF troops who opened fire into Lebanon, leaving 10 Palestinians dead and at least 112 wounded, some seriously. Palestinians refugees in Syria knocked down the border fence into the Golan Heights, entered the Druze village of Majdal Shams, and rallied in the village square; IDF troops opened fire to drive them back across the border, killing 4 and wounding around 200. On the Jordanian border, Jordanian troops fired tear gas and scuffled with some 800 Palestinians, preventing them from reaching the border, leaving 14 demonstrators and 3 police officers lightly injured. Egyptian security forces reinforced their border, preventing some 250 Palestinians from marching to the Rafah crossing. In Cairo, however, 100s of protesters converged on the Israeli embassy, where they were violently dispersed by riot police, leaving around 120 injured. IDF troops on the Gaza border fired live ammunition and artillery at more than 1,000 Gazans marching toward the Erez crossing, wounding at least 125. In the West Bank, IDF troops

fired tear gas, rubber-coated steel bullets to disperse around 1,000 stone-throwing Palestinians marching toward the Qalandia crossing (injuring 10s) and violently beat scores of Palestinians marching from Palestinian-controlled area A toward Israeli-security-controlled area B in Hebron (injuring 10s). A large nonviolent rally was held in Ramallah. Although the demonstrations were widely promoted online, Israel was caught by surprise. Netanyahu accused (5/15) the demonstrators of participating in “incitement” and challenging “the very existence of Israel,” vowing to defend Israel’s borders forcefully if such marches recurred. Other Israeli officials accused (5/15) Iran and Syria of instigating the Palestinians, noting that Syrian security did nothing to prevent busloads of Palestinians from approaching the border.

#### ***Prisoner Release Talks***

German- and Egyptian-mediated prisoner release talks continued to be stalled this quarter, though channels of communication remained open. Hamas and Israel had previously agreed in principle to the release of as many as 1,000 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for IDF soldier Gilad Shalit (seized in 2006), but Israel continued to reject a handful of names on Hamas’s proposed list, saying it would not release “mass murderers” (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 158). On 4/18, an unnamed former head of Israel’s Shin Bet security agency said Israel should release Palestinians convicted of fatal attacks on Israelis if that would secure Shalit’s release.

An anonymous Hamas official in Gaza noted on 2/22 that Israel had been more serious about prisoner swap talks since Mubarak’s regime fell on 2/11, saying a breakthrough could be announced soon, though none was. Al-Jazeera reported (5/8) that Hamas had approved a new draft release agreement drawn up by Egypt, but no details were available and no further action was reported before the end of the quarter. Meanwhile, on 4/17, Netanyahu appointed high-ranking Mossad official David Meidan as the new Israeli coordinator for the negotiations after the current coordinator, former Mossad official Hagai Hadas, stepped down for personal reasons.

#### ***Independent Initiatives***

A group of 50 prominent Israelis urged (4/6) Netanyahu to make a bold peace

initiative in response to the 2002 Arab peace initiative and the Arab Spring, offering their own independent peace proposal. The plan, initially drafted by a small group of former Israeli security chiefs, would offer Palestinians a state on most of the West Bank and Gaza, with a capital in East Jerusalem, withdrawal from the Golan Heights, and regional security and economic cooperation plans. Among the signers were former Mossad chief Danny Yatom, former Shin Bet head Ya’akov Peri, a former IDF chief of staff, and Yitzhak Rabin’s daughter. Aides confirmed (4/6) that Netanyahu saw the document but did not comment. Members of the group presented the initiative to Abbas in Ramallah on 4/28. Separately, more than 60 Israeli intellectuals and artists (including 17 recipients of the Israel Prize and several winners of the Emet Prize, Israel’s 2 most prestigious national merit awards) released (4/21) a declaration endorsing a Palestinian state on 1967 borders. Both groups said they were motivated by the inadequacy of the Netanyahu government’s peace steps.

#### ***Intifada Data and Trends***

During the quarter, at least 64 Palestinians, 9 Israelis, and 1 foreigner were killed as a result of Israeli-Palestinian violence (compared to 36 Palestinians and 1 Israeli last quarter), bringing the toll at 5/15 to at least 7,813 Palestinians (including 51 Israeli Arabs and 19 unidentified Arab cross-border infiltrators), 1,111 Israelis (including 354 IDF soldiers and security personnel, 226 settlers, and 531 civilians), and 66 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 and the ongoing conflict, such as ailing Palestinians denied access to medical care and Palestinians killed in accidents in smuggling tunnels.

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

Overall, Israeli-Palestinian violence in the West Bank was low and in Gaza was moderate, with a few spikes of heavy violence (see Chronology for details).

In **Jerusalem**, 1 British woman was killed and 38 Israelis injured when suspected Palestinian assailants left a bomb near Jerusalem’s central bus station and convention center on 3/23. This marked the first bombing in Jerusalem in 7 yrs.



(since an al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade [AMB] suicide bombing in 2/2004) and the first bombing attack against an Israeli civilian location in more than 3 yrs. (since a Hamas attack in Dimona in 2/2008). In addition, 1 Palestinian died (5/14) of injuries received when Israeli police and settlement security guards fired on stone-throwing Palestinian youths taking part in Nakba commemorations outside Beit Yonatan in Silwan. Numerous other Nakba day demonstrations took place in East Jerusalem on 5/13 and 5/14, but no serious injuries were reported.

In the **West Bank**, 6 Jewish settlers and 1 Israeli civilian were killed. On 3/11, a Jewish settler family (2 parents and 3 children) was found stabbed to death in their home in the unauthorized settlement outpost of Itamar near Nablus. While there was some initial indication that a foreign worker in the settlement killed the family in a labor dispute (see *Jerusalem Post*, Ma'an News Agency 3/14), Israel suspected local Palestinians and immediately began sweeps of local villages, especially Awarta, that lasted for weeks (see Chronology), rounding up hundreds of men ages 15–40 for questioning, detaining scores (forcing some to undergo DNA testing), and ultimately issuing a statement on 4/17 that 2 teenagers from Awarta had confessed in custody. Israeli police said the teens had connections to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) but that it was unclear if the PFLP was involved in the attack; the PFLP denied (4/17) responsibility. The killings also sparked reprisal attacks on Palestinians across the West Bank by Jewish settlers implementing their “price-tag doctrine” of broad, disproportional retaliation for acts harming settlers (see “Settlers and Settlements” below for details).

The sixth Jewish settler was killed and 4 others wounded by PA security forces (PASF) on 4/24 during a predawn attempt to sneak into Nablus to pray at Joseph’s Tomb, removing a roadblock and speeding down the road to the tomb, refusing orders to halt. The IDF, which regularly escorts settlers to the tomb to pray, confirmed (4/24) that it had not authorized the settlers’ visit. Later in the day, Jewish settlers outside Nablus and in East Jerusalem’s Shaykh Jarrah attacked Palestinian homes (injuring a Palestinian boy), vandalized cars, and attacked a woman and 6 children with pepper spray in retaliation.

On 4/4, a suspected Palestinian gunman fatally shot Juliano Mer-Khamis, a well-known and highly admired figure in Jenin refugee camp (r.c.). Mer-Khamis (son of an Israeli Palestinian father and Israeli Jewish mother) ran an internationally renowned theater troop for Palestinian children in the camp (started by his mother, Arna) and was seen as a bridge-builder between Israelis and Palestinians. Although his theater program was well supported among Palestinians, it had been the target of some strong popular criticism (as well as several arson attacks by suspected Islamist groups) for years for allowing the mixing of genders and producing controversial shows that challenged conservative values. Others thought the killing might be the product of fighting among rival AMB factions in the camp, which was an AMB stronghold. The codirector of the theater, Zacharia Zubaydi, was the former head of the AMB’s Jenin branch until he accepted amnesty from Israel in 2005 in exchange for disarming, which precipitated the branch’s splintering. Among the reasons Mer-Khamis had hired him was the hope that he could prevent the theater from becoming a target of radical AMB off-shoots. The PASF quickly launched an investigation into the killing, arresting and charging Jenin r.c. resident Mujahid Qaniri on 4/5. The PA called him a former AMB member who had defected to Hamas, but Hamas denied any affiliation.

Other incidents of note: The IDF blocked (3/23) a funeral procession from using a main road in Bayt Umar village near Hebron, sparking a clash in which 2 Palestinian mourners were wounded by live ammunition. The IDF also shot and wounded (3/25) a mentally disabled Palestinian who disobeyed orders to halt.

Overall, the average number of IDF operations per week in the West Bank, as recorded by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), declined slightly this quarter from 92 to 90. For perhaps the first time, most IDF incursions into Palestinian population centers were patrols as a show of force, without arrest raids, house searches, or the like. Continuing the trend of recent quarters, the IDF also often issued Palestinians summons to appear for interrogation rather than detaining them immediately. PLO officials noted (3/27), however, that at least 200 Bayt Umar residents, mostly teenagers, had been arrested since the beginning of

2011. The unusually high number of arrests in Bayt Umar built up steadily over time and were mostly related to stone-throwing or the weekly protests against settlement construction, as opposed to coming in a few large arrest sweeps in response to an unusual incident. The IDF did conduct 2 arrest raids (3/5, 4/25) that targeted organizers of the weekly demonstrations (see Chronology for details).

The IDF also rearrested 3 Hamas-affiliated Palestinian Council (PC) members recently released from Israeli prison: Azzam Salhab (on 3/3), Muhammad Mahir Badr (on 3/31), and Issa al-Jabari (on 5/3). All 3 were originally arrested ca. 6/06 as part of Israel's round-up of elected Hamas officials after the 1/2006 PC elections. The IDF also arrested senior PFLP member Ahmad Sulayman Qatamesh in al-Bireh (4/20).

In **Gaza**, a total of 63 Palestinian deaths and 1 Israeli death were attributable to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This included 42 Palestinians killed in IDF air strikes, 7 killed by other IDF cross-border fire, 12 killed in accidents in the smuggling tunnels on the Rafah border (necessitated by Israel's siege), 1 killed by mishandling explosives, and 1 killed in disputed circumstances (either an air strike or mishandling explosives).

In total, the IDF carried out more than 115 air strikes (compared to 50 last quarter) using warplanes, helicopters, and drones, killing 28 militants and 14 civilians and wounding 84 Palestinians (including at least 8 militants and 68 civilians). Two of the air strikes (3/30, 4/1) were assassinations. Palestinians fired about 100 rockets (including 32 manufactured Grads), about 200 mortars (a few containing white phosphorus on 3/23), and 2 antitank weapons and detonated 1 explosive device near the border fence (compared to 32 rockets and at least 73 mortars fired last quarter), killing 1 Israeli civilian and wounding 4 civilians and causing damage in 5 instances.

Most of the cross-border fire and casualties took place during 2 major spates of violence: 3/19–24 and 4/7–10. In the first case, the largest barrage since Operation Cast Lead (OCL) ended in 1/2009, Palestinians fired (3/19) 2 rockets (including 1 Grad) and 54 mortars into Israel within 15 mins., lightly injuring 2 Israelis, damaging an empty kindergarten. Hamas acknowledged (3/19) firing 33 of the mortars targeting IDF bases along the border, as

retaliation for a 3/16 Israeli air strike that killed 2 Hamas members who had just fired a rocket. The move was seen by some as ending Hamas's cease-fire imposed since 1/2009, but others (e.g., NYT 3/22) saw the strikes as reflecting a growing split between Hamas's political and military wings. Israel retaliated on 3/19 with heavy air strikes, artillery fire, and tank fire on Hamas targets and rocket launching sites across the Strip, killing a Hamas official and 2 Palestinian teenagers who allegedly were armed, and wounding at least 5 Palestinians (including at least 2 civilians). The exchanges continued over the next 5 days, with Palestinians firing 8 Grads, 9 Qassams, and around 15 mortars (some containing white phosphorus scavenged from unexploded IDF ordnance from OCL), causing light damage and slighting wounding 1 Israeli. Israel meanwhile carried out more than a dozen air strikes, killing 8 Palestinians (4 militants, 4 civilians) and wounding 18 (1 militant and 17 civilians). Most of the Palestinian fire after 3/19 was believed to have been by Islamic Jihad, not Hamas. On 3/25, Israel announced that it had deployed its first Iron Dome antimissile battery to intercept short-range rocket fire in what many thought could be preparation for a major offensive against Gaza. The next day (3/26) Hamas announced that it had convinced the Gaza factions to reimpose the cease-fire. Though unidentified Palestinians fired 1 Qassam harmlessly into Israel later that day, the cease-fire generally held, even when Israel targeted 2 Islamic Jihad members for assassination on 3/30 (killing 1 and wounding 1).

The 2d uptick in violence came after Israel assassinated 3 Hamas members in an air strike on 4/1. Although Hamas urged the factions to maintain the cease-fire, members of its military wing claiming retaliation fired an advanced Russian Kornet antitank missile at an Israeli school bus across the border on 4/6, injuring a student (who later died) and the driver. This first use of a Kornet, a very sophisticated laser-guided weapon, marked a serious escalation. Moreover, during the rest of the day, Palestinians fired about 45 rockets and mortars into Israel, causing damage but no injuries. Between 4/7 and 4/9, Israel retaliated with more than 38 air strikes (including missiles dropped from war planes and fired from helicopters and drones) and heavy artillery fire (10s of rounds) against

at least 37 targets across the Gaza Strip, killing 20 Palestinians (10 civilians and 10 militants, including 1 senior Hamas member), wounding 41 (38 civilians, 3 militants), collaterally damaging 10s of homes and 1 commercial building, and drawing more Palestinian fire. From 4/8 through the afternoon of 4/10, Palestinians fired 16 Grads and 93 other Qassams and mortars, causing light damage in 4 instances but no injuries. The AMB, DFLP, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP, and PRCs each claimed some responsibility for the fire. Israel's new Iron Dome system intercepted at least 10 of the Palestinian rockets, most of them larger Grads. On the evening of 4/10, an Egyptian-brokered cease-fire was announced; unidentified Palestinians fired 1 rocket that evening, but Israel did not respond. Unidentified Palestinians fired 4 more rockets (including 2 Grads) through 4/18, causing no damage or injuries. Hamas reassured (4/15) Israel that it was doing everything possible to prevent rocket fire, and Israel limited its response to 2 late-night air strikes (4/15) on empty Hamas training sites, causing no injuries. From 4/19, there was no rocket or mortar fire through the end of the quarter.

The IDF also continued routinely to fire warning shots at Palestinian civilians scavenging for construction materials in the former Jewish settlement sites and the demolished Erez industrial zone near the northern border (killing 1, wounding 4), at farmers and shepherds straying too near the border (killing 1, wounding 1), at protesters staging nonviolent marches to the border fence (wounding 125 on 5/15; see "March to Palestine" above), and at Palestinian fishing vessels to keep them close to shore (wounding 1). IDF cross-border fire (gunfire, artillery, and tank fire) targeting suspicious movement near the border killed 5 Palestinians (including at least 2 militants) and wounded 15 (8 militants, 7 civilians). The IDF also made regular brief incursions to level land and clear lines of sight along the Palestinian side of the border fence and made 1 incursion (4/21) to demolish 8 warehouses containing construction material belonging to the Palestine Development and Investment Company (PADICO).

Of note: On 2/19, Mossad agents kidnapped Gazan engineer Dirar Abu Sisi in the Ukraine and rendered him to Israel. Abu Sisi had been the operating manager

of Gaza's power plant for over a decade and had overseen the modifications to the plant so it could run on diesel fuel smuggled from Egypt. Married to a Ukrainian, he was in the Ukraine applying for citizenship. Israel initially only confirmed (3/10) that Abu Sisi was being detained in Ashqelon prison, but later (on 4/4) charged him with developing rockets for Hamas and establishing a "military academy" in Gaza to train Hamas commanders. Hamas and Abu Sisi denied (4/4) any linkage to each other, with Abu Sisi accusing Israel of rendering him as leverage for information about captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit.

