

QUARTERLY UPDATE ON CONFLICT AND DIPLOMACY

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The Quarterly Update is a summary of bilateral, multilateral, regional, and international events affecting the Palestinians and the future of the peace process. More than 100 print, wire, television, and online sources providing U.S., Israeli, Arab, and international independent and government coverage of unfolding events are surveyed to compile the Quarterly Update. The most relevant sources are cited in JPS's Chronology section, which tracks events day by day. JPS Chronologies are archived on the JPS website at www.palestine-studies.org.

Highlights of the Quarter: Israel continues Operation Pillar of Defense (OPD) assault on Gaza, which lasts a total of eight days and ends with an Egyptian-negotiated ceasefire; PA pres. Mahmud Abbas, despite U.S. and Israeli opposition, goes to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and obtains Palestine's recognition as a non-member observer state; Israel announces plans to develop E1 area in East Jerusalem, the last undeveloped area between Jerusalem and the West Bank; Solidarity protests with Palestinian prisoners grow; Post-OPD reconciliation moves between Hamas and Fatah snag on Palestinian election plans; Benjamin Netanyahu, running on a joint Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu ticket in Israeli parliamentary elections, is returned as prime minister.

THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

This quarter was dominated by Operation Pillar of Defense (OPD) and its aftermath, the Palestinians' successful bid for a status upgrade at the United Nations, and the Israeli elections held in 1/2013. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations remained stalled, with both the Netanyahu govt. and Palestinian pres. Mahmud Abbas sticking to their respective positions concerning the settlement freeze and terms of reference for the talks. Israeli settlement construction in East Jerusalem and the West Bank dramatically increased, drawing international condemnation but little by way of punitive action. While the ceasefire that ended OPD ensured a measure of calm in southern Israel, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) continued attacks on Palestinians in Gaza. Meanwhile, in the

West Bank, tensions were high due to Israel's announced plans for developing new areas for settlement, prisoner hunger strikes, and anger over the killing of unarmed civilians by the IDF.

Operation Pillar of Defense and a Ceasefire

As the quarter opened, Israel's OPD was entering its 3d day, with numerous, large-scale attacks being launched on 100s of targets across the Gaza Strip. The operation had begun on 11/14 with the IDF's assassination of Hamas military commander Ahmad al-Jabari via targeted airstrike (which also killed 8 others), followed by a barrage of rocket launchings by Palestinian factions (causing no fatalities). On 11/16, at the start of the quarter, the Palestinian death toll was 30, around a third of them civilians, with intense Israeli airstrikes raising the total number of targets struck since the operation began to some 500. Palestinian armed groups, meanwhile, fired a total of 190 rockets into Israel, including one that landed in an open area nr. Gush Etzion

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settlement bloc s. of Jerusalem. With air raid sirens sounding in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Israeli DM Ehud Barak requested the mobilization of 75,000 reservists, immediately approved by the Israeli cabinet. Day 4 of the attack (11/17) witnessed around 300 airstrikes in 24 hours, while Palestinian factions fired more rockets into Israel, bringing the total number of projectiles fired since OPD began to 250.

Internationally, Israel enjoyed solid support from the U.S., cautious support from other allies such as the UK, and condemnation by Egypt and other Arab and Muslim states. While Israel continued to receive broad Western backing for what was viewed essentially as an operation of self-defense, comments like those by Israel's Interior Minister Eli Yishai, who said that the goal of the operation was to "send Gaza back to the Middle Ages," caused consternation in some sections of the media. Also on 11/17, Tunisian FM Rafik Abdesslem visited the Gaza Strip, while in Cairo, Egyptian pres. Mohamed Morsi held talks with Turkish Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Qatar's Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Hamas chief Khalid Mishal and Islamic Jihad leader Ramdan Shalah.

On 11/18 (Day 5), the IDF assault provoked its 1st strong international criticism when a strike on a family home in Jabalya killed 10 civilians from the same family; the IDF also targeted a building used by the media. More than 30 Palestinians died that day. Palestinian-fired rockets continued to land in Israel, with 2 rockets wounding 7 Israelis in separate incidents. On 11/19, the IDF struck dozens more targets, raising the Palestinian death toll to 100. On 11/20, the IDF struck 133 targets, killing 19 Palestinians, including several children. IDF airstrikes also killed three Palestinian journalists, attacks condemned by Reporters Without Borders. Al-Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility for the killing of 6 alleged collaborators in the streets of Gaza City. From the beginning of the quarter, Palestinians fired over 1,100 projectiles, of which about 300 were reported to have been intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome defense system. Of the total rockets fired, 140 landed in Israel, killing 1 soldier and 1 defense ministry contractor, bringing the Israeli death toll to 5.

On the diplomatic front, a ceasefire agreement brokered by Egypt on 11/20 was signed the following day at 9:00pm local time. The deal was announced by Egyptian FM Mohammed Kamel Amr at a joint press conference with U.S. secy. of state Hillary Clinton in Cairo. The Obama administration thanked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for accepting the deal and also commended Egyptian pres. Mohamed Morsi for his role. Hamas chief Khalid Mishal stated that his organization would respect the truce but would respond to any Israeli violations, and thanked Egypt for its role in securing the ceasefire. Mishal and other Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip celebrated the ceasefire and welcomed an agreement that included an end to Palestinian projectile-fire and cross-border attacks, as well as an end to Israeli incursions and assassinations. Steps to ease the blockade were also expected.

Before the ceasefire was implemented, the IDF attacked numerous targets in the Gaza Strip, killing around 20 Palestinians, while unidentified Palestinians planted a bomb on a Tel Aviv bus, which injured 2 dozen Israelis, mostly lightly or moderately. Despite the ceasefire, Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip continued throughout the quarter, primarily shootings on or near the border and targeting fishermen. Four Palestinians were killed and 91 injured close to the border fence in dozens of separate incidents. There were also a number of limited incursions by IDF forces (described by the military as "routine").

The final tally of Palestinians killed during the entire 8-day operation was 165; of these, 146 were killed this quarter, while 19 had died last quarter during the 1st 2 days of OPD. Palestinian *civilian* deaths during the entire operation were estimated at 99–105, or roughly 60% of the total. The dead included 33 children and 13 women. The number of Palestinian wounded during the operation was estimated to reach 1,400. A total of 6 Israelis were killed during OPD, (4 civilians and 2 soldiers), all by Palestinian rocket fire. Approximately 200 Israelis were wounded, also by rocket fire, during OPD.

The IDF hit some 1,500 targets in the course of the operation which included, according to the Israeli military, dozens

of “command centers,” “senior operatives,” “underground rocket launchers,” “weapon manufacturing and storage facilities,” and rocket “launch sites.” Damaged or destroyed infrastructure also included some 450 homes, health facilities, schools, universities, mosques, media centers, and civil govt. buildings. Palestinian armed groups fired some 1,506 rockets from Gaza into Israel during the whole of OPD.

With regard to human rights monitoring, the Israeli NGO B’Tselem published initial investigations while the operation was still underway that indicated 40% of the Palestinian dead (killed 11/14–19) were civilians. Human Rights Watch subsequently reported that at least 18 Israeli airstrikes, which killed 43 civilians, were in apparent violation of the laws of war. On 2/6, towards the end of the quarter, Israel’s Military Advocate General Danny Efroni revealed that the IDF was in the process of examining 70 cases of non-combatant Palestinian civilian deaths during OPD.

UN Statehood Bid

The PA’s UN bid for non-member state observer status this quarter was a follow up to its application for UN full membership in 9/2011, which failed to get the required backing of the UNSC (see *JPS* 162). In the buildup to the anticipated vote at the UNGA on Palestinian statehood this year, Israel and the U.S. both deployed efforts to stop the Palestinians from going forward with the new initiative. The U.S. did try to rein in Israel’s expected response, however: on a visit to the region, U.S. secy. of state Clinton warned (11/23) Netanyahu not to take extreme measures for fear of provoking the collapse of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Specifically, the U.S. urged Israel not to build in the “E1” area of the West Bank just east of Jerusalem, a particularly hot-button issue for the Palestinians as it not only would close the last remaining gap between Jerusalem and Israel’s massive settlement bloc to the east, but also virtually bisect the West Bank into northern and southern halves (see *Settlement Monitor* in this issue).

Meanwhile, unnamed aides to PA pres. Abbas told (11/23) the media that he had no choice but to seek UN recognition since Hamas was perceived to have

held its own against Israel in the Gaza fighting. Israeli officials continued to issue mostly vague threats about the consequences of the UN bid, while Ramallah officials repeated Abbas’ determination to go ahead regardless (11/24). As Abbas left for New York, PA officials were optimistic about the level of European states’ support, dismissing Israeli and U.S. warnings that the initiative would be punished. Indeed, there were signs of backtracking by Israel, with diplomatic sources saying that its response to the bid would depend on what Abbas did with the upgraded status. Importantly for any future reconciliation within the Palestinian movement, Hamas leader Khalid Mishal telephoned Abbas (11/26) to express Hamas’ support for the bid.

