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QUARTERLY UPDATE ON CONFLICT AND DIPLOMACY

16 AUGUST–15 NOVEMBER 2012

COMPILED BY BEN WHITE

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 print, wire, television, and online sources providing U.S., Israeli, Arab, and international independent and government coverage of unfolding events are surveyed to compile the Quarterly Update. The most relevant sources are cited in JPS's Chronology section, which tracks events day by day. JPS Chronologies are archived on the JPS website at www.palestine-studies.org.

Highlights of the Quarter: The PLO announces its intention to seek a status upgrade at the UN General Assembly at the end of November; early Israeli elections are called for 1/2013, with the ruling Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu to run on a joint ticket; vigorous cost-of-living protests against the PA; First Palestinian elections (municipal) in six years held in the West Bank, boycotted by Hamas; Emir of Qatar visits Gaza, offering huge aid package along with implied recognition of Hamas rule of the Strip; Israel launches Operation Pillar of Defense in Gaza after rising tension and spikes in IDF strikes and Palestinian projectile fire.

THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

This quarter, there were no significant moves toward renewed negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA). Most of the diplomatic focus was centered on PA pres. Mahmud Abbas' decision to seek United Nations (UN) nonmember observer state status for the Palestinians. Israeli elections were called for in 1/2013, with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and FM Avigdor Lieberman making a surprise announcement that their parties would present a joint ticket. The PA held local elections, which saw mixed results for Fatah and low turnout, and there were protests against rising living costs in the West Bank. Israel consolidated Jewish settlements in the West Bank with new tenders for housing units, and rising tension in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel culminated in the Israeli military launching Operation Pillar of Defense in 11/2012.

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The Peace Process and the UN Bid

As the quarter opened, Abbas, frustrated by the lack of movement toward peace since the last fruitless round of exploratory talks hosted by Jordan in 1/2012 (see QU in *JPS* 163), was preparing to revive Palestinian statehood efforts at the upcoming UNGA session in 9/2012. Abbas had applied to the UN Security Council (UNSC) seeking full recognition of Palestinian statehood in 9/2012, but by 11/2011 it was clear that no UNSC member state would call for a binding vote, largely because of U.S. pressure (see QU in *JPS* 162). This time, he planned to ask the UNGA for the lesser observer-state status, which would put Palestine on the same footing as the Vatican, with all the rights of a state (including the right to petition the International Criminal Court) except voting rights, though he had stated (8/6) that he probably would not ask the UNGA to vote on a resolution until after the U.S. presidential elections.

In his address to the annual opening of the UNGA session in New York on 9/27, Abbas made the appeal as expected (see Doc. B4 in *JPS* 166). He also referred to current Israeli policies as "ethnic

cleansing," singling out settlement construction and home demolitions for particular criticism. While Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) criticized the speech for offering nothing new, Fatah praised it as "historic." The next day (9/28), PLO Executive Committee member Hanan Ashrawi said that a UNGA vote on Palestinian statehood would likely be held on 11/29, the 65th anniversary of the UN Partition Plan for Palestine.

In the following weeks (10/3, 10/11), the Palestinian side undertook consultations with Arab countries and EU mission heads over the text of a draft resolution requesting the UNGA accept Palestine as a nonmember state. Abbas also sought to reassure world leaders, including U.S. pres. Barack Obama and EU member states, of his intention to resume negotiations if the UN bid was successful and urged them to support the initiative (10/16, 10/28). In an interview on Israeli TV, Abbas said (11/1) that there would be no 3d intifada and that he would not seek a return to Israel's pre-1967 borders. Abbas later clarified, through an adviser, that he was not giving up the right of Palestinian refugees to return, but was being "realistic." On 11/8, the PA circulated a draft resolution to UN member states, ahead of the expected vote later in the month. The draft text included a reiteration of the Palestinian's commitment to the two-state solution and reiterated the PLO's status as sole legitimate representative of all Palestinians (this last to assuage fears that if the recognition was given to the PA, which represents Palestinians in the occupied territories only, it might mean de facto loss of refugee rights). On 11/12, Abbas confirmed that the bid for nonmember observer status at the UN would be presented on 11/29.

The Israeli government, meanwhile, had embarked on a parallel process of threats and blunt diplomacy in order to try and stop the Palestinians' march to the UN. On 8/22, Israeli FM Lieberman wrote to members of the Quartet (the U.S., EU, UN, and Russia), urging them to call for new elections in the Palestinian territories and describing Pres. Abbas as an obstacle to peace. By fall, when it became less likely that Abbas could be persuaded to back down, Israel started to

warn of the repercussions of the UN vote, with Lieberman saying (9/29) that the Israeli government would "exact a price" from Abbas in response, and Fin. Min. Yuval Steinitz warning (11/10) that Israel would withhold tax revenues to the PA. On 11/4, Lieberman met with Israeli ambassadors to the EU in Vienna to plan ways of countering Abbas' UN bid, while Netanyahu convened (11/6) the senior forum of ministers to discuss punitive steps in response, such as freezing the transfer of VAT taxes collected on the PA and revoking travel privileges of senior Palestinian leaders.

The international community's response to Abbas' push for a 11/2012 UN vote was mixed. There was clear opposition from the U.S., with Washington's Amb. to the UN Susan Rice saying (10/15) that the bid would "jeopardize" the peace process and complicate efforts to resume negotiations, a position later reiterated (11/11) by Obama himself to Abbas. The British government, for its part, urged (10/17) the Palestinians to delay the bid on the grounds that it would harm the peace process in the context of U.S. presidential elections, while Greek dep. FM Dimitris Kourkoulas said (10/11) that the EU was advising the PA to take care that its UN bid did not undermine the process. In an 10/2012 visit to Israel and the West Bank, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton heard both Lieberman and Abbas reiterate their positions: from the Israeli side, threats (10/24) of "consequences," and from the PA, a pledge (10/25) for negotiations after UN recognition. By 11/2012, the UN bid was reported to have the support of at least a dozen EU member states (10/30), China (11/5), and the head of the Arab League (11/13).

