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# QUARTERLY UPDATE ON CONFLICT AND DIPLOMACY

16 FEBRUARY–15 MAY 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: A tense calm is generally maintained with sporadic cease-fire violations in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel; The peace process remains stalemated while U.S. Secy. of State John Kerry conducts talks with both Israeli and Palestinian officials without a breakthrough; Demonstrations across the West Bank against the occupation and in solidarity with prisoners continue; Tensions in the West Bank continue to rise with an uptick in settler-Palestinian violence, as well as IDF-inflicted fatalities; Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad resigns from his position; Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu forms a governing coalition for his victorious Likud-Yisrael Beitenu joint ticket, partnering with Yesb Atid and Jewish Home.*

## THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

This quarter was dominated by earnest yet ineffective U.S. diplomatic efforts, largely behind the scenes, to restart Israeli and Palestinian peace talks, with U.S. Secy. of State John Kerry conducting shuttle diplomacy between the parties. Meanwhile, tensions in the West Bank intensified as larger and more widespread mobilizations took place by Palestinians angry over shootings by the Israeli military and in solidarity with prisoners in Israeli detention. There were also numerous attacks by Jewish settlers on Palestinians in the West Bank and a general escalation in tension between the 2 groups.

In the Gaza Strip, the calm that followed the 11/2012 Operation Pillar of Defense (OPD) was largely maintained, despite Israeli attacks on Palestinian farmers, civilians, and fishermen. The

Strip was also the scene of sporadic projectile fire from Palestinian factions, as well as the 1st Israel Defense Forces (IDF) air strike assassination since OPD.

### *Peace Process Stalemate*

With the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority (PA) both refusing to resume negotiations on the other's terms, the quarter opened with no indication of a likely breakthrough in the peace process, despite concerted and ongoing U.S. efforts to urge the two sides back to the negotiating table. In particular, Kerry, who took office on 2/1, made restarting the moribund peace process a personal priority, embarking on a succession of trips to the region and shuttle diplomacy-style talks with both Israeli and Palestinian leaders. The lack of progress prompted warnings by UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry (2/26) and later by Kerry (4/18) that the coming year would be a critical—and perhaps final—chance for the two-state solution.

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As U.S. Pres. Barack Obama prepared for his 1st visit as president to Israel and the West Bank in 3/2013, U.S. officials were keen to stress (2/26) that it would not involve a new peace initiative. In anticipation of the visit and to avoid diplomatic friction, Jerusalem's Municipal Planning and Building Committee removed (3/14) 2 construction plans from its agenda, one for the expansion of the Har Homa settlement, and the other for a waste infrastructure project in the E1 area of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement. Arriving in Israel on 3/20, Obama held talks with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, stating at their news conference that the key to a lasting peace was a "strong and secure Jewish state where Israel's security needs are met, alongside a strong Palestinian state." The following day, however, in a speech to Israeli students in Jerusalem, Obama delivered a message with a different tone and emphasis: further settlement construction was "counterproductive" to peace efforts. Obama also met with PA Pres. Mahmud Abbas in Ramallah, discussions that Palestinian officials later characterized (3/21) as disappointing with regard to settlements and prisoners.

Kerry met with Israeli and Palestinian leaders on a number of occasions during the quarter, both in the U.S. and in the region. These meetings included talks with Abbas in Saudi Arabia (3/4), Amman (3/23), Ramallah (4/7), and Ankara (4/21), as well as with Netanyahu and other senior Israeli officials (e.g., Justice Minister Tzipi Livni and Pres. Shimon Peres) in Washington (3/23, 4/8, 4/11, 5/2), and in Rome (5/8). The talks were aimed at identifying terms acceptable to both sides for face-to-face negotiations on final status issues. On 4/7, Kerry reportedly offered Abbas incentives for a return to direct negotiations, including assurances that Israel would not withhold tax revenues again (most recently in 12/2012) and that parts of Area C of the West Bank could be transferred to the PA's jurisdiction. However, neither party offered details in public about what was discussed.

In all their discussions with U.S. officials and when talking to the media (e.g., 2/17, 2/19, 3/4, 3/24), PA officials remained focused on what they viewed

as essential pre-conditions for resuming talks—namely a freeze on settlement construction and a release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

For the Palestinians, a major demand with regard to restarting negotiations was that they use as their starting point the 1967 borders, at least in principle. The border issue came to the fore this quarter following a visit to Washington by an Arab League delegation (see "Regional Affairs" below) to promote the 2002 Arab peace plan. In the course of the delegation's 4/29 meeting with Secy. Kerry and VP Joe Biden, the Qatari FM suggested mutually agreed minor land swaps between the two sides. While some viewed this as a softening of the original 2002 proposal, PLO negotiator Saeb Erekat pointed out that the Arab League's support for land swaps was not new. In any case, Fatah's Central Committee approved (5/2) this latest version of the League's plan formally authorizing land swaps. The same day, Hamas politburo chief Khalid Mishal rejected the Arab League's proposal overall on the grounds that it was designed to facilitate economic peace (normalization) between Arab states and Israel. Livni and other Israeli officials had already welcomed the new proposal (4/29), though one emphasized that the framework could not be a starting point for talks (4/29). Subsequently, Israeli sources said (5/2) that PM Netanyahu feared that Israel's negotiating position would be undermined if Kerry accepted the Arab League's recent initiative.

One concession Palestinian officials did make to Israeli and U.S. demands was agreeing (4/4) to suspend temporarily its "unilateral measures" against Israel in UN agencies to give the U.S. more time to pursue its efforts to restart negotiations. The pause was reportedly to last 2 to 3 months, during which time Israel would show its seriousness by presenting a map of the future borders of a Palestinian state. Among the Palestinian "measures" (revealed 4/24) were 5 resolutions condemning Israeli policies that were to be presented to the UNESCO executive board in Paris. However, as a result of a U.S.-brokered agreement between the Palestinians, Jordan, and Israel, the PA agreed to postpone the 5 resolutions while

UNESCO experts undertook to survey a number of sites in Jerusalem. Hamas condemned the PA's decision to agree to postpone the resolutions.

Although Netanyahu continued to insist on "no pre-conditions" (i.e. no settlement freeze), there were reports of possible gestures Israel would be willing to make to kick-start the process. The reports were conflicting, however, with some versions of the discussions between Kerry and Netanyahu reported (4/11) in the Israeli media claiming agreement on a "silent" construction freeze (outside the major settlement blocs), and others claiming there would be no Israeli confidence-building measures whatsoever before negotiations.

On 5/7, Israeli officials said that Netanyahu had promised Kerry to "rein in" settlement construction until mid-6/2013 in the context of renewed efforts to resume negotiations—the so-called "silent freeze." If this turns out to be the case, it could put Netanyahu on a collision course with some of his new coalition partners (see "A New Israeli Government" below). As one of a number of such statements, for example, Housing Minister Uri Ariel (Jewish Home) announced (3/17) that the government would "build in Judea and Samaria." A week after the reports of a quiet freeze, Israeli media reported (5/13) that tenders for 1,500 housing units in Ramat Shlomo settlement in East Jerusalem had been delayed for at least 3 weeks for "political reasons" related to the peace process. This was an example of the continued balancing act by Israeli officials: on the one hand seeking to avoid giving the impression internationally that Israeli "provocations" are responsible for stymieing peace talks, while on the other hand reflecting the coalition government's consensus opinion on construction, especially in the main blocs. A further complication was the issue of whether any future peace deal would be submitted to a national referendum, a proposal reportedly being pushed (4/28) by Economy and Trade Minister Naftali Bennett and opposed by Livni. In a meeting with Swiss FM Didier Burkhalter on 5/2, Netanyahu expressed support for the referendum idea.

### *Palestinian Authority Financial Difficulties*

As the quarter opened, the PA still had not received the tax revenues Israel had been withholding since last quarter (see QU in *JPS* 167), and the continuing non-payment of civil servants' salaries that prompted street protests and industrial action in the West Bank, such as by teachers on 2/16 and 2/20 in schools. On 2/24, Netanyahu authorized the transfer of the tax revenues for 1/2013; on 2/26, the PA announced the payment of the remainder of 1/2013 salaries. In 3/2013, Netanyahu's office announced (3/25) that the new fin. min., Yair Lapid, had been instructed to restart regular monthly tax transfers. Meanwhile, to help alleviate the PA's constant financial difficulties, the World Bank in mid-3/2013 transferred \$60.5 million to the PA from the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan Trust Fund (PRDP-MDTF), a multi-donor budget support mechanism that in this instance was channeling money from the UK and Norway to support urgent PA budget needs.

On 3/18, PA PM Salam Fayyad and European Union (EU) foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton agreed to a new \$9 million funding for Palestinian development, aimed at supporting the Palestinian presence in Area C of the West Bank. The next day, the Israeli newspaper *Ha'Aretz* reported (3/19) that Israel's Civil Administration in the West Bank was preparing a new master plan for Area C to retroactively legalize some Palestinian construction. A step described by the paper as "part of a series of gestures toward the Palestinians designed to lessen the diplomatic pressure on Israel." Fayyad and Ashton sealed the new funding in Brussels during the 3/2013 semi-annual meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, the international donor group, after which Norwegian FM Epsen Barth Eide said that progress was made toward finding the \$1.2 billion needed to fund the PA this year.

### *Gaza Cease-Fire under Strain*

The cease-fire agreement reached by Israel and Hamas via Egyptian mediation at the end of OPD in 11/2012 (see QU in *JPS* 167) came under some strain this quarter. Sporadic Palestinian projectile fire prompted Israeli military incursions

and attacks on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, mainly in the IDF-declared “buffer zone.” In 3/2013, Palestinian militants fired rockets into southern Israel, causing no injuries but damaging 1 home in Sderot. A small Islamist group named Magles Shura al-Mujahiddin, which also operates in the Egyptian Sinai, claimed responsibility for the launch. This same group previously claimed an attack on Israel from the Sinai in 6/2012. In response, the Israeli military announced (3/21) that it would be reducing the permitted fishing zone for Palestinians in Gaza to 3 miles, as well as (temporarily) closing the Kerem Shalom crossing.