Also of note: On 3/15, the Israeli navy detained a ship, the German-owned and Liberian flagged *Victoria*, en route from Syria to Egypt when it was 200 mi. off the Israeli coast, claiming it was attempting to deliver arms to Gaza from Iran operating in collusion with Syria. The vessel was taken to Ashdod port, where Israeli authorities said the ship carried 4 crates of arms, including some 70,000 rounds of ammunition for Kalashnikov rifles, 1,000s of mortars, 6 Chinese C-704 antiship missiles, and 2 radar systems. Iran denied (3/15) the charges; Syria and factions in Gaza apparently did not comment.

Also of note: The Gaza-based Palestine Center for Human Rights (PCHR) took (3/29) the unusual stand of condemning the building and storage of munitions in built-up residential areas of Gaza by the various factions. PCHR noted that home-made mortars and rockets had led to numerous deaths and injuries when they either exploded accidentally or fell inside Gaza, saying "this poses a major threat to the lives of the Palestinian civilians."

**Inside Israel**, 1 Israeli was killed (5/15) and 17 were injured by an Israeli Palestinian driver. The driver said it was an accident, whereas Israeli police said it was a deliberate attack to mark the Nakba.

#### *Movement and Access Issues*

This quarter, Palestinian freedom of movement in the West Bank remained relatively good (i.e., it was possible to go almost anywhere, though not necessarily by the most direct route). In general, travel between major population centers continued to be easier than to outlying villages. There were still 100s of earthen mounds, unmanned barriers, and

occasional manned “flying checkpoints” hindering travel, but only a few dozen permanent manned checkpoints were in place (although the IDF’s infrastructure of checkpoints remained intact, meaning that travel restrictions can be reimposed quickly). The IDF imposed general closures on the West Bank for the Purim holiday (3/17–21), Passover (4/17–26), and Independence Day (5/8–10). Of note: At Abbas’s request, Netanyahu allowed (2/23) some 300 Palestinians fleeing the violence in Libya (of more than 30,000 Palestinians living and working there) to enter the West Bank.

Meanwhile, the siege on Gaza continued. Personal travel into and out of the Strip via Rafah to Egypt and via Erez to Israel remained extremely tight. Egypt reopened the Rafah crossing on 2/18 for the first time since 1/29/11, when it was shut in light of domestic unrest (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159), but only to allow Palestinians trapped in Egypt and abroad to enter Gaza. On 4/29, Egypt said that it planned to open the crossing fully within 2 weeks, but did not do so before the end of the quarter. Israel continued to restrict use of the Erez crossing to urgent medical cases, VIPs, and employees of international organizations on a case-by-case basis.

On 3/2, Israel permanently closed the Qarni commercial crossing (which could process 1,000 trucks/day and handled imports of wheat, fodder, and some construction material), shifting all import and export of goods to Kerem Shalom (capable of handling only 250 trucks/day); Kerem Shalom itself was closed from 4/6 to 4/13 because of specific security threats. As a result, imports of humanitarian and limited commercial goods declined from an average of 868 truckloads/wk. last quarter to 639 (24% of the weekly average before Hamas’s takeover of Gaza in 6/07) this quarter, with food items constituting 52% of imports on average (compared to 20% before the siege)—an indication that imports were still providing subsistence rather than economic stimulation. Wheat shortages became a chronic problem. Given Kerem Shalom’s existing limitations and new responsibilities, import of construction material for rebuilding projects continued to remain far below Gaza’s needs.

Israel continued to bar most fuel imports to Gaza, leaving Gazans reliant on

smuggling from Egypt. As a result of fuel shortages, Gazans continued to suffer a 34% electricity deficit and to experience rolling blackouts of 6–8 hrs./day across the Strip. Without adequate fuel for pumps and filtration systems, water rationing also continued: 10% of Gazans received running water once every 4 days for 6–8 hrs.; 80% received water once every 2–3 days for 6 hrs.; and 10% receive running water once a day for 6–8 hrs. On the other hand, Israel continued to allow Gazans to export cut flowers and strawberries for the duration of the season (cf. Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159) and allowed (3/2) Gazans to export tomatoes for the first and only time since 6/2007.

#### *Assassinations and Terrorist Attacks*

Israel assassinated 4 Palestinians (compared to 3 last quarter), all in Gaza: Hamas’s Muhammad Mahdi al-Dayah, Abdullah Lobbad, and Ismail Lobbad (all on 4/1) and Islamic Jihad’s Muhammad Abu Mu’ammam (3/30). Another Islamic Jihad member targeted with Abu Mu’ammam and 1 bystander were injured in the strikes.

Four incidents this quarter may have been Palestinian terrorist attacks: The 3/13 murder of 5 Jewish settlers in Itamar attributed to 2 Palestinian teenagers loosely affiliated with the PFLP (although the PFLP denied responsibility and the teens confessed under duress; see above under West Bank violence); a pipe bomb that exploded (3/6) in a trash can in Jerusalem that injured 2 Israeli municipal workers (no one claimed responsibility); a bomb placed (3/23) near the West Jerusalem central bus station and convention center that killed 1 British woman and injured 38 Israelis (no one claimed responsibility; see above under Jerusalem violence); and an incident involving an Israeli Palestinian motorist who ran his truck into several cars, a bus, and several pedestrians in Tel Aviv, killing 1 Israeli and injuring 17 (Israeli police called it a terror attack; the driver, who was unaffiliated with any group, said he accidentally lost control of his vehicle; see above under violence inside Israel). In addition, the IDF reported (3/8) detaining a Palestinian at a checkpoint near Nablus carrying 3 pipe bombs, 4 Molotov cocktails, and a knife, alleging that he was on his way to commit an attack (no independent corroboration).

### *Nonviolent Protests*

In addition to the largely nonviolent “March to Palestine Day” demonstrations on 5/15, Palestinians continued to hold weekly popular protests, often with the participation of Israeli and international activists, against the separation wall and land confiscations in Bil’in and Ni’lin near Ramallah, Dayr Nizam/Nabi Salih in the n. central West Bank, and outside Karmeit Tsur settlement near Hebron. The IDF routinely fired warning shots, stun grenades, and tear gas at the demonstrators, frequently causing light-to-moderate injuries (see Chronology for details). In Gaza, only 1 nonviolent protest march toward the border fence to protest Israel’s imposition of a no-go zone was reported this quarter. The IDF fired warning shots at the marchers to disperse them, killing 1 Palestinian.

### *House Demolitions and Other Leveling*

Israeli demolitions of Palestinian homes (permanent structures) were extremely low this quarter (4 compared to 25 last quarter), but demolitions of other Palestinian structures (according to UNRWA, temporary tents, farm buildings, fences, wells, etc.) reached a record high in 3/2011 for the 3d consecutive month. UNRWA reported (4/3) that it recorded 76 structures demolished in 3/2011 (displacing 158 people, including 64 children) compared to 70 in 2/2011 (displacing 105 people, including 43 children) and 29 in 1/2011 (displacing 70 people, including 47 children). UNRWA stated (4/3) that it was “not saying this is classic ethnic cleansing, but . . . it is discrimination against one ethnic group.”

The residential demolitions (houses and tents) this quarter targeted Bedouin exclusively. The IDF tore down (2/21) tents providing temporary shelter for Bedouin and an additional 20 structures (3/2) in Khirbat Tana near Nablus, where the IDF demolished homes and other structures twice last quarter (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159). On 5/5, Israeli troops and border police uprooted 600 olive saplings and demolished 4 houses and 10 tents in Khirbet Um Nir s. of Hebron, displacing 8 Bedouin families (50 individuals).

### *Settlers and Settlements*

Israeli officials announced (2/28) that Netanyahu, in consultation with DM Barak and Atty. Gen. Yehuda Weinstein, had asked Israel’s High Court to respond to 15

petitions filed by Peace Now demanding the immediate removal of Israel’s unauthorized settlement outposts. Specifically, the government asked the Court to order the dismantlement of the few outposts built on privately owned Palestinian land (except for 1 house owned by a fallen IDF officer) before the end of 2011, but to authorize the legalization of those built on state land (the overwhelming majority). If the High Court agreed, this would mean that 6 outposts would be removed, of which 5 are inhabited (47 homes), while more than 100 others would be legalized. The Israeli cabinet endorsed the plan on 3/7, but the High Court did not respond before the end of the quarter. In addition, as noted above, the Israeli DMin. rezoned (4/4) several West Bank Jewish settlements, retroactively legalizing construction already underway.

Meanwhile, in early 2011, Likud members and the YESHA settlers’ council were complaining that although the settlement construction freeze had lapsed in 9/2010, little new construction had been authorized by the government in large settlements such as Ariel and Ma’ale Adumim. On 2/28, Netanyahu responded that those who were complaining were ignoring the current realities in the region (e.g., international pressure on Israel, the Arab Spring), stating: “We are currently making efforts to maintain the existing construction, but we must understand that we are [faced with] a very difficult international reality.” Peace Now argued (2/28) that settler and Likud accusations were misleading, reporting that work had begun or resumed on 1,700 new units in 67 smaller settlements since 9/26/10—the implication being that the government considered the larger settlements “safe” (i.e., unlikely to be ceded under final status), so the building there could wait, while the private construction had focused on bulking up smaller settlements more at risk in negotiations.

Israel did approve significant new construction this quarter. On 3/13, after the murder of a settler family in Itamar (see “Overview of the Violence” above), the Israeli government ostensibly in retaliation approved construction of up to 500 West Bank settlement housing units in Ariel, Gush Etzion, Kiryat Sefer, Ma’ale Adumim, and Mod’in Ilit (large settlements Israel expected to keep under final status), with PM Netanyahu telling relatives of the victims:

“They murder and we build.” The U.S. expressed (3/13) “deep concern,” saying “continued Israeli settlements are illegitimate and run counter to efforts to resume direct negotiations.” In addition, as mentioned above, Israel’s Jerusalem authorities gave final approval (3/2) for construction of 14 Jewish settlement housing units in Ras al-Amud (in East Jerusalem) and preliminary approval (4/4) for 942 new settlement housing units in Gilo (s. of Jerusalem and n. of Bethlehem).

The IDF demolished (2/28) 3 structures at the unauthorized settlement outpost of Havat Gilad, sparking retaliatory attacks by settlers on Palestinians (see Chronology), in keeping with their “price-tag doctrine” of disproportionate retaliation against Palestinians for any attempt to curb settler actions, even if the attempt was by Israeli authorities. By 3/7, all 3 structures had been rebuilt and 4 new ones constructed. Widespread settler attacks against Palestinians in keeping with the price-tag doctrine were also reported for several days after the Itamar murders (see Chronology for details).

Overall, the number of individual incidents of settler violence reported was up sharply this quarter (90 compared to 33 last quarter). The breakdown of incidents by region was as follows: Qalqilya (28); Nablus (25); Hebron (20); Ramallah (8); Salfit (5); and Bethlehem, East Jerusalem, Homesh, and Jenin (1 each). Settler actions included: attempting to seize Palestinian land to expand existing settlements and outposts (2/28, 3/5, 3/13, 3/18, 4/4); entering Palestinian population centers to pray (3/19, 4/24, 5/3, 5/10; the 4/24 incident resulted in a clash between settlers and the PASF that left 1 settler dead and 4 wounded) or in a show of force (3/4, 3/6, 6 on 3/12, 9 on 3/13, 3/14, 3/15; the 3/6 incident resulted in a clash between Palestinians and IDF troops and settlers, leaving 10 Palestinians injured); beating or harassing Palestinians (3/17, 3/19, 3/31, 4/14, 4/24, 5/10); stoning passing Palestinian vehicles or obstructing Palestinian traffic (2/28, 3/3, 3/4, 3/5, 3/6, 10 on 3/12, 8 on 3/13, 3/14, 3 on 3/15, 2 on 3/17, 2 on 3/18, 2 on 3/19, 3/21, 4/24, 5/10); setting fire to property, including a mosque (2/28, 3/12, 3/17, 4/1, 5/15); uprooting or cutting down trees and crops (2/20, 2/22, 3/7, 3/12); releasing sheep and cattle in fields to damage crops (3/19, 4/18); pumping

settlement wastewater onto agricultural land (3/4); and otherwise vandalizing Palestinian property (10 on 3/12, 4 on 3/13, 3/21, 3/31, 4/19, 4/24). In 3 incidents (2 on 3/21, 4/19), settlers stabbed or shot at Palestinians, wounding 4. In Nablus, a Jewish settler deliberately injured a Palestinian in a hit-and-run on 3/18, and settlers attempted to kidnap 2 Palestinian children on 3/12. (See Chronology for details.)

Of note: The Israeli human rights group Yesh Din reported (2/16) that between 2005 and 2011, in 91% of cases in which Palestinians reported violence by Jewish settlers, there were no indictments.

#### *Inside Israel*

The Israeli daily *Ha’Aretz* reported (5/11) obtaining an Israeli Justice Min. document written in response to Israel’s equivalent of a Freedom of Information Act request by an Israeli human rights group admitting that Israel used a covert procedure to cancel the residency status of 140,000 West Bank Palestinians (roughly 10% of the West Bank population) between 1967 and 1994. Under the unannounced procedure, Palestinians who traveled abroad via Jordan were ordered to exchange their ID cards at the Allenby Bridge border crossing for a 3-yr. exit card that could be renewed for 1 yr. up to 3 times. If a Palestinian did not return within 6 mos. of the final expiration, their IDs were sent to the census bureau and marked as “no longer residents,” effectively exiling them. An unknown number of Gazans are believed to have similarly lost their residency rights, but exact numbers have not been made public.

Several important pieces of legislation affecting Israeli Palestinians were passed this quarter: On 2/21, the Knesset passed (40-34, 46 abstaining or not voting) the **Foreign Government NGO Funding Transparency Law** tightening regulations for Israeli nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that accept foreign funding, requiring them to disclose all foreign sources of financing in their advertisements as well as to state explicitly when foreign funds are used to finance advocacy campaigns. The measure passed its first reading early in 2010 and then laid dormant until 1/2011, when it was revived amid heated Knesset debate over a Yisrael Beitainu proposal to form a panel of inquiry into left-wing Israeli NGOs that allegedly

delegitimize Israel (mostly human rights groups that track IDF abuses of Palestinians; see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159). The day after the new law was passed (2/22), Netanyahu lifted Likud support for the Yisrael Beitainu initiative in a move seen (e.g., HA 4/2) as guaranteeing the panel would not be formed. The widespread concern (especially among EU donors) was that the new law would be used to achieve the same effect as the panel—to curb foreign-funded NGOs critical of Israeli policy and IDF actions. Practically speaking, however, legal experts and the NGOs themselves questioned how increasing the frequency and prominence of disclosure statements would affect the organizations (see NonProfit-Banker.com 4/13).

On 3/22, the Knesset passed (37-25, with 58 abstaining or not voting) the **Budget Foundations Law** (popularly known as the “**Nakba Law**”), which allows the state to reduce or eliminate funding to any institution, community, or other entity that engages in any activity that questions Israel’s definition as a Jewish and democratic state, that commemorates Israel’s Independence Day as a day of mourning, or that harms Israeli national symbols. The original draft called for prison sentences for those who commemorate the Nakba, but this was dropped after debate.

Also on 3/22, the Knesset passed (35-20, with 65 abstaining or not voting) the **Law to Amend the Cooperative Societies Ordinance** (known widely as the “**Admissions Committees Law**”), which allows communities with fewer than 400 families to set up committees to screen potential residents and reject them if they “do not fit into the community’s social or cultural way of life.” The law was aimed in particular at preventing Israeli Palestinians from moving into Jewish communities in the Negev and Galilee regions, where the state has long denied services and building permits to existing Arab communities.