Domestic Israeli Politics

Domestic politics in Israel this quarter was dominated by developments and speculation surrounding the call for early elections in 1/2013, preempting by 10 months the 11/2013 date when general elections were originally scheduled. Netanyahu's announcement on 10/9 that elections would be held in 3 months' time was followed by confirmation, by his office, that the exact date of the vote would be 1/22/2013. In consequence, the Knesset was dissolved on 10/15. Initial

polling reported by the Israeli media (10/11) indicated that Netanyahu faced no serious challenger in the elections. Yet the political landscape unexpectedly and radically changed when, just a fortnight later (10/25), Netanyahu and Lieberman held a joint press conference during which they announced that their parties—the Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu—would run together. Lieberman told the media that their alliance had 1st been discussed a year earlier. Some analysts speculated that a future attack on Iran was behind the unity deal, while others suggested that the move merely highlighted the continuing rightward trend within Israeli politics.

Polls of voters' intentions after the announcement as to whether or not the two parties would gain from the unification were unclear. Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu together currently control 42 seats of the 120 total Knesset seats. Irrespective of whether or not that number would rise significantly, most analysts felt a right-wing coalition seemed highly likely. Labor party leader Shelley Yacimovich urged a unification of "centrist" parties to challenge the new alliance (10/25). One potential shake-up would be the return of former PM Ehud Olmert, who avoided a jail sentence when, after his conviction for cronyism in 7/2012, an Israeli court handed (9/24) him a suspended jail term and fine. In other developments, Israeli coalition party Yisrael Beiteinu announced its intention to request that the Central Election Committee disqualify the Balad party (the Arab democratic party founded by exiled Azmi Bishara) from the upcoming elections on the grounds that it "supports terror and acts against the existence of Israel as a Jewish, democratic state." A Likud MK submitted a similar petition on 10/16.

Settlement Consolidation in the West Bank

During this quarter, the Israeli government continued to approve housing in settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, provoking now routine expressions of disapproval by the international community. On 10/18, final approval was granted to a plan for 800 new homes in East Jerusalem, meaning an expansion of Gilo settlement. Criticism of the move from the EU was

dismissed by Lieberman, and Netanyahu vowed to continue building. On 11/6, new tenders were published for homes in East Jerusalem settlements Pisgat Ze'ev and Ramot, as well as another 72 units being reoffered in Ariel settlement, in the northern West Bank. European governments condemned the move as a hindrance to the peace process. Also in East Jerusalem, plans were revealed (10/20) for the construction of a military academy on the Mount of Olives and a new residential neighborhood for retired police and soldiers in the East Jerusalem district of Sur al-Bahir (10/29). In Silwan, Jewish settlers moved into a section of a new Palestinian home after a court ruling in favor of the settlers' ownership claims (9/2).

Other further consolidation of Israeli control in the West Bank and the strengthening of Jewish settlements included DM Ehud Barak's approval (11/12) of a plan to expand Itamar settlement to 5 times its size by adding 538 homes, and Barak's green light (10/11) to the Jewish settlers' occupation of a house in Hebron that was ruled by an Israeli court to have been legally acquired. On 9/9, the Israeli cabinet also voted to upgrade a higher education college in Ariel settlement to the status of a full-fledged university, a decision that still needs to be ratified by Barak. Finally, on 9/14, the Israeli newspaper *Ha'Aretz* reported that the Israeli government was seeking court approval for the construction of settlement homes on privately owned Palestinian land, a development relevant to 44 settlements recently revealed to have been erected entirely or partially on private land.

During the quarter, Israeli authorities took some action against unauthorized Jewish settler outposts in the West Bank. On 9/2, security forces evicted settlers from Migron, an outpost nr. Ramallah. Around 50 families were relocated a short distance away in new housing built by the government for that purpose. On 11/1, the IDF demolished 2 structures in an outpost nr. Yitzhar settlement in the West Bank, with settlers reportedly attacking soldiers with stones. On the other hand, Israeli NGO Peace Now reported on 10/31 that Jewish settlers had set up 2 new outposts with utilities infrastructure in the West Bank for the first time since 2005, located nr.

Ramallah and Qalqilya. In the grander scheme of things, there were reports (e.g., on Israeli Army Radio on 10/17) that the Israeli cabinet would apply parts of the Levy report (see Doc. C1 in *JPS* 165), which recommended legalizing unauthorized outposts and rejected the idea that Israel's presence in the territories constitutes occupation, to West Bank settlements.

Tension and Violence in the Gaza Strip and Southern Israel

Conflict between Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip and Israel intensified over the quarter, culminating on 11/14 with Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense (Israeli figures record 24 rockets and mortar shells fired in 8/2012, 25 in 9/2012, and 171 in 10/2012). However, long before this large-scale assault, the IDF had been striking the Gaza Strip and inflicting significant numbers of casualties throughout 9/2012 and 10/2012, into 11/2012.

On 9/5–6, the IDF killed 6 armed Palestinians in air strikes. Then, on 9/19, the IDF assassinated 2 members of the al-Aqsa Guards Group who allegedly worked for Hamas security forces and smuggled explosives into Gaza through the Rafah tunnels. Meanwhile, according to Israeli figures, Palestinian groups fired 25 rockets and mortar shells from the Gaza Strip into Israel throughout the entire month of 9/2012.

On 10/7, the IDF fired a missile into the southern Gaza Strip nr. Rafah, assassinating 1 member of an armed Salafist group (of the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem) and wounding a 2d member and 8 bystanders (including 3 children, 1 woman, and 1 elderly man). The next day, Hamas' Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades (IQB) and the smaller Ansar al-Quds group claimed joint responsibility for an estimated 55 projectiles fired into Israel in the morning for what they said was a response to the earlier IDF air strike.

A week later (10/13), the IDF assassinated 2 armed Palestinians (at least 1 of whom was from the Salafist group al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad) in an air strike. The next day, it killed 3 Palestinians, 2 of whom were identified as members of the Popular Resistance Committees (PRCs). The group vowed (10/14) to retaliate. On 10/19 and 10/22, Palestinian fighters

attacked IDF forces operating inside the Gaza Strip (causing no injuries), with the latter incursion leading to the death of 3 armed Palestinians. On 10/23, a mortar shell injured an IDF soldier on patrol on the Gaza border, while an IDF air strike killed 3 Hamas fighters. The next day (10/24), Palestinian groups fired around 80 rockets and mortar shells into Israel, injuring 5, and the IDF killed 4 Palestinians, including 3 members of the resistance. Israel closed the Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings in both directions. On 10/25, an unofficial truce believed to have been negotiated by Egyptian intelligence brought relative calm (though on 10/28, an IDF air strike killed 1 Palestinian fighter, and the PRC fired a Grad rocket which landed nr. Beersheba).

