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Update on Conflict and Diplomacy

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# Update on Conflict and Diplomacy

16 AUGUST–15 NOVEMBER 2013



## 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](http://www.palestine-studies.org).*

**Highlights of the Quarter:** Israeli and Palestinian negotiators resume peace talks, with both sides indicating a lack of progress and Palestinian negotiators frustrated by a lack of direct U.S. engagement; Israeli settlement construction continues, with announcements of new tenders drawing condemnation from Palestinians and the international community; increased violence and death toll in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, albeit without an outbreak of wide-spread clashes; Fatah-Hamas reconciliation remains unlikely, particularly given developments in Egypt post-coup; pro-Israel lobby groups advocate against easing sanctions on Iran and push for intervention efforts in Syria.

## THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

This quarter was marked by U.S.-mediated Israeli-Palestinian negotiations struggling to make tangible progress, as Israeli settlement construction intensified and became a serious obstacle to building the atmosphere necessary for productive talks. Violence in the West Bank was also on the rise, with an increase in Palestinian attacks, and a number of Palestinian civilian deaths as a result of Israel Defense Forces (IDF) operations both in towns and refugee camps. The Gaza-Israel border remained tense, with violent

confrontations between the Israeli military and armed Palestinian factions increasing slightly. Gaza continued to suffer under a tightening blockade worsened by Egypt's frequent closures of the Rafah crossing.

## PEACE PROCESS MAKES SLOW PROGRESS

The renewed peace talks struggled this quarter, and despite a number of meetings between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, there was little indication of any substantive progress being made. The negotiating teams met several times, with an intensification of frequency toward the end of the quarter.

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By 9/26, the 2 sides had held 7 rounds of talks (since 7/2013) and they had met a further 6 times by 10/23. The 16th meeting, held on 11/6, ended in acrimony over settlement construction. Due to the general lack of progress and the Palestinian representatives' publicly expressed frustration, Secy. of State John Kerry and special envoy Martin Indyk had to step up U.S. involvement in the talks. On 8/22, Palestinian officials complained that Indyk and his team had, at Israel's request, attended none of the negotiating sessions hitherto. On 9/1, U.S. State Dept. spokesperson Jen Psaki confirmed that Indyk had participated in only 1 set of meetings since 7/2013. Two days later (9/3), Palestinian Authority (PA) FM Riyad al-Maliki indicated that Abbas would be complaining to Kerry about Indyk's limited participation. On 9/25, Kerry announced that both sides had agreed to a stepped-up U.S. role and intensified talks. Kerry described 2 tracks: one between negotiators from the 2 sides and another comprising Palestinian pres. Mahmud Abbas, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, Kerry and U.S. Pres. Barack Obama. Kerry met with Abbas 3 times during this quarter (on 9/8 in London, 11/6 in Bethlehem, and 11/7 in Amman), and with Netanyahu twice (on 10/23 in Rome and 11/8 in Jerusalem); Indyk held separate meetings on the progress of talks with Abbas on 9/17 and 10/4. However, most of the negotiations continued to take place mainly between the Palestinian and Israeli teams, and little of their content was released to the public.

For the Palestinians, settlement construction and announcements of tenders on new housing units were major issues of contention during this quarter, and official Israeli decisions on settlements also came in for criticism by the international community. On 8/25, the

Jerusalem municipality approved a NIS 62.4 million extension, adding some 1,600 housing units, to the Ramat Shlomo settlement, and NIS 20 million to develop a national park at the settler-owned "City of David" project in the Palestinian district of Silwan. In his dedication of 2 new neighborhoods (160 homes) in the West Bank settlement of Kedumim on the same day, Housing and Construction Minister Uri Ariel stated that a two-state solution would "never" happen. On 10/9, Jerusalem approved the construction of 58 housing units in the Pisgat Ze'ev settlement. Twenty days later, Israel freed 26 Palestinian prisoners being held since before the Oslo Accord, with 5 of them going to the Gaza Strip and the rest to their homes in the West Bank (10/29). While the prisoner release was part of a goodwill gesture to help restart faltering negotiations, the very next day Israel announced that some 3,500 new settlement homes would be constructed in East Jerusalem and the West Bank (10/30). Israeli officials insisted that both the U.S. and Palestinians had known that these announcements would accompany prisoner releases but Psaki said "continued settlement activity" did not serve to "create a positive environment for the negotiations," while the PA's Nabil Abu Rudeineh stated that the move "destroy[ed] the peace process." A few days later, tenders were published for over 1,700 of those housing units slated for the West Bank settlements of Beitar Ilit, Ma'ale Adumim, and Karnei Shomron (the last lying outside those "blocs" which, it is commonly assumed, Israel will keep under a final two-state deal). However, when on 11/12, Israel's Housing Ministry issued tenders on construction plans for some 24,000 new settlement homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Netanyahu halted the announcement. He claimed that the plan had been drawn up without prior coordination with

his office and that it damaged Israel's international standing.

Settlement construction provoked strong Palestinian complaints (8/18 and 9/19), emphasizing U.S. failure to prevent such developments. There was also more general Palestinian frustration at the direction and content of the talks, with anonymous officials leaking aspects of the proposals under consideration to the media. This included the claim (9/4) that Israel would be leaving numerous settlements and military bases in the West Bank to set up a provisional Palestinian state. Israel's insistence on maintaining a presence in the Jordan Valley was another frequently cited bone of contention, according to remarks by Fatah Central Cmte. mbr. Nabil Shaath (9/5). Meanwhile, Israeli media reported (9/16) that Netanyahu was unhappy with chief negotiator Tzipi Livni's apparent flexibility on arrangements for the Jordan Valley. In protest at unabated Israeli settlement construction activity and in light of assessments such as those by PLO Executive Cmte. mbr. Yasir 'Abid Rabbuh (9/4, 9/6) that the talks were making no progress, the Palestinian negotiating team resigned on 11/3. While not initially accepted by Abbas, the resignations were a further impediment to the progress of talks.

#### WEST BANK VIOLENCE

This quarter witnessed a definite uptick in the number of violent incidents between Palestinians and Israeli forces and settlers, with 9 Palestinians, 2 soldiers, and 1 settler killed in the West Bank during the period. On 8/20, the IDF shot and killed 1 Palestinian and wounded 2 others in Jenin r.c. after opening fire on residents during clashes sparked by an arrest raid. Days later, the increasingly common dynamic was repeated when an arrest raid led to clashes in which Israeli soldiers used lethal

force: the IDF shot and killed 3 Palestinian civilians and wounded 18 others during an arrest raid in Qalandia r.c. nr. Ramallah (8/26). One of the fatalities was an UNRWA employee, the agency revealed. The IDF claimed that its forces were met by a rioting crowd of some 1,500 camp residents throwing stones and petrol bombs but, according to Ma'an News, Israeli forces in plain clothes had entered the camp to re-arrest recently released prisoner Yousef al-Khatib. Reactions to the Qalandia deaths were extensive both in the local community and throughout the West Bank. During protests against the Qalandia deaths later that day, the IDF shot and wounded 2 Palestinians with rubber-coated metal bullets in Bethlehem's Aida r.c. A few days later, Ramallah youth activists marched in honor of the 3 Palestinians killed, holding a mock funeral with caskets and chanting against the resumption of negotiations with Israel. The attention garnered by the Qalandia deaths led Palestinian negotiators to announce the cancellation of one of the 1st scheduled peace talks in Jericho that week. In a raid on 9/17, Israeli forces killed a Palestinian man in Jenin r.c. after raiding his house and shooting him in disputed circumstances.

On 10/22, a Palestinian man wanted for his alleged role in an attack on an Israeli bus during Operation Pillar of Defense, in 11/2012, was killed by Israeli forces as he sought refuge in a cave nr. Bayt Liqya. On 10/30, Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian in Qabatya village nr. Jenin during clashes sparked by an arrest raid, making his death the 5th resulting from arrest raids this quarter. On 11/7, the IDF killed 2 Palestinian men in separate incidents at checkpoints: 1st at Za'atara nr. Nablus, where soldiers shot and killed a man who had thrown fireworks at them; and 2d at Container checkpoint nr. Bethlehem, where Israeli soldiers

claimed that the man they killed had attempted to attack them.