On 3/28, the Knesset passed (37-11, with 72 abstaining or not voting) into law the **Citizenship Loyalty Law**, which gives the High Court the power to revoke the citizenship status of anyone found guilty of treason, espionage, terrorism, or assisting a terrorist organization. Permanent residents and dual citizens would have their citizenship revoked entirely, whereas Israeli citizens would be given a new status with rights equivalent to

foreign workers. The law was widely seen as aimed at Israeli Palestinians.

The same day (3/28), the Knesset also enacted (29-8, with 83 abstaining or not voting) another **law that strips salary and pension benefits from Knesset members** designated by the attorney general as suspected of crimes punishable by 10 or more yrs. in prison and/or who do not appear at criminal proceedings or investigations to answer for charges against them. This measure gave the state legal grounds to strip former Israeli Palestinian MK Azmi Bishara of his parliamentary benefits. Bishara fled Israel in 2007 after being accused of (but never indicted for) treason for allegedly giving Hizballah information on strategic locations in Israel during the 2006 war on Lebanon.

The Knesset also passed (ca. 3/29) **amendment 3 to the Israel Lands Law of 1960** that bans selling, renting, or otherwise transferring land for more than 5 yrs. to a “foreigner” or an entity acting on behalf of a foreigner. The amendment designates as a “foreigner” an individual who is not an Israeli citizen or legal resident or who cannot immigrate to Israel under the 1950 Law of Return. The amendment was seen as aimed at preventing Israeli Palestinians from bequeathing or transferring property to their refugee relatives abroad.

On 3/7, the Knesset Law Committee approved (8-4) the first reading of a **draft “Boycott Law”** that would impose heavy fines on Israelis who knowingly initiate, encourage, take part in, or provide assistance to “an intentional avoidance of economic, cultural, or academic relations with a person or another agent, solely because of their ties to the State of Israel, its institutions, or areas under its control [i.e., settlements].” Left-wing MKs argued that the bill was antidemocratic by undermining citizens’ right to freedom of expression.

In addition, the Knesset Comm. on Aliyah and Diaspora Affairs’ subcomm. on public diplomacy held (3/23) a 2-hr. debate on the legitimacy of J Street’s criticism of Israel, with hard-line members (led by Likud) arguing that pro-Israel U.S. groups were legitimate only if they unconditionally supported the government’s positions, and centrist members (led by Kadima) arguing that organizations can criticize the government and still be pro-Israel. J Street exec. dir. Jeremy Ben-Ami came from Washington to defend his

organization. When the subcomm. first announced the session on 3/15 (calling it an opportunity for J Street “to apologize for its actions largely perceived to be opposed to the best interests of the State and Government of Israel”), J Street issued a statement calling the hearing “unprecedented” and “one more regrettable step by a small but growing group of anti-democratic forces in Israeli politics to limit debate and to intimidate those with whom they disagree.” By the end of the quarter, plans for another Knesset comm. debate on whether the foreign media was covering Israel fairly had been approved but had not been held.

*Ha’Aretz* reported (3/31) that Israeli human rights activist and former deputy attorney general Yehudit Karp recently sent a detailed letter to Israel’s Atty. Gen. Weinstein and Justice Minister Ya’akov Neeman stating that Israeli authorities regularly failed to implement Israeli High Court rulings and commitments made to the court on decisions relating to the West Bank and the treatment of Israeli Palestinian citizens. The Justice Min. did not respond before the end of the quarter.

Of note: On 2/27, a government-appointed Israeli panel charged in 2008 with investigating the 7/22/02 assassination of Hamas military leader Salah Shihada in a massive air strike on a residential area of Gaza City that killed 19 bystanders and wounded some 140 (mostly women and children) concluded its inquiry. According to the panel, while the operation was flawed by putting too much emphasis on killing Shihada and not enough on the “risk of harm to uninvolved civilians,” it “did not stem from disregard or indifference to human lives.”

Also of note: On 3/15, 2 cars owned by Israeli Palestinian students at Safad Academic College attending a campus event to promote Arab-Jewish dialogue were torched. Anti-Arab graffiti were sprayed on the walls of the college, saying: “Arabs get out,” “Death to Arabs,” and “Kahane was right.”

#### INTRA-PALESTINIAN DYNAMICS

The main intra-Palestinian event of the quarter was the announcement that Fatah and Hamas had agreed to form a unity government and take serious steps to reintegrate West Bank and Gaza institutions

and end their divide. The reconciliation agreement altered but did not derail plans already in the works to hold Palestinian elections. As the quarter opened, Palestinians in the territories, particularly college-age youths, were increasingly spurred to action by the failed peace process, the leak of the “Palestine Papers” showing the willingness of the Fatah-led negotiating team to make concessions under Israeli and U.S. pressure (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159), and the inspiration of the antigovernment demonstrations across the region.

#### *PA Elections*

Last quarter, when Abbas announced plans to hold municipal elections beginning in 7/2011 and legislative and presidential elections in 9/2011, the Hamas authorities quickly stated that Gaza would not participate on the grounds that elections could not legitimately be held before national reconciliation had been achieved (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159). On 2/17, Abbas declared that municipal elections in the West Bank would proceed as planned, but that presidential and legislative elections would be postponed as long as Hamas refused to participate. On 3/8, the date was set to hold the first round of municipal elections on 7/9/11. To this end, the Central Elections Committee (CEC) held (3/8-15) a week-long West Bank voter registration drive. Hamas officials in Gaza barred the CEC from opening its offices there.

The election timetable was affected by the Fatah-Hamas unity deal announced on 4/27 (see “National Reconciliation” below), under which the factions agreed to hold legislative and presidential elections within a year (likely after 10/2011) in both the West Bank and Gaza, with Hamas participation. It was unclear whether municipal elections in the West Bank would go on as planned or if Hamas would allow local elections in Gaza in light of the unity deal.

#### *National Reconciliation*

As the quarter opened, popular calls for national reconciliation were on the rise. By 2/16, a “youth manifesto” equally contemptuous of Fatah and Hamas that had been launched on Facebook sometime last quarter by a small group of Gazan students began to make news when its online supporters reached 20,000. On 2/17, some



1,000 college-age Palestinians rallied in Ramallah to urge national unity and reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. More than 80 Palestinian nonprofit organizations from the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem issued (2/21) a statement urging Fatah and Hamas to “take practical steps toward ending the[ir] disagreement.” On 2/24, up to 1,500 Palestinians rallied in Ramallah in support of national unity and an end to the Fatah-Hamas divide, which they warned “opens the door for the occupiers to do whatever they want.” Hamas authorities in Gaza banned a similar rally that was to be held in Gaza City. At the rallies, Palestinians made a point of showing only the Palestinian flag rather than factional flags—a rare gesture in recent years.

On 2/20, amid the popular calls, acting PM Fayyad (still in the process of forming a new government) declared that the Fatah-Hamas split had “gone on too long and should not continue.” He proposed forming an interim national unity government with Hamas, suggesting the PA would not interfere with Hamas’s rule in Gaza in the run-up to elections if Hamas agreed to take part in presidential and legislative elections in 9/2011. The proposal apparently (see *al-Sharq al-Awsat* 2/27, NYT 4/21) was Fayyad’s personal initiative, not approved by Fatah, and was driven by his strong belief that the Palestinians could not make a credible bid for statehood at the UN in 9/2011 if the PA did not have at least a temporary government that was broadly representative. In previous talks, Fatah had demanded that Hamas agree to cede political and security control of Gaza as the basis of reconciliation talks.

Elements within Fatah quickly pushed back. Later on 2/20, Fatah senior official Azzam al-Ahmad “clarified” Fayyad’s announcement, saying that Fatah was willing to reopen national unity talks with Hamas “so that the [2009] Egyptian document”—a draft national unity accord that Hamas had repeatedly rejected (see Quarterly Updates in *JPS* 154 and 158)—“can be signed.” On this basis, Hamas said (2/21) that the initiative “lacked seriousness and credibility.” Fayyad stood firm, however, and reiterated (2/23) his offer, adding that if the U.S. followed through on long-standing threats to suspend aid to Abbas’s PA if Hamas joined the government, the PA was willing to forgo further U.S. aid for the sake of national unity. Abbas and a number of Hamas

leaders quickly endorsed (2/23, 2/24) further discussion of Fayyad’s plan. On that basis, Fatah and Hamas officials opened talks on 2/24 regarding the formation of an interim national unity government headed by Fayyad and that would include members from both factions and independents, with the understanding that Hamas would continue to rule Gaza up until elections provided it refrained from violence.

Still, not everyone within Fatah was on board. Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) secy.-gen. Amin Maqboul stated (ca. 2/26) that Fayyad’s initiative was “unreasonable and unacceptable” and a “private” plan that ran counter to Fatah policy in that it envisioned establishing a unity government with Hamas before their dispute was solved, and because it would keep Gaza security in Hamas’s hands. On 2/27, the full FRC issued a set of standards that Fayyad should observe in picking the interim unity cabinet, even though the FRC legally had no authority over the PA PM or the cabinet formation process. Shortly afterward, leading FRC members sent (3/3) a letter to Abbas urging him to “reconsider reappointing Fayyad and [instead] ask that a strong Fatah figure do the job.” Elements of Hamas were also skeptical: An aide to Hamas’s acting PM Ismail Haniyeh warned (3/1) that Fayyad’s unity plan would be “born dead . . . without the reform of the PLO and the Palestinian National Council” and called on the PLO factions to start the reform immediately.

On 3/6, Fayyad for the first time publicly argued the case for supporting his plan, stating that the fault of reconciliation plans to date was that they expected reconciliation first and establishment of a unity government after, whereas he believed that a unity government could be the forum for discussing reconciliation. Stiff reprimands again followed (3/6) from Fatah senior officials, including FCC member Mahmud al-Alul who declared that it was “premature . . . [to] talk about such initiatives before we resolve the elections issue” and the FRC’s Hatem ‘Abd al-Qader who said Fayyad had “no right to present political initiatives whether internal or external because he is just an employee who is charged with managing the services offered to the residents, no more no less.” With the matter unresolved, Fayyad on 3/7 requested another 2 wks. to form a government.

On 3/9, Hamas authorities in Gaza invited the factions to a meeting to present a counterproposal to Fayyad's initiative, but the effort was scuttled when Fatah and 4 other key factions did not attend. Hamas officials then made their offer publicly, proposing the creation of a unified leadership to handle Palestinian affairs until the PLO was restructured to include Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Fatah did not acknowledge the proposal.

Meanwhile, popular frustration over the impasse was growing, unsettling Hamas authorities in Gaza and Fatah authorities in the West Bank, which each viewed any protest in its territory as a measure of support for its opponent and quickly clamped down on them accordingly (see Chronology for details). By 3/11, Palestinian youth groups organizing online declared a rally day on 3/15 to call for national unity, reconciliation, and "full democratic representation of all Palestinians all over the world." A day ahead of the demonstrations (3/14), at least 3,000 young Palestinians turned out in Gaza City for a unity rally. On 3/15, 1,000s of Palestinians turned out across the West Bank and Gaza for candlelight vigils calling for unity. Hamas security forces violently dispersed the biggest rally (as many as 100,000) in Gaza City, injuring 5 protesters. In the West Bank, the PASF fired tear gas at some 8,000 protesters in Ramallah, briefly dispersing them and injuring 20; but some protesters returned, vowing to stay in Ramallah's Manara Square (as Egyptians did in Cairo's Tahrir Square) and observe a hunger strike until the West Bank and Gaza were reunited. (The sit-in lasted until 4/17 when the PA made confidence-building gestures to Hamas; see below.) Meanwhile, the PLO's Washington mission issued a statement reprimanding these "few fringe elements within our civil society," urging them to stand down and "collaborate with us." From Gaza, Hamas's Haniyeh invited Abbas to Gaza for reconciliation talks, saying Fatah and Hamas should heed the calls to set aside their differences and begin the process of reconciliation.

While Fatah spokesman Ahmed Assaf immediately rejected (3/15) Haniyeh's offer as "not serious," Abbas publicly stated (3/16) that he would be "ready to go to Gaza tomorrow to end the split and form a new government." From this stage, Abbas

seemed to take over the reconciliation initiative from Fayyad and to rein in the critical Fatah elements, making it an official Fatah/PA effort. This prompted Netanyahu to state (3/17) in an interview with CNN that he did not see how the PA could be "for peace with Israel and peace with Hamas that calls for our destruction" and alluded to long-standing warnings that Israel would not deal with the PA if it included Hamas. On 3/20, a Fatah delegation led by Azzam al-Ahmad went to Cairo to brief Arab League Secy.-Gen. Amr Moussa and Egyptian officials who had long mediated the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation talks. A Hamas delegation traveled to Cairo soon after. On 3/22 (the end of his 2-wk. extension), Fayyad announced he was suspending his efforts to form a new cabinet while Abbas pursued the effort to form an interim unity government with Hamas.

Abbas then met (3/26) with 7 West Bank Hamas officials in Ramallah to discuss a possible trip to Gaza to meet with Haniyeh for the first time since Hamas seized control of the Strip in 6/2007. Abbas at this point proposed creating a temporary unity government with 2 mandates only: (1) organizing legislative and presidential elections within 6 mos., and (2) fast-tracking the reconstruction of Gaza. Officials on both sides said the talks were positive and that Abbas's proposals would be conveyed to Hamas's Gaza leadership. Local Fatah officials in Gaza met with Hamas's acting FM Mahmud Zahar on 4/3.

Abbas then went (4/6-7) to Cairo to personally brief the Egyptians. Days later (on 4/10), the independent group Palestine Forum led by Nablus businessman Munib al-Masri sent a delegation of independent Palestinians (7 each from the West Bank and Gaza) to Cairo to present a draft reconciliation agreement to Egypt. Egyptian mediators along with Turkey's FM Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was visiting Cairo at the time, agreed to support the document and urged the Forum to persuade Fatah and Hamas. Abbas and Damascus-based Hamas leader Khalid Mishal, as well as Syrian officials, said the draft was worth exploring. From this point, reconciliation talks were kept strictly confidential but apparently were intensive, involving a secret trip by Abbas to Syria (ca. 4/25) to meet with Damascus-based Hamas leader Khalid Mishal (see *Independent* 6/9). As talks progressed, the PA released (4/17) 11 Hamas

prisoners and ordered to end the media incitement against the movement as an apparent confidence-building gesture.

On 4/27, Fatah and Hamas announced an (unsigned) agreement pledging the formation of a transitional national unity government chosen by consensus that would focus solely on: (1) planning for legislative and presidential elections within a year (including agreeing on new members for the CEC); (2) rebuilding Gaza; and (3) reintegrating West Bank and Gaza institutions. The sides also agreed to work for elections for the Palestinian National Council (the decision-making body of the PLO) that apparently would include Hamas and to form a joint security committee to discuss unifying security forces. Both Hamas and Fatah stressed that negotiations with Israel would remain the purview solely of the PLO. Sources said (Ma'an News Agency 5/11) that the sides had basically adopted the 2009 Egyptian document that Hamas previously rejected, but included an additional "oversight document prepared in Damascus which would guide the implementation."

Only a short text was publicly released outlining the points above (see Doc. B4). Various senior Hamas and Fatah officials stated (e.g., Hamas's Zahar 4/27 in Reuters 4/27; Abbas 4/28 in AP 4/28; Mishal 5/4 in NYT 5/5, YA 5/7) that other important understandings had been reached that were not in this published text (but possibly were included in the unpublished side document), including: that the unity government would include only independent technocrats, that Hamas had explicitly accepted the goal of a state within the 1967 borders and effectively agreed to halt armed attacks on Israel (by agreeing to coordinate resistance with Fatah, which had renounced armed struggle), and that there would be a joint prisoner release. The agreement was initialed in Cairo by 15 small Palestinian factions on 5/3 and signed formally by Abbas and Mishal in Cairo on 5/4.