On 11/4, the IDF killed a Palestinian man at the border fence whose relatives said was unarmed and suffered from epilepsy. On 11/6, a bomb exploded along the border fence between the Gaza Strip and Israel, injuring 3 IDF soldiers on patrol. On 11/8, the IDF killed a Palestinian boy with live fire in the Gaza Strip during an incursion by Israeli forces nr. Khan Yunis. Palestinian fighters from the PRC engaged the Israeli forces in a gun battle. Later, IQB detonated a bomb nr. the border fence which damaged an IDF jeep and wounded 1 soldier allegedly in response to the killing of the boy.

On 11/10, Palestinians fired an anti-tank missile at an Israeli military jeep on the border, injuring 4 soldiers. Subsequently, the IDF fired a number of shells at a residential area nr. Gaza City, killing 4 Palestinian civilians, including 2 teenagers, and wounding 38 Palestinians (1 of whom subsequently died of his wounds). The IDF also shelled a village nr. Khan Yunis (injuring 11 civilians) and fired a missile at Palestinian fighters from the Islamic Jihad, killing 1 of its members. Armed Palestinian groups fired around 30 rockets and mortar shells into Israel, causing no injuries.

On 11/11, the IDF struck a number of targets in the Gaza Strip, killing 1 armed Palestinian and wounding a number of civilians. Around 100 rockets and mortar shells from Palestinian groups injured 3 Israelis and caused some damage to property. Netanyahu said, at a weekly cabinet meeting, that the army was prepared to intensify its attacks while

a number of ministers urged an escalation in military operations (such as assassinations), as well as other measures like cutting off electricity. A source in Netanyahu's office commented that the PM was preparing international public opinion for a military operation in Gaza.

On 11/12, Hamas and Islamic Jihad declared a cease-fire, following the reported mediation by Egyptian intelligence officials. Rocket fire from Gaza fell to 6 on 11/12 and to 3 on 11/13. On 11/13, an IQB fighter died of injuries sustained in an earlier attack. His death brought the total number of fatalities in Gaza to 7, including 4 civilians, and around 40 wounded (16 Israelis had been wounded, including 8 civilians). Some media reports cited Israeli defense officials' claim that Israel was considering renewing its assassination of militant leaders. However, in a meeting with southern Israeli mayors, Netanyahu said (11/13) that Israel did not expect to embark on significant military action in Gaza or pursue assassinations.

On 11/14, the IDF assassinated Hamas military commander Ahmad al-Jabari and killed 8 other Palestinians in a number of air strikes across the Gaza Strip on military and civilian targets that left around 90 wounded. The dead included 2 children and an elderly man. Code-named Operation Pillar of Defense, the Israeli military attacks were described as the "beginning," with the goal being increased deterrence and the elimination of Hamas' rocket-launching capabilities. IQB said Israel had "opened the gates of hell" with the assassination of Jabari, and fired dozens of projectiles into Israel. They were joined by other factions from Islamic Jihad, the PFLP, PRC, and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), all of whom claimed responsibility for rocket and mortar fire. Over 90 projectiles hit Israel from the Gaza Strip, causing 4 injuries. The Iron Dome rocket defense system intercepted 30 rockets. Overnight, the IDF targeted around 100 sites across the Gaza Strip. U.S. Pres. Obama called Netanyahu to express his support for Israel's military operation and the country's right to self-defense. Obama also called Egyptian pres. Mohamed Morsi to stress the importance of de-escalation and pledged to stay in close touch. Egypt strongly

condemned Israel's military assault, and UN Secy.-Gen. Ban Ki-moon called for a cease-fire. The UNSC held an emergency meeting but took no action.

Intifada Data and Trends

At least 51 Palestinians were killed this quarter as a result of Israeli actions (up from 29 last quarter), while 3 Israelis were killed (compared to 1 last quarter) as a result of Palestinian actions. The Palestinian deaths brought the comprehensive toll as of 11/15 to at least 8,019 Palestinians (including 51 Israeli Arabs and 19 unidentified Arab cross-border infiltrators), 1,117 Israelis (including 354 IDF soldiers and security personnel, 226 settlers, and 533 civilians), and 66 foreign nationals (including 2 British suicide bombers) since the 2d intifada began in 9/2000. 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 (e.g., ailing Palestinians who died when denied access to medical care and Palestinians killed in smuggling tunnel accidents).

Overview of the Violence

Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip killed an estimated 51 Palestinians and injured dozens during this quarter (over 30 fatalities occurring before Operation Pillar of Defense), while projectiles fired from Palestinian factions in Gaza killed 3 Israelis and injured another 34 (19 of whom were injured after the start of Operation Pillar of Defense on 11/14). Of the 51 Palestinians killed, 7 were assassinated in Israeli air strikes (2 al-Aqsa Guards Group members on 9/19; 1 member of the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem on 10/7; 2 armed Palestinians, including at least 1 member of al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, on 10/13; and IQB commander Ahmad Jabari and his body guard on 11/14. A total of 2 targeted Palestinians and 9 bystanders were killed in these attacks.) Palestinian groups fired at least 373 rockets and mortars from the Gaza Strip into Israel. Palestinian fishermen were routinely intercepted and fired upon by the Israeli navy, and there were also attacks on Palestinians in the IDF-declared "buffer zone" nr. the Gaza-Israel border fence.

In the West Bank, there were no Palestinian fatalities by the IDF this quarter, but almost 300 Palestinians were injured, mostly in the context of demonstrations against different aspects of the occupation. The IDF conducted an average of 65 search operations/week in the West Bank this quarter, down from 81/week last quarter.

