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Update on Conflict and Diplomacy

16 MAY–15 AUGUST 2013



COMPILED BY BEN WHITE

The Quarterly Update (QU) 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 QU. 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: Intense diplomatic efforts by U.S. Secy. of State John Kerry produce a breakthrough and restart direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations; settlement construction continues and threatens to scupper peace efforts; release of a small group of Palestinian prisoners as a positive gesture in the context of renewed talks; relatively low levels of violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with a few high-tension incidents (IDF raids and clashes in West Bank towns and refugee camps; sporadic Palestinian rocket fire); Fatah and Hamas remain at loggerheads, with no breakthrough in national unity efforts on the horizon; potential for civil unrest as a broad spectrum of opponents protest the Praver Plan.

THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

This quarter was marked by the 1st direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations since 2010, a breakthrough following intense shuttle diplomacy by U.S. Secy. of State John Kerry despite doubts within both the Israeli govt. and the Palestinian Authority (PA) about the framework for resuming talks. In the West Bank, levels of violence remained circumscribed, although Israel Defense Forces (IDF) raids on Palestinian communities, as well as clashes pursuant to protests, increased

tensions—as did continued and widespread settler attacks on Palestinians. The Gaza Strip-Israel border similarly saw no significant violent exchanges. A number of rockets were fired into s. Israel—none causing damage or casualties—prompting a tightening of Israeli restrictions on the territory and select air strikes.

PEACE PROCESS BREAKTHROUGH

The quarter began with a stalemate, as both Israelis and Palestinians refused each other's terms for recommencing direct talks (see QU in *JPS* 168). Faced with an impasse, Kerry pursued

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a strategy of intense shuttle diplomacy, meeting separately with senior Israeli and Palestinian leaders in an effort to close the gap.

Kerry's 1st trip to the region this quarter saw him begin with Oman on 5/20, followed by Jordan, Israel, and the West Bank. On 5/23, Kerry held separate talks with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, and Pres. Shimon Peres in Jerusalem, and with Palestinian pres. Mahmud Abbas in Ramallah. After 2 days of discussions, he proceeded to Amman on 5/27, where he held meetings with Livni and Netanyahu envoy Yitzhak Molcho, as well as with Abbas. Kerry left the region saying that he expected answers from both Netanyahu and Abbas within 1 or 2 weeks.

Both sides voiced eagerness to resume direct talks, with Abbas stating (6/4) his wish to start as soon as possible and Netanyahu informing (6/9) his cabinet that Israel was committed to reaching an agreement that would see the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state. At the same time, each side was accusing the other of obstructing the resumption of talks by insisting on unacceptable preconditions—an accusation Netanyahu made on several occasions (e.g., 6/10). Netanyahu, facing opposition from within his own coalition to offering concessions as part of resuming talks, told his cabinet that any future agreement with the Palestinians would be voted on in a national referendum (6/30). On 7/22, Abbas also announced that there would be a national referendum on any future deal.

Once again, it was the question of settlements that threatened to derail U.S. efforts to restart direct negotiations. On 5/30, Israel's Housing Ministry released a tender for the construction of 300 new homes and confirmed a decision to sell 797 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlements of Ramot and Moradot Gilo, respectively. A U.S. State Dept. spokesperson

described the move as “counterproductive,” while chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said it sabotaged Kerry's efforts. Israel “clarified” that the announcement was not for new construction but the republication of a tender previously issued (due to the nature of the bureaucratic process, some building projects get several announcements). On 6/13, Israeli officials confirmed plans for 1,000 new homes in the Bruchin and Itamar (West Bank) settlements, which the State Dept. called an “unhelpful” development. This last announcement came on the heels of a revelation by the Israeli NGO Peace Now that building starts for West Bank settlement homes had hit a 7-year high in the 1st quarter of 2013, according to the govt.'s own figures, with 865 housing starts compared to 313 for the same period in 2012. A few weeks later, the Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem was the focus of attention, with the Jerusalem Municipality and members of the Knesset Finance Cmte. approving (7/1) funding for infrastructure construction on housing tenders for 930 additional homes in the settlement. The work is part of a project approved in 8/2011 for around 1,000 housing units to further the development of Har Homa.

Meanwhile, Kerry returned to the region at the end of 6/2013, shuttling between Jerusalem and Amman or Ramallah for separate talks with Netanyahu and Abbas (6/27-30). During the 4-day trip, he held a total of 13 hours of talks with Abbas and Netanyahu. In a press conference he held at Ben Gurion Airport at the end of his trip, Kerry stated that his shuttle diplomacy had produced “real progress.” Middle East adviser Frank Lowenstein and State Dept. legal expert Jonathan Schwartz remained in the region to continue conversations with the head of Israel's National Security Council Yaakov Amidror and Molcho on how to break the logjam.

Two weeks later, Kerry returned to Amman (7/15), where he held talks with Jordanian and Arab League officials, followed by talks with Abbas (7/16). On 7/19, he announced that direct Israeli-Palestinian talks would begin, although he gave no particular framework or timetable for the discussions. UN Secy.-Gen. Ban Ki-moon and European Union (EU) Foreign Affairs chief Catherine Ashton both welcomed the news. Uncertainty about whether the negotiations would actually take place followed Kerry's announcement, with senior Fatah official Nabil Shaath claiming (7/21) that a return to direct negotiations was still subject to certain conditions (e.g., a halt in settlement construction), and Israeli economy minister Naftali Bennett insisting the same day that construction on Jewish settlements would continue whether or not there were talks. But after a week of back and forth between the Obama administration and Israeli and Palestinian officials, negotiators from both sides held their 1st direct meeting over an iftar meal at the State Dept. on 7/29. Present at the inaugural meeting were Kerry and the newly-appointed U.S. envoy Martin Indyk for the U.S., Molcho for Israel, and Saeb Erakat and Mohammed Shtayyeh for the Palestinians. At a press conference on 7/30, Kerry—flanked by Livni and Erakat—praised the 2 sides for their engagement and leadership, and announced a further round of talks within two weeks (see Doc. D1 in this issue). He added that both sides had agreed to keep the contents of the meetings confidential. On 8/1, U.S. Pres. Barack Obama called Netanyahu and Abbas to urge them to show goodwill and remain focused during the negotiations.

Two weeks later, on 8/15, Israeli and Palestinian officials held their 1st direct talks since 2010. The meeting in Jerusalem lasted for several hours, but its proceedings and details were not divulged.

As the quarter drew to a close, Israel made more announcements of settlement expansion. On 8/8, final approval was given for 1,086 settlement homes spread over 7 settlements in the West Bank, 920 of them new units and the remaining 166 to be legalized retroactively. In a letter to Kerry, Erakat wrote that continued settlement construction made it unlikely for renewed talks to be fruitful, but stopped short of threatening to pull out of the negotiations. In a press briefing in Washington, State Dept. spokesperson Jen Psaki said that the Obama administration was making its concerns known to Netanyahu. A few days later, on 8/11, Israel approved nearly 1,200 more homes for East Jerusalem and West Bank settlements, which Palestinian negotiator Shtayyeh called an Israeli attempt to destroy the viability of a two-state solution. Thus, with direct talks having begun, the quarter ended with thousands of new settlement housing units in various stages of construction set to be built on land under negotiation.

