

CHRONOLOGY

16 MAY–15 AUGUST 2007

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This section is part ninety-five of a chronology begun in JPS 13, no. 3 (Spring 1984). Chronology dates reflect Eastern Standard Time (EST). For a more comprehensive overview of events related to the al-Aqsa intifada and of regional and international developments related to the peace process, see the Quarterly Update on Conflict and Diplomacy in this issue.

16 MAY

As part of an ongoing crackdown on **Hamas** in Gaza, the **Israel Defense Forces (IDF)** makes an air strike on a Rafah building controlled by the **Executive Support Force (ESF)**—a branch of the **Palestinian Authority (PA)** Interior Min. loyal to **Hamas-affiliated PM Ismail Haniyeh**—killing **3 ESF mbrs.** and wounding at least 21 ESF mbrs., 3 members of the **Fatah-affiliated PA Preventive Security Force (PSF)** in a PSF office nearby, 3 bystanders (including 2 journalists). **Hamas mbrs.** fire 12 **rockets** fr. Gaza into Israel, hitting a home in Sederot, moderately injuring 1 Israeli, and hitting a transformer, cutting electricity to 24,000 residents. The **IDF** responds with an air strike on a house nr. Jabaliya refugee camp (r.c.), killing **2 Hamas mbrs.**, wounding 3. **Israeli PM Ehud Olmert** convenes his **security cabinet** which authorizes the IDF to carry out “severe and harsh” attacks on Gaza, including assassinations of resistance leaders, to prevent further rocket fire, effectively ending the 11/26/06 Gaza cease-fire, frequently violated by both sides. Meanwhile in Gaza, factional fighting btwn. **Fatah, Hamas** (ongoing since **PA Pres. Mahmud Abbas [Fatah]** deployed 1,000s of PA security forces under his control without coordinating with either independent **Interior M Hani al-Qawasmī**, who resigned in protest, or **ESF** cmdrs. on the ground) escalates sharply, particularly in Gaza City, leaving at least **20 Palestinians dead**, 10s wounded, and a number of Fatah and Hamas mbrs. kidnapped. Among the incidents: an **Egyptian official** is fatally shot by Fatah mbrs. while walking the streets of Rafah with Fatah and Change and Reform legislators to test the intra-Palestinian cease-fire declared on 5/15; Hamas mbrs. ambush a PSF vehicle not knowing that it is transporting Hamas detainees, killing 5 Hamas mbrs., 2 PSF mbrs.; Fatah makes a retaliatory strike on an ESF post outside the Interior Min.’s offices in Gaza City, firing rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), killing 4 ESF mbrs.; some 200 Hamas mbrs. attack and occupy the home of **PA internal security head Rashid Abu Shibak** (who is not home at the time), killing at least 4 bodyguards; Hamas mbrs. fire mortars at **Abbas’s** Gaza residence, causing no injuries; Hamas mbrs. fire antitank rockets at the PA General Intelligence base nr. Shati’ r.c. (After Fatah’s attacks today, the ESF, which has largely remained in its barracks, deploys “to respond with all our power” to further attacks.) Among the wounded are 8 Palestinian civilians among 200 who turned out in Gaza City to protest the interfactional violence and who placed themselves btwn. Fatah and Hamas gunmen to prevent further clashes. **Palestinians in Ramallah** observe a 1-day general strike to protest the factional violence. Midday, **Hamas** announces a unilateral cease-fire to begin at 8:00 P.M. local time, and Abbas calls on Fatah mbrs. to follow suit, but gun battles resume within hrs., leaving 2 Fatah mbrs. dead, 10 Palestinians wounded (included in totals above). **Israeli Vice PM Shimon Peres** says that Israel would respond favorably if **Abbas** asked

for assistance in quelling the violence. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, the **IDF** conducts arrest raids in al-Til nr. Tulkarm (deliberately setting fire to a Palestinian **home**, damaging 5 others), neighboring Allar, and in and around Balata r.c. and Nablus. **Jewish settlers** fire on Palestinian homes in Bayt Furik nr. Nablus, causing no injuries; the **IDF** intervenes, removes the settlers. (BBC, HA, REU 5/16; IFM, NYT, WP, WT 5/17; PCHR 5/21; OCHA 5/23; PCHR 5/24)