Movement and Access Issues

With regard to movement and access issues in the occupied territories, this quarter was marked by a relative easing of some restrictions. Israeli authorities reopened access (8/17) to a military checkpoint linking Jericho and the Jordan Valley with cities in the northern West Bank, allowing Palestinians to use a road that had been almost inaccessible to them for a decade. On 10/15, the Israeli NGO Association for Civil Rights in Israel announced that the IDF had informed them of their intention to ease freedom of movement restrictions in the Jordan Valley. Meanwhile, the Israeli government approved (9/27) a proposal to allow 5,000 more entry permits for Palestinian construction and agricultural workers, bringing the total number of work permits issued by Israel to West Bank Palestinians to over 45,000. Going in the opposite direction, however, the Israeli military decided to close (8/27) the Ras Khamis checkpoint in occupied East Jerusalem, leaving only a single exit for the residents of Shu'afat refugee camp. For the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, as is standard practice for similar religious festivals in Israel, the military imposed (9/24) a general closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip for 48 hours. During this quarter, the 2012 weekly average of truckloads of goods entering the Gaza Strip via the Kerem Shalom crossing rose from 1,057 to 1,083 (less than 40 percent of the weekly average before the blockade was initiated in 6/2007). The amount of truckloads carrying food varied between around one-third and one-half of the weekly total. Over the entire quarter, 23 truckloads of exports left the Gaza Strip (the weekly average pre-blockade was 240). On 9/20, an Israeli official announced that Israel would permit some exports of furniture and clothes from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, with 3 truckloads of furniture later sent

(9/27) destined for PA-run schools. This marked the 3d time in 2012 that Israel permitted the passage of goods from Gaza to the West Bank. On 10/9, an official in the Gaza Strip announced that date bars would be shipped to the West Bank, while on 10/21, Israel permitted farmers in the Gaza Strip to export spices to Europe for the 1st time in 5 years.

Regular Nonviolent Protests in the Territories

Demonstrations in the West Bank against the occupation, settlements, and the separation wall continued this quarter, with additional protests centered on Palestinian prisoners and restrictions on movement. Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals took part in demonstrations in villages like Kafr Qaddum (nr. Qalqilya), al-Nabi Salih (Ramallah), and Bil'in (Ramallah). In the case of Kafr Qaddum, the village's weekly demonstrations accounted for almost 40 percent of all injuries in the West Bank in 2012. Apart from village-based demonstrations, there were also direct action protests targeting the road network used by Jewish settlers, such as the blocking of Road 443 (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv) on 10/16 and of the Gush Etzion junction by Palestinians, Israelis, and international protesters on 11/9. On 10/30, an Israeli border police officer was acquitted of causing the death of a 10-year-old Palestinian boy shot during a protest in the West Bank village of Ni'lin in 2008.

Settler Attacks on Palestinians

There was a substantial uptick this quarter in settler attacks on Palestinians and their property, with at least 94 incidents reported (compared to 36 last quarter). This was in part due to the olive harvest season, with the level of incidents prompting the UN's Middle East envoy to express (10/14) his alarm at the attacks perpetrated by Jewish settlers against Palestinian farmers and farmland in the West Bank. The UN and a coalition of Israeli human rights groups reported (10/15) that during the olive harvest, Jewish settlers vandalized 850 trees in the 1st week.

Palestinian communities in the Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah governorates seemed particularly hard hit by settler attacks, with numerous examples of both

trees and crops, as well as Palestinian-owned property being targeted (e.g., 8/17, 8/21–22, 8/25, 8/29, 9/1, 9/5, 9/7, 9/9, 9/12, 9/27, 10/7, 10/10–11, 11/5). There were also several examples of so-called “price tag” attacks (e.g., 10/5, 11/3, 11/7), when graffiti accompanying a particular act of vandalism described the act as “revenge” for either a Palestinian-perpetrated attack, or for an Israeli government-enforced crackdown on unauthorized outposts. One such “price tag” incident was the vandalizing of the Latrun monastery nr. Jerusalem (9/4).

Demolitions and Confiscations

At least 150 demolitions were reported this quarter. The villages around Hebron were particularly targeted, with housing, wells, tents, and agricultural property all demolished on various occasions (8/28, 10/24, 11/8). Other notable incidents included one on 11/7, when IDF soldiers entered a village nr. Salfit to order residents out of 20 homes in preparation for a demolition. Clashes resulted in 6 Palestinians injured, including 2 journalists. There was also a significant demolition by Israeli authorities of a home in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of the Mount of Olives, making 8 people homeless (11/13).

Land requisitions continued during the quarter, including in the Nablus governorate (9/14, 9/21) affecting dozens of farmers. There were also land confiscations in the Bethlehem governorate, affecting farming communities nr. Beitart Illit settlement and in the Fukin Valley (8/30, 9/19, 10/3).

INTRA-PALESTINIAN DYNAMICS

Fatah-Hamas Reconciliation

Qatar’s Emir Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, accompanied by a large delegation that included the Qatari PM, made a high-profile visit to Gaza on 10/23 to meet with Hamas’s acting PM Ismail Haniyeh, becoming the first head of state to visit the Strip since Hamas took control in 6/2007. The emir inaugurated reconstruction projects worth \$400 million and called on Hamas and Fatah to reconcile. The implicit diplomatic recognition of Hamas rule over the Strip that the visit accorded was seen (e.g., *NYT* 10/23) as a potential game changer that

elevated Hamas’s status at Fatah’s expense, especially in light of Qatar’s recent efforts to expand its regional role and its longstanding criticism of Abbas’s leadership. Meanwhile, there was little movement in national reconciliation efforts between Fatah and Hamas during this quarter. On 9/25, Hamas officials revealed that leader Khalid Mish’al had decided to step down, a decision he announced at a meeting in Cairo of the Hamas leadership. Mish’al intends to remain in post until a new leader is chosen through the groups’ internal election process. In the West Bank, PA security forces continued to target Hamas members: on 9/19, it was reported that dozens had been detained across the territory, while on 9/22, Hamas claimed that 120 party members had been arrested or summoned for questioning over the previous few days. On 9/23, the PA said that its security forces had discovered an underground bunker used by Hamas members in a village nr. Nablus that contained communications equipment. On 10/15, Hamas reported that a dozen of its members had been arrested or summoned for questioning, and the following day (10/16) PA security forces raided an apartment in Nablus and claimed to have confiscated documents and weapons belonging to the IQB. There were further reports of arrests by PA security agencies of both Hamas and Islamic Jihad members on 11/2.

Local Elections

On 10/20, Palestinians in the West Bank voted in local elections, the 1st election in 6 years. Hamas boycotted the elections. The poll was held in only 92 of the 353 municipalities, and 181 formed councils without elections for lack of candidates. Around 515,000 Palestinians were registered to vote, according to the Central Elections Commission; turnout was 55 percent of eligible voters (compared to the roughly 75 percent who cast ballots in the 2006 parliamentary elections and roughly 67 percent in the 2004 and 2005 municipal elections). Fatah had mixed results, partly due to the fact that its own members ran against each other, some as independents (27 Fatah members were expelled for running on non-Fatah lists).

Economic Protests

Rising costs of living provoked significant unrest in the PA-administered areas of the West Bank during this quarter. This was particularly evident during a peak in public demonstrations in 9/2012, such as protests in West Bank cities and strike action on 9/6, 9/9, and 9/15. Protester demands included calls for the PA to abolish the 1994 Paris Protocol that governs all economic relations with Israel (on grounds that it disproportionately benefits the latter) and that PA pres. Abbas and/or PM Salam Fayyad resign. Despite the unpopularity of Fayyad in some Fatah circles, there was no indication that he would be forced to resign as a sacrifice to the demonstrators—in fact, Fatah official Nabil Sha’th said on 9/7 that the resignation of Fayyad would solve nothing. Fayyad himself intervened on 9/11, with an announcement of an emergency economic package, including the cancellation of recent price rises for fuel and cooking gas and a VAT cut. A senior Palestinian trade union official described the measures as insufficient. Fayyad also called on donor countries to increase aid to the PA. The next day, Israeli PM Netanyahu ordered the transfer of \$60 million in tax revenues to the PA citing the current economic crisis and protests in the West Bank.

Internal Governance

The PA received unwelcome attention over the detention of Jenin’s Freedom Theater director and former al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades fighter Zakaria Zubeidi, allegedly connected to the shooting attack on the late Jenin governor Qad-dura Musa, who died of a heart attack shortly after the attack on 5/2. Zubeidi began a hunger strike protesting his detention without charge on 9/10, which he suspended on 9/20 when he heard of his imminent release. He was freed on bail on 10/1.

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas security forces arrested on 8/17 a Salafist leader allegedly linked to the group responsible for the kidnapping and murder of Italian activist Vittorio Arrigoni in 4/2011. Later, a court handed down convictions for his murder, with the men identified as members of the Hamas security forces working for a Salafist group (9/17). There were also examples of tension between

the Hamas government and the population, such as on 10/2, when authorities demolished 12 residential structures nr. Umm Nasir village, displacing 60 residents, on the grounds that the land was “state land.” Two children and 1 woman were injured in clashes between the police and residents. On 11/6, Hamas police officers beat women demonstrating in Gaza City during a protest demanding national reconciliation outside the parliament building. At a similar demonstration the following week, Hamas security forces arrested 6 protesters, according to the DFLP (11/13).

PALESTINIAN OPINION

The following data are excerpted from a poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC) between 28 October and 4 November 2012. Results are based on a survey of 1,200 men and women from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip. The poll, the 77th in a series, was taken from JMCC’s website at www.jmcc.org.

1. In general, how do you evaluate the performance of the PA? Would you say its performance is very good, good, bad, or very bad?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Very good	4.0%	3.6%	3.8%
b. Good	50.0%	52.9%	51.1%
c. Bad	30.0%	31.6%	30.6%
d. Very bad	14.3%	11.8%	13.3%
e. No answer	1.7%	0.1%	1.2%

2. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way that President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) is performing his job as president to the PA?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Very satisfied	19.3%	15.3%	17.8%
b. Somewhat satisfied	32.1%	30.2%	31.4%
c. Somewhat unsatisfied	17.5%	18.0%	17.7%
d. Very unsatisfied	26.3%	34.4%	29.3%
e. No answer	4.8%	2.1%	3.8%

3. President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) recently presented the Palestinian leadership with two options for exiting the current political crisis: to cancel signed agreements with Israel or to conduct legislative and presidential elections. In your opinion, what is the best option for exiting the current political crisis?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. To cancel signed agreements with Israel	35.9%	26.4%	32.3%
b. To conduct legislative and presidential elections	52.9%	67.3%	58.3%
c. Others	2.8%	1.3%	2.3%
d. I don't know/No answer	8.4%	5.0%	7.1%

4. The Palestinian leadership is planning to head to the UN General Assembly next month in order to request an upgrade of their status to become a nonmember state. In your opinion, do you think this will be to the benefit of the Palestinian cause, to the detriment of the Palestinian cause, or neither to the benefit nor to the detriment of the Palestinian cause?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. This will be to the benefit of the Palestinian cause	47.9%	48.2%	48.0%
b. This will be to the detriment of the Palestinian cause	11.6%	13.1%	12.2%
c. Neither to the benefit nor to the detriment of the Palestinian cause	35.6%	35.6%	35.6%
d. I don't know/No answer	4.9%	3.1%	4.2%

5. There is a debate on the future of the PA whereby some people believe that dissolving the PA is necessary now while others believe that the perpetuation of the PA and maintaining it is a necessity. What do you think?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Dissolving the PA is necessary	26.8%	29.6%	27.8%
b. Perpetuating and maintaining the PA is a necessity	65.1%	64.9%	65.0%
c. I don't know/No answer	8.1%	5.5%	7.2%

6. According to the Palestinian Basic Law, the legislative and presidential elections should have been held three years ago. Do you favor holding elections this year under any circumstances, or do you favor holding elections only after reconciliation is completed?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Prefer holding elections soon under any circumstances	32.8%	38.2%	34.8%
b. Prefer holding elections only after reconciliation is completed	61.2%	60.2%	60.8%
c. I don't know/No answer	6.0%	1.6%	4.4%

FRONTLINE STATES

EGYPT

The domestic scene in Egypt this quarter continued to be dominated by the messy and highly contested post-Mubarak political transition. One of the thorniest unresolved issues—drafting a new constitution—remained, with clashes in Tahrir Square on 10/12 between supporters and opponents of the Muslim Brotherhood following

a protest originally intended to voice opposition to a perceived domination of the constitution-drafting process by Islamist groups. On 10/23, an Egyptian court referred the decision on whether to disband the 100-member assembly drafting the constitution to the country's highest court.

With regard to Egypt's relationship to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it was possible this quarter to identify both definite changes from the Mubarak era, as well as dimensions of the relationship with Israel and the U.S. marked by continuity. In comments to U.S. media on 9/23, Morsi said that the country's peace deal with Israel depended on the Jewish state's policies toward the Palestinians, and that the U.S. government needed to help create a Palestinian state to reduce anger in the region. In 10/2012, the country's new ambassador to Israel presented his credentials to Israeli pres. Shimon Peres, alongside his Jordanian counterpart, with Egypt's envoy expressing commitment to existing agreements (10/18). Egyptian officials were also believed to be behind 2 instances (10/25, 11/12) of unofficial truce between Israel and Palestinian resistance factions in the Gaza Strip. In the latter case, the "truce" broke down almost immediately when Israel assassinated Hamas commander Ahmad Jabari, launching Operation Pillar of Defense. On 11/14, Obama called Morsi to urge de-escalation, while Egypt strongly condemned the attack.

An issue of concern that prompted cooperation between the Egyptian government, the U.S., and Israel was the activities of armed, radical Islamist groups in the Sinai. On 8/16, one such group claimed responsibility for rockets fired into Israel the previous day and for a number of attacks on the gas pipeline between Egypt and Israel. In response, Morsi pledged that Egypt would continue to target "terrorists" in the Sinai Peninsula, working to that end with others, including Palestinians (8/17). By the end of 8/2012, there were reports of Israel and Egypt negotiating over a force increase in Sinai during meetings at the Kerem Shalom crossing (8/24); the coordination was confirmed (9/8) by an Egyptian army spokesperson following a claim of responsibility by a group calling itself the Mujahideen Shura Council

for 2 rockets fired the previous night from Sinai into Israel. In 9/2012, there was an uptick in violence, as gunmen attacked Egyptian security headquarters in northern Sinai, with 8 people wounded (9/17). A few days later (9/21), the IDF killed 3 militants on the Israel-Egypt border who had entered through a gap in the fence, with 1 Israeli soldier killed in the clash.

JORDAN

This quarter, Jordan was not involved in any efforts related to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. One development of note was the appointment on 9/28 of diplomat Walid Obeidat as the new ambassador to Israel, a position vacant since 2010 when the previous ambassador's term expired and he was not replaced. Obeidat presented his credentials to Peres on 10/18 at the same time as the new Egyptian ambassador.

Jordan continued to be impacted by the ongoing civil war in Syria, particularly in terms of the influx of refugees. By 9/2012, the UN estimated that there were more than 85,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan, with a noticeable increase at the end of 8/2012. In addition, the Jordanian military clashed (10/22) with suspected Islamic militants on the border with Syria, leaving 1 Jordanian soldier dead.

Domestically, King Abdullah, under pressure from a rise in gas prices, cancelled (9/4) a planned 10 percent increase following protests and opposition from parliamentarians. Economic-focused discontent bubbled over again in 11/2012, with violent protests in response to an announced increase in fuel prices leading to the death (11/14) of 1 protester as police stations were attacked. The public expressions of discontent (some of which were calls for regime change) took place as the country prepared for the elections (expected early 2013) to follow Abdullah's dissolution of parliament on 10/4. The following day (10/5), the Muslim Brotherhood organized a large rally in Amman, calling for more radical democratic change, with the group's leadership saying it would boycott an election held under the current laws.

LEBANON

There were no significant interventions by the Lebanese government regarding the Israeli-Palestinian peace process this quarter. Tensions between Israel and Hizballah were heightened in 10/2012, when the Lebanese group sent (10/6) an unmanned drone—later described by Hasan Nasrallah as a “reconnaissance aircraft”—over the Negev desert; the drone was shot down by the Israeli Air Force the same day. Nasrallah, taking responsibility for the drone a few days later (10/11), said that the parts had been manufactured in Iran and assembled in Lebanon. In a subsequent report submitted to the UNSC, Ban Ki-moon criticized the Hizballah drone as a “reckless provocation,” but also noted that Israel’s use of drones and fighter jets in Lebanese airspace constitutes a violation of sovereignty (10/18).

During the quarter, the civil war in Syria increasingly spilled over into Lebanon, provoking a rise in sectarian and political tensions. On 8/15, some 30 Syrians were kidnapped by a group claiming that a Lebanese relative had been seized by rebels in Syria. This sparked a wave of abductions, with Syrian fighters inside Lebanon reportedly seized by Shiite Lebanese. In late 8/2012, days of fighting between Sunni Muslims and Alawites in Tripoli led to a dozen deaths (8/22). On 9/27, U.S. and Lebanese government officials alleged that Hizballah had sent military advisers to help the Asad government in Syria. On 10/19, a bomb blast in Beirut killed Wisam al-Hasan, head of Lebanese domestic intelligence, as well as another 9 people and left more than 100 injured. In the aftermath, opposition politicians, including Sa’d al-Hariri, blamed the Syrian government; demonstrations across the country by Sunni Muslims followed. PM Najib Mikati voiced his suspicions that the killing was linked to al-Hasan’s role in uncovering Syrian involvement in a previous plot. Iran condemned (10/20) the blast, hinting that Israel was responsible. In the days following the assassination, 7 people were killed in exchanges of gunfire in Beirut and Tripoli, with the Lebanese army being deployed (10/22) to stop the violence.

SYRIA

The Syrian civil war continued to intensify this quarter, with serious consequences for the civilian population. Around 40,000 people had died in the fighting by the end of the quarter, with one report dated 10/18 claiming that around 28,000 Syrians had “disappeared” in the previous 19 months. The UN Human Rights Council has condemned human rights violations by the Syrian government (9/28), while international concern grew over the conduct of some of the armed opposition groups. On 9/27, the UN predicted that the total number of refugees fleeing Syria would reach 700,000 by the end of 2012. On Friday 11/9, around 11,000 Syrians were reported to have fled the county.

On 8/18, UN observers began to leave Damascus at the end of their mission in Syria. At the same time, Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi was appointed by the UN (8/17) and the Arab League (8/19) as the new peace envoy to Syria, replacing Kofi Annan. In 10/2012, Brahimi had little success with a proposed ceasefire for *‘Id al-Adha* which, while welcomed in theory by government (10/16) and opposition forces (10/17), was widely ignored as casualty-heavy clashes continued across the country (10/26–27, 10/29).

On 11/11, an umbrella coalition for opposition forces, named the Syrian National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces, was finalized in the Qatari capital Doha. The efforts had previously been criticized by the Syrian National Council since the largely-exile-based group lost influence to those on the ground within the new leadership council (11/1, 11/4). Within days, the new group had the backing of members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, France, Turkey, and the praise—though not explicit recognition—of Britain and Germany (11/12–14).

Palestinians in Syria

Palestinians in Syria became increasingly caught up in the civil war during the quarter, particularly when it came to fighting centered on Yarmuk refugee camp in Damascus. The camp is a stronghold of the pro-Asad faction the PFLP-General Command, while other Palestinians were reported to have joined

opposition groups. On 9/20, Syrian government forces were reported by PLO officials to have killed at least 18 Palestinians in Yarmuk, while on 11/4, the Syrian army shelled opposition forces inside Yarmuk causing a number of fatalities. Meanwhile, Syrian security forces sealed off the Damascus office of Hamas chief Khalid Mishal on 11/7, the premises of which were abandoned by the Hamas leadership earlier in the year. On 10/2, Syrian state television accused Mishal of “selling out” and being ungrateful.

Impact on Israel

On 9/25, the 1st sign that Syria’s civil war was spilling over into the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights appeared, with mortar shells fired by the Syrian army landing in the area, causing no damage or injuries. The Israeli military said that they were misfired shells intended to hit positions inside Syria. On 11/3, Israel filed a complaint with UN monitors after 3 Syrian tanks entered the demilitarized zone in the occupied Golan Heights. Just 2 days later, the IDF reported (11/5) that a bullet fired from inside Syria had hit one of its vehicles in the Golan Heights, causing no injuries. Mortar shells fired from inside Syria landed in the Golan Heights again on 11/8 and 11/11, prompting the IDF to fire back in the direction of a Syrian army mortar crew—an incident described by Israel Radio as the 1st direct engagement of the Syrian military on the Golan Heights since the 1973 war. On 11/14, Barak said that almost all the villages nr. the border with the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights were controlled by the Syrian opposition.

Almost inconsequential in the circumstances of the bloody civil war, Israeli newspaper *Yed’iot Abaronot* reported on 10/12 that in 2010 Netanyahu engaged in months of secret, U.S.-brokered discussions with Syria about a negotiated peace treaty including Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. The U.S. State Department confirmed that Netanyahu had relayed a message to Syrian pres. Bashar al-Asad, but Netanyahu denied the accuracy of the story.

REGIONAL AFFAIRS

This quarter there was no serious regional engagement with the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict, with most countries being focused on issues emerging from the uprisings of the last 2 years—whether in terms of internal strife and transition or in terms of positioning themselves with regard to critical focal points like Syria.

At a summit in Mecca, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation suspended (8/15) Syria’s membership due to the government’s violent suppression of the revolt. A fortnight later, the Arab League hosted (8/24) a meeting of the Syrian opposition in Cairo in an attempt to create a shared platform for disparate elements. These were signs of the Asad regime’s isolation in the region, leaving Iran as the Syrian government’s only real defender. This reality was highlighted at a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran on 8/30 when Morsi leveled strong criticism against the Asad regime and expressed his support for the opposition forces, prompting a walk-out by the Syrian delegation and anger from the Iranian hosts. In 11/2012, the Syrian opposition received support from across the region in the form of backing for the Syrian National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces, the new umbrella council finalized in Doha on 11/11.

Of note: There was a warming of relations between Turkey, Egypt, and Hamas. On 9/30, Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan hosted Morsi and Mishal at a conference of his ruling party. Erdogan, Morsi, and Mishal expressed their support for the Palestinian and Syrian people in their struggles against Israel and the Asad regime respectively.

TURKEY

The deterioration in Turkey’s relations with Syria continued, with a number of cross-border military engagements and strong rhetoric from Turkish leaders. On 10/20, a Turkish newspaper reported that Turkey’s military had fired on Syria 87 times and killed 12 Syrian soldiers in response to shells and mortar fire originating from inside Syria and landing in Turkey. Earlier in the month, the shelling of a Turkish town by Syrian government forces that killed 5 civilians was condemned in a unanimously-approved UNSC statement (10/4). On 10/14, Turkey

banned all Syrian aircraft from entering its airspace. The day before, Syria had banned Turkish aircraft.

IRAN

Prospects of an Israeli attack on Iran seemed somewhat reduced this quarter, with officials suggesting that at the very least, a decision would not have to be made until some point in 2013. On 8/16, Israeli pres. Shimon Peres warned against a unilateral Israeli military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, while the following month, Israel's opposition leader MK Shaul Mofaz (Kadima) said that Israel would not attack Iranian nuclear sites this year, and that the U.S. must take the lead for any attack on Iran (9/21). Netanyahu made headlines when he addressed the UNGA on 9/27 and literally drew a red line on a cartoon of a bomb to illustrate his claim that Iran would be capable of making a nuclear weapon within a year. In contrast, U.S. officials played down the notion that Iran was on the brink of acquiring a nuclear weapon, with Obama rejecting the Israeli call for a red line at that point. During the fall, after media reports that U.S. requests to use UK military bases for a buildup of forces had been rebuffed by London, the UK government clarified (10/26) that it did not believe military action against Iran to be appropriate at the moment. Several days later (10/30), and Barak said Iran had drawn back from its ambitions of building a nuclear weapon, adding (11/9) that Israel may have to decide in 2013 whether or not to launch a military attack. On 11/4, it was reported in the Israeli media that Netanyahu and Barak had given orders in 2010 for the IDF to prepare for hitting Iran's nuclear facilities, but that the orders were opposed and not carried out by the military leadership.

While military action seemed at least temporarily off the table, the sanctions regime continued to bite. The sanctions policy was strengthened by developments like the 8/30 report by the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) that Iran had installed three-quarters of the nuclear centrifuges it would need to complete an underground site for producing nuclear fuel. On 10/3, there were public protests in Tehran over the

country's economic woes, with the fall in value of the Iranian rial partly due to the sanctions. In response, Iranian officials were reported (10/4) to be offering new ideas for defusing the dispute over the country's nuclear program, plans that included ending the sanctions and suspending production of the most high enriched uranium. Yet on 10/14, the EU approved new sanctions targeting the country's banking sector, industry, and shipping—a move welcomed by Netanyahu.