In early 4/2013, there were 3 days of consecutive projectile fire (4/2–4). The 1st mortar shell attack was claimed by the Magles Shura al-Mujahiddin as a response to the death on 4/2 of West Bank Palestinian prisoner Maysara Abuhamdieh in Israeli detention (see “Rising Tensions in the West Bank” below). The IDF conducted 2 retaliatory nighttime air strikes nr. Bayt Lahiya, causing no injuries. None of the rockets or mortar shells fired by Palestinians over those 3 days caused damage or injuries.

Three more rockets were fired by Palestinian militants on 4/7, with 1 landing in the Negev causing no damage or injuries, and the other 2 landing within the Gaza Strip. Two rockets were fired into Israel on 4/18, 1 rocket on 4/21, and 1 Grad rocket on 4/28, none of which caused damage or injuries. In response to the Grad attack, the IDF conducted air strikes on 2 sites in the southern Gaza Strip, followed the next day by the firing of another rocket. Neither the air strikes nor the rocket caused damage or injuries.

Israel responded (4/29) to the recent rocket fire by again closing the Kerem Shalom goods crossing, restricting movement through the Erez crossing to “humanitarian cases,” and cancelling visits for families from the Gaza Strip to prisoners in Israeli jails. The next day (4/30), the IDF assassinated a Palestinian in an air strike nr. Rafah. Israel claimed that the targeted man, Haitham al-Mishal, was a Salafist militant responsible for arms manufacturing. In response, Hamas urged Egypt to ensure that Israel stays committed to the truce deal.

Meanwhile, Hamas authorities showed no desire to escalate the violence on the

Gaza-Israel border, with reports (5/2) of Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades fighters being deployed nr. the border fence to stop rocket fire and Salafist militants being arrested by Hamas security forces. There were 2 subsequent attacks by Palestinian armed groups in the quarter: 2 mortar shells were fired into southern Israel on 5/2, and 1 rocket was fired on 5/15. Neither attack caused damage or injuries. Meanwhile, the Israeli military conducted dozens of limited incursions and shooting attacks in the “buffer zone” nr. the border fence, as well at sea, targeting fishermen, farmers, protesters, metal collectors, and civilians at leisure—in some cases causing injuries.

### *Rising Tensions in the West Bank*

This quarter saw a significant rise in tension in the West Bank, stemming from ongoing Palestinian anger over the status of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails (heightened by anger over fatal IDF shootings and other deaths attributed to Israel) and from increased violence between Palestinians and Jewish settlers.

Numerous demonstrations were held throughout the quarter in solidarity with prisoners (especially the hunger strikers), with the IDF causing injuries with rubber-coated bullets or live ammunition. Particular flashpoints included—but were not limited to—Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah, Ofer prison nr. Ramallah, al-Khader nr. Bethlehem, Aida r.c. nr. Bethlehem, al-'Arub r.c. nr. Hebron, Tulkarm, Huwarra checkpoint nr. Nablus, and Bayt Ummar nr. Hebron.

On 2/19, an estimated 800 Palestinian prisoners declared a 1-day fast in solidarity with 4 hunger striking prisoners, Samer Issawi, Ayman Sharawna, Jafar Ezzedin, and Tareq Qa'adan, all of whom were either rearrested or being held in administrative detention without charge. The deteriorating health of the prisoners, in particular Issawi who was entering his 211th day on strike and had been denied bail by an Israeli military court that day, sparked not only organized support from fellow prisoners, but prompted Palestinians to hold demonstrations at Ofer prison and the Huwarra checkpoint. About 200 protesters in the demonstration at Huwarra in the northern West Bank clashed with Israeli soldiers.

As tensions continued to rise over the following days, UN Secy.-Gen. Ban Ki-moon expressed concern at the ongoing Palestinian hunger strike. On 2/21, Palestinians demonstrated nr. Ramallah, and 29 Palestinians were injured by rubber-coated metal bullets from IDF forces. Large-scale violent confrontations continued on 2/22.

The following day (2/23), news that Palestinian prisoner Arafat Jaradat had died in Israel's Megiddo prison unleashed more protests and clashes (see "Selections from the Press" in this *JPS* issue). Israeli officials reported the cause of death as a heart attack. As news of 30-year-old Jaradat's death and suspicion of torture under interrogation spread, Palestinians launched fresh protests across the West Bank and Gaza Strip while around 4,000 prisoners in Israeli jails held a hunger strike. PA chief pathologist Saber Aloul, who attended the autopsy, claimed that evidence showed Jaradat died from torture. Palestinian officials announced these claims at a press conference in Ramallah on 2/25.

In light of the number and seriousness of the clashes, PA Pres. Mahmud Abbas met (2/25) with PA security chiefs and ordered them to enforce calm in the West Bank. With the frequency and size of demonstrations growing in a period of weeks, U.S. dep. State Dept. spokesman Patrick Ventrell called (2/25) on Israelis and Palestinians to "exercise maximum restraint" and "refrain from provocative actions that could destabilize conditions on the ground." On 3/7, a Palestinian from Abud village nr. Ramallah died of injuries sustained when an IDF soldier shot him weeks prior (2/22) during heightened tensions at one of the solidarity protests.

On 4/2, less than 6 weeks after Jaradat's death, another Palestinian prisoner, Maysara Abuhamdieh, died in an Israeli jail from complications relating to terminal cancer. Abuhamdieh's family issued a statement that Israeli prison health authorities had diagnosed his condition months before without informing him or attempting to treat his illness. The news of medical negligence, which caused Palestinian outrage (amplified by suspicions of intentionally withheld cancer treatment), triggered a new wave of prisoner solidarity

demonstrations in Hebron (Abuhamdieh's hometown), Jerusalem, Gaza, and other localities. At one such demonstration nr. Tulkarm, Israeli soldiers at a military post shot and killed (4/4) a Palestinian teenager following what the IDF claimed was a firebomb attack (an account disputed by witnesses).

The prisoner solidarity demonstrations died down after high-profile hunger strikers reached agreements to end their strikes. Most notably, Issawi agreed (4/22) to end his 8-month protest in exchange for early release, accepting an 18-month sentence for violating the terms of his 2011 amnesty (which had confined him to the Jerusalem area), with the time already served since his 7/2012 rearrest to be deducted. Most crucially, he would be released to his home town of Issawiya, having successfully refused the terms of release Israel had imposed on other hunger strikers: deportation to Gaza. Fellow hunger striking prisoner Sharawna, for example, who had also been rearrested after prior release, agreed (3/17) to be exiled to Gaza for 10 years.

Besides the protest demonstrations, the other main source of tension in the West Bank this quarter was the uptick in violence between settlers and Palestinians. Weekly reports from the UN Office for the Coordination of Affairs (OCHA) cited 117 settler attacks on Palestinians and Palestinian-owned property this quarter that injured some 100 Palestinian civilians, up from 67 during last quarter. There were also an estimated 25 Palestinian attacks on Israeli settlers in the West Bank that resulted in about 50 injuries. In 3/2013, Israel's security apparatus, Shin Bet, published (3/5) statistics indicating that from 1/2013 to 2/2013 there was a 70 percent increase in violent attacks by Palestinians in the West Bank, most of these identified as throwing Molotov cocktails.

The most serious settler-related incident of the quarter occurred on 4/30, when a Palestinian assailant stabbed a Jewish settler from Yitzhar to death at a West Bank bus stop. The death triggered settler rampages, attacking Palestinians, blocking roads, and throwing stones at passing vehicles. Yitzhar settlers attempted to set fire to a mosque in 'Urif village and stoned a bus carrying

Palestinian schoolchildren, injuring 2. The attack on 'Urif in turn sparked clashes between IDF forces and Palestinians during which 4 Palestinians were injured. In total, an estimated 43 Palestinians and 8 settlers were injured in the riots and clashes after the stabbing.

Finally, in occupied East Jerusalem, tensions surrounding Jerusalem Day, the Israeli holiday celebrating the 1967 "reunification" of the city, erupted into a scuffle on the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount). On 5/7, some 15 of the Muslim worshippers inside the compound yelled and threw chairs at a group of Jews praying at the site (in defiance of Israeli regulations). Calm was quickly restored by Muslim religious officials and security forces, but the incident led to a diplomatic fuss (see "Jordan" below) when Israeli police detained the mufti of Jerusalem, Mohammed Hussein, the same day for unknown reasons. Though the mufti was released without charge, U.S. State Dept. spokesman Ventrell expressed concern about "the recent tensions surrounding the Temple Mount, Haram al-Sharif," and urged "all sides to respect the status quo of this holy site and to exercise restraint and refrain from provocative actions." The following day, some 18 Palestinians were arrested nr. Damascus Gate for incitement as the annual flag-dance parade of religious Zionist youth prepared to march through the Old City.

#### ***A New Israeli Government***

As the quarter opened, Netanyahu, entrusted (2/2) by Pres. Peres to form the government following the 1/22 parliamentary elections, was still struggling to put together a coalition. With his Likud-Yisrael Beitenu ticket having won only 31 of the 120 Knesset seats (see Yiftachel article in *JPS* 167), Netanyahu initially signaled (2/17) his intention to forge a "broad coalition." On 2/20, he signed an agreement with Livni's Hatnuah party to join the government, under which Livni would become justice minister and head Israel's negotiations team with the Palestinians. However, his larger task of securing a stable Knesset majority was hampered by the mutually agreed decision (2/25) of newcomer and popular Lapid (Yesh Atid) and Bennett (Jewish Home) to adopt an "either both of us or

neither of us" approach to overtures to join the government.

After the initial 28-day period for forming a government passed without a successful coalition agreement, Peres gave (3/2) Netanyahu 2 more weeks to form a government. By 3/15, Netanyahu finalized a coalition deal, ultimately reaching separate agreements with Yesh Atid and Jewish Home. The 2 deals, together with the Hatnuah party agreement, gave the Likud leader a Knesset majority of 68 seats. It is worth noting that this is the 1st Israeli coalition in a decade that does not include any ultra-Orthodox parties.

The new government formally took office on 3/18, with Netanyahu telling the Knesset that Israel was ready for a "historic compromise" with the Palestinians. Netanyahu's announcement was perhaps made more with an eye to U.S. Pres. Obama's upcoming visit, since the new government's immediate concerns would likely be issues such as the new budget and proposed legislation to overturn the long-standing exception to mandatory IDF service for the ultra-Orthodox community.