At the 5/4 ceremony, the signing was held behind closed doors and public statements were given afterward. Abbas initially first insisted that Mishal not be allowed to sit with him at the podium or speak to the audience during the public ceremony, arguing that the portrayal of himself and Mishal as political equals could have damaging consequences for the Palestinians

with the international community (e.g., fueling calls for aid to the PA to be cut). In the end, Mishal was allowed to give a brief statement after Abbas but agreed to sit with the other delegates. Abbas in his statement said that the Palestinians "affirm the commitment to signed agreements and the solution of two states along the 1967 borders" and "we reaffirm our principled position renouncing violence and emphatically condemning terror in all its forms," but did not state explicitly that Hamas had signed on to these Quartet demands. (On 4/27, senior Hamas official Musa Abu Marzuq, who headed the Hamas delegation negotiating the deal, said that the Quartet demands were not part of the deal.) Mishal made reference to having "one authority and one decision" (a favorite phrase of Abbas) and the goal of establishing "a Palestinian state, independent and sovereign, on the lands of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with its capital, Jerusalem, without a single settler, without conceding a single inch, and without conceding the right of return." He also said that Hamas would work with Fatah to guide Palestinian diplomacy and "resistance in all its forms." After the signing, broadcasts resumed of PA-affiliated TV stations in Gaza and Hamas-affiliated stations in the West Bank. Overall, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza reacted skeptically, taking a wait-and-see attitude. Some Gazans spontaneously celebrated in Gaza City on 5/4 and organized a small rally at al-Azhar University on 5/8, but only a small group of women rallied in Ramallah on 5/4; otherwise there was no public outpouring.

The day after the signing (5/5), Mishal reiterated that Hamas was "fully committed to working for a two-state solution," but refused to say that such an agreement would constitute an end of claims, as Israel demanded and the PLO has indicated it would accept. He also refused to reject armed struggle, stating: "Where there is occupation and settlement, there is a right to resistance. Israel is the aggressor. But resistance is a means, not an end," adding that as Hamas and Fatah work together in the coming year, "we are ready to reach an agreement on how to manage resistance." On 5/11, Hamas's Zahar clarified that Hamas would accept a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders but would not recognize Israel, because recognizing Israel would jeopardize the Palestinian right of return to

areas in Israel. He also vowed to maintain the Gaza cease-fire but said a truce cannot equal peace.

Fatah officials said (5/8, 5/10) that Fatah and Hamas planned to hold their first meeting on implementing their unity deal on 5/16–17 with the aim of forming a unity government within 10 days. Some Fatah members, including Abbas, were reportedly (Ma'an News Agency 5/10, 5/11) lobbying to keep Fayyad as PM since this would be more palatable to the international community, but at least 4 other candidates were also being considered: Munib al-Masri, the Palestine Forum head and dir. of PADICO investment company; Ziad Abu-Amr, an independent PC member (first elected in 1996) and former PA FM from Gaza City; Abed al-Karim Shubeir, former independent presidential candidate in the 2005 elections; and Jamal al-Khudari, a Gaza independent and former PC member (elected in 2006). Fatah and Hamas were also expected to begin releasing political prisoners within days, but this did not happen before the end of the quarter.

#### *PA's West Bank Rule*

The PA did not take any major decisions affecting West Bank governance this quarter. As noted above, however, on 5/1, following the announcement of the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation, Israel delayed the monthly transfer of VAT taxes it collects on behalf of the PA (\$90 m.), saying it feared the money would go to Hamas. (VAT taxes amount to around \$1 b. annually, making up 70% of PA revenue and covering two-thirds of PA budget expenditures. Israel is required by the Oslo Accord to transfer the money without prejudice, though it has frequently suspended transfers to pressure the PA.) The U.S. said (ca. 5/1) that would it continue its assistance to the PA for now but would reassess as the unity process moves forward.

When the taxes had still not been transferred by 5/9, PM Fayyad stated that the PA did not have enough funds to cover recurring expenses and that instead of paying only part of civil servants' salaries, he would suspend all salary payments until VAT taxes were released and then pay all back salaries owed—a decision that would affect 151,000 employees in the Palestinian public sector and some 100,000 people receiving monthly stipends from the PA (e.g., families of

prisoners, welfare recipients). Alternatively, he called on Arab states to donate funds to cover salaries, but there was no immediate response. Instead, France said (5/10) it would donate ECU 10 m. (more than \$14 m.), and the EU agreed (5/10) to advance the PA \$121.9 m. to cover costs. Before the monies were received, Israel resumed VAT transfers on 5/15, saying Abbas had guaranteed that none of the money would be accessible to Hamas under the new Fatah-Hamas unity deal, but warning that it would reconsider suspending transfers if Hamas were allowed to join a PA government.

Of note: Human Rights Watch issued (4/6) a report stating that Palestinian journalists were routinely subjected to detention and abuse by the PASF for political reasons and that Palestinian journalists self-censor to avoid harassment. According to the report, conditions for journalists in Gaza were better than in the West Bank but had sharply declined recently amid the popular protests supporting national reconciliation.

#### *Hamas in Gaza*

As national unity talks were getting underway, Hamas's acting PM Haniyeh reshuffled (3/10) his cabinet, changing his cabinet secretary and 6 ministers: religious affairs, economy, women affairs, prisoners, youths and sports, and planning. No other factions were invited to join the government and no reason was given for the shake-up. This marked Haniyeh's 2d cabinet shuffle since Hamas took control of Gaza in 6/2007.

Hamas continued to face challenges from smaller radical factions. On 4/14, the radical Salafist group Tawhid and Jihad (TAJ) kidnapped Italian peace activist Vittorio Arrigoni in Gaza and threatened to kill him by 5:00 P.M. local time on 4/15 unless Hamas authorities released its imprisoned leaders Hisham Saidani and Shaykh Abu Wali al-Makdisi (arrested in 3/2011), other supporters, and "global jihadists." Early in the morning of 4/15, Hamas authorities in Gaza stormed a house in Gaza City where they believed Arrigoni (who had been living in Gaza since 2008) was being held, only to find that he had already been hanged. Hamas authorities detained 10 suspects in raids on 4/15 and 4/17 (1 died in police custody on 4/19). In a raid on 4/19, a Jordanian suspect detonated a

hand grenade to kill his 2 Palestinian accomplices (killing 1, wounding 1) before turning a gun on himself to prevent their arrested; 3 Hamas-affiliated policemen were also wounded. Another TAJ suspect died in Hamas police custody on 4/19. On 5/6, Hamas authorities broke up a demonstration in Gaza City by 10s of Salafists protesting the 5/1 U.S. assassination of Osama Bin Laden.

As noted, Hamas routinely dispersed national unity rallies in Gaza (see Chronology for details). In 1 incident on 3/16, Hamas-affiliated police fatally shot 1 Palestinian demonstrator when they violently dispersed a rally.

There were also some signs that Hamas's political wing was having trouble keeping its military wing, the Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades (IQB), in line as cross-border tensions rose this quarter. Hamas held several meetings with the factions this quarter about halting rocket and mortar fire into Israel. Although Hamas announced several deals to reimpose the cease-fire (e.g., 3/26, 4/5, 4/10), it was violated repeatedly, even by the IQB.

On 3/19, a group of 10 armed, plain-clothes Palestinians claiming to be Hamas-affiliated security forces raided the Gaza City bureaus of CNN, NHK news channel, and Reuters, attacking journalists, destroying cameras, and confiscating tapes to punish them for filming Hamas police dispersing a 3/17 Palestinian unity rally. Hamas Interior M Fathi Hammad denied that the men were connected to Hamas, and Reuters confirmed that the men did not show identification.

On 3/3, Hamas-affiliated police forced a Gaza bank to cash some \$500,000 in stolen checks drawn against the Palestine Investment Fund (PIF) account, even though the account did not have that much money in it. Hamas's Interior Min. confirmed (3/3) the incident, saying police were ordered to seize the money after PIF governors transferred funds out of Gaza to accounts in the West Bank. (The PIF was created in 2000 to manage PA commercial assets and privatized in 2006, when Abbas cut PA ties to the fund after Hamas's 1/2006 election win fearing the assets would be used to benefit Hamas.) The Palestine Monetary Authority, which regulates Palestinian banks, closed all Gaza branches until 3/6 in protest.

A Gaza court sentenced (3/29) 1 Palestinian to death and another to 15 yrs. in prison for collaborating with Israel. Since 1994, 114 people were sentenced to death in the occupied territories; the last death sentences were handed down on 2/3/11 (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159). On 5/4, Hamas authorities executed a Palestinian convicted in 10/2009 of collaborating with Israel; Hamas authorities have executed 6 Palestinians since taking control of the Strip in 6/2007 (3 for collaboration, 3 for murder; of the 6, 2 had been sentenced to death by the Fatah-led PA prior to the 2007 takeover). The most recent executions prior to this were in 5/2010 (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 157).

### **Security Coordination**

While Israeli-PA security coordination continued to be strong this quarter, with no disruptions, sources close to the U.S. Security Coordinator's mission confirmed that the IDF increasingly flexed its muscles as a warning to the PA in light of Israel's concerns about the Arab Spring, Fatah-Hamas reconciliation, Abbas's diplomatic efforts to garner recognition of a Palestinian state, and overall deterioration of the peace process. The message apparently was for Abbas to keep the PASF in line in the run-up to the 9/2011 UN meeting, out of some concern that the deterioration could lead to splits within the PASF.

In particular, the IDF was a bit more aggressive entering area A (under full PA security and civil control), including at least 13 instances (2/24, 3/3, 3/5, 3/10, 3/17, 3/21, 3/23, 3/27, 3/29, 4/3, 4/8, and 2 on 4/12) of making uncoordinated entries into Jericho to patrol and photograph the PA General Intelligence headquarters, several PASF buildings and training sites, and the Intercontinental Hotel. IDF entry into Jericho was highly symbolic. While the IDF enters area A with some regularity, Jericho—the first Palestinian town to which Israel transferred full PA control and a main PASF center—was normally considered off-limits to such incursions. (The IDF also photographed PA security sites, municipal buildings, and cultural heritage sites during patrols in 'Aqabat Jabir r.c. on 2/23 and Dayr Istya village on 3/13; see Quarterly Updates in *JPS* 158 and 159 for similar incidents.)

**PALESTINIAN OPINION**

*The following data are excerpted from a poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) between 17 and 19 March 2011. Results are based on a survey of 1,270 men and women from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza. The poll, the 39th in a series, was taken from PCPSR's Web site at [www.pcpsr.org](http://www.pcpsr.org).*

**1. From what you have heard or read in the press about the Palestinian documents published by al-Jazeera on Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, do you think the Palestinian negotiating position remained committed or uncommitted to the vital goals and interests of the Palestinian people?**

	West		
	Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Certainly remained committed	9.7%	19.6%	13.6%
b. Remained committed	31.4%	29.0%	30.5%
c. Did not remain committed	31.8%	24.4%	28.9%
d. Certainly did not remain committed	20.4%	20.5%	20.4%
e. Don't know/ No answer	6.7%	6.5%	6.6%

**2. During the past several weeks, several demonstrations have taken place in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip raising several different slogans like the people want to end the split or the people want to end occupation and others. If you were to select just one slogan for all demonstrators in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which one of the following would you select?**

	West		
	Bank	Gaza	Total
a. People want an end to corruption	14.8%	13.1%	14.2%
b. People want an end to negotiations	2.0%	2.6%	2.3%
c. People want an end to Oslo	2.4%	2.5%	2.4%
d. People want an end to return to the intifada	2.9%	1.4%	2.3%
e. People want an end to the split	45.5%	60.9%	51.3%

f. People want an end to occupation	28.8%	16.3%	24.1%
g. People want an end to security coordination	1.6%	2.7%	2.0%
h. Other (specify)	2.1%	0.5%	1.5%

**3. The U.S. has used its veto power to prevent the UNSC from issuing a resolution condemning Israeli settlement activities. Given this U.S. behavior, do you support or oppose a large U.S. role in the peace process in the future?**

	West		
	Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Certainly support	1.7%	1.2%	1.5%
b. Support	28.3%	21.9%	25.9%
c. Oppose	51.9%	53.7%	52.6%
d. Certainly oppose	15.3%	18.9%	16.6%
e. Don't know/ No answer	2.9%	4.3%	3.4%

**4. If at the end of 2011 the Palestinian side unilaterally declares the establishment of a Palestinian state without an agreement with Israel, do you think such a declaration will lead to actual change on the current conditions in the Palestinian areas with regard to settlements and control of the occupation forces over roads and crossings in the West Bank?**

	West		
	Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Certainly will lead to positive change	1.6%	3.2%	2.2%
b. Will lead to positive change	21.0%	24.1%	22.2%
c. Will not lead to any change, positive or negative	35.6%	48.5%	40.5%
d. Will lead to negative change	31.0%	20.4%	27.0%
e. Certainly will lead to negative change	7.3%	1.3%	5.0%
f. Don't know/ No answer	3.5%	2.5%	3.1%

**FRONTLINE STATES**

**EGYPT**

After the ouster of Hosni Mubarak's regime on 2/11/11, Egypt's interim military government resumed Egypt's role mediating a Palestinian reconciliation agreement

(see "National Reconciliation" above) and Hamas-Israel prisoner swap (see "Prisoner Release Talks" above). Notably, while the Fatah-Hamas unity deal was being worked out, Egyptian officials received Hamas's delegation at the Egyptian FMin., whereas under Mubarak's government, meetings with Hamas had always taken place at hotels. The change was seen (e.g., NYT 4/29) as a conscious decision to upgrade Hamas's diplomatic status and as such worried Israel.

In addition, Egyptian and Hamas officials confirmed (4/28) that planning was underway for Haniyeh, Hamas's acting PM in Gaza, to make his first official visit to Cairo (the Mubarak regime had refused to meet him, preferring that relations go through Damascus to avoid the Israeli and U.S. protest that a Haniyeh visit would cause). In addition to the Palestinian unity deal, talks were expected to address security cooperation, combating terrorism, border control and transit through the Rafah crossing, and fuel and electricity imports to Gaza from Egypt. No date for the visit was set before the end of the quarter.

Also raising Israel's concern, Egypt allowed Iranian warships to pass through the Suez Canal (see "Iran" below). Egyptian officials openly contemplated restructuring Egypt's natural gas deal with Israel, which many viewed as overly favorable to Israel. (Natural gas deliveries to Israel started in 2008 and currently make up 40% of Israeli consumption.) The new leadership also recognized the Muslim Brotherhood and was considering expanding ties with Iran.

This quarter, Israel approved (2/16) an Egyptian army request to send 100s more troops to the Sinai Peninsula to guard the natural gas pipeline to Israel and Jordan. (The size of the Egyptian military presence in the Sinai is restricted under the 1979 peace treaty.) Israel approved a prior deployment request last quarter at the height of the Egyptian unrest, but the pipeline had been sabotaged nonetheless (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159). It was repaired but bombed again on 4/27, cutting supplies. It had not been fully repaired before the end of the quarter.

Of note: A poll released on 4/24 by the U.S.-based Pew Research Center reported that only 36% of Egyptians favored maintaining Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, whereas 54% wanted to annul it. In

addition, 43% thought Egypt should distance itself from the U.S., whereas only 15% thought Egypt and the U.S. should strengthen their ties.

#### JORDAN

Jordan did not play a significant role in the peace process this quarter though it remained in contact with the parties. Asst. Secy. of State for Near East Affairs Jeffrey Feltman traveled to Amman (ca. 5/3) for talks on bilateral relations and peace process issues.

Jordan experienced some small demonstrations calling for reform this quarter. In effort to preempt serious unrest, King Abdallah endorsed (3/3) a new government under PM Ma'ruf Bakhit; appointed (3/2) a new chief of the royal court, Khalid Karakai, with extensive experience in tribal politics; and set up (3/14) a 52-member National Dialogue Comm. to discuss election reform. Security forces clashed (4/15) with about 350 Salafist protesters in Zarqa, leaving 10s wounded (including 83 police officers), but the government did not seem imperiled. Authorities conducted arrest sweeps on 4/16, arresting 70 Islamists.