At the UN itself, efforts (11/27) to soften the wording of the UNGA draft resolution came to nothing despite joint U.S.-Israeli pressure; on 11/28, Obama even sent his secy. of state William Burns to try to persuade Abbas in person, to no avail. On the eve of the vote it appeared that the Palestinian side had secured the support of at least a dozen European countries. Israeli sources reported (11/28) that in light of the bid’s almost certain success, the govt. approach would be to down play the significance of the vote.

On 11/29, the UNGA, as expected, passed by a wide margin draft resolution A/67/L.28 to upgrade the Palestinians’ status as a non-member observer entity to the status of a non-member observer state (see Doc. A2 in this issue). The vote was 138 in favor to 9 against (U.S., Israel, Panama, Palau, Canada, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Czech Republic, and Micronesia), with 41 abstentions and 3 countries registered as absent. Israeli PM Netanyahu described the vote as “meaningless,” while U.S. amb. to the UN Susan Rice called the resolution “unfortunate and counterproductive” (see Doc. D1 in this issue).

Israel’s immediate response to the PA move was to announce (11/30) that it was moving swiftly ahead with zoning and settlement construction plans for the 4.6 sq. mile E1 area connecting East Jerusalem to the large settlement of Ma’ale Adumim, thereby closing off access to the West Bank. Soon after, it approved plans for 3,000 new settlement

housing units elsewhere in the West Bank. Several days later (12/2) the Israeli govt. also decided to withhold the tax revenues it had collected on behalf of the PA during 11/2012.

The PA leadership, meanwhile, seemed undecided as to whether or not to use its new status as a means of holding Israel to account in, say, the International Criminal Court (ICC). On 11/30, Abbas said he has no immediate plans to pursue such a course, but suggested that it could be a future option. Later, however, doubtless in reaction to Israel's various announcements about settlements, there were comments along the lines of those made by Abbas's adviser Nimr Hammad (12/21) to the effect that Palestine might complain to the ICC if the UNSC failed to take substantive action concerning Israeli settlement construction. On 12/26, the PA was reported to be seeking to join a number of international organizations that were now open to it as a result of the UN upgrade, including the Universal Postal Union, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the World Health Organization.

Stalled Negotiations

The official peace process remained frozen this quarter; if anything, the diplomatic climate deteriorated on account of the Palestinians' UN bid and Israel's provocative announcements on new settlement construction. Soon after OPD ended, UK foreign secy. William Hague urged (11/25) the U.S. to take a "decisive lead" in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts in coming months, adding that "we're coming to the final chance, maybe, for a two-state solution in the Israeli Palestinian conflict to be successfully resolved." Hague reiterated the warning on 1/22.

From the Palestinian side, there were calls for a return to talks provided that (1) there was a freeze in West Bank settlement construction (12/9) and (2) negotiations started from the point they left off and had the clear goal of a resolving final status issues within 6 months (12/10). On 12/27, Abbas told the Israeli newspaper *Ha'Aretz* that if both settlement construction and the diplomatic stalemate continued after the Israeli elections scheduled for 1/2013, he would dismantle the PA. He also stated that

Israel had reduced security cooperation with the PA since the UN vote in 11/2012.

From the Israeli side, Netanyahu repeated on numerous occasions his offer of a so-called unconditional return to negotiations. On 12/31, Israeli television reported that Netanyahu stood behind his 2009 Bar-Ilan University statement of support for the two-state solution (see Doc. C1 in *JPS* 153), though without directly quoting him. A week later, foreign minister and Netanyahu campaign partner Avigdor Lieberman declared (1/6) that the principles set out in the Bar-Ilan speech would guide the govt. if re-elected. As the quarter drew to a close, Israel's National Security Adviser Yaakov Amidor was reported (2/7) to have privately warned Netanyahu that settlement construction was causing Israel to lose support even among its strongest allies in the West.

A Surge in Settlement Expansion

This quarter was marked by almost unprecedented settlement expansion. Besides the high-profile announcements (e.g. concerning E1 development on 11/30, and on the additional 3,000 settlement units elsewhere on 12/5), there were quieter but still noteworthy announcements of construction projects in Ma'ale Adumim (12/11), the Jordan Valley (1/13), and the Gush Etzion bloc (2/10). On 12/4, it was reported that around 12,000 settlement housing units in East Jerusalem—about a quarter of the total number of existing settlement units in East Jerusalem—were at some stage of the approval process. On 1/3, Israeli NGO Ir Amin published data indicating that tenders for settlement apartments in East Jerusalem launched in 2012 showed a three-fold increase compared to 2011 (2,386 units), and a four-fold increase compared to 2011 in units approved for future construction (6,932). Israeli NGO Peace Now, meanwhile, reported that approval for settlement plans jumped 300% in 2012, and that under Netanyahu's premiership, 40% of the settlement construction started was in settlements located outside of the so-called "blocs" often assumed to form part of a future land swap (1/16).

Two further significant developments in the colonization of East Jerusalem took place this quarter. The 1st was the

Jerusalem municipality's approval (1/16) of the site on the Mount of Olives for the planned relocation of the National Defense College. The 2d was the municipality's final approval of plans to build the 1st new settlement in East Jerusalem since 1997: Givat Hamatos, between Talpiot and Beit Safafa (12/3, 12/17, 12/19). Finally, there was international disapproval of Israel's decision this quarter to officially grant university status to a higher education college located in Ariel settlement (12/27, 1/8).

Staving off the PA Financial Crisis

Meanwhile, the PA's increasingly dire financial straits, exacerbated by the shortfall in donor payments and Israel's punitive withholding of PA custom tax revenues, reached critical proportions this quarter, necessitating emergency measures. On 12/9, the Arab League promised to provide the PA with a \$100 m. monthly financial safety net (roughly the amount being withheld by the Israeli authorities). By 12/14, however, this money had not materialized, so Palestinian banks stepped in (12/19) to lend the PA money as a temporary solution. In mid-1/2013, the EU allocated (1/16) about €100 m. to the PA and UNRWA combined in order to support essential services in the o.t. There was further European support via contributions from Denmark and the Netherlands (1/21), amounting to around €7.2 m., for the payment of December's salaries and pensions for some 80,000 Palestinian civil servants and pensioners. A more significant breakthrough came when Saudi Arabia announced (1/19) that it would give the PA \$20 m./month for as long as Israel holds back the tax revenue. At the end of 1/2013, PA fin. min. Nabil Qassis met (1/29) with Middle East Quartet envoy Tony Blair in Ramallah and called for pressure on Israel to release the much-needed funds so that the PA could meet its obligations. By the end of the quarter, no progress had been made in this regard.

Israeli Elections

Several changes in Israel's political landscape occurred during the 1st weeks of this quarter in the run-up to Israel's general elections planned for 1/2013, though none was on par with the

decision taken last quarter by Likud's Netanyahu and Yisrael Beiteinu's Avigdor Lieberman to run on a joint ticket (see QU in *JPS* 166 for details). Elections-related developments of note this quarter included Israeli DM Ehud Barak's announcement that he would leave political life after the elections; the victory of Likud's more hardline wing at the party's primary (11/26), meaning an almost guaranteed Knesset seat for far-right activist Moshe Feiglin; and former FM Tzipi Livni's declaration (11/27) that she would leave Kadima, which she headed, and run as the head of a new party, Hatenua (the Movement). Livni was joined in the new party by several MKs who likewise resigned from Kadima. Former Labor chief MK Amir Peretz also joined (12/6). Labor, meanwhile, went into the elections under the leadership of MK Shelly Yachimovich, hoping to capitalize on the social justice and housing protests that marked the Israeli domestic scene in 2011. One headache for Netanyahu and the joint Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu ticket was Avigdor Lieberman's legal troubles. On 12/14, in anticipation of the attorney general's decision to indict him on charges of fraud and breach of trust, Lieberman announced his intention to resign as Israel's foreign minister and deputy prime minister, and did so on 12/16. However, he remained chair of Yisrael Beiteinu and 2d on the joint electoral list with Likud. Netanyahu signaled his continuing confidence by stating his hope that Lieberman would soon return to a senior govt. post. Lieberman was formally indicted by Israel's Justice Ministry on 12/30. Another matter of controversy pre-elections was the initial disqualification (12/19) of Balad party MK Haneen Zoabi by the Central Elections Committee, largely on the basis of her participation in the 2010 Gaza-bound flotilla, the *Mavi Marmara*. As expected, however, this decision was overturned (12/30) by Israel's Supreme Court.

Israelis went to the polls on 1/22, with a high turnout. Netanyahu had hoped that a campaign focused on defiance of the international community in addition to a tough stand on both settlements and Iran would lead to a solid win for Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu and their allies, but he was disappointed. The elections produced a Knesset more or less evenly

split between the right-wing/religious bloc and centrist/center-left blocs. The headlines were dominated by the rise of a new party, Yesh Atid ("There's a Future"), and its leader Yair Lapid, with fewer seats than anticipated for both Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu and Naftali Bennett's religious Zionist party, Jewish Home. The final tally gave 31 seats to Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu, 19 to Yesh Atid, 15 to a resurgent Labor party, 12 to Bennett's Jewish Home, and 11 and 7 seats respectively to Shas and United Torah Judaism. Meretz improved its Knesset participation with 6 seats, Tzipi Livni's new party got 6, the United Arab List and Hadash both got 4, and Balad and Kadima won 3 and 2 seats respectively. (See Oren Yiftachel's article in this issue.) The estimated turnout for Palestinian citizens of Israel was 56%, according to figures cited by Army Radio, while the overall turnout was 67%.