Regarding the latter issue, the new coalition government, though lacking an ultra-Orthodox component, does include a number of parties that campaigned against the traditional military service exemptions for that community. Moreover, without an ultra-Orthodox presence in the new government, there is expected to be less political risk in repeal than would typically be the case.

Meanwhile, Yisrael Beitenu head Avigdor Lieberman, who had resigned his post as foreign minister in 12/2012 when facing indictment for corruption, remained focused this quarter on his corruption trial and did not resume his position in the new coalition. The Foreign Ministry was thus left in the hands of Dep. Minister Ze'ev Elkin as an interim measure, with Netanyahu's office also assuming some of the responsibilities and decision making.

#### ***Occupation Data and Trends***

Ten Palestinians were killed this quarter as a result of Israeli actions (down from 169 Palestinians last quarter), and 1 Israeli settler was killed (compared to 6 Israelis killed last quarter) as a result of

Palestinian actions. As of 5/15, the deaths this quarter brought the comprehensive death toll since the 2d intifada began in 9/2000 to 8,198 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*

The significant drop in fatalities this quarter is due to OPD's extending into last quarter. Even so, this quarter was notable for its lack of serious or large-scale violence either in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. The Gaza-Israel border was relatively quiet. Sporadic Palestinian rocket fire was mostly limited to 2 brief periods in 4/2013, Hamas authorities having made efforts to clamp down on smaller militant groups that were not observing the terms of the cease-fire agreed to in 11/2012. There were also IDF responses to rocket fire, including an assassination and other air strikes. In addition, the Israeli military carried out numerous limited ground incursions into the Gaza Strip territory alongside the border fence, shot Palestinians nr. the fence in the "buffer zone," and targeted fishermen in waters off the coast.

While fatalities and large-scale clashes were markedly down from the last quarter overall, the West Bank was the scene of increased frequency in tension and violence this quarter, with clashes between Palestinians and Jewish settlers, as well as between the IDF and Palestinians. Flashpoints for confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers included places like Aida r.c. in Bethlehem and al-Khader village nr. Bethlehem. Demonstrations in towns and villages across the West Bank in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners were not always noteworthy for their size, but their frequency and intensity—with many of the

even smaller protests turning into clashes with IDF—was significant.

Israeli soldiers shot and killed 2 Palestinians in the West Bank during the quarter—which along with the deaths of 2 prisoners in detention prompted a further surge in anti-occupation protests (an additional 5 Palestinians died this quarter in tunnel-related accidents). Settler-Palestinian friction noticeably increased this quarter. The violence in the West Bank led some pundits to speculate about a 3d intifada, what has become a regular go-to question since Arab uprisings began in 2011. On 3/27, Maj. Gen. Nitzan Alon, a senior IDF commander, told Israeli television that Palestinian violence in the West Bank had been increasing over a period of months, but stopped short of mentioning a 3d intifada. Overall, the consensus remained—including among Israeli military leaders who speculate on such things—that conditions are not yet ripe for an uprising.

#### *Movement and Access Issues*

During this quarter, freedom of movement and access for Palestinians in the West Bank remained largely unchanged. The last comprehensive update was provided by OCHA, whose 12/31/2012 statistics recorded 532 obstacles to movement (including 9 Green Line checkpoints and 59 internal checkpoints, along with numerous earth mounds, road barriers, trenches, and gates).

In 3/2013, PLO official Hanan Ashrawi publicly criticized (3/24) the shortage of Israeli-issued permits for West Bank Christian communities to visit Jerusalem, with parishes in Bethlehem and Ramallah reportedly only receiving 30–40 percent of the requested permits. On 4/29, Israel granted 540 permits for Christians in the Gaza Strip to visit the West Bank for Orthodox Easter celebrations.

With regard to the Gaza Strip, the IDF imposed restrictions on border crossings (all of which it controls except Rafah) in response to sporadic projectile fire from inside the territory into southern Israel. These restrictions occurred on 2/26, and then again on 3/21, when Israel closed the Kerem Shalom crossing, restricted the movement of people through Erez, and cut the maritime zone accessible to fishermen from 6 to 3 nautical miles. Kerem

Shalom remained closed for a week as a punitive measure, and was then closed again several days later for Passover (3/25–4/2; Israel routinely imposes a comprehensive closure during national holidays), with Erez restricted only to humanitarian cases for the week.

In 4/2013, there were further punitive closures in response to rocket fire (e.g., 4/8 and 4/28). Throughout the month, Kerem Shalom was closed for 17 out of 30 days, including holidays and regular closing days. Meanwhile, Kerem Shalom had also been closed on 3/4 by Hamas authorities, due to a dispute over the collection of customs revenue with the company operating the terminal.

One potential positive change on the horizon was reported on 2/19, when the head of the PA's borders and crossing dept., Nathmi Muhanna, announced that the EU would fund expansion of Kerem Shalom to increase its capacity to 500 truckloads per day (up from its current 300). Kerem Shalom remains the only crossing open for the transfer of goods in and out of the Gaza Strip (Rafah being for people crossing only). During the reporting period, an estimated 12,500 truckloads of goods entered the Gaza Strip, an average of less than 1,000 truckloads per week, compared to a pre-2005 weekly average of some 2,500.

In addition to the Israeli-imposed restrictions, this quarter saw further efforts by Egyptian authorities to clamp down on cross-border tunnels, including flooding them with sewage water on 2/20.

With regard to the “buffer zone” and “no-go” zones along the border fence and the coast, Israeli forces used live fire against Palestinian farmers and picnickers (e.g., 2/22, 3/1, 3/8, 3/12, 3/20, 4/15, 4/28, 5/3, 5/5). One issue was the apparent lack of clarity from the Israeli military about the exact dimensions of the buffer zone. On 3/10, Israeli NGO Gisha received a letter from a military spokesperson stating that Palestinians are prohibited from accessing areas within 300 meters from the fence, contradicting earlier statements that farmers may approach up to 100 meters from the fence on foot. There were also numerous attacks on Palestinian fishermen working off the coast of the Gaza Strip (e.g., 2/18, 2/21–25, 3/8, 3/24–25, 3/28, 3/30, 4/7–8, 4/10, 4/13–15, 4/26, 4/28–5/1, 5/6–7).

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

Demonstrations in the West Bank against the occupation, settlements, and the separation wall continued, with protests taking place in a larger number of villages (even if not always weekly). Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals took part in demonstrations in villages and areas nr. Ramallah (Abud, Bayt Liqya, Bil'in, Budrus, al-Nabi Salih, Ni'lin, Ofer prison, al-Shakara), Bethlehem (al-Ma'sara), and in Hebron and areas nr. Hebron (Bayt Ummar village and al-Hara'ik), and nr. Qalqilya (Kafr Qaddum, Jayyus). IDF soldiers typically responded with force (tear gas, rubber-coated bullets, and live ammunition), and there were a number of examples of serious injuries being sustained (e.g., 2/22, 3/8, 3/22, 4/12, 4/26, 5/3, 5/10).

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

There was a sharp increase in settler violence this quarter, with an estimated 117 attacks (compared to 67 attacks last quarter, and 94 incidents the quarter before that). Around 100 Palestinians were injured in these attacks. Incidents of settlers vandalizing or destroying Palestinian-owned orchards and agricultural land were frequent (e.g., 2/21, 2/24, 3/5, 3/8, 3/12, 4/11, 4/22, 5/2), as well as “price tag” graffiti and attacks on vehicles in Palestinian villages (e.g., 3/8, 4/7, 4/22, 5/7). The long-standing complaints of impunity for settlers targeting Palestinians were supported this quarter by evidence (3/3) that no charges had been filed in any of the 56 price tag attacks against Palestinians in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas (3/3). The Palestinian Civil Defense, a small group of forces under the PA security apparatus dedicated to firefighting and basic local protections, reported (5/1) 57 fires across the West Bank caused by settlers, with damage to hundreds of olive and almond trees.

Two specific episodes of Palestinian-settler violence this quarter stand out. The 1st involved serious clashes in Qusra village in the northern West Bank in late 2/2013. On 2/23, settlers from Esh Kodesh invaded the village and shot 2 residents, returning the next day to attack a house nearby; the 2/24 attack was followed by the IDF's violent dispersal of the Palestinian villagers. The 2d

episode, far more serious, was the already described 4/30 stabbing to death of a settler by a Palestinian and its consequences in the Yitzhar settlement/Urif village area (see "Rising Tensions in the West Bank" above). This 2d episode is in line with reports of rising Palestinian violence targeting settlers, though fatalities have been rare.

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

Approximately 91 demolitions were reported this quarter, down from the previous quarter (146) and the winter quarter (150). Of this quarter's total demolitions, 78 percent (71 demolitions) were carried out within a 3–4 week period during 4–5/2013, displacing 84 Palestinians. This intense burst prompted the EU missions in Ramallah and Jerusalem to express (4/27) serious concern over Israel's demolition of 22 structures across 8 locations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem at the end of 4/2013, with the EU noting that some of the destroyed structures had been funded by member states. In 5/2013, the UN noted that demolitions in 4/2013 had brought the 2013 monthly average figure to 50, the same as in 2012. However, while the average number of demolitions had not increased, the corresponding number of persons displaced had; from 73 in 2012 to 95 in 2013 (OCHA 5/24).

As in previous quarters, some regions of the West Bank were harder hit than others: about 60 percent of all 2013 demolitions to date occurred in the Jordan Valley (Tubas and Jericho governorates) and 20 percent in the Hebron governorate (OCHA 5/24). Meanwhile, some 200 Palestinians in 3 communities in the northern Jordan Valley this quarter were ordered to leave their homes in 3/2013 to make way for Israeli military training exercises. Though only removed for a short time, the precarious state of these small Area C communities has left many unsure of the long-term plan of Israeli authorities for the area.