In late 9/2013 and early 10/2013, 3 Israelis were killed by Palestinians. On 9/21, the body of an Israeli soldier murdered in Qalqilya was discovered; the Palestinian assailant reportedly told Israeli interrogators that he was acting in response to Israel's incarceration of his brother since 2003. The next day, a Palestinian sniper shot and killed (9/22) an Israeli soldier at a checkpoint in Hebron. Three weeks later, on 10/10, an Israeli settler was killed and his wife wounded outside their home in the n. Jordan Valley at the hands of a Palestinian. While expressing shock at the number and frequency of such attacks, Israeli officials and commentators conceded that although significantly more numerous than in recent months and years, these were not indicative of an impending 3d intifada, but rather the actions of individuals acting outside the framework of an established militant group.

Overall, it was in the refugee camps, the Hebron area, and the n. West Bank that violent clashes took place this quarter, typically in the context of patrols and arrest raids by Israeli forces. In the week when Israel killed 4 Palestinian civilians in raids in Jenin and Qalandia r.c., the IDF conducted a total of 76 search and arrest operations, of which 6 turned into violent confrontations (UN OCHA, 8/26). This quarter also witnessed a continued increase in Palestinian casualties at the hands of Israeli forces, a trend on the rise since 2011. Nearly 3,500 Palestinians in the West Bank were injured by the IDF during the 1st 10 months of 2013, the highest number of injuries since 2005, with 64% of casualties caused by demonstration clashes, up from 59% and 40% for the same periods in 2012 and 2011 respectively (UN OCHA, 11/27). According to Israeli security officials, the monthly figures for

7/2013 and 10/2013 saw a 66% increase in Palestinian attacks on Israeli soldiers and settlers in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem). It is worth noting, however, that most of the attacks caused no casualties.

This quarter also saw a continued intensification of activity by right-wing Jewish groups to the al-Aqsa Mosque compound as part of a sustained campaign to change the status quo on Muslim and Jewish worship rights at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. Groups of activists, frequently several dozen-strong, accompanied by Israeli security forces, forced their way into and toured the al-Aqsa compound on numerous occasions, including 8/29, 9/3, 9/4, 9/11, 9/26, and 10/24.

#### THE GAZA STRIP

The Gaza Strip witnessed several violent exchanges between the Israeli military and armed Palestinian factions this quarter. On 9/2, there were 2 explosions targeting an IDF patrol nr. the Qarni crossing, neither of which caused damage or injuries. On 9/18, an IDF incursion into the north of the territory, close to the border fence, was met with resistance by armed Palestinians—1 of whom was injured. On the same night, unidentified Palestinians fired a Qassam rocket into s. Israel, causing no damage or injuries. Another projectile was fired into s. Israel on 9/27, again causing no damage or injuries. On 9/30, the IDF shot at 2 Palestinian men from al-Bureij r.c. who were attempting to cross the border fence, killing 1 and wounding the other. According to his family, the man killed had been trying to cross into Israel to look for work. On 10/13, the IDF announced it had discovered a “terror tunnel” running from inside the Strip into s. Israel. Following this discovery, and in the last 2 weeks of the quarter, clashes became increasingly severe. Palestinians fired 2 rockets at Ashkelon on

10/28, one of which was intercepted by the Iron Dome, causing no damage or injuries. In response, the IDF struck a training site of the Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades nr. Gaza City, with no casualties reported. On 10/31, the IDF killed 4 brigade mbrs. in 2 separate incidents and the brigades wounded 5 Israeli soldiers: 1 Palestinian was killed in an operation to close a tunnel straddling both sides of the border, and 3 more died inside another tunnel which the Israeli Air Force (IAF) bombed. On 11/14, Palestinians fired several mortar shells during an IDF incursion nr. the border fence, and 2 shells landed inside Israel, causing no damage or injuries (the attack was claimed by Palestinian Islamic Jihad). In response, the IAF carried out an air strike on 2 areas of open land claiming these concealed rocket launching-pads; no damage or injuries resulted.

#### OCCUPATION DATA AND TRENDS

Altogether, 14 Palestinians were killed this quarter as a result of Israeli actions, 9 in the West Bank and 5 in the Gaza Strip (up from a total of 5 killed last quarter). As of 11/15, and including this quarter's casualties, the comprehensive death toll since the beginning of the 2nd intifada (9/2000) stood at: 8,217 Palestinians (including 51 citizens of Israel and 19 unidentified Arab cross-border infiltrators); 1,127 Israelis (358 IDF soldiers and security personnel, 228 settlers, and 537 civilians); and 66 foreign nationals (including 2 British suicide bombers). These numbers include Palestinian individuals who died in noncombat-related incidents if their death was deemed a direct result of Israel's occupation and the ongoing conflict (e.g., sick people who died while being denied access to medical care and men killed in smuggling tunnel accidents).

#### *Overview of the Violence*

Widespread but low-level violent clashes persisted in the West Bank this quarter, with an uptick in Palestinian and Israeli casualties. IDF raids continued to spark violent confrontations in Palestinian communities, resulting in Palestinian fatalities on 8/20, 8/26, and 10/30; 2 Israeli soldiers and 1 settler were also killed in isolated attacks. Settler violence went on unabated, with hundreds of olive trees uprooted, and numerous attacks on individual Palestinians in their villages and on their lands.

While there were no large-scale military confrontations on the Gaza-Israel border, there was sporadic projectile fire and a greater willingness on the Palestinian side to openly confront IDF incursions into the territory—actions that were met by IAF strikes and the killing of a number of armed Palestinians.

#### *Movement and Access Issues*

During this quarter, there was little change in status of freedom of movement and access in the West Bank. Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs Yuval Steinitz announced at the Ad Hoc Liaison Cmte. meeting on 9/26 that Israel would be easing some restrictions on the Palestinian territories, including the extension of operating hours at the Allenby Bridge.

The Gaza Strip suffered from continued restrictions imposed by both Israel and Egypt, with the Rafah border crossing subject to closures from the Egyptian side due to the tense and volatile security situation in the Sinai Peninsula. Rafah was closed in both directions on 8/19, reopening, albeit on a limited scale, on 8/24. According to UN OCHA figures, at the end of 8/2013, an average of 117 people were crossing into Egypt daily with 212 coming back the other way—around 25% of totals prior to the Egyptian crackdown in 8/2013. As of early

9/2013, sources in Gaza reported to the UN that only about 10 tunnels were functioning, down from approximately 50 prior to mid-8/2013 (and compared to an alleged 200-300 tunnels before 6/2013). This translated into a significant reduction in the volume of goods entering the Strip, from 200 to 20-30 truckloads per day (UN OCHA, 9/5). As a result of tunnel closures, fuel shortages led to price increases and daily power outages of up to 12 hours. Rafah was closed continuously from 9/11-17 and from 9/20-27; when open, the crossing operated for a mere 4 hours per day, 6 days a week, but only for limited categories of persons (e.g., foreign nationals, humanitarian cases, etc.). As in 8/2013, the number of people crossing at Rafah fell further in 9/2013, with a daily average of 113 people going to Egypt and 103 coming into Gaza—a sharp drop from the 1,860 seen in 6/2013. The crossing was again closed at the end of the quarter.

On 9/17, Israel announced it would allow the entry of a limited quantity of materials destined to private construction projects in the Strip for the 1st time in 6 years. However, the promise of 350 trucks of cement, steel, and concrete entering the territory weekly was short-lived. On 10/13, after the IDF announced the discovery of a tunnel running under the Gaza border fence, the “concessions” were rescinded. All in all, 15,090 truckloads of goods entered the Gaza Strip from Israel, with just a handful of truckloads exiting with exports in the 3-month period from mid-8/2013 to mid-11/2013.

