



Update on Conflict and Diplomacy

16 AUGUST–15 NOVEMBER 2016

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This update is a summary of bilateral, multilateral, regional, and international events affecting the Palestinians and Israel. 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: The surge of violence (*habba*) that began before the Jewish High Holidays in 9/2015 continues to subside, and this year's holidays pass without any major incidents. The Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israeli govt. reach deals on electricity and postal service, but neither alters their positions on a return to final-status negotiations, despite the international community's recent efforts. The Palestinian leadership instead advances initiatives in international institutions, including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The recently reshuffled Israeli govt. launches a new "carrot-and-stick" policy for administering the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), while also struggling with internal differences over Amona, an illegal Israeli settlement outpost, as well as with the settlement enterprise itself. Donald Trump is elected president of the United States, ushering in a Republican-dominated U.S. govt. that portends significant changes to U.S. positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

This quarter marked the 1st anniversary of the eruption of violence, or *habba* (surge or revolt in English), that began in East Jerusalem and the West Bank during the Jewish High Holidays in 9/2015. Although protests, random attacks, and other acts of resistance characterizing the *habba* continued this quarter, violence did not augment in the wake of this

year's High Holidays. Palestinian and Israeli casualty rates remained relatively consistent with the previous 2 quarters. The Israeli govt. intensified its crackdown on the oPt, however, as newly appointed defense minister (DM) Avigdor Lieberman ushered in new policies reinforcing the occupation.

The Israeli govt. and Palestinian leadership made no progress on a return to peace talks, despite repeated interventions from various

mbrs. of the international community, including a new Russian effort. At the same time, Israeli intransigence put the French peace initiative on hold. The Palestinians redoubled their efforts to achieve justice in international institutions, including the UNSC.

REVOLT AND RESPONSE

Near-daily protests, clashes, and random, uncoordinated attacks resulted in the deaths of 23 Palestinians, marking a slight increase over the 18 recorded the previous quarter (see *JPS* 46 [1]). While the number of Palestinian deaths was significantly lower than in comparable periods for late 2015 and early 2016 (see *JPS* 45 [2–4]), the overall death toll since the beginning of the surge reached 250. Meanwhile, 2 Israelis were killed this quarter, bringing the total number of surge-related Israeli deaths to 32. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 640 Palestinians and 33 Israelis were injured as a result of conflict in 8–10/2016, a considerable decrease from the previous 2 quarters, when the corresponding injury figures were 709 Palestinians and 60 Israelis in 5–7/2016, and 1,148 Palestinians and 56 Israelis in 2–4/2016.

Motives for individual attacks were seldom clear and have been hotly disputed throughout the course of the *habba*. While Israel's administrative detentions and punitive village closures, as well as withholding of Palestinian corpses killed during alleged attacks on Israelis, and extrajudicial killings all continued apace, there were few high-profile episodes of intense violence during the 2d half of 2016. Both Israeli and Palestinian media turned their focus to other issues, helping tensions to ease.

Carrots and Sticks

In addition to ramping up the collective punishment of Palestinian communities in the

oPt, Lieberman outlined a new strategy for administering the occupation this quarter, clearly signaling a change in Defense Ministry relations with the Palestinian public and the PA.

Unveiling his new “carrot-and-stick” policy during a press conference in Tel Aviv on 8/17, Lieberman announced that he planned to implement a “differential policy” whereby areas of the oPt with a higher frequency of anti-Israeli attacks would be subject to more severe punishments, including arrests, movement restrictions, and limits on construction, than other areas, which would be eligible for permits for “civilian projects.” An example was Lieberman's approval of the construction of a new hospital in Beit Sahour and a new industrial zone in w. Nablus. The DM also indicated his intention to sideline PA pres. Mahmoud Abbas by establishing “personal dialogue” channels with other Palestinian interlocutors. This tactic included the establishment of a new Arabic-language news site administered by the Coordination of Govt. Activities in the Territories Unit (COGAT) of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Scheduled to launch by 1/2018, the news site was set to receive a NIS 10 m. budget allocation (approx. \$3 m.) to fulfill its mission to report news “from our [Israel's] perspective,” according to Lieberman.

The Palestinian govt. and public were quick to reject Lieberman's announcement. Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Exec. Comm. mbr. Ahmad Majdalani described the plan (8/22) as “a renewed attempt to revive the old Village Leagues . . . in order to bypass the Palestinian leadership, replacing it with new Palestinian partners.” Majdalani predicted that the plan would fail, just as earlier incarnations of it had when, in the late 1970s, Israel canceled local Palestinian municipal elections and created

co-opted Village Leagues in their place (see Yehuda Litani's article "Village Leagues': What Kind of Carrot?" in *JPS* 11 [3] for context and background). Majdalani called on Lieberman to focus instead on implementing existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements. On 8/25, the Private Sector Coordinating Council (PSCC) issued a joint statement rejecting the "carrot-and-stick" approach: "We view the policy proposed to directly contact Palestinian figures, businessmen, and academics and bypass the [PA] and its legitimate leadership under elected Pres. Mahmoud Abbas as amateurish, completely humiliating, underestimating our intellect, and reminiscent of old ideas that are null and void." The PSCC is comprised of reps. of 11 different institutions, including PALTRADE, the Palestinian Federation of Business Associations, and the Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.

Later in the quarter, as tensions grew between Lieberman and Israeli prime minister (PM) Benjamin Netanyahu on 1 side, and Israel's pro-settler extreme right on the other, over the evacuation of an illegal settlement outpost (see "Amona" below), right-wing mbrs. of Netanyahu's coalition criticized Lieberman's policies. *Haaretz* reported (10/27) that Israel's security cabinet had voted on 10/5 to approve a series of Palestinian plans for new construction projects in Area C of the West Bank, but had kept the decision secret for fear of sparking an Israeli settler attack on the projects. After the news came out, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Uri Ariel, a mbr. of the right-wing Jewish Home Party, blamed Lieberman for creating a "miserable reality, in which the settlers get sticks and the carrots go to the Palestinians." Ariel called for the full cabinet to vote on the Lieberman-approved plans,

hoping his party would scupper them, but the vote was not held.

Ariel's accusations notwithstanding, the "stick" aspect of Lieberman's new policy immediately affected Palestinians across the oPt. After killing 2 Palestinians allegedly responsible for ramming and stabbing attacks in the Hebron area on 9/16, the IDF said it would impose strict punishments on the attackers' home villages, including Bani Na'im, which the IDF had targeted for mos. before (see *JPS* 46 [1]). IDF troops carried out aggressive raids and house searches for days following the attacks, provoking further violent incidents and retaliatory restrictions on Palestinian movement (see Chronology for details).

QUELLING DISSENT

Since winning his 4th term in office on 3/17/2015, and then forming the most right-wing ruling coalition in Israel's history, Netanyahu has made it a priority to undermine his political opponents, including the Palestinian minority in Israel and Israel's left-wing parties. This quarter witnessed a continuation of that strategy: Netanyahu authorized an investigation into the finances of a non-Zionist party and led a new effort to marginalize all non-Zionist parties in the Knesset.

On 9/18, the Israeli police launched a series of raids across Israel to arrest 36 Balad Party activists, including party chair Awad Abdel Fattah, for allegedly mismanaging party funds. Dubbing the investigation and arrest campaign "Case 274," the police alleged that Balad officials, as well as their lawyers and accountants, conspired to misrepresent the origin of some party funds by claiming these came from local donors, when they actually originated abroad. Balad, 1 of the 3 non-Zionist parties comprising the Knesset's Joint List, released a statement on 9/18 denying the

accusations: “The Israeli authorities have fabricated new allegations to smear Balad and harm its political work.” Balad countered the police’s allegation with an accusation of its own: “When the Likud Party could not account for 2 m. shekels [approx. \$530,000], the state comptroller imposed a 100,000 shekel fine [approx. \$26,000].” But in the case of the Joint List, the police had arrested dozens of officials, the statement argued, going on to charge that the “frantic campaign” of arrests was a “pretext” for targeting Balad as “part of a plot by the right-wing govt. [to] bring us back to the era when a good Arab was an Arab who adhered to govt. policies.” By 9/26, only 6 of the party activists remained in custody, but the investigation and litigation continued through the end of the quarter. Atty. Gen. Avichai Mandelblit authorized the questioning of 2 top Balad leaders, Knesset members (MKs) Jamal Zahalka and Haneen Zoabi (*Haaretz*, 9/29). After their interrogation, Zahalka accused the police of taking “another step in the political persecution of Balad and the Arab public since the last election.”