#### LEBANON

Lebanon remained calm this quarter despite regional unrest. Its principal focus was on the stalled efforts by Lebanese PM-designate Najib Mikati to form a government and concerns of domestic instability. Hizballah had forced the collapse of rival Sa'ad Hariri's government on 1/12/11 in what was widely regarded as a maneuver aimed at shutting down the UN Special Tribunal on Lebanon's investigation into the 2005 assassination of former PM Rafiq Hariri (Sa'ad's father), which had implicated Hizballah. Despite significant protest by Sa'ad Hariri's March 14 coalition, Pres. Michel Suleiman tapped Hizballah to form a new government, and Hizballah had chosen Mikati, seemingly the ideal compromise candidate (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159). Although Mikati is a respected independent politician unaffiliated with any Lebanese party and a previous PM, the fact of Hizballah's unprecedented effective control of forming the government, and as such the division of portfolios, became a particularly hot political issue. With various parties seeking key portfolios

(especially the interior, foreign ministry, and defense) either as rewards for participating in a Hizballah government or as tools for asserting power and shaping policy, allocations could not be agreed before the end of the quarter, leaving Hariri's caretaker government in place.

Meanwhile, Secy. of State Clinton pressed (3/2) Congress to continue military aid to Lebanon despite the unresolved government situation. (Lawmakers had previously put military aid on hold for fear it could eventually fall into Hizballah's hands and threaten Israel; see Quarterly Updates in *JPS* 158 and 159 for background.) A month later, however, anonymous U.S. defense officials said (4/2) that Defense Secy. Robert Gates had frozen weapons shipments to Lebanon already back in 1/2011 but had not announced the freeze publicly for diplomatic reasons. The sources confirmed that the U.S. continued to provide training and nonlethal assistance but was in the process of reviewing all security assistance "during this period of government formation." Ca. 5/6, former Lebanese PM Fouad Siniara visited Washington for meetings with congressional leaders and admin. officials to warn against cutting aid to the Lebanese military, saying it would backfire, weaken the army, and aid Hizballah and Iran.

Of note: Sources who had seen the classified U.S. National Intelligence Estimate issued on 2/23 said (3/17) that the report emphasized that U.S. intelligence agencies viewed Hizballah "as a political and social force in Lebanon in addition to the militia officially designated by the United States as a 'foreign terrorist organization.'" Asked for comment, National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor only reaffirmed (3/17) that the U.S. would not engage with Hizballah and would continue "efforts against the group . . . in line with that status."

### ***The UN Tribunal***

Daniel Bellemare, prosecutor for the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon investigating the Hariri assassination, filed (3/11) an amendment that "expands the scope" of the initial indictment he submitted in 1/2011 (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159). A spokesperson for the tribunal in the Netherlands said it could take months for judges to read through the 1,000s of pages of supporting documents submitted before

deciding how to act. The original indictment and amendment were secret but were expected to implicate Hizballah.

### ***Spy Cases***

On 2/18, a Lebanese court sentenced to death a man convicted of spying for Israel. Since 2009, more than 20 individuals have been charged with spying for Israel and at least 6 have been sentenced to death, though none of the sentences has been carried out.

On 2/16, alleged Hizballah spy Sami Shihab, who escaped from an Egyptian prison during the Cairo uprising in 2/2011, appeared at a televised Hizballah rally in Beirut, proving he had made it back to Lebanon. Shihab was arrested by Egyptian authorities in 4/2009 on charges of organizing a major spy ring that intended to attack Israeli and Egyptian targets inside Egypt. Hizballah denied the accusations (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 152 for background).

### ***Other Security Issues***

This quarter witnessed several demonstrations of note: On 5/15, 1,000s of Palestinian refugees and Lebanese supporters took part in "March to Palestine," walking to the southern border with Israel to mark the anniversary of the Nakba (see "March to Palestine" above). IDF troops fired into Lebanon, killing at least 10 protesters and wounding 112, some seriously. Lebanon strongly denounced (5/15) Israel's "massacre against unarmed protesters." On 3/13, 10,000s of supporters of the Hariri-led March 14 coalition rallied in Beirut to mark the 6th anniversary of a popular uprising against Syrian troops in the country, demanding that Hizballah be disarmed. Although the demonstration raised tensions considerably, no violence was reported. In addition, 1,000s of Lebanese inspired by the regionwide popular protests rallied in Beirut on 2/27 and 3/6 to call for an end to the sectarian system.

In a briefing at the UN on 3/22, the UN asst. secy.-gen. noted that while the area monitored by the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained "generally quiet and stable," Israel's routine violations of Lebanese air space continued "at high level" in violation of UNSC Res. 1701 which ended the 2006 Lebanon war. In a separate briefing on 3/29, UNSC Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams



also called on Israel to halt its “almost daily violations of Lebanese air space” and expressed hope that Israel would withdraw from the northern part of the disputed village of Ghajar as soon as a new Lebanese government was formed. (Israel had expressed intentions to withdraw last quarter but suspended implementation when Hizballah collapsed the government; see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159). As if in response, later that day (3/29), Israel released a declassified IDF map claiming to pinpoint nearly 1,000 Hizballah facilities in Lebanon, including 550 bunkers, 300 monitoring sites, and 100 weapons storage facilities in some 270 villages, mostly in southern Lebanon. Hizballah accused (3/29) Israel of fabricating the data and of threatening Lebanon with a de facto target list.

On 3/16, the Lebanese army said it had uncovered and dismantled another Israeli surveillance camera near the southern port city of Tyre. At least 2 similar devices were found last quarter, some remotely detonated by Israel (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159).

Two violations of the Blue Line marking the unofficial Israel-Lebanon border took place this quarter: On 3/22, 2 Lebanese shepherds accidentally crossed into Israeli territory, were taken into custody by the IDF, and were then turned over to UNIFIL. On 4/13, an Israeli tank briefly entered a disputed border area near Adaysseh village after an early warning system was triggered by Lebanese picking herbs and flowers in the zone.

In addition, Lebanese youths stoned (4/2) a U.S. embassy convoy visiting Sidon. No one was injured.

## SYRIA

The increasingly violent clashes between government forces and pro-reform demonstrators across Syria as of mid-March (see under “Regional Affairs” below) had destabilizing effects throughout the region, most directly on Lebanon (Hizballah) and more broadly on regional alliances and the peace process. It also jeopardized Hamas’s relations with its Syrian hosts. Hamas officials confirmed (5/2) that as the domestic unrest heated up, the Syrian government exerted intense pressure on Hamas to state publicly its support of the Asad regime against the demonstrators and to take part

in counterdemonstrations supporting the government. Hamas refused, invoking its neutrality on Syrian domestic issues. As Gaza-based Hamas official Salah Bardawin put it (5/2): “The Syrian leadership and other leaderships should understand Hamas’s strategic principle not to intervene in the internal affairs of the states.” Hamas denied rumors, however, that tensions were so great that it was considering moving headquarters to Qatar.

On the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, experts reported (e.g., *Washington Times* 4/20) that public support among the Syrian Druze for the Asad regime was strong despite private misgivings. Thousands had rallied in Majdal Shams in support of the government, and there were no demonstrations in support of the protests. The pro-Asad Golan demonstrations reportedly worried Israel, which also feared the Syrian unrest could undermine the security along the common border. Israel also criticized (5/15) Syria’s obvious complicity in allowing the demonstrators taking part in the “March to Palestine” to reach the border (see “March to Palestine” above).

### *Peace Talks with Israel*

At the start of the quarter, before the clashes broke out, various U.S. officials explored reviving the Israeli-Syrian peace talks. On 2/22, Pres. Asad received a U.S. congressional delegation headed by Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL) for talks on the latest developments in the Middle East and stated his interest in reopening negotiations. The U.S. delegation transmitted the message to Israeli PM Netanyahu in Israel on 2/25, but Netanyahu expressed skepticism. Soon after, however, Israeli DM Barak stated (2/28) that Israel would be willing to reopen peace talks with Syria if Damascus was serious about doing so, adding that “the Syrians are signaling, in more than one way, that they are willing to consider an accord,” though he did not give details.

Meanwhile, Senate Foreign Relations Comm. chmn. Sen. John Kerry, who had been in discussions with Asad for nearly a year about restarting peace talks (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 158 for background), reportedly (HA 2/23) drafted terms of reference for resuming negotiations that he planned to share with Netanyahu and Asad on a trip to the region ca. 3/21. By that time, however, the situation

in Syria was beginning to deteriorate, and the White House and French government pressed Kerry to put off the trip, arguing the timing was not right given government transition issues in Lebanon and broader regional unrest. On 4/26, State Dept. policy planning dir. Jake Sullivan stated to the press (4/26) that the U.S. would not consider pursuing peace initiatives with Syria while Assad was attacking antigovernment demonstrators.

Meanwhile, WikiLeaks published (4/17) a 4/2009 State Dept. cable revealing that the U.S., since 2006, had given millions of dollars to Syrian political opposition groups and related projects (such as a satellite TV station). In the cable, the senior U.S. embassy official in Damascus urged the State Dept. to reconsider such programs as they “would undoubtedly” be seen by Syria “as tantamount to supporting regime change” and could undermine Obama’s efforts to rebuild ties with Damascus.

#### **Other Security Issues**

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) announced (3/2) that Syria had “agreed in principle” to allow inspectors to tour nuclear sites for the first time since 6/2008, though some details remained to be worked out. Syria ultimately allowed the IAEA to inspect a nuclear facility in Homs on 4/1, but refused to allow inspectors to visit the Dayr al-Zur site bombed by Israel in 2007, which Israeli and U.S. intelligence said was being constructed as a nuclear facility (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 146). On 4/28, IAEA dir. Yukiya Amano referred to the Dayr al-Zur site as having been a covert nuclear reactor under construction. Later in the day, however, the IAEA released a statement saying it had not yet concluded that the site was definitely a reactor.

### **REGIONAL AFFAIRS**

This quarter, like the last half of the previous quarter, was almost entirely dominated by massive uprisings across the region, largely relegating not only Arab-Israeli affairs and the peace process, but also movement on Iran, to the background. The only item of regional note during the quarter was the end of ‘Amr Musa’s 10-yr. term as Arab League secy. gen., and his

replacement by Egyptian FM Nabil Elarabi, newly appointed FM after Mubarak’s fall on 2/12/11, who was elected to the post on 5/15.

#### **Popular Protests Regionwide**

After largely nonviolent protests unseated Husni Mubarak in Egypt and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia last quarter (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159), violence exploded this quarter in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. Although the turmoil focused on domestic matters such as corruption and political repression, the repercussions of these protests are crucial for the Palestinian situation and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Peaceful antigovernment protests had begun in **Bahrain** last quarter calling for transition to a constitutional monarchy, but on 2/16 began to shift to calls for the ouster of the monarchy altogether. Bahrain’s government responded (2/17) by declaring martial law and violently suppressing protests (2/16–19), which only sparked more massive demonstrations. On 2/26, the leader of Bahrain’s banned al-Haq party, seen as the hard-line leader of the kingdom’s Shi’i majority, returned from exile to throngs of supporters. The first overtly sectarian clashes between the largely Shi’i protesters and the Sunni regime were reported on 3/3 and continued on a near daily basis thereafter. On 3/11, amid the escalating sectarian violence, U.S. Defense Secy. Robert Gates visited the kingdom to show support for the royal family and to urge reforms. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia (deeply concerned that Shi’i protests in Bahrain would encourage its own Shi’i population in the oil-rich Eastern Province to revolt), secured Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) approval (3/13) to send 2,000 Saudi and UAE troops along with a Kuwaiti medical contingent into Bahrain on 3/14 to shore up the monarchy; more Saudi troops entered on 3/19. Simultaneously, the king imposed (3/15) a 3-mo. state of emergency, closed schools and offices, deployed the army across the capital, bulldozed (3/16) the main protest camp in Manama’s Pearl Square, and later demolished (3/18) the pearl statue itself. Protesters largely left the streets as of 3/20. Through early 5/2011, the government detained 100s of opposition figures, fired an estimated 1,200 public workers who supported the opposition, and disbanded

(4/14) the country's biggest Shi'i party, al-Wifaq, and the smaller Shi'i party al-Amal for "threatening peace." While tensions remained high, no major demonstrations or violence was reported. On 5/8, the king said he would end the state of emergency on 6/1, 2 weeks ahead of schedule. As of 5/15, Saudi, Kuwaiti, and UAE forces remained in Bahrain.

In **Libya**, as the quarter opened, small clashes had been reported in Benghazi (Libya's 2d largest city and long considered an opposition stronghold) and city residents had called for a major demonstration on 2/17 to demand Col. Mu'ammar Qaddafi's ouster. Protests in 5 eastern cities were violently suppressed on 2/17 by Qaddafi's forces, which then opened fire (2/19) on some 20,000 mourners leaving funerals in Benghazi for the victims, with scores dead and wounded. From there, antigovernment demonstrations and fierce military repression escalated sharply, and opposition groups took up arms. By 2/21, the Libyan government had lost control of most of the eastern part of the country, with significant numbers of military personnel nationwide defecting to support the protesters, and casualties rapidly rising into the 1,000s. Dozens of senior Libyan officials and diplomats began (2/21) to resign in protest over Qaddafi's handling of events. Thereafter, the violence quickly descended into civil war, with neither side able to rout the other. Fighting reached Tripoli (2/22), Libyans and foreigners began fleeing the country (more than 100,000 by 2/25), and rebels declared (3/1) a breakaway provisional government in Benghazi controlling the eastern part of the country. By 3/2, Qaddafi was launching air strikes against rebel strongholds and flying in mercenaries from other parts of Africa, prompting calls from rebel forces and the Arab states for international intervention to impose a no-fly zone.

Meanwhile, Western nations debated whether and how to intervene, with preference leaning toward sending a NATO-led force to impose a no-fly zone. NATO expressed willingness provided that the Arab League first officially recognize the rebels' provisional government and call on the UN to impose a no-fly zone. The Arab League did so on 3/12. On 3/17, the UNSC authorized (10-0, with Brazil, China, Germany, India, and Russia abstaining) "all necessary measures" short of foreign occupation to

protect Libyan civilians, including calling for an immediate cease-fire, imposition of a no-fly zone, and interdiction of ships heading to support Qaddafi's forces. U.S. and British warships and U.S. and French planes began strikes in Libya on 3/19. With the Libyan air force and air defenses all but destroyed by 3/23, NATO took over enforcing the no-fly zone on 3/24. Nonetheless, fierce ground fighting continued without resolution through the end of the quarter.

On 4/4, 22 NATO and Arab nations agreed to set up a fund for humanitarian assistance to rebel-controlled areas of Libya using frozen Libyan assets, though rebel leaders said they intended to use at least some of the money to buy arms. The U.S. was also looking for legal ways to transfer to the rebels the Libyan assets it had frozen since the fighting began. By 5/11, Britain, France, Italy, Qatar, Turkey, and the U.S. all had diplomatic and/or military advisers on the ground (for the U.S., CIA operatives).

In **Syria**, unrest was sparked when a policeman beat a motorist over a traffic violation in Damascus on 2/16, sparking a large spontaneous nonviolent protest denouncing the regime's routine "humiliation" of the masses. The incident's similarity to the event that sparked the Tunisian revolution alarmed the regime and emboldened Syrian activists. An online group emerged on Facebook calling for massive protests after Friday prayers on 3/18 to demand the ouster of the Asad regime. Though only a few dozen protesters turned out in Damascus, the larger rallies in Baniyas (100s protesting), Dara'a (100s), and Homs (2,000) were violently put down by government security forces, leaving 6 dead and 10s wounded in Dara'a. When protests in Dara'a resumed on 3/19, security forces sealed off the city and clashed with the demonstrators. Low-level violence continued until 3/23, when security forces launched a predawn raid into the town, killing 15 protesters. Thereafter, clashes spread quickly and became daily events. By 4/4, demonstrations—although still relatively small (in the 1,000s)—had been held in Baniyas, Hama, Homs, Idlib, Latakia (which was reported to be "near anarchy"), Qamishli, and Sanamein, with the tally of those killed reaching around 100 nationwide. (Only a few protests were reported in Damascus and Aleppo.)