During this quarter, Israeli forces targeted Palestinians approaching the territory’s border fence as well as fishermen working off the coast. These so-called buffer zone incidents in which Israeli soldiers opened fire resulted in the injury of the following: 2 Palestinian children on 8/20; a Palestinian farmer on his own land on 8/30;

a Palestinian man walking close to the border fence nr. Bayt Lahiya on 9/20; another farmer working his land nr. Gaza City on 10/2; and, several civilians in 2 separate incidents nr. Khan Yunis and al-Musaddar respectively (11/13). The IDF also conducted numerous incursions to level land nr. the border fence (8/26; 9/1, 9/3, 9/12, 9/15, 9/17, and 9/24; 10/3, 10/15, 10/20-22), and they continued to harass Palestinian fishermen at sea with gunfire (8/20, 8/22-23; 9/2, 9/8, and 9/16; 10/9-13, 10/21, 10/24, and 10/31; 11/7, 11/9, and 11/12). One fisherman was wounded on 11/10, but otherwise no damage or casualties resulted from these operations.

### ***Regular Protests in the Occupied Territories***

Nonviolent demonstrations against the occupation, settlements, and the separation wall continued throughout the West Bank. Palestinians and Israelis as well as internationals took part in the demonstrations in many villages where such protests have become routine, around Ramallah (Bil’in, Nabi Salih, Ni’lin), Bethlehem (al-Ma’sara), and nr. Qalqilya (Kafr Qaddum). IDF soldiers typically responded with force (tear gas, rubber-coated bullets, and live ammunition), causing serious injuries on 8/23, 8/30, 9/6, 9/20, 10/4, 10/25, 11/1, and 11/15. Many of the injuries resulted from the use of tear gas canisters as projectiles.

### ***Settler-Related Violence***

This quarter saw a slight rise in settler-related violence, with 122 attacks on Palestinians and Palestinian-owned property and agricultural assets (up from 106 the previous quarter) and 14 attacks by Palestinians on Israeli settlers (also an increase from the previous quarter’s 11). Settler violence included assaults on Palestinians working their lands or in their

villages (8/18-19, 11/14), throwing stones at vehicles (9/1, 9/9, 10/16, and 10/22), and the uprooting or vandalizing of olive trees (9/22-23; 10/3, 10/5, 10/19, and 10/22). There were also a number of Palestinian attacks targeting settlers, most notably the bludgeoning to death (10/10) of a settler outside his home in an isolated n. Jordan Valley settlement. These attacks also included stone-throwing at vehicles, and on 10/25, a petrol bomb was hurled at an Israeli settler bus in the n. West Bank, causing no serious damage or injuries.

### ***Demolitions and Confiscations***

Approximately 198 structures were demolished this quarter, up from 113 in the previous period, with some 312 Palestinians displaced (up from 275). As reported by UN OCHA, 53 of the structures destroyed were in East Jerusalem, part of a growing trend of demolitions inside the city. As of 8/22, more than 200 Palestinians had been displaced in East Jerusalem, the highest number since 2009, and more than the combined total for 2011 and 2012. September saw the demolition of 94 Palestinian structures, the 2d highest monthly total since the beginning of 2013. Demolitions this quarter included the destruction of 11 residential tent homes of more than 50 Bedouin Palestinians in Bayt Hanina on 8/19, with other demolitions in al-Tur on 8/26, in al-Zaayyem on 9/11, and in Bayt Hanina again on 10/29 and 10/30. In the Jordan Valley, IDF demolished 15 structures on 8/20, again on 9/2, and the entire village of Khirbet Makhul was bulldozed on 9/16, because the roughly 60 structures did not have the required permits, and soldiers returned to demolish rebuilt tents and former barrack structures on a number of occasions (9/18, 9/20, 10/3). Although Palestinian

settlement in the area pre-dates 1948, stone structures were demolished by the Israeli army after 1967.

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## **INTRA-PALESTINIAN DYNAMICS**

The quarter began right after the start of the 5-week period Abbas had given (8/13) newly-appointed PA PM Rami Hamdallah to form a new govt. On 9/16, the president and prime minister met in Ramallah to discuss the formation of the cabinet, and Azzam al-Ahmad, the Fatah speaker of parliament, informed the media that it would be a “regular” rather than a caretaker govt. because of the failure to implement a Fatah-Hamas reconciliation. The 16th Palestinian govt. was thus sworn in on 9/19 with both the president and the prime minister publicly declaring their mutual support. With all 24 cabinet mbrs. staying in post, the govt. remained unchanged, as Hamdallah no longer sought to resign after Abbas gave him assurances that he would have full control of his cabinet.

## **NATIONAL RECONCILIATION**

There were yet again no serious efforts this quarter to advance the national reconciliation plan agreed on in Cairo (see QU in *JPS* 168). The fallout from the military coup in Egypt exacerbated the impasse, as did the Fatah-led PA’s investment in the U.S.-mediated peace talks with Israel, which Hamas opposed.

There were few meetings held between the respective parties, although Fatah and Hamas leaders did hold talks in Gaza on 8/18 to discuss the possibility of presidential and legislative elections. The PA’s return to peace negotiations remained a major source of disagreement between the 2 sides, however.



On 10/9, while Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal called for national reconciliation, he also stressed the need for armed struggle (10/9). In a telephone conversation on the occasion of *'Id al-Adha*, Gaza-based PM Ismail Haniyeh and Abbas exchanged customary greetings and reaffirmed the importance of ending the division (10/15). In line with that sentiment, Haniyeh issued a statement in which he urged a popular uprising in the West Bank and a rejection of negotiations with Israel (10/19).

But confrontations in the oPt continued, with the 2 groups trading accusations of mutual harassment. On 8/17, 8/18, and 10/3, Fatah complained that Hamas was targeting its mbrs. in Gaza for arrest, while Hamas made the same allegation against the PA regarding its mbrs. in the West Bank (e.g., 8/30, 10/13). On 8/21, there were clashes at Birzeit University, when some 100 pro-Fatah students attacked a dozen or so Hamas activists on campus.

#### INTERNAL GOVERNANCE

Aside from the Fatah-Hamas divide, other features of domestic Palestinian politics this quarter included attacks on freedom of the press, strikes by public sector workers, and economic problems in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Journalistic freedom was an ongoing source of tension in both territories, following Hamas's closure of Ma'an News Agency's Gaza bureau and Al-Arabiya's office the previous quarter (7/25, see Update in *JPS* 169) on charges of disseminating false reports. These actions drew criticism from the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms, which claimed (9/16) that such moves took Palestinians "back to the dark era of the 1st months after inter-Palestinian rivalry broke out in 2007." Two weeks later, Ma'an announced (9/30) that it would cease

working in the Gaza Strip as a result of financial losses incurred by the closure of its office, adding that it would seek legal redress for lost wages and revenues. In response, Hamas offered (10/1) to hire Ma'an's staff for alternative media work. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, a crackdown on journalists covering a pro-Morsi rally in Ramallah prompted a sit-in strike by journalists (8/25) to protest the heavy-handedness of the PA security force.

Hamas was also concerned this quarter with the emergence of a Palestinian version of Tamarod, the Egyptian activist group that played a key role in opposing the ruling Muslim Brotherhood govt. prior to the military coup. Tamarod in Gaza released a video (8/19) denouncing the Hamas govt. and calling for a day of protests on 11/11 to end the Islamist movement's rule in the territory. Hamas responded (8/23) with accusations of Egyptian intelligence involvement. While the promised day of protest did not transpire, according to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (11/13), a campaign of arrests and torture did take place. On 10/2, Hamas executed a convicted murderer, the 17th such execution since the movement assumed control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 (at least 8 of these have been Palestinians convicted of collaborating with Israel). Meanwhile, the PA launched its own crackdown in the n. West Bank, particularly around Jenin, following growing unrest targeting both Israeli forces as well as PA buildings. On 10/5, PA forces raided Jenin r.c. and arrested a number of residents, including Islamic Jihad activists. By 10/12, Jenin gov. Talal Dweikat announced that the Palestinian National Security Services had detained nearly 100 people in the n. West Bank as part of a campaign to "tackle" disorder.