As the investigation into the Balad Party’s finances continued, the rift between Zionist and non-Zionist parties in the Knesset widened, particularly during former Israeli PM Shimon Peres’s funeral on 9/30. While dignitaries and leaders from around the world, including Abbas, attended the funeral at the Mount Herzl cemetery in Jerusalem, none of the Joint List’s 13 MKs did. Explaining their boycott earlier in the day, Chair Ayman Odeh cited Peres’s “complicated” history with the Palestinians. While he offered condolences to Peres’s family, he said that he would not participate in a “national day of mourning in which I have no place; not in the narrative, not in the symbols that exclude me, not in the stories of Peres as a man who built up Israel’s defenses.”

Taking issue with the Joint List’s boycott, Israel’s right-wing ruling coalition retaliated. Shortly after the funeral, Lieberman declared that the Joint List had crossed a line. He formally requested that all the ruling parties boycott the party in the Knesset when the winter session started on 10/30. Netanyahu came out in support of his DM’s initiative on 10/9. Joint List officials, however, were resolute in their decision. Odeh, responding to Netanyahu’s announcement on 10/9, said “Lieberman’s initiatives to undermine the political representation of Arab citizens boomerang on him and only . . . strengthens [the Joint List]. We will continue to work in all arenas, including the parliamentary arena, to advance peace and equality.” The next day, Lieberman promised (10/10) to treat Odeh as if he were not a mbr. of the Knesset, “but at most, a mbr. of the Palestinian Council in Ramallah,” heightening tensions in the Knesset as the quarter came to an end.

Right-wing MKs introduced 2 major pieces of legislation this quarter that target the Palestinian minority and persecute coalition opponents. The Knesset’s Ministerial Comm. for Legislation approved (11/13) a bill barring mosques from broadcasting the call to prayer, sending it on to the full plenum for a 1st reading. In addition, the Internal Affairs Comm. approved (11/7) 8–5 a bill authorizing the govt. to bar supporters of any boycott against Israel from entering the country. Israel’s interior minister already has such a right, and although many pro-boycott activists had already been turned away this measure would formalize those decisions and authorize the creation of a list of designated anti-Israel individuals to be barred, absent a waiver from the interior minister on a case-by-case basis. The bill passed its 1st reading in the Knesset on 11/14.

Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan and Interior Minister Aryeh Deri announced a similar anti-boycott bill last quarter (see *JPS* 46 [1]), but failed to articulate its specific provisions. The new bill gave Erdan, Deri, and their supporters a legislative vehicle for their anti-boycott efforts, and analysts estimated it has a good chance of being passed. The new anti-boycott bill is best understood in the context of the so-called NGO bill that passed into law on 7/11. That bill required nongovernmental organizations receiving more than half of their funding from public foreign entities to reveal their backers in certain situations. Right-wing lawmakers justified both initiatives as efforts to defend Israel from meddling by foreign interests although they could also be used to silence opponents of the right-wing govt.

RUSSIA THROWS ITS HAT IN THE PEACE PROCESS RING

The past year witnessed an intensification of international efforts to facilitate a return to Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. The French led the 1st major initiative, culminating in an international conference in Paris on 6/3 that had no discernible impact on the current impasse. As the French opted to carry on without Israeli participation (see “Broader Diplomatic Initiatives” below), Egyptian pres. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi offered to mediate talks between Abbas and Netanyahu amid the Israeli govt. reshuffle last quarter. Since neither Netanyahu nor Abbas evinced any interest in compromising on basic positions, the Egyptian initiative, like the French one, faded into the background (see *JPS* 46 [1]). Russia entered the arena as a new player this quarter, with similar results, and by 11/2016 the Israelis and Palestinians were no closer to resuming direct talks on final-status issues.

In the opening weeks of the quarter, the original version of al-Sisi’s initiative was clearly faltering. On 8/19, Israel Radio reported that Abbas told a visiting Egyptian delegation in Ramallah that he was willing to meet with Netanyahu in Cairo, so long as the Egyptian initiative did not replace the French effort (which Netanyahu had already rejected) and Israel agreed to a series of conditions that Netanyahu had consistently rebuffed. Abbas told the visiting Egyptians that he would attend if Israel enforced a freeze on settlement construction and released the 4th tranche of prisoners that Israel had agreed to free in connection with the so-called Kerry negotiations in 3–4/2014 (see *JPS* 43 [4]). Netanyahu had been open to al-Sisi’s effort, but demanded that talks open without any “preconditions.”

Focus soon shifted away from Egypt, however. After an Israeli delegation met with their Egyptian counterparts in Cairo on 8/21, al-Sisi revealed that he had recently spoken with Russian pres. Vladimir Putin about hosting peace talks in Moscow. Putin reportedly agreed, precipitating mos. of speculation and posturing. While the Israelis appeared open to the Moscow plan—Netanyahu spoke with Putin by phone on 8/23 and had repeatedly said he was open to meeting with Abbas in previous weeks—the Palestinians were hesitant to embrace the idea. Majdalani said on 8/28, “A few weeks ago, they were talking about Cairo and now they’re talking about Moscow, and perhaps in the future, they’ll talk about someplace else. . . . But changing the venue won’t change the Palestinian position, and there are agreements Netanyahu must fulfill, like freezing settlement construction, freeing the 4th tranche of veteran prisoners, and setting a deadline for ending the occupation. Otherwise, any meeting will be superfluous and won’t lead to any

progress.” Majdalani also complained that rumors about a bilateral summit were undermining the ongoing French peace initiative.

Majdalani’s comments illustrated the Palestinians’ ambivalence toward the Russian effort. Abbas and his aides were clearly interested in a meeting but were not willing to dilute their positions. On 8/29, Abbas’s office released a statement reaffirming that he was willing to take part in any peace initiative aimed at a “comprehensive and fair solution.” Majdalani himself noted that Russia would be a more “credible” and “balanced” mediator than the U.S., according to the Israeli press on 9/2.

The Russian initiative picked up steam before falling apart in 9/2016. Netanyahu met with Russia’s Dep. Foreign Minister (FM) for Middle East Affairs Mikhail Bogdanov on 9/5 to discuss the effort. Afterward, his office released a statement saying that he was “always willing to meet Abbas without preconditions, which is why he is considering the Russian pres.’s proposal and the timing of a meeting.” At a press conference in Warsaw the next day, Abbas said that Putin proposed holding the meeting in Moscow on 9/9 and that he had planned to fly there directly from Poland, but that Netanyahu asked for it to be postponed in his 9/5 meeting with Bogdanov. Netanyahu confirmed (9/6) the meeting’s postponement without offering an explanation; he merely reiterated his willingness to meet with Abbas “without preconditions at any time.” A Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson confirmed this chronology of events on 9/8, indicating that Abbas and Netanyahu had not yet agreed to a new date. Despite the meager results, she said that Russia was “pleased with how our initiative was received.”

Although both Abbas and Netanyahu publicly stated their interest in Putin’s offer on

multiple occasions throughout the rest of the quarter, and despite Russian PM Dmitry Medvedev’s assertion (11/11) that it was “still on the table,” no further progress was made, leaving the Palestinians to continue to seek justice in international institutions (see “Palestinians’ Unilateral Efforts” below).

MINOR ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN AGREEMENTS

While Abbas and Netanyahu parried with international efforts to bring them back to the negotiating table for final-status talks, lower-level Israeli and Palestinian officials reached 2 minor agreements this quarter. Although neither had any impact on the occupation, they did resolve some lingering differences.

COGAT chief Yoav Mordechai and PA minister of civil affairs Hussein al-Sheikh signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on 9/4 to improve postal service in the oPt. Taking effect on 9/11, the MoU allowed the PA to administer international mail delivery between the oPt and the rest of the world via the Allenby Bridge border crossing. Previously, mail designated for the oPt would 1st go to Israel and then transfer to local post offices in the West Bank and Gaza. The PA and Israel had agreed in 2008 that the PA should have direct postal relations with the rest of the world, but that agreement never went into effect.