In a significant development regarding land confiscation, the Israeli Special Appeals Committee of the Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court rejected (4/24) a petition by Palestinian landowners from Bayt Jala and representatives of the Cremisan Monastery and Convent. They had appealed to have a section of the

separation wall rerouted in the Cremisan Valley. Consequently, the court's decision means that the wall will separate 58 farmers from approximately 3,000 dunams of land, including the only recreational green space in the area. The monastery and convent will now also be separated by the wall.

### **INTRA-PALESTINIAN DYNAMICS**

The most significant development the internal Palestinian political arena this quarter was the departure of longtime (since 2007) PM Salam Fayyad, who offered his resignation to Pres. Mahmud Abbas on 4/10. It was not initially clear if Abbas would accept the resignation. The following day, a scheduled meeting between the 2 men was postponed (4/11) due to European and U.S. pressures; an anonymous U.S. State Dept. official even dismissed the idea that Fayyad was actually resigning. On 4/13, however, Abbas accepted Fayyad's resignation while asking him to remain as caretaker PM until a replacement was appointed.

Fayyad, a technocrat who spent many years in Western institutions but with little experience in domestic Palestinian politics, had never been embraced by Fatah. His resignation was welcomed by the secy. of Fatah's revolutionary council, Amin Makhoul, who cited Fayyad's failure to solve serious economic problems. U.S. Secy. of State Kerry said he would have preferred Fayyad to stay on but hoped Abbas would pick an appropriate replacement. UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry praised (4/15) Fayyad's role, adding that he "had to contend with circumstances that kept constraining the success of the state building agenda" that is now "at serious risk."

In the days that followed, Palestinian attention focused on how this development would impact Fatah-Hamas reconciliation talks. Fatah official Azzam al-Ahmad urged (4/15) Abbas to form a national unity government and set a date for elections. Hamas officials denied that Fayyad's departure had any connection to the national reconciliation process, though Islamic Jihad senior leader Khalid al-Batsh commented that it was an opportunity to form a unity government headed by Abbas (4/14).

On 4/18, officials from a dozen Palestinian factions, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Islamic Jihad—but excluding Hamas and Fatah—met in Gaza City to discuss the implications of the resignation. In a press conference and according to Ma'an News Agency, the factions said Abbas should "immediately start forming a Palestinian unity government of technocrats to be sworn in within 3 weeks." The government would then set a date for presidential, parliamentary, and PNC elections. The next day, senior Hamas officials (including both PM Ismail Haniyeh and Mishal) met in Qatar to discuss developments in light of Fayyad's decision. That same day (4/19) in Ramallah, Abbas announced that he would launch talks in the near future on forming a new cabinet.

#### **National Reconciliation**

Efforts at furthering the long-running, stop-go national reconciliation process continued this quarter in line with tentative efforts the previous quarter (such as the announcement in 1/2013 that Fatah and Hamas would be implementing previous reconciliation agreements). Nothing of substance was subsequently advanced, however.

In 3/2013, Qatari emir Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani used a speech at the Arab League Summit (3/21–27) in Doha to call for a mini-summit on Palestinian national reconciliation in Cairo, remarks welcomed (3/26) by both the Ramallah PA and Hamas. On 3/28, Fatah official Yahya Rabah announced that Egypt would host initial consultations with Fatah and Hamas to relaunch national reconciliation talks and attempt to move beyond discussions to implementation. On 4/10, Fatah's Azzam al-Ahmad and Hamas's Abu Marzuk—both senior officials in their respective parties—resumed talks in Cairo for the 1st time since 2/2013 (see *JPS* 167).

After Fayyad's resignation, Abbas began consultations (4/27) to create a national unity government. He called on all factions to cooperate with him so he could issue 2 presidential decrees on the formation of a government of technocrats and set a date for elections. Also on 4/27, Gaza-based Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that there had been

no "consultation with Hamas" so far and warned Fatah against unilateral steps. At the end of the quarter, talks in Cairo between Fatah and Hamas representatives produced an agreement (5/14) with a timetable for the formation of a unity government within 3 months, but with no clear indication how this timetable would fare better than previous unrealized pledges.

Efforts at moving the national reconciliation process forward were hampered by incidents of harassment and detention of one party by the other in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In Gaza on 3/20, for example, Hamas security services summoned 7 Fatah members for interrogation. Meanwhile, in the West Bank Hamas reported examples of PA security forces arresting its members across the territory (2/23, 5/1, 5/9). On 3/5, Hamas officials reported that during 2/2013, PA forces had arrested 66 of its members and summoned another 38 for interrogation.

#### **Internal Governance**

Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip made headlines this quarter with a highly publicized campaign, launched by the Interior Ministry on 3/13, offering amnesty to Palestinian collaborators with Israel who turned themselves in by 4/11; those who failed to do so, the ministry warned, would be arrested—on the basis of lists already compiled. The deadline passed, the ministry did not announce how many persons had taken advantage of the offer, but an official speaking anonymously reported that about 30 collaborators had surrendered during Hamas's 1st amnesty campaign held during the 2d half of 2010. To date, Hamas has "officially" executed 6 collaborators in Gaza, while more than a score of alleged collaborators were "executed" in the street during the 2008–9 Operation Cast Lead and the 11/2012 OPD. Meanwhile, the Hamas-run security forces targeted Salafist militants in an effort to enforce the post-OPD cease-fire agreement with Israel that took effect in 11/2012. Six Salafists were arrested (5/2) on suspicion of stealing weapons and plotting attacks, while according to media reports Hamas had placed al-Qassam Brigades fighters nr. the border fence to stop rocket fire.

With regard to non-security domestic issues, the Education Ministry in Gaza announced on 4/1 that men would henceforth be barred from teaching at girls' schools, and that separate classes for boys and girls as of age 9 would now be mandatory. Samer Badra, the financial director of the Patriarchate Schools in Palestine, stated that the new gender segregation in schools would "force Gaza's Christian institutions to build new facilities and hire new employees... something that the modest budget of our church-affiliated non-profit educational institutions cannot afford." (*Al-Akbbar*)

In the West Bank, the PA was subject to further strikes, over late payment of salaries to civil servants, though to a lesser extent than previous quarters. On 2/16, schools across the West Bank were closed as teachers went on strike to protest the failure of the PA to pay 1/2013 wages. On 2/26, the PA announced the payment of the remainder of the 1/2013 salaries. (Ma'an News Agency 2/26)

In other developments this quarter, Hamas re-elected Mishal as politburo head for the 4th time (4/2). Elections took place in Cairo with Mishal as the favorite backed by Turkey, Egypt, and Qatar, where he now lives.

**PALESTINIAN OPINION**

*The following data was excerpted from a poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC) between 27 December 2012 and 31 March 2013. Results are based on a survey of 1,199 men and women from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. The poll, the 79th in a series, was taken from JMCC's website at www.jmcc.org.*

**1. In general, what is the best method to achieve the Palestinian people's goal of ending the occupation and establishing a state?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Peaceful negotiations	40.6%	30.2%	36.8%
b. Armed resistance (armed intifada)	20.3%	34.2%	25.4%

c. Non-violent resistance (peaceful popular intifada)	30.6%	30.2%	30.4%
d. Other	2.0%	4.2%	2.8%
e. I don't know/No answer	6.5%	1.2%	4.6%

**2. Some believe that a two-state formula is the favored solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict, while others believe that historic Palestine cannot be divided and thus the favored solution is a binational state on all of Palestine where Palestinians and Israelis enjoy equal representation and rights. Which of these solutions do you prefer?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Two-state solution: Palestinian and Israeli	53.7%	50.2%	52.4%
b. Binational state on all of historic Palestine	26.6%	17.9%	23.4%
c. Palestinian State	7.1%	17.2%	10.8%
d. Islamic State	2.5%	1.2%	2.0%
e. Others	0.7%	0.9%	0.8%
f. No solution	8.4%	10.5%	9.2%
g. Don't know/No answer	1.0%	2.1%	1.4%

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

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Hamas	17.1%	26.7%	20.6%
b. Fatah	41.7%	44.2%	42.6%
c. Others	8.8%	9.8%	9.2%
d. I won't vote	26.3%	16.3%	22.6%
e. No answer	6.1%	3.0%	5.0%

**4. Should Hamas and Fatah pursue national reconciliation even if this would lead to sanctions by Israel and the U.S.?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Yes, Hamas and Fatah should pursue national reconciliation	88.9%	92.8%	90.3%

b. No, Hamas and Fatah should not pursue national reconciliation	4.4%	6.5%	5.2%
c. No answer	6.7%	0.7%	4.5%

c. The Palestinian leadership should refuse to return to negotiations	18.4%	34.9%	24.4%
d. Don't know/No answer	7.0%	2.3%	5.3%

**5. On the 20th anniversary of the Oslo Accords, do you think that the Oslo Accords served or harmed the Palestinian national interests or made no difference?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. The Oslo Accords served Palestinian national interests	22.0%	29.1%	24.6%
b. The Oslo Accords harmed Palestinian national interests	32.0%	36.3%	33.6%
c. The Oslo Accords made no difference	36.6%	32.1%	34.9%
d. Don't know	6.9%	1.9%	5.1%
e. No answer	2.5%	0.6%	1.8%

**6. At this time, the Americans are seeking to resume the peace process and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. What do you think? Do you think the Palestinian leadership should resume negotiations without conditions, should they resume negotiations on condition that Israel halts settlement expansion, or should they refuse to return to negotiations?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. The Palestinian leadership should resume negotiations without conditions	4.9%	5.6%	5.2%
b. The Palestinian leadership should resume negotiations on condition that Israel halt settlement expansion	69.7%	57.2%	65.1%

**FRONTLINE STATES**

**EGYPT**

During this quarter, the Egyptian government and security establishment maintained a reasonably close working relationship with their Israeli counterparts, particularly with regard to maintaining the Gaza cease-fire concluded after OPD (see *JPS* 167) and mutual security interests in the Sinai. At the formal diplomatic level, however, Cairo recalled its amb. to Israel in 11/2012 to protest OPD, and Tel Aviv's efforts with the Egyptian government to get him returned (reported by Israeli media on 3/30) have thus far failed. And following clashes at Haram al-Sharif on Jerusalem Day in mid-5/2013 (see "Rising Tensions in West Bank" above), Egypt's Shura Council (upper house) demanded the immediate expulsion of Israel's amb. in a special session called to discuss the incidents.