The PA also continued to deal with industrial action by public sector workers in the West Bank. Although Hamdallah announced on 9/5 that an agreement had been reached, the teachers' union stated on 11/3 that it would launch a limited strike in response to what it said was the PA's failure to implement the deal. Such disputes, typically related to nonpayment of or stagnation in wages, were directly related to the PA's economic woes, and thus this quarter also saw continued efforts to secure further external funding for the indebted Ramallah govt. On 8/18, Hamdallah signed an agreement with the U.S. Consul-Gen. in Jerusalem, Michael Ratney, for a \$148 million U.S. contribution to the PA's budget. The funds, destined for PA salaries, were described by Obama as being in "the national security interests of the U.S." Days later, on 8/24, France and the PA signed a deal for €9 million (\$12.4 million), similarly aimed at propping up the PA budget. By mid-9/2013, the PA could count (10/9) a number of responses to its pleas for help: Saudi Arabia pledged \$200 million, the U.K. \$11.6 million, the World Bank \$72.2 million, the Italian govt. \$60 million, and the EU a further €60 million (\$82.7 million).

The Hamas authorities in Gaza also experienced growing financial pressure this quarter since, in addition to Israel's blockade, the Egyptian authorities cracked down on the tunnels that had kept the territory supplied with fuel and other goods. The sharp drop in "tax revenue" from the tunnels also meant that Hamas only paid 77% of its 8/2013 payroll, comprising 50,000 civil servants in the Gaza Strip. On 10/27, Hamas Dep. Economy Minister Hatem Oweida said that the closure of the tunnels had caused monthly losses of \$230 million to Gaza's economy.

## PALESTINIAN OPINION

*The following data was excerpted from a poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) on September 19-21, 2013. Results are based on a survey of 1,261 men and women from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. The poll, the 49th in a series, was taken from PSR's website at [www.pcpsr.org](http://www.pcpsr.org).*

1. Do you support or oppose the decision by President Abbas to return to negotiations with Israel?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Definitely support	7.8%	6.4%	7.3%
b. Support	45.3%	31.5%	40.2%
c. Oppose	30.0%	37.2%	32.7%
d. Definitely oppose	12.5%	23.3%	16.5%
e. Don't know/No answer	4.4%	1.7%	3.4%

2. Twenty years after the signing of the Oslo Agreement, do you think it served or hurt the vital national interests of the Palestinian people?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Certainly served	0.7%	7.2%	3.1%
b. Served	25.9%	27.1%	26.3%
c. Hurt	42.0%	31.0%	37.9%
d. Certainly hurt	18.8%	26.3%	21.6%
e. Don't know/No answer	12.7%	8.4%	11.1%

3. Given the developments in Egypt and the ups and downs [there], the progress and the setbacks in the Fatah-Hamas dialogue,

what are your expectations for the future of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Unity will resume in the near future	11.6%	12.5%	11.9%
b. Unity will resume but will take a long time	38.8%	45.8%	41.5%
c. Unity will not resume and two separate entities will emerge	43.0%	38.2%	41.3%
d. Don't know/No answer	6.5%	3.4%	5.3%

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

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Marwan Barghouti	32.8%	37.8%	34.8%
b. Ismail Haniyeh	29.1%	39.0%	33.1%
c. Mahmud Abbas	32.2%	19.7%	27.1%
d. Don't know/No answer	5.9%	3.5%	4.9%

5. Do you support or oppose the solution based on the establishment of a Palestinian State alongside Israel known as the two-state solution?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Certainly support	6.4%	5.1%	5.9%
b. Support	48.5%	38.4%	44.8%
c. Oppose	35.7%	36.7%	36.1%
d. Certainly oppose	7.1%	18.5%	11.4%
e. Don't know/No Answer	2.2%	1.3%	1.9%

6. In your view, is the change of president and government in Egypt which led to the dismissal of President Morsi good or bad for the Palestinians?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Certainly good	0.4%	7.3%	3.0%
b. Good	15.3%	24.4%	18.7%
c. Bad	51.4%	35.1%	45.3%
d. Certainly bad	15.5%	25.3%	19.2%
e. Don't know/No answer	17.4%	7.9%	13.8%

## FRONTLINE STATES

### EGYPT

Political unrest in Egypt continued this quarter, with the post-coup interim military govt. ostensibly pursuing efforts to move toward civilian rule. The insurgency and counter-insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula meant almost daily bloodshed.

Egyptian military authorities continued with their ruthless crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood leaders and mbrs. this quarter. The group's leader, Mohamed Badie, was arrested and charged with incitement to murder on 8/19, while the mass arrest and detention of Brotherhood mbrs. occurred on 8/28, 9/3, and 9/20. On 9/1, Egypt's chief prosecutor ordered ousted Pres. Mohamed Morsi and 14 other Brotherhood leaders to stand trial on charges which included incitement to violence and murder. On 11/4, the trial of the ousted president began and was almost immediately postponed, as Morsi and the other leaders in court disrupted the proceedings, shouting slogans, denouncing the coup and questioning the legitimacy of the trial. In addition to the legal arena, there were frequent clashes between Muslim Brotherhood mbrs. (and also other

broader, anti-coup groups at times), on the one hand, and the security forces and pro-military Egyptians, on the other (8/27, 8/30, 9/6, 9/13, 10/2, 10/4, and 11/8). Two days of intense violence in Cairo and other cities left more than 170 dead (8/16-17), as the military continued the violent crackdown that began with the clearing of Rabaa Square in the capital on 8/14 (see QU in *JPS* 169). By 8/18, the death toll from a week of violence across Egypt stood at about 900, including an estimated 70 police officers. Clashes on 10/6 ended with at least 51 people dead and 423 arrested, according to the Interior Ministry. Two weeks later, a few thousand student supporters of Morsi protested at Al-Azhar University (10/20) and sectarian violence on the same day left 3 people dead, including a child, after gunmen opened fire on the congregation leaving a Coptic church.

On the political level, the new regime named a constituent assembly (9/1) and gave it 60 days to review amendments that would purge articles the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic parties had introduced by the previous year. On 9/28, Egyptian FM Nabil Fahmy announced that the post-coup govt. would end its interim tenure by spring 2014, when parliamentary and presidential elections would take place, but the minister provided no date. The constitutional panel charged with amending 189 of the constitution's 230 articles by consensus began to vote on the proposed changes on 10/27. In other news, former pres. Hosni Mubarak was released from a prison cell and moved to house arrest at a military hospital, following a court ruling (8/19) clearing him of corruption charges—separate from an outstanding retrial on charges of complicity in the murder of protesters during the 2011 revolution that deposed him.

Although it showed signs of inconsistency, the U.S. responded to developments in Egypt with overall acceptance of the interim govt. and of the military's role in shaping future steps. However, in the immediate aftermath of the mass killings in mid-8/2013, the U.S. State Dept. put on hold (8/18) financing for economic programs directly linked to the Egyptian govt. On 10/9, the Obama administration announced a freeze on military assistance to Egypt, withholding Apache helicopters and tank kits, as well as cash assistance to the govt. No precise figures were provided, but it was estimated that the cuts amounted to several hundred million dollars. Speaking at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur, Kerry said (10/10) that the cuts in aid would not have much impact on Egypt, that the move was not a "withdrawal" from relations with Cairo, and that the aid could be restored once "credible progress" was made in restoring an inclusive govt. On a visit to Cairo some 3 weeks later, Kerry expressed optimism (11/3) about a return to democracy, and described Egypt as a vital U.S. partner. Unnamed senior State Dept. officials told reporters that Kerry did not discuss the Morsi trial in meetings with Pres. Adly Mansour and Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. In other international reactions, Egypt was chastised by the EU, which suspended security equipment sales due to "disproportionate" actions by the military (8/21), but it was buttressed by the UAE, which increased its aid to the new interim govt. with a \$4.9 billion package including loans, fuel supplies, and other forms of assistance (10/26).