The 2d agreement resolved a more contentious issue: Palestinians’ unpaid debts to the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC) and the IEC’s retaliatory power cuts to areas of the West Bank (see *JPS* 45 [4]). On 9/13, the PA and Israel reached an agreement to administer the repayment of the Palestinians’ debts, which reportedly totaled nearly NIS 2 b. (approx. \$530 m.). The PA agreed to pay a little over ¼ of the debt immediately and Israel agreed to forgive another ¼, leaving the rest for future

repayment. Furthermore, the PA was set to assume control over power lines supplying major West Bank cities for the 1st time since 1994. The IEC announced (10/5) that the PA had transferred NIS 590 m. (approx. \$160 m.) on 10/2, and that the remaining debt would be settled in 48 installments.

BROADER DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES

Palestinians' Unilateral Efforts

As Netanyahu indefinitely delayed a meeting with Abbas in Moscow, the Ramallah-based Palestinian leadership resumed their efforts to obtain justice in international institutions. The PA resuscitated a dormant campaign for a new UNSC res. condemning Israel's settlements; ratcheted up their call for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) to sanction Israeli settlement soccer clubs; launched new battles against Israeli abuses, for recognition in the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and to assert Palestinian rights as a UN non-mbr. observer state at Interpol, the intergovernmental police organization.

UNSC

The Palestinians had suspended their push for a UNSC res. after the U.S. came out firmly against the draft they were circulating in 4/2016 (see *JPS* 45 [4]), but with U.S. pres. Barack Obama nearing the end of his 2d term, reports of a possible change of position cropped up with increasing frequency (see "United States" below). Encouraged by such reports, PA officials resumed their efforts at the UNSC this quarter. The 1st hint of this came on 9/1, when a PA spokesperson said that a recent Israeli announcement of settlement growth demanded "international intervention" and that the Arab ministerial group, which the Palestinians

organized the last time they made a serious push at the UNSC (see *JPS* 45 [3, 4]), would make "contacts at the international level to speed up convening a UNSC session that should pass a res. to stop settlements." During his address to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 9/22, Abbas himself pledged to present the UNSC with such a res.

After Abbas's announcement, the Palestinians started making progress at the UNSC in 10/2016, provoking a U.S. and Israeli backlash. PA FM Riyad al-Maliki said (10/4) that the Arab states had agreed to start consultations with mbrs. of the UNSC in New York in support of an anti-settlement res. by the end of 10/2016. A week later, he announced (10/10) that the UNSC had agreed to hold an informal sharing of views on 10/14, and he hoped the Arab states would be able to finalize a draft res. by the end of the mo. In the lead-up to the 10/14 meeting, Palestinian UN amb. Riyad Mansour said (10/13) he had met with around half of the UNSC's mbrs. in the past 10 days and that he would meet with the rest soon, before reporting back to the Arab ministerial comm. It was only after the 10/14 meeting that Israel and the U.S. got involved. Netanyahu accused B'Tselem and Americans for Peace Now, anti-occupation groups that made presentations at the meeting, of joining the "chorus of slander" against Israel. Other Israeli officials echoed him, including Israel's amb. to the UN, Danny Danon, who said (10/19) he planned to demand that UNICEF and 2 other UN bodies that allegedly fund B'Tselem to end their support. Although U.S. rep. to the UN David Pressman defended B'Tselem and called on all govts. to "protect and create an atmosphere" for all voices to be heard, the U.S. govt. did not shift its basic position on an anti-settlement res. According to a senior Palestinian official on 10/20, both the

U.S. and Egypt had warned the Palestinian leadership behind closed doors against pushing for a UNSC res. until after the 11/8 U.S. presidential election in order to avert a U.S. veto.

FIFA

After the Israeli authorities obstructed the 2016 Palestine Cup last quarter (see *JPS* 46 [1]), the Palestinian leadership resumed efforts to convince soccer's international governing body, FIFA, to sanction Israel. The 2015 effort stemmed from Palestinian complaints about Israeli restrictions on the movement of Palestinian soccer players and the 6 Israeli soccer teams that play in West Bank settlements. FIFA established a monitoring comm. to follow up on the Palestinian grievances on 5/29/2015 (see *JPS* 45 [1]).

Led by Palestinian Football Association chair Jibril Rajoub, the Palestinians called on FIFA's leadership to agree, at their upcoming council meeting in 10/2016, to bring a res. to FIFA's next congress in 5/2017 barring the 6 Israeli settlement-based teams from playing in the Israel Football Association (IFA). Their efforts were boosted on 9/26 when Human Rights Watch released a report concluding that the presence of Israeli teams in the settlements violated FIFA's policies barring games from being held on the territory of another FIFA mbr. without permission. Rajoub met with FIFA secy.-gen. Fatma Samoura in late 9/2016 in Zurich, and she was receptive to the proposed res. Meanwhile, Israeli officials said (10/29) that they had launched several quiet diplomatic measures to block the Palestinians' efforts.

In the days leading up to the council meeting, FIFA pres. Gianni Infantino said (10/6) that resolving the dispute over Israeli settlement teams was a "priority." He met (10/5) with the head of the FIFA monitoring comm., Tokyo

Sexwale, to figure out how to proceed. Meanwhile, Rajoub raised the stakes, threatening to petition the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne if FIFA did not compel Israel to relocate the 6 teams or suspend them from IFA: "Our message to FIFA is clear," he said. "The time has come to decide this issue and bring an end to Palestinian suffering, and thereby grant freedom of action to Palestinian sport and football, on 1 hand, and stop giving legitimacy to clubs active in the settlements, on the other." Rajoub spoke out because the council had reportedly caved to Israeli pressure and agreed only to discuss the issue on 10/13 and 10/14, rather than hold a vote or make a decision. An Israeli official said as much on 10/12: "Until a week and a half ago, we were very worried about what was likely to happen at the FIFA council meeting. . . . Now, we're more relaxed." Rajoub's worries were confirmed when the council delayed (10/14) a decision on the issue, opting instead to wait until Sexwale could deliver a full report. Ultimately, FIFA neither held a vote nor made a decision this quarter, postponing the issue to the 5/2017 congress.

UNESCO

Palestinian efforts at UNESCO were far more fruitful, although they had no major impact in practical terms. Instead, they advanced Palestinian calls for recognition and further exacerbated tensions between the UN and Israel.

With support from Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, and Sudan, the Palestinians advanced a UNESCO res. titled "Occupied Palestine" early in the quarter that condemned Israel's discriminatory administration of Haram al-Sharif and, according to Israeli officials, ignored Jewish connections to the site (see Doc. A1).

UNESCO's executive board had adopted a similar res. on 10/21/2015 in the wake of the *habba* (see *JPS* 45 [2]). Over Israeli objections, UNESCO approved this res. as well by consensus on 10/18. Both major party U.S. presidential candidates, the White House, and Israeli officials from across the political spectrum criticized the agency for downplaying Jewish ties to the site. Education Minister Naftali Bennett pledged (10/14) to suspend Israeli ties with UNESCO, denouncing the res. as a reward for "diplomatic terror." Netanyahu went 1 step further, announcing (10/19) that the Israeli govt. would assist a settler-led archaeological project in East Jerusalem in response. The Temple Mount Sifting Project, as it is known, aimed to sort through debris from an Islamic Waqf excavation in 1999 (Ma'an News Agency, 10/22).

UNESCO's World Heritage Comm. approved a similar res. in a secret ballot the following week. The comm. met on 10/24–26 to wrap up business from the meeting that was cut short by the attempted coup in Turkey in 7/2016 (see *JPS* 46 [1]). Ultimately, the Israelis and their U.S. allies convinced reps. from Croatia and Tanzania to call for a vote on the Haram al-Sharif res., forcing the Palestinians and Jordanians to soften the wording to maintain consensus (they had been hoping to pass the res. without a vote on the basis of unanimity). As a result, the new draft referred to the Western Wall without quotation marks, removed the Muslim name for the wall, and removed the term "occupying" in reference to Israel. Because it still did not include the Jewish name for Haram al-Sharif or highlight Jewish ties to the site, the Israeli govt. rejected it. Netanyahu recalled (10/26) Israel's amb. to UNESCO for consultation and only sent him back on 11/8 for a conditional 2–3-week period. "If we don't receive a positive response to our demands," a

senior Israeli official said (11/8), "the amb. will return to Israel."