Meanwhile, online groups called for mass protests every Friday until the regime fell.

On Friday 4/8, protests were reported in 10s of towns (including Damascus, Dara'a, Homs, Harasta, Latakia, Tartous), with opposition groups claiming that 100,000s participated nationwide with as many as 100 killed and 100s wounded by security forces; no independent confirmation was available. (Throughout the quarter, the Syrian government was able to bar the press and largely shut down communications.) Experts believed (e.g., NYT 4/9) that although the protest movement was maturing rapidly, most protesters were still poor, semirural youths; the urban upper-middle class, whose participation would constitute a major threat to the regime, was still on the sidelines.

On 4/10, Asad for the first time deployed troops and tanks to surround and cut off towns where protests were held. Notwithstanding, through the end of the quarter, the cross-country Friday protests (4/15, 4/22, 4/29, 5/6, and 5/12) steadily grew more massive (10,000s) and the Syrian government response more extreme. Shelling and sniper fire became routine. In between Friday protests, Syrian forces raided areas where protests or funerals were largest; Baniyas, Dara'a, Homs, Latakia, and the Kurdish region were frequent targets. Still, the various protests seemed isolated, with little overarching organization.

On 4/25, Asad launched a major offensive against Dara'a, the main hotspot, sending tanks and possibly 1,000s of soldiers into the town. Few details leaked out of the sealed town: communications and water were cut, street battles and mass arrests were reported, and many of the protesters took refuge in the central mosque, which was raided in a massive assault on 4/30. Forces finally withdrew on 5/5. Thereafter major raids involving artillery and heavy machine gun fire were made on Homs (5/6, 5/11), Baniyas (5/7), Zabadani village outside Damascus (5/7), and Tal Kalakh near the Lebanese border (5/14-15). In early 5/2011, the military also began house-to-house arrest raids in troubled areas, first in the Damascus suburbs then across the country, mostly targeting men age 18 to 50. In some towns, soccer stadiums, schools, and government buildings reportedly (NYT 5/13) were used as ad hoc detention centers. As of 5/15, rights

groups in Syria estimated that around 900 had been killed, 1,000s wounded, and as many as 10,000 reported missing or arrested since the clashes began.

The international community seemed deeply conflicted over Asad's crackdown. Though the violence was widely deplored, most countries were concerned about the political vacuum and instability the fall of the regime could bring, not to mention widespread belief that international intervention in Syria was inadvisable while NATO actions against Libya were underway. The UNSC proved unable to agree on a resolution, presidential statement, or even a press statement condemning the violence. The Arab League issued (4/27) a generic statement calling on all states in the region to refrain from responding to demonstrations with violence. By late 4/2011, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the U.S. had summoned the Syrian ambs. to warn that if Asad did not refrain from further violence, such steps as arms embargoes, asset freezes, and travel restrictions would follow; on 4/29, the U.S. froze some Syrian assets, and on 5/9 the EU imposed an arms embargo. Turkey sent (4/28) a delegation to Damascus offering closer economic ties if Asad ceased all violence.

There were no signs of fissures within the regime. Although there were some reports (e.g., NYT 4/26) that elements of the military were critical of the raid into Dara'a, by the end of the quarter no defections were apparent. By 4/27, at least 2 parliamentarians from the Dara'a region had resigned in protests and some 200 Ba'ath party members from the Dara'a region and a few low-ranking members elsewhere were rumored to have resigned. Overall, however, at the close of the quarter, the government showed no signs of falling.

**Yemen** last quarter saw large, mainly nonviolent rallies calling for an end to Pres. Ali Abdullah Saleh's 32-yr. rule, citing economic ills, corruption, and expectations that Saleh planned to install his son as his successor. As the quarter opened, nearly daily protests (1,000s of protesters) continued in the capital Sana'a and Taiz. There were frequent reports of fights between pro and antigovernment supporters that occasionally resulted in fatalities, but overall the protests were peaceful. Saleh refused to step down but offered

numerous reform gestures that fell short of what the opposition could accept to halt the protests. By 2/28, 10 parliamentarians from Saleh's ruling party had resigned in solidarity with protesters, while medical unions, entire tribes and villages, and lawyers and labor unions had joined the demonstrations.

On 3/2, opposition figures, tribal leaders, and influential clerics presented Saleh with a plan for his peaceful transition from power, meeting with him late into the night to discuss it. When Saleh gave no immediate response, protests grew. When he rejected the deal (3/5), progovernment demonstrators (suspected to be plainclothes security forces) became more violent. On 3/10, Saleh offered to discuss amending the constitution, as the opposition had requested last quarter, but the opposition said the move was too late and Saleh must step down. In response, Saleh deployed troops on 3/12, authorizing the use of water cannons, tear gas, live ammunition, and sniper fire to crush the protests. Injuries quickly rose into the 100s but demonstrations grew, now involving 10,000s of protesters.

On 3/18, government troops and supporters opened fire for more than 20 mins. on protesters demonstrating after Friday prayers in Sana'a, leaving at least 47 dead and 100s injured but failing to disperse the crowd. Afterward, Saleh declared a state of emergency, allowing authorities to curtail civil rights and monitor communications, and deployed tanks to protect key government installations. On 3/20, he fired his cabinet, apparently to preempt a mass cabinet resignation to protest the deadly clashes. Over the next 2 days, Yemen's amb. to the UN, several other ambassadors, the country's most influential military commander Maj. Gen. Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar (a relative and close ally of Saleh), and 4 other generals resigned and Saleh's own tribe and another key tribal leader called on him to step down. Popular protests also continued.

Saleh bent to this extreme pressure and on 3/24 reined in the security forces and opened talks with the opposition, saying he would step down if he could arrange "an honorable transfer of power" that would keep the government in "safe hands." In response, 100,000 of Yemenis turned out for the largest protests to date after Friday prayers on 3/25 in Sana'a

calling for Saleh's immediate resignation. Talks on a transfer of power continued on and off through the end of the quarter, with Saleh changing his demands several times, fueling suspicions that he was trying to buy time in hopes that the protests would peter out. Popular rallies continued, numbering in the 100,000s on Fridays and in the 1,000s to 10,000s during the week, with occasional violence reported.

On 4/7, the GCC began efforts to mediate a transition of power. On 4/21, it offered a deal under which Saleh could hand over power to a successor of his choice, with immunity from prosecution for him and his family if he stepped down within 30 days. After some back and forth, Saleh and the opposition agreed (4/26) to sign the deal, but on 4/30 Saleh backed out. On 5/14, a GCC envoy arrived in Sana'a to try to resurrect the deal but with no immediate result. At the close of the quarter, near daily protests were continuing, with around 150 Yemenis killed since clashes began.

Protests inspired by events in Egypt and Tunisia were also reported in **Algeria**, **Iran**, **Iraq** (particularly in the Kurdish zone), **Jordan** (where a new government was sworn in; see Jordan section above), **Kuwait** (where the cabinet resigned on 3/31 over regional developments), **Lebanon** (calling for an end to the sectarian system), **Morocco** (where the king formed a comm. on 3/9 to explore constitutional changes and election reforms), **Oman** (where Sultan Qaboos shuffled his cabinet on 2/27 and on 3/3 replaced several government officials accused of corruption), **Saudi Arabia** (small Shi'i protests in the Eastern Province), the **UAE**, and as far afield as Azerbaijan. None of these regimes appeared seriously threatened, however.

Meanwhile, **Egypt** continued its rough transition, suffering serious incidents of Muslim-Christian sectarian violence (e.g., 3/9, 5/8), continued labor strikes, growing economic concerns (as foreign investment and tourism took flight), and occasional renewed popular rallies when reforms were not thought to be proceeding as expected. Still, Egyptians were still largely optimistic about change: Joyous voters turned out (3/19) for a national referendum on changes to the constitution, which passed with 77% public approval; elections were promised (3/30) by 11/2011; the supreme court dissolved (4/16) Mubarak's National

Democratic Party; and military authorities arrested Mubarak (4/13), his wife (5/13), and various other former senior officials on corruption charges.

In **Tunisia**, massive protests were held on 2/20 to demand a new interim government that excluded Ben Ali allies. As a result, PM Rachid Ghannouchi resigned and a new transitional government was appointed 2/27 that set (3/3) elections for 7/2011. At the close of the quarter, voter registration and other election preparations were underway, but some officials feared there would not be enough time to put adequate systems in place to guarantee free, transparent elections and that voting might have to be postponed.

**Turkey**

This quarter, Turkey's involvement in Arab-Israeli affairs was largely limited to encouraging the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation efforts (see "National Reconciliation" above).

Relations with Israel remained strained over the 5/2010 *Mavi Marmara* incident (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 157). When the U.S.-based Free Gaza Movement and the Turkish aid group Humanitarian Relief Fund announced their intention to send a 2d aid flotilla to Gaza to mark the anniversary of the incident, Israeli PM Netanyahu asked (4/1) the UN to help block the flotilla. UN Secy.-Gen Ban Ki-Moon noted (4/1) Israel's concerns but did nothing more. Soon after, members of Congress sent (5/12) a letter to Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan urging him to prevent the departure of another flotilla. He did not respond, but ultimately the voyage was canceled.

Turkish pres. Abdullah Gül cautioned in a *New York Times* op-ed (4/20) that Israel would have to adapt to the regional changes brought on by the Arab Spring (see Doc. A4), stating that "Sooner or later, the Middle East will become democratic, and by definition a democratic government . . . cannot afford to pursue foreign policies that are perceived as unjust, undignified and humiliating by the public" and that therefore creation of a Palestinian state and a true, lasting Arab-Israeli peace were necessary. He also criticized the U.S. for failing to rise to its "long-overdue responsibility to side with international law and fairness when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian peace." On 4/25, Obama

phoned Erdogan to urge Turkey to improve relations with Israel in light of the ongoing regional unrest. Turkey did not publicly comment.

**Iran**

With so much attention focused on the popular protests across the Arab world, there was little action this quarter regarding Iran. Israeli PM Netanyahu argued (4/6) that the changes underway in the Arab world might increase the threat from Iran and thereby make it harder for Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians in the peace process. In an opinion piece published in the *Christian Science Monitor* on 4/27, Israel's former dep. national security adviser Chuck Freilich argued that given popular uprisings spreading across the Middle East, the U.S. should take the lead "both [in] public and behind the scenes" to topple Iran's regime. He encouraged the Obama admin. to prioritize public and private encouragement to the Iranian people to rise up, including by providing "significant financial and material . . . directly . . . [and] covertly." Obama had already shifted his tone on Iran significantly. In a 3/21 address to the Iranian people to mark the Persian new year, he spoke in support of dissidents seeking democratic reform, denounced the government's "persecut[ion] . . . of hundreds of prisoners of conscience," and quoted Iranian poet Simin Behbahani, considered the "poet laureate of Iran's democratic opposition movement."

Israel and the U.S. were also concerned when Iran dispatched (2/16) 2 Iranian military vessels on a mission to Syria via the Suez Canal, marking the first time Iran had tried to cross the canal since the 1979 Iranian revolution. Though Iran stressed that the ships were not headed for military maneuvers but to "carry the message of peace," the move was widely seen (e.g., *Washington Times* 2/21) as Iran's test of whether Egypt's new interim military rulers would maintain deposed Pres. Mubarak's foreign policy lines, which generally opposed efforts to expand Iran's regional influence and aligned with the U.S. interests in the region. Though Israel protested (2/16) the "serious provocation by Iran," Egypt's Defense Min. approved the passage of the vessels on 2/18, saying that since they were not carrying military equipment or nuclear or chemical contents, international convention dictated that they be

allowed to pass. The ships crossed the canal on 2/22, arrived in Syria on 2/24, and were not mentioned again.

Meanwhile, Israel's former Mossad chief Meir Dagan, speaking for the first time since his retirement, said (5/6) that it would be "a stupid idea" to launch a military strike on Iran, since it might not meet its objectives and could lead to a long war, recommending covert actions to undermine Iran's nuclear effort. His position ran counter to Israel's official policy of encouraging threats of military action against Iran as long as it continues its nuclear program.

Iran experienced some popular protests in response to the Arab Spring: some were against Pres. Mahmud Ahmadinejad's government (e.g., 2/16, 2/20, 3/1) and others were in solidarity with protesters in Bahrain and against Saudi intervention there (e.g., 3/17, 4/20-22). More significant, however, was an open rift that developed between Ahmadinejad and Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in mid-4/2011. Ahmadinejad, in his ongoing effort to centralize his authority (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159), had fired Intelligence M Heydar Moslehi in retaliation for Moslehi's firing of a senior ministry official who was his (i.e., Ahmadinejad's) close ally and (it was widely believed) in order to install a new intelligence minister whom he could control. The apparent attempt to co-opt the intelligence ministry prompted Khamenei to order (4/20) Moslehi reinstated and to warn (4/23) that he would intervene further in politics if he felt the nation's interests were being "neglected." The parliament, also sparring with Ahmadinejad (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159), endorsed Khamenei's order the same day. After Khamenei imposed Moslehi's reinstatement, Ahmadinejad stayed home for 11 days in what sources called (NYT 5/7) "a visible fit of pique." Ca. 5/4 several close associates of Ahmadinejad were arrested in what was seen (NYT, *Washington Post* [WP] 5/7) as increased pressure from the clerical establishment on the president. On 5/8, he reemerged and endorsed Moslehi's reinstatement.

Meanwhile, there was no progress toward renewing nuclear talks this quarter. Iran delayed responding to EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton's 2/2011 letter proposing further talks (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159) until 5/10, when it accepted in principle if the talks were held

"without pressure," which analysts construed (e.g., WP 5/11) to mean that Iran would continue to refuse to discuss uranium enrichment.

In testimony to the Senate intelligence comm., U.S. national intelligence dir. James Clapper summarized (2/18) what he expected to be the conclusion of the forthcoming classified National Intelligence Estimate (NIE): that Iran had resumed "early stage R&D work on aspects of the manufacturing process for a nuclear weapon." While Clapper refrained from estimating when Iran might have a weapon, his testimony represented a reversal of the controversial 2007 NIE, produced roughly every 2 yrs., which had suggested that Iran had ceased such work in 2003 (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 147). The intervening NIE report, of 2009, had suggested that Iran was "keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons" and continued "to develop a range of capabilities that could be applied to producing nuclear weapons," but had not yet made a decision to revive its nuclear weapons pursuit. The final NIE was submitted to Congress on 2/23 but not released publicly. Soon after, IAEA head Amano stated (3/7) that Iran may have been working on a nuclear arms program later than 2004. Clarifying, he stated: "We are not saying that Iran has a nuclear weapons program. We have concerns, and we want to clarify the matter," but Iran had not been cooperating with IAEA inspectors. The UN, however, said on 5/11 that Iran was actively seeking to develop nuclear and ballistic missile technology, though recent sanctions had "constrained" its efforts.

Meanwhile, Iran reported (2/25) without explanation that it had been obliged to remove fuel rods from the reactor at its Bushehr nuclear power plant that was to begin providing electricity to the national grid in 2/2011. Many experts (see NYT 2/26, WP 2/27) suspected sabotage, including possibly the Stuxnet computer worm (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 158). Experts speculated (4/25) that the Stuxnet virus had not been fully contained, was still popping up in new places, and had destroyed more than 10% of Iran's centrifuges for refining uranium. On 4/25, Iran acknowledged that it was facing a new cyber attack targeting its nuclear facilities by a new computer worm named "Stars"; Iran blamed Israel and the U.S. The Bushehr plant finally went online on 5/10.

