



Update on Conflict and Diplomacy

16 AUGUST–15 NOVEMBER 2015

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This 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: Tension over Haram al-Sharif in 9/2015 leads to a wave of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) in 10/2015, particularly in East Jerusalem and the Hebron region of the West Bank, and the Israeli govt. initiates a broad crackdown. The Ramallah-based Palestinian leadership continues its unilateral efforts at the United Nations (UN) and the International Criminal Court (ICC), producing marginal results and incremental progress. Intermittent international efforts to facilitate a return to Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations or a long-term cease-fire between Israel and Hamas are fruitless and largely put on hold after the escalation of violence in 10/2015. Internal Palestinian politics stagnate as a meeting of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) is called, then postponed. The European Union (EU) issues new labeling guidelines for imports from Israeli settlements.

THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

International attention returned to Israel and the oPt this quarter following the successful conclusion (7/14) of the nuclear deal between the P5+1 (the U.S., Russia, China, France, UK, and Germany) and Iran, with both the Israelis and the Palestinians going through the motions of exploring a possible resumption of talks. Maintaining a guarded stance toward bilateral efforts, the Palestinians kept up their call for a

new, multilateral initiative while also focusing on their ongoing efforts at the UN and the ICC. At the same time, and despite signs of progress early in the quarter, international efforts to facilitate talks between Israel and Hamas over a long-term cease-fire and a possible prisoner swap were unsuccessful, further slowing the reconstruction of Gaza.

Meanwhile, escalating tension in Jerusalem over Palestinian access to Haram al-Sharif spread to the West Bank. Following a string of

violent incidents in East Jerusalem, including clashes at the sanctuary on 9/13 as well as a stabbing and an alleged stabbing on 10/3 and 10/4, there were almost daily killings, clashes, and other incidents across the oPt, particularly after the Israeli govt.'s crackdown on Jerusalem, which had been ramping up since mid-9/2015.

PROGRESS STALLS ON RESTARTING PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

With Israel under mounting international pressure to resume talks with the Palestinians, PM Benjamin Netanyahu had resorted to an old tactic last quarter, nominally calling for a return to negotiations, but with “no preconditions.” While his posture dampened international criticism of Israel, it went no further. This quarter, Netanyahu reiterated his willingness to resume talks, including on 9/1 when he offered to travel to Ramallah to meet with Palestinian Authority (PA) pres. Mahmoud Abbas. Calling the Israeli PM “king of the settlers,” Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) secy.-gen. Saeb Erakat described the offer as a PR stunt. Other senior PA officials said that Netanyahu would not be welcome in Ramallah unless he was willing to discuss ending the occupation.

Though both sides largely stuck to these public positions, there were indications of possible progress on the secret track, which was 1st reported last quarter after informal talks between Erakat and Israel's chief negotiator, Silvan Shalom, on 7/23 (see *JPS* 45[1]). Later, Abbas told 4 retired Israeli diplomats (9/21) that he had sent Netanyahu a message via a former Israeli cabinet mbr. with whom he had met secretly in Ramallah earlier in the month conveying his willingness to begin a new round of talks. One of the diplomats was quoted as saying that a “third party who isn't Israeli” blocked the move (9/23). With Abbas and Netanyahu both set to address the UN General

Assembly (UNGA) and to meet with world leaders in New York over the following weeks, rumors swirled about the possible identity of the 3d party in question. On 9/27, 1 day after Abbas met with U.S. secy. of state John Kerry, *Haaretz* reported Israeli and Palestinian officials as saying that it was Kerry. Although the officials provided no explanation for Kerry's move—and a U.S. State Dept. spokesperson promptly called the details of the report inaccurate—they speculated that he was reluctant for talks to go ahead without U.S. mediation and that he was too preoccupied with securing the implementation of the nuclear deal with Iran to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the wake of the UNGA session, Netanyahu repeated (9/27 and 10/1) his offer to resume talks without preconditions, and Abbas restated (10/6) the Palestinian position that there could be no further negotiation with Israel without a halt to settlement expansion in the West Bank and the release of the 4th batch of prisoners scheduled to have taken place at the end of the last round of U.S.-led talks in 3–4/2014 (see *JPS* 43[3]). The escalation of violence in Israel and the oPt throughout the quarter precluded any serious overtures from either the Israeli or Palestinian side and overshadowed the few international efforts aimed at facilitating the resumption of talks.

PALESTINIANS' UNILATERAL EFFORTS CONTINUE

Flag-Raising Resolution at the UNGA

Besides the feelers they put out in private, the public Palestinian stance on a return to talks remained directed at ongoing initiatives at the UN and the ICC, where progress remained incremental and largely symbolic.

Early in the quarter, the PA prepared a draft UNGA res. to build on the success of the

11/2012 UNGA vote that upgraded Palestine's status to that of a non-mbr. observer state (see *JPS* 41[2]). The draft res. called for the flags of non-mbr. observer states—Palestine and the Vatican—to be flown alongside those of the 193 mbr. states outside UN offices, including the headquarters in New York. The Palestinians hoped to embarrass the U.S. and Israel into agreeing to the proposal since going against it would be considered as a slap in the face for Pope Francis who was set to give his 1st UNGA address on 9/25.

However, the Vatican distanced itself from any possible controversy. Church envoys requested (8/25) all references to the Vatican should be expunged from the draft and informed a number of UN mbrs. that the Vatican had no intention to cosponsor the resolution (Reuters, 8/26). After the Palestinians formally introduced the res. on 8/27, the Vatican released a statement saying that while “the Holy See [did] not object to the tabling,” it recognized the UN tradition of flying only mbr. states' flags.

Despite the Vatican's stated position as well as Israeli lobbying, the res. passed overwhelmingly on 9/10 (119–8, with 45 abstentions). The Palestinian flag was raised outside UN headquarters in a ceremony overseen by Abbas and UN secy.-gen. Ban Ki-moon on 9/30.

Abbas at the UNGA

As the Palestinians shepherded their flag-raising res. through the UNGA, Abbas and his aides worked on coordinating a complementary diplomatic initiative around the PA president's UNGA address, scheduled for 9/30. In early 9/2015, the Palestinians began creating anticipation that Abbas's speech would unveil a new Palestinian strategy for navigating the conflict with Israel. On 9/6, PLO Exec. Comm. mbr. Ahmad Majdalani said that due to Israel's

“lack of commitment,” Abbas intended to declare the Oslo accords a dead letter. His comments led to speculation about the future of PA security coordination with Israel, codified in the 1995 Oslo II agreement and decried by most of the Palestinian community ever since. Days later, senior Palestinian officials confirmed (9/8) that Abbas planned to cancel Oslo II and to announce several new diplomatic measures. After a trip to Cairo to coordinate the Palestinian position with Egyptian pres. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (9/10), Abbas further raised expectations when he promised to “drop a bombshell” in his 9/30 speech (*al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/17). Though he later made clear (9/20) that dissolving the PA was not on his agenda, rumors and speculation proliferated regarding the nature of his purported “bombshell.”

Ultimately, Abbas's speech was underwhelming. Besides stating that so “long as Israel refuses to commit to the agreements signed with us . . . we cannot continue to be bound by these agreements” (9/30; see Doc. B2), the Palestinian pres. made no explicit statement on ending security coordination or any other concrete issues, and also left questions unanswered as to how and when the PA would stop implementing the Oslo agreements. Commenting the following day, senior PA official Mahmoud al-Habbash said (10/1) Abbas had inaugurated a new phase in Israeli-Palestinian relations and that in future the Palestinians' commitment to the agreements would be commensurate with Israel's own. Abbas's speech garnered criticism from across the Palestinian political spectrum: a Hamas spokesperson said (9/30) that it would be “judged by how long it takes him to implement his commitments,” and former PLO spokesperson Diana Buttu said

(9/30) “on the ground, nothing will change [based on the speech].”

Violence in Israel and the oPt continued to escalate during 10/2015 and there were no indications that the PA was abandoning its agreements with Israel and by the end of the quarter, the promises of Abbas’s speech had been completely eclipsed by events on the ground.

War Crimes Charges at the ICC

The Palestinian leadership continued to facilitate ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda’s preliminary examination into alleged war crimes committed in the oPt, submitting documentary evidence of recent Israeli transgressions of international law, inviting Bensouda to lead a fact-finding delegation to the oPt, and employing the threat of an ICC investigation in its public statements condemning Israeli violence (10/30). At the end of the quarter, Bensouda’s office published (11/12) a report on the status of her ongoing cases, which included a section on Israel and the oPt. Following a summary of the alleged war crimes under consideration, the document outlined her plans to conduct a “thorough factual and legal assessment of the information available,” including the documentation supplied by the Palestinians, “in order to establish whether there is a reasonable basis to believe that crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court have been or are being committed.”

In a separate development, the ICC appeals chamber dismissed (11/6) Bensouda’s 7/27 appeal not to open an investigation into the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) raid on the flagship of the 5/2010 Gaza Freedom Flotilla, the *Mavi Marmara*. Bensouda’s appeal had been lodged in response to an ICC panel’s 7/16 request for her to reconsider her decision not to investigate the raid, which led to the death of 8 Turkish nationals and 1 Turkish-American (see *JPS* 45[1]

for more on Bensouda’s appeal; and *JPS* 40[1] for more on the *Mavi Marmara* raid).

NO PROGRESS TOWARD AN ISRAEL-HAMAS AGREEMENT

Although several international attempts to facilitate negotiations between Israel and Hamas had come to light last quarter, it was unclear by the close of the current quarter whether they would succeed. Originally centered on achieving a long-term truce, or *hudna*, to expedite the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, the scope of such talks was expanded to include the bodies of 2 Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza as well as 2 Israelis allegedly being held by Hamas. Conflicting reports were issued by each side in the 1st mo. of the quarter and with tension in Jerusalem leading to a period of sustained violence across Israel and the oPt, there were no additional developments.

The Israelis remained vague, if not inconsistent. Netanyahu’s office released (8/17) a statement to put an end to speculation, saying that Israel had not been “holding any meetings with Hamas, neither directly, nor via any other countries or intermediaries,” but an Israeli official asserted that Israel was “certainly checking the feasibility of the matter.” On the subject of the soldiers’ bodies and the alleged captives, Israeli officials offered scant information, although in a veiled reference to the matter, Israel’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) denied (8/20) a request for the sisters of senior Hamas official Ismail Haniyeh to travel to Gaza for a wedding. COGAT said it would not consider Haniyeh’s “humanitarian” request because Israel’s “humanitarian issues” in Gaza weren’t being considered.

For their part, various Hamas officials acknowledged that efforts on both sides had

been inconclusive. On 8/20, a senior official disclosed that Israel had conveyed several proposals for a long-term truce, but that none was sufficiently fleshed out to garner a response. Hamas leader Khalid Mishal reportedly turned down an offer to meet former Quartet envoy Tony Blair (Middle East Eye, 8/20), with whom he had met repeatedly the previous quarter to hammer out a draft truce proposal. Nevertheless, the following day Mishal described (8/21) his meetings with Blair as “very positive.” Three weeks later, in an interview with Turkey’s Anadolu Agency (9/14), the deputy head of Hamas’s political bureau, Musa Abu Marzuq, appeared to reconcile the contradictory comments offered by Hamas officials and the Israeli govt. He corroborated the official Israeli position that there had been no “direct or indirect” negotiations, but also confirmed that there had indeed been several Israeli proposals for starting negotiations, none of which had met Hamas’s expectations. The most significant proposal, which Abu Marzuq said had come from Blair, called on Egypt to resume its mediating role because of the general lack of progress. (Egypt had been set to host and mediate talks on pending issues remaining after the 8/26/2014 cease-fire ending Israel’s 50-day war on Gaza but postponed the talks indefinitely following a surge in violence in the Sinai Peninsula.)

A WAVE OF VIOLENCE

Tension Builds in Jerusalem

At the end of last quarter, tension on the ground in the oPt was high (see *JPS* 45[1]). Israeli settlement growth continued apace and Israeli forces were punitively demolishing the family homes of Palestinians accused of perpetrating serious crimes against Israelis. But the situation deteriorated completely after Israeli settlers set fire (7/31) to 2 Palestinian

homes, killing 2 Palestinians (a 3d died of her injuries on 9/7). Palestinian frustration with the occupation was at boiling point this quarter once again over issues of access to Haram al-Sharif, leading to a sustained period of violence as the Israeli govt. cracked down across the oPt.