INTERPOL

The Palestinians hoped to leverage their non-mbr. observer status at the UN and to secure Interpol's support in prosecuting Palestinian criminals. They won observer status at Interpol in 2011 and applied for full membership in 2015 in the context of several international recognitions of Palestinian statehood (see *JPS* 44 [2, 3, and 4]). Because Interpol's bylaws require an applicant to garner a minimum 2/3 vote from the UNGA's 190 mbrs., and because 130 countries had already recognized Palestine, admission seemed within reach. It was not: only 56 mbrs. voted in favor of Palestinian membership, with 62 opposing and 37 abstaining. Netanyahu lauded (11/8) Israel's diplomats for their "very intensive work" preceding the vote, but Interpol's leadership was unhappy with the process. The agency's exec. comm. released (11/8) a statement announcing the appointment of an official to devise a "clear and transparent process with a defined set of criteria for membership" to be considered at the agency's 2017 meeting in Beijing.

Other Diplomatic Efforts

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

This quarter witnessed developments in the preliminary examination initiated by ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda on 1/16/2015. The ICC is investigating alleged Israeli war crimes committed in the oPt in the summer of 2014.

After the IDF's legal division announced (8/24) that it was closing 7 of its ongoing internal investigations into alleged war crimes perpetrated during the Israeli assault on Gaza in

the summer of 2014, the PA called (8/25) on Bensouda to accelerate her examination on behalf of the victims of the alleged crimes. Of the 360 incidents reviewed by the IDF, only 24 had led to criminal investigations by 8/2016, and only 1 of those led to an indictment—on a count of theft.

A delegation of ICC officials led by Bensouda arrived (10/5) in Israel for a 5-day tour of the region. According to the ICC, the visit was an educational outreach trip to raise awareness about the ICC and the preliminary examination process. ICC officials explicitly stated (10/5) that the tour was not an effort to “engage in evidence collection in relation to any alleged crimes” or to “assess the adequacy of the respective legal systems to deal with crimes that fall within ICC jurisdiction.” According to Majdalani, the delegates refused to meet with the comm. established by Abbas to follow up on the ICC effort.

The Palestinians’ reaction to the ICC trip was mixed. Hamas released (10/8) a statement criticizing the UN court and calling the trip “pointless and useless. . . . It is regrettable that the ICC delegation yielded to the demands of the Israeli occupation to exclude the Gaza Strip from the delegation’s schedule, despite the fact that the Gaza Strip was the main site of Israeli crimes in 2014.” Meanwhile, PLO secy.-gen. Saeb Erekat welcomed (10/8) the ICC delegation, saying “this mission, by establishing and further solidifying a stable 2-way communication, will prove to be a crucial and indispensable component for the steadfast progression of the proceedings.”

A mo. after the trip, Bensouda’s office released (11/14) its annual report, including its 2d preliminary report on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, noting that while Israel disengaged from Gaza in 2005, “it may be

argued that Israel nonetheless remains an occupying power.” The report also noted that Israel annexed East Jerusalem outside the bounds of international law. As expected, the report did not include any conclusive statements about Bensouda’s intentions or the timeline of the ongoing preliminary examination.

THE FRENCH PEACE INITIATIVE

This quarter, in the wake of the international summit in Paris on 6/3, the French peace initiative took a back seat to Egyptian and later Russian efforts to facilitate a meeting between Netanyahu and Abbas. Despite Israel’s rejection of the French initiative, France continued with the 2d phase of its plan, organizing another peace conference to be held in Paris by the end of 2016. French FM Jean-Marc Ayrault reaffirmed the plan on 9/19 at a briefing on the sidelines of the UNGA meeting in New York, stating that France still intended to organize a follow-up conference to present a package of incentives to the Israelis and Palestinians in hopes of reaching a final peace agreement. Ayrault also acknowledged the Egyptian and Russian efforts, saying that “all efforts are in fact complementary of the French initiative.”

Although French and Palestinian attention focused elsewhere over the course of the quarter, both sides maintained support for the initiative. Al-Maliki said (10/10) that work on the French effort was ongoing, and French envoy Pierre Vimont visited Israel and the oPt in early 11/2016 to drum up support. Although Israel’s acting national security advisor Jacob Nagel and special envoy Yitzhak Molcho reiterated Israel’s opposition to the French peace initiative in a meeting with Vimont on 11/7, French diplomats confirmed (11/7) that they would not desist. While Erekat and Abbas reaffirmed support for the French initiative in a

meeting with Vimont later that day in Ramallah, it was unclear what progress, if any, could be realized without Israeli participation (see “Palestinian Opinion” below).

OCCUPATION DATA AND TRENDS

The overall number of Palestinian and Israeli casualties rose slightly this quarter, following a yearlong trend toward falling casualty rates: 32 Palestinians were killed as a result of Israeli actions (up from 23 last quarter), and 2 Israelis were killed as a result of Palestinian actions (down from 6 last quarter). The comprehensive death toll since the beginning of the 2d intifada in 9/2000 reached 10,869 Palestinians (including 56 Palestinian citizens of Israel and 19 unidentified cross-border “infiltrators”), 1,254 Israelis (432 IDF soldiers and security personnel, 246 settlers, and 576 others), and 71 foreign nationals (including 2 British suicide bombers). These numbers include individuals who died in noncombat-related incidents if their death was a direct result of Israel’s occupation or of the ongoing conflict (e.g., ailing Palestinians who died while being denied access to medical care and Palestinians killed in smuggling tunnel accidents). Therefore, a Palestinian prisoner who died of a stroke on 9/25 as a result of complications related to a beating he received at the hands of Israeli prison guards in 2003 is included among the casualties. Excluded from this count is a Jordanian shot and killed by the Israeli police outside the Old City of Jerusalem on 9/16 after he allegedly attempted to stab a policeman.

Overview of the Violence

In keeping with the decreasing number of protests, clashes, and individual-scale attacks, there were relatively fewer Palestinian casualties in the **West Bank** and **East Jerusalem** this quarter, as compared to the peak of the *habba* in

late 2015 and early 2016. Twenty-five Palestinians were killed, up from 15 the previous quarter. Of these, 18 were killed as a result of alleged or actual stabbings or ramming attacks, and 7 sustained fatal injuries in clashes with Israeli forces, including 3 from injuries sustained in 1992, 2002, and 2007. At the same time, the overall number of Palestinians injured in the West Bank and East Jerusalem dropped, according to OCHA, from 624 the previous quarter, to 521 this quarter.

Six Palestinians were killed as a result of Israeli actions in the **Gaza Strip** this quarter, the same total as during the previous 3 mos. Of these, 4 were killed in tunnel collapses or other tunnel-related accidents (9/29, 10/10, 10/22, and 10/24). IDF troops shot and killed 1 child on 10/12 (the IDF denied involvement in this incident after Hamas accused Israeli soldiers of responsibility); and the remaining person sustained (9/9) fatal injuries in clashes with IDF troops along the border fence. At the same time, the number of Palestinians injured in Gaza more than doubled, from 19 in the previous quarter to 61 between 8/16 and 11/14.

Continuing a trend that began with Israel’s assault on the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2014, several intermittent bouts of cross-border violence erupted this quarter, disrupting the relative calm that has characterized the post-assault cease-fire. Seven days witnessed substantial cross-border attacks (8/21, 9/4, 9/6, 9/15, 10/5, 10/6, and 10/24), up from 5 last quarter. On each of those days, Gazan fighters launched rockets into Israel or fired on Israeli soldiers patrolling the border, and the IDF responded with air strikes and artillery fire on alleged Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad military sites. IDF strikes led to substantial damage and at least 10 Palestinian injuries (8/12 [7] and 9/4 [3]), while the Gazan fighters failed

to inflict any damage or injuries inside Israel. On 8/20, the IDF shot down a Hamas drone flying off Gaza's coast, explaining that it would "not permit any violation of its air space," and that it would "act with determination against any such effort." One Israeli fighter pilot was killed on 10/5 when his jet crashed on the return trip from a strafing mission in Gaza.