In the face of continued settlement construction and trumpeted announcements, the release of Palestinian prisoners was a necessary concession for Abbas to be able to proceed with the resumption of direct talks. Rumors of a prisoner release began in earnest in late 6/2013 (6/25, 6/28), even though Netanyahu's office continued to deny media reports that his cabinet was considering such releases as part of efforts to recommence direct negotiations (7/11). Not long afterward, however, Israel's Minister of International Relations Yuval Steinitz announced (7/20) that Israel would indeed release some Palestinian prisoners as part of a deal on the resumption of direct talks. The Israeli cabinet approved the deal in a 13-7-2 vote on 7/28, with 104 prisoners set for release in 4 stages. In the 1st stage, 26 Palestinian prisoners were released on 8/13.

Fourteen were deported to the Gaza Strip, while 12 returned to their homes in the West Bank.

WEST BANK VIOLENCE

The West Bank continued to experience a number of violent incidents between Israeli forces, Palestinians, and settlers, with the frequency and seriousness a source of alarm from the point of view of Israel, the PA, and United Nations (UN). It was now, however, seen as an indication that any kind of wider-scale uprising was imminent, due to what most analysts viewed as the continued close cooperation between the PA and Israel on security matters, and the characterization of attacks by Palestinians as being isolated incidents, without a connection to a particular armed faction. Most clashes occurred due to IDF raids in West Bank refugee camps and villages, or, due to confrontations between Jewish settlers and Palestinians.

On 5/17, there were further protests associated with Nakba Day (5/15), and the IDF shot and injured a number of Palestinians in various clashes. Outside Jalazun r.c. nr. Ramallah, Palestinians threw stones at Beit El settlement, and IDF forces shot and wounded 9 with live ammunition, none fatally. In the Abu Dis neighborhood of East Jerusalem, Palestinians opened a small hole in the separation wall and the IDF opened fire with rubber-coated metal bullets, causing a few, non-serious injuries. In al-‘Arub r.c. nr. Hebron, the IDF shot and wounded 2 Palestinians with rubber-coated metal bullets after residents threw stones at an army patrol. In Bayt Umar village nr. Hebron, the IDF shot and wounded 1 Palestinian with a rubber-coated metal bullet, in clashes sparked by an army patrol. In addition, there were also clashes between Jewish settlers and Palestinians, as settlers set fire to

lands of Nablus area villages. This day (5/17) of violence was, to an extent, illustrative of the foci of current tensions in the West Bank and likely sources of conflict (e.g., refugee camps, IDF raids, clashes with settlers, protests centered on specific events). Such developments were also reflected in the report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) titled “Buying Time? Money, Guns and Politics in the West Bank” (5/29). The ICG noted “rising instability and insecurity” in the West Bank and suggested that deep-rooted problems to do with the PA’s legitimacy crisis and economic stagnation could lead to a serious escalation over time.

For the rest of the quarter, an IDF presence in Palestinian towns and refugee camps were the most common source of violent and in some cases fatal confrontations with Palestinian residents. On 6/1, Israeli soldiers positioned at a watchtower shot and injured a Palestinian in Aida r. c. in Bethlehem. On 6/28, an IDF raid in Qalandia r.c. sparked clashes, with the IDF shooting and wounding 4 civilians. Then on 7/1, Israeli soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian man in Dura village nr. Hebron during stone-throwing at an IDF patrol. Meanwhile, there were also numerous cases of settler-Palestinian clashes (see “Settler-Related Violence” below), although there were no large-scale confrontations as seen in the previous quarter.

PROTESTING PRAWER

A source of growing tension within Israel—and which this quarter also mobilized protests in the oPt and beyond—was the pending Israeli govt. plans for the development of the Negev, plans that will see the forced displacement of tens of thousands of Bedouin Palestinian citizens currently living in so-called unrecognized villages (see Amara in *JPS* 168). The Praver, or Praver-Begin, Plan, named after

the committees that drew up the proposals, has slowly progressed through the legislative process, with opposition and concern expressed along the way by Israeli human rights groups, the Bedouin community itself, and international actors such as the EU. This quarter, the Knesset passed (6/24) the 1st reading of the Praver Law for the development of the Negev, which will mean the forced displacement of an estimated 40,000 Bedouin citizens. Two weeks before the vote, thousands marched (6/13) in Beersheba against the plan, on the same day as a community-wide general strike by Bedouin Palestinians. Subsequently, grassroots activists from the Palestinian community inside Israel called for a “Day of Rage” on 8/1, which was observed by protesters inside Israel, the West Bank, and Palestinians and solidarity activists in demonstrations worldwide. On 8/9, the regular Friday demonstration in Bil’in in the West Bank was held in solidarity with Bedouin citizens of Israel resisting the Praver Plan. While the plan looks set to proceed in the Knesset’s winter session, the joint actions between Palestinian citizens of Israel and those under military occupation is a phenomenon worth taking note of, as is the potential for much greater civil unrest and opposition among the Bedouin should the scale and pace of expulsions accelerate.

OCCUPATION DATA AND TRENDS

Five Palestinians were killed this quarter as a result of Israeli actions (down from 10 Palestinians last quarter). As of 8/15, the deaths this quarter brought the comprehensive death toll since the 2d intifada began in 9/2000 to 8,203 Palestinians (including 51 Palestinian citizens of Israel and 19 unidentified Arab cross-border infiltrators), 1,124 Israelis (356 IDF soldiers and security personnel, 227 settlers, and 537

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 (e.g., ailing Palestinians who died while being denied access to medical care and Palestinians killed in smuggling tunnel accidents).

Overview of the Violence

There were no intense periods of violent conflict during this quarter; however, there were widespread low-level violent clashes, particularly in the West Bank. There, the violence that existed was largely on account of IDF raids in Palestinian communities, as well as many settler attacks on Palestinians and their property (and a far fewer number of Palestinian attacks on Jewish settlers). With regard to settler attacks, UN OCHA recorded (8/23) in their 7/2013 monthly report that in the 1st half of 2012, Jewish settlers had damaged 7,272 Palestinian-owned trees and saplings. While Palestinian deaths remained low, UN OCHA noted at the end of 6/2013 that throughout 2013 to date, some 2,640 Palestinians had been injured by IDF forces across the West Bank (1-6/2013)—the highest monthly average since OCHA began collecting such records in 2005. The vast majority of these injuries were sustained during protests.

While the Gaza-Israel border was quiet overall—at least in terms of any wide-scale militaristic confrontation—there were a number of projectiles fired from Palestinians inside the Strip. On 6/23, Palestinians fired 6 rockets into s. Israel, causing no damage or injuries, with 2 intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system. In response, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) struck 4 targets in the Gaza Strip belonging to Islamic Jihad, causing 1 injury and property damage. There were

further rocket attacks of 1 or 2 projectiles each on 7/11, 7/18, 7/22, 7/30, and 8/7. On 8/13, Palestinians fired 2 rockets with 1 falling within the Strip and the other landing in s. Israel, not causing any damage or injuries. In response, the IDF launched an air strike at night, with no reported injuries or damage.

The Israeli military killed 2 Palestinians this quarter: 1 in the West Bank and 1 in the Gaza Strip (a further 3 Palestinians died in tunnel-related accidents). The former was killed on 7/2 in Dura village nr. Hebron, during clashes sparked by an IDF raid. The Palestinian killed in Gaza was shot by the IDF as he tried to cross the border fence nr. al-Bureij r.c.

Movement and Access Issues

During this quarter, freedom of movement and access for Palestinians in the West Bank remained largely unchanged. With regard to the Gaza Strip, Israeli authorities' approach to the crossings varied, with restrictions tightened in response to Palestinian armed attacks, while on the s. border, the Egyptian security forces made Rafah an increasingly difficult place from which to enter or exit Gaza.