Notwithstanding, in mid-2/2013, Egyptian and Israeli officials met in Cairo (2/18, 2/19) for talks on the Gaza cease-fire and border restrictions. On 4/11, a delegation of Israeli security and diplomatic officials arrived in Cairo from Tel Aviv via private plane for discussions both on the Sinai situation and on indirect talks with Hamas.

Indeed, the Sinai continued to be a security concern for both Egypt and Israel. At least 3 attacks, none of which caused damage or injuries, were launched from Sinai this quarter. On 3/9, militants launched a missile from c. Sinai toward Suez. Later that same day, unidentified gunmen, reported in the media as suspected jihadists, opened fire on an Egyptian military checkpoint on the Cairo-Suez road. Finally, on 4/17, militants from the Mujahiddin Shura Council claimed responsibility for 2 rockets fired from the Sinai that hit Eilat. A few days later, on 4/20, Egyptian security official Gen. Eli al-Azizi announced

that Egypt had sent armored vehicles to the northern Sinai Peninsula as part of a crackdown on militants operating in the region.

The Egyptian authorities served as the channel through which Hamas communicated with Israel, notably to register complaints (e.g., 3/22 and 4/30) about attacks and alleged cease-fire violations. Relations between the Gaza authorities and Cairo were nonetheless strained, however, with tensions continuing to mount, for example, over the illegal tunnel trade between Gaza and Egypt (see *JPS* 167). On 2/19, renewed Egyptian flooding of the tunnels with sewage water was reported by Yusef Rizka, adviser to Hamas PM Haniyeh, and immediately understood to be part of a new Egyptian crackdown on tunnel trade. According to Hamas Economy Minister Alaa Rafati (2/20), the crackdown would fail without viable alternatives for importing produce. In fact, the Hamas authorities in Gaza had explored other options with Cairo, including the opening of an official commercial route along the border, but nothing came of these talks.

Other noteworthy developments this quarter included the publication (3/13) of the results of a fact-finding commission created by Pres. Mohamed Morsi that concluded, inter alia, that the killing by Egyptian police of almost 900 protesters during the 2011 Egyptian uprising could not have occurred without the approval of then pres. Hosni Mubarak. Accordingly, Mubarak and associates had to face a new trial (5/11) for complicity in these deaths. They pleaded not guilty.

The quarter also marked the 1st direct passenger flight (3/30) between Egypt and Iran since the 1979 revolution. This was part of a thawing of relations following the 6/2012 election of Morsi as president. On 4/8, however, Egypt suspended the commercial flights to Iran following sectarian protests by Salafists in Cairo.

#### JORDAN

On 3/2, an Israeli diplomatic source reported that PM Netanyahu and King Abdullah had met in Jordan the previous week to discuss the peace process; no further details were given.

In a development with possibly long-term legal implications for the status of East Jerusalem, King Abdullah and PA Pres. Abbas signed (3/31) an agreement confirming Jordan's longtime role as guardian of the holy places in the city (see Document B2 in this *JPS*). Given the importance attached to the guardianship role, Jordan reacted strongly in 5/2013 to disturbances in the Haram al-Sharif around Jerusalem Day (see "Rising Tensions in the West Bank" above), and notably to the removal (5/7) by Israeli police of the mufti of Jerusalem from his home for interrogation for suspected involvement in the incidents. On 5/8, Jordanian interior min. Hussein al-Majali (standing in for the absent foreign minister) summoned Israeli amb. Daniel Nevo to protest the events. Meanwhile, Jordan's parliament unanimously voted in favor of expelling the amb. and recalling Jordan's rep. in Tel Aviv. On the same day, there was also a demonstration by dozens of Jordanians outside the Israeli embassy in Amman.

The quarter saw an increased military dimension to Jordan's involvement in the Syrian conflict, with media reports (e.g., 3/10, 3/25, and 4/3, citing anonymous officials) that Jordan was facilitating and hosting U.S., British, and French instructors training Syrian opposition fighters in order to build a counterweight to radical Islamist groupings. Additionally, U.S. Secy. of Defense Chuck Hagel told (4/17) the Senate Armed Services Committee that Washington would send army planners to Jordan as part of contingency planning relating to Syria's chemical weapons and potential spillover across the Jordanian border.

Domestically, an important change in government process was inaugurated this quarter: on 3/9, for the 1st time in Jordan's history, the kingdom's PM was chosen not by the king but by parliamentary vote. (King Abdullah, however, set the PM's term in office at 4 years. The man elected by parliament, Abdullah Ensour, had been caretaker PM when the previous government was dissolved (10/2012) ahead of elections. On 4/24, Ensour survived a vote of confidence in his government (83–65) after a weeklong debate in parliament over the state of the economy and the rising number of Syrian refugees in the country.

**LEBANON**

Sectarian and political tensions related to the Syrian civil war heightened and intensified this quarter, with outbreaks of violence along the borderland in specific trouble spots like Tripoli in the north. On 2/21, and for the 1st time since the outbreak of civil strife in Syria, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) announced that it had retaliated against what it claimed were Hizballah actions in Syria and bombarded the Hizballah sites inside Lebanon. On 3/31, Lebanon's state news agency reported that shells fired from inside Syria exploded in 4 Lebanese border villages, causing no injuries.

In Tripoli, deadly clashes between pro- and anti-Asad gunmen continued. On 3/22, exchanges of fire between the pro-Syrian opposition Sunni neighborhood (Bab Tabbaneh) and the adjacent, pro-Asad Alawite neighborhood (Jabal Mohsen) resulted in 6 dead and 20 wounded. The same day, a Lebanese soldier was killed during a raid to capture gunmen. Strong political rhetoric accompanied the violence, with Ali Feddah, a prominent member of Lebanon's Arab Democratic Party, commenting (5/14) that Lebanese Alawites were "being subjected to an organized campaign that aims to eliminate them on all levels."

On 4/11, the discovery of a bomb marked with anti-Hizballah, anti-Asad, and pro-al-Nusra Front (the al-Qa'ida linked militant group) slogans in Hizballah's stronghold in Beirut's southern suburbs was seen as further evidence of the growing hostility to Hizballah's increasingly overt participation in the Syria fighting. On 4/11, Lebanon's Future Movement (led by Saad Hariri) issued a statement condemning "the increase in the number of Lebanese dead in Syria as a result of the continuing involvement of Hizballah in the fighting [which is not in] the Lebanese national interest." Hizballah stoutly defended its decision to fight for Asad's government. Hizballah leaders, including Hassan Nasrallah (3/5), linked the party's involvement to countering U.S. projects to bring down Syria.

In other domestic developments this quarter, Lebanese PM Najib Mikati resigned (3/22) in the face of parliament's inability to agree on a new law to govern the elections planned for 6/2013, as well as in relation to the Hizballah-

dominated cabinet's refusal to extend the tenure of the country's retiring police chief, seen as an enemy of the movement. On 4/6, former minister of culture and Beirut parliamentarian Tammam Salam was asked to form a new government after securing 124 of 128 votes in parliament. After the vote, Salam said that the 6/2013 elections might be delayed "while a new electoral law is decided" (4/7). No government was formed by the end of the quarter.

Meanwhile, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, the international UN-linked body set up to investigate the 2/2005 assassination of Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri and prosecute those responsible, announced (4/23) that the trial in absentia of 4 Hizballah members wanted in connection with the killing will likely start in late 2013.

With regard to the perennial issue of Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace, UNIFIL announced (3/25) that Israel had doubled the rate of such violations in 2013 thus far, compared to the same period in 2012. On 4/4, Lebanese pres. Michel Suleiman urged the international community to end breaches of UN Res. 1701 (shorthand for violations of sovereignty/airspace). Tensions increased on 4/25, when the Israeli Air Force shot down an unmanned aircraft over the Mediterranean Sea as it was approaching the Israeli coast from the direction of Lebanon. No group claimed responsibility for sending the drone, and Hizballah specifically denied involvement. Israeli aircraft also entered Lebanese airspace (3/5) in the context of strikes on Syrian targets (see "Syria" below).

**SYRIA**

The civil war continued to rage this quarter, with no major military breakthrough either by the Asad government or the opposition, but with the regime reportedly regaining some ground. Reports and evidence of atrocities continued to surface regularly, with some of the most brutal acts having clear sectarian motivations. According to Amnesty International reports (3/13) on war crimes committed by both sides, the "vast majority" have been perpetrated by government forces. By the end of the quarter, estimates for the death toll in the

civil war (e.g., UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights) exceeded 80,000, almost half of them civilians (5/12).

With regard to the ongoing humanitarian crisis, the World Food Program announced (3/8) that it was increasing the number of its Syrian food recipients from 1.7 to 2.5 million. The refugee population continued to grow; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres estimated (3/10) that the total number could double or triple by the end of the year if the civil war continued. UNRWA reported (4/30) that approximately 235,000 Palestine refugees have been displaced inside Syria, with PLO Secy.-Gen. Fathi Abu al-Ardat stating (5/11) that at least 55,000 Palestinian refugees had fled Syria to Lebanon.

Syrian-Israeli interactions this quarter dramatically increased, with cross-border violence, Israeli air strikes on Syrian targets, and several instances of mortar shells landing in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights (routinely attributed by the IDF to misfiring between government and rebel forces (e.g., 2/27, 3/2, 5/7, 5/15)). There were also cross-border, small-scale exchanges of gunfire and artillery shells between unidentified armed persons and Israeli soldiers (3/24, 4/2, 4/12), with damage or injuries on the Israeli side. On several occasions (e.g., 2/16, 3/27) Israeli soldiers facilitated the provision of medical assistance to Syrians nr. the border fence.

UN peacekeepers were increasingly caught up in the conflict in the Golan Heights region. Syrian rebels detained (3/6) 21 UN peacekeepers from the Philippines. The UNSC demanded their immediate release, and 3 days later (3/9) they were freed (3/9) nr. the Israeli-Golan border and transferred to Jordan in good health. After this incident, according to news reports (3/14), UN peacekeepers monitoring the cease-fire line between Syria and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights had been stopping patrols. On 5/7, a Syrian rebel faction, the Yarmuk Martyrs Brigade, announced that it was holding 4 Filipino UN peacekeepers detained along the cease-fire line, claiming that fighting had endangered the observers. They were freed on 5/12.