Immediately after the elections, as the process of assembling "the broadest" coalition began, PM Netanyahu declared (1/23) that he saw in the results "many partners" for his "goals." He also said that whatever coalition would be formed would address issues such as greater equality in carrying the military burden and institute cheaper housing and govt. reform. Yesh Atid's Yair Lapid quickly ruled out (1/23) his participation in any sort of "blocking" majority aimed at preventing Netanyahu from remaining PM, and expressed hopes of working with the Likud leader. The 2 men met on 1/24 for their 1st discussions about forming a coalition. According to reports, Lapid intended to set 2 conditions for joining a governing coalition: a universal draft bill and resumption of peace talks with the Palestinians.

On 2/2, Israeli pres. Shimon Peres formally tasked Netanyahu with forming the next govt., beginning coalition negotiations in earnest with a deadline of 28 days. Peres said that it would be essential for the next govt. to tackle the budget deficit, social justice, universal military conscription, and renewed negotiations with the Palestinians. Netanyahu emphasized the need to form as broad a coalition as possible to deal with domestic and international challenges. By the end of the quarter a govt. had not yet been formed.

Rising Tensions in the West Bank

Israel's OPD in Gaza triggered large-scale protests throughout the West Bank, with 2 Palestinians killed and approximately 560 (including 140 children) wounded in clashes with IDF soldiers with OCHA recording its highest number of injuries in a single week during the protests against the attack. There were also 8 incidents of IDF soldiers shooting to death unarmed Palestinian civilians (11/17, 11/19, 12/3, 12/12, 1/12, 1/15, 1/18, 1/23). Clashes between Jewish settlers and Palestinians were ongoing, often caused by groups of the former vandalizing property or uprooting trees of the later, and in some cases invading villages.

Solidarity protests with Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails proved a focus for much of the unrest this quarter, heightened by the continuation of high-profile hunger strikes by Palestinian prisoners, Ayman Sharawna and Samer Issawi, who have been refusing food for months over the terms and conditions of their detention by Israel. Both Sharawna and Issawi were freed under the 2011 swap deal but rearrested last year on charges of violating terms of their release. Israeli media reported (1/1) that around 50 residents of Issawiya, the home village of Samer Issawi in annexed East Jerusalem, were arrested during 12/2012 in clashes with security forces. Protests increased in 1/2013 and 2/2013, with substantial demonstrations outside Ofer prison nr. Ramallah. In one such demonstration, on 2/15, protesters included Palestinian MP Mustafa Barghouti, Palestinian Knesset member Ahmad Tibi, and leader of the Islamic Movement in Israel, Sheikh Raed Salah. In the context of hunger strikes and an increased profile of the Palestinian prisoners' case, it is worth noting that the IDF raided (12/10) the Ramallah offices of prisoner support-NGO Addameer, confiscating equipment, including computer hardware.

All this, combined with an uptick in Palestinian attacks (rock-throwing, Molotov-cocktails), according to Shin Bet statistics, led some Israeli observers to wonder whether a new intifada might be brewing. In 12/2012, the Israeli media reported on such concerns among Israel's security establishment, citing

deadlocked negotiations, the Palestinians' recent UN bid, and the recent Gaza conflict (12/9). Later that month, Kadima chair Shaul Mofaz issued a similar warning (12/27), as did former-Shin Bet head Yaakov Peri (1/8). On 1/7, the IDF's Col. Yaniv Alaluf even claimed that a 3d intifada was already underway.

Intifada Data and Trends

At least 169 Palestinians were killed this quarter as a result of Israeli actions (up from 51 last quarter), while 6 Israelis were killed (compared to 3 last quarter) as a result of Palestinian actions. The Palestinian deaths brought the comprehensive toll as of 2/15/13 to at least 8,188 Palestinians (including 51 Palestinian citizens of Israel and 19 unidentified Arab cross-border infiltrators), 1,123 Israelis (including 356 IDF soldiers and security personnel, 226 settlers, and 537 civilians), and 66 foreign nationals (including 2 British suicide bombers) since the 2d intifada began in 9/2000. These numbers include individuals who died in noncombat-related incidents if the death was a direct result of Israel's occupation and the ongoing conflict (e.g., ailing Palestinians who died when denied access to medical care and Palestinians killed in smuggling tunnel accidents).

Overview of the Violence

Of the 169 Palestinians killed this quarter, 146 (about 86%) were killed during OPD, as were all 6 Israeli fatalities. Indeed, violence this quarter was dominated by OPD. All the reported injury statistics, both Palestinian (in Gaza) and Israeli, relate to OPD: besides the estimated 1400 Palestinians wounded by Israeli airstrikes and the estimated 200 Israelis wounded by Palestinian rocket fire, an additional 29 Israelis injured in a bus bombing in Tel Aviv on 11/21 can be considered as its casualties, given that the bombing occurred on OPD's last day.

Similarly with Palestinian rocket firings, all 1,100 of them launched this quarter were during OCL; none was fired afterwards (though Shin Bet claimed that one mortar shell was fired from the Gaza Strip in 2/2012, causing no injuries). The large number of rockets fired into Israel during OPD, both this quarter and last,

accounted for the dramatic increase for the total number during the year 2012, which registered 2,327 rockets, compared to 419 in 2011.

Although no significant rounds of violence occurred in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel for the rest of the quarter, Israeli attacks on the territory and its population continued. Four Palestinians were killed and 91 injured near the border fence in some 63 different shootings by IDF soldiers positioned either on the border or during limited incursions (of which there were 13). There were also 27 attacks on Palestinian fishermen off the Gaza coast.

In the West Bank, 8 Palestinian civilians were killed this quarter (11/17, 11/19, 12/3, 12/12, 1/12, 1/15, 1/18, 1/23), compared to zero Palestinian fatalities in the West Bank last quarter. During OPD, 2 Palestinians were killed and approximately 560 Palestinians were injured (including 140 children) in clashes with IDF soldiers. In the aftermath of the operation, OCHA recorded the highest number of injuries in the West Bank in a single week since records began back in 2005. In 1/2013, 4 unarmed Palestinian civilians were killed by the IDF over an 11-day period: 1 man shot in the back trying to cross the Wall s. of Hebron en route to work; a 17-year old boy repeatedly shot by the Wall nr. Budrus; a 15-year old boy shot from an IDF watchtower in Ayda r.c. in Bethlehem; and a woman shot dead nr. al-Arrub refugee camp in the Hebron governorate. The IDF conducted an average of 60 incursions/patrols per week in the West Bank this quarter, slightly down from 65/week last quarter, and arrested an average of 42 Palestinians per week.

According to statistics gathered and published by Israel's security services, there were well over 200 attacks this quarter by Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The vast majority of these involved the throwing of Molotov cocktails. A total of 12 Israelis were injured this quarter (excluding OPD), including 7 civilians. The year 2012 ended with no Israeli fatalities from Palestinian attacks in the West Bank for the entire year, but the total number of Palestinian attacks in the West Bank rose from 320 in 2011 to 578 in 2012.

Movement and Access Issues

During this quarter, freedom of movement and access for Palestinians in the West Bank was stable—reasonably good compared to past years. As of 12/31/12, OCHA reported 532 obstacles to movement in the West Bank, including 9 Green Line checkpoints and 59 internal checkpoints. Of note, however, the Israeli authorities in 12/2012 changed the system at the al-Hamra checkpoint, one of the most important crossings in the northern West Bank, no longer requiring Palestinians either to have permits to cross or to get out of their vehicles at the inspection point (12/4). The change was reportedly due to IDF plans to set up new facilities at the checkpoint. The IDF further issued its customary special seasonal permits for Palestinian Christians, with relaxed restrictions lasting about a month starting from late 2/2012. Five hundred permits went to residents of the Gaza Strip to travel to the West Bank, specifically Bethlehem, while 20,000 permits were allocated for West Bank Palestinians to enter Israel. Two hundred permits were issued for Palestinians wishing to travel abroad using Ben Gurion Airport.

Movement and access for the Gaza Strip remained largely unchanged this quarter, with Israel in total control of border crossings except Rafah, and with the IDF enforcing “no-go” zones near the border fence and out at sea. There were some changes, however, especially in the aftermath of OPD: a crucial part the ceasefire was an easing of Israeli restrictions on the movement of people and goods, as well as Palestinian access to the “buffer zone” nr. the border fence and fishermen’s access Gaza’s waters beyond 3 nautical miles.