On 6/9, Israel allowed a partial opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing so that 220 truckloads of goods destined for the commercial, agricultural, and aid sectors could enter the Gaza Strip. But Kerem Shalom, along with the Erez crossing, was closed again in response to the rocket attacks on 6/23 (see "Overview of the Violence" above). The crossings remained closed for 3 days, reopening on 6/26. According to UN OCHA, imports through Kerem Shalom increased by 33% in 7/2013 before dropping in 8/2013. The monthly number of truckloads of goods entering Gaza was around 5,000 during this quarter.

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip suffered greatly during this quarter due to the political instability

in Egypt, which caused unpredictable closures of the Rafah crossing imposed by the Egyptian authorities. On 5/17-22, Egyptian security officials enforced an unofficial closure of Rafah to protest the kidnapping of Egyptian officials in Sinai. Citing the security situation, the authorities also closed Rafah completely on 7/5, reopening it partially on 7/10. According to UN OCHA, the average number of people crossing daily in 7/2013 was 540, compared to 1,860 for 6/2013. A serious and sustained crackdown on the smuggling tunnels by the Egyptian military exacerbated Gaza's difficulties by cutting off a vital lifeline to the territory. By the end of 7/2013, 43% of essential medicine items were either at zero or low-stock in Gaza's Central Drug Store.

Israeli forces continued to use live ammunition against Palestinian fishermen working off the coast of Gaza, as well as targeting farmers and scrap-metal or gravel collectors close to the border fence in the so-called "buffer zone." Attacks on fishermen occurred every day from 5/19 to 5/25, and on 5/27, 6/2, 6/7, 6/18, 6/19, 7/3, 7/17, 7/27, 8/6 (injuring 2), 8/11, and 8/13 (injuring 3). In the buffer zone, the IDF fired at Palestinians on 6/1 (injuring 1), 6/10 (injuring 1), 6/13, 6/14, 7/14 (injuring 1), 7/25 (injuring 1), 7/27 (injuring 1), and 8/11 (injuring 1). The situation improved modestly for fishermen, however, as Israel's military announced that fishing limits in force since 2010 had been extended to 6 nautical miles from the Gaza coast (5/21).

Regular Protests in the Occupied Territories

Non-violent demonstrations in the West Bank against the occupation, settlements, and the separation wall continued, in most villages where such protests have become routine. Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals took part in demonstrations in villages and areas nr.

Ramallah (Bil'in, Budrus, Nabi Salih, Ni'lin, al-Shakara), Bethlehem (al-Ma'sara), and nr. Qalqilya (Kafr Qaddum). IDF soldiers typically responded with force (tear gas, rubber-coated bullets, and live ammunition), with serious injuries being inflicted on 5/24, 5/31, 6/7, 6/14, 6/21, 6/28, 7/5, 7/19, 7/26). Many of the injuries were caused by tear gas canisters fired as projectiles.

Settler-Related Violence

This quarter saw a slight reduction in settler attacks on Palestinians and Palestinian-owned property and agricultural assets. There were 106 such attacks, down from 117 last quarter, but still a significant increase over the quarter before that, which saw 67 attacks. There were also 11 reported attacks by Palestinians on settlers. In addition to small-scale incidents targeting Palestinian farmland (6/3, 6/6, 6/7, 6/25, 6/30), Jewish settlers carried out large-scale attacks around Nablus, destroying about 100 olive trees with toxic chemicals on 5/25, another 300 by arson on 6/15, and cutting down a further 1,000 trees nr. Nablus on 7/1. Settlers also set fire to over 400 olive trees nr. Bethlehem on 7/21 and on 7/7 pumped wastewater onto Palestinian agricultural lands in Wadi Fukin village nr. Bethlehem. Settlers also attacked Palestinian homes and vehicles (5/29, 6/13, 6/20, 6/26, 7/6, 8/12), often including "price-tag" graffiti, as well as shepherds, farmers, and laborers (6/22, 7/20, 7/31).

Demolitions and Confiscations

Approximately 113 demolitions were reported this quarter, up from 91 in the previous period, with some 275 Palestinians displaced. Demolitions of both residential and agricultural structures occurred throughout the quarter, particularly in East Jerusalem (5/21, 5/29) and the Jordan Valley (e.g., 5/27, 6/27, 7/8).

According to UN OCHA, 6/2013 saw the 2d largest number of demolitions in a single month for the year to date. A total of 69 Palestinian-owned structures were destroyed in Area C for lack of the right permit, displacing some 100 people, including 37 children. Another 64 people lost homes and were displaced as a result of the demolition of the herding communities of Khirbet ar-Ras al-Ahmar and al-Hadidya in the Jordan Valley. In early 7/2013, UN OCHA's monthly report documented a 14% increase in the number of structures demolished and a 33% increase in number of people displaced in the 1st half of 2013 compared with the same period the previous year. The percentage increase in displacement was especially notable in East Jerusalem, with a 400% spike in the number of Palestinians displaced between 1/2013 and 6/2013 compared to the same period in 2012.

INTRA-PALESTINIAN DYNAMICS

Following former PM Salam Fayyad's resignation (see QU in *JPS* 168), the main development in internal Palestinian politics this quarter was Abbas's appointment of Rami Hamdallah, pres. of An-Najah University as the new PM (6/2). Though welcomed by Kerry, the decision was condemned by Hamas, with spokesperson Fawzi Barhoum stating that Abbas should have implemented the national reconciliation agreement signed in 5/2013 (see QU in *JPS* 168) rather than make a unilateral appointment. Hamdallah's 24-member cabinet remained mostly unchanged, with 2 notable exceptions—the appointment of 2 deputy premiers, Ziad Abu Amr and Mohammed Mustafa, and a new finance minister, Shukri Bishara. At the swearing-in ceremony in Ramallah on 6/6, Abbas told Hamdallah's

cabinet that he expected the new govt. to remain in place until an agreement was reached with Hamas on when to hold elections (see “National Reconciliation” below). But events took a somewhat farcical turn when no more than 2 weeks later, and after only 2 official cabinet sessions, Hamdallah submitted his resignation (6/20). Hamdallah’s decision was attributed to his unhappiness about his restricted powers and differences with his newly appointed deputies, Abu Amr and Mustafa, both of whom were close advisers of Abbas. Though Abbas did not immediately respond publicly, on 6/23 he accepted the resignation but asked him to stay on as head of the interim govt. until a replacement was found. On 8/13, with no progress on the national reconciliation front, Abbas asked Hamdallah to form a new govt. within 5 weeks.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

Efforts to advance the national reconciliation plan agreed on in Cairo on 4/10 (see QU in *JPS* 168) stalled this quarter, with the lack of progress due to the turmoil in Egypt and to the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks to which Hamas remained opposed. Discussions held on 5/21-22 in Cairo to prepare the ground for elections, as well as a 6/4 meeting in Gaza between Fatah officials Shaath and Faisal Abu Shahla and Hamas’s Imad Alami and Ghazi Hamada remained fruitless, leading Islamic Jihad’s Abu Imad al-Rifaei to state that neither Hamas nor Fatah appeared serious about healing the rift (5/24).

Upon his appointment as PM in early 6/2013, Hamdallah had said that Abbas would form a new national unity govt. on the basis of an agreement between Hamas and Fatah by 8/14, but as time passed, this looked increasingly unlikely. On 7/16, Shtayyeh warned that the formation of a new govt. was Hamas’s “last

chance for national reconciliation,” a statement echoed (7/18) by Azzam al-Ahmad, the head of the Fatah delegation to the reconciliation talks. By the time the mid-8/2013 deadline arrived, however, still no deal had been struck, and when the quarter ended, there was general acceptance that a national reconciliation agreement was not even on the horizon.