**Other**

On 4/5 an unidentified plane entering Sudanese air space from the Red Sea fired a missile at a car, killing its 2 passengers—at first reported to be a Sudanese national and Hamas’s ‘Abd al-Latif Ashkar, who according to Israel had replaced senior Hamas military commander Mahmud al-Mabhuh (assassinated by a suspected Mossad hit team in the UAE in 1/2010)—before flying back the way it came. Sudan, which has long been a route for arms smuggling to Gaza, quickly stated (4/5) that the strike was “absolutely an Israeli attack,” but questions arose when Sudan later identified (4/6) both of those killed as Sudanese and Hamas stated (4/6) that no Hamas members had been harmed. On 4/10, Sudan announced that remnants of the missile fired at the car had been identified as a U.S.-made Hellfire missile, noting that the only countries in the region to have purchased Hellfires are Israel and the UAE. Israel, which was suspected in a similar air strike on Sudan in 2009 (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 152), neither confirmed nor denied involvement.

**INTERNATIONAL**

**UNITED STATES**

The Obama admin. remained divided this quarter over how best to proceed on the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Some senior officials, including Secy. of State Clinton, continued to press for the U.S. to present its own substantive peace proposal as a basis to relaunch talks, whereas the other camp, led by Obama’s chief Middle East adviser Dennis Ross, recommended taking no action given the instability in the region, the ill will between the parties, and the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 159 for background).

***U.S.-Israel Relations***

In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* published on 3/7, Israeli DM Barak indicated that Israel might request an additional \$20 b. of U.S. military aid in light of the popular uprisings across the Arab world. IDF chief of staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz had ordered a wholesale reassessment of potential threats to Israel given the regional instability and contingency plans to address them. When it was presented to IDF senior officers on 3/14, Israeli military intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi

highlighted various worst-case scenarios, including the possible fall of the Jordanian monarchy, Egyptian abrogation of the peace treaty with Israel and instability on that border, and increased probabilities of conflict with Iran. As Barak anticipated, the assessment concluded that defense against these possibilities would require significant upgrades in IDF personnel, training, and operational programs—the bottom line being a recommendation that Israel ask the U.S. for an extra \$20 b. over several years. Israeli sources expected Barak to broach the subject with U.S. Secy. of Defense Robert Gates when Gates visited Israeli and Palestinian officials on 3/24–25 to discuss regional affairs, but there was no indication Israel formally made the request. Gates reiterated U.S. support for Israel’s right to self-defense, saying “no sovereign state can tolerate having rockets fired at its people,” but urged Israel and the Palestinians not to use regional unrest as an excuse to put off peace talks. In an address to the Anti-Defamation League’s annual conference in Washington on 4/2, Obama adviser Ross stated that regional turmoil made it increasingly important that Israel receive tangible security guarantees in exchange for concessions to the Palestinians.

Israeli pres. Shimon Peres visited (4/4–8) the U.S., meeting with Secy. of State Clinton at the State Dept. on 4/4 and with Obama at the White House on 4/5 to discuss the peace impasse and prospects that the PLO would bring a resolution to the UN in 9/2011 seeking recognition of a Palestinian state. He also called on the U.S. to release jailed spy for Israel Jonathan Pollard, handing the president a letter from Pollard (dated 4/1) asking him to “please send me home to Israel now.” Pollard, an American citizen, applied for and was granted dual Israeli citizenship in 1995, while in prison. Peres also met with congressional leaders on Capitol Hill on 4/6.

Of note: Israel’s chief Ashkenazi rabbi Yonah Metzger used his 4/14 Shabbat sermon to warn that Obama must prove he is a friend of Israel and “immediately free Pollard” before pressing Israel to renew peace talks, saying American Jews would not help reelect him if he did not grant Pollard clemency.

***Congress***

Following Judge Richard Goldstone’s 4/1 open letter qualifying some



conclusions he and his team reached in conducting the UN investigation into OCL (see Doc. A1 and "Goldstone Report" below), Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and James Risch (R-Idaho) began (4/8) circulating a measure (S. Res. 138) calling on the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to rescind the Goldstone Report; the measure passed on 4/14 by unanimous consent. Simultaneously, Reps. Joe Walsh (R-IL) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL; chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee) and Sen. David Vitter (R-LA) began circulating companion measures (H. Res. 1501 and S. Res. 923) that would withhold U.S. payments to the UN until the report was rescinded. Reps. Robert Dold (R-IL) and Gary Peters (D-MI) circulated another measure (H. Res. 232) urging the admin. to "take steps to reverse the damage done" by the Goldstone Report. At the end of the quarter, these last 3 measures had been referred to committee. By 4/12, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen was also drafting a revision to the United Nations Transparency, Accountability, and Reform Act of 2009 (H. Res. 557) that would "make it U.S. policy to demand that the UN General Assembly revoke and repudiate the Goldstone Report and any UN resolutions stemming from the report, and . . . refund to U.S. taxpayers their share of the costs for the report and its follow-on measures," but as of the end of the quarter, she had not formally submitted it. In addition, 22 House reps. sent (ca. 4/14) a letter to UN Secy.-Gen. Ban Ki-Moon, urging him to override the UNHRC (which had said on 4/2 that it would continue to consider the Goldstone Report an official document unless the authors formally asked it to be revoked) and remove the report from the UN's official record.

Following the signing of the Fatah-Hamas unity agreement, 27 Democratic senators sent (5/6) a letter to Pres. Obama urging him to halt aid to the PA unless the unified government reaffirmed the Quartet principles. The senators were concerned that while existing U.S. law bars aid to a Palestinian government that includes Hamas, some experts had argued that "government" could be liberally interpreted to allow U.S. aid to continue if Hamas members are in the legislature but excluded from the cabinet. Separately, Reps. Kay Granger (R-TX) and Nita Lowey (D-NY), heads of the House appropriations subcomm., sent (ca. 4/28) a letter to Abbas

warning that they would take steps to block disbursement of the \$550 m. of U.S. aid to the PA budgeted for 2011 if he formed a government with Hamas.

In light of the 3/11 murder of 5 West Bank settlers, 49 members of the Republican Study Comm., the conservative caucus of the House Republicans, sent (3/28) a letter to Secy. of State Clinton denouncing the admin. for pressuring Israel on settlements instead of urging the PA to address incitement. A bipartisan group of 27 senators sent a letter to Clinton on 3/29, asking the admin. to force the PA to halt "dangerous incitement," which they say "includes the glorification of terrorists and jihad and anti-Semitic stereotypes in the Palestinian media." A similar letter signed by 46 members of the House was sent to Pres. Obama on 3/31.

Senior House Republicans Dan Burton (R-IN; chair of the House's Europe Subcommittee), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), and Steve Chabot (R-OH; chair of the House Middle East Subcommittee) introduced (3/10) the draft Jerusalem Embassy and Recognition Act of 2011 (H. Res. 1006) that would strip the president of his power to waive requirements to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as permitted under the 1995 U.S. Embassy Act. Obama (like Presidents Bill Clinton, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush before him) has consistently invoked the national security waiver. The White House would likely dismiss any law removing the waiver on the grounds that it is unconstitutional because it constrains the president's executive authority to set foreign policy. The measure was referred to committee on 3/29 with 31 cosponsors but did not progress further during the quarter.

At the height of the U.S. budget debate that threatened a government shutdown, at least 11 of 13 freshmen senators and 65 of 87 freshmen reps., all Republicans, signed companion letters to the House and Senate Republican leaders (Doc. D1) in 4/2011 stating: "As we work to reduce wasteful government spending, we recognize that providing for the national defense is a constitutional responsibility of the federal government. Therefore, we must continue to prioritize the safety of our nation and the security of our allies, including Israel."

In late 4/2011, a bipartisan delegation of U.S. House reps. visited Israel and

met with PM Netanyahu and opposition leader Tzipi Livni to discuss Israel's safety and security in light of the prodemocracy uprisings across the region and "the ever-present threat posed by Iran's nuclear weapons program."

**Lobbies**

Days after vetoing the UNSC res. on settlements, Obama met (3/1) with 50 top members of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations at the White House, urging them to speak to their colleagues in Israel and to "search your souls" over Israel's seriousness about making peace. He also stressed his "opposition to any effort to delegitimize [Israel] or single it out for criticism."

AIPAC arranged (4/13) a conference call with more than a dozen pro-Israel members of Congress—including Reps. Barney Frank (D-MA), Henry Waxman (D-CA), Howard Berman (D-CA), Nita Lowey (D-NY), and Eric Cantor (R-VA)—to discuss "how best to promote Israel" during Netanyahu's upcoming 5/2011 visit. The call was also aimed at urging members of Congress to press the Obama admin. to take Israel's security concerns into consideration when responding to the anti-government uprisings across the region, noting that Netanyahu saw real danger for Israel in the regional uprisings.

To cap its annual conference in Washington, the critically pro-Israel J Street organized (3/1) more than 700 activists for a lobbying day on Capitol Hill. In 240 separate meetings, activists urged continued robust foreign aid to Israel and the PA. J Street pres. Jeremy Ben-Ami also led a delegation to Ramallah on 5/8 to meet with Abbas, who urged J Street to lobby Congress to continue aid to the PA despite the unity deal with Hamas. Abbas reiterated that he would return to peace negotiations with Israel if the U.S. offered a plan for the creation of a Palestinian state on 1967 lines with agreed land swaps and a 2–3-mo. halt to Israeli settlement construction. Ben-Ami pledged to deliver the message to the White House personally.

American Jewish and Latino leaders held (3/27–28) a conference in San Antonio to discuss building bridges and alliances between their communities. Attendees included the heads of universities and Jewish and Hispanic organizations, former U.S. House speaker Newt Gingrich

(who declared his candidacy for president on 5/12), and the wife of Christians United for Israel founder John Hagee. Participants identified "common values and interests" ranging from equal opportunity in education and immigration reform to "protecting the State of Israel" and combating racism. Agreed action items included: organizing trips to Israel for influential Latino leaders and media reps. (with the stated aim of teaching Latinos about the Israeli education system and immigration programs); increasing coverage of national security issues on the Spanish-language TV network Univision; and developing and lobbying for programs to "pass on the story of Israel's formation to the next generation, whether through schools or religious institutions." An opinion poll of American Jews and Latinos conducted for discussion at the conference and released on 3/30 showed that 48.1% of Latinos believed the U.S. was "too supportive" of Israel; 34% of Latinos identified more with Israel, while 21.3% identified more with Palestinians (the remainder saying neither or both equally); 46.3% of Latinos believed there was anti-Semitism in the Latino community, as did 58.3% of Jews; and 31.9% of Latinos believed there was anti-Latino sentiment among Jews, as did 30% of Jews.

Jewish donors in Washington and New York issued (3/29) an open letter calling on regional Jewish federations to monitor or pull donations from Jewish community centers that support "cultural activities that denigrate Israel," citing as an example the New York Jewish Community Center's financing of a film festival that included a film portraying the difficult conditions for non-Jewish minorities in Israel. One signatory of the letter said the point was not "to infringe on anyone's freedom of expression, but why should it be from my federation contributions?"

Dr. Alexander Mashkevich, pres. of the United Israel Appeal's annual conference of Jewish leaders in Washington and pres. of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, announced (ca. 4/9) his plan to form a pro-Israel international news network, similar to al-Jazeera and the BBC, to combat the delegitimization of Israel in the media and to influence public opinion. It would offer only news programs in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish. He said that he would lobby other U.S. Jewish philanthropists to contribute and that "in about three–four

months we'll hold a presentation in Israel. We'll purchase talents from all other channels. From BBC, CNN—everyone.”

In late 4/2011, American philanthropists Miri and Sheldon Adelson, who have given millions of dollars to pro-Israel groups, pledged \$1 m. to expand the Israel Fellows program—a joint effort of the Jewish Agency for Israel and Hillel (The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life) “to bring recent Israeli college graduates to Hillels on U.S. and Canadian campuses to assist with Israel education and advocacy.” The program would expand from 34 to 50 fellows.

### **Legal Action**

Many of the legal actions this quarter stemmed from the efforts of pro-Israel groups to stifle any campus activity that could be seen as pro-Palestinian or critical of Israel. Most prominent among these was an investigation launched (3/7) by the U.S. Dept. of Education (DOE) Office of Civil Rights into charges filed in 6/2009 by Tammi Rossman-Benjamin, professor of Hebrew at University of California, Santa Cruz, alleging that rhetoric used by individuals and groups on campus that “demonizes Israel, compares contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis, calls for the dismantling of the Jewish state, and holds Israel to an impossible double standard . . . crosses the line into anti-Semitism.” This marked the first investigation since the DOE announced in 10/2010 that it would extend Title VI protections to victims of antireligious bias as well as those of ethnic and racial bias—a change that the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) had lobbied for 6 yrs. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 bars discrimination by organizations receiving federal funds.

Jessica Felber, a Jewish student at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB), filed (3/4) a case in U.S. district court seeking damages and a jury trial, accusing UCB of failing to protect Jewish students from harassment and attack by 2 pro-Palestinian student groups—Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and the Muslim Student Association—and of tolerating “the growing cancer of a dangerous anti-Semitic climate on its campuses” that violates the rights of Jewish and other students “to enjoy a peaceful campus environment free from threats and intimidation.” The suit stemmed from an incident on 3/5/10 in

which SJP head Hussam Zakharia allegedly rammed into Felber with a shopping cart because of the pro-Israel sign she was holding during a pro-Israel rally. Zakharia was arrested for battery but later released and not charged.

On 3/9, 30 University of California Jewish studies faculty members asked the Orange County district attorney to drop criminal charges against 11 Muslim students who disrupted a 2/8/10 campus speech by Israeli amb. to the U.S. Michael Oren by standing up 1-by-1 during his address to call him a “mass murderer” and “war criminal,” prompting him to walk off stage twice. The charges of conspiracy to disrupt a meeting could carry jail terms of up to 6 mos. as well as fines. The Jewish Voice for Peace organization previously called for dropping charges on the grounds that the outbursts constituted freedom of speech and peaceful protest. The Simon Wiesenthal Center and the ZOA were among the Jewish groups supporting prosecution under Title VI. There was no ruling before the end of the quarter.

The ZOA filed (4/7) a complaint with Rutgers University, saying that “the campus environment is increasingly hostile, anti-Semitic, and even includes violent threats against a Jewish student” and accusing the university of failing to prevent “anti-Semitism, Israel-bashing, and violent threats” on campus. The ZOA called on Rutgers to investigate its complaints; meet with Jewish students; “publicly label and condemn anti-Semitism when it occurs on campus, including when it is expressed as anti-Zionist or anti-Israel”; train faculty and staff to recognize and confront anti-Semitism; create programs to educate students “about the history and dangers of anti-Semitism in all of its manifestations”; and to undertake “a comprehensive review of university course descriptions and course materials to ensure that . . . students aren’t being discouraged or intimidated into not expressing their views supporting Israel.” Rutgers had not responded by the end of the quarter.

In response to the UCB and Rutgers cases, the American Association of University Professors and the American Jewish Committee issued (Doc. D2, 4/20) a letter urging close scrutiny of claims that statements and activities on campuses that are critical of Israel amount to illegal intimidation of Jewish students. They

stressed that Title VI had been misused to “seek to silence anti-Israel discourse and speakers”—an application of Title VI that they called “unwarranted” and “dangerous” to free speech.

Taking example from the U.S. cases, Sammy Katz, a student at Canada’s York University in Toronto, filed a claim with Ontario’s Human Rights Tribunal alleging that the university tolerated an environment hostile to Jews after he was verbally abused at a pro-Israel rally in 2/2010. The university released a video of the event aimed at showing that pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian students were “evenly matched” in their verbal abuse and that there was little physical contact. The tribunal did not take action before the quarter’s end.