Meanwhile, lingering tensions between Hamas and the small Islamist groups that oppose its rule in Gaza came to the forefront. In the late spring and early summer of 2015, these groups had launched a series of rocket attacks on Israel as a means of directing Israeli firepower at Hamas, which the IDF holds responsible for all attacks emanating from Gaza (see *JPS* 45 [1]). Reviving this tactic, Islamist groups claimed the rocket attacks on 8/21, 10/5, and 10/6. After the 10/6 attack, a Salafi leader in Gaza, Abu Bakr al-Maqqdisi, threatened (10/6) more rocket attacks against Israel unless Hamas released 5 imprisoned mbrs. of his group. It was not clear whether al-Maqqdisi spoke for the organization responsible for the rocket attacks on 10/5 and 10/6, but his threat fit these groups' established pattern since 2015.

The IDF continued its strict enforcement of Israel's unilaterally defined buffer zone, or Access Restricted Areas (ARA), along the border fence and off of Gaza's coast this quarter. IDF troops opened fire on Palestinian farmers, shepherds, and bird hunters working in the ARA on at least 16 occasions (down from 20 last quarter), injuring 3 Palestinians and killing 1, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza (as mentioned above, the IDF denied responsibility for this killing). The IDF also arrested 6 Palestinians attempting to cross into Israel (8/16 [4], 9/3, and 10/3), opened fire on Palestinian land or property at least 11 times (9/4, 9/11, 9/21, 10/2, 10/14, 10/15, 10/30,

11/1 [2], 11/11, and 11/13), and violently dispersed Gazan protesters gathering along the border fence at least 11 times (8/19, 8/26, 9/9, 9/16, 9/23, 9/30, 10/7, 10/14, 10/21, 10/28, and 11/11). As in each of the last 2 quarters, Israeli forces conducted 15 limited incursions to level land along the fence (8/24, 8/31, 9/7, 9/14, 9/15, 9/20, 10/6, 10/9, 10/19, 10/26 [2], 10/27, 10/31, 11/1, and 11/9) this quarter.

Finally, Israeli naval forces continued harassing Palestinian fishermen off Gaza's coast purportedly to enforce the new 9 naut. mi. fishing zone (see "Movement and Access" below). They fired warning shots or otherwise confronted fishermen on 50 occasions (up from 36 last quarter and 22 the quarter before that). These incidents led to 5 Palestinian injuries (8/25, 9/19, 10/29, 11/1, and 11/6) and 23 arrests and detentions (8/21 [2], 8/25, 8/27 [2], 8/29 [2], 9/8 [6], 10/7 [2], 11/1 [6], and 11/15 [2]). Israeli naval forces also confiscated 5 fishing boats (8/27, 10/7, 11/1 [2], and 11/15) and damaged at least 3 (8/25, 9/19, and 9/24).

Movement and Access

The most significant impact on Palestinian movement and access under occupation stemmed from the Egyptian authorities more than doubling Rafah border crossing openings this quarter. Thus, the Egyptian authorities were able to give Gazans waiting for access to healthcare and those stranded in Egypt welcome relief. Egypt opened the crossing for 21 days (8/30, 8/31–9/1, 9/3–7, 9/18, 9/21–23, 10/15–16, 10/19–23, and 11/14–15), up from 9 and 5 respectively, in each of the previous 2 quarters. More than 8,429 Palestinians were able to leave Gaza and more than 8,809 were able to enter, according to OCHA. Conditions at the crossing, however, appeared to be deteriorating. According to Al Jazeera on 9/5, many travelers reported that adults paid around

\$3,000 in bribes to Egyptian border officers and Palestinian brokers to secure passage, and that some officials asked for bribes of up to \$10,000 to get a single person off a “blacklist” of individuals barred, for whatever reason, from using the crossing.

Israeli restrictions on Palestinian movement in **Gaza** did not change this quarter, effectively leaving the blockade in place. Furthermore, there were new indications that Israel’s claims about lifting restrictions in the wake of the 2014 assault were even hollower than they appeared. Amira Hass wrote (10/19) in *Haaretz* that the Shin Bet had revoked the permanent exit permits of 12 of 14 senior functionaries at the PA’s civil affairs commission in Gaza. All 14 of the senior officials had held their positions since 2007 or earlier, acting as mediators between Palestinian civilians and the Israeli authorities on issues relating to exit permits and the entry of construction materials. A spokesperson for the commission said that he believed the move was part of Israeli DM Lieberman’s new “carrots-and-sticks” policy to communicate directly with Palestinian citizens, rather than through Palestinian institutions (see “The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict” above). Officials at the commission said that COGAT had revoked their permits for “security reasons.” A COGAT spokesperson confirmed that report, saying “there has been no change in the COGAT policy in which we work opposite the Palestinian civil comm. in the Gaza Strip,” but that “it has recently been decided by the security bodies to reexamine entrance permits into Israel for everyone leaving the Gaza Strip, including mbrs. of the comm.” Hass reported that COGAT has been approving fewer Gazan applications for travel permits, by percentage, since 2013. Citing the Israeli NGO Gisha, she noted that 82% of exit permit applications were

approved in 2013, while only 77%, 60% and 46% had been approved in each subsequent year (2016’s figures only cover the 1st 9 mos. of the year). Moreover, the monthly number of Palestinians exiting Gaza dropped this quarter to levels not seen since the aftermath of Israel’s summer 2014 assault on Gaza (see figure 1).

After temporarily extending the fishing zone off Gaza’s s. coast from 6 to 9 naut. mi. earlier in 2016 (see *JPS* 45 [4] and 46 [1]), the Israeli authorities considered a further temporary extension this quarter. According to a Palestinian official on 10/25, they planned to expand the fishing zone from 6 to 9 naut. mi. across the entirety of Gaza’s coast for all of 11/2016. COGAT confirmed this (10/26) and a spokesperson explained that the expansions were meant to “facilitate increased activity in [the] Gaza Strip’s fishing sector, which is an [important] source of income.” However, COGAT postponed the expansion 3 times, and by the end of the quarter, the fishing zone was still 6 naut. mi., denying Gaza’s fishermen access to the more bountiful waters further from the coast. After the 3d postponement, COGAT said (11/6) that the Palestinians had not fulfilled their commitments, specifically that they had yet to provide some kind of monitoring vessel “to ensure that there are no infractions in the enlarged fishing zone and to maintain order between the fishermen.”

Although the IDF continued to mount nr.-daily raids, house searches, and mobile checkpoints across the **West Bank** and **East Jerusalem**, the Israeli crackdown on the *habba* was most severe in Hebron, especially after the string of random individual attacks in the region in 9/2016 (see Chronology for details). Nevertheless, the Israeli authorities did lift some restrictions for Eid al-Adha (9/11–15): the Defense Ministry permitted

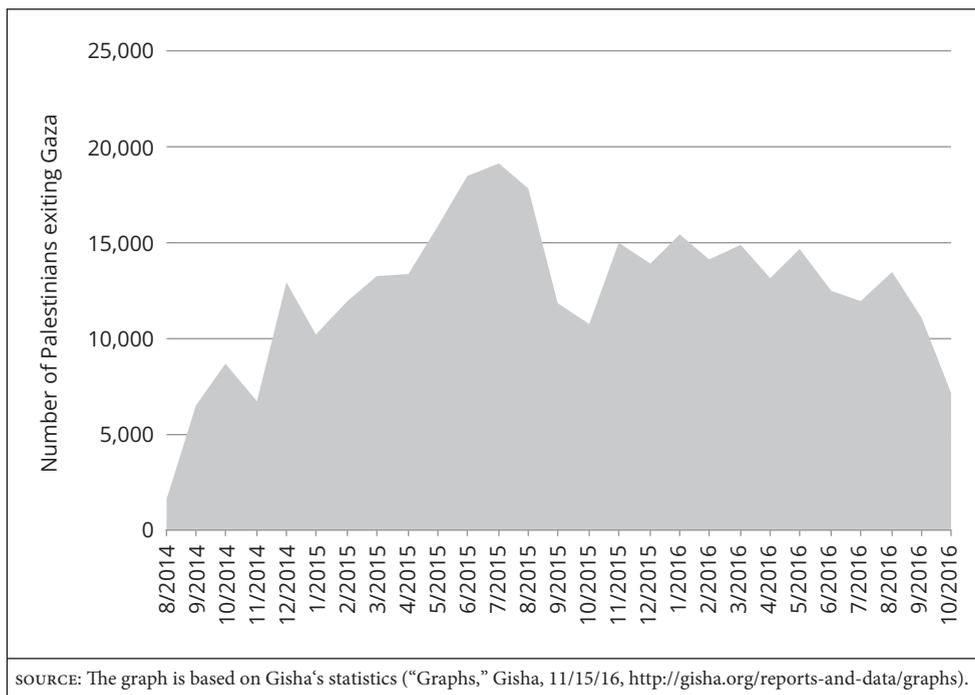


Figure 1. Exits of Palestinians via the Erez border crossing, 8/2014–10/2016.