Tensions increased dramatically in early 5/2013 with 2 separate Israeli air

strikes on targets in Syria, the 1st since 1/2013 (see *JPS* 167). According to anonymous U.S. officials cited in the media, the air strike on 5/3 targeted weapons rather than a building or installation. While there was no official word from the Israeli authorities, experts assumed that the strike, like that of 1/2013, was aimed at weapons en route to Hizballah. (Note that Israel's responsibility for the 1/2013 attack was tacitly confirmed during a 4/22 press conference in Tel Aviv with Hagel by Israeli DM Moshe Ya'alon, who stated that Israel had "already acted" to stop weapons from falling into Hizballah's hands). In the 2d air strike, on 5/5, the Israeli Air Force bombed a site nr. Damascus where, according to anonymous Western intelligence sources, the target was a shipment of advanced, Iranian-made missiles heading to Hizballah in Lebanon.

Both the Syrian government and the opposition Syrian National Coalition (SNC) condemned the strike: Damascus declared that Israel's "gross aggression . . . opens a door to all options," while the SNC accused Israel of "taking advantage" of the conflict. U.S. intelligence officials claimed that Washington had not been given prior warning of the strike. Iran's foreign ministry declared that countries in the region should oppose the "assault," Egypt and Lebanon condemned the strikes, and the Arab League demanded that the UNSC act to end Israeli attacks on Syria. Ban Ki-moon expressed concern over the reports of an Israeli air raid, but said the UN could not confirm details. As for Israel, officials emphasized that the air strikes were aimed at Hizballah rather than at destabilizing or undermining the al-Asad regime (5/6). Finally, al-Asad, while claiming that Syria was capable of facing Israel (5/7), avoided mention of retaliation.

Hizballah neither confirmed nor denied that weapons bound for the organization were the target, though Hassan Nasrallah said that Syria would supply his movement with "game-changing" weapons after the strikes, and that Hizballah would help other groups looking to liberate the Syrian Golan Heights from Israeli occupation (5/10). The following day, the PFLP-GC said that it was forming combat units to recapture the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights (5/11).

Western engagement with Syria's crisis centered on peace efforts, chemical weapons usage, and how best to support the opposition.

On 2/21, the UN and Arab League extended the mission of their joint envoy to Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, through to the end of 2013. By 4/19, Brahimi was telling the UNSC that virtually nothing had been accomplished in 8 months of diplomatic efforts, and weeks later the media reported claims by anonymous UN diplomats that Brahimi wanted to resign over the deadlock and felt that the Arab League's decision to recognize the Syrian opposition undermined his neutrality. While Brahimi placed greater blame on the Syrian government for the failure to make progress in reaching a compromise, the opposition SNC was also divided about the way forward, with some members preferring to wait for the chance that Brahimi might form a transitional government as part of a deal, and others wanting to form a government to preempt a compromise leaving Asad in power. In a largely symbolic but nevertheless important move, Syrian opposition leader Shaykh Moaz al-Khatib took the country's vacant seat at the Arab League summit in Doha on 3/26, 2 days after resigning as president of the SNC.

With regard to chemical weapons, with both the government and rebels exchanging high-profile accusations that the other side had deployed them in the fighting (3/19), UN Secy.-Gen Ban Ki-moon announced (3/21) that the UN would investigate such claims, specifically in the Aleppo province. Israeli officials declared (4/23) having obtained evidence that Damascus had used chemical weapons. Statements indicating varying degrees of caution by official U.S. sources (e.g., White House press secy. on 4/23, Hagel on 4/25) followed, and on 4/26 Obama said he would respond "prudently" and "deliberately" to solid evidence of chemical weapons use. (Overall, the Obama administration's response to the growing allegations of chemical warfare was somewhat hamstrung by the president's 8/2012 characterization of such an eventuality as a "red line.") On 4/29, Ban Ki-moon urged the Syrian government to allow experts into the country to investigate reports of alleged use of

chemical weapons, with the probe to include a 12/2012 incident in Homs.

On the issue of arming the opposition, the international community seemed to be moving in that direction but was held back by doubts on several points, including the question of representation and an opposition leadership structure. On 3/18, the opposition coalition National Council elected Ghassan Hitto, a U.S.-born information technology executive, as the 1st PM of an interim Syrian government, partly because of Western pressure to establish a clearer chain of command for supporting the rebels.

Some types of assistance did increase this quarter, openly and otherwise. On 2/18, EU foreign ministers announced an amendment to the sanctions regime against Syria that would allow for the supply of "nonlethal support and technical assistance for the protection of civilians." At a 2/2013 meeting in Rome (convened by Secy. Kerry), Kerry announced that Western countries would provide Syrian rebels with medical supplies, food, and funding for basic services (2/2), while on 4/11 Obama signed a declaration freeing up \$10 million for food and medical kits for Syrian opposition fighters. On 4/21, Kerry announced that Washington would double its nonlethal aid to the Syrian opposition to \$250 million (to be funneled through the rebels' Supreme Military Council).

Meanwhile, senior U.S. officials speaking off the record revealed (2/27) that Washington was already training rebels at a base in the region. Subsequent reports (e.g., 3/10, 3/25, and 4/3) confirmed this information, adding as well that U.S., British, and French instructors were training Syrian rebel fighters in Jordan with the aim of building up FSA units that exclude radical Islamists. While French FM Laurent Fabius, seeing such "nonlethal" aid as insufficient, declared (3/11) that the EU would soon have to consider arming Syrian rebels due to the "lack of balance" in weapons between the 2 sides, an EU summit days later rejected (3/15) a Franco-British proposal to lift the arms embargo to arm Syrian opposition fighters. (For more on U.S.-Syria specific developments, see "Syria" under "International – United States" below.)

## REGIONAL AFFAIRS

This quarter, the Arab League's 24th summit, attended by 15 heads of state, was held in Doha 3/26–27, following the foreign ministers' meeting of the 22-member body. While the most urgent item on the agenda was the Syria crisis, the most concrete proposals involved Palestine and the Arab-Israeli arena. The most important of these was the announcement by al-Thani of the establishment of a \$1-billion al-Quds fund, 1-quarter of which would be contributed by Qatar, to "maintain the Arab and Islamic character of the city and reinforce the steadfastness of its people." The Arab League approved the proposal, and Saudi Arabia's Islamic Development Bank was designated as manager of the fund (3/26).

The summit supported reconciliation efforts between Hamas and Fatah, with Qatar's emir proposing to that end a mini-summit in Cairo as soon as possible. At a declarative level, the Arab leaders rejected Israel's self-declaration as a Jewish state, condemned settlement activity and called for immediate Israeli withdrawal from all o.t., and expressed fervent support for the Palestinians in the o.t. and in Israel itself.

The summit strongly reaffirmed the 2002 Arab peace initiative. In this regard, a concrete follow-up to the summit was the formation of a high-level delegation of Arab officials, including the Bahraini, Egyptian, Jordanian and Qatari foreign ministers, and representatives from Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the PA, and the Arab League to press the case with the Americans. On 4/29, they met with U.S. Secy. of State Kerry and U.S. VP Biden in Washington (see "Peace Process Stalemate" above). In their discussions, Kerry affirmed the importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, and welcomed the Arab League's support for revived peace talks as a "very big step forward."

Of note: Syria's seat at the summit (Syria's membership in the Arab League was suspended in 11/2011) was taken up by a rep. of the Syrian opposition coalition, a move that was protested by Iraq, Algeria, and Lebanon.

### TURKEY

This quarter saw a significant easing of Turkey's tensions with Israel, which

dated back to the deaths on board the Gaza-bound Mavi Marmara in 6/2010. While on his regional tour in 3/2013, Obama coordinated a diplomatic breakthrough before leaving Israel for Jordan, with Netanyahu apologizing over the telephone to Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan for mistakes made during the IDF's attack on the activists' flotilla (3/23). Both sides also agreed to dispatch envoys to each other's countries. Erdogan told the media that stronger relations with Israel would aid the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and help speed al-Asad's fall, while Netanyahu also cited the Syrian crisis as a reason for his decision to improve relations with Ankara.

On 4/3, a source in Netanyahu's office revealed that his special envoy to Turkey, Joseph Ciecchanover, and National Security Adviser Yaakov Amidror would be conducting talks in Ankara on restoring Turkish-Israeli ties. Later, talks (4/21) addressed issues such as financial compensation by Israel to the families of Turkish activists killed on the Mavi Marmara. On 5/5, it was announced that Israeli and Turkish officials had reached a draft agreement in Jerusalem during a visit by a delegation from Ankara headed by Undersecy. of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Feridun Sinirlioglu—though Netanyahu's office published a statement saying they required further clarifications on certain subjects.

In related news this quarter, Turkish media reported (2/18) that Israel supplied electronic warfare systems to the Turkish military, the 1st such exchange since the 2010 flotilla raid. An Israeli defense source cited in *Ha'Aretz* claimed that the deal came about after U.S. pressure and due to an Israeli desire to improve relations with Turkey. In 5/2013, Turkish media reported that Ankara was close to an agreement with Israel over joint energy projects in light of the natural gas discoveries off Israel's northern coast (5/13).

### IRAN

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

As the quarter opened, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released (2/21) a report stating that Iran had begun installing advanced centrifuges at its main uranium enrichment

plant which could enable Tehran to speed up its accumulation of material needed for a nuclear weapon. The IAEA report also said that Iran had been converting refined uranium to powder for the production of reactor fuel since 12/2012. The following week, talks in Almaty, Kazakhstan on Iran's nuclear program between Iranian officials and the P5+1 (comprising representatives of the UNSC's permanent members plus Germany) concluded (2/27) with concessions offered by Iran that would allow Tehran to keep a limited amount of highly enriched uranium and result in the removal of some trade sanctions. The parties also agreed to hold new discussions in 3/2013 and 4/2013. The late 2/2013 talks were welcomed by Iran's chief negotiator, Saeed Jalili, as "positive" and by Iranian FM Ali Akbar Salehi, who said they made him "very optimistic about the outcome." Yet, a few days later (3/7), Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei remarked that the West had failed to offer any concessions during the most recent talks in Kazakhstan.