As right-wing Jewish activists began visiting Haram al-Sharif more frequently and in ever greater numbers (e.g., 8/20, 8/24, 9/8, 9/9, and 9/10) during the 1st mo. of the quarter, Palestinians began to fear that Israel planned to change the status quo at Haram al-Sharif (see Doc. R6 in *JPS* 45[1] for background). Due to their provocative nature, these visits often led to confrontations with Muslim worshippers, which in turn led to Palestinian arrests and detentions (e.g., 8/20, 8/24, 9/8, and 9/10). Israeli DM Moshe Ya’alon then banned (9/9) the *murabitun* and *murabitat*—traditional volunteers who guard access to the sanctuary—from the area. In addition, the Israeli authorities renewed their self-styled “dilution” policy (8/24) aiming to minimize the number of Muslim worshippers at Haram al-Sharif during the hours that Jewish activists are permitted to visit according to the status quo arrangement (see “Movement and Access” below). Playing into the Palestinian public’s fears and further exacerbating the violence in Jerusalem, the Israeli measures eventually provoked a response from the Palestinian leadership. On 8/30, Abbas went to Amman to discuss the dire situation with Jordan’s King Abdullah and the following day the PA Foreign Ministry called for an emergency Islamic summit.

As was the case in 2014 (see *JPS* 44[2–3]), the arrival of the Jewish high holidays and Israel’s concomitant tightening of restrictions on Palestinian access to Haram al-Sharif provided the spark that led to widespread clashes both

at the holy site and throughout East Jerusalem. First, the Israeli authorities announced that Palestinian men under 45 would be barred from the sanctuary on 9/13, the 1st day of the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah). The Israeli police, who later said they had received intelligence that Palestinian youth were barricading themselves inside al-Aqsa Mosque (see Photos from the Quarter), conducted a morning raid at Haram al-Sharif on 9/13, sparking clashes with Palestinian youth that lasted for hours and spread to the streets of the Old City and parts of East Jerusalem; 110 Palestinians were injured, including 9 journalists. After the police dispersed the protesters, Agriculture Minister Uri Ariel (Jewish Home Party) led a group of Jewish activists on a tour of the sanctuary and called for Israel to “build a real temple on the Temple Mount,” further stoking Palestinian fears of a complete Israeli takeover of the area.

Amid the clashes in East Jerusalem on 9/13, an incident in which an Israeli crashed his car into a pole in Sur al-Bahir after losing control of the vehicle gave rise to Israeli accusations that stone-throwing Palestinian youth had caused the accident. (The driver and 2 passengers were injured, with the former succumbing to his injuries the following day.) That incident, combined with Israeli police raids at Haram al-Sharif and clashes across East Jerusalem on 9/14, contributed significantly to a further deterioration of the situation in East Jerusalem. Following statements of serious concern from Jordan and the U.S. at the escalating violence, the Israeli govt. responded with an announcement by Netanyahu (9/14) that he planned to fast-track a bill to outlaw stone-throwing using mandatory minimum sentences for the “crime.” After convening (9/15) an emergency meeting of security officials, the Israeli premier (9/16) said “a modification of the [Israeli police’s] rules of engagement will be examined as well as the

establishment of a minimum penalty for those who throw stones.” Meanwhile, Israeli officials indicated (9/16) that in a series of messages conveyed since the outbreak of serious clashes on 9/13, they had reassured the Jordanian authorities that they planned to uphold the terms of the Israeli-Jordanian agreement (the so-called status quo) banning non-Muslims from praying in Haram al-Sharif and recognizing Jordan’s administration of the site. Speaking to Kerry (9/16), Netanyahu reaffirmed Israel’s commitment to maintaining the “status quo.”

As the Israeli govt. broadened its crackdown, clashes in East Jerusalem intensified through the end of 9/2015. Israeli atty. gen. Yehuda Weinstein approved (9/17) police use of Ruger sniper rifles against Palestinian stone-throwers in the city, thereby authorizing Jerusalem police to use lethal crowd control measures in addition to purportedly nonlethal ones such as rubber-coated bullets, stun grenades, and tear gas. Netanyahu also authorized the deployment of 800 additional Israeli police in Jerusalem over the course of the next mo. On 9/24, Israel’s security cabinet unanimously approved a series of measures proposed by the PM to deter stone- and firebomb-throwing incidents. Lastly, Jerusalem’s city council approved a proposal (9/20) to give Hebrew names to 30 streets in predominantly Palestinian neighborhoods. The situation in East Jerusalem escalated as Palestinian access to Haram al-Sharif was restricted further during the Jewish holidays of Yom Kippur (9/22–23; Palestinian men under 40 were barred) and Sukkoth (9/27–10/4; Palestinian men under 50 were barred), and the ban on all non-Muslim visitors to the site during the Muslim holiday of *‘Id al-Adha* (9/24–27). Although Netanyahu reiterated his pledge not to alter the status quo on multiple occasions (e.g., 9/20 and 9/25) and the Israeli

police temporarily suspended the use of Ruger rifles on 9/21, clashes in East Jerusalem continued on an almost daily basis, with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reporting 51 Palestinians and 5 Israeli police injured between 9/15 and 9/28, at Haram al-Sharif alone.

As East Jerusalem roiled, the clashes spread to the West Bank and Gaza. According to OCHA, 3 were killed (9/21, 9/22, and 9/24) and 128 injured on the Palestinian side, and 14 Israeli troops were injured in various types of violence (see Chronology for details). Armed groups in Gaza fired rockets toward Israel on 5 occasions (9/16, 9/18, 9/19, 9/20, and 9/29), causing damage to a bus and a home in Sderot on 9/18 but no injuries. Further amplifying tensions, the Israeli authorities closed Hebron's al-Ibrahimi Mosque to Muslim worshippers on 9/29–30 to allow for increased Jewish access during Sukkoth.

On the diplomatic front, the escalating violence brought growing opprobrium, both internationally and regionally. On 9/17, Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz called U.S. pres. Barack Obama asking him to intervene (reportedly at Abbas's urging) and the UN Security Council (UNSC) released a press statement expressing "grave concern." On 9/24, Jordanian sources said that Abdullah had asked that messages from Netanyahu no longer be relayed lest Israel got the impression that the 2 countries were cooperating. The sources also indicated that Jordan had begun pushing for a UNSC res. condemning the growing Israeli restrictions at Haram al-Sharif (see "Jordan" below) and was also considering a recall of its amb. to Tel Aviv, in a repeat performance of late 2014 (see *JPS* 44[2–3]), when violence in Jerusalem had also escalated. On the domestic front, Palestinian and Israeli officials, including Abbas and Netanyahu, traded mutual

accusations of incitement (see Chronology for details).

Escalation of Violence in the oPt

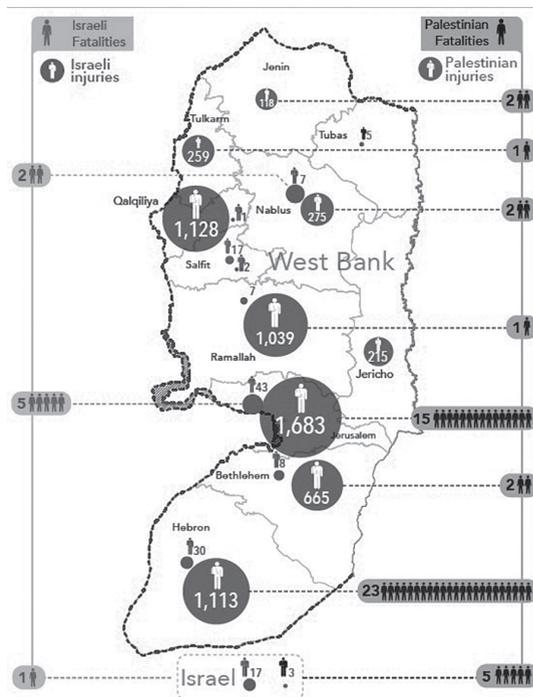
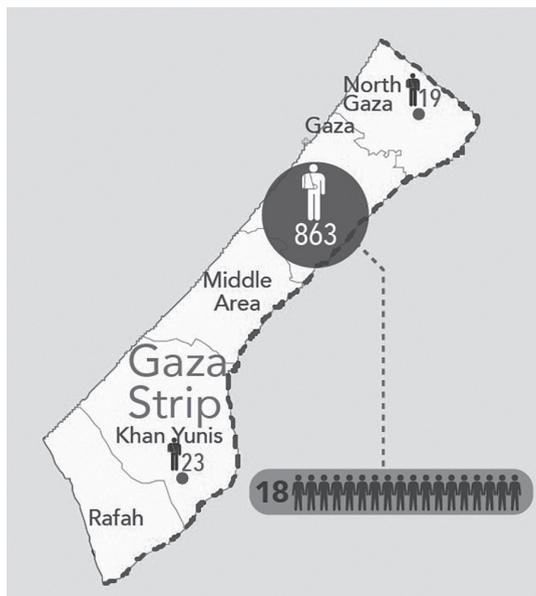
Despite intermittent fatal confrontations between Palestinians and Israelis in East Jerusalem and the West Bank in 9/2015, it was the killing of 2 Israeli settlers and injuring of 4 settler children in a drive-by shooting on 10/1 nr. Nablus that sparked a rising up of Palestinians throughout Israel and the oPt, prompting speculation about a possible 3d intifada. Almost every day, Palestinians from both sides of the Green Line held mass rallies protesting Israeli violence and restrictions to access at Haram al-Sharif, which often culminated in violent clashes with Israeli troops. The signal element of this new rising up was a string of high-profile one-on-one incidents between Israelis and Palestinian youth generally unaffiliated with a political group or faction. Provoking retaliatory measures from the Israeli govt. and counterattacks by Israeli civilians and settlers, these incidents headlined all media coverage of the violence.

The 1st 2 incidents occurred on 10/3 and 10/4. First, Israeli police shot and injured a knife-wielding Palestinian youth who attacked a group of Israelis at one of the Old City gates in Jerusalem (10/3), killing 2 and injuring 2. On the heels of this incident, Israeli forces interrogated local shop owners, set up mobile checkpoints throughout the city, and forcibly evicted some 70 Palestinians from Haram al-Sharif. That evening, hundreds of Israelis marched through Silwan, chanting "death to Arabs" and throwing stones at Palestinian homes. Hamas praised the attack and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed the attacker was a mbr. of the organization. The following day, Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian outside the Old City, allegedly for

stabbing and injuring an Israeli teenager in the area. However, multiple videos of the confrontation showed otherwise: in one, a Palestinian youth was seen being chased by a group of Israelis shouting, “Shoot him! He’s a terrorist! Shoot him!” followed by the appearance of police car lights and audible gunshots, and the police asking the crowd, “Did he stab anyone?” A 2d video showed that the Palestinian youth being chased had no knife or other weapon with which to inflict harm. While officials and the media in Israel largely stuck to the initial story of the police killing, once the videos proliferated on social and traditional media disputing their narrative, Palestinian officials started referring to the incident, and those that followed, as “extrajudicial killings.” Over the course of 10/2015, there were at least 50 such incidents, prompting several commentators to dub the wave of violence

the “Stabbing Intifada.” The narratives diverged in every case, and questions of motives and intent were consistently disputed. Although they accounted for a relatively small share of total injuries in 10/2015, these disputed stabbings garnered the lion’s share of coverage by the media.

Counting the stabbing attacks (both alleged and confirmed), the almost daily clashes, and other violent incidents in Israel and the oPt, there were 85 Palestinians, 1 Eritrean asylum seeker (10/18), and 12 Israelis killed during the wave of violence between 10/1 and 11/15, and according to OCHA (11/10), at least 8,135 Palestinians and 128 Israelis were injured between 10/1 and 11/9. OCHA also reported that 10/2015 had seen the highest number of Palestinian casualties in the West Bank in a single mo. since data tracking began in 2005.



Palestinian and Israeli injuries in 10/2015, broken down by region. (OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin: Monthly Report, October 2015)

With no sign of the violence abating, Israel ratcheted up its response. On 10/4, after meeting with his security officials following the 1st 2 high-profile attacks, Netanyahu made a televised statement pledging to: expedite the punitive demolitions of Palestinian attackers' family homes (see "Occupation Data and Trends" below); extend the terms of administrative detentions; increase troop deployments; and consider any "further measures" that might be necessary. Meanwhile, the Israeli police announced (10/4) a 48-hour ban on Palestinian entry to the Old City, to which only tourists and Israeli citizens, including Palestinian citizens of Israel, were allowed access. Later that week, Netanyahu's office confirmed (10/8) that the PM had banned all ministers and MKs, including Palestinian MKs, from visiting Haram al-Sharif.

The Israeli authorities barred Palestinian men under 45 from attending Friday prayers at Haram al-Sharif on 10/9, barred Palestinian men under 40 from the sanctuary on 10/16, and on 10/10 deployed reserve forces inside Israel's majority Palestinian towns and cities. After 2 Israelis were killed and at least 10 others injured in an East Jerusalem stabbing attack on 10/13, the Israeli security cabinet agreed to revoke the residency status of Jerusalemite Palestinians involved in recent attacks on Israelis; ban the rebuilding of Palestinian homes subjected to punitive demolitions; authorize the police to "impose a closure on, or to surround, centers of friction in Jerusalem" (resulting in the establishment of new roadblocks and mobile checkpoints across East Jerusalem on 10/13); and to deploy 300 IDF troops to major Palestinian cities in Israel and along major roads. The following day, the Min. of Public Security, Strategic Affairs, and Information, Gilad Erdan, approved (10/14) a series of measures designed to ease restrictions on Israeli

firearms purchases. The move came days after his ministry reported (10/11) a sharp uptick in the number of Israelis applying for or renewing firearms permits and following Ya'alon's call (10/9) for civilians to carry firearms in order to defend themselves against Palestinian attack.

The crackdown extended to the legal sphere when the Knesset passed (11/2) into law, 51-17, a bill setting a minimum 3-year mandatory prison term for anyone convicted of stone-throwing. The bill also revoked National Insurance Institute (NII) benefits to persons serving such sentences and also NII benefits to parents of convicted children for the duration of their sentence. Based largely on discussions at the security cabinet's 9/24 meeting, the measures were approved by the full cabinet on 10/11 and passed a 1st reading in the Knesset on 10/12. The new law was designated a pilot program, whose provisions were set to expire after 3 years unless reauthorized by the Knesset.

Further exacerbating tension, the Israeli authorities announced 3 major settlement expansion initiatives. First, the govt. informed (9/29) the High Court of Justice of its intention to retroactively authorize all settlement outposts in the Shilo region nr. Ramallah, including Adi Ad and 3 others inhabited by dozens of settler families. Second, the Civil Admin. advanced (11/3) a 2014 master plan for a settlement bloc nr. Ramallah that would include the construction of 2,200 new residences and retroactively approve 2 settlement outposts. Third, the Jerusalem Municipality approved (11/11) 891 new settlement residences nr. Bayt Jala in East Jerusalem. Fueling further Palestinian protests and attacks, the initiatives announced failed to satisfy mbrs. of Israel's extreme right wing, such as Jewish Home Party's Naftali Bennett. The freshly minted education

minister called (10/5) for a new settlement to be created for every Palestinian attack that was carried out.

On the diplomatic level, Israeli and Palestinian officials regularly accused each other of incitement without making any moves, whether individually or jointly, to quell the violence. While the IDF and PA security forces continued to coordinate their efforts on the ground, widely condemned by Palestinians besides those involved in the PA, Israeli officials were reportedly in regular communication with their Jordanian counterparts throughout 10/2015. Although no agreements were reached or any tangible progress made, 1 of several major international attempts to de-escalate the tension resulted in an Israeli-Jordanian agreement to improve the security infrastructure at Haram al-Sharif.

According to an EU press release (10/11), after meeting with them separately, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini appealed to Abbas and Netanyahu to “agree on substantial steps” that would “improve the situation on the ground,” making clear the EU’s expectations with respect to a mooted mission by the Middle East Quartet (U.S., UN, EU, and Russia) to help rekindle the peace process. But the next day, after a senior Israeli official indicated that Netanyahu objected to the Quartet’s timing, the Quartet confirmed the cancellation of the trip, and a Western diplomat speculated that the Israelis “were probably [. . .] concerned that the Quartet representatives’ visit would increase international pressure on Israel” (*Haaretz*, 10/12).

Another initiative came from the French. At a meeting of the UNSC on 10/16, France’s amb. to the UN, François Delattre, said his country had prepared a draft UNSC presidential statement urging all parties to maintain the status quo at Haram al-Sharif. On 10/17, French diplomats said that they would also call for the

deployment of international observers at the sanctuary, as the UNSC had done with the Temporary International Presence in Hebron following the 1994 al-Ibrahimi Mosque massacre (see “Background to a Massacre,” *JPS* 23[4]; also Doc. A2 in the same issue for more on UNSC Res. 904). Israel’s amb. to the UN, Danny Danon (10/17), and Netanyahu (10/18) both criticized the French proposal, and the Foreign Ministry summoned (10/19) the French amb. to Tel Aviv for reprimand. Kerry announced (10/19) that the U.S. was also opposed, effectively scuttling the initiative since it required unanimous support by UNSC mbrs.

Kerry himself headed the only initiative that yielded any kind of agreement. Reports of private talks with Abbas, Netanyahu, and Abdullah started appearing in the press in mid-10/2015, after Kerry announced (10/13) that he would be traveling to the Middle East in a bid to help de-escalate the violence. On 10/14, the Israeli press reported that he was working on a summit meeting between the 3 leaders in Jordan. After Netanyahu agreed (10/15) to the summit, Israeli officials indicated (10/20) that Kerry was hoping to “upgrade and clarify” the 11/13/2014 agreement between Jordan and Israel that followed the previous wave of violence in Jerusalem (see *JPS* 44[2]). After meeting with Netanyahu in Berlin (10/22) and with Abbas and Abdullah in Amman (10/24), Kerry announced (10/24) that understandings had been reached, including a concrete agreement between Jordan and Israel to install cameras at Haram al-Sharif broadcasting in real time 24 hours a day. No further details about the surveillance agreement were disclosed, including how the stream would be monitored. The Palestinians, on the other hand, were strongly critical of the camera plan, especially after Israeli police stopped the Islamic Waqf from installing cameras at the sanctuary in the

days following the announcement (an Israeli police spokesperson said [10/26] that “the issue is still being discussed at the diplomatic level” and that the relevant parties were not ready to coordinate installation yet). PA FM Riyad al-Maliki described (10/25) the plan as a “new trap” and said that Israel would likely use the footage to arrest Muslim worshippers. Disregarding such complaints, a delegation of Jordanian officials arrived in Jerusalem on 11/12 to oversee the installation of cameras. By quarter’s end, it was expected that these would be in place imminently.

The 10/24 Jordanian-Israeli agreement had no effect on quelling the wave of violence, which entered a new phase, with increasingly frequent attacks throughout the West Bank and, especially, in Hebron. Citing heightened security measures, an Israeli police spokesperson announced that the “situation in Jerusalem has changed” (10/26), and in the next 3 weeks until the end of the quarter, 13 Palestinians were killed in clashes or other confrontations with Israeli settlers and troops in the Hebron region, while another 14 were killed in similar circumstances in the rest of the oPt combined.

The Israeli crackdown only intensified further. According to OCHA, the IDF’s 32 mobile checkpoints in the Hebron area alone came to more than those in all other areas combined between 11/3 and 11/9. At the same time, following several days of protest in Hebron, the Israeli authorities reversed (10/30) their directive to withhold the bodies of Palestinians killed in confrontations with the IDF, handing over to the PA the bodies of 7 Palestinians killed in the Hebron area. An Israeli source explained that the defense establishment had begun to consider the bodies as “a burden and not an asset,” as withholding them was further stoking tensions, with a reported stipulation that returned bodies were

not to be interred in mass funerals. After a joint mass funeral was held in Hebron the next day, leading to clashes with the IDF (see Chronology for details), Ya’alon announced (10/31) that no more bodies would be returned to the Hebron area, and threatened (11/1) that Israel would stop returning bodies altogether if mass funerals continued. According to OCHA, as of 11/5, Israel had returned the bodies of 14 of the 36 Palestinians killed between 10/1 and 11/2, but the issue of unreturned bodies continued to be a source of tension and violence through the end of the quarter.

The Palestinian leadership, meanwhile, was coming under increasing pressure to implement the promises made in Abbas’s 9/30 UNGA speech or to take some form of concrete action. While Abbas and other Palestinian officials repeatedly criticized Israel for trying to alter the status quo at Haram al-Sharif, for condoning “extrajudicial killings” and for agreeing (10/24) to the installation of cameras at the sanctuary (see above), they offered little by way of new ideas. In Cairo on 10/25, Erakat announced that the PLO and the Arab League were preparing a new draft UNSC res. setting a timetable on the Israeli occupation and establishing an international commission of inquiry into the recent violence. The same day, another senior official said that the Palestinians hoped the Israeli crackdown would help build support for the UNSC initiative (a similar draft was rejected by the council in 12/2014; see *JPS* 44[3]). While there were some signs of international support for a new UNSC res. on the Israeli occupation (see “United Nations” below), there were no further developments by quarter’s end.

DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION FUNDING IN ISRAEL

Prior to the escalation of violence in the oPt, a major controversy broke out in Israel over

state funding of Christian schools. Instead of opening on schedule on 9/1, Israel's 47 Christian schools went on strike to protest budget cuts imposed by the Education Ministry, grounding some 30,000 Palestinian students at home. In the previous 5 years, state support for Christian schools, categorized as "recognized but unofficial," declined to 29–34% of the funds provided to public schools, placing the increasing burden of rising tuition on Palestinian families. (Israel's Education Ministry placed caps on tuition hikes in 2014, exacerbating the funding issue further.) For context, it is important to note that according to the Secretariat of Christian Schools, Haredi Jewish schools, also considered "recognized but unofficial," were still receiving 75–100% of the average public school subsidy. Around 5% of Palestinian school-aged children in Israel attend Christian schools in order to escape the segregated public school system. Arab schools get a fraction of the funding their Jewish counterparts receive, and suffer from a 17% dropout rate, with their faculty and curricula determined by Jewish officials.

The Christian schools' strike continued through 9/2015, and Israel's Palestinian minority quickly rallied to the cause, with many Arab schools observing a 1-day solidarity strike on 9/7 (see Photos from the Quarter), and hundreds of Palestinian Christian families protesting outside the homes of Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon in Haifa (9/12) and Education Minister Bennett in Ra'anana (9/15). Meanwhile, the *Jerusalem Post* reported (9/17) that the secretariat, which was engaged in negotiations with the Israeli govt., had recently turned down an offer of NIS 50 m. (around \$12.9 m.), demanding that Christian schools get the 75% public funding levels enjoyed by all other "recognized but unofficial" schools. According to *Haaretz* (9/24), by mid-9/2015,

Joint List chair Ayman Odeh and Israeli pres. Reuven Rivlin had also joined in the negotiations.

After the strike had lasted almost 1 mo., a 6-person comm. representing the Christian schools reached (9/27) an agreement with the Education Ministry, whereby the govt. pledged to: transfer NIS 50 m. to the schools immediately; include their faculty in teacher development programs that they had been excluded from; and increase curriculum offerings. Additionally, the ministry agreed to establish joint comms. to investigate funding inequalities and to provide a series of recommendations by the end of 3/2016. The Christian schools were able to reduce elementary student tuition by 25% and reopened their doors on 9/28.

OCCUPATION DATA AND TRENDS

The escalation of violence this quarter led to a marked increase in the number of Palestinian and Israeli deaths. A total of 95 Palestinians died as a result of Israeli actions—51 in the West Bank, 22 in Gaza, 14 in East Jerusalem, and 8 total in West Jerusalem and Israel. On the other side, 12 Israelis died as a result of Palestinian actions, including 1 who succumbed to injuries sustained in West Jerusalem almost a year earlier (11/18/2014; see *JPS* 44[3]), while an Eritrean asylum seeker was killed by a group of Israelis in Beersheba on 10/18. These totals brought the comprehensive death toll since the beginning of the 2d intifada in 9/2000 to 10,660 Palestinians (including 54 Palestinian citizens of Israel and 19 unidentified cross-border "infiltrators"); 1,229 Israelis (430 IDF soldiers and security personnel, 238 settlers, and 553 civilians); and 68 foreign nationals (including 2 British suicide bombers). These numbers include individuals who died in non-combat-related incidents if their death was a direct

result of Israeli actions or of the ongoing conflict (e.g., ailing Palestinians who died as a result of being denied access to medical care and Palestinians killed in smuggling-tunnel accidents). Not included in the quarter's overall count is the death of a 96th Palestinian, a fisherman who was killed in a confrontation with Egyptian naval forces on 11/5.

Overview of the Violence

Prior to the swell of violence that broke out across the oPt in 10/2015, the number of Palestinians who died as a result of Israeli actions in the **West Bank** and **East Jerusalem** remained consistent with previous quarters. During the 1st half of the quarter (8/16–9/30), 5 Palestinians were killed (4 in confrontations with Israeli forces and 1 who succumbed to her injuries from the 7/31 Jewish settler arson attack), compared to 13 and 9 during the entirety of the previous 2 quarters. Of the 60 Palestinians killed as a result of Israeli actions in the final 6 weeks of the quarter, 58 were killed in clashes or other types of confrontations with Israeli forces, including stabbing attacks (both alleged and confirmed; for details, see “A Wave of Violence” above and Chronology), and 2 were killed by Israeli settlers (10/17 and 10/23).

Likewise, the number of Palestinians killed in the **Gaza Strip** by Israeli actions rose dramatically in the 2d half of the quarter. Until 10/1, only 1 Palestinian had succumbed (8/16) to injuries from a piece of Israeli ordnance that exploded in Rafah on 8/6, while 2 Hamas operatives were killed in tunnel accidents (8/29 and 9/28). After 10/1, however, a total of 19 Palestinians were killed: 2 in an Israeli air strike (10/10), 1 who succumbed (10/8) to injuries sustained during the 2d intifada, on 11/8/2000 (see *JPS* 30[2]), and the remaining 16 in clashes with the IDF along the border fence, which most frequently occurred e. of

al-Bureij refugee camp (r.c.) and nr. the Erez border crossing. At 8, the number of Palestinians injured in Gaza in the 1st 6 weeks of the quarter was relatively consistent with the average of 7 in the previous 2 mos., but OCHA reported that the number soared to 981 in the subsequent 6 weeks as a result of the groundswell of violence.

Small armed groups in Gaza fired rockets at Israel intermittently both before and after 10/1. On at least 14 days this quarter (up from 8 last quarter), there was Palestinian rocket fire directed at Israel (8/26, 9/1, 9/16, 9/18, 9/19, 9/20, 9/29, 10/4, 10/9, 10/10, 10/11, 10/21, 10/26, and 11/8). No Israeli injuries or deaths resulted, and the only damage caused occurred on 9/18 when a rocket landed in Sderot, damaging a bus and a house. Of note, Sarayat al-Shaykh Umar Hadid, a small armed group that last quarter fired a series of rockets at Israel in an effort to pressure Hamas, claimed responsibility for at least 4 of the attacks (8/26, 9/20, 9/29, and 10/4). Also of note, Palestinian gunfire emanating from a Hamas military site in n. Gaza struck 3 houses in a kibbutz on the Israeli side of the border on 9/2, and unidentified Palestinian gunmen opened fire on Israeli forces nr. the border fence on multiple occasions (9/13, 10/11, and 10/13).

Because Israel holds Hamas responsible for any attack from Gaza, Israeli Air Force (IAF) jets launched retaliatory air strikes in response to the 9/2 gunfire and to 6 of the rocket attacks, (8/26, 9/18, 9/29, 10/4, 10/26, and 11/8), killing a pregnant Palestinian woman and her young daughter, injuring 5 other Palestinians on 10/10, with each strike causing substantial damage. In a related incident, the IDF “eradicated” (10/20) a group of Hamas fighters who according to the military’s statement had been responsible for several attacks on Israeli troops along the border fence in previous weeks. The Palestinian

media provided no additional details on the incident and the IDF did not elaborate on its actions.

This quarter, there were several incidents with unexploded Israeli ordnance in Gaza, leading to the injury of 4 Palestinians (8/21 [2], 9/8, and 9/28). In addition, 1 Palestinian woman died from injuries sustained in a similar incident in the previous quarter (8/6) and another piece of unexploded Israeli ordnance was successfully dismantled in Khan Yunis on 10/30.

The IDF continued to enforce the unilaterally defined Access Restricted Areas (ARA), or buffer zone, along Gaza's borders. They arrested at least 33 Palestinians approaching the border fence to cross into Israel for work or other reasons (8/27, 9/3, 9/6, 9/7 [2], 9/9 [2], 9/11, 9/13 [2], 9/14 [5], 9/17 [2], 9/18 [2], 9/23, 9/24 [3], 9/27, 10/2 [7], and 10/3 [2]), and opened fire on Palestinian farmers (8/31), unidentified Palestinians (9/15), and on Palestinian land and property (8/16 and 9/12). Israeli forces also conducted at least 16 limited incursions into the ARA to level land along the border fence (8/17 [3], 8/19 [2], 8/25, 9/1, 9/3, 9/8, 9/21 [2], 9/29, 10/2, 10/8, 10/14, and 11/4). In solidarity with their West Bank counterparts, Palestinians in Gaza marched to the border fence on a nr.-daily basis from 10/2015 through the end of the quarter, to protest Israeli restrictions on access at Haram al-Sharif, as well as the intensifying crackdown in the oPt and the occupation; IDF troops violently dispersed protesters, sparking clashes that led to the deaths of 16 Palestinians and the injury of almost 1,000, according to OCHA. After the 1st 3 days of clashes led to 11 Palestinian deaths, an Israeli military source said (10/12) that the IDF's Southern Command had ordered soldiers to use tear gas and warning shots in their attempts to disperse protesters. The source clarified that the order did not

constitute a change in the official rules of engagement but reflected the security establishment's desire for fewer Palestinian casualties.

Lastly, Israeli naval forces enforced their unilaterally imposed 6-naut.-mi. fishing zone off the coast, opening fire on Palestinian fishing boats on at least 17 occasions (down from 34 last quarter), arresting at least 4 fishermen (10/4 [2] and 10/5 [2]), seizing 1 boat (10/5), and ramming another (9/26), causing it to sink.

Movement and Access

In an effort to improve the humanitarian situation in the **Gaza Strip**, the Israeli authorities continued easing restrictions on the Erez and Kerem Shalom border crossings this quarter. The most significant development in this regard came on 9/21 when COGAT announced that, starting on 10/7, Israel would allow Palestinians in Gaza to export ironware, furniture, and textiles to Israel. While Gazans welcomed the news, the Israeli nongovernmental organization (NGO) Gisha put the announcement in perspective. It explained (9/22) that "the Gaza furniture industry, which is supposed to benefit from the newly announced policy, is on the verge of collapse because Israel doesn't allow the sale of wood to Gaza with a thickness of over one centimeter." Overall, the volume of exports from Gaza to Israel remained steady this quarter with a monthly average of 25 truckloads exiting in 8–10/2015 (down from 36 in the previous 3 mos.) and no sharp increases after COGAT's 9/21 announcement. The overall trend for Gazan exports this quarter was a slight rise from 330 in 5–7/2015 to 359 truckloads in 8–10/2015. The volume of goods entering Gaza through Kerem Shalom increased significantly however, reaching 26,099 truckloads in 8–10/2015, up from 19,769 in 5–7/2015, a 32% increase.

The other major development of the quarter related to the ARA. On 9/16, the Israeli authorities permitted 500 Palestinian farmers access to their land along the border fence, after being barred for 15 years from cultivating the 3,500–4,000 arable dunams (approx. 863–988 acres).

Despite the nascent Egypt-Hamas rapprochement last quarter (see *JPS* 45[1]), with violence in Sinai ongoing, Egypt maintained its tight grip on the Rafah border crossing. The Egyptian authorities opened the crossing for 12 days this quarter (8/17–20, 9/7–9, 9/17, 9/30, 10/7–8, and 10/15), down from 13 last quarter, but there was a significant increase in the number of people permitted to cross: 5,329 exited (up from 4,987) and 7,710 entered (up from 2,710), according to OCHA.

In the **West Bank** and **East Jerusalem**, the Israeli authorities continued to obstruct Palestinians' freedom of movement and access with the IDF's daily raids, detentions, and flying checkpoints. The frequency of these increased dramatically following the escalation of violence in 10/2015: according to OCHA, search and arrest operations over the 1st 6 weeks of the quarter averaged 77, consistent with previous quarters, while the figure in the subsequent 6 weeks rose to 103 (see Chronology for details).

Access to Haram al-Sharif, a permanently simmering source of conflict, became the flashpoint for sustained violence in the last 6 weeks of this quarter (see "A Wave of Violence" above). On 8/24, Israel barred all Palestinians from entering the sanctuary, including the 500 Muslim students who attend religious school inside its perimeter. Through 9/13, Palestinian women and children under 17 continued to be barred from the sanctuary between 7:00 A.M. and 11:00 A.M., and the Israeli authorities kept all but 3 entrances closed. Palestinian access to Haram al-Sharif was also

restricted during the Jewish high holidays, with men under 45 barred during Rosh Hashanah (9/13), men under 40 during Yom Kippur (9/22–23), and men under 50 during Sukkoth (9/27–10/4). Meanwhile, during the Muslim holiday *Id al-Adha* (9/24–27), Israel barred all non-Muslims from Haram al-Sharif and eased restrictions on Palestinian access: operation hours at border crossings between the West Bank and East Jerusalem were extended and married Palestinian men and women from the West Bank, respectively over 45 and 30, were permitted to pray at the sanctuary on 9/24–25. Additionally, in response to specific incidents or outbreaks of violence in Jerusalem, the Israeli authorities further restricted Palestinian access at Haram al-Sharif, barring men under 40 and all women on 9/18, men under 45 on 10/9, and men under 40 on 10/16.

Gaza Reconstruction

Apart from Israel's decision to allow Gazans to export furniture, ironware, and textiles (see "Movement and Access" above), this quarter saw no major developments on the reconstruction front, and rebuilding what was destroyed in Israel's summer 2014 attack continued at snail's pace. As in previous quarters, Israeli security concerns and donor reticence were the principal impediments.

The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM), the joint PA-UN-Israeli mechanism giving Israel purview over Palestinian requests for construction materials (see *JPS* 44[3]), became a bone of contention this quarter. COGAT Yoav Mordechai claimed (9/1) that despite the vetting process, Hamas had diverted to its military infrastructure construction materials designated for GRM-approved projects. For his part, the UN's special coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov (9/17), asserted that the GRM was functioning and

reconstruction was accelerating. According to Gisha, a monthly average of 289,573 tons of reconstruction materials (cement, steel, and gravel) entered Gaza in 8–10/2015, up from 192,622 tons in 5–7/2015, a 50% increase. The 1st home to be rebuilt after being completely destroyed or rendered uninhabitable was occupied in early 10/2015, and most of the 130,000 homes that were partially damaged in the assault had been rebuilt, according to PA minister of public works and housing Mufid Hasayneh (Associated Press, 11/1).

Despite announcing several new reconstruction projects, by the end of the quarter international donors had disbursed only 35% of the \$3.5 b. pledged at the 10/24/2014 Gaza Reconstruction Conference in Cairo, up from 28% on 7/7 (Electronic Intifada, 10/29).

Prisoners

The overall number of Palestinians in Israeli custody rose sharply this quarter as a result of the security crackdown in the West Bank and Jerusalem in response to the upsurge of violence in 10/2015. Prior to that, the overall number of Palestinian prisoners had been falling steadily for almost a year, reaching 5,520 in 8/2015. By 10/2015, the number had reached 6,700, exceeding the 6,500 high resulting from the last escalation of violence in Jerusalem in late 2014 (see *JPS* 44[2]). In the same vein and following a 4-mo. decline, the number of administrative detainees went up 31%, from 343 in 9/2015 to 450 in 10/2015, according to the Palestinian prisoners' rights NGO, Addameer.

Palestinian prisoner Muhammad Allan ended the hunger strike he had begun on 6/16 after his case gained international attention last quarter. As the current quarter opened, Allan was in a medically induced coma that

became central to a controversy over a new Israeli law (7/30) allowing the force-feeding of hunger-striking prisoners whose lives are in danger. Allan's strike continued to fuel tension in Israel and the oPt this quarter, with protesters and counterprotesters clashing (8/16) outside Barzilai Medical Center in Ashqelon, where Allan was being held, and officials from PIJ and Hamas meeting (8/16) to coordinate their responses in the event that Allan died in Israeli custody (Allan is a mbr. of PIJ). On 8/18, Israeli doctors ended his medically induced coma and he accepted fluid intravenously for 24 hours when they explained that his life was at risk. However, he rejected the Israeli govt.'s offer to release him from administrative detention if he agreed to leave the country for 4 years. After an MRI found evidence of brain damage, the Israeli High Court of Justice temporarily suspended (8/19) Allan's administrative detention, but ordered that he be kept in the hospital until a final decision was handed down on his case. Allan, who had been placed in another coma (8/19) ahead of the ruling, suspended (8/20) his hunger strike in response to the High Court's decision. His condition improved over the next mo. and he was discharged from Barzilai Medical Center on 9/16, when the Israeli authorities moved him (9/16) to Ramla Prison Hospital. Set to end on 11/14, Allan's administrative detention was then reinstated, prompting him to resume the strike for 2 days. Allan was eventually released on 11/5.

Also of note, 1 Palestinian detainee suffered a stroke (10/11) and died (10/14) at Soroka Medical Center in Beersheba. The Palestinian Prisoners' Society issued a statement (10/11) saying that the man's condition had worsened as a result of medical negligence on the part of the Israel Prison Service. He had been in prison since 2006.

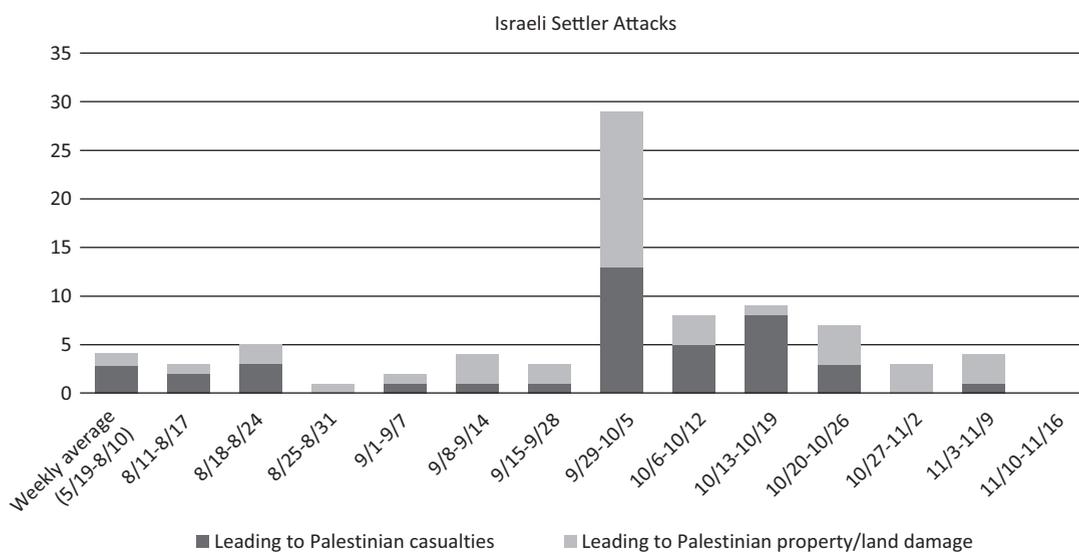
Judaization of East Jerusalem

Although access to Haram al-Sharif was the flashpoint for tension in Jerusalem and the oPt this quarter, Palestinian frustrations were also exacerbated by Israel’s ongoing settlement expansion in East Jerusalem. On 8/27 and 9/1, Israeli settlers under police escort moved into residential buildings in Silwan, sparking clashes on both occasions. The buildings were purportedly purchased by Ateret Cohanim, an Israeli Jewish organization dedicated to creating a Jewish majority in the Old City and Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem. Palestinian residents and officials disputed the deeds.

Settler-Related Violence

Tension was high between Palestinians and Israeli settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem this quarter, in the wake of the 7/31 Duma arson attack that killed 3 Palestinians from the Dawabsha family, including a toddler, and the subsequent flare-up of violence in East Jerusalem over

access at Haram al-Sharif and settlement expansion inside Palestinian neighborhoods. All of these issues compounded to increase settler-related violence, and OCHA reported 151 total incidents between 8/11 and 11/16 (a 300% increase from the 49 recorded in the previous 12 weeks), of which 68 led to property damage and 83 to casualties on the Palestinian side. As in previous quarters, incidents of settler-related violence occurred most frequently in and around Nablus (32) and Hebron (30; see Chronology for details). Three Palestinians died this quarter as a direct result of such violence (9/7, 10/17, and 10/23), including the 3d mbr. of the Dawabsha family. Settler attacks on Palestinian olive trees went on apace, leading to the destruction of dozens of trees in 3 incidents (9/9, 10/2, and 10/9), down from 5 last quarter when 400 olive trees were destroyed. Meanwhile, Palestinian retaliation against Israeli settlers and their property resulted in the death of 6 settlers (10/1 [2], 10/3, 10/20, and 11/13 [2]).



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Demolitions and Displacement

Israeli forces razed 163 Palestinian structures between 8/11 and 11/16, with 100 of these demolitions taking place in the West Bank in the 1st 3 weeks of the quarter. This was an increase of almost 50% from last quarter's 110 and the largest number of demolitions in the year to date, according to OCHA. The demolitions displaced 253 Palestinians, almost 3 times as many as last quarter's 92.

In addition to demolitions allegedly related to permit and licensing issues, the Israeli govt. continued the punitive demolition of homes inhabited by Palestinians accused of serious crimes against Israelis or their property, a total of 8 this quarter (10/6 [2], 10/19, 11/13 [5]), 6 of which took place amid the Israeli crackdown in the oPt in 10/2015. Another 16 adjacent residences were damaged during the 11/13 demolitions. Used sparingly until recently, the policy of punitive demolitions was reinstated in summer 2014 (see *JPS* 44[1-3]). In a related incident, Israeli forces sealed (10/6) a room in the Jabal Mukabir residence of the Palestinian who was shot and killed on 10/30/2014 after allegedly attempting to assassinate the leader of the messianic Temple Mount movement, Yehuda Glick.

INTRA-PALESTINIAN DYNAMICS

Amid speculation about his retirement and tension with Hamas continuing to obstruct the operations of the PA consensus govt., Pres. Mahmoud Abbas attempted to bolster his position. He made no headway, however, and the wave of violence on the ground precluded further efforts. The state of internal Palestinian politics therefore remained essentially unchanged by the end of the quarter.

After firing (6/30) PLO secy.-gen. Yasser Abed Rabbo and replacing him (7/4) with longtime chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat (see *JPS* 45[1]), Abbas took further steps this quarter to minimize Abed Rabbo's influence. On 8/19, Palestinian sources said Abbas had issued an order the previous day to shut down the Palestinian Peace Coalition (PPC), a Swiss-funded NGO chaired by Abed Rabbo that promoted the 2003 Geneva Accord for a 2-state solution (see Special Doc. in *JPS* 33[2] for more). On the same day, the PPC's executive director responded by saying that the group would appeal the order and the NGO's umbrella organization issued a statement regretting "that a personal power struggle led to a decision to close the Palestinian branch of the Geneva Initiative." However, Abbas was reported to have revoked his decree (*Haaretz*, 8/27) after coming under additional pressure from Bern and other, unnamed European govts.

As the Palestinian media speculated about Abbas's motives in trying to shut down the PPC, the PA pres. and his chief aides launched a major effort to reconfigure the Palestinian political system. At a PLO Exec. Comm. meeting on 8/22, Abbas and 10 of the 18-mbr. comm. announced their intention to resign, including Hanan Ashrawi and Erakat. The comm. also agreed to call into session the 740-strong PNC, the PLO's legislative body, which had not convened in regular session since 1994, to confirm the resignations and to elect a new comm. (see *JPS* 25[4]). On the same day, a senior PA official indicated that exec. comm. mbrs. who resigned would be permitted to stand for reelection, fueling new rumors about Abbas's intentions. The pres. and his aides had repeatedly alluded to his wish to retire, describing the reconvening of

the PNC as just 1 aspect of a multifaceted plan to transfer power (e.g., 9/5). In answer to a question from Middle East Eye about the rationale behind Abbas's resignation, Erakat told the publication that Abbas was concerned about leaving a vacuum and that he wanted to "have institutions behind" him (9/24).

Abbas and his supporters arranged (8/29) for the 2-day PNC session to fall on 9/14–15, 2 weeks before his 9/30 UNGA address and enough time, according to senior Palestinian officials (9/8), for him to build consensus around the diplomatic measures he planned to unveil.

The Ramallah-based leadership struggled over the next 2 weeks to implement their plans. First, it was unclear whether Hamas and PIJ, neither of which are PLO mbrs., would participate in the PNC session. Speaker Salim Zanoun sent out invitations to all 740 mbrs. in late 8/2015, including the 132 mbrs. of the Palestinian Legislative Council in which Hamas has held a majority since 2006 (Ma'an News Agency, 8/31). However, in the event that Hamas refused to participate in the PNC, there was a chance that the quorum of 474 would not be reached, according to PLO Exec. Comm. mbr. Ahmad Majdalani (Al-Monitor, 8/31). Hamas had been critical of convening the PNC after such a long hiatus and at such short notice, a process that the dep. head of the political bureau, Musa Abu Marzuq, had described as "invalid" (8/22). For their part, the 2 largest factions after Fatah and Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), also opposed the proposal and called (8/30) for all PLO factions to meet ahead of the PNC session to hammer out an agenda rather than

just accept the Abbas-led agenda. Following a meeting of several factions in Gaza, including Hamas, PIJ, and others (9/3) that called for boycotting the PNC's abrupt reconvening, Hamas leader Khalid Mishal reiterated (9/7) that the session should be postponed in order to allow all factions a say on the agenda. Anticipating no quorum, let alone consensus, Zanoun postponed (9/9) the PNC session to "give space to other Palestinian factions to participate in this large responsibility." He said that a comm. comprised of himself, the PLO Exec. Comm., and the heads of the various factions would meet soon in order to prepare for a PNC session within 3 mos. (see "Palestinian Opinion" below).

As violence on the ground in the oPt escalated in 10/2015, the strategic differences between the 2 major Palestinian political groupings returned to the fore, with Hamas consistently praising attacks targeting Israelis and supporting violent resistance while Fatah condemned the violent tactics and called for peaceful demonstrations. There were thus no further developments of note by the end of the quarter.

Gesture of Good Faith

There was 1 small breakthrough in terms of Palestinian national reconciliation this quarter. On 11/10, Hamas transferred custody to Fatah of the Gaza City home of deceased PLO leader Yasir Arafat, in a ceremony held on the eve of the 11-year anniversary of his death. In a statement welcoming the move, a senior Fatah official in Gaza said (11/10), "We hope Hamas follows this step with more steps to end the division." The Yasir Arafat Foundation reportedly planned to turn the home into a museum.

PALESTINIAN OPINION

The following data was excerpted from a poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) on 17–19 September 2015. The results are based on a survey of 1,270 men and women from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. The poll, the 57th in a series, was taken from the PSR’s website at www.pcpsr.org.

1. Are you satisfied or not satisfied with the performance of Mahmoud Abbas since his election as president of the PA [in 2005]?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1) Very satisfied	3.5%	7.2%	4.9%
2) Satisfied	37.7%	26.1%	33.3%
3) Not satisfied	40.1%	34.1%	37.8%
4) Not satisfied at all	14.9%	32.1%	21.4%
5) Don't know/No answer	3.8%	0.6%	2.6%

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

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1) Marwan Barghouti	36.0%	30.9%	34.0%
2) Ismail Haniyeh	34.9%	39.0%	36.5%
3) Mahmoud Abbas	21.5%	27.4%	23.8%
4) Don't know/No answer	7.7%	2.7%	5.7%

3. The PNC will convene in the near future. One of its missions will be to elect a new Exec. Comm. for the PLO. In your view, will the planned PNC session succeed in

electing new leaders who would be able to strengthen the PLO?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1) It will elect new leaders who will strengthen the PLO	28.4%	31.9%	29.7%
2) It will elect new leaders but the PLO will remain weak	17.5%	21.8%	19.1%
3) It will not elect new leaders and the PLO will remain weak	34.5%	31.1%	33.2%
4) It will not elect new leaders and the PLO will remain strong	5.5%	7.6%	6.3%
5) Don't know/No answer	14.1%	7.5%	11.6%

4. How will [. . .] convening the PNC to hold a hearing and the election of a new Executive Committee for the PLO [impact] the prospects for reconciliation and reunification of the West Bank and Gaza?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1) Positively	32.3%	33.1%	32.6%
2) Negatively	20.2%	26.8%	22.7%
3) Will have no impact	36.6%	34.4%	35.7%
4) Don't know/No answer	10.9%	5.7%	9.0%

FRONTLINE STATES

EGYPT

In keeping with its stance since the end of Israel’s summer 2014 assault on Gaza, the Egyptian govt. remained largely uninvolved in Israeli-Palestinian affairs this quarter. It was occupied with internal matters, including a new round of parliamentary elections and the discovery of a massive natural gas field, as well

as the ongoing violence in Sinai. After a series of major attacks by the Sinai Province of the Islamic State (SPIS) on Egyptian security forces in early 7/2015 (see *JPS* 45[1]), SPIS and other armed groups in the Sinai attacked a more diverse range of targets this quarter. These included Hamas and prompted a large-scale Egyptian military operation in 9/2015. The Egyptian army also continued its efforts to crack down on smuggling from Gaza to the n. Sinai, further obstructing 1 of Hamas's key revenue streams. Despite a recent improvement in Egypt's relationship with the govt. in Gaza, the continuing conflict in the Sinai spurred the Egyptian authorities to tighten their grip on the Rafah border crossing (see "Occupation Data and Trends" above) and to threaten the rapprochement with Hamas.

The most notable incident in this respect occurred early in the quarter. On 8/19, several masked fighters intercepted a bus in the n. Sinai transporting around 50 Palestinians from the Rafah border crossing to Cairo airport. After allegedly checking the identity of each passenger, the assailants abducted 4 youths who turned out to be Hamas mbrs. There were no claims of responsibility for the incident, giving rise to speculation and rumors, but the following day a Hamas source accused Egyptian intelligence operatives of responsibility (Al Jazeera) and Israeli media reported that the 4 abductees had been on their way to Iran for military training, alleging that Hamas's military wing was in cahoots with SPIS. The Egyptian govt. and sources close to SPIS, however, all pointed the finger at the Egyptian insurgent group, saying that it planned to leverage the 4 captives in their effort to secure the release of some 50 Islamist fighters detained by Hamas in Gaza (see *JPS* 45[1] for more on Hamas's crackdown on Islamist groups). By 8/24, Hamas and SPIS

had begun negotiations with both Palestinian and Egyptian mediators (Ma'an News Agency), but there were no further developments by the end of the quarter.

Tensions between Hamas and Egypt were further exacerbated by the Egyptian army's ongoing demolition of smuggling tunnels between Gaza and n. Sinai. In late 8/2015, Egyptian forces began work on a project along the Gaza border that they described as a "fish farm." However, there was speculation that the project was actually an attempt to destroy nearby tunnels by flooding them with sea water (Middle East Eye, 9/27). On 9/19, Egyptian security sources stated that the army had recently discovered and destroyed 12 tunnels, prompting senior Hamas official Ismail Haniyeh to comment, "We are telling our Egyptian brothers: 'Stop this project.'" In a response issued by Pres. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's office (9/26), Egypt indicated that all the security measures along the border with Gaza had been undertaken "in full coordination with the PA and [do not] aim to harm our Palestinian brothers in the Gaza Strip." However, the Egyptian army pursued its search and destroy mission undeterred, and according to a military spokesperson on 11/9, it uncovered and destroyed some 31 tunnels nr. Rafah in 10/2015.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian army launched (9/7) a major operation, code-named Martyr's Right, against armed groups in the Sinai. Two weeks later, it announced that the "1st and major phase" of the operation was complete: over 500 fighters had been killed, the armed groups' major hideouts, gathering points, and weapons depots had been destroyed, and at least 9 Egyptian soldiers and 2 civilians killed. After the army announced (10/7) the 2d phase of the operation, to "pave the road for suitable conditions to start development projects in

Sinai,” *al-Ahram* (10/8) reported that this would include the construction of a “new” Rafah city, including 1,200 new housing units and several hospitals and schools, and the dispatch of military convoys of medical supplies, construction materials, and food to civilians in n. Sinai.

IAEA Resolution

Egypt renewed its efforts this quarter to place Israel’s nuclear program under international supervision. Following U.S. and Israeli opposition to Cairo’s call for an international conference on a nuclear weapon-free Middle East at the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference last quarter, Egypt and a number of other Arab states began pushing for a similar res. to be adopted at the general meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on 9/14–18. The central provisions of the res. included opening Israel’s nuclear facilities to IAEA inspectors and establishing a nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Israeli and U.S. officials once again worked to block the res. (*Jerusalem Post*, 9/16), including Israeli PM Netanyahu, who said (9/17) he had personally spoken with more than 30 leaders from around the world to block the move. Their efforts proved to be successful: on 9/17, the res. was defeated by a vote of 61–43, with 33 abstentions.

JORDAN

The violence and tension at Haram al-Sharif strained Jordanian-Israeli relations this quarter. Since Israel’s occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank in 1967, the Israeli govt. has recognized Jordan’s historic role as custodian of Haram al-Sharif although perceived Israeli moves to alter that arrangement have periodically led to formal protests, diplomatic incidents, and popular outcry. After a meeting

with UK PM David Cameron amid this quarter’s escalating violence, King Abdullah warned (9/14) that “any more provocations in Jerusalem will affect the relationship between Jordan and Israel,” adding that “Jordan will have no choice but to take action.” Israeli officials, for their part, accused Jordan of shirking its responsibilities regarding Haram al-Sharif (e.g., 9/21). As the Israelis intensified their crackdown in East Jerusalem, Abdullah’s frustration with Israel had him asking (9/24) his own officials to withhold communicating with the Israeli PM, enabling him both to deny cooperating with Israel and to decline a request to meet Netanyahu in Aqaba in a purported attempt to defuse the situation.

Israeli-Jordanian tension escalated alongside the violence on the ground in the oPt in 10/2015. At a meeting on the sidelines of the UNGA meeting in New York on 10/1, Israeli Dep. FM Tzipi Hotovely interrupted Jordanian FM Nasser Judeh’s prepared remarks several times after he had reportedly made a sarcastic comment in response to something she had said.

The meeting’s chair, Norwegian FM Børge Brende, called Hotovely to order on 2 occasions. Later, Abdullah considered (10/4) recalling the Jordanian amb. to Israel, as he had done during the previous escalation of violence in Jerusalem in late 2014 (see *JPS* 44[2]). Later that mo., Tel Aviv rejected a Jordanian proposal for the Islamic Waqf to take over control of the entrances to Haram al-Sharif, as it had done prior to 2000 (*Times of Israel*, 10/19) and Amman rejected an Israeli offer to limit the number of non-Muslim visitors at the sanctuary, according to unnamed Arab sources on 10/21.

Abdullah and Netanyahu ultimately reached an agreement, announced by U.S. secy. of state Kerry on 10/24. Largely based on the UNSC’s 9/17 statement urging a return to calm in Jerusalem, the agreement provided for the

installation of cameras at Haram al-Sharif that would broadcast continuously 24 hours a day. Despite public Jordanian protests against Israeli actions with respect to the sanctuary (e.g., 11/2), there were no further indications of Israeli-Jordanian tension through the end of the quarter.

Of note: Israeli forces began construction on a fence along the border with Jordan, which will eventually connect the Golan Heights border fence with that along the Egyptian border. Approved by Israel's cabinet in 6/2015, construction is estimated to take 1 year.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian leadership took steps to improve its relationship with Jordan, after a minor controversy sparking tension last quarter. On 9/10, the PLO publicly announced support for Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein's candidacy in the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) presidential election. This issue had caused a minor kerfuffle last quarter after Palestinian Football Association chair Jibril Rajoub had allegedly voted for Sepp Blatter in the 5/29 FIFA election and was subsequently barred from entering Jordan. (Prince Ali was able to stand again on 9/9 after Blatter had been suspended from his newly acquired post on corruption charges.)

LEBANON

In 'Ayn al-Hilwa r.c., a brief outbreak of violence between Islamist groups and Fatah's security forces aggravated tensions in the overcrowded locality. As the quarter opened, 'Ayn al-Hilwa housed some 80,000 Palestinian refugees, including 10,000 who had fled the conflict in Syria, straining the camp's infrastructure. The violence began on 8/22, when the Islamist group Jund al-Sham, which had ties to similar groups in Syria, attempted to assassinate a Fatah military leader at a funeral. There were periodic confrontations between the

2 groups throughout 2015, but when Fatah responded to the attempted assassination by accusing all Islamist factions in the camp of complicity, gunfights in the camp's alleys and streets ensued (8/22–27). According to the Electronic Intifada on 9/3, 6 people were killed, more than 70 injured, and around 3,000 displaced, many of them fleeing to the nearby Mieh Mieh r.c. (*Al-Monitor*, 9/4).

SYRIA

There was 1 major cross-border incident this quarter, as the Syrian conflict spilled over briefly into Israel. On 8/20, at least 4 rockets were fired from Syria into the Galilee and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, causing no damage or injuries. The IDF described (8/20) the attack as "deliberate and orchestrated," distinguishing it from the sporadic "spillover" rockets that have landed in Israel since the Syrian conflict began in 2011 (e.g., 9/26, 9/27, and 10/13). Initially, the rocket fire was thought to be connected to the ongoing hunger strike of PIJ mbr. Muhammad Allan (see "Prisoners" above), but IDF officers later denied this and a PIJ spokesperson said (8/21), "We categorically deny . . . responsibility for the rockets fired into the Galilee." That night, the IDF conducted retaliatory strikes on 14 Syrian govt. sites in the Golan Heights, killing at least 1 and injuring at least 7. The next day, IAF jets targeted a vehicle approx. 10–15 km from the border, killing as many as 5 PIJ mbrs., allegedly the men responsible for the 8/20 rocket fire.

REGIONAL AFFAIRS

IRAN

Approving and Implementing the Nuclear Deal

After negotiators from Iran and the P5+1 reached a historic agreement, the Joint

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JPCOA; see *JPS* 45[1]) last quarter, the difficult work of adoption and implementation began, with hard-liners in both Iranian and U.S. legislatures rallying, unsuccessfully, to scuttle the deal (see “United States” below).

As the chief Iranian sponsor of the negotiations, Pres. Hassan Rouhani was deeply invested in the JPCOA’s success and he and his supporters pushed for the agreement to be adopted and ratified by the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC, chaired by the pres), rather than the Majlis, where opponents would have the opportunity to veto the deal. Rouhani argued (8/29) that a parliamentary vote would turn the components of the JPCOA into legal obligations rather than aspects of a political understanding that Iran would be implementing voluntarily. After Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei charged (9/3) the Majlis with voting on the deal, the speaker, Ali Larijani, said (9/3) that he expected more “drama” in his legislature than in the U.S. Congress (*New York Times*, 9/3).

While U.S. officials claimed privately that Khamenei supported the JCPOA, the supreme leader’s public position was unknown, and since the authority was his to make the ultimate decision, the uncertainty rendered the Majlis vote all the more significant. In the end, the Majlis passed a bill (10/13), by 161–59 votes with 13 abstentions, authorizing the govt. to implement the JCPOA. Approved by the Guardian Council the following day, the bill provided for Iran to renege on the deal if the P5+1 did not lift sanctions, as promised, and gave the SNSC responsibility for its enforcement. After the vote, Khamenei endorsed the agreement publicly on 10/21, clearing the final hurdle in the way of Iran’s fulfilment of its obligations.

Meanwhile, the Iranian govt. proceeded with implementation. After reps. of Iran and the P5+1 had met (9/28) on the sidelines of the UNGA meeting in New York to discuss the JCPOA, the IAEA announced (10/15) that Iran had provided all the information and access necessary for the agency to prepare a report on Iran’s past nuclear activities, meeting the deadline set under the 7/14 nuclear agreement. The IAEA was set to deliver its report by 12/15.

Iran and the Palestinians

Last quarter, the relationship between the Ramallah-based Palestinian leadership and Iran appeared to be improving, although it was unclear whether Tehran was receptive to Palestinian overtures. On 8/19, a senior Iranian official told a Hamas-affiliated newspaper that Iran had repeatedly denied PA pres. Mahmoud Abbas’s requests for a state visit to Tehran. Abbas, for his part, said (8/23) that he planned to visit what he called a “sister and neighbor state” soon.

INTERNATIONAL

UNITED STATES

Congressional Oversight on the Iran Nuclear Deal

As the quarter opened, the U.S. Congress was embroiled in a battle over the JCPOA (see *JPS* 45[1]) reached with Iran on 7/14, with the mandated congressional review period set to expire on 9/17. Republicans in Congress, as well as Israel’s PM and numerous pro-Israel U.S. organizations, were trying to build large enough majorities behind a joint res. disapproving the deal that would ensure it was immune to presidential veto. By mid-9/2015, however, it was clear that the admin. and its political supporters had built enough backing for the

deal among Senate Democrats to obtain its adoption.

Because the Republican majority was large enough to pass a joint res. in the House disapproving the deal regardless of the Democrats, the main congressional battleground was the Senate. Republican senators opposed to the JCPOA had been joined last quarter by only 1 of their peers, Charles Schumer (D-NY), giving opponents a total of 55 votes (5 shy of the filibuster-proof majority required for a joint res. and 12 votes shy of the majority needed to override a presidential veto). Although Sens. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Bob Casey (D-PA), and Chris Coons (D-DE) followed in Schumer's footsteps on 8/19 and 9/1, they proved to be the only Senate Democrats willing to oppose Pres. Obama, and after Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) joined (9/2) several of her colleagues in announcing their support, the administration had the 34 votes necessary to defend Obama's veto of a disapproval motion. Although Mikulski's announcement essentially ended the debate, Secy. of State John Kerry indicated (9/2) that the admin. would continue trying to "persuade people up until the last second," as Obama's veto could be obviated only if 7 more Senate votes were secured. The same day Israeli sources reported that Netanyahu intended to continue lobbying against the deal and the American Israel Public Affairs Comm. (AIPAC) said it would do the same.

As the extra 7 votes came through, Senate Democrats successfully filibustered the joint res. of disapproval on 9/10, 9/15, and 9/17 (see H. J. Res. 61 of 7/25/2015 at congressionalmonitor.org for more). Having lost their opportunity to block the JCPOA through a joint res. (9/17), congressional Republicans shifted their tactics. From 9/2, when Mikulski cast her decisive vote until the end of the quarter, opponents introduced 17 measures designed to undermine

the deal or hinder its implementation, although none passed into law. These measures fell mainly into 1 of 3 categories: placing additional requirements on Iran that were not part of the JCPOA (e.g., H.R. 3457 of 9/9/2015); adding new congressional oversight measures to the implementation process (e.g., S. 2119 of 10/1/2015); and challenging the legality of the deal's adoption (e.g., H. Res. 411 of 9/9/2015). The JCPOA also turned into an electioneering tactic, with every Republican intending to run in the 2016 presidential disavowing the agreement and several pledging to revoke it if elected.

Once the admin. had secured the necessary support, it set about implementing the deal. The State Dept. appointed Stephen Mull as lead coordinator on the process (9/17) and Obama advised (10/18) the secys. at the State, Treasury, Commerce, and Energy Depts. to prepare to lift sanctions on Iran. He also began reaching out to Israel to mend U.S.-Israeli relations after high-profile disagreements with Netanyahu over the JCPOA (see below).

Easing the Strained Relationship with Israel

Throughout the long drawn-out saga of the nuclear deal, both Washington and Tel Aviv took some steps to alleviate their strained relationship: talks resumed over increasing U.S. military aid to Israel after Netanyahu had suspended them last quarter, and each side made several symbolic gestures of good faith.

Already tense before the final round of negotiations with Iran began, the relationship between the U.S. pres. and the Israeli PM had grown increasingly acrimonious as the JCPOA neared completion on 7/14. Pro-Israel groups and pundits were concerned that this negative rapport between the 2 would have a lasting, deleterious effect on the Israel-U.S. relationship, especially following the 3/17 Israeli election

when the Obama admin. announced that it was undertaking a “reassessment” of its policy on the conflict (see *JPS* 44[4]). A chief complaint on the Israeli side was that the nuclear deal would allow Tehran to increase its funding to Hezbollah and Hamas, which would then constitute greater threats to Israel. Obama was also under significant pressure from his own party to make concessions. According to a *Politico* report on 10/1, Senate minority leader Harry Reid (D-NV) had repeatedly asked Obama to publicly pledge to veto any UNSC res. calling for a Palestinian state. Reid reportedly hoped that this would give his fellow Senate Democrats more leeway to support the JCPOA with their pro-Israel constituents and donors.

While Obama did not commit to any particular line of conduct, both he and Netanyahu appeared eager to move past their disagreement this quarter and the admin. dispatched Treasury Dept. undersecy. Adam Szubin to Israel (8/28–31) for consultations on the JCPOA’s implementation. In addition to expressing his expectation (8/28) that tension would decrease after the congressional review period ended on 9/17, Obama indicated (8/31) that talks on increasing military aid to Israel should “move forward.” The admin. also announced (9/16) that Netanyahu had accepted an invitation to meet with the pres. on 11/9 in Washington, their 1st face-to-face meeting in over a year (since 10/1/2014; see *JPS* 44[2]). Netanyahu’s stance was nuanced if not ambiguous: he reportedly told Israeli Foreign Ministry officials that he was hoping that talks on increasing military aid would begin after the congressional review period (*Haaretz*, 9/13), and then declared that the tension with Obama had not caused lasting harm to the U.S.-Israeli relationship (*Haaretz*, 9/17). On 10/1, Netanyahu lambasted the nuclear deal in his

UNGA speech and told U.S. officials that this was meant to “close the chapter” on his efforts to block the agreement. The next day, the Israeli PM told Fox News that he was ready to start talking about increased U.S. military aid to Israel.

The 2 sides began negotiations forthwith. As the chair of the U.S. Chiefs of Staff, Joseph Dunford, visited Israel for talks on military cooperation, Israeli amb. to the U.S. Ron Dermer revealed (10/18) that negotiations over a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had begun the previous week. Israeli DM Moshe Ya’alon then visited Washington (10/27–28) to continue talks on the new MoU with his U.S. counterpart, Ash Carter, and other U.S. security officials. The previous MoU, set to expire in 2017, had guaranteed Israel \$30 b. in military aid over 10 years and Israeli officials offered a range of projections for the next 10 years during preliminary talks throughout 2015. While no official details were released, a number of leaks surfaced regarding the figures involved: according to U.S. congressional sources cited on 11/4, the Israeli govt. reportedly asked for \$5 b. per year, or \$50 b. over 10 years; another U.S. source indicated that the admin. was unlikely to meet the full Israeli request and that the final figure would probably be between \$4 and \$5 b. per year (Reuters, 11/4).

Minor controversies surrounding Netanyahu’s 11/2015 trip to Washington rekindled the climate of divergence between the 2 sides. First, Netanyahu’s office announced (11/4) the nomination of Ran Baratz, a right-wing Jewish settler, as head of the National Information Directorate, sparking a minor uproar as the Israeli press uncovered statements by Baratz on Facebook insulting Kerry’s intelligence and accusing Obama of anti-Semitism. Netanyahu responded (11/5) by saying that the statements were “totally

unacceptable” and Baratz issued (11/5) a public apology. Despite the PM’s personal call to Kerry on the same day in which Netanyahu promised to “review” Baratz’s appointment, the issue continued to dominate press coverage related to Netanyahu’s impending visit. Second, employees of the Center for American Progress (CAP), a progressive think tank with close ties to the Obama admin., staged a protest against Netanyahu’s scheduled appearance at CAP on 11/10. Around a dozen staffers read a joint statement at an all-staff meeting on 11/6 denouncing CAP’s decision to approve the Israeli govt.’s request for Netanyahu to visit the center and decrying the patina of bipartisanship that this would provide to the Israeli PM. One CAP staffer was quoted as saying that the joint statement garnered “10–15 seconds” of applause (*Foreign Policy*, 11/9).

In any event, Netanyahu’s trip to Washington went ahead as planned. The discussions (11/9) went well, according to both sides, with Netanyahu saying it was “one of the best meetings” he had ever had at the White House, and Obama calling it “good, on-the-point, and constructive.”

Reducing Aid to the Palestinians

On 9/25, the State Dept. notified Congress of its intention to cut \$80 m. from its funding to programs in the West Bank and Gaza. The dept. had originally requested \$370 m. in fiscal year 2015 for programs including USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) projects and payments to the PA’s creditors. According to a dept. official (*Al-Monitor*, 10/22), State had decided to cut funding by 22% because of “unhelpful actions taken by the Palestinians and constraints on our global assistance budget.” While the cut was not a reaction to the escalating violence in the oPt and the deterioration of the situation in

East Jerusalem, several mbrs. of Congress welcomed it as a rebuke to the Palestinian leadership whom they blamed for inciting violence. On 10/22, Rep. Kay Granger (R-TX) said that it was a “good first step,” and Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY) said, “We need to dial up pressure on Palestinian officials to repudiate this violence.” Engel’s comments came after he voted to approve a symbolic resolution condemning Palestinian incitement passed by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Leaders of the House Subcomm. on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, which controls aid to the Palestinians, threatened to take similar punitive action. In a letter to Abbas (10/20), Subcomm. Chair Kay Granger and ranking mbr. Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY) indicated that future aid could be “severely jeopardized if you continue to abandon direct negotiations with Israel.”

Legislative Crackdown on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement

The legislative crackdown on BDS continued this quarter in 2 state legislatures. On 10/8, the speaker of the Ohio House of Reps., Cliff Rosenberger, announced that “Ohio will fight BDS and boycotts against Israel,” and that work on a new bill along those lines was underway. The bill was expected to mirror South Carolina’s new law barring public entities from entering into contracts with persons or businesses that boycott Israel (see *JPS* 45[1]). On 11/3, New York State Sen. Michael Gianaris announced that he was planning to introduce similar legislation. Although previous anti-BDS bills in the New York State Senate had failed, Gianaris said (11/6) he believed “that the concern regarding the funding of the academic institutions was a freedom of speech issue,” referencing the central legal complaint that

blocked the previous attempts. “In this case, we’re talking about New York making its own decisions about who it invests with and who it doesn’t invest with,” he added.

The PA and PLO on Trial

Last quarter, the PA and PLO began their appeal in New York to the U.S. District Court’s 2/23 verdict finding them liable for \$655 m. in damages on terrorism charges, brought under the Anti-Terrorism Act by 10 U.S. families whose relatives were killed in 6 attacks in Israel between 2002 and 2004 (see *JPS* 44[3–4] and 45[1]). Judge George Daniels ordered (8/24) the PA and PLO to post \$10 m. in cash or bond up front, and an additional \$1 m. per mo. during the appeals process. The bond amount was lower than that sought by the victims’ lawyers. Mitchell Berger, a lawyer for the defense, said (8/24) that although the PA was willing to pay the \$10 m. deposit and make the subsequent payments, there would be “humanitarian consequences” as it would not be able to rebuild a school in Gaza destroyed in the summer 2014 assault and might have to cut some 900 employees from its payroll.

EUROPEAN UNION

Labeling Israeli Settlement Products

With the 7/14 nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 on track for approval, the lengthy European campaign to label products imported from Israel’s West Bank settlements moved forward, culminating in a set of guidelines issued in 11/2015 and putting renewed strain on the EU-Israel relationship. Following the failure of the last round of U.S.-led peace negotiations in 3–4/2014 and Israel’s summer 2014 assault on Gaza, 16 of the EU’s 28 FMs had renewed the call for labeling settlement products in 4/2015 (see *JPS* 44[4]). Last quarter, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini responded to

their call, notifying the EU Council (5/18) that she would soon publish a directive on the subject and discussing the initiative with Netanyahu (5/20).

While Israel intensified its diplomatic campaign to block Mogherini’s efforts, the EU rep. to the PA, John Gatt-Rutter, asserted (8/27) that “there is support within the Union to go on,” and on 9/5 Mogherini indicated that the “work is close to being finished but ongoing.” As Israeli efforts against European labeling grew increasingly vocal (e.g., 9/7, 9/8, and 11/6), U.S. congressional reps. eventually stepped into the fray. On 9/10, the European Parliament passed a symbolic res. (9/10), 525–70, with 31 abstentions, supporting the initiative, lending it further momentum. By early 11/2015, Israeli officials said (11/2) they expected guidelines to be issued soon, and a bipartisan group of reps. from both houses of Congress signed onto letters to Mogherini (11/9, 11/10) stating that labeling would facilitate a “broader boycott of Israel” and that distinguishing Israel from its settlements would “prejudice the outcome of future negotiations.”

On 11/11, the EU Commission adopted a document titled, “Interpretative Notice: On Indication of Origin of Goods from the Territories Occupied by Israel since June 1967” (see Doc. A1), requiring products imported from the oPt to state their national provenance. Thus goods might be labeled “product from the West Bank (Palestinian product)” or “product from the Golan Heights (Israeli settlement).” Because the notice did not introduce any new laws or rules, its enforcement was left up to individual EU mbr. states.

While EU officials took pains to clarify that the guidelines did not constitute a boycott, Tel Aviv responded angrily. On 11/11, the Economy Ministry estimated that implementation of the guidelines could cost



To show their support for Israeli companies based in the occupied West Bank, a group of Christian Dutch activists visit the settlement of Esh Kodesh. The tour was organized by the Lev Haolam foundation, whose chairman, Nati Rom, is seen standing left of center. (10 November, Menahem Kahana/AFP/Getty Images)

Israel as much as \$50 m. per year (Reuters), the Foreign Ministry summoned EU amb. to Israel Lars Faaborg-Andersen for a formal reprimand, and Netanyahu made a statement saying that the EU should “be ashamed of itself.” Israeli officials also postponed a series of scheduled talks with their European counterparts and Pres. Reuven Rivlin canceled an upcoming trip to Brussels in protest. The Palestinians, for their part, welcomed the guidelines: the PLO issued (11/11) a statement endorsing the move and a Hamas spokesperson called (11/12) it a “step in the right direction.” In an apparent endorsement of the rationale behind the measure, on 11/12 a State Dept. spokesperson said the U.S. admin. did not “believe that labeling the origin of products is equivalent to a boycott.”

UNITED KINGDOM

While it had no direct bearing on UK policy toward Israel or the Palestinians this quarter,

Jeremy Corbyn’s victorious bid to lead the Labour Party on 9/12 was widely seen as signaling a shift to the left for the UK opposition. Corbyn, a 32-year veteran of the House of Commons, ran on a progressive platform of economic and foreign policy reform and was quickly embraced by Palestinian solidarity activists in the UK. In an interview with the Electronic Intifada on 8/2, he referred to the Palestinian right of return as “the key” to any resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and endorsed a boycott of products imported from Israel’s settlements.

Also of note: a petition calling for Netanyahu to be arrested on war crimes charges when he arrived in the UK for a state visit collected over 100,000 signatures in 8–9/2015, reaching the threshold necessary for parliament to consider a debate. No debate was held, however, and PM David Cameron’s govt. issued a statement protesting Netanyahu’s diplomatic immunity as

head of state and the Israeli govt.'s "proportionate action to defend itself," in a reference to Israel's summer 2014 assault on Gaza (see *JPS* 44[1]).

UNITED NATIONS

A UNSC Resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

At the end of last quarter, there were 3 UNSC draft res. at play on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: 1 from the French setting a timetable for the end of the Israeli occupation, subsequently subsumed under a larger French peace initiative; 1 from New Zealand announced earlier in the year (4/21) that was to be conditional on the results of France's efforts (see *JPS* 44[4]); and a 3d being coordinated by the Palestinians and the Arab League, relating specifically to Israeli settler violence. Following the UNSC's rejection of a res. setting a timetable on the end of the Israeli occupation in 12/2014 (see *JPS* 44[3]), sporadic efforts to resuscitate the initiative continued throughout 2015, especially after the Obama admin. announced (3/2015) a "reassessment" of its policy, casting uncertainty on the U.S. position (the U.S. veto in the UNSC being the chief obstacle to passing any res. unfavorable to Israel).

The Palestinians continued to work with the Arab League this quarter (see "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" above), and they also coordinated with France as the latter's broader initiative took shape. In advance of the French submission of the draft res., which had been rumored to occur before the UNGA convened in New York in mid-9/2015, PA FM Riyad al-Maliki twice met with his French counterpart in Paris, on 8/18 and 9/10, to discuss the issues at hand. But at a meeting of the Middle East Quartet on 9/30 that he gate-crashed, Laurent Fabius apparently proposed an alternative plan for a follow-up conference in Paris to which

would be convened a number of other states besides those represented inside the Quartet, after having failed to garner the necessary support for the original draft res. A 10/11 *Haaretz* report claimed that Fabius had "said there were many parties pressing for a vote on a Security Council res. on the settlements and the subject was being explored" causing the Israeli cabinet to react angrily. Despite the lack of a draft or proposed text of a French res., *Haaretz* went on to comment that it was not clear how it might differ from UNSC Res. 465—a res. that passed unanimously in 1980 (i.e., without a U.S. veto) declaring the settlements illegal and calling for their dismantlement, as well as the cessation of new Israeli construction.

Spurred on by the escalation of violence in the oPt and the unraveling of the French draft, New Zealand's UN envoys circulated a draft of their res. to the UNSC on 10/23. With a view to restarting peace negotiations, both Israel and the Palestinians were urged to refrain from statements that would prejudice negotiations as well as any unilateral actions, such as settlement expansion or war crimes charges at the ICC, according to the Associated Press (10/29). The draft res. got a critical reception from Israel and the Palestinians. Tel Aviv's UN amb., Danny Danon, described the proposal as "destructive" (10/30) and Palestine's envoy to New Zealand, Izzat Salah Abdulhadi, said "we need more substance." The only other relevant development in this regard came on 10/30, when Russia announced its support for Wellington's initiative.

UNRWA's Financial Crisis

At the beginning of the quarter, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was mired in a funding crisis and it was unclear if the agency would be

able to continue providing its core services through the end of the year. While immediate shortfalls were alleviated by mid-8/2015, underfunding continued to affect Palestinian refugees across the Middle East.

In the words of Comm.-Gen. Pierre Krähenbühl, last quarter UNRWA faced its “most serious financial crisis ever” (see *JPS* 45[1]). As of mid-6/2015, the agency’s general operations fund was \$101 m. in the red and officials feared that the school year in UNRWA’s 685 schools across the Middle East might be delayed, leaving around 500,000 Palestinian children without education. Thanks to pledges from the Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, the UK, and Norway, the deficit had dropped to almost \$70 m. when this quarter opened. Soon afterward, UNRWA confirmed a combined total of more than \$45 m. in new donations from Kuwait (8/17; \$15 m.), the UAE (8/18; \$15 m.), the U.S. (8/18; \$15 m.), and Sweden (8/19; \$1.7 m.), leading to a last-minute announcement that school would open on time (8/24).

In Gaza, however, UNRWA’s funding difficulties were exacerbated by tensions resulting from the territory’s catastrophic economic conditions. On 8/24, the scheduled start of the UNRWA school year, the local staff union went on strike, in protest at the agency’s decision to increase class size and place teachers on unpaid 1-year furloughs in order to balance its books—keeping some 200,000 Palestinian students from attending UNRWA’s 257 schools. The next day, an organization of Gazan parents joined the protest to demand that the number of students be capped at 38 per class as UNRWA disputed their claim that class sizes had increased to 50 students. Amid the ensuing week of protests, Kuwait pledged (8/28) another \$15 m. specifically for the agency’s Gaza schools, 2 days after UNRWA announced

(8/26) plans to build 60 more schools in the oPt, including 40 in Gaza, in an effort to reduce strain on existing infrastructure. The back and forth between the staff union, parents, reps. of local factions, and UNRWA eventually yielded an agreement on 9/9 to end the protests and for UNRWA to cap class size at 39 students, which required it to hire an additional 270 teachers.

UNRWA was able to secure further pledges through the rest of the quarter: \$35 m. from Saudi Arabia (9/10), including \$7.6 m. for Palestinian refugees in Jordan; €30 m. (around \$33 m.) from the EU on 9/30, bringing its total contributions in 2015 to around \$139 m.; and \$5.73 m. in food assistance from Japan (10/30), marking the 4th consecutive year of such assistance from that country. Furthermore, UNRWA announced (10/12) that 22 countries had pledged \$100 m. to the agency’s budget in 2016 at a fundraising conference in New York. Despite these pledges, in an address to UNRWA’s advisory commission on 11/16, Krähenbühl projected a \$135 m. shortfall in 2016, leaving the agency on the brink of another crisis.

UNESCO and Haram al-Sharif

Amid the escalating violence in the oPt in 10/2015, UNESCO’s executive board adopted a res. submitted on behalf of the Palestinians by Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Kuwait. The res. condemned “Israeli aggressions and illegal measures against the freedom of worship and Muslims’ access to . . . Al Aqsa Mosque,” and deplored “the continuous storming” of the mosque compound by “Israeli right-wing extremists and uniformed forces,” as well as “the recent repression in East Jerusalem, and the failure of Israel, the occupying power, to cease the persistent excavations and works . . .

particularly in and around the Old City.” The original text of the res. had included a reference to the Buraq Plaza, which was described as “an integral part of Haram al-Sharif” and is known to Jews as the Western Wall. After Israel had successfully lobbied for the removal of the offending sentence, the executive board approved an amended res., 26–6, with 25 abstentions (plus 1 absence) on 10/21. The Israeli govt. immediately issued a statement condemning the UN agency’s move.

BRAZIL

Precipitating a minor controversy, the Israeli govt. approved (9/6) Netanyahu’s 8/5 appointment of former Yesha Council chair Dani Dayan to be the next Israeli amb. to Brazil. More than 40 Brazilian social movements had signed (8/22) on to a petition calling for their govt. to reject Dayan, citing his connections to West Bank settlements and the implicit endorsement of Israel’s settlement policy conferred by the acceptance of his letter of credentials. After running it by the Israeli govt. for approval, Brazilian pres. Dilma Rousseff reportedly sent backchannel messages to Tel Aviv expressing her displeasure (Ynet, 9/20), in keeping with a practice deemed necessary to avert diplomatic crises in the event of controversial appointments.

Israeli leaders immediately rallied for Dayan. The opposition’s Isaac Herzog (Joint List) and Yair Lapid (Yesh Atid) both spoke (9/20) with Brazil’s amb. to Israel to argue for his appointment to be accepted, and Ya’alon called (9/21) his Brazilian counterpart, Jaques Wagner, to formally request the same. By the end of the quarter, Dayan had still not been formally received in Brasilia and Reda Mansour remained Israel’s amb. to Brazil.

DONORS

The Ad Hoc Liaison Comm. (AHLC), the chief policy-level coordination mechanism for development assistance to the Palestinians, convened on the sidelines of the UNGA meeting in New York on 9/30, chaired as previously (5/27; see *JPS* 45[1]), by Norwegian FM Børge Brende. AHLC ministerial delegations considered reports on the Palestinian economy from the PA, World Bank, IMF, UNESCO, and the Office of the Middle East Quartet. Reaffirming its commitment to the 2-state solution, the AHLC urged both sides to take trust-building steps, reaffirmed the Palestinians’ readiness for statehood, stressed the need for improved economic dialogue and more effective implementation of the Oslo Accords, called for the reconstruction of Gaza to be accelerated, and urged donors to increase assistance to the PA and honor pledges made at the 10/2014 Gaza Reconstruction conference. The AHLC commended the PA for implementing economic reforms and effectively managing the severe liquidity squeeze resulting from Israel’s withholding of Palestinian tax clearance revenues in the 1st half of 2015 (see *JPS* 44[3–4]). In an apparent reference to Gaza, it also welcomed what it called Israel’s recent easing of restrictions on Palestinian movement and access.

Several major transactions and pledges were also made at the meeting. The World Bank transferred (9/21) \$25 m. to the PA for direct budget support and (11/2) \$8 m. for local governance and teacher improvement in the oPt; Japan announced (10/7) a \$4 m. donation to the UN World Food Program for assistance to Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip (see UNRWA’s financial crisis, above); during Indian pres. Shri Pranab Mukherjee’s visit to Ramallah (10/12–13), India announced a \$5 m.

grant to support the PA budget and \$17.79 m. worth of joint capacity-building and educational projects in the oPt. Last but not least, the EU pledged €88 m. (around \$95 m.) for socioeconomic development and institution-building in the oPt (9/10), €18 m. (around \$19 m.) for a new wastewater treatment plant and irrigation system in the West Bank town of Tubas (10/22), and €19 m. (around \$20.8 m.) to help pay PA employees' 10/2015 salaries and pensions (11/4).

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement was launched in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian civil society groups. Its aim is to create an international campaign of boycotts, divestments, and sanctions against Israel “until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights.”

BOYCOTT EFFORTS

The most significant boycott-related developments this quarter took place in the context of U.S. labor unions. United Electric Workers adopted a res. endorsing BDS at its national convention (8/16–20), making it the 1st nationwide U.S. union to join the movement. The res. called for the U.S. to end aid to Israel and for the U.S. to support a peace settlement based on Palestinian self-determination. The union represents around 30,000 workers across the U.S. At its biennial convention (10/29–30), the Connecticut branch of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) passed a res. calling on the national org. to, inter alia, endorse BDS and “urge its affiliates

and related pension and annuity funds to adopt similar strategies.”

There were also noteworthy developments in the debate over a cultural boycott. Following a popular BDS campaign in Spain, the Rototom Sunsplash reggae music festival—one of Europe’s largest—disinvited U.S. Jewish rapper Matisyahu, who was due to perform on 8/22. After the Spanish Foreign Ministry condemned (8/18) the move and accused organizers of anti-Semitism, the festival reinstated (8/19) the invitation and Matisyahu performed on schedule. The campaign’s organizers, BDS País Valencià, explained that they made their original call (8/19) on the grounds that they wanted to hold the festival accountable to its stated goal of supporting “peace, equality, human rights, and justice,” pointing to Matisyahu’s “repeated defense of Israeli war crimes and gross violations of human rights.”

The following month, UK academics and cultural figures sparred publicly over the same issue. On 8/22, the *Guardian* published an open letter opposing the cultural boycott of Israel signed by 150 UK artists and performers, including J. K. Rowling, the author of the best-selling *Harry Potter* series of young adult novels. The letter stated “cultural boycotts singling out Israel are divisive and discriminatory, and will not further peace.” The following week, 343 UK academics published a response in the *Guardian* (8/27) endorsing the academic boycott and saying that they would reject invitations to visit Israeli universities, refuse to serve as referees for Israeli academics, and not attend conferences “funded, organized, or sponsored” by Israeli institutions (see Doc. A2).

In the 10 years since the 2005 launch of the campaign by Palestinian civil society organizations and individuals, BDS efforts have resulted in small, if incremental, changes, but

this quarter, there were indications that major changes were afoot owing to their cumulative effect. In its report to the AHLC (see “Donors” above), the World Bank said (9/30) that Palestinian imports from Israel dropped by 24% in the 1st quarter of 2015, reflecting a reduction in overall economic activity, “but also a growing trend among Palestinian consumers to substitute products imported from Israel by those from other countries” (imports from other countries were up 22% in the same period). Earlier, the NGO Who Profits reported (8/27) that the French multinational corporation Veolia had sold off (8/6) its last shares in companies profiting from Israel’s occupation. Veolia had been the focus of several BDS campaigns and its withdrawal

was the 1st among a number of major BDS targets.

SANCTIONS

There was only 1 major sanctions-related development this quarter. On 8/18, U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) sent a letter to the State Dept. calling for sanctions against the Israeli border police unit responsible for the killing of 2 Palestinian youths in the West Bank on 5/15/2014 (see *JPS* 43[4]). She wrote, “Israel’s treatment of Palestinian youth in the Occupied West Bank is unacceptable and must not be tolerated by the U.S. or the international community” (see *JPS* 43[4]). The letter was McCollum’s 2d in as many mos. condemning aspects of Israel’s occupation.