

## CHRONOLOGY

**16 FEBRUARY–15 MAY 2006**

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*This section is part eighty-four 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 FEBRUARY**

As the quarter opens, the **Israel Defense Forces (IDF)** continues **Operation Blue Skies** (launched 12/28/05) to prevent **Palestinians** fr. firing crude homemade rockets fr. Gaza into Israel, enforcing a 1.5-mi-deep no-go zone along the n. Gaza border using artillery fire fr. inside Israel, occasional air strikes, heavy surveillance fr. air and sea, and construction of a border fence along the n. Gaza border (see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 139). The **IDF** also continues to restrict the flow of Palestinian goods and individuals into and out of Gaza: Rafah operates 8 hrs./day for entry and exit of individuals to and from Egypt; Erez is open as the sole entry of Palestinian workers to Israel (the **IDF** has issued 5,000 permits but only 2,500–3,500 workers can pass because of slow processing by the **IDF**); Qarni is open for the transit of goods (360 trucks/day entering Gaza, 75 trucks/day exiting with agricultural goods); Sufa, for the import of raw materials only, is closed since 2/14. In the West Bank, the **IDF** maintains 100s of checkpoints and roadblocks, effectively separating the northern and southern West Bank, cutting off access to the n. Jordan Valley, and restricting movement within those cantons. Work also continues on Israel's **separation wall**. The **IDF** conducts arrest raids in and around Balata refugee camp (r.c.), Nablus and nr. Bethlehem, Hebron (occupying 1 house as an observation post), Jenin. A **Palestinian woman** fr. Bethlehem attempts to stab an **Israeli police officer** outside the al-Aqsa Mosque compound, is arrested. (HA 2/16; OCHA 5/22; PCHR 2/23)

### **17 FEBRUARY**

The **IDF** bars Palestinians under age 45 fr. attending Friday prayers at al-Aqsa Mosque; raids al-Khadir nr. Bethlehem, arresting 6 youths (aged 14–17) for throwing stones at Israeli vehicles along nearby Route 60; conducts arrest raids, house searches nr. Qalqilya. (PCHR 2/23)

### **18 FEBRUARY**

The **IDF** tightens restrictions on Palestinian movement around Ramallah in the morning, coinciding with the convening of the new **Palestinian Council (PC)** session (see below); sends troops back into al-Khadir (see 2/17), sets up roadblocks, conducts ID

checks looking for youths who threw stones at Israeli cars on Route 60, arresting 2; raids, searches a Palestinian home in Hebron, severely beating but not arresting 1 resident; conducts arrest raids, house searches in Aida r.c., arresting 2 15-yr.-old Palestinian boys. A **Jewish settler** is stabbed, wounded apparently by a **Palestinian** nr. Ma'ale Adumim. (HA 2/20; PCHR 2/23)

The new **Palestinian Council** (the second elected since the PC was formed in 1995) is sworn in in Ramallah, with Gazan reps. participating by video link, since **Israel** barred their passage to the West Bank. **PA Pres. Mahmud Abbas** invites the **Hamas-affiliated Change and Reform party** to form a cabinet. (WT 2/18; NYT, WP, WT 2/19; *al-Hayat al-Jadida* 2/19 in WNC 2/20; MM 2/20) (see Quarterly Update for details)

## 19 FEBRUARY

The **IDF** sends troops into Balata r.c. in what it says is the beginning of an operation targeting the **al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (AMB), Islamic Jihad, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)** that will continue for several days, firing on stone-throwing youths who confront the troops (killing **2 Palestinians**, wounding 16), occupying an UNRWA school and several homes as operational bases, demolishing a **Palestinian home**. The **IDF** also launches air strikes on **2 Popular Resistance Comm. (PRC) mbrs.** attempting to lay a roadside bomb or fire rocket nr. the n. Gaza border fence, killing both; fires across the Israeli border into Gaza towards Palestinian farmers working their fields nr. Abasan, causing no injuries; erects a gate at the entrance to Kafr Haris nr. Hebron, facing Ariel settlement; conducts arrest raids, house searches nr. Hebron and in Allar nr. Tulkarm, al-Azza r.c., Bethlehem, Qabatya nr. Jenin; patrols in Tulkarm. **Palestinians** fire **2 rockets** into Israel, causing no damage or injuries. (VOI, VOP, YA 2/19, VOP 2/20 in WNC 2/20; HA, IMEMC, NYT, WP 2/20; PCHR 2/23)

The **Israeli cabinet** approves steps to isolate and destabilize the **new Hamas-led Palestinian government**, including immediately halting transfers of VAT taxes collected on the PA's behalf, a source of some \$50 m./mo. in revenues for the cash-strapped PA. The **UN special envoy Alvaro de Soto** reprimands Israel, saying "these are monies that belong to the Palestinians and should not be withheld." (Israeli cabinet communiqué 2/19; VOI 2/19, VOP 2/20 in WNC 2/20; HA, MM, NYT, WP, WT 2/20; JP 2/20 in WNC 2/21; WP 2/21; PCHR 2/23) (see Quarterly Update)