The mid-3/2013 talks in Istanbul bore no concrete result beyond setting the agenda for the 4/18 round of talks in Almaty, which began on 4/5. The discussions ended on 4/6 without agreement, with EU's Ashton commenting that the 2 sides were "still a considerable distance apart." By mid-4/2013, it was reported (4/18) that Iran and the IAEA had agreed to discussions in mid-5/2013, which accordingly took place in Vienna (5/15) but once again failed to produce an agreement—the 10th such inconclusive meeting between the IAEA and Iran over the past 18 months. No new meeting date was set. Separately but on the same day, Jalili also met Ashton to discuss diplomatic efforts to diffuse the crisis over Iran's suspected nuclear weapon drive.

Meanwhile, the international community had been expressing considerable skepticism and frustration at the lack of progress during these protracted efforts at negotiation. On 3/3, Netanyahu said following a private briefing by U.S. diplomat Wendy Sherman on Kazakh-hosted talks that talks with Tehran on its nuclear program were giving Iran more time to work on building a bomb. A few days later (3/6), chief U.S. delegate to the IAEA Joseph Macmanus declared that Iran was

displaying "deception, defiance and delay." IAEA head Yukiya Amano said (4/2) that Iran might be secretly working on nuclear weapons while negotiations about resuming inspections continued, after which PM Netanyahu expressed (4/3) opposition to continued world power talks on the grounds that it was giving Tehran more time to develop its nuclear program. After the failure of the Kazakhstan-hosted negotiations in 4/2013, Kerry expressed (4/18) his disappointment to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but added that a diplomatic solution to the dispute with Iran would still be the best option. Days later, however, U.S. Asst. Secy. for International Security and Nonproliferation Thomas Countryman declared (4/22) that Iran's nuclear program was challenging the credibility of global non-proliferation efforts and claimed that Iran had a long history of deceiving the IAEA.

### *Elections*

Domestically, the focus this quarter was on the impending presidential elections scheduled for 6/14. Unlike the atmosphere of unrest that accompanied the elections in 2009, analysts have predicted that the conditions are not ripe for similar trouble, not least because many of the leading opposition figures are in jail, exiled, or under house arrest. The main issues at the center of the elections were the economy and relations with the international community in connection with the nuclear program. In the months leading up to the vote, outgoing Pres. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was actively promoting his preferred successor (and most trusted adviser) Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, strongly disliked by the conservative clerical establishment. Mashaei, who had once been deemed unfit for office by Ayatollah Khamenei, now represented Iran as head of the Non-Aligned Movement (whose presidency rotates).

On 5/7, the authorities formally opened the registration process for candidates, meaning that the presidential race was officially underway. Not long after, a group of some 100 hard-line lawmakers petitioned (5/15) the authorities to bar 2 candidates, Mashaei and former pres. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. By the end of the quarter, no less than 686 candidates had registered to run for

president in the elections, with the Guardian Council announcing a post-screening shortlist on 5/22. The short-listed candidates included Hassan Rouhani, a senior cleric and Tehran's former chief nuclear negotiator under former pres. Mohammad Khatami, who was seen by some at the time as representing perhaps the best possibility of seeing a reformist or moderate president take office.

## INTERNATIONAL

### UNITED STATES

#### *Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process*

During this quarter, the Obama administration made a number of efforts to rekindle peace talks, albeit without obvious signs of success or breakthrough. Due to the significant obstacles inhibiting both parties from restarting negotiations, the White House and State Dept. sought to limit expectations of what could be achieved through the efforts of Kerry and Obama; a good example is the strong emphasis by U.S. officials prior to Obama's 3/2013 trip to the region that the president would be focused on "listening" rather than offering new ideas on the peace process.

Kerry devoted considerable effort to the Israel-Palestine file this quarter, holding a number of talks with both Israeli and Palestinian officials. In leaving the region, Obama left Kerry behind (3/23) to continue talks with Abbas and Netanyahu. By 4/3, Kerry was on his 3d visit to Jerusalem and Ramallah in 2 weeks. Media reports (3/24) suggested that Kerry intended to invest 3 to 6 months on restarting talks, a determination no doubt in part driven by Kerry's understanding—as he expressed in a House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee meeting (4/18)—that the "window for a two-state solution is shutting" and the chance to create a Palestinian state alongside Israel will be lost in 1–2 years. He also hosted the senior delegation of Arab officials in Washington (4/29) that produced a reaffirmation of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. Aside from the Israeli-Palestinian track, Kerry invested efforts in moving forward Turkey-Israel reconciliation, stopping off at Ankara in his 4/2013 Middle East tour and hailing

subsequent restored ties as enabling the U.S. to work with the 2 countries more closely on Iran and Syria (4/22).

Despite sequester cuts incurred this quarter by almost all U.S. programs (defense and non-defense), U.S. financial and military aid to Israel remained mostly unaffected. When Hagel hosted (3/5) Israeli DM Ehud Barak at the Pentagon on 3/2013—their 1st meeting since Hagel assumed office following a 58–41 confirmation vote in the Senate (2/26)—Barak was assured that there would be no interruption of funding for Israeli defense systems such as Iron Dome, Arrow, and David's Sling. Although reports suggested that the sequester would cost Israel around \$155 million in 4/2013, for the 1st time the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency contained funds to buy additional Iron Dome missile defense systems for Israel (4/16). Some \$395.9 million was budgeted for this purpose for the 2014–15 fiscal year, in addition to \$486 million requested or added in recent years by the White House and Congress.

Hagel himself traveled to the Middle East in 4/2013, where he held meetings in Israel (4/21) with Peres, Netanyahu, IDF chief of staff Benny Gantz, and DM Ya'alon. Hagel concluded an arms deal which was announced at a press conference in Tel Aviv alongside Ya'alon (4/22). The sale included V-22 Osprey helicopter-plane aircraft, refueling tankers, advanced radars for fighter jets and advanced missiles that target air defenses. While in Israel, Hagel also discussed Iran and Syria, and at their joint press conference Ya'alon tacitly acknowledged Israel's responsibility for a 1/2013 air strike on an army convoy in Syria (see "Syria" above). Hagel's tour included Egypt, where he held discussions (4/24) with his counterpart, Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and Morsi (4/24), as well as the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

This quarter also saw the Obama administration unblock around \$500 million in aid for the PA, including \$200 million in direct budget support, previously frozen by Congress (3/22). The White House also notified Congress that it was seeking another \$200 million to fund USAID projects for the Palestinians.

### *Syria*

U.S. lawmakers increased pressure on the White House this quarter to take stronger action in support of the Syrian opposition. Rep. Eliot Engel, top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, urged the Obama administration to train and arm parts of the Syrian opposition (3/15). On 3/21, chmn. of the Senate Armed Services Committee Sen. Carl Levin and Republican Sen. John McCain wrote to Obama asking him to call for U.S. air strikes against Syrian military installations and for the creation of a "safe zone" in northern Syria. In 5/2013, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez introduced legislation to enable the U.S. to provide arms for vetted Syrian opposition groups (5/6).

Over the quarter, the U.S. began steadily increasing its involvement in the civil war. On 3/18, Kerry revealed that Washington would not oppose efforts by others, such as Britain and France, to make available arms supplies to opposition fighters, and in late 4/2013 stated that Washington would double (to \$250 million) nonlethal aid to the opposition through the rebels' Supreme Military Council. By 4/30, however, U.S. National Security Council spokeswoman Caitlin M. Hayden said that the White House was considering supplying weapons to Syria's opposition, with "assistance . . . on an upward trajectory." Days later (5/2), Hagel said that the Obama administration was rethinking its opposition on arming Syrian rebels, as part of considering all the options (5/2).

One of the issues assumed critical for the decision of whether or not to directly arm the opposition involved the debate over chemical weapons usage by the al-Asad government; the White House remained cautious. On 4/17, Hagel told the Armed Services Committee that U.S. army planners would be engaged in contingency planning in Jordan regarding potential chemical weapons spillover issues. On 4/23, White House press secy. Jay Carney said that the administration was looking for "conclusive evidence, if it exists," and on 4/25, the White House released a pair of letters sent to congressional lawmakers describing probable "small scale" chemical weapons usage. By the end of the quarter, both Hagel and

Kerry were increasing public mention of arming the rebels as an option.

### *Iran*

Early in the quarter, U.S. senators passed (2/28) a bipartisan resolution endorsing U.S. military support for Israel if it were to attack Iran in self-defense, and also endorsed unilateral penalties targeting Tehran. The resolution was co-sponsored by Robert Menendez, the Democratic chmn. of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Republican Lindsey Graham. The initiative was promoted by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) which also welcomed the adoption (4/17) by the U.S. Senate's Foreign Relations Committee of Senate Res. 65, which stipulates that Washington will support Israel in the eventuality it takes military action against Iran.

Meanwhile, the U.S. administration seemed in no hurry to take action. Despite the Senate Foreign Relation Committee's declaration of support for any future Israeli military action, Biden, emphasized in his speech (3/4) at AIPAC's annual policy conference in 3/2013 that Washington would not consider the use of force to attack Iran's nuclear program until sanctions and diplomacy had been exhausted. The following month, Kerry, while expressing (4/18) frustration at absences of progress of the IAEA-sponsored talks on Iran's nuclear program, reiterated (in remarks to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee) the U.S. preference for a diplomatic solution. Overall, the sense this quarter was that the U.S. administration was content to talk tough by leaving open a military option, but did not share the same urgent time frame being advocated by Netanyahu, whose address to the UN in 9/2012 had warned that by spring or summer 2013 Iran would have acquired enough enriched uranium to build its 1st nuclear weapon.

### **RUSSIA**

Russia's main regional focus this quarter remained the Syria crisis, with Moscow continuing to block efforts by the West to intervene more directly in favor of the rebels while encouraging

dialogue between the government and the opposition. Syria was the main topic of the discussions hosted by the Kremlin with Arab League officials and several Arab foreign ministers (e.g., Egypt and Lebanon). On 2/20, as a result of the meetings, Russian FM Sergey Lavrov announced that Russia and the Arab League wanted to broker talks between the 2 sides. Syrian FM Walid al-Moualem, meeting separately with Lavrov a few days later, stated (2/25) that his government was ready for dialogue with members of the armed opposition.