This quarter saw the intensification of the insurgency and counterinsurgency in the Sinai Peninsula. On 9/7, the Egyptian military

launched a major operation against Islamist militants in the n. Sinai, deploying helicopter gunships and armored vehicles (9 insurgents and 2 Egyptian soldiers died on just the 1st day). The Egyptian army had already gone on the offensive in the days and weeks prior to the operation, and 8 people suspected of belonging to militant cells were killed in air strikes nr. Rafah on 9/3. The destruction of smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza also intensified in the wake of the offensive and, on 9/9, an Egyptian official claimed that 90% of the tunnels had been destroyed. Six days later, Egyptian military spokesperson Ahmed Ali announced (9/15) that the army had destroyed 152 tunnels since the end of 7/2013, arrested more than 300 Egyptians since the beginning of the offensive, and lost 100 soldiers since the July coup. Ali also claimed accused groups based in the Sinai of coordinating with their counterparts in the Gaza Strip, without naming Hamas directly. By 10/5, the Egyptian army claimed it had demolished a total of 1,055 smuggling tunnels since 1/2011, of which 794 were destroyed in 2013 alone. As part of the ongoing Sinai offensive, the Egyptian authorities frequently closed the Rafah border crossing into the Gaza Strip (see Movement and Access Issues in the Occupation Data and Trends section above) but militants kept up their attacks on the security services. On 9/11, 2 car bombs killed 11 people, including 9 officers (coincidentally, the same day that Israeli officials were in Cairo to discuss the Sinai situation with their Egyptian security counterparts). Other incidents included the detonation of a car bomb by a suicide bomber at an Egyptian military intelligence facility nr. Ismailia (10/19), and a number of shootings including one on 11/11 when 2 soldiers were killed by gunmen, also nr. Ismailia.

## JORDAN

Other than hosting the talks between Kerry and Abbas in Amman, Jordan only played a marginal role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process this quarter, with King Abdallah II pledging support for the talks and praising the visiting U.S. official (11/17). Jordan did level criticism at Israel, however, specifically with regard to developments at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound. On 11/12, the Jordanian government's senior legal adviser on Islamic and Christian property in Jerusalem, Abd Al-Nasser Nassar, was quoted by the Jordanian media as saying that he was "adamantly opposed" to any Jewish worship in the compound. There were also reports (8/22) this quarter of advanced negotiations between Israel and Jordan over a water exchange, with a proposed desalination plant in Aqaba supplying water to the Negev, and water from the Sea of Galilee going to n. Jordan. Lastly, it was reported (8/11, 11/11) that Jordan would replace Saudi Arabia on the UNSC, following Riyadh's rejection of the position.

Jordan continued to receive large numbers of Syrian refugees. On 8/21, UNCHR said that 25-50 Syrians were crossing into Jordan daily, a dramatic fall compared to earlier in the year when over 1,000 people per day streamed in. But according to govt. officials on 9/16, the number of Syrian refugees entering Jordan had risen to an average of 900 per day. At the same time, an estimated 600 refugees were also returning to Syria every day, a reflection of the dire conditions in the Jordanian refugee camps. Speaking (9/24) at the UNGA, Abdallah said that the refugees from Syria now total one-tenth of Jordan's entire population, had overwhelmed his country and he urged the international community to find a political solution to the conflict. Toward the end of the quarter, UN aid

agencies and the Jordanian govt. estimated (10/29) that there were around 550,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan, of whom some 200,000 were school-aged children. Amman was expected to have spent around \$850 million on the refugees in 2013.

The Jordanian Armed Forces and the U.S. Central Command co-hosted (8/25-27) a meeting of regional defense chiefs to discuss the Syrian crisis, including the issue of the Bashar al-Asad regime's alleged use of chemical weapons. Present at the meeting were security officials from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Canada, as well as U.S. Chmn. of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey. According to Jordanian FM Nasser Joudeh, the meeting had been "scheduled for months" (8/26). One example of the challenges posed to Jordan's security by the Syrian situation was apparent when a military court convicted (9/23) 5 Jordanian citizens of trying to enter Syria to fight with Jabhat al-Nusra, a radical Islamist group linked to al-Qa'ida.

On the domestic front, Jordan's king continued small-scale reforms designed to assuage pro-democracy critics. In the framework of promised changes following parliamentary elections earlier in the year, the king swore in 13 new cabinet ministers (8/21), taking the total number to 27, including 3 women. Soon afterward, Information Minister Mohammad Momani announced (9/1) that an amended draft law would curtail the powers of the military tribunal known as the State Security Court, which opposition activists claimed was used to stifle freedom of speech. Momani said the court's previous purview of 17 crimes would now extend only to matters related to terrorism, espionage, treason, illegal drugs, and currency

counterfeiting. Near the end of the quarter, Abdallah told (11/3) parliament's opening session that he intended to pursue further reform plans to change election laws and overhaul the public sector. One source of dissent in the country unrelated to domestic political reform was the protest against a potential U.S. strike on Syria. Demonstrations in Amman denouncing "American aggression" ranged from a few hundred to one thousand-strong (8/30, 9/9).

## LEBANON

Lebanon continued to be significantly impacted by the ongoing Syrian conflict, whether in terms of rising sectarian violence or economic strain caused by the large influx of refugees from Syria. In an unusually large-scale attack, twin bomb explosions outside Sunni mosques in Tripoli (8/23) killed more than 40 people, with no one claiming responsibility. Tripoli remained a focal point of violence between pro- and anti-Asad groups which, according to local security officials (10/24), claimed the lives of half a dozen people and wounded another 50 in 10/2013 alone. Clashes between the rival groups broke out on 10/14 when a military prosecutor disclosed the charges against suspects detained in connection with the twin bomb attacks in 8/2013. Political assassinations were another feature of the sectarian violence, and a Sunni cleric was gunned down in Tripoli on 11/12. While Hizballah Secy.-Gen. Hasan Nasrallah continued to defend his group's participation on the side of the regime in the Syrian conflict, in a speech on 10/28 he also appealed for a political solution to the crisis (understood as a reference to the proposed Geneva conference) and slammed Saudi Arabia's support for some of the rebel groups.

There was growing concern about the growing strain on Lebanon from the influx of refugees from Syria. On 8/31, Lebanese security officials confirmed to the media that the govt. was no longer letting Palestinians from Syria into Lebanon, after an estimated 92,000 of Syria's Palestinian refugees (from the 1948 and 1967 wars) had sought refuge in the country. According to a World Bank report (9/19), the spillover from the Syrian civil war had already cost Lebanon billions of dollars and strained social services; a meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon met (9/25) on the sidelines of the UNGA in New York to discuss financial aid for the country in light of its new refugee population. Pres. Michel Suleiman met (9/24) with Obama in New York, while the State Dept. praised the support Lebanon had already extended to almost 800,000 Syrian refugees on the country's borders. Obama unveiled 2 separate aid packages: \$74 million in humanitarian support and \$8.7 million for the Lebanese military.

Deadlock over the formation of a new cabinet persisted. Nasrallah's proposal (10/28) for a 9-9-6 formula—allocating 9 ministerial posts to each of the March 8 and March 14 factions, and the remaining 6 to centrists—was rejected by the Future Movement the next day. The March 14 coalition, for its part, insisted on Hizballah's disengagement from the Syrian conflict as the starting point for a new cabinet (11/1).

Lebanon's border with Israel was generally quiet although there were a few instances of tension. The most notable was a rocket attack on 8/22, when 4 projectiles were lobbed into n. Israel by suspected mbrs. of the al-Qa'ida-linked Brigades of Abdallah Azzam; they caused no damage or injuries (1 rocket was intercepted by the Iron Dome). The IDF said it viewed this as an isolated incident, attributing the attack to "global jihad" elements. On 8/27, the brigades

appeared to claim direct responsibility for the attack via a statement published on the Twitter account of a Salafist cleric known to be affiliated with the group. Despite the self-proclaimed identity of the attackers, the IDF conducted an air strike in response (8/23) against a base of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) s. of Beirut. The air raid reportedly caused no casualties or serious damage. Suleiman condemned the Israeli strike and ordered his country's diplomats to file a complaint about the attack at the UNSC. On 8/28, UNIFIL hosted a meeting between Israel and Lebanon at the al-Naqura border crossing; discussions centered on Israeli violations of UNSC Res. 1701, particularly an IDF incursion into Lebanese territory on 8/7 (see QU in *JPS* 169). UNIFIL also condemned the 8/22 rocket attack on n. Israel.