In keeping with the easing, on 12/29 Egyptian authorities allowed building materials such as gravel into the Gaza Strip via the Rafah crossing for the 1st time since 2007 (there was a repeat delivery on 1/7). The materials were allowed in as part of rebuilding projects funded by Qatar. Meanwhile, in the last week of 12/2012 Israel began allowing into Gaza a daily quota of 20 truckloads of aggregates for the private sector via the Kerem Shalom crossing (through 1/2013, however, the daily average was only 15). Israel also announced that it would end

a ban on the import into Gaza of utility vehicles (e.g., refrigerated trucks, public transportation vehicles, etc.).

On the other hand, exports remained minimal, with the Israeli-imposed ban on exports to Israel and the West Bank continuing, and the only exception being set quantities of flowers, fruits, and vegetables leaving Gaza for Europe under a Dutch gov.-overseen program. Due to fuel shortages, the main power plant in Gaza was operating at only half capacity, so Gaza residents suffered from shortages of electricity (experiencing outages of up to 12 hours/day) as well as of gas. With deliveries averaging only 150 tons/day, in late 1/2013 Gaza officials called for more cooking gas deliveries to meet the daily requirement of some 250 tons. In terms of movement of people, the situation at Erez and Rafah crossings remained similarly restricted as before OPD.

Tunnels continued to be used to circumvent restrictions at border crossings. Airstrikes during OPD had reportedly destroyed or damaged dozens of tunnels, but subsequent repairs reportedly restored usage to 80% of the previous levels. Six Palestinians died in tunnel collapses during heavy rains in early 1/2013, bringing the number of people killed in tunnels since the network was established to over 200. In 2/2013, there were reports of an Egyptian crack down, with arrests of suspected smugglers and shutting down tunnels through flooding. The latter campaign was met with anger by Hamas officials, who said that attempts to forcibly shut the tunnels would not succeed without alternatives to import produce.

The quarter ended with Israeli television reporting (2/15) that indirect talks mediated by Egypt were underway between Israel and Hamas to ease the blockade by opening the Rafah crossing to construction materials and other staple items. A senior Hamas official confirmed the reports on 2/17.

Regular Nonviolent Protests in the Territories

In the West Bank, regular weekly demonstrations against the occupation, settlements, and the separation wall continued this quarter in villages nr. Ramallah (Bil’in, Ni’lin, Nabi Salih), al-Ma’sara

village nr. Bethlehem, Beit Ommar nr. Hebron, and Kafr Qaddum village nr. Qalqilya. Following the usual pattern, Israelis and internationals joined Palestinians, with IDF soldiers using force (tear gas, rubber-coated bullets, and live ammunition) but mostly without serious injuries.

This quarter also saw a new form of nonviolent protest, namely the setting up of “protest villages” or camps in areas marked for particularly significant settlement development. In the most dramatic case, which drew considerable international media attention for the novelty of the protests and the importance of its location, took place on 1/11, when several hundred Palestinians erected a tent village called “Bab al-Shams” (“Gate of the Sun”) in the highly contentious E1 area nr. Jerusalem (see Doc. B2 and the press section of this issue). Though the Israeli Supreme Court had issued a temporary injunction against removing the protesters, on 1/13 about 500 IDF soldiers forcibly evicted from the site the some 100 Palestinians still there. On 1/16, after getting the court’s approval, the IDF removed the tents themselves. Another high profile case followed on 1/18, when the “al-Karamah” (“Dignity”) protest village was set up nr. Bayt Ika village close to Jerusalem. On 1/20 the encampment was stormed by IDF forces using stun grenades and tear gas to evict the protesters.

Settler Attacks on Palestinians

Settler violence was down this quarter, with 67 attacks (compared to 94 incidents last quarter). Many of the attacks were associated with the olive harvest, during which about 40 Palestinians were injured. Incidents included the uprooting of dozens of even 100s of trees (e.g. 11/23, 12/5, 12/27, 1/11, 1/17). The olive harvest season concluded in 2/2012; the number of settler attacks for the whole period was just over 50, the same as the harvest in 2011. OCHA’s yearly statistics for the year 2012 reported a total of 8,600 trees burned, uprooted, or vandalized during 2012, down from 9,500 olive trees in 2011. In 1/2013, some 673 trees were damaged by settlers. So-called price tag acts of vandalism targeting Palestinian-owned property or vehicles

were also witnessed during the quarter (e.g. 11/28, 12/31, 2/14).

Of particular note was the repeated targeting of Qusra village nr. Nablus by settlers from Esh Kodesh outpost. On 12/31, around 200 olive trees were uprooted in a night raid by settlers that also saw residents assaulted and property damaged. Then, on 1/5, settlers returned to the village, firing live ammunition into the air, with IDF soldiers subsequently deployed to attack Palestinians defending themselves. On 1/10, Esh Kodesh settlers returned again to Qusra and opened fire on villagers, wounding 1 man in the leg. The same day, settlers from Yitzhar settlement attacked the village of Urif, in the Nablus governorate. IDF soldiers shot and wounded 1 man with live ammunition in the ensuing clashes. Overall, the 1st week of 1/2013 saw 18 Palestinians wounded by settler violence.

Settlers also encroached on Palestinian farmland and in some instances expanded their settlements by this means, including in Maskiot in the Jordan Valley (1/16), Elon Moreh nr. Nablus (1/16), and Halamish settlement nr. Ramallah (1/22). Another example was the Sde Bo’az settlement nr. Bethlehem, where on 1/8 settlers leveled land belonging to al-Khadr village, and over the following week, proceeded to uproot numerous trees in order to complete a road connecting the outpost to an extension of it.

Demolitions and Confiscations

Approximately 186 demolitions were reported this quarter, a significant uptick from the previous quarter (150) and the quarter before that (27). January saw the largest number of demolitions, with 139 structures targeted in 20 separate incidents. These included 59 residential structures, which displaced 250 people. January’s total was the highest for a single month in over 2 years. Continuing long-standing trends, the Jordan Valley and the Hebron area continued to be hardest hit. Three of January’s largest incidents were in the Jordan Valley, with a total of 65 structures demolished, displacing 124 people (1/16, 1/17, 1/24). In the Hebron governorate, there were numerous demolitions of residential and agricultural properties (11/28, 12/4, 1/14,

1/21, 2/6, 2/7, 2/11), including 1 incident that destroyed 7 structures and displaced 29 people (1/21). There were also at least a half-dozen cases this quarter of demolition orders being served in localities across the West Bank (2 on 12/26, 1/22, 1/23, 2/4, 2/5).

Meanwhile, demolitions continued in East Jerusalem (12/11, 1/8, 1/15, 1/28, 2/5). *Ha'aretz* reported (12/4) that Interior Ministry supervisors had resumed patrols in Palestinian East Jerusalem neighborhoods to prepare for demolitions. On 1/29, though stop-work orders were obtained for the 13-household Jerusalem neighborhood of Anata (on the West Bank side of the separation wall), final demolition will go forward if legal appeals fail, placing over 70 people at risk of displacement. The community's land has been gradually requisitioned over the years for, among other things, a nearby Israeli military base.

INTRA-PALESTINIAN DYNAMICS

The quarter began with positive gestures concerning national reconciliation as a result of the united front sought by senior Fatah and Hamas leaders during and in the wake of Israel's OPD attack on the Gaza Strip. After the successful UN bid, which was ultimately backed by Hamas, PA officials also indicated that they would focus on furthering national unity (12/5). At a rally in Gaza City celebrating the OPD ceasefire on 11/22, PM Ismail Haniyeh was joined by Fatah's Nabil Shaath, while a Fatah delegation joined Haniyeh for a ceremony a few days later (11/27) to honor bereaved families. Subsequent positive gestures included prisoner releases by both Hamas (11/25, 12/28) and the PA (11/25), as well as the return to the Gaza Strip of several Fatah members who had fled during the civil strife in 2007 (12/2, 12/3, 1/24). On 12/7, Hamas chief Khalid Mishal visited the Gaza Strip for the 1st time to mark the 25th anniversary of Hamas's founding. The PA also allowed Hamas supporters to hold celebratory rallies in West Bank cities (12/13). Shortly thereafter, it was Fatah's turn to hold anniversary festivities, including in Gaza. It initially appeared that Hamas would facilitate an event in Gaza planned for

12/17, but disputes about the location (12/25, 12/27, 12/28) delayed the rally, which eventually took place on 1/4. The rally drew a crowd of hundreds of thousands, the 1st such open show of support for Fatah in Gaza since 2007.

In 1/2013, a new push began to move the process of reconciliation forward, with PA pres. Abbas and Hamas leader Mishal initially holding separate meetings with Egyptian pres. Mohamed Morsi in Cairo (1/9). The focus of the talks was on forming a Palestinian unity govt. and holding overdue presidential and parliamentary elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. On 1/10, the Egyptian govt. announced that Fatah and Hamas had agreed to start implementing previous reconciliation agreements. Abbas spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudayna said the 2 sides had agreed to form several joint committees, including one dealing with presidential and parliamentary elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and another dealing with the formation of a Palestinian unity govt. and rebuilding the PLO. There followed a series of announcements concerning the formation of various oversight committees (1/17, 1/21), but by 2/10 further talks in Cairo had not progressed on some the substantial issues on the table. A complicating factor for reconciliation efforts was the ongoing targeting of Hamas members in the West Bank by PA security forces, such as the arrest of 25 members in 48 hours on 2/7.