17 MAY

The **IDF** makes at least 6 air strikes on Gaza, killing **9 Palestinians**, wounding 10s. Air strikes target an **ESF** barracks outside the Interior Min. (killing **1 ESF mbr.**, wounding at least 21 Palestinians, including at least 10 bystanders); a civilian car (apparently mistaken for a Hamas vehicle) driving nr. Rafah, killing **2 Palestinian children**, wounding their father, 2 siblings; a trailer used to house ESF mbrs. guarding **Interior Min. spokesman Khalid Abu Hilal's** home, killing **1 ESF mbr.**, wounding 4; a Hamas base e. of Gaza City nr. Qarni, killing **4 Hamas mbrs.**, **1 bystander** and wounding 4 Hamas mbrs., 2 bystanders; a car in Gaza City, in an apparent attempt to assassinate **Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades (IQB) cmdr. Imad Shabanah** and **a 2d senior Hamas mbr.**, wounding them, 4 bystanders. The **IDF** reoccupies an area of prime Palestinian agricultural land northeast of Bayt Hanun and northwest of Bayt Lahiya to expand its n. Gaza buffer zone, declaring the area off limits to Palestinians farmers, leveling land; deploys an artillery battery on the n. Gaza border, shelling areas nr. Bayt Lahiya and in Jabaliya r.c. (targeting **Islamic Jihad** mbrs.), causing no injuries; sends tanks into n. Gaza to conduct "limited ground operations" to halt Palestinian rocket fire, occupying buildings in Bayt Lahiya, and later Bayt Hanun and Jabaliya r.c. (The **U.S.** supports Israel's "right to defend itself.") A Palestinian teenager is injured in Jabaliya r.c. when he accidentally triggers unexploded **IDF** ordnance (**IDF UXO**). **Palestinians** fire at least 17 rockets fr. Gaza into Israel, wounding several Israelis and damaging a synagogue, high school, and industrial building. (The **Israeli DMin.** evacuates **900 residents fr. Sederot**, where most rockets have hit, taking them for a "weekend respite" at a recreation center in Netanya; about half of the town's 24,000 residents have left.) In the West Bank. The **IDF** conducts arrest raids, house searches in and around Salfit, Tulkarm (firing on stone-throwing Palestinians who confront them, wounding 2) and in Hebron (also raiding a wedding in Hebron, interrogating celebrants and arresting 3), Nablus; sends troops to patrol in Bayt Fajjar nr. Bethlehem, firing on residential areas and stone-throwing youths who confront the troops, killing **1 Palestinian teenager**, wounding a 2d. Meanwhile, a new **Hamas-Fatah** cease-fire significantly reduces violence in Gaza, though at least **6 Palestinians** are killed in clashes during the day. The dead include a Hamas mbr. kidnapped, executed by Fatah; a Hamas mbr. killed by a Fatah sniper; 4 Hamas supporters killed, 14 wounded when Fatah forces ambush a funeral for 2 ESF mbrs. killed on 5/16. **Hamas** mbrs. also attack **PA national security forces (NSF)** and PSF headquarters in n. Gaza. With the PA security forces unable to guarantee his security, **Abbas** delays plans to go to Gaza today to discuss the interfactional fighting. (AP, HA, REU 5/17; IFM, NYT, WP, WT 5/18; PCHR 5/21; OCHA 5/23; PCHR 5/24)

18 MAY

In Gaza, the **IDF** assassinates **IQB mbrs. Ra'ed Habib and Munir al-Jamal** in an air strike on their car in Gaza City, wounding 6 bystanders; makes 5 other air strikes on **Hamas** and