100,000 West Bank Palestinians to visit their families in Israel for the holiday, extended the hours at border crossings in and out of Gaza and the West Bank, and allowed married men aged 45 and over and women aged 30 and older to visit Haram al-Sharif.

In a related development, Israel indefinitely extended a ban on the entry of 2 Palestinian food companies' products. One of the 2, Hamoda, was 1st banned from Israel in 3/2016 (along with 4 other Palestinian dairy companies) on the grounds that it did not adhere to Israeli labeling specifications. At the time, a Hamoda official said that since around 50% of the company's goods were sold in Israel, the ban had a serious impact on company revenues. It was unclear when the ban on Pinar, the 2d company, came into force.

Settlement Growth

The right-wing Israeli govt. under PM Netanyahu continued developing and expanding Israel's settlements in the **West Bank** and **East Jerusalem** this quarter, drawing increasingly sharp criticism from the Palestinians and the international community.

In and around **East Jerusalem**, the Israel Land Authority and Ma'ale Adumim Economic Development Company opened (8/20) 4 tenders for leasing land, establishing a new hotel, and constructing a new park in the settlement. Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz revealed (11/1) plans for 4 new light rail stops in settlements nr. the city, including at Ma'ale Adumim. The PA's Foreign Ministry complained (11/1) that Katz's plan would "undermine territorial continuity of the West Bank and transform it into disconnected

cantons, making it impossible for the Palestinians to continue to live there.” On 11/12, the Jerusalem Municipality approved the construction of 181 new residences in the Gilo settlement.

There were even more major announcements of new settlements and settlement growth in the **West Bank**. The Israeli NGO Peace Now reported (8/21) that renovations were underway at an IDF compound in Hebron to make way for the expansion of an Israeli settlement in the area. Israel’s Housing Ministry planned to build 28 new housing units nr. Hebron, allowing around 100 new settlers to move in, according to a follow-up report on 8/23. The following week, the High Planning Comm. of Israel’s Civil Admin. revealed (8/31) plans for the construction of 463 new settler residences in the West Bank, including approval for 234 homes in the Elkana settlement, 31 in Beit Arye, and 20 in Givat Ze’ev. The comm. also retroactively legalized 178 homes built in Beit Arye in the 1980s. Later in the quarter, *Haaretz* reported (11/2) that settlers from Ariel had recently erected 16 new buildings on territory that did not belong to the state, meaning that construction there should have been illegal under Israeli law. Meanwhile, a group of settlers began construction on a new illegal settlement outpost in the n. Jordan Valley in late 9/2016. COGAT said (10/20) it delivered a stop-work order to the site, but as of 11/5, the settlers had started construction on another unauthorized outpost in the area.

A change in Israeli policy accompanied the last major settlement announcement of the quarter. Hours after the IDF had dismantled (9/6) an Israeli settlement outpost nr. Hebron, displacing 10 families, the Israeli authorities initiated a new procedure, approved by Lieberman, requiring the DM’s office to oversee

the dismantlement of any outpost. Previously, COGAT was able to carry out these operations without oversight. The newly instituted procedure will make it more difficult for the army to demolish and dismantle other illegally constructed outposts in the West Bank.

AMONA

The Israeli govt. faced criticism and pushback on settlement policy from the right-wing flank of Netanyahu’s ruling coalition this quarter. The bone of contention was the High Court of Justice’s 12/2014 ruling that the Amona outpost nr. Ramallah had to be evacuated and demolished by 12/25/2016 because it was built on private Palestinian land. In the mos. leading up to the court-ordered evacuation date, Amona’s residents and their allies in the Knesset explored numerous avenues to reverse the High Court’s ruling and to preserve their outpost. Netanyahu, meanwhile, struggled to balance between the need to keep his ruling coalition together and the desire to rebuff international criticism. Netanyahu’s balancing act became more urgent in light of U.S. pres. Obama’s rumored end-of-term “peace push” (see “United States” below).

The conflict between Netanyahu’s govt. and the settlers started heating up in late 9/2016. As the govt. explored ways to relocate Amona’s residents to another settlement, the 40-odd families living in the outpost firmly refused to move. Then, 25 of Likud’s 30 MKs signed (9/18) a petition calling for legislation to retroactively authorize Amona. Education Minister Bennett, a staunch supporter of the settlement enterprise, called (9/25) the Likud MKs “weak and lazy” for merely signing a petition. He announced that he was drawing up a bill that would “legitimize in one thrust” all Israeli construction in the

West Bank, effectively preempting any court-ordered demolitions of outposts like Amona.

While Bennett and other right-wing MKs jockeyed for position as the pro-settlement vanguard, Netanyahu attempted to avert conflict. According to Peace Now on 10/1, Israel's Civil Admin. had advanced plans to build a new settlement outpost nr. Nablus to relocate Amona's residents in 98 new housing units. The international backlash to Peace Now's report was swift. White House press secy. Josh Earnest offered (10/5) an uncharacteristically harsh rebuke, saying "We had public assurances from the Israeli govt. that contradict this new announcement—so when you talk about how friends treat each other—this is also a source of concern." Netanyahu then called U.S. secy. of state John Kerry on 10/8 to respond, contending that the plan was not for a new settlement, but rather, for alternative housing for the Amona evacuees. He also said that the plan would not go forward unless he failed to find some other resolution to the Amona issue. While Netanyahu was assuaging U.S. fears, he was also telling a group of Likud activists, some of whom were residents of Amona, that any "unwise conduct" on Israel's part prior to Obama's departure from office in 1/2017 could "endanger the settlement enterprise," implying that the Obama admin. might take steps to sanction the settlements (Israel's Channel 2, 10/19). Netanyahu's office denied (10/19) the report, but noted that U.S. presidents have in the past used their final mos. in office to make statements on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Bennett and the other partisans of Amona did not heed Netanyahu's warnings. Throughout 10/2016, the settlers turned up the pressure as Netanyahu struggled fruitlessly to achieve a resolution. On 10/12, Bennett issued the PM an ultimatum: either stay the evacuation order,

or the Jewish Home Party would leave the ruling coalition. Netanyahu then met (10/13) with Bennett and Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, Bennett's chief lieutenant in Jewish Home, and promised to petition the High Court of Justice to delay the evacuation order by 6 mos., according to sources close to the meeting. By the end of the mo., however, Netanyahu had yet to formally petition the court. An Israeli source said (10/29) that he was delaying because Shaked, who was taking the lead on the issue, had not yet prepared an alternative housing option for Amona's residents. Meanwhile, Bennett impatiently reiterated his support for a so-called regulations bill to retroactively legalize all 232 Israeli settlement outposts established in the West Bank with state support. He pledged to bring it to a Knesset comm. on 10/30, saying, "We've tried solving this crisis in other ways, but there's been a constant foot-dragging . . . there is no other way to solve the crisis, so we're going to submit the bill."

Netanyahu scrambled to avert the so-called regulations bill in late 10/2016 and 11/2016, but was unable to achieve a compromise. Ahead of the Knesset Ministerial Comm. for Legislation's preliminary hearing on a draft of the bill, Netanyahu pulled Bennett and Shaked aside to discuss it with Dep. Atty. Gen. Avi Licht, who informed them that Atty. Gen. Mandelblit would not defend the bill in front of the High Court if the comm. approved it. As Bennett and Shaked would not relent, Netanyahu postponed the comm.'s meeting by a week, purportedly to give the govt. time to finalize its alternative housing proposal (i.e., the 98 units nr. Nablus). The next day, in a speech marking the 1st day of the Knesset's winter session, Netanyahu announced that he would "continue to take care of settlement in Judea and Samaria"

and that Israel's state attys. had petitioned the High Court that morning to suspend, for 7 mos., the Amona evacuation order to give the govt. time to secure bureaucratic approval for their alternative housing plan.