Netanyahu also visited Moscow toward the end of the quarter for talks with President Vladimir Putin about the peace process and regional developments, including Syria. Netanyahu asked Putin (5/11) not to supply S-300 anti-aircraft missiles to the Asad regime as this would boost Damascus' military capabilities and threaten Israel's ability to conduct air strikes on suspected arms shipments to Hizballah. Earlier in the quarter, Obama and Putin conferred by telephone (3/1) about Iran and Syria, and in the course of that conversation agreed to hold further talks on the sidelines of the G8 summit scheduled for 6/2013 in Northern Ireland. On 3/14, Abbas went to Moscow for a routine visit.

#### EUROPEAN UNION

During this quarter, the EU expressed concern about ongoing Israeli settlement construction and other occupation-related policies that had come to dominate public diplomacy with Tel Aviv. Yet, there was still no sign that any serious European move to use sanctions of any sort was imminent. Ashton expressed dismay over specific issues, such as Palestinian prisoner conditions in the context of the long-standing hunger strikes (2/16). As in other quarters, some of the strongest criticism came from the EU's mission in Ramallah, which leaked (2/27) a report revealing that diplomats had urged Brussels to use economic tools to target Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The recommendations included that the EU "prevent, discourage, and raise awareness" of direct investments by European companies in settlements.

Perhaps more seriously from Israel's point of view, a 4/20 letter to Ashton from 13 of the 27 EU foreign ministers expressed support for the labeling of products from Israeli settlements and asking the EU foreign policy chief to formulate agreed-upon guidelines. Also in 4/2013, the EU missions in Ramallah and Jerusalem expressed (4/27) serious concern over Israel's demolition of 22 structures across 8 locations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The EU statement noted that some of the destroyed structures had been funded by member states.

The EU continued to make significant contributions to the PA budget this quarter, including a €20.8 million contribution (made 3/17) toward the 2/2013 payment of salaries and pensions for over 80,000 Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. (The funding is channeled through the PEGASE mechanism, an instrument to channel EU and international assistance as a contribution to Palestinian state-building.) Ashton and Fayyad also agreed (3/18) to a new \$9 million funding commitment aimed at supporting the Palestinian presence in Area C of the West Bank.

On other regional issues, the EU was undecided about how and to what extent to support the Syrian opposition. On 2/18, EU foreign ministers amended the sanctions regime against Syria to allow for the supply of "nonlethal support and technical assistance for the protection of civilians"—wording intended to further aid rebels (2/18). In 3/2013, Britain and France made efforts to lift an arms embargo that prevented the arming of Syrian rebels in the interests of correcting (to use the 3/11 words of French FM Laurent Fabius) the "lack of balance" between the 2 sides; the proposal was rejected by an EU summit (3/15).

The EU also remained engaged in diplomatic efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear dispute, with Ashton taking a leading role in talks in Kazakhstan (4/6) and meeting with Iran's chief negotiator Saeed Jalili again on 5/15. In 3/2013, EU foreign ministers tightened the sanctions targeting Iran, adding to the list of individuals with a travel ban and asset freeze, and freezing the assets of 1 company or organization (3/11).

## UNITED NATIONS

On 3/18, a UN Human Rights Council fact-finding mission formally presented its high-profile report on Israel's West Bank settlements, released in 1/2013 (see Doc. A5 in *JPS* 167), at the UNHRC's 22nd session in Geneva. The report—which describes the settlements as a “creeping form of annexation” and calls on Israel to immediately cease construction and “initiate a process of withdrawal”—triggered heated debate; Nobel Peace Laureate David Trimble, among the interested outside parties (individuals and organizations) that participated, harshly criticized the conclusion. The U.S. refused to take part in the debate. Mission leader Christine Chanet, who presented the report, urged the international community to take action to cut economic links with the settlements, while Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, told the HRC that Israeli settler violence “continues to be perpetrated with impunity.”

There were no significant developments this quarter concerning the peace process that involved the UN. In 4/2013, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry sounded (4/15) a warning on the occasion of Fayyad's resignation that the former PM's state-building agenda was now “at serious risk.”

## BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS

*The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS) is a movement initiated 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.” This report delineates the major events pertaining to this movement that have occurred this quarter.*

**Boycott Efforts**

There were a number of developments this quarter on the academic boycott front. In the U.S., the Association of Asian American Students adopted (4/20) a resolution to boycott Israeli academic institutions, following suit with the American Studies Association, which passed a similar measure in 11/2012. In

Australia, Director of the University of Sydney Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies called for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions in early 5/2013. After heated student protests on both sides of the issue, the university's administration released “an uncompromising statement” (5/10) that the institution will not support the professor's calls for a boycott. Meanwhile, in the UK, a pro-Israel activist member of the University and College Union lost his case at an employment tribunal in which he had claimed that pro-boycott initiatives had helped foster an atmosphere of anti-Jewish discrimination.

Meanwhile, the undergraduate student union of York University in Toronto, Canada passed (3/21) a resolution supporting the BDS movement. The graduate student union of the same university passed a resolution to support BDS in 11/2012, in response to the IDF attacks on Gaza during that month. Finally, the University of Sheffield administration ended (5/3) its contract with Veolia, a French multinational company that operates in the Palestinian territories and provides services for settlers, following a student campaign. Successful student-led boycott initiatives on university campuses also included Le Trobe University Student Union (Australia) dropping (3/10) SodaStream as a student event sponsor. SodaStream is an Israeli soda company located in Kav LaOved, an illegal Israeli settlement in the West Bank. SodaStream is known for exploiting its workers, who are often Palestinian. The University of Dundee Students Association voted (2/26) to end the university's contract with G4S, an international security contracting firm notorious for its contracts with Israeli military involving the operation of checkpoints and Ofer Prison.

In related news, and in response to numerous protests against G4S at its headquarters in London and in various locations around the globe, G4S announced (4/21) that it plans to end its contracts with Israel to help operate the prison and checkpoints by 2015. Furthermore, the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. announced (3/16) that it will not knowingly contribute to companies that profit from violence against Palestinians. Meanwhile, Clackmannanshire Council, a municipal government in

Scotland, resolved (3/20) to “resist, insofar as legislative considerations permit, any action that gives political or economic support to the State of Israel.” The resolution was met with significant Israeli and Zionist backlash in the town, fuelled, at least in part, by allegedly false reporting by local media as to what the resolution would mean for the town.

### *Divestment*

The BDS movement saw several notable symbolic divestment successes and failures this quarter. Most notably, Associated Students of 2 University of California (UC) system campuses passed divestment efforts: UC San Diego (3/14) and UC Berkeley (4/18). The Associated Students of UC Riverside passed a divestment resolution in early 3/2013, but it was vetoed on the grounds that it made Jewish students feel marginalized on campus. The successful UC Berkeley divestment resolution came three years after a similar bill was passed and vetoed in 2010 during a very public process that garnered national press. Any divestment measures passed by student body governments cannot be enacted without the support of the UC Board of Regents, which has repeatedly stated it will not support efforts to divest the UC portfolio from Israeli companies.

The student senate of Oberlin College also passed (5/5) a measure to divest from 6 companies involved in illegal settlements or profiting from the occupation. However, the measure has yet to be brought before the Oberlin Board of Trustees’ Finance Committee.

Retirement fund giant TIAA-CREF’s refusal to allow shareholders to vote on divestment from firms profiting from the Israeli occupation continued this quarter. The fund was being threatened by the Israeli law organization Shurat HadDin.

### *Other*

University of Cambridge-based and world-renowned physicist Prof. Stephen Hawking pulled out (5/8) of a conference in Israel scheduled for 6/2013, citing the boycott call from Palestinian academics and his opposition to Israeli policies. The “Presidential Conference,” hosted by Shimon Peres, has become an annual gathering of international statesmen, academics, and cultural figures.

## **DONORS**

Donor support for the PA continued this quarter to provide a lifeline for an economy crippled by a significant budget deficit and Israeli restrictions. In a 3/12 report, the World Bank warned of the continued deterioration of the Palestinian economy, citing Israeli-imposed restrictions and the impact of closures (see Document A2 in this *JPS*). The report also noted a drop in donor funding, and large PA debts to banks and suppliers. Palestinian GDP growth for the 1st 3 quarters of 2012 was 6.1 percent, down from an 11 percent average in 2010 and 2011.

As the report was released, the World Bank transferred (3/13) \$60.5 million to the PA from the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan Trust Fund (PRDP-MDTF), a multi-donor budget support mechanism that in this instance was channeling money from the UK and Norway to support urgent PA budget needs. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) simultaneously stated (3/14) that the PA’s fiscal situation was becoming “increasingly precarious” and urged action from donors to help alleviate the significant budget deficit. The IMF projected a financing gap of about \$400 million for 2013. The IMF also determined that unemployment had increased to almost a quarter of the labor force by the end of 2012. In late 3/2013, the EU contributed (3/27) €148 million to the PA in the 2d part of its 2013 assistance package for Palestine, the majority of which is to be allocated to the PEGASE mechanism (the remainder going to UNRWA).

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee met (3/19) in Brussels this quarter. The Committee’s 15 members are chaired by Norway with co-sponsorship from the EU and U.S., and it convenes periodically to coordinate development assistance to the Palestinians. The meeting focused on ways to address the PA’s financial crisis, improve the dependability of foreign aid, and look at how to secure better movement and access conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The committee concluded by, among other things, calling on donors to continue the provision of adequate and predictable assistance to meet the estimated \$1.2 billion requirement for

the PA in 2013, calling on Israel to take further steps to facilitate the growth of the Palestinian economy, and urging the

reopening of the Gaza Strip's borders for trade. The 2 groups agreed to meet again in New York in 9/2013.



Palestinian Authority (PA) security officers—colloquially referred to as the “Dayton Forces” due to their American training and funding—block protesters from reaching the gate of the presidential compound in Ramallah on 21 March 2013. For the duration of President Obama’s visit, PA security enforced a special curfew in the city, including school closings and road blockages. (Ilia Yefimovich/Getty Images)