ESF targets in Bayt Lahiya, Dayr al-Balah, and Gaza City, wounding 10 bystanders, destroying 2 alleged weapons factories, damaging several homes. In retaliation, **Hamas** fires 17 **rockets** fr. Gaza into Israel, injuring 2 Israelis in Sederot. The **Israeli navy** fires on Palestinian fishermen off the Gaza City coast, forcing them to return to shore. In the West Bank, the **IDF** patrols in, fires on residential areas of Kafr Dan nr. Jenin, wounding 3 Palestinians; conducts arrest raids, house searches in and around Nablus and neighboring Balata r.c.; fires rubber-coated steel bullets, percussion grenades, tear gas at Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists holding a weekly nonviolent protest against the **separation wall** in Bil'in nr. Ramallah, injuring 2. **Jewish settlers** scuffle with Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists demonstrating against the wall in Bani Na'im nr. Hebron; the **IDF** intervenes, detaining 5 activists. Meanwhile, **Fatah-Hamas** fighting in Gaza continues, leaving 4 **Palestinians** dead and more than a dozen wounded. Incidents include **Abbas's presidential guard** firing RPGs and mortars at the predominantly Hamas Islamic University in Gaza City. A **7-yr.-old Palestinian boy** dies of injuries received in the 5/17 Fatah attack on a funeral in Rafah. (AP, WP 5/18; NYT, WP, WT 5/19; PCHR 5/21; OCHA 5/23; PCHR 5/24)

19 MAY

The **IDF** makes 7 air strikes on Gaza, targeting 2 **Hamas** rocket-launching sites in n. Gaza, killing 3 **Palestinian shepherds**, 1 **Palestinian child**; hitting a car driving in Gaza City, assassinating **Hamas Muhiy al-Din al-Sirhi**, also killing 2 **civilians** traveling with him; destroying the Gaza City home of Hamas mbr. Imad Dallul in an apparent assassination attempt, wounding him and 3 other Hamas mbrs.; destroying 4 alleged weapons factories in Bayt Hanun, Bayt Lahiya, and Nussayrat r.c., damaging nearby homes. The **IDF** also shells residential areas in Bayt Hanun, injuring a Palestinian woman, 4 children. In Gaza City, 3 Palestinians are injured by **IDF UXO**; 3 Hamas mbrs. are injured when explosives they are handling detonate prematurely. **Hamas** fires an RPG at an IDF bulldozer leveling land along the Gaza border fence, injuring 2 IDF soldiers; fires 5 **rockets** fr. Gaza into Israel, starting a brush fire but causing no injuries. In the West Bank, the **IDF** patrols in, fires on residential areas of Nablus. **Jewish settlers** fr. Tel Rumeida in Hebron beat 2 international peace activists escorting Palestinian children nr. Beit Hadasah settlement. **Jewish settlers** fr. Itamar nr. Nablus burn Palestinian olive trees in nearby Bayt Furik. Meanwhile, at least 6 Palestinians are wounded in factional fighting in Gaza that includes a gun fight btwn. **ESF** and **NSF** mbrs. in Gaza City, a **Hamas** attack on a **PSF** base in Rafah, and **Fatah's** kidnapping and malicious wounding of 2 Hamas mbrs. in Gaza City. **NSF** officers manning several checkpoints reportedly harass observant Muslims, ordering women to remove their head coverings and arresting bearded men on suspicion of being Hamas mbrs., raising public outrage against Fatah. Another Egyptian-brokered cease-fire (involving 3 phone conversations btwn. **Abbas**, Damascus-based **Hamas leader Khalid Mishal**) that was to go into effect at 3:00 P.M. local time is ignored by Hamas and Fatah. (NYT, WP 5/20; PCHR 5/21; OCHA 5/23; PCHR 5/24)