After Netanyahu postponed (11/6) the comm.'s consideration of the original regulations bill by an additional week, the comm. had had enough. Over his and Mandelblit's objections, they unanimously approved a draft of the bill on 11/13 retroactively legalizing all 232 Israeli settlement outposts established with state support in the West Bank, such as Amona, and compensating Palestinian landowners by paying them 125% of what the govt. deemed their land's worth. The High Court then rejected (11/14) the State's petition for a postponement on its evacuation order, and both the Palestinians and the international community resumed their chorus of criticism.

As the quarter came to a close, both the Israeli govt. and the settlers were preparing for a potentially violent confrontation in 12/2016. At an emergency meeting on 11/14, Amona's residents pledged to resist any attempt to demolish their homes and planned to erect a tent city outside their outpost to house others who might flock to their aid. Furthermore, their spokesperson pledged to "stand here like a bulwark," and called for passage of the regulations bill. Meanwhile, Mandelblit said that the govt. must follow the High Court's order rather than accept the unconstitutional regulations bill, and Lieberman called on Amona's residents and protesters to avoid confrontations with the IDF.

Palestinian Prisoners

Two major legislative developments affected the status of Palestinian prisoners this quarter. First, Israel's High Court of Justice upheld

the law, passed 7/30/2015 (see *JPS* 45 [1]), allowing the Israeli authorities to force-feed hunger-striking Palestinian prisoners if the atty. gen., a district court, and a doctor agreed that the strike in question was causing irreparable damage or threatening the prisoner's life. Second, the ruling coalition submitted a bill for consideration in late 10/2016 giving the DM expanded powers to detain citizens without charge. This new bill would replace an "emergency" regulation in place since Israel's founding with a permanent law allowing the DM to indefinitely detain Israeli citizens without charge, ban them from certain professions, confine them to specific locales, and forbid them from contacting certain people. The bill was originally a part of the broad counterterrorism bill that passed in 6/15/2016 (see *JPS* 46 [1]).

These new developments came at a time of increasing urgency for Palestinians in Israeli prisons. According to the Palestinian prisoners' rights NGO Addameer, the number of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel remained at 7,000 through the quarter, having 1st reached that threshold in 2/2016 (see *JPS* 46 [1]). One Palestinian prisoner died of a stroke on 9/25 in connection with injuries he sustained when Israeli guards assaulted him in 2003, drawing accusations of negligence from the Palestinians and the international community. At the same time, other prisoners undertook a series of short-term mass hunger strikes and long-term individual strikes to keep up the pressure on the Israel Prison Service (IPS). Their struggles brought renewed attention to the Israeli carceral system's abuses and catalyzed Palestinian protests across the oPt.

As the quarter began, Bilal Kayed, 1 of the prison chapter leaders of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), had been on hunger strike for 2 mos. and his health had

deteriorated dramatically. His struggle against the Israeli policy of administrative detention resonated with the Palestinian public—there were protests in Gaza City, outside Ofer Prison, and in Ramallah on 8/18 and 8/22. Robert Piper, the UN’s resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator for the oPt, said (8/20) he was “deeply concerned” about the “egregious” treatment Kayed was receiving. In the end, Kayed’s lawyers made a deal with the IPS, announcing (8/19) that he had suspended his strike after 71 days in exchange for being released at the end of his 6-mo. detention in 12/2016.

As Kayed neared the end of his detention, 3 other Palestinian prisoners captured the public’s attention. Brothers Muhammad and Mahmoud al-Balboul, a dentist and a student at Al-Quds University, respectively, were arrested on 6/9 during a late-night raid on their home and sentenced to administrative detention. Protesting their detention without trial, as well as the detention of their sister on charges relating to an alleged stabbing attack in 4/2016, and the killing of their father, a Fatah official, in 2008, they began a hunger strike on 7/4 and 7/7. Malik al-Qadi, a journalism student at Al-Quds University, joined them on 7/16. He had been rearrested and held without trial on 5/23, shortly after being released from a previous 4-mo. detention.

As the quarter began, the health of the 2 brothers and al-Qadi began deteriorating. Muhammad al-Balboul was rushed to Wolfson Medical Center in Tel Aviv on 9/1, joining al-Qadi in emergency care. He then suffered a loss of vision for 5 days in early 9/2016. Mahmoud was moved to intensive care at Assaf Harofeh Medical Center on 9/4. Even after an Israeli court suspended his detention on 9/9, al-Qadi refused to end his strike and fell into a coma on 9/10. Israel’s High Court of Justice

then rejected (9/13) an appeal to release al-Qadi, drawing renewed protests from the Palestinian public. More than 100 prisoners launched (9/14) a hunger strike in solidarity and hundreds of Palestinians gathered (9/16) in Jenin to demonstrate their support for the 3 men.

After coming out of his coma on 9/18, al-Qadi released (9/19) a statement addressed to PA pres. Abbas and the Palestinian people: “Don’t leave us alone! I ask Pres. Mahmoud Abbas to intervene as quickly as possible, and I ask every holder of a Palestinian identity document who has conscience to support us in this battle.” Two days later, the Israeli authorities opted not to renew the 3 men’s administrative detentions, and all 3 ended their hunger strikes. Palestinian Prisoners Affairs Comm. chair Issa Qaraqe said (9/21) that they were released “as a result of political efforts by Pres. Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian leadership, and intense efforts on all levels.” Visiting al-Qadi in person on 9/30, Abbas stressed that the plight of Palestinian prisoners was a priority for his govt. Al-Qadi returned home to Bethlehem on 10/2, and the Balboul brothers were set for release on 12/8.

Although those 3 hunger strikes were the most dramatic of the quarter, they were not necessarily the most impactful. On 10/24, Samer al-Issawi, who ended his own 266-day hunger strike in 4/2013 (see *JPS* 42 [3, 4]), and Munther Snawbar went on hunger strike in solidarity with female Palestinian prisoners, who had been complaining about a lack of access to medical care and cumbersome trips from their prisons to court. Eleven days later, the IPS relented (11/6) and agreed to some of the female prisoners’ demands: said prisoners were transferred to a prison closer to the court where detainees are tried; and a ban on families visiting their incarcerated daughters loosened.

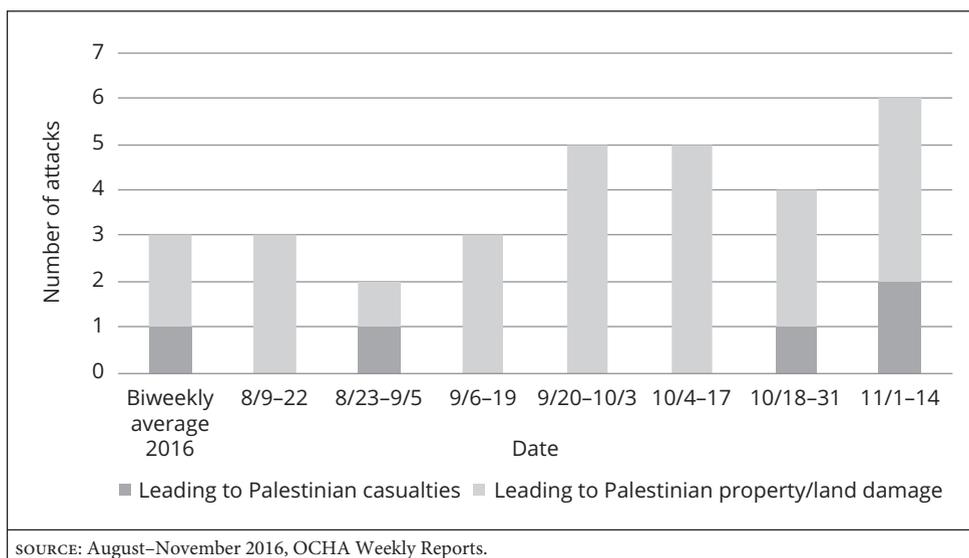


Figure 2. Israeli settler attacks.