In late 10/2012, the *NYT* claimed that the U.S. and Iran had agreed, in principle, to one-on-one negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. The White House denied (10/20) the report, confirming that it was prepared for bilateral talks, as yet unarranged. On 11/1, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Fereydoun Abbasi, announced that his country had finished installing centrifuges for enriching uranium at its underground facility in Fordo. Two days later (11/3), an Iranian member of parliament said that the country had suspended its enrichment of uranium stockpiles to the required level of purity needed to facilitate developing a nuclear device, a step presented as a "goodwill" gesture ahead of planned talks with the U.S. after the presidential elections. But shortly afterward, UN IAEA chief Yukiya Amano told (11/5) the UNGA that Iran was not cooperating with an investigation into suspected secret work on nuclear weapons, though he clarified that the IAEA was continuing to verify that declared nuclear material was not being diverted from peaceful purposes. Tensions rose when the Pentagon revealed on 11/8 that Iranian jets had fired on a U.S. drone over the Persian Gulf the previous week, missing the unmanned aircraft. Iran's DM confirmed (11/9) the attack, but said that the drone entered airspace over Iranian waters.

INTERNATIONAL

UNITED STATES

Barack Obama's electoral victory was portrayed as a diplomatic blow to Netanyahu, who during the campaign was widely seen as preferring the Romney ticket. (The role of staunchly pro-Israel

casino magnate Sheldon Adelson in supporting both the Republican candidate and Netanyahu had also been highlighted.) Yet while commentators suggested that a 2d Obama term might lead to greater pressure on a right-wing Israeli government, there were no immediate signs of a weakening in the relationship, with Obama offering (11/14) strong support to Netanyahu at the start of Operation Pillar of Defense.

On the diplomatic front, the U.S. continued its opposition to what are portrayed as "unilateral" moves on the part of the Palestinians, specifically including the UN upgrade bid. U.S. amb. to the UN Susan Rice summarized Washington's position on 10/15 when she said that the Palestinian bid for nonmember state observer status would "jeopardize" the peace process and complicate efforts to resume negotiations. On 10/21, the U.S. and Israeli militaries held their largest-ever joint exercise, focused on defending Israel from mass missile attacks.

U.S.-Iranian tensions continued, with the main difference between the public positions of the U.S. and Israel being the question of how to assess when the point of no return is reached with regard to the nuclear program. For example, when Netanyahu addressed the UNGA on 9/27, U.S. officials downplayed the notion that Iran was on the brink of achieving a nuclear weapon. In 10/2012, the *NYT* claimed that the U.S. and Iran had agreed in principle to one-on-one negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. The White House denied the report and confirmed it was prepared for, as yet unarranged, bilateral talks (10/20). Later that month, it was reported that U.S. requests to use UK military bases for a buildup of forces had been rebuffed by London (10/26). Shortly after the U.S. election, the Pentagon revealed (11/8) that Iranian jets had fired on a U.S. drone over the Persian Gulf, an attack confirmed by Iran's DM, who said the drone had entered airspace over Iranian waters.

RUSSIA

In contrast to the opposition of the U.S. and ambiguity of the EU, Russia supported the Palestinians' UN statehood bid. On 11/6, Russian FM Sergey Lavrov held talks with Abbas in Amman to

discuss the peace process, with negotiator Saeb Erekat expressing his thanks for Russia's backing of the Palestinians' push for nonmember observer state status. Russia, along with French and Swiss experts, also joined (11/11) the international investigation—organized by Qatar's Al Jazeera Satellite TV—into whether Yasir Arafat had been murdered.

EUROPEAN UNION

During this quarter, the EU was ambivalent regarding the Palestinians' UN statehood bid, with differences of opinion between member states being exposed. The EU was also lobbied by the U.S. government to oppose the Palestinian initiative on grounds that it would be bad for the peace process (10/1), a concern also expressed (10/11) by the Greek Dep. FM Dimitris Kourkoulas in 10/2012 when he said that the EU was advising the PA to be sure that the UN bid did not damage the peace process (10/11). In late 10/2012, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton visited Israel and the West Bank, meeting with Netanyahu and other officials, as well as Fayyad and Abbas (10/23). By 10/30, a PLO official was able to predict at least 12 "yes" votes from EU member states at the UNGA vote in 11/2012.

The EU expressed criticism of Israeli settlement growth on various occasions, typically prompted by announcements of tenders for settlement housing units. Ashton publicly condemned the planned expansion of Har Homa settlement (8/22), as well as the decision to approve 800 new houses in Gilo (10/19) and the publication of tenders for 1,200 new homes in East Jerusalem settlements in Pisgat Ze'ev and Ramot (11/6).

UNITED NATIONS

On 8/27, the UN published a significant report, the headline of which claimed that the Gaza Strip would no longer be "liveable" by 2020 (see Doc. A1 in *JPS* 166) unless urgent action were taken to improve basic infrastructure like water, power, health, and schooling. Upon its release, UN Humanitarian Coordinator Maxwell Gaylard called for the end of the blockade and isolation of

the territory. On 10/14, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry expressed alarm at attacks perpetrated by Jewish settlers against Palestinian farmers and farmland in the West Bank, citing reports of hundreds of destroyed olive trees during harvest season. Earlier in the quarter, Serry had warned (8/20) that the PA was losing legitimacy due to its inability to achieve political goals.

DONORS

With vigorous protests against rising living costs in the West Bank, the PA appealed (9/11) to donor countries to increase their aid. On 10/10, a PA

spokesperson told the media that international donors had only provided 40 percent of pledged aid for 2012, meaning that 150,000 PA employees had been warned that it was not known when they would receive their 9/2012 salaries (10/10). On 11/4, the United Arab Emirates donated \$42 million to the PA, while the EU, Sweden, and the Netherlands donated (11/12) \$24 million to help pay 10/2012 salaries and pensions. The Gaza Strip, meanwhile, was set to receive major reconstruction funds from Qatar, after the Gulf state's announcement (10/16) of a \$254 million plan, the largest such injection of aid since the end of Operation Cast Lead in 1/2009.



Zakaria Zubaidi, former head of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, arrives to Jenin refugee camp on 2 October 2012 following his release after a five-month prison term in a Palestinian prison in Jericho. He was charged with participating in an attack against the Jenin governor, which he denied, and no evidence was presented. (Saif Dahlah/AFP/Getty Images)