Of note: The University of California, Hastings’ board of directors convened (3/24) an emergency meeting the day before a 2-day conference on “Litigating Palestine” hosted by its law school opened. The meeting voted to “take all steps necessary to remove the UC Hastings name and brand” from the conference and to cancel plans for the university’s dean and chancellor Frank Wu to give an opening speech. The university had received complaints from some alumni and local Jewish organizations who denounced the conference as “an anti-Israel political organizing conference using law as a weapon.” In announcing its pull-out, the board did not explain the decision but stated that convening such gatherings is “among our responsibilities as an academic institution.”

Similarly, the board of the City University of New York (CUNY) rejected (5/4) the student nomination of Pulitzer-prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner for an honorary degree at its commencement after a board member (Jeffrey Wiesenfeld, also a trustee of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy) objected that Kushner was anti-Israel because of a recent statement he made acknowledging being conflicted about Zionism, since Israel’s founding in 1948 was based on ethnic cleansing. Wiesenfeld said Kushner should not be given an honorary degree until he repudiated his past statements about Israel. CUNY’s trustees, however, voted (5/9) to overturn the decision, stating: “Freedom of thought and expression is the bedrock of any university worthy of the name. . . . It is not right for the board to consider politics

in connection with the award of honorary degrees except in extreme cases not presented by the facts here.”

Larry Klayman, a U.S. attorney, activist, and founder of the conservative public interest group Judicial Watch, filed (3/31) suit in U.S. District Court in Washington as “an American citizen of Jewish origin” who is “active in all matters concerning the security of Israel and its people,” seeking more than \$1 b. in damages from Facebook and its CEO Mark Zuckerberg for “negligence” for not responding quickly enough to calls to take down a page calling for a 3d intifada against Israel. Facebook removed the page on 3/29 after it had been up for several weeks and gained 350,000 followers. The suit also called on Facebook to remove all pages using the words “Third Intifada” or any other wording that “encourages violence toward Jews.” Facebook said (3/31) the case was one “without merit” and which it would fight, stating: “We strongly believe that Facebook users have the ability to express their opinions, and we don’t typically take down content, groups, or pages that speak out against countries, religions, political entities, or ideas.”

## RUSSIA

In the absence of Quartet meetings on the peace process and P5+1 meeting on Iran, Russia largely monitored events in the region this quarter but kept lines of communication open. PA Pres. Abbas met (3/22) in Moscow with Russian pres. Dmitri Medvedev, who expressed concern over the stalled peace talks and reaffirmed support for creation of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. Days later, on 3/24, Israeli PM Netanyahu also met in Moscow with Medvedev, asking him to halt arms sales to Syria and increase pressure on Iran to end its nuclear program. Medvedev did not comment publicly. The following week, Israeli chief negotiator Molcho and Israeli FMin. legal adviser Daniel Taub made (3/30) a secret trip to meet with Russian FM Sergei Lavrov, Russian special envoy to the Middle East Sergei Yakovlev, and other senior Russian officials. The purpose of the Israeli visit was to urge Russia not to support the EU call for an international peace initiative at the Quartet session in mid-4/2011 and to brief Russia on plans for a major policy

speech by Netanyahu (see "Netanyahu Maneuvers" above); no details were released.

Of note: On the eve of Netanyahu's visit to Moscow, Israel complied (3/21) with a 2008 court decision to return to Russian ownership Sergei's Courtyard, a prominent Jerusalem landmark built in 1890 to accommodate Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land.

#### EUROPEAN UNION

EU members were a focus of Israeli and Palestinian lobbying this quarter, particularly regarding the issue of recognition of Palestinian statehood at the UN in 9/2011. Israel lobbied the EU hard to block the British-French-German initiative to put forward a Quartet initiative to relaunch the peace process, to withhold EU support for Fatah-Hamas reconciliation, and to oppose Palestinian efforts to achieve recognition of a Palestinian state. The Palestinians, meanwhile, lobbied for the opposite. Most of the contacts were bilateral, between Israel and the PA and individual EU states.

To this end, Israeli PM Netanyahu traveled to London (5/4) and Paris (5/9) as part of what he planned to be a series of meetings with EU leaders over the coming weeks. British PM David Cameron, according to his spokesman, told Netanyahu that "Britain's clear and absolute preference is for a negotiation to take place between Israel and the Palestinians which leads to a two state solution which everyone endorses," but that if Israel did not resume serious negotiations toward a 2-state solution, "Britain is not ruling anything out." French pres. Nicholas Sarkozy did not publicly take a position on the issues but offered to host a round of Israeli-Palestinian talks in Paris in 6/2011 to discuss reviving negotiations. No preparations for a meeting were reported by the close of the quarter.

PA Pres. Abbas met (5/5) with German chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin to press for endorsing Palestinian statehood at the UN in 9/2011, but Merkel stressed that "unilateral actions" were unhelpful and urged an immediate return to negotiations based on the Quartet principles. Meanwhile, French pres. Nicholas Sarkozy told Abbas (5/5) that France would likely support the statehood effort if the peace process remained stalemated through the summer.

Of note: According to anonymous Israeli officials, Netanyahu phoned German chancellor Merkel on 2/21 to express disappointment with Germany's 2/18 vote in favor of the UNSC res. on settlements (see "Paving the Way for UN Recognition" above). Merkel reportedly (HA 2/25) was furious, telling Netanyahu: "How dare you. . . . You are the one who disappointed us. You haven't made a single step to advance peace."

Also of note: Marc Otte, EU special rep. for the Middle East peace process since 2003, ended his term on 3/1. EU external affairs chief Catherine Ashton did not appoint a replacement immediately, citing lack of movement on the peace process. An anonymous EU official said (*Agence France-Presse* 3/4) that the matter would be discussed in fall 2011 after a detailed review of the effectiveness of the EU's full network of special envoys and reps. Another EU official, also speaking anonymously, said Ashton placed such high importance on the peace process that she intended to assume the role herself.

#### UNITED NATIONS

While many Palestinian moves this quarter involved the UN (see "Recognition of Palestine" in the Palestinian-Israeli section above), in light of the broader regional unrest few actions affecting the peace process took place in UN bodies.

##### *Goldstone Report*

In a *Washington Post* op-ed (online 4/1, in print on 4/3; see Doc. A1), South African judge Richard Goldstone, head of the UN comm. investigating possible war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during OCL (12/27/08-1/18/09), stated that "if I had known then what I know now," he would have concluded that Gazan "civilians were not intentionally targeted as a matter of [Israeli] policy" and would have given more weight to crimes perpetrated by Hamas (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 154 for background). His statement reportedly came after intense pressure from Israel, pro-Israel groups, the Johannesburg Jewish community, and even family members (see John Dugard's article in "Selections from the Press" in this issue). Of the 3 other experts who cowrote the report (British international

law professor Christine Chinkin, Pakistani jurist Hina Jilani, and Irish peace-keeper Col. Desmond Travers), Jilani and Travers issued a brief statement on 4/1 defending the report as it stands. All 3 issued a statement on 4/14 denouncing Goldstone's backtracking, saying that by yielding to intense outside pressure he was depriving the victims of justice (see Doc. A3).

Meanwhile, Netanyahu declared (4/2) that Israel had been vindicated by Goldstone and that the report should be officially nullified. On 4/3, he launched a diplomatic effort to convince the UN to repeal the Goldstone report formally, calling it libel. He vowed Israel would "act on the public-diplomacy front and on other fronts with the international community and the UN in order to demand the justice that is due to Israel." By 4/7, Israeli MK Danny Danon (Likud) was in the U.S. organizing a team of pro bono Jewish-American attorneys to file a class-action libel lawsuit against Goldstone in New York District Court. The attorneys said that the plaintiffs (unspecified) would demand that Goldstone publicly apologize to the State of Israel and pay a symbolic amount of damages for the accusations he made in his fact-finding report. There was no evidence the lawsuit was filed, however. Meanwhile, the State Dept.'s spokesman said (4/4) that the Obama admin. noted "with great interest" that Goldstone had apparently come around to U.S. government's assessment that there was never "any evidence that the Israeli government committed any war crimes, nor did it intentionally target civilians," adding that Goldstone's "retraction" revived concerns about an anti-Israel bias in the UNHRC.

The UNHRC said (4/2) it would continue to uphold the Goldstone Report as written, stating that Goldstone would have to submit a formal request signed by all of the committee members for the report to be withdrawn. Goldstone said (4/5) that he had no intention of asking the UN to rescind it. Israeli pres. Peres urged (4/8) UN Secy.-Gen. Ban to revoke the Goldstone Report during a one-on-one meeting at the UN headquarters in New York.

Meanwhile, the UNHRC met on 3/21 to receive the 2d report of a committee of independent experts mandated to assess the Israeli and Palestinian compliance with the Goldstone Report's requirements. The committee concluded, as it did in its first

report in 9/2010, that neither side had adequately investigated allegations that serious violations of international law were committed during OCL. Meanwhile, Amnesty International petitioned (3/7) the UNHRC to ask the UNSC to refer the investigation to the International Criminal Court for action if the committee's final assessment reached this conclusion. The petition was signed by some 66,850 Amnesty members and supporters worldwide.

#### **Other UNHRC Actions**

UNHRC special rapporteur Richard Falk told (3/21) the council that Israel's settlement building in East Jerusalem "can only be described in its cumulative impact as a form of ethnic cleansing." The UNHRC at the time was drafting a res. condemning settlement building in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which passed on 3/25. On 3/24 and 3/25, another 5 UNHRC res. on Israel passed: (1) calling for a fund to compensate Palestinians who suffered losses during OCL; (2) noting the "grave human rights violations" by Israeli forces in the Palestinian territories and demanding that Israel end its occupation; (3) calling on Israel to end its occupation of the Golan Heights; (4) reaffirming the right of Palestinians to self-determination; and (5) denouncing the 5/2010 Gaza flotilla incident. The U.S. voted against all 6 measures.

In a statement marking the 2d anniversary since the U.S. rejoined the UNHRC, the State Dept. declared that the U.S. "maintains a vocal, principled stand" against "the Council's biased and disproportionate focus on Israel" and will continue "robust efforts" to end it.

Syria withdrew (5/11) its bid for a rotating seat on the UNHRC in light of domestic events. Kuwait was named to replace it as a candidate for the Asia bloc. The vote was set for 5/20.

For the first time since it was reconstituted 5 yrs. ago, the UNHRC appointed (3/24) a special investigator to look into human rights abuses in Iran.

#### **Other Items of Note**

On 2/24, UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process Robert Serry briefed the UNSC on the situation in the Middle East, urging the Quartet to make a serious effort to revive both the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian tracks—and even offer its own "concrete suggestions" for

peace—arguing that resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict had become even more critical given the regionwide protests (see “The Quartet Considers Action” above).

On 5/14, UN Undersecy.-Gen. for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos began a 4-day visit to Israel and the occupied territories with a tour of the separation wall around Jerusalem. Noting that only 13% of land in East Jerusalem is available for Palestinian use, that it is already overcrowded, and that an estimated 86,500 East Jerusalem Palestinians face demolition of their homes for being built without permits, she called on Israel to halt “policies [that] lead to forced displacement of Palestinians from Jerusalem and from the rest of the West Bank” and to allow Palestinians to develop their communities. On 5/15, she visited Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan in East Jerusalem and met in Ramallah with PA Pres. Abbas and PM Fayyad. She planned to visit Gaza and meet with Israeli officials in Tel Aviv on 5/16 and 5/17.

Israel and the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) signed (3/7) an agreement for the establishment of a center within UNESCO (partially funded by Israel) devoted entirely to developing and promoting Holocaust education and combating its denial worldwide.

## DONORS

The only major donor meeting this quarter was an Ad Hoc Liaison Comm. (AHLIC) session in Brussels on 4/13. Before the meeting, the World Bank issued (4/7) a report assessing the strength of PA institutions and the prospects for sustainable Palestinian economic growth, concluding that “if the PA maintains its performance in institution-building and delivery of public services, it is well-positioned for the establishment of a state at any point in the near future.” Similarly, the UN report for the AHLIC (released 4/12) stated that the PA met 6 key criteria for “the sufficient functioning government of a state”—(1) governance, rule of law, and human rights; (2) livelihoods and productive sectors; (3) education and culture; (4) health; (5) social protection; and (6) infrastructure and water—but that it still needed help in state-building. In particular, the UN special coordinator for Middle East peace Serry

said (4/12) that to match Palestinian progress in state-building, “further steps on the ground” were urgently needed by Israel to roll back its occupation. The statements effectively endorsed Palestinian plans for a statehood initiative at the UN in 9/2011 (see “Paving the Way for UN Recognition” above).

The World Bank report warned, however, that prospects for sustained economic growth in the West Bank and Gaza were “bleak” because of the underdevelopment of the private sector that stemmed from Israeli restrictions on Palestinian access to natural resources and markets. It also cautioned that while the territories experienced an impressive 9.3% growth in 2010, the growth reflected “recovery from the very low base reached during the second intifada.” Smuggling through the Rafah tunnels had generated much of the growth in the Gaza economy, whereas West Bank growth was primarily donor driven. Experts also noted that unemployment levels for the West Bank (16.9%) and Gaza (37.4%) and poverty levels in Gaza (71%) remained among the highest in the world, and that even those with jobs increasingly reported being underemployed.

At the AHLIC meeting, PA PM Fayyad presented a new 3-yr. Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP) for 2011–13 outlining the PA’s policy agenda (still prioritizing statehood by 9/2011) and its economic plan, based on “the core national development vision of . . . independence, sovereignty, and open borders [as] essential ingredients for the sustainable social and economic development of Palestine.” The PA’s strategic objectives included: promoting justice and the rule of law, ensuring national security and public safety, modernizing and streamlining public admin., empowering local government, improving services and infrastructure, safeguarding energy and natural resources, attaining financial independence and economic stability, promoting Palestinian sovereignty in the international community (e.g., upgrading diplomatic presence overseas), supporting and empowering the poor and vulnerable in society, investing in youth (with a focus on education and health), empowering women, and protecting Palestinian culture and heritage. The PA estimated that fulfilling its mission would require \$5 b. in donor aid over the 3 yrs. Though pledges were not solicited

at this session, the World Bank soon after announced (4/28) \$10 m. in aid to 5,500 needy Palestinian families in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Other regular donor meetings this quarter included a meeting on 4/5 of the Local Development Forum, the body that oversees donor coordination on the ground, to discuss the PA's reform and development priorities and budget issues before the AHLC. Of the 4 main donor "strategy groups" (SGs), only the economic policy SG met on 4/4; the social development and humanitarian assistance SG, the infrastructure SG, and the governance and reform SG did not meet. Various SG subcommittees held regular follow-up meetings. These included the economic SG's fiscal sector working group (SWG; 4/4), private sector development and trade SWG (3/17), and agriculture SWG (3/31); the governance SG's election reform SWG (2/16);

the infrastructure SG's municipal development and local governance SWG (2/17), water and sanitation SWG (3/15), environmental SWG (5/12), and solid waste thematic subgroup (4/7); and the social and humanitarian assistance SG's education SWG (3/23) and "social protection" SWG (which addresses the Social Safety Net Reform Project funded through PEGASE; 4/20).

Of note: On 5/10, Munib al-Masri's private investment firm PADICO issued \$70 m. in 5-yr. corporate bonds to finance a power plant and an entertainment and tourism center in the West Bank. The bonds were bought by Palestinian and Jordanian banks. This first private release of Palestinian bonds was seen as a milestone in the effort to achieve statehood. The PA said (5/10) that it hoped to release its first government bonds soon but gave no details.



A Palestinian protestor throws a stone as fires burn during clashes with the Israeli army and police at Qalandia checkpoint during Nakba Day protests, 15 May 2011. (Uriel Sinai/Getty Images)