**Hamas** nominates moderate **Ismail Haniyeh**, who led the Change and Reform slate in the 1/25/06 elections, as its candidate for PM to form a cabinet. (VOP 2/19 in WNC 2/20; WP 2/20) (see Quarterly Update)

## 20 FEBRUARY

The **IDF** expands its Balata arrest operation to the wider Nablus area, fatally shooting **Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades leader Ahmad Abu Sharikh, AMB Nablus cmdr. Muhammad Shatawi** in apparent assassinations; firing on stone-throwing youths, wounding 12. The **IDF** also shells the n. Gaza no-go zone, damaging several homes in Um al-Nasser n. of Bayt Lahiya but causing no injuries; severely beats a Palestinian teenager in Hebron; demolishes a **Palestinian home** nr. Tulkarm; fires on residential areas of al-Fawwar r.c. nr. Hebron, wounding 2 Palestinians; conducts arrest raids, house

searches in Azariyya nr. Jerusalem, Tulkarm, and nr. Bethlehem, Hebron, Jenin. **Palestinians** fire a **rocket** fr. n. Gaza into Israel, causing no damage or injuries. (AP, IMEMC, MM, NYT, WT 2/20; VOI 2/20 in WNC 2/21; IMEMC, NYT 2/21; PCHR 2/23; YA 3/1)

## 21 FEBRUARY

The **IDF** closes the Qarni crossing after a **roadside bomb** explodes nearby inside Gaza, causing no damage or injuries; continues operations in and around Nablus for a 3d day, clashing with local Palestinians in Balata r.c., wounding 18; demolishes a **Palestinian home** in Hebron; conducts arrest raids, house searches in and around Hebron, in Qabatya. **Armed gunmen** from the **Amr Abu Sitta Battalions** (a **Fatah** offshoot) raid the Khan Yunis municipal building and a municipal garage, ransacking the offices and stealing the keys for all municipal vehicles, after municipal officials refuse to loan the group a bulldozer to level land for a barracks. (IMEMC 2/21; NYT, PCHR 2/22; PCHR 2/23; NYT 3/4)

## 22 FEBRUARY

After the **AMB** fires 3 **rockets** fr. Gaza into Israel, causing no damage or injuries, the **IDF** fires at least 15 artillery shells at n. Gaza, 1 of which hits an apartment building in Bayt Lahiya, wounding a 2-yr.-old Palestinian boy. The **IDF** also reimposes 2 roadblocks outside Jericho that were removed under the 3/16/05 agmt. turning over security control of the city to the PA, citing the PA's 2/9 release of wanted AMB, Islamic Jihad mbrs. fr. the Jericho jail; continues arrest raids, house searches nr. Nablus; finds an empty **rocket** casing in a search in Qabatya; bulldozes a **USAID**-funded public park and playground in Azun nr. Qalqilya, saying it was built without permission (USAID donated \$80,000 of the \$120,000 cost); fires on residential areas of Bani Na'im nr. Hebron. **Israeli undercover units**, driving a car with Palestinian plates, raid Allar, search a home, arrest a wanted Palestinian. Some **20 armed gunmen** fr. the **al-Yasir Brigades** (an **AMB** offshoot) temporarily occupy the Rafah governorate offices to protest the appointment of a Khan Yunis resident as the new Rafah governor, demanding that the governor be a Rafah resident. (AFP, PCHR, XIN, YA 2/22; PCHR 2/23, 3/2)

## 23 FEBRUARY

On the 5th day of IDF operations in the Nablus area, **IDF** fire on stone-throwing Palestinians in Balata r.c. escalates into heavy exchanges btwn. the IDF and local **AMB mbrs.**, leaving **3 wanted AMB gunmen**, **2 Palestinian bystanders** dead and 2 IDF soldiers, 22 Palestinian wounded (including 3 medical workers treating the injured). The **IDF** also fires on stone-throwing Palestinians nr. Hebron; conducts arrest raids, house searches in Dura nr. Hebron, Yabad nr. Jenin. (PCHR 2/23; DS, HA, MM, NYT, REU, WP, WT 2/24; PCHR 3/2)

## 24 FEBRUARY

The **IDF** officially ends operations in the Nablus area, but reenters Balata r.c. and Nablus late in the evening, patrolling streets and firing on residential areas; fatally shoots **2 Palestinians** laying roadside bombs along the Gaza border nr. Dayr al-Balah; makes an air strike on **3 AMB mbrs.** driving in Bayt Lahiya, missing the vehicle, injuring 2 bystanders in an apparent assassination attempt; shells uninhabited areas nr. Rafah, causing no damage or injuries; fires on 3 unarmed Palestinians attempting to sneak into Israel fr. Gaza nr. Dayr al-Balah to find jobs, killing **1 Palestinian**, wounding 2; conducts arrest raids, house searches in and around Hebron (occupying 1 house as an observation post), in Silwad nr. Ramallah; patrols in Askar r.c. nr. Nablus; fires on stone-throwing Palestinians in Bayt Umar nr. Hebron. Elsewhere in Gaza, a **Hamas mbr.** dies in a mysterious explosion, possibly while preparing explosives. A **Jewish settler** fr. a settlement nr. Jericho shoots, wounds a Palestinian farmer working his nearby land. (REU, XIN 2/24; NYT 2/25; PCHR 3/2)

## 25 FEBRUARY

The **IDF** makes a rare raid into Jericho, turned over to PA security control on 3/16/05, to arrest a wanted **AMB** mbr. who is also a mbr. of the PA security forces; fires on residential areas of Bani Na'im (wounding 2 Palestinians); conducts arrest raids, house searches in Budrus nr. Ramallah, Hebron (firing on residential areas, wounding 2 Palestinians); patrols in, fires on residential areas of Jenin town and r.c.; raids the PA Customs Dept. in Hebron, confiscating fireworks; sends troops into al-Khadir to arrest 3 Palestinian youths for stone-throwing. After **IDF** warplanes strike the n. Gaza no-go zone, Palestinians fire 2 **rockets** fr. Gaza into Israel; the IDF responds by shelling the no-go zone again; no damage or injuries are reported on either side. A **Palestinian** wounded in the IDF shelling of Bayt Hanun on 2/9 dies. (AFP, JAZ 2/25; IMEMC 2/26; PCHR 3/2)

## 26 FEBRUARY

The **IDF** shells the n. Gaza no-go zone; shoots, wounds 2 Palestinian teenagers at Anata checkpoint n. of Jerusalem when they protest the physical search of a young woman; conducts arrest raids, house searches in al-Arub r.c., Balata r.c. and nr. Bethlehem, Jenin, Nablus. All **4 flour mills** in Gaza close, saying there is no wheat to process due to the IDF closure of the Qarni crossing; flour stocks in Gaza stores are estimated to last another few wks. (IMEMC 2/27; HA 2/28; NYT 3/1; PCHR 3/2)

## 27 FEBRUARY

The **IDF** sends troops into Bani Na'im, surrounds a house in search of a wanted Palestinian who is not home, fires on stone-throwing Palestinians who confront the troops, sparking several hrs. of clashes that leave 35 Palestinians wounded; conducts overnight arrest raids in and around Jenin and in Askar r.c., Balata r.c., Bethlehem, Hebron, Nablus's old city, Ramallah; uproots 10s of olive trees and bulldozes 2 animal pens for construction of the **separation wall** nr. Jenin; erects a metal gate, places barbed wire at the southern entrance to Jamayn nr. Nablus, which faces a settler bypass road;

installs metal gates at entrances to Marda, facing Ariel settlement. The **IDF** also requests that the PA dig a trench 20 m long by 4 m deep near the Qarni crossing in a search for smugglers tunnels; the PA complies but no tunnels are found. (XIN 2/27; PCHR 3/2; OCHA 3/23)

## **28 FEBRUARY**

The **IDF** conducts arrest raids, house searches nr. Nablus. Several **Jewish settlers** severely beat a Palestinian woman nr. Hebron. (PCHR 3/2)

## **1 MARCH**

**Islamic Jihad senior military cmdr. Khalid Dadu**, 9 times the target of failed IDF assassination attempts, is killed in Gaza City when he opens the door of his bomb-rigged car; **Israel**, which has evacuated its troops fr. Gaza in 9/05, denies responsibility; Palestinian collaborators are suspected; **Islamic Jihad** vows retaliation. **IDF undercover units**, driving a car with Palestinian plates, enter Anza nr. Jenin, raid a store, arrest a wanted Palestinian. The **IDF** also conducts arrest raids, searches in Bani Na'im and in and around Jenin, Nablus. **Israeli police arrest 2 Change and Reform PC mbrs.**, a **3d Hamas mbr.** touring al-Makassid hospital in East Jerusalem for "conducting illegal political activities." **AMB gunmen** fatally shoot **1 Jewish settler**, wound a 2d at a West Bank gas station nr. Migdalim settlement nr. Nablus. (HA, IMEMC 3/1; AFP, NYT, PCHR, WP, WT 3/2; PCHR 3/9)

The **UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)** warns that stocks of basic goods (including flour, sugar, cooking oil) in Gaza could run out within days unless Israel reopens the Qarni crossing (closed from 1/15–2/5, then closed again on 2/21); says shortages are so severe that aid programs are being affected (e.g., the World Food Program, which delivers flour to around 146,000 Gazans, has used up its 2 mo. supply buffer and is currently on hold). Meanwhile, costs of basic goods in Gaza are up by 25% due to shortages. **Israel** claims the closing is in response to an "enhanced terrorist threat" and concerns over avian flu, is not punishment for Hamas's 1/06 election victory. (REU 3/1; AFP 3/2; NYT 3/6; WP 3/16)