Given Egypt’s key role in efforts to try and secure an agreement between Fatah and Hamas, the political upheaval in Cairo was an obvious setback for intra-Palestinian negotiations. At the end of the quarter, Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Cmte. member Wasel Abu Yousef said (8/15) that Fatah would have to wait for a resolution of Egypt’s political crisis before proceeding with national unity efforts. Egypt aside, the deep divergences between Fatah and Hamas regarding the peace process were another obstacle to a potential unity deal. The Fatah-dominated PA’s decision to resume direct talks with Israel was unequivocally condemned by Hamas officials, with Barhoum describing (7/20) it as a “disaster” endangering reconciliation prospects. A senior Hamas official, Mahmoud Zahar, expressed the same sentiment at a press conference in Gaza on 8/12 when he characterized the resumption of peace talks as “futile” and said that Abbas had “no legitimacy” to represent the Palestinian people at such talks.

This quarter also saw Fatah and Hamas publicly clashing over other issues. On 7/31, PA Minister for Waqf Affairs Mahmoud Habash published a Facebook status saying that ending Hamas’s control of the Gaza Strip—either through national unity or by a revolt against its rule—was a patriotic duty. Hamas, meanwhile, alleged that it had uncovered documents showing that Fatah was leading a media disinformation and smear campaign against it, linking it to Islamist

violence in Egypt. Fatah dismissed the documents as fake. Politically-motivated harassment and arrests also continued, with security forces in the Gaza Strip raiding (8/11) the homes of several Fatah officials and detaining them for questioning.

INTERNAL GOVERNANCE

Aside from national reconciliation, domestic Palestinian politics this quarter saw complaints of attacks on freedom of the press and moderate protests against PA economic policies. In its annual report published on 5/22, the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights noted a 10% uptick in violation incidents by the PA and Hamas governments in their respective jurisdictions, including torture, prevention of public assembly, deaths in custody, and extrajudicial executions. A few weeks later, Hamas announced (6/22) the execution of 2 Palestinians found guilty of being Israeli informants in the Gaza Strip (6/22).

There were a number of incidents targeting media workers this quarter, including the brief detention and interrogation on 5/18 by the PA's General Intelligence Security of 2 journalists, 1 of whom was Ramallah-based Haroun Abu Arrah who had previously been arrested for "insulting" Abbas. On 6/4, PA security also arrested a Bethlehem-based journalist on the grounds that he stirred up sectarian tensions by releasing a statement falsely attributed to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. In the Gaza Strip, the Hamas govt. ordered (7/25) the closure of the territory's Ma'an News Agency office and Al-Arabiya's TV bureau, summoning the Ma'an bureau chief for questioning a few days later (7/30). According to anonymous Hamas sources, the allegation against Ma'an was that it had spread false rumors about the Hamas organization regarding events in Egypt.

There were also continued rumblings of discontent about the PA's economic policies, with a strike by doctors in public hospitals and a protest by the doctors union, which led to the implementation of a 2010 agreement on bonuses. There were also demonstrations (6/1) in Nablus and Bethlehem protesting the high cost of living and an increase in value-added tax.

Overall, the big picture remained gloomy for the PA, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted (7/4) a slowdown in economic growth to 4.25% for 2013, though a little headway expected on cutting the roughly 24% unemployment level. The IMF report also estimated a \$1.7 billion deficit in the PA's budget for 2013 due to a shortfall in existing donor commitments. On 8/3, the EU and the Netherlands stepped in to help with the PA's 7/2013 payroll, contributing a total of €10.9 million (\$14.9 million), of which 90% was covered by the EU Commission. The Netherlands made an additional donation of €1.5 million (\$2 million) to meet payroll for the police and civil defense departments.

PALESTINIAN OPINION

The following data was excerpted from a poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) on June 13-15, 2013. Results are based on a survey of 1,270 men and women from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. This was the 48th poll in a series, and the complete data can be found on PSR's website at www.pcpsr.org.

1. Do you believe that a two-state solution with an independent Palestinian state is no longer viable due to settlement expansion or is still viable as settlements

can be evacuated when an agreement is reached?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Certainly no longer viable	17.3%	21.7%	19.0%
b. No longer viable	37.8%	39.8%	38.6%
c. Remains viable	35.4%	29.0%	33.0%
d. Certainly remains viable	5.3%	7.5%	6.2%
e. Don't know/No answer	4.1%	2.1%	3.3%

2. Do you support or oppose the establishment of a confederation with Jordan now or in the future after the end of the Israeli occupation?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Support the establishment of such a confederation now	29.9%	31.7%	30.6%
b. Support the establishment of such a confederation after ending the Israeli occupation	16.6%	35.3%	23.7%
c. Oppose the establishment of such a confederation now or in the future	49.2%	25.0%	40.0%
d. Don't know/No answer	4.3%	8.0%	5.7%

3. If PLC [Palestinian Legislative Council] elections were to take place today, which of the following parties would you vote for?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Hamas	24.0%	37.8%	29.5%
b. Fatah	41.3%	41.0%	41.2%
c. Other lists combined	9.3%	7.3%	8.5%
d. Don't know/Undecided	25.4%	13.9%	20.8%

4. If new presidential elections were to take place today, and the competition was between Marwan Barghouti, Ismail Haniyeh, and Mahmud Abbas, whom would you vote for?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Marwan Barghouti	34.7%	34.7%	34.7%
b. Ismail Haniyeh	27.0%	40.8%	32.5%
c. Mahmud Abbas	30.7%	21.9%	4.5%
d. Don't know/No answer	7.6%	2.6%	5.6%

5. Given the ups and downs, the progress and the setbacks in the Fatah-Hamas dialogue, what are your expectations for the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Unity will resume in the near future	15.3%	19.1%	16.8%
b. Unity will resume but will take a long time	43.5%	45.9%	44.4%
c. Unity will not resume and two separate entities will emerge	37.2%	32.9%	35.6%
d. Don't know/No answer	4.0%	2.0%	3.2%

6. Do you support or oppose the resignation of Salam Fayyad as prime minister?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Certainly agree	18.5%	23.0%	20.2%
b. Agree	51.6%	38.8%	46.7%
c. Disagree	19.3%	24.9%	21.5%
d. Certainly disagree	1.0%	4.9%	2.5%
e. Don't know/No answer	9.6%	8.3%	9.1%

FRONTLINE STATES

EGYPT

This quarter saw intense political turmoil in Egypt, with protests, street violence, and the forced removal of Pres. Mohamed Morsi by the Egyptian military—in addition to continued routine attacks on security forces in Sinai and the army's counterinsurgency campaign in response.

Tensions mounted during 6/2013, with Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court ruling (6/2) that both the interim parliament and the 100-member panel set up to draft the new constitution were illegal. Meanwhile, Morsi appointed (6/16) 17 governors across the country, 7 of them members of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party. Low-level violence and street clashes continued, and Egyptians took to the streets en masse (6/30) to express their opposition to the Morsi presidency. As many as 4 million people were reported to have participated in protests across the country, with some news reports putting the figure as high as 20 and even 30 million. Following this show of public disapproval, the Egyptian military issued (7/1) a 48-hour ultimatum to Morsi to meet the demands of protesters or face the army's intervention; hundreds of thousands of Morsi supporters and opponents took to the streets again. Morsi rejected the ultimatum (7/2), insisted on the legitimacy of his govt., and warned of chaos if he were forcibly removed.

However, on 7/3, Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced the suspension of the constitution and the ousting of Morsi, who was arrested and taken to an unknown location. Al-Sisi appointed Adly Mansour, head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, as interim president for an indefinite period of time, saying that

presidential and parliamentary elections would follow in due course. Al-Sisi addressed the nation flanked by a "symbolically-loaded panel" featuring religious leaders, independent politician Mohamed El-Baradei, and a representative of Tamarod (which drove the anti-Morsi protests).

Al-Sisi's announcement was followed by violent clashes between supporters and opponents of the Morsi regime, and hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood members were detained. That same day (7/3), 30 people were killed and hundreds were wounded in Cairo, Alexandria, and other cities, as security forces cracked down on opponents of the coup. On 7/4, the supreme leader of the Brotherhood, Mohamed Badie, was arrested on charges of inciting violence. Obama's initial response was to express concern about the military's actions, but the written statement issued by the White House stopped short of outright condemnation. Violent clashes continued on 7/5, with some 2 dozen more killed in Cairo and Alexandria, prompting U.S. State Dept. spokesperson Jen Psaki to condemn the violence and urge peaceful political reconciliation. Violent, large-scale street clashes continued through 7/8, when Egyptian soldiers killed around 50 pro-Morsi supporters camped outside the Republican Guard barracks in Cairo where the ousted president was believed to be held.

As events unfolded, behind-the-scenes discussions continued between high-ranking officials, notably U.S., Israeli, and Egyptian chiefs of staff Gen. Martin Dempsey, Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz, and Lt. Gen. Sedki Sobhi, who consulted by phone on 2 consecutive days (7/4, 7/5). On 7/6, U.S. Defense Secy. Chuck Hagel also held phone conversations with al-Sisi; few details about the contents of the discussions were released, but Pentagon spokesperson George Little revealed in a

statement that Hagel emphasized the need for a peaceful civilian transition. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), both backers of the Egyptian military, pledged \$5 billion and \$3 billion of economic aid, respectively (7/9).

Post-military intervention politics meant a crackdown on the Brotherhood and the unveiling of a new road map to the ballot box. On 7/8, Mansour issued a timetable for parliamentary and presidential elections to be held as early as 2014. On 7/14, the newly appointed interim PM Hazem el-Bablawi filled senior posts in his new cabinet, with former Amb. to the U.S. Nabil Fahmy as FM and El-Baradei as VP. That day, U.S. Dep. Secy. of State Bill Burns arrived in Cairo for talks with officials of the interim govt., as well as civil society and business leaders, and warned (7/15) against political repression of Muslim Brotherhood supporters. Mansour moved quickly to appoint (7/20) a 10-member commission of judges and legal experts to make recommendations on amendments to the Brotherhood-drafted constitution within 30 days. A 2d committee was to review the recommendations and the changes would be voted on in a national referendum.

However, even as these political developments moved forward, demonstrations continued, with another bloody episode on 7/23 leading to the death of 12 people in street fighting between Morsi supporters and opponents. On 7/27, Egyptian security forces killed an estimated 80 people in various attacks on supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood across Cairo, and just days later, the Interior Ministry issued (8/3) a warning (8/3) to Brotherhood members to evacuate protest camps in Cairo. This last warning came after weeks of growing tension surrounding encampments set up by coup opponents, especially in Rabaa Square, where

residents complained of disruption to life in the neighborhood. Then, on 8/14, Egyptian security forces launched a large-scale attack on a protest camp of Muslim Brotherhood supporters in Cairo, sparking clashes in the capital and other cities, including Alexandria, where more than 600 people were killed and thousands injured. Govt. and other sources (with supporting film footage to back their claims) alleged that some Brotherhood supporters were using firearms. However, a majority of the casualties were unarmed protesters. In apparent reprisal attacks, dozens of Christian sites across Egypt were vandalized and set on fire, including churches and Copt-owned businesses.

Kerry said that the violence had dealt a “serious blow” to political reconciliation efforts, comments echoed by White House spokesperson Josh Earnest. Arab leaders were divided concerning the bloody developments in Egypt, with Turkey, Iran, and Qatar condemning the violent crackdown, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE backing the military. In Palestinian circles, too, opinion was divided. Abbas congratulated Mansour on his appointment and praised the Egyptian army’s action. Hamas, meanwhile, though clearly opposed to the forced removal of the Morsi regime, its ally, issued a carefully worded statement so as not to alienate the Egyptian military given its tight control over the Rafah border.

In the Sinai, attacks by suspected armed jihadist groups on Egyptian security forces became routine during this quarter. This included the kidnapping of 7 officers (5/16) who were subsequently released unharmed (5/22). Throughout the quarter, gunmen frequently attacked police stations and military bases, especially in al-Arish. Attacks on 5/20, 5/22, and 7/16 caused no fatalities, but security forces suffered 24 deaths during the

period: 6/9 (1 dead), 7/5 (5 dead), 7/7 (1 dead), 7/12 (1 dead), 7/18 (2 dead), 7/21 (3 dead), 8/5 (3 dead), 8/6 (1 dead), and 8/15 (7 dead).

In response to violence that came close to being a full-blown insurgency, there was open coordination between the Egyptian and Israeli militaries, not least to facilitate the deployment of Egyptian armored vehicles nr. the Gaza Strip on 7/2.

On 8/10, 5 suspected Islamic militants were killed nr. Rafah in Egypt, in what the group in question, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, as well as anonymous Egyptian officials, said was a drone strike carried out by the Israeli military. The strike also destroyed a rocket launcher directed toward Israel, but there were no reports out of Israel confirming or denying news of the drone strike. Meanwhile, the Egyptian military launched (7/27) a wider-scale offensive of its own in the Sinai, which by 8/7 had killed 60 fighters and resulted in more than 100 arrests, according to the army. While some of the jihadist activity in Sinai has been attributed to groups targeting Israel—such as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis and the Mujahiddin Shura Council—the escalation and 7/2013 offensive was very much tied to internal Egyptian developments and the military's removal of Morsi.

JORDAN

This quarter saw Jordan more directly involved in both the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the spillover from the Syrian civil war, with no notable developments on the domestic front. On 5/26, Jordan hosted a meeting of the World Economic Forum that focused on the benefits of peace and which included speeches by Kerry, as well as Peres and Abbas (see Doc. D1 in this *JPS* issue). As stated above, Kerry was in Amman 4 times during the quarter (in 5/2013, 6/2013, 7/2013)

to meet with Israeli and PA officials, as well as with King Abdallah of Jordan (6/27), and finally Arab League officials (7/15) in the aim of moving the process forward. Aside from its role in the resumption of negotiations, Jordan helped inaugurate a new, Japanese-funded industrial complex in Jericho (7/26), with Jordanian interior minister Hussein Majali attending the event alongside Israeli minister of energy and water Silvan Shalom, Japanese FM Fumio Kishida, and PA Interior Minister Said Abu Ali.

The main impact of the Syrian conflict on Jordan continued to be the humanitarian refugee crisis. The kingdom's burden seemed to have eased this quarter, however, with the gov't. claiming that 60,000 Syrian refugees had returned to Syria (5/29)—an indication of the difficult conditions the Syrians had to endure in Jordan's sprawling refugee camps.

Canada became the latest country to contribute to the financial cost of supporting the refugee population in Jordan, with a pledge of \$98.4 million to be disbursed over 3 years and applied toward enhancing security in the camps (6/17). The authorities also reported having thwarted arms smuggling attempts from Syria into Jordan, citing 1 such attempt on 8/1, and another on 8/7 which involved anti-tank and surface-to-air missiles.

Citing the risk of a Syrian spillover, Washington decided to keep F-16 fighter jets and Patriot missile batteries in place (6/15) following its annual joint military exercise with Jordan (6/9). The joint exercise involved over 4,500 U.S. troops, as well as 3,000 Jordanian and 500 British soldiers.

LEBANON

Serious sectarian violence in Lebanon continued this quarter, as spillover from the Syrian conflict showed no signs of abating.

In Tripoli, where fighting had already claimed dozens of lives in the previous 3 months (see QU in *JPS* 168), clashes (5/19-23) between Sunni and Alawite gunmen led to the death of 18 people (including 2 Lebanese soldiers), with another 170 wounded. The violence this quarter also extended to Beirut, as a car bomb targeting a Hizballah stronghold in the s. outskirts of the city injured over 50 people (7/9); another, more devastating attack on 8/15 killed 20 and wounded 120, again in Beirut's s. suburbs.

Responsibility for the fatal car bomb was claimed by a group calling itself Brigades of Aisha, and both attacks were seen as retaliation for Hizballah's intervention on the side of the Syrian regime. Hizballah leader Shaykh Hasan Nasrallah showed no sign of backing down from this position, or of pulling his forces from Syria itself, where they had been fighting the rebels since 5/23. On 5/25, he stated that the fall of the Bashar al-Asad govt. would be a disaster for the resistance against Israel and a victory for U.S. and Israeli interests: "If Syria [the al-Asad regime] falls, so will Palestine, the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem." There were also incidents of cross-border violence, with rockets fired from inside Syria landing in the n. Biqa' Valley (6/1), including an attack on the town of Hermel where 4 people were wounded (6/11). In the context of these security concerns, the Lebanese legislature postponed (5/30) parliamentary elections, extending its current term until 11/2014. The decision was supported by 97 of 128 legislators, a 75% majority.

Lebanon's border with Israel remained generally quiet, with few incidents of tension. Reports of rockets fired into Israel on 5/26 were denied by the IDF after it failed to find the impact site or evidence of a projectile landing in Israeli territory. A week later (6/2), IAF planes conducted low-altitude fly-overs of the Biqa' Valley and other parts of e. Lebanon. The most

notable incident, however, came on 8/7, when 4 Israeli soldiers were wounded by an explosion on the Lebanese side of the Blue Line after an IDF patrol crossed into Lebanon nr. the town of al-Labbouneh. There was confusion about the exact nature of the incident, and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) opened an investigation.

SYRIA

During this quarter, the Syrian situation remained deadlocked, with neither the govt. nor rebel forces making a significant military breakthrough, and the violence continuing to impact the Palestinian refugee population. On 7/24, Syrian govt. forces launched a rocket attack on Yarmuk r. c., killing an estimated 15 Palestinian civilians. They also closed the 1 remaining checkpoint in and out of the camp, barring any flow of goods and people and tightening the blockade already in force. International efforts to bring about peace talks between the al-Asad regime and the opposition remained stalled. The G8, holding its 2-day summit in Northern Ireland on 6/17-18, issued a declaration in favor of peace talks in Geneva aimed at creating a transitional coalition govt. in Syria, but could not agree on a unified statement regarding al-Asad's future. On 7/2, after meeting with Russian FM Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of a security conference in Brunei, Kerry told reporters that a proposed peace conference on Syria would not happen before 9/2013, at the earliest.

The main focus of international engagement with the Syrian crisis this quarter centered on war crimes. On 5/29, the UN Human Rights Council passed (36-1) a res. condemning the role of foreign fighters in the conflict and calling for an urgent investigation into alleged crimes by Syrian govt. forces and Hizballah fighters

during the battle of Qusair. On 6/14, attention turned to the use of chemical weapons, with U.S. Amb. to the UN Susan Rice announcing that the Obama administration had determined that sarin gas had been used in a govt. attack on Aleppo on 3/19 and that unidentified chemical weapons were also used on 5/14 and 5/23.

Meanwhile, the West's approach to opposition forces remained uncertain. During talks in Brussels, EU foreign ministers failed (5/27) to reach an agreement on supplying arms to the rebels, but lifted the arms embargo to the opposition, thus freeing up member states like Britain and France to send weapons on their own if they so choose. Later, a meeting of the Friends of Syria group in Doha produced (6/22) an agreement to give urgent military support to opposition forces confronting both a regime counteroffensive, as well as jihadist fighters. On 5/3, the UN Security Council added Jabhat al-Nusra, an al-Qa'ida-linked rebel group operating in Syria, to a UN sanctions list. On a humanitarian level, international efforts continued to struggle with the scale of the emergency. On 6/7, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres told a news conference in Geneva that the number of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries could double to 3.5 million by the end of the year.

The Israeli-occupied Golan Heights saw an increase in tensions this quarter, most notably when Syrian opposition fighters briefly took over a crossing operated by the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) between Syria and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights (6/6). One shell landed at an UNDOF base, injuring a Filipino peacekeeper, leading to fighting in which the opposition forces briefly took control of the position before govt. forces regained the upper hand. In response, Austria declared it would withdraw its 380 troops from

the 1,000-strong UNDOF force, but agreed (6/13) to delay the withdrawal to ensure a smooth transition for reinforcements that Ban Ki-moon requested (6/14) from Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark. Austria withdrew the last of its forces by 6/26.

Incidents of cross-border fire continued between Syrian soldiers and Israeli forces in the Golan Heights this quarter, including a brief confrontation on 5/21 sparked by an attack on an Israeli jeep claimed by the Syrian army. There were no casualties on either side, and IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz warned the Syrian govt. against conducting further attacks. Episodes of mortar fire from inside Syria on the occupied Golan Heights caused no damage or injuries (6/5, 6/20, 7/16).

REGIONAL AFFAIRS

This quarter, the Arab League threw its weight behind the renewed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations following Kerry's extensive shuttle diplomacy. Nine Arab League FMs met with Kerry in Amman on 7/18, assuring him of their full support for Abbas to return to the negotiating table. A statement from the ministers also praised Kerry's diplomatic efforts. In widely publicized remarks on the same day, Kerry urged Israel to consider the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative as an offer of peace with "22 Arab nations and 35 Muslim nations." A few days later, Arab League Dep. Secy.-Gen. for Palestinian Affairs Mohamed Sabih confirmed the league's support for a resumption of talks while expressing skepticism about Israeli intentions (7/21).

More generally, political divisions in the region continued to revolve around the Syrian conflict and the military takeover in Egypt. The continuing antagonism between

Saudi Arabia and Iran contributed to the tensions. On 5/21, the Saudis announced the detention of 10 more members of an alleged Iranian spy network in their country, a charge the Iranians denied. The Saudi regime was also a vocal opponent of Iran's nuclear program, with FM Prince Saud al-Faisal issuing (5/25) warnings of its consequences for the region's security. Saudi-Iranian tensions also extended to Lebanese affairs, particularly in light of Hizballah's role in Syria, and on 6/20, the Saudi authorities announced that they were deporting Hizballah-supporting Lebanese nationals. As subsequent news reports pointed out, those targeted were specific individuals (such as a businessman on 7/27) rather than a whole class of people. Meanwhile, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was reported (6/20, 7/28) to be looking at ways to impose sanctions against Hizballah leaders.

TURKEY

U.S.-led efforts to mend relations between Turkey and Israel were held up this quarter, with officials on both sides blaming each other for an impasse over the amount of compensation to be paid to the families of Turkish nationals killed on the Mavi Marmara (see QU in *JPS* 157). An unnamed Israeli official revealed (5/27) that the gap between the 2 sides remained very wide, despite talks held in Ankara on 4/22 and again on 5/6 (see QU in *JPS* 168). On 6/26, Israeli officials told the media that while Israel had offered a total of \$5 million in restitution, Turkey was demanding \$40 million—positions that were subsequently amended to \$14 million and \$24 million, respectively. Israel also complained that Ankara would not guarantee the end of legal proceedings against Israeli forces and officials.

On 7/24, Dep. Turkish PM Bulent Arinc explained that the problems stemmed from: (1) Israel's insistence on defining the damages as an *ex gratia* payment rather than as the result of a "wrongful act"; (2) Israel's concern about the possible precedent for compensation in other cases; and (3) Turkey's desire to see Israel end the Gaza blockade as a condition to restoring full ties. This last point was something to which Israel would not commit, according to Israeli negotiator and National Security Adviser Ya'akov Amidror (7/25). Meanwhile, although Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan on 5/16 had said that he would visit the Gaza Strip during the quarter, the visit did not materialize due to the military takeover in Egypt and Erdogan's public support for the ousted Muslim Brotherhood govt. However, Erdogan did host Hamas leaders Khalid Mish'al and Haniyeh for meetings in the Turkish capital on 6/19, with Israeli policies in Jerusalem at the top of the agenda.

IRAN

P5+1 and the IAEA

There were few significant developments around Iran's nuclear program and related negotiations with the international community this quarter. On 5/16, Tehran's chief negotiator Saeed Jalili expressed the hope that there would be a new round of talks with the P5+1 powers (the 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany) either before or shortly after upcoming presidential elections. On 7/17, after the elections were held (see "Domestic Politics" below), FM Ali Akbar Salehi announced that Tehran would be ready to resume suspended nuclear talks with the P5+1 group once the newly elected Pres. Hassan Ruhani took office in 8/2013.

A development of note this quarter was a confidential report leaked on 5/22 by the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) indicating that Tehran was pressing ahead with the construction of a research reactor in Arak. Responding to criticism about the source of such intelligence in the absence of relevant inspections, anonymous IAEA officials confirmed (5/24) that 80% of the agency's information on Iran's nuclear program comes from the U.S. and its allies. In the aftermath of the report's publication, IAEA head Yukiya Amano told (6/3) the agency's 35-nation board that talks with Iran "have been going around in circles" (6/3).

Domestic Politics

When Iranian voters went to the polls in 6/2013, 1 notable reformist, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, was absent from the ballot, having been barred from running by the Guardian Council on 5/21. There was no clear frontrunner going into election day—the field included Saeed Jalili, the chief negotiator for Iran's controversial nuclear program, Ali Akbar Velayati, Khamenei's foreign policy adviser, and Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the mayor of Tehran. Hence the surprise when Ruhani, former secy. of the Supreme National Security Council and an experienced negotiator in nuclear talks, emerged as the clear winner on 6/15. Winning 50.88% of the vote in an election with around 80% voter turnout, Ruhani's win was immediately seen as a victory for moderate elements within the domestic political scene and a defeat for conservative clerical hard-liners. Commentary that the electoral results boded well for a thaw in relations with the international community seemed confirmed when Ruhani promised "constructive interaction with the world" on the day he took office (8/3). At his 1st press conference as president, Ruhani called for

serious negotiations to resolve his country's conflict with the international community over its nuclear program (8/6).

INTERNATIONAL

UNITED STATES

Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

The Obama administration engaged heavily with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict this quarter, with Kerry investing much time and energy in a shuttle diplomacy campaign that eventually led to a breakthrough on resuming direct negotiations. On 5/23, Hagel appointed Gen. John Allen as special envoy on security issues in talks between Israel and the PA. Allen had been commander of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) before retiring from the military. In 7/2013, Indyk was appointed as the administration's special envoy to the talks, with responsibility for aiding day-to-day negotiations between the parties.

Leaders of key pro-Israeli lobby groups endorsed the secy. of state's efforts in a meeting at the Capitol (6/26), with AIPAC pres. Michael Kassen reportedly expressing his satisfaction during an off-the-record meeting with Senate Democrats. Rabbi Steve Gutow, head of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, also voiced his support. The following month, on 7/31, with direct talks already underway, Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Tim Kaine (D-VA)—chairs of the Senate's Intelligence Cmte. and Middle East subcommittee, respectively—and Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM) co-sponsored a non-binding res. supporting the Obama administration's work on the peace process and pledging Senate support for Washington's sustained effort to achieve a two-state solution.

Israel and the U.S. Congress

Debates over the U.S. budget for the 2014 fiscal year heated up this quarter, and the argument over an exemption for military aid to Israel continued in the context of across-the-board sequester cuts still in place and the sluggish U.S. economy. On 6/21, Netanyahu was reported as telling Israeli officials in Washington not to object to an anticipated 5% cut in the annual military aid package, about \$150 million for FY 2014. Lobby groups differed in their reactions, with J Street supporting Netanyahu's position and AIPAC lobbying for military aid to Israel to be spared budget cuts. Both the Senate Armed Services Cmte. and the full House of Representatives approved amounts higher than requested by the administration for the joint U.S.-Israel missile defense systems. On 6/20, the Senate committee approved \$246 million, up from the requested \$95 million, for support of Arrow 3 and David's Sling, which intercept long-range and medium-range missiles, respectively. Earlier, on 6/14, the House of Representatives had approved \$268 million for the same programs. Around that time, both chambers approved the \$220 million requested by the administration for the short-range Iron Dome missile defense system, but on 8/4 it was reported that Israel was prepared to waive \$55 million in U.S. aid for that program in recognition of the impact of budget cuts.

The summer recess also featured 2 separate Congressional delegations to Israel funded and organized by the AIPAC-affiliated American Israel Education Foundation. The Democrats' trip was led by Rep. Steny Hoyer, the House of Representatives Minority Whip, and featured 37 politicians of whom 31 were freshmen (8/4). As the Democrats left, the 26-member

Republican delegation led by House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) arrived (8/12).

Syria

The Obama administration's approach to the ongoing Syrian conflict continued to be complicated this quarter by Washington's growing malaise about support for the rebels, while internationally the U.S. was forced to work with Russia, al-Asad's main ally, to discuss ways forward.

On 5/21, the Senate Foreign Relations Cmte. voted 15-3 for legislation that would facilitate the supply of weapons to Syrian rebels, but only to so-called "moderate" and "vetted" factions. This was the 1st time U.S. lawmakers had approved such a step, and both Republicans and Democrats continued to express grave doubts about sending arms to opposition fighters without being able to prevent them from getting into the hands of forces linked to or professing allegiance to al-Qa'ida. On 6/27, a bipartisan-backed res. was put forward that would prevent Obama from arming Syrian rebels without congressional approval. In mid-7/2013, an administration official said that lawmakers' objections to arming the rebels were being addressed, but that some details still needed to be ironed out (7/15).

On 7/2, after meeting with Lavrov on the sidelines of a security conference in Brunei, Kerry told reporters that a proposed peace conference on Syria would not happen before 9/2013 at the earliest. For his part, Lavrov said that Kerry had recognized the need for "consolidating" the various Syrian opposition forces prior to any possible peace conference. Known as "Geneva II"—in reference to a previous gathering on solving the Syrian crisis in 6/2012—the planned conference would convene in the aim of ending the conflict in Syria and agreeing on a post-war political transition.

Iran

U.S. lawmakers continued to advance punitive sanctions even as the Iranian presidential election produced a potential window of opportunity for more fruitful international engagement with Tehran. On 5/22, the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Cmte. unanimously approved a bill—which had 349 co-sponsors—imposing tighter sanctions on Iran. Later in the summer, on 7/31, after Iran’s election but before Ruhani took office, the House approved the bill by a vote of 400 to 20. Aimed at denying Iran the capability of producing a nuclear weapon, the bill, titled “the Nuclear Iran Prevention Act of 2013,” would strengthen and expand existing sanctions on the Iranian energy and finance sectors, while imposing new sanctions on Iranian mining and on any entity maintaining commercial ties with Iran. The bill would also, inter alia, limit Iran’s access to its foreign exchange reserves and designate Iran’s Revolutionary Guard as a foreign terrorist organization. (See congressionalmonitor.org for more on the bill, H.R. 850). Iran’s Foreign Ministry responded by saying that the action “simply indicates that neo-conservative unilateralism dominates multilateral sovereignty in the American administration,” and that such sanctions would complicate efforts to further negotiations (8/1). Despite this, 2 days later, 76 senators signed (8/3) a letter to Obama demanding even tougher economic sanctions on Iran, an appeal backed by AIPAC and initiated by Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Cmte.

RUSSIA

Russia’s main regional focus this quarter remained the Syrian crisis, with Moscow continuing to block efforts by the U.S. and

some EU members to intervene more directly in favor of the rebels. Instead, Russia continued to encourage dialogue between the govt. and the opposition. Moscow also remained a persistent skeptic of accusations that the al-Asad regime had deployed chemical weapons, claiming that rebel forces had staged the alleged attacks.

Russia had little to do with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process this quarter independent of its position within the Quartet, which Lavrov mildly criticized on 5/17 for being too passive. He also noted that ministerial level meetings had been hampered by a lack of readiness from the U.S. side. This criticism was not echoed by other Quarter members or diplomats.

EUROPEAN UNION

While the EU and Ashton did not depart from long-standing positions such as supporting peace talks and criticizing settlement construction, this quarter was marked by unusual tension between Israel and the EU. Ashton visited Israel and the West Bank on 6/20 as part of a regional tour, meeting with senior officials on both sides. Soon afterward, at an EU foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg on 6/25 that expressed support for Kerry’s efforts to rekindle direct talks, Ashton made clear that the foreign ministers would not be drafting a res. on the Middle East, seemingly a gesture to Israel that an EU statement would very likely contain substantial criticism of its policies. The next month, however, a significant row broke out when the European Commission published (7/19) new guidelines (see Doc. A2 in this *JPS* issue) barring EU agencies from funding Israeli entities and activities in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem. The same day, Ashton published a statement

clarifying that publication of the guidelines was not intended to undermine Kerry's shuttle diplomacy, and on 7/23 she was reported to be pushing for the correct labeling of Israeli products originating in the 1967-o.t. In apparent retaliation, Israel reportedly took steps to make it difficult for the EU to work in the oPt, with unnamed Western diplomats claiming that the measures included denying permits for European humanitarian aid staff to enter the Gaza Strip (7/26). By the end of the quarter (8/9), Ashton's spokesperson, Michael Mann was saying that the EU was ready to hold discussions with Israel clarifying the guidelines and that the European body looked forward to "continued successful EU-Israel cooperation, including in the area of scientific cooperation."

UNITED NATIONS

Israel's conflict with the UN Human Rights Council continued this quarter, despite a letter (6/3) from Israel's UNHRC Amb. Eviatar Maner, expressing his govt.'s intention to restore ties with the council. The letter spoke of "positively resolv[ing] all outstanding issues in Israel's complex relationship with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms," which media reports suggested that Israel expected assurances from the council that it would henceforth be treated "fairly." Days later, however, UNHRC investigator Prof. Richard Falk presented (6/10) his latest report in Geneva that dealt, among other things, with "collective punishment" imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip and called for an inquiry into the torture of Palestinians in Israeli detention. Israel and the U.S. boycotted the debate, and in the aftermath of the presentation, the international law prof. was denounced for his alleged bias in separate statements issued by Israel, the U.S., and the EU.

Other UN agency officials also drew attention to the situation in the Gaza Strip, as well to the urgency of moving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process forward. On 7/23, for example, Robert Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, warned that the Gaza Strip was facing a serious shortage in fuel and basic building materials due to border crossing restrictions and the Egyptian military's crackdown on smuggling tunnels. Serry also warned (5/22) that the international community would be mistaken to ignore the Palestinian-Israeli conflict because of events in other parts of the region, such as Syria.

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement was launched in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian civil society groups. Its aim is to create an international campaign of boycotts, divestments, and sanctions against Israel "until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights."

BOYCOTT EFFORTS

While the EU guidelines on dealing with settlements released on 7/16 do not actually constitute a boycott (see "European Union" above and Doc. A2 in this *JPS* issue), they were widely likened to one by Israeli officials. Housing Minister Uri Ariel, for example, described them as racist and comparable to "boycotts against Jews from over 66 years ago" (i.e., the Nazi boycott). The move was welcomed by senior Palestinian officials, with PLO Executive Cmte. member Hanan Ashrawi calling it "a significant development in the way the EU countries deal with Israeli occupation." While initial indications suggested that the cost

to Israeli research institutions could be as much as a 40% loss in R&D funding, it was unclear at the end of the quarter exactly what and how the EU guidelines would be implemented in practice—and to what extent the guidelines would be applied to institutions located inside the Green Line with ties in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. On 8/14, Israeli officials and the EU began talks on the matter, with Israel threatening to withdraw its participation in the Horizon 2020 R&D program, should the sides fail to reach a “positive understanding” related to the new guidelines.

In other boycott-related news, the Federation of French-speaking Students in Belgium (FEF) announced on 5/31 that it had approved a motion calling for “a freezing of relations with Israeli universities” after it had passed with 85% of the vote. FEF represents about 100,000 students from 25 institutions. Around the same time, the United Church of Canada launched (5/23) a new campaign titled “Unsettling Goods” targeting SodaStream, Ahava, and Keter Plastic for “engagement” as a preliminary stage that could eventually lead to a potential boycott call.

Meanwhile, it was revealed in 6/2013 that the fast-food chain McDonalds had refused to approve the opening of a restaurant in the Ariel settlement in accordance with its long-standing policy not to operate in the West Bank.

DIVESTMENT

Divestment initiatives, typically campus-based, took a back seat this quarter, due to the

summer break. However, on 7/15, the U.S. campaign group We Divest announced that pension fund giant TIAA-CREF had removed Israel’s SodaStream from its portfolio, a company targeted by Palestinian solidarity groups for being headquartered in a West Bank settlement. At the same time, there were protests against TIAA-CREF’s decision not to allow a vote at their annual general meeting on a res. submitted by more than 200 shareholders calling on the fund to divest from companies such as Veolia and Caterpillar.

OTHER

Acclaimed Indian film director Mira Nair turned down an invitation to attend the Haifa Film Festival for a screening of her new film “The Reluctant Fundamentalist,” saying that she would go to Israel only “when occupation is gone.” Meanwhile, pop star Alicia Keys went ahead with a performance in Israel (7/4) despite a high-profile campaign urging her to heed the Palestinian boycott call. Activists managed to garner public statements of support from Alice Walker and Roger Waters, as well as a 16,000-signature petition which pushed the conversation into the mainstream press. Also this quarter, the Palestinian Boycott National Cmte. (BNC) held its 4th national BDS conference in Bethlehem (6/8), with 700 participants from a variety of civil society groups (6/8). The gathering made headlines when PA Economy Minister Jawad al-Naji clashed with participants during a panel discussion and then left early.