## SYRIA

The Syrian war showed no sign of abating this quarter, although attention was focused overwhelmingly on the international—particularly the American—response to what was widely believed to be the Syrian army's use of chemical weapons. After initial reluctance to blame the attack on the al-Asad regime, by early 8/2013 Western powers had reached consensus on the issue, with Russia the notable dissenting voice. The Israeli and British governments (8/22) and the Obama administration (8/25) all went on the record as saying that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons were forces loyal to al-Asad. On 8/24, U.S. Secy. of Defense Chuck Hagel told reporters that the Pentagon was ready to launch a military attack on Syria should Obama give the order. Meanwhile, on the ground, UN inspectors visited (8/25) the site of the suspected attack in a Damascus suburb, as Russia urged the U.S.

and its allies to wait for the UN team's report. Over the course of a week, senior U.S. officials repeatedly spoke of the need for "accountability" (e.g., 8/26), positioning the Obama administration for a limited military attack supported by France and others (8/27). But in the face of divisions on Capitol Hill about the merits of such an assault and the opposition of Russia at the UNSC (for more details see International section below), the likelihood of an attack receded yet further after the 285-272 vote in the British parliament (8/29) in which many conservative MPs voted with the Labour opposition against a military operation. In the aftermath, PM David Cameron acknowledged that Britain would not take part in any attack on Syria. While still seeking to lobby the foreign ministries of allied powers (8/30) and present evidence of Syrian govt. responsibility for chemical weapons usage, Obama announced that a military operation against Syria would need to be backed by Congress (8/31).

After securing the backing of the Senate Foreign Relations Cmte. (a 10-7 vote) for the use of military force, albeit with narrower parameters than those originally requested, Obama went to the G20 summit in St. Petersburg seeking international support and meeting with Pres. Vladimir Putin (9/6). In a significant and surprising development, however, Russian FM Sergey Lavrov made a statement on 9/9 calling for military action against Syria to be averted by the implementation of an internationally-coordinated plan to destroy the Syrian chemical weapons arsenal. The dramatic intervention was welcomed as a possible breakthrough by Obama who asked (9/10) congressional leaders to postpone a vote authorizing force while a "diplomatic path" was pursued. Days later, the 5 permanent mbrs. of the UNSC met at Russia's UN mission (9/11) to discuss a new res.

securing and dismantling Syria's chemical weapons. This was followed by discussions between Kerry and Lavrov in Geneva (9/13), leading to a deal (9/14) to remove al-Asad's chemical arsenal as a means of averting a U.S. military strike on regime targets. Talks in New York between diplomats from the 5 permanent mbrs. of the UNSC produced a res. that was successfully passed on 9/27. The res. avoided automatic recourse to military force as a means of enforcement, instead requiring another res. under Chapter 7 to be passed. The timetable set required that the destruction of the arsenal be completed by mid-2014. Inspectors from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) arrived in Damascus soon afterward (10/1) and began their mission to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons capacity on 10/16. The Syrian govt. fully cooperated with the OPCW team, meeting relevant deadlines (10/27) for the mission's progress, and the OPCW finalized a plan and timetable by 11/15.

There was also frustration this quarter among international parties trying to organize a Geneva 2 conference bringing together the Syrian govt. and opposition for talks on a political transition. UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi expressed (9/13) hopes that such a gathering would take place in 10/2013, yet by mid-10/2013 Brahimi was still calling for the conference to be held urgently (10/14). The Syrian National Coalition (SNC)—who had appointed (9/14) Ahmad Tomeh as provisional prime minister—said (9/22) it was prepared to attend Geneva 2, but after a Friends of Syria meeting held in London(10/22), Tomeh made clear that such participation was conditional on al-Asad giving up power. In a statement made by Dep. PM Qadri Jamil (10/17), the Syrian regime claimed that an international conference was planned for 11/23-24, dates denied by Brahimi. A few



days later, al-Asad said “the factors are not yet in place” for Geneva 2 (10/21), and he questioned the presence and legitimacy of the groups claiming to represent the Syrian people. By the end of the quarter, it was clear that the conference would not be taking place anytime soon, as Brahimi met with Russian dep. FMs Gennady Gatilov and Mikhail Bogdanov as well as U.S. Undersecy. of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman (11/6), albeit without setting any dates.

On 10/31, the IAF attacked a shipment of missiles located at a Syrian military base nr. Latakia thought to be destined for Hizballah. The air strike was confirmed by an anonymous U.S. administration official. According to Israeli media, unnamed Israeli officials subsequently expressed anger at the White House for confirming that it was an IAF operation and Home Front DM Gilad Erdan reiterated the oft-repeated statement that Israel would not allow advanced weapons to be transferred to Hizballah (11/1).

There continued to be sporadic outbreaks of violence in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights due to spillover from fighting in Syria. On 8/17, the IDF fired a surface-to-surface missile at a Syrian army post after 3 shells launched from inside Syria landed in the Golan Heights, causing no damage or injuries. The Israeli army retaliation destroyed the Syrian position but caused no casualties. Less than a month later, 3 stray mortar shells landed (9/12) in the Golan Heights, again causing no damage or injuries. Continuing the now characteristic back-and-forth exchange, on 9/22, unidentified gunmen opened fire on an Israeli army patrol operating close to the border, and the IDF returned fire, with no reports of damage or casualties on either side. However, on 10/9, 2 IDF soldiers were hurt by 2 mortar shells in the occupied Golan Heights that were fired from Syrian territory. In response, the IDF

destroyed a Syrian military cannon, all the while maintaining that the shelling from the Syrian side had been errant rather than intentional.

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## REGIONAL AFFAIRS

This quarter, the Arab League assumed a more visible role in regard to both the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the Syria crisis. In early 9/2013, the Peace Initiative Cmte., an Arab League ministerial delegation made up of FMs from Egypt, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, met with Kerry in Paris (9/8) to discuss the progress of peace talks. Following the discussion, the cmte. expressed support for U.S. efforts to promote direct negotiations. The following month, Kerry met again with League officials in Paris (10/21) and he held a joint press conference with Qatari FM Khaled al-Attiyah where it was disclosed that the Gulf state would provide \$150 million in debt relief to the PA. Kerry praised what he called the League’s “remarkable commitment” to advancing the peace process. However, Arab League spokesperson Nasif Hata followed up the Kerry meeting by stating (10/23) that his organization was not optimistic about renewed peace talks. Regarding Syria, the Arab League backed punitive action in response to chemical weapon attacks it attributed to the al-Asad regime (8/27) but it did not support retaliatory military action, a nuanced position it maintained in subsequent discussions with Kerry (9/8).

Another significant regional development this quarter was Saudi Arabia’s growing concern over 3 significant areas of U.S. policy: Iran, Syria, and Israeli-Palestinian relations. The Saudi-Iran rivalry was the backdrop to Riyadh’s unhappiness with Washington and the Saudis sought a firm U.S. response to Tehran’s nuclear program while continuing to support rebels

fighting the al-Asad regime in Syria. On 10/18, the Saudi Foreign Ministry announced that the kingdom would decline to take its seat on the UNSC in a show of frustration and anger at the body's failure to take effective action with regard to the Syrian conflict and other Middle East issues—a move thought to be mainly directed at the U.S. With a view to dissipating the atmosphere of tension, Kerry went to Saudi Arabia (11/4) and held a joint press conference with Saudi FM Prince Saud al-Faisal where both men expressed their countries' commitment to work together on issues of concern. The quarter ended with Jordan agreeing to take up the Saudi seat on the UNSC for a 2-year term (11/8).

#### TURKEY

There were a few signs of a potential thawing in Turkey-Israel relations, albeit with continued rhetorical barbs from PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan, not least an accusation that (8/20) Israel was involved in the military coup that removed Morsi in Egypt (his remarks were widely condemned in international circles, including by Egypt and the U.S.). However, on 9/1, for the 1st time since the Mavi Marmara attack, Israel's chargé d'affaires at the Israeli Embassy in Ankara, Yosef Levi Sfari, attended an official reception held by Pres. Abdullah Gul commemorating a battle from the 1922 Turkish War of Independence. A few days later, Turkish media reported (9/5) anonymous comments by an official in Ankara that reconciliation talks between the 2 countries were progressing well. The main obstacle, however, remained the amount of compensation Israel would pay to the families of those killed and wounded by IDF soldiers in the Mavi Marmara incident.

Turkey continued to be concerned about spillover from the Syrian conflict, and it engaged militarily on 2 occasions. Turkish

warplanes shot down a Syrian helicopter after it crossed into Turkish airspace on 9/16 and, exactly 1 month later, the Turkish army fired on what it described as al-Qa'ida-linked militants firing shells into Turkey from n. Syria (10/16). The SNC, meanwhile, continued to use Gaziantep province as its base, holding discussions in 11/2013 on participating in the Geneva 2 peace conference. Turkey also struggled with the humanitarian impact of the conflict, with estimates by the national disaster management agency on 10/21 putting the total number of those displaced from Syria at 600,000, of whom 400,000 were living outside refugee camps.

#### IRAN

##### *P5+1 and the IAEA*

This quarter saw diplomatic breakthroughs in Iran's relations with the international community, including the U.S., amid indications that Tehran, following Pres. Hassan Ruhani's election, would seek a res. of its disputed nuclear program with the P5+1 group and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It soon became clear that the negotiations would be the responsibility of the Foreign Ministry under the authority of the new FM, Mohammad Javad Zarif, and on 9/5, Ruhani confirmed that Zarif would be replacing Iran's previous negotiator, Saeed Jalili. In 9/2013, reports surfaced that talks would restart with the IAEA and that the agency's immediate aim was to gain satisfactory access to the Parchin military site. Speaking at his 1st board meeting on 9/12, Tehran's amb. to the IAEA, Reza Najafi, said that Tehran would cooperate with the agency to "overcome existing issues once and for all."

The UNGA meeting in late 9/2013 provided the backdrop to an unprecedented diplomatic

offensive by Iran, with Ruhani setting the tone in an interview (9/18) with U.S. television in which he said Tehran would never develop nuclear weapons. On the same day, White House spokesperson Jay Carney revealed that Obama had exchanged letters with Ruhani, informing him that the U.S. was ready to resolve the dispute but that urgent action was necessary. The message was emphasized on 9/20, when White House dep. spokesperson Josh Earnest said that the Obama administration was ready to engage in talks with Iran about the country's nuclear program "on the basis of mutual respect." On 9/24, both presidents addressed the UNGA, striking optimistic notes without going into specifics about the concessions that would be needed to break through the impasse. In the following days, the atmosphere warmed further as Kerry and Zarif held one-on-one talks at the UN (9/26) and Ruhani and Obama had a direct phone conversation (9/27)—the highest-level contact between the 2 countries since 1979.

The government's diplomatic strategy garnered backing from a significant majority of Iran's parliamentarians—230 of 290 signed a joint statement backing Ruhani's efforts (10/2)—and from Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who endorsed the diplomatic opening to the U.S. (10/5) while expressing reservations about Washington as a negotiating partner.

On 10/12, Iran's official news agency IRNA reported that Zarif would lead the nuclear negotiation team at a new round of talks with the P5+1 group on 10/15-16, but that he would attend only the opening session before handing over to Dep. FM Abbas Araqchi. The U.S. delegation was reportedly set to include Sherman—leading the team—as well as sanctions expert Adam Szubin, the director of the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). The talks duly got underway (10/15), and although none of the

parties revealed any details that 1st day, Iran presented a proposed plan to break the deadlock. The Iranians' presentation was followed by what was subsequently described by EU spokesperson Michael Mann as the 1st detailed, technical discussions of their kind, and Psaki echoed his cautiously optimistic comments. Talks ended the next day with negotiators speaking of progress and sounding positive about a follow-up round of talks set for 11/7-8 in Geneva even though, according to Psaki, there was no agreement on what sanctions relief Iran might gain if it took concrete steps to meet the international community's demands on its nuclear program. On 11/7, the planned talks took place in Geneva, coordinated by the EU's Catherine Ashton. While discussions ended 2 days later without a deal (11/9), all sides agreed to resume discussions on 11/20 and Kerry stated that "significant progress" had been made on remaining points of difference.

Negotiators from Iran and the IAEA also held talks independently of the P5+1 discussions on 10/29. Both sides released positive statements without providing any details, saying a new meeting would take place in Tehran on 11/11, as Najafi spoke of a "new chapter of cooperation." At the 11/11 meeting conducted by IAEA chief Yukia Amano, Iran and the IAEA signed a deal to allow nuclear inspectors "managed access" to 2 sites within 3 months.

## INTERNATIONAL

### UNITED STATES

#### *Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process*

The significant amount of work put in by Kerry and other U.S. officials to restart Israeli-Palestinian talks continued this quarter. As the new round of negotiations struggled to

make progress, Kerry continued to shuffle between Palestinian and Israeli officials, meeting with Abbas in London (9/8) and Bethlehem (11/6) and with Netanyahu in Rome (10/23) and Jerusalem (11/6). The Palestinian side expressed unhappiness (8/22, 9/3) at what they perceived as lack of adequate participation by Indyk who did not attend any of the initial negotiators' meetings.

### ***Israel and the U.S. Congress***

Major pro-Israel lobbying organizations, including the American Israel Public Affairs Cmte. (AIPAC), focused their energies this quarter on seeking "favorable" administration policies and congressional votes on Syria and Iran. Four days after Obama announced his intent to pursue congressional authorization for a "limited" attack on Syrian military targets, and following a call with the U.S. presidential security advisers, both AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (COP) broke their silence on the issue by releasing strongly-worded statements in support of intervention (9/3). AIPAC subsequently deployed an estimated 250-300 Jewish leaders and activists to Capitol Hill (9/9) as part of a major lobbying effort to persuade Congress to endorse an attack on Syria.

The following month, lobby groups mobilized again, but this time in conjunction with Israeli govt. efforts to maintain diplomatic and economic pressure on Iran. In the weeks leading up to the scheduled meeting between P5+1 and Iranian negotiators in Geneva (11/7), AIPAC, as well as the Jewish Federations of North America and the Jewish Council on Public Affairs, urged U.S. congressional representatives to not only prevent U.S. negotiators from using sanctions relief as a bargaining chip, but also to advance legislation which would strengthen sanctions

against Iran. Their efforts centered on the "Nuclear Iran Prevention Act of 2013," a bill that had passed the House of Representatives on 7/31 by 400-20 and that was, currently being considered by the Senate Banking Cmte. and its chairman Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD). On 10/29, White House National Security Adviser Susan Rice, her deputies, Ben Rhodes and Tony Blinken, and Sherman held an "intense" meeting with leaders of the American Jewish Cmte., the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the COP, and AIPAC in an effort to dissuade these groups from lobbying the Senate for new sanctions-related legislation. *Ha'Aretz* broke the story about the meeting (11/1), noting that the four lobbying groups agreed to a 60-day freeze in their advocacy efforts. The next day, ADL National Director Abe Foxman confirmed the report, saying that the four groups had also agreed that their arrangement would remain secret. However, hours after Foxman's comments were published, AIPAC put out a statement (11/2) saying that there would be "no pause, delay or moratorium in our efforts," a sentiment echoed by AJC Director David Harris in a column published by *Ha'Aretz* on 11/4.

### ***Syria***

The question of how to respond to the Syrian government's use of chemical weapons was a divisive topic in Washington this quarter, as the Obama administration pushed for a limited military campaign in the face of opposition or reluctance on Capitol Hill, in addition to a skeptical public. Ultimately, decisions and actions outside Obama's control such as the British parliament's rejection of intervention and Russia's proposal for a diplomatic solution averted the possibility of an embarrassing administration defeat in Congress and popular censure. Despite efforts to make the case for a strike (including major TV network interviews

on evidence for the chemical attacks on 9/1 and Obama's weekly radio address on 9/7), polls clearly revealed the very low levels of support for a military intervention (only 19% according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll on 9/3). Meanwhile in Washington, Obama faced a divided Senate Foreign Relations Cmte., where positions on a military intervention cut across party lines. The cmte. finally agreed on a draft authorization of force on 9/3, but only passed the res. 10-7 the following day. Before Congress could vote on the res., however, the Russian initiative stopped the march to war in its tracks.

### *Iran*

When the U.S. sent OFAC Director Szubin (see Regional Affairs above) to a new round of P5+1 talks (10/12), it seemed to suggest that the Obama administration was contemplating a potential easing of sanctions as part of a deal with Tehran. In response, 6 Democratic and 4 Republican senators co-signed a letter to the White House urging a suspension of new sanctions only if Iran took significant and concrete measures regarding its nuclear program. Signatories to the letter included Robert Menendez (D), chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Cmte., and Republicans John McCain and Lindsey Graham. Meanwhile, the Israeli govt. was pressuring the Obama administration to step up sanctions rather than ease them (9/30, 10/15). On 10/17, an unnamed Obama administration official was quoted as saying that the U.S. was contemplating a partial release of Iran's assets if Tehran took specific steps to curb its nuclear program. On 10/24, the White House hosted a meeting of Senate cmte. leaders' aides as part of a drive to delay new sanctions against Iran. A week later, VP Joe Biden and other administration officials held 2 private briefings (10/31) with Senate

Democratic leaders and bipartisan mbrs. of the Senate Banking Cmte. to convince lawmakers not to pass further sanctions arguing that such a move could negatively impact the atmosphere surrounding talks on the nuclear program.

### RUSSIA

Russia's profile in the region was heightened this quarter with its initiative to avert a U.S. attack on Syria as a result of a surprise diplomatic breakthrough that facilitated a UNSC res. to destroy the al-Asad regime's chemical weapons capabilities and arsenal. However, Moscow kept up its official skeptical stance with respect to Damascus's responsibility for the chemical attacks. Russia's close ties with the al-Asad regime went unchanged, and Putin continued discussions (11/14) with the Syrian president about the proposed Geneva 2 peace conference.

Russia made no significant contributions toward the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, which remained largely dominated by the U.S. and EU.

### EUROPEAN UNION

EU-Israeli relations this quarter were dominated by controversy over new European guidelines restricting funding on projects with Israeli institutions which had ties to settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (see Update in *JPS* 169). Soon after the release of the guidelines, it became clear that the EU was anxious to minimize their potential impact. On 8/25, at a Jerusalem press conference, visiting French FM Laurent Fabius stated that the guidelines would need to be carefully examined to ensure they did not go beyond what was intended, adding that Israeli officials had repeatedly brought up the issue with him. In response to U.S. calls for

the restrictions be postponed to not hinder negotiations, EU Foreign Affairs chief Catherine Ashton said (9/7) the EU would ensure that the new guidelines would not harm relations with Israel, prompting criticism from Rabbuh (9/9) who berated Kerry's efforts to pressure the EU into postponing action. A few days later, Israeli Foreign Ministry officials and senior EU officials met in Jerusalem (9/10) to discuss the new guidelines and both sides issued upbeat assessments of how matters were progressing. Israeli and EU officials met again on 9/12, with around a dozen participants from each side holding talks for 7 hours in Brussels. Much of the discussion focused on Israel's participation in the Horizon 2020 R&D framework, an initiative considered to be worth preserving in both sides' interests. All the same, the Palestinian side did receive a boost to its position when 15 former senior European officials—including former French FM Hubert Vedrine, former German Dep. FM Wolfgang Ischinger and former EU Foreign Affairs chief Javier Solana—signed off on a letter urging the EU (9/16) not to soften or delay the implementation of Horizon 2020. (For more information on the guidelines, see Doc. A2 in *JPS* 169.)

#### UNITED NATIONS

Israel's 18-month long boycott of the UN Human Rights Council came to an end as Israeli officials including the dep. atty. gen. participated in the hearing held in Geneva on 10/29. Reports indicated that Israel's decision was influenced by warnings from Germany that Tel Aviv risked a diplomatic backlash if it continued to stay away. During its appearance at the hearing, Israel faced accusations of discriminatory policies and breaches of

international law. Israeli officials at the hearing accused the council of directing "disproportional and politically-motivated scrutiny" at their country.

Israel came under sustained criticism from UN officials this quarter. On 8/27, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed its concern about recent forced evictions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, saying that the Palestinian house demolitions could amount to a violation of international law. OHCHR also expressed concern over the killing of Palestinian civilians in West Bank refugee camps by Israeli forces. On 9/20, Dep. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process James W. Rawley, who is also UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt, condemned Israel's blocking of humanitarian assistance to Palestinians whose homes had been demolished in the Jordan Valley. Rawley described "the displacement of a whole Palestinian community" as "a very disappointing development at such a delicate moment where we look forward to positive measures on the ground." A few days later, the OHCHR renewed (9/24) its criticism of Israel's eviction policy, but this time highlighting the destruction of Bedouin-owned properties in the oPt and the proposed Praver-Begin plan for the Negev.

In a briefing to the UNSC on 9/17, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry urged the international community not to neglect the peace process as it focused on other crises in the region. Serry welcomed the increase in work permits Israel granted to West Bank Palestinians but called settlement activity "counterproductive," adding that Palestinian-settler clashes were "particularly worrisome."

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## DONORS

On 9/25, a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Cmte. took place in New York on the sidelines of the UNGA session. Chaired by Norwegian FM Espen Barth Eide and hosted by UN Secy.-Gen. Ban Ki-moon, the gathering included Hamdallah, Steinitz, Kerry, Ashton, Quartet peace envoy Tony Blair, and ministers from other donor countries. The attendees expressed support for the ongoing peace talks and for measures designed to boost the Palestinian economy. A few weeks before the meeting, Eide had sounded a warning (8/27) when he said that donors would not indefinitely fund Palestinian state-building without a political horizon. As the meeting ended, the Quartet unveiled a plan to revive the Palestinian economy. Commenting that “without economic empowerment, any negotiations are likely to seem too remote from reality to be credible,” the Quartet explicitly tied the economy’s revival to the peace process. Focused on private sector growth, the plan called for the construction of tens of thousands of Palestinian housing units in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

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## 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

There were signs this quarter that the PA was starting to become more forthright with respect

to urging its international partners to adopt boycott strategies, something for which it has come under fire for not actively supporting in recent years. During talks with EU leaders on 10/24, Abbas asked that foreign companies avoid working with settlement-based businesses, encouraging EU mbrs. not to back down from the Horizon 2020 guidelines (see EU section for details).

After being successfully lobbied by Palestinian organizations, and following the advice of its govt., Dutch engineering firm Royal Haskoning DHV announced (9/6) its decision to withdraw from a sewage treatment project in East Jerusalem. UN Special Rapporteur Richard Falk welcomed the decision (9/10) and stated that the sewage treatment facility “would have served to further entrench Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem, now universally considered to be a violation of international law” (OHCHR). On 10/2, the Norwegian trade union, Industri Energi, terminated its contract with G4S, a security company supplying products and services to Israeli prisons and illegal settlements, in “solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people.” In the U.S., the mayor’s office of St. Louis, MO announced (10/29) that Veolia Water North America, part of the French multinational targeted by the BDS campaign, was withdrawing from a municipal services bid due to public pressure regarding its involvement in projects in the oPt. Local activists had mounted a sustained campaign against a deal with Veolia.

### DIVESTMENT

On 8/26, Norwegian financial services group Nordea excluded Cemex from its investment portfolio because of the company’s involvement in resource extraction on the West Bank. The decision was praised by Norwegian People’s Aid

(NPA) and the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (NUMGE), both of which had lobbied Nordea to drop the company. In other divestment news, on 9/4, a regional Quaker organization encompassing Ohio, Michigan, and Western Pennsylvania became the 1st Quaker yearly meeting to officially endorse boycott and divestment targeting companies complicit in the Israeli occupation or settlement enterprise.

There were no significant divestment votes on North American college campuses this quarter, with the exception of a defeated attempt by pro-Israel students to thwart future divestment efforts at UCLA. On

10/22, the UCLA Undergraduate Students Association Council voted 7-5 against a res. that framed divestment as a source of tension on campus and advocated instead for "positive investment." BDS activists hailed the failure of the res., a new strategy by pro-Israel groups, as important.

#### OTHER

In an open letter published on his Facebook account and on *The Electronic Intifada* (8/20), musician Roger Waters, of Pink Floyd fame, maintained his outspoken support for the Palestinians by calling on other musicians to boycott Israel. His boycott call made headlines around the world.