On 1/30, the Central Elections Comm. (CEC) announced plans to begin registering voters in the Gaza Strip in preparation for national parliamentary and presidential elections, a key part of the national reconciliation efforts (1/30). Voter registration duly started on 2/11, with the process still ongoing at the end of the quarter. Despite the registration drive, it was unclear exactly how, or even if, elections would take place. On 2/12, senior Fatah official Azzam al-Ahmad said that Pres. Abbas had begun consultations to form a unity govt. of technocrats that would be sworn in when the CEC finished updating the voter registry. The next day Abbas said (2/13) that Hamas was opposing elections for the time being despite their apparent agreement on a timetable relating to the formation of a unity govt. and subsequent elections

that would take place 3 months after the CEC completed its preparatory work (2/13).

Another significant track of the national reconciliation process involved PLO reform. A meeting in Cairo on (2/9–10) intended to integrate Hamas and Islamic Jihad into the PLO did not produce any breakthroughs, though PM Haniyeh said that the talks had not entirely collapsed. Some of the main differences, aside from the process leading to elections, included whether the Palestine National Council (PNC) should follow proportional representation or the same system as the parliament (2/9). Meanwhile, the quarter also saw grassroots efforts in Palestinian communities around the world demanding elections for the PLO’s PNC (2/13).

Internal Governance

Israel’s decision, following the PLO’s UN bid in 11/2012, to withhold the customs duties it collects for the PA contributed to the PA’s inability to pay tens of thousands of employees. As a result, Fatah and the PA faced numerous strikes this quarter by teachers, govt. employees/civil servants, and public transport workers (12/17, 12/19, 1/8, 1/14, 1/26, 1/29). There were also protests in Balata r.c. in Nablus and Jenin r.c. (1/10, 1/21), where masked gunmen claiming affiliation to Fatah paraded in the camp, protesting that they were being targeted by the PA security forces. This public spectacle moved Pres. Abbas to convene his security chiefs (1/17) and to stress the PA’s monopoly on the use of force.

In the Gaza Strip during this quarter, Hamas’s banning (12/27) Palestinian journalists from speaking with the Israeli media and govt. officials (12/27), caused considerable anger. There was even more uproar—including international criticism—when Hamas detained a number of Fatah-affiliated journalists in late 1/2013 (1/22, 1/28).

There were no major internal party developments in either Fatah or Hamas this quarter. Fatah’s advisory council met in Ramallah in 12/2012 to discuss the future of the party and the PA, including the prospect of holding a 7th Fatah conference (12/23, 12/26). Hamas, meanwhile, delayed the leadership elections

that had been expected at the end of 2012 (1/23).

PALESTINIAN OPINION

The following data are excerpted from a poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC) between 6 and 11 December 2012. 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 78th 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	45.3%	32.2%	40.4%
b. Armed resistance (armed intifada)	26.0%	43.6%	32.6%
c. Non-violent resistance (peaceful popular intifada)	22.0%	21.8%	21.9%
d. Other	1.3%	1.8%	1.5%
e. I don’t know/No answer	5.4%	0.6%	3.6%

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

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Dissolving the PNA is necessary	23.1%	14.9%	20.0%
b. Perpetuating and maintaining the PNA is a necessity	71.4%	80.7%	74.9%
c. I don’t know/No answer	5.5%	4.4%	5.1%

3. Now that the Gaza war has ended, who do you think is the winning side? Israel, Hamas, Israel and Hamas or neither Israel nor Hamas?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. Israel	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%
b. Hamas	72.0%	68.4%	70.6%
c. Israel and Hamas	2.0%	4.7%	3.0%
d. Neither Israel nor Hamas	20.8%	23.6%	21.9%
e. I don't know/ No answer	3.5%	1.5%	2.7%

4. Do you support the continuation of military operations against Israeli targets as an appropriate response under current political conditions or do you oppose them and believe they harm Palestinian national interests?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. An appropriate response under current political conditions	48.7%	54.4%	50.9%
b. Oppose them and believe they harm Palestinian national interests	41.0%	43.6%	42.0%
c. Others	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%
d. I don't know/ No answer	9.2%	0.9%	6.0%

5. The Palestinian leadership recently headed to the UN to obtain an upgrade in Palestine's status at the UN. Do you believe this is a good step that serves Palestinian national interests, a bad step that harms Palestinian national interests or a step that won't make any difference?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
a. A good step that serves Palestinian national interests	70.8%	81.8%	74.9%

b. A bad step that harms Palestinian national interests	7.6%	2.9%	5.8%
c. The step won't make any difference	18.4%	15.1%	17.2%
d. I don't know/ No answer	3.2%	0.2%	2.1%

6. Which Palestinian personality do you trust the most?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Mahmoud Abbass (Abu Mazen)	29.8%	30.7%	30.1%
Ismail Haniyeh	12.3%	25.8%	17.3%
Khaled Misha'l Marwan al-Barghouti	3.1%	6.0%	4.2%
Ahmad Sa'adat	2.5%	1.6%	2.2%
Others	7.3%	14.2%	9.9%
I don't trust anyone	27.0%	14.4%	22.3%
No answer	12.3%	0.9%	8.0%

FRONTLINE STATES

EGYPT

This quarter was marked by profound domestic political unrest, as many Egyptians became polarized on issues such as the powers of the presidency and the new constitution. On 11/22, Pres. Morsi issued decrees protecting the constituent assembly from possible dissolution by the judiciary and giving greater authority to himself, beyond court review, notably to take "due measures and steps" to deal with any "threat" to the revolution and national unity. This triggered days of protests and violent clashes which resulted in 2 deaths and 100's of injuries within the week (11/28). By 11/30 the Islamist-dominated constituent assembly finalized the new constitution by voting, one by one, on its 230 articles for over 16 hours. The proposed constitution would provide for a stronger parliament but also preserve much of the military's power and maintain that Egyptian law is rooted in the "principles of Islamic law."

A referendum on the constitution was set for 12/15. The weeks leading up to it were marked by further protests, both in the streets (on 12/5, for example, fighting left 5 dead and 350 injured) and in the form of civil disobedience, with strikes by judges and media workers. By 12/7, the clashes prompted the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, to express alarm at the rising casualty toll and to suggest that flaws in the constitution and the method of its preparation were a major reason for the unrest. On 12/11, the International Monetary Fund delayed a \$4.8bn loan to Egypt until 1/2013. A week before the referendum, on 12/8, Pres. Morsi made a concession to the opposition by canceling the decree that gave him sweeping powers, but insisted (also on 12/8) that the constitutional referendum go forward as planned. The vote took place over 2 weekends and the referendum was approved by about 63% in the 2 rounds combined, though turnout was only around 30%–33% of eligible voters (12/22).

A new bout of street clashes broke out toward the end of 1/2013, sparked by both the anniversary of the 2011 uprising and the death penalty and harsh sentencing of persons judged responsible for the Port Said soccer stadium disaster in 2/2012. In the 1/2013 protests, about 50 people were killed over a few days (1/24–27), with particularly intense clashes between protesters and security forces in Port Said, prompting Pres. Morsi to declare a month-long state of emergency in 3 cities along the Suez Canal. A final complication for Egypt's internal instability was the prospect of a retrial of deposed former Pres. Hosni Mubarak after an appeals court overturned his life sentence (1/13).

Regionally, Egypt had a high-profile this quarter thanks to its critical role in securing a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas to end OPD. When the cease-fire was announced on 11/21, it was at a press conference in Cairo with Egyptian FM Mohammed Kamel Amr standing alongside U.S. secy. of state Hillary Clinton, and both Clinton and pres. Obama praised Morsi's contribution to securing the agreement (see "Operation Pillar of Defense and a Cease-Fire" under the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, above).

Meanwhile, the Egyptian govt. continued to work with the U.S. to secure de-escalation between Israel and Hamas, and helped maintain indirect lines of communication between them concerning the cease-fire terms, such as easing border restrictions and preventing arms smuggling (11/26, 12/21, 12/30). Egypt demonstrated solidarity with Hamas and the Palestinians (most notably when PM Hesham Kandil visited the Gaza Strip on 11/16, in the midst of OPD), while also angering Hamas officials by attempting (e.g. 11/28, 2/11) to close down tunnels linking the Gaza Strip to Egypt (for more on this, see "Movement and Access" above). With regard to internal Palestinian politics, Egypt continued work mediating talks between Hamas and Fatah (see "Intra-Palestinian Dynamics") as Palestinian domestic political turmoil disrupted the already fraught national reconciliation process.

In another dimension of its regional role this quarter, Egypt continued to consolidate its improved relations with Iran. Iranian pres. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited Cairo (2/5) for an Islamic summit (the 1st trip to Egypt by an Iranian president since 1979). Pres. Morsi received (1/10) Iranian FM Ali Akbar Salehi on the latter's 3d visit to Cairo since Morsi took office.

The lack of security in the Sinai continued to be a problem for Egypt this quarter. There were numerous instances in which Egyptian security forces found and confiscated (12/15, 1/10, 1/4, 1/12, 2/5, 2/15) explosives or weapons caches—including anti-aircraft gun rounds, RPG launchers, anti-tank missiles, and disassembled rockets mainly suspected to have come from Libya—en route to the Gaza Strip. On 1/20, Egyptian media reported that police had seized 5 tons of explosives over the previous 3 months. There were also attacks on Egyptian security forces (1/6 and 1/11), for which vaguely identified "extremists" (i.e., Islamist extremist groups) were blamed; such groups are also believed to be responsible for the infrequent rocket fire from the Sinai Peninsula into Israel (e.g. on 11/16, during OPD). In their year-end-report, Israel's security service Shin Bet declared (1/24) that 8 rockets had been fired at Israel from the Sinai during 2012. On

1/10, the IDF closed a section of highway nr. the Egyptian border to civilian traffic, citing security concerns related to the Sinai unrest. Meanwhile, the Obama administration was taking the problems in the Sinai seriously enough to send U.S. undersecretary of defense for intelligence, Michael Vickers, to Cairo (1/6) for 2 days of meetings concerning the issue.

JORDAN

During this quarter, Jordan made some low-key efforts to stimulate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. King Abdallah visited Ramallah for talks with Pres. Mahmud Abbas and other senior officials on 12/6, met Israeli pres. Shimon Peres at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland (1/25), and held talks with Hamas leader Khalid Mishal (1/30). In 1/2013, Abdallah told the French media that Jordan was working with European countries to restart the stalled negotiations (1/13). More controversially, Jordan was engaged in secret talks with officials from Israel's Tamar natural gas field about exporting gas to power a potash plant on the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea, according to Israeli media (2/15).

The fallout from Syria's civil war manifested itself primarily through the influx of refugees. The UN refugee agency estimated (1/2) that Jordan was hosting some 120,000 registered Syrian refugees, about 25% of the regional total. On 1/29, UNICEF representative to Jordan Dominique Hyde revealed that over 21,000 Syrian refugees had arrived at the country's only refugee camp in the previous week alone. There were also security concerns related to the conflict in Syria, with anonymous govt. officials in Israel confirming a story reported in *al-Quds al-'Arabi* that PM Netanyahu had secretly met King Abdallah in Amman to discuss the risk of Syria's chemical weapons falling into the hands of armed Islamist groups (12/26).

Domestically, Jordan's main focus this quarter—besides further protests (11/16, 11/20) over rising fuel prices—was the parliamentary election scheduled for 1/23. The Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Islamic Action Front urged a boycott on the grounds that the electoral system was biased in favor of rural tribal areas, where

pro-regime sentiment is highest, to the detriment of the large, more densely populated urban areas, where pro-Brotherhood views are strong among poor Palestinians. In the elections for the lower house, 1,425 candidates competed for 150 seats, up from 120. The results saw pro-govt. candidates maintain their dominance of the parliament, though 37 Islamist and other govt. critics won seats in the legislature.

LEBANON

Continuing spillover from the Syrian civil war this quarter threatened to have serious consequences for Lebanon's fragile political fabric. Serious armed clashes took place in Tripoli between Sunni Muslim and Alawite militias, killing dozens in early 12/2012 (12/5, 12/9). On 2/4, a Lebanese judge issued arrest warrants for Syrian intelligence official Brig. Gen. Ali Mamlouk and his aide for alleged involvement in a bombing plot in Lebanon. Against this background, the U.S. govt. gave (1/7) the Lebanese army 200 armored vehicles to help respond to crises. Lebanon also received thousands of refugees fleeing the violence in Syria, with the UN reporting that the country hosted some 130,000 of the total 478,000 registered refugees throughout the region (1/2).

Hizballah was under political pressure this quarter because of its pro-Asad position vis-à-vis the Syrian civil war. In addition, the Bulgarian govt. publicly accused (2/5) the organization of responsibility for a bomb attack targeting Israeli tourists in Burgas, Bulgaria, in 2012. Deputy Hizballah leader Naim Qassem denied responsibility for the bombing the very next day (2/6), saying that Israel was behind the "allegations and incitements." Meanwhile, U.S. secy. of state John Kerry and White House counterterrorism adviser John Brennan on 2/5 joined Israel in calling upon the EU to take "proactive action" against Hizballah, typically assumed to mean placing the organization on a list of proscribed terrorist groups.

Tensions on the border with Israel were heightened this quarter due to the large number of Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty. Early in 2013, Lebanon lodged (within the context of

UN Security Council Res. 1701) several complaints with the UN (1/23, 1/30, 2/8) about Israeli warplanes overflying Lebanon's territory. In 12/2012 alone, according to a report submitted on 2/8 by Lebanese amb. to the UN Nawaf Salam, Israel violated UNSC Res. 1701 a total of 54 times with its incursions into Lebanese airspace.

SYRIA

Developments in Syria's civil war this quarter saw some rebel consolidation and gains, but neither the opposition nor govt. forces gained a clear upper hand. There were, however, significant though not breakthrough political developments. In 12/2012, Syrian rebel commanders joined forces under a united command, albeit excluding 2 of the more radical Islamist groups in a move at least partly designed to allay Western concerns (12/8). Syrian rebel commanders said they expected greater military assistance from the Gulf states after forming the new united command structure (12/10). On 12/12, U.S. pres. Obama announced that the Americans would formally recognize the Syrian National Coalition for Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SNC) as the de facto govt. in regions under rebel control, and invited the opposition umbrella group head Moaz al-Khatib to Washington. In 1/2013, al-Khatib provoked dissent from within the opposition groups by expressing willingness (1/30) to negotiate with members of Pres. Bashar al-Asad's govt. to end the civil war, but the rebels reiterated the offer of peace talks on the assumption that Asad himself would have no role in a transitional govt. (2/1, 2/15). In 2/2013, the Syrian minister for national reconciliation said (2/11) he would meet the SNC's al-Khatib in any foreign city for talks.

Meanwhile, the UN and Arab League's peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi continued to struggle to make headway on securing a ceasefire of any sort. Appointed in August 2012 (see *JPS* 166), Brahimi's proposal in October 2012 for an 'Id al-Adha ceasefire was largely ignored by both sides, and talks on a possible transition plan (e.g. in Damascus on 12/26-27) led to nowhere. On 1/29, Brahimi insisted he would not quit his role,

despite being stymied by differences of opinion in the Security Council about how best to proceed.

On a humanitarian level, according UN Human Rights Commissioner Pillay (1/2/13), the Syrian death toll from 3/2011–11/2012 had risen above 60,000. In terms of the Syrian refugee crisis, by 12/2012 the number of UN-registered refugees hit 478,000 (1/2), with Turkey hosting the largest number of registered Syrian refugees, followed by Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. By 2/2013, an exodus rate of roughly 5,000 people daily meant that the UN was reporting a total refugee population of some 800,000 (2/8).

Palestinians in Syria

The Yarmuk r.c. in Damascus was the focus of intense fighting this quarter, with a particularly bloody episode on 11/16, when a bombing raid by the Syrian air force killed over 20 civilians leading thousands of Palestinian refugees to flee for safety. Indeed, most of the Yarmuk's residents left the camp during the fighting, to the extent that Palestinian pres. Mahmud Abbas offered to take in refugees (an idea that never got off the ground due to reported Israeli stipulations). On 1/6, talks between PLO leaders, the Free Syria Army, and Syrian govt. forces were held in the aim of reaching a deal to end the fighting in and blockade of Yarmuk r.c., including the withdrawal of rebel fighters and the end to army shelling. While the talks continued, refugees returned to the camp amid calls for the Palestinians in Syria to be a "neutral party" in the civil war. According to Hamas figures (1/11), some 885 Palestinians had been killed in Syria and 20,000 had fled. With a deal to exempt the camp from fighting still pending, fighting (and casualties) continued (2/3, 2/6).

Impact on Israel

Incidents on the border between the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and Syrian territory, such as gunfire and infrequent mortar fire from Syria, continued (11/25, 12/5, 2/13). UN secy.-gen. Ban Ki-moon accused (12/3) the Syrian govt. of serious violations of the 1974 force separation agreement between Israel and Syria in the Golan Heights, while the UN forces, deployed since 1973

to monitor the Israeli-Syrian cease-fire, announced that they would reinforce security due to threats posed by Syrian rebels (12/5). The UNSC passed a resolution (12/19) drafted by the U.S. and Russia on extending the peacekeeping mission in the demilitarized zone between Syria and Israel, with the text expressing concern at the presence in the zone of both gov't. and rebel forces. By 1/2013, PM Netanyahu considered the situation serious enough to vow (1/6) to build a fortified fence along the border, while senior IDF officers briefed (1/13) the gov't. that Syrian armed opposition groups had taken up positions along the border. On 2/3, the *Sunday Times* reported that Israel was considering establishing a 10-mi. buffer zone inside Syria to protect itself from rebels. Separately, concerns about Syria's chemical weapons prompted Netanyahu to secretly meet (12/26) Jordan's King Abdallah in Amman to discuss the risk of such weapons falling into the hands of armed Islamist groups.

The most striking news of the quarter, however, was an Israeli air strike on a weapons convoy inside Syria, en route to Lebanon (1/30). The attack was initially shrouded in confusion, with Israel keeping silent and the media reporting anonymous Western intelligence claims and Syrian counterclaims about the location and target of the strike. Though the Syrian gov't. claimed that a military research center had been struck, most reports mentioned only that Israel had destroyed a convoy of anti-aircraft weaponry bound for Hizballah in Lebanon; the matter was resolved with a statement by U.S. officials that the convoy had been the target, but that the research center had suffered collateral damage.

In the aftermath of the strike, the Syrian gov't. summoned the head of the UN peacekeeping mission in the Golan Heights to protest the raid. The Russian Foreign Ministry said that the attack, if confirmed, constituted a violation of the UN Charter and was "unacceptable." The Arab League condemned what it called "cruel aggression," while Hizballah released a statement expressing "solidarity" with Syria and calling the strike "barbaric aggression" (1/31). A few days later, comments by Israeli DM Ehud Barak at a security conference in Munich were

taken as a hint of admission that Israel was behind the air strike.

REGIONAL AFFAIRS

While the Syrian civil war continued to dominate regional affairs, there were indications of frustration in the Arab League about the Israeli-Palestinian diplomatic impasse. At an Arab League meeting on 12/9, Qatari PM Shaykh Hamad Bin-Jassem al-Thani called for rethinking the 2002 Arab peace initiative in light of zero results in a decade of peace process and Quartet-led efforts. To Hamad's warning that the Arab League proposal would "not be on offer forever," PA pres. Abbas urged the League not to withdraw its 2002 peace plan. Later, on 1/14, Arab League secretary general Nabil al-Arabi called for "a new mechanism and new methods and a new approach" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Arabi particularly criticized what he called the signing of "temporary agreements" that "go round in circles" and which "only lead to wasting time in a way that allows Israel to expand its settlements." In follow-up, the Arab League's secy.-gen. for Palestinian affairs Muhammad Sbeih announced (1/29) that an Arab League delegation would go to Washington to advance the peace process and present "new ideas," specifically regarding "Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territory, the establishment of a Palestinian state, [and] guaranteed security for both sides." According to Sbeih, the proposal also suggested changes concerning the role of the Quartet.

TURKEY

The Syrian Civil War

During the quarter, the Turkish gov't. maintained its anti-Asad stance, having granted recognition to the opposition umbrella group in November 2012 (see *JPS* 166). On 1/23 Turkey's FM Ahmet Davutoğlu told the World Economic Forum that attacks by Syrian gov't. forces on civilians should be declared a war crime. Turkey was involved with securing the release (1/9), by Syrian rebels, of 48 Iranians in exchange for more than 2,000 prisoners held by the Syrian government.

But the main development concerning Turkey this quarter was NATO's decision to deploy troops and batteries of Patriot missiles on Turkey's border with Syria's border as protection from attacks originating within Syrian territory. On 12/14, the Pentagon announced that the U.S. would send 2 batteries of Patriot missiles and 400 troops as part of the NATO force, joining contributions by Germany and the Netherlands for a total of 6 Patriot batteries. The anti-missile defense system became operational on 1/23. The deployment was not well received in Iran: the country's army chief of staff Gen. Hassan Firouzabadi urged (12/15) NATO to reconsider the move but stopped short of threatening retaliation against Turkey, which he described as Iran's "friend." Meanwhile, Turkey continued to bear the brunt of the refugee crisis, hosting the largest number of Syrians of any country in the region (around one-third of all registered refugees as of 1/2).

Relations with Israel

Turkey's already poor relations with Israel were exacerbated by OPD. During the attack, Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Israel was guilty of "terrorist attacks" in the Gaza Strip (11/19), and Turkish FM Davutoğlu visited Gaza on 11/20 as part of an Arab League delegation. On 2/11, it was reported that PM Erdogan himself would visit the Gaza Strip once a hospital being built with materials delivered by Turkish trucks was completed. For the rest of the quarter, there was little sign of a rapprochement. In 11/2012, senior Israeli officials claimed (11/23) that the 2 countries had resumed talks on ending the diplomatic crisis, with PM Netanyahu's envoy Yosef Ciechanover meeting in Geneva with Turkish Foreign Ministry undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioğlu. These low-level discussions came to nothing, however, and FM Davutoğlu told CNN (11/23) that Turkey would make no concessions to resolve the diplomatic crisis with Israel. Nevertheless, on 12/23 it was announced that Turkey had lifted its veto of NATO's military cooperation with Israel, which had begun in the aftermath of Israel's attack on the Gaza flotilla, the *Mavi Marmara*, in 2010. The decision was made as NATO deployed the Patriot anti-

aircraft missile batteries along the border with Syria (12/23).

IRAN

P5+1 and the IAEA

In mid-12/2012, it was reported that the P5+1 world powers—the 5 permanent members of the UNSC plus Germany—were expected to hold a fresh round of talks with Tehran in early 2013 (12/10), while at the same time, envoys from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) began talks with Iranian officials in an attempt to restart negotiations and gain access to relevant sites (12/13). The positive diplomatic atmosphere was boosted by U.S. and European indications (12/14) that, in the context of preparations for possible new talks, Iran might be open to a package of inducements in exchange for freezing parts of its nuclear program. Shortly thereafter, Iran's FM Ali Akbar Salehi called (12/17) for an end to the stalemate between Iran and the P5+1 group (12/17). The next week Tehran announced (12/27) that it would allow the IAEA to inspect the Parchin military site nr. Tehran if threats of Israeli attacks on the country's nuclear facilities were defused.

Things looked even more promising in early 1/2013, when Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, declared (1/4) that Tehran had agreed in principle to resume international talks on its nuclear program later that month, with the practical details still to be finalized. By mid-1/2013, however, not only was there nothing concrete on the table by way of a framework for talks, but when the IAEA visited (1/7–18) Iran, in hopes of gaining access to the Parchin military site, the deal to unblock inspections proved elusive, and inspectors left Iran without achieving their objective. This prompted some criticism of Tehran from Russian FM Sergei Lavrov (1/23), who said that Iran should be quicker to cooperate on inspections of its nuclear sites (while also warning Israel and the West against a military strike). A few days later, on 1/25, the chair of Iran's parliamentary national security and foreign policy comm. Alaeddin Boroujerdi, said that Tehran would cooperate on nuclear inspections only if there were to be an easing of sanctions.

By the end of the month, after the EU criticized (1/23) Iran for delaying the P5+1 talks by suggesting various venues but not committing to one, Tehran confirmed (1/28) what was already clear: that the round would take place in 2/2013 rather than 1/2013. On 1/31, Iran wrote a letter to the IAEA to announce plans to install and operate advanced uranium enrichment machines, a step the U.S. said (1/31) would be "provocative." Two weeks later, IAEA diplomats reported (2/10) that Iran had resumed converting small amounts of enriched uranium into nuclear fuel, possibly as a way of buying more time for negotiations. This was subsequently confirmed (2/12) by Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Ramin Mehmanparast. By the end of the reporting period, Western officials told the media (2/15) that the P5+1 group was preparing to offer Iran an easing of sanctions targeting gold and precious metals in return for Iran's moving to close the newly expanded Fordow uranium enrichment plant.

Sanctions

At the end of 11/2012, the U.S. Senate voted (11/30) in favor of new sanctions on Iran's energy and shipping sectors, despite White House opposition, by a margin of 94 to zero. Furthermore, on 12/22, new sanctions targeting Iran's banking, shipping, and industrial sectors entered EU law, the toughest EU measures to date. On 12/31, U.S. undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence David Cohen told the Israeli media that the sanctions on Iran had made 2012 one of the most difficult years, economically, for Iran since 1979. A week later, Gholam Reza Kateb, head of the Iranian Parliament's budget comm., said (1/7) that sanctions had caused a 45% drop in the country's revenues from oil and gas exports.

INTERNATIONAL

UNITED STATES

Operation Pillar of Defense

Israel's military assault on the Gaza Strip in 11/2012 enjoyed strong support across the board in Washington, from the White House to Capitol Hill. On 11/16, for example, the U.S. Senate

unanimously passed a resolution supporting Israel's "right to act in self-defense." At the same time, however, the U.S. administration encouraged Egyptian mediation efforts, and thanked Pres. Morsi for his leadership during the crisis. The next month, the Pentagon notified (12/11) Congress of its intention to resupply Israel with munitions worth about \$647 million and asked (12/12) Capitol Hill for additional funding for Israel's anti-missile defense systems.

The Palestinians' UN Bid

As the deadline for the 11/2012 Palestinian statehood bid at the UN approached, the U.S. lobbied countries backing the Palestinians to withdraw their support. Even as Pres. Abbas began his journey to New York, a U.S. official told (11/27) the media that Washington believed "bringing forward a resolution on statehood is unwise, does not help bring [the parties] closer to their legitimate aspirations, and will create an environment less positive for negotiations." He added, even at this 11th hour, that the Obama administration was still "trying to prevent this from happening." With Abbas securing a convincing majority and the Palestinians successfully obtaining nonmember observer state status, the U.S. was left regretting what the country's UN amb. Susan Rice described (11/29) as an "unfortunate and counterproductive resolution" that placed "further obstacles in the path of peace." There were, however, no serious consequences of the Palestinians' UN bid in terms of punitive measures, though there were AIPAC-supported congressional efforts (1/1) to shut down the PLO office in Washington. Serious steps seemed to be on hold until it was clear whether the Palestinians would seek to use their new status to challenge Israel in international forums such as the ICC.

Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations

The flurry of settlement construction announcements by the Israeli authorities following the Palestinians' UN bid prompted the Obama administration to express frustration with what it saw as steps that undermined efforts to renew peace talks. Plans for the development of the E1 area and the publication of tenders for thousands of new housing units

in West Bank and East Jerusalem settlements prompted U.S. State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland to express (12/18) disappointment with what she called Israel's "pattern of provocative action" that "run[s] counter to the cause of peace" and puts the two-state solution "further at risk." In 12/2012, former U.S. amb. to Israel Dan Kurtzer caused a minor stir when he claimed (12/3) that the Obama administration had been angered by an Israeli official's background briefing that indicated the E1 plan was a premeditated response to Obama's refusal to reaffirm Bush's 2004 letter recognizing the "new realities on the ground" (i.e. settlements) and acknowledging the impossibility of a return to the 1967 borders (see special Doc. B in *JPS* 132). The already well-established sense that Obama and Netanyahu do not see eye-to-eye was heightened in 1/2013, when U.S. columnist Jeffrey Goldberg revealed (1/5) that the U.S. president had repeatedly stated in private that "Israel doesn't know what its own best interests are" with regard to recent announcements of settlement expansion.

In the New Year, U.S. State Department spokesperson Nuland said (1/2) that the Obama administration was urging Israeli and Palestinian leaders to resume direct talks in 2013 and to halt "counter-productive unilateral actions." Later in 1/2013, then-nominee for U.S. secy. of state John Kerry said (1/24) in his Senate confirmation hearing that he intended to invest effort in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and hoped that the Israeli election could help restart talks. Following the Israeli elections, Obama called (1/28) Netanyahu to congratulate him and to say that he looks forward to working closely with Israel on a "shared agenda for peace and security in the Middle East." Before the end of the quarter, it was announced (2/6) that Obama would visit Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan in the spring. The White House made clear that Obama would not present a new peace initiative on the trip, though some media reports suggested (2/10) that he would offer to increase pressure on Iran in exchange for Netanyahu making concessions on the Palestinian front. Meanwhile, it was reported (2/11) that the new secy. of state John

Kerry was working to try to free up almost \$700 m. in aid for the PA that had been held up in Congress.

Nomination of Chuck Hagel for Defense Secretary

When Pres. Obama nominated (1/7) Republican Chuck Hagel as his next defense secretary, the Congressional opposition expected due to his record on Israel and Iran duly materialized. A week later, the Pentagon was sending (1/13) briefings to senators to rebut what it called "myths" about Hagel propagated by pro-Israel lobby groups (1/13). Despite picking up the backing of some noted Israel supporters (e.g., Democratic senators Chuck Schumer and Barbara Boxer on 1/15), Hagel's appearance before the Senate Armed Services Comm. (1/31) was a bruising encounter where he was repeatedly attacked by Republican lawmakers for his positions on Israel and Iran. Hagel repeatedly apologized for once critically referring to the "Jewish lobby," and acknowledged (1/31) that he had been wrong to suggest that pro-Israel groups "intimidate" Congress into doing "dumb things." White House spokesperson Jay Carney criticized (2/1) the "stridency" of the attacks on Hagel in the committee, which was headed by Sen. John McCain, but expressed confidence concerning ultimate confirmation. On 2/12, the Senate Armed Services Comm. voted 14–11 (along party lines) to approve Obama's nomination of Hagel, but as a result of a Senate procedural vote on 2/14, Hagel's confirmation was delayed by what Democrats called an unprecedented filibuster.

RUSSIA

Russia was not involved in any significant way in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict this quarter, beyond routine diplomacy and condemnation of Israeli settlement plans similar to that offered by the EU and others (12/21). Russia was, however, deeply involved in the Syrian civil war and in ongoing international efforts to end the bloodshed. In 12/2012, both Russia's foreign minister and its deputy foreign minister indicated, in the clearest such messaging to date, that they foresaw the victory of the opposition and the possibility of a post-Asad Syria (12/13,

12/22). Doubts about their ally's chances of survival appeared heightened a month later when PM Dmitry Medvedev said (1/27) that he thought that "with every day, every week and every month, the chances of [Asad's] preservation are getting smaller and smaller." At the same time, Russia maintained a critical line when it came to the support provided by the West and Persian Gulf states to the rebels, and Medvedev insisted (1/27) that political change should be the result of negotiations, not military might: "The task for the United States, the Europeans and regional powers is to sit the parties down for negotiations, and not just demand that Assad go and then be executed like Gaddafi or be carried to court sessions on a stretcher like Hosni Mubarak." Throughout the quarter, Russia maintained close contacts with UN peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, including the holding of joint discussions (1/9) with U.S. diplomats on a possible path to a solution for the country.

EUROPEAN UNION

Israel's announcements about settlement construction and expansion during late 11/2012 and early 12/2012 prompted anger among EU member states. On 12/2, Israeli media reported "heavy diplomatic pressure" from the EU urging Israel to reverse its decision to develop the E1 area outside Jerusalem. On 12/5, the EU summoned Israel's ambassador, a move repeated individually by Italy, Britain, France, Spain, Sweden, and Denmark. But with the EU divided about how best to respond to Israel's settlement plans (12/4), the only official public show of displeasure was a statement released by EU foreign ministers (12/10) expressing dismay and opposition to settlement expansion. Sweden's FM Carl Bildt declared that "what the Israelis did . . . has really shifted things inside the European Union to the extent that I don't think they really appreciate."

Frustration at Israeli policies in the West Bank led to hints this quarter that the EU might be prepared soon to move beyond condemnatory statements. On 12/4, British foreign secretary William Hague said that European sanctions against Israel were not an option, but that further steps would be considered if

settlement expansion plans were not rescinded. The same week, senior PLO official Hanan Ashrawi wrote (12/6) to EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton urging action against Israel, including "reconsidering" the EU-Israel Association agreement. Other possible avenues for firmer steps reported this quarter included a blacklist of "known violent settlers" who would be blocked from entering EU member states (11/26) and moves to enforce the labeling of settlement produce (12/10, 2/13).

Though the peace process was frozen, the EU had some involvement with unofficial contacts. In 1/2013, the *Jerusalem Post* reported (1/8) that informal talks between Israeli and Palestinian academics, public figures, and former military and civil officials had been taking place, often supported by the EU. This so-called Track II diplomacy focused on final-status issues aimed at coming up with suggestions of steps that could be taken by both sides. Also in 1/2013, there were reports (1/13) that the EU was preparing a new plan to restart peace talks, which it intended to present in March, following Israeli elections and the formation of a new govt. The plan was said to include timetables for completing negotiations on core issues during 2013.

UNITED NATIONS

On 1/29, Israeli representatives failed to appear at a session of the UNHCR in Geneva that had been scheduled to review Israeli human rights practices under the organization's "Universal Periodic Review Process," to which all 193 member states are subjected. (Israel's last review was in 12/2008). Israel was the 1st country to boycott its periodic review at the council, ignoring advice by the U.S. and other countries not to do so (1/24). Israel had cut ties with the UNHRC in March 2012 following the council's approval of a fact-finding mission to investigate Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The findings of that investigation, which were published on 1/31 (see Doc. A5 in this issue), declared Israel's settlement policy to be a contravention of the Geneva Convention and thus a potential war crime under the jurisdiction of the ICC. The investigators,

led by French judge Christine Chanut, called on Israel to halt settlement expansion and withdraw all settlers. Israel's Foreign Ministry rejected the report, calling it counterproductive and the result of a "one-sided and biased approach towards Israel." Senior PLO official Hanan Ashrawi welcomed the report, saying that the Palestinians were encouraged by its "candid assessment of Israeli violations."

Two senior UN officials involved in the Israeli-Palestinian arena issued warnings this quarter. On 1/23, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry told the UNSC that the Middle East peace process had entered a critical period "in which concerted action will be vital if we are to salvage the two-state solution." Later that same month, the UN's humanitarian coordinator James W. Rawley expressed serious concern about the killing of Palestinian

civilians by Israeli forces in the o.t., decrying the use of live ammunition and calling for impartial investigations into specific incidents (1/30).

In 1/2013, the UN announced that it would investigate the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) for targeted killings by the U.S., UK, and Israel. The UN special rapporteur on counterterrorism and human rights Ben Emmerson will lead the investigation, which will address 25 examples of attacks (1/24). Emmerson said in a statement that it was "... imperative that appropriate legal and operational structures are urgently put in place to regulate its use in a manner that complies with the requirements of international law, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law (or the law of war as it used to be called), and international refugee law." Israel is not expected to cooperate with the inquiry.