At the very end of the quarter, Shaykh Raed Salah, the head of the now-disbanded Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, which the Israeli govt. outlawed on 11/16/2015 (see *JPS* 45 [3]), announced (11/13) a hunger strike to protest his solitary confinement. He began serving a 9-mo. sentence in 5/2016 on charges of incitement to violence in connection with a speech he had given in 2007. Because Salah is such a prominent figure, his strike had the potential to significantly increase pressure on the IPS and the Israeli authorities.

Settler-Related Violence

In keeping with the general downward trend in violence across the oPt this quarter, settler-related incidents also fell: down from 35 the previous quarter, there were 28 instances of settler attacks on Palestinians or their property between 8/9 and 11/14, according to OCHA's report. Of these, 24 led to property damage and 4 led to Palestinian injuries (see figure 2 and Chronology for details). The 2 fatal bouts of

settler-related violence were otherwise typical incidents. An Israeli settler crashed his car into a Palestinian couple and their horse-drawn cart nr. Qalqilya on 10/25, fatally injuring the man. Another settler crashed his car into a 6-year-old Palestinian girl outside Bethlehem on 9/10, killing her on the spot. While witnesses of the latter incident said it appeared to be an accident, the driver's intentions were unclear.

Demolitions and Displacement

Although Israel demolished more Palestinian structures this quarter than last, the overall pace of demolitions was much slower than at the height of the *habba* (between 11/17/2015 and 5/16/2016), when the IDF destroyed 654 structures in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. According to OCHA, Israeli forces destroyed a total of 267 Palestinian structures in the oPt (223 in the West Bank and 44 in East Jerusalem) between 8/9 and 11/14. These demolitions led to the displacement of 382 Palestinians, almost double the previous quarter's 185.

While the overall pace of demolition picked up relative to the previous quarter, the percentage of demolitions carried out as collective punishment for individual Palestinians' alleged crimes against Israelis decreased. There were only 2 reported punitive demolitions (8/30 and 10/11), and 1 partial demolition (9/26) this quarter (see Chronology for details). The IDF punitively demolished 13 homes in their entirety and parts of 4 others over the course of the previous 2 quarters.

INTRA-PALESTINIAN DYNAMICS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS MISFIRE

After Qatar's attempt to kick-start a Palestinian national reconciliation process stalled last quarter (see *JPS* 46 [1]), the PA decided to hold a round of municipal elections in 10/2016, the 1st since 2012. Given Hamas's announcement in 7/2016 that it would participate in local elections, this would have been the 1st time Hamas and Fatah faced off at the ballot box since 2006 (see *JPS* 35 [3]). However, the major issues obstructing reconciliation also hindered the elections effort, leaving PA pres. Abbas to explore other ways of consolidating Fatah's power. Once the ballot exercise was shelved, Abbas reached out to Hamas's leadership in an apparent attempt to resume the reconciliation process and to ward off regional actors' efforts to influence the power struggle anticipated following his retirement.

Despite the campaign season's acrimony the previous quarter and through the 1st 2 weeks of the current 1, the vote was set for 10/8, and all signs indicated it would proceed as planned. On 8/15, 5 left-leaning parties announced they would run on a joint list called

the Democratic Alliance. They included the PFLP (the largest of the 5), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Palestinian People's Party, the Democratic Union (FIDA), and the newly formed Palestinian National Initiative. The day before the deadline to submit nominations, the Central Election Commission (CEC) reported (8/24) "remarkable activity and heavy turnout from those running for election" throughout urban municipal areas, indicating a strong interest in the election process.

Hamas, for its part, was planning to support sympathetic or affiliated candidates in the West Bank, rather than running on a separate list. Former PLO legal advisor Diana Buttu described the move as a "win-win" for Hamas, since the party could claim a victory if its affiliated candidates did well and would avoid the sting of defeat if they lost.

But the election process hit some bumps in 8/2016 and into 9/2016. Although this was not the 1st time that Hamas and Fatah officials accused each other of obstructing their favored candidates, Hamas escalated the accusations, filing a formal complaint with the CEC on 8/30 that claimed Fatah violations, including "threats, summons, arrests, shootings, improvised explosive devices, and house raids." Later that week, the CEC announced (9/4) that 163 objections had been filed against various candidates in the West Bank and Gaza, and that 7 had been disqualified, including 4 Fatah candidates in Gaza. Hamas-run courts disqualified 5 more Fatah candidates on 9/8, effectively removing Fatah from 9 of Gaza's 25 races. The Palestinian Supreme Court put (9/8) a temporary freeze on the elections, delaying them through 12/21, on the grounds that "the [elections] must deal with the homeland as 1 unit, and with the faltering measures in Jerusalem and the procedural problems in

Gaza,” postponement was in order. Pointing out that the court was made up of presidential appointees, and that Abbas had been pres. since 2005, Hamas denounced the decision and called the freeze “political.”

Through the end of 9/2016, the ballot exercise was further compromised and the temporary freeze began to look more like a full cancellation. Following a request from the public prosecutor’s office, the Supreme Court postponed (9/21) its final decision on the elections to 10/3. At the same time, the CEC confirmed that it had suspended all ballot preparations, pending the court’s decision. On 10/3, the court reversed its position on considering the Palestinian-held areas as 1 territory, ruling that the vote would proceed on 10/8 in the West Bank only, as it had in 2012, arguing that the Hamas-run judiciary operating in Gaza was “illegal.” Hamas again rejected the decision, with several of its officials alleging that the court was interfering to obviate a Fatah defeat. The CEC reaffirmed (10/3) its original position that holding the election in the West Bank alone would exacerbate Fatah-Hamas tensions and recommended postponing the election by 6 mos. After a meeting of the PA cabinet, PM Rami Hamdallah announced the govt. would follow the CEC’s recommendation and postpone the ballot, pushing it back a further 4 mos., to 2/2017. In the meantime, the PA announced (10/11) that all municipal councils that had resigned ahead of the 10/8 vote would continue work as usual until the election could proceed (see “Palestinian Opinion” below).

ABBAS CONSOLIDATES POWER

Abbas’s declining health—the 81-year-old pres. was hospitalized briefly on 10/6 after suffering chest pains—catalyzed much of the intra-Palestinian politicking this quarter.

Abbas’s supporters, allies, and rivals jockeyed for position in the upcoming struggle over succession expected to follow his retirement from public life. Abbas himself took steps to ensure that succession would proceed on his terms.

Further increasing the pressure on the Palestinian pres. and his would-be successors, unrest and anti-PA sentiment appeared to be on the rise in the West Bank early in the quarter, especially in Nablus, where the PA Security Forces (PASF) were cracking down on alleged weapons dealers and other wanted criminals. On 8/18, PASF troops conducted a series of raids in Nablus, sparking clashes and brief firefights in which 2 PASF troops were killed. In the aftermath, the PA intensified its crackdown: on 8/23, PASF troops beat to death Ahmad Izzat Halaweh, a Fatah military leader, as he was being held in Nablus in connection with the 8/18 killings and Nablus’s population began (8/23) a general strike in protest. The escalating tensions prompted Hamdallah to meet with Nablus gov. Akram Rajoub on 8/27 in an attempt to defuse the situation. After the meeting, Hamdallah vowed to resign if his govt. failed to arrest all wanted criminals fueling so-called security chaos (*falatan amni*) in the West Bank, and both the crackdown and protests continued. Around 12,000 Palestinians attended a funeral for the slain Fatah military leader on 8/28, and many of them marched through Nablus afterward, chanting anti-PA slogans.

As the protests and low-level violence continued, a regional intervention in internal Palestinian politics threatened to undermine Abbas. On 8/31, *Times of Israel* reported that the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE had been pressuring Abbas into reconciling with Mohammad Dahlan, the Fatah strongman who has lived in the UAE since his expulsion

from the party in 2011. In the preceding 18 mos., Dahlan had made several moves hinting at his planned return to Palestinian politics and a possible run for the presidency (see *JPS* 44 [4], 45 [1], and 46 [1]), but this was the 1st indication that he enjoyed broader support in the region. Although there had been rumors of regional machinations the previous quarter, current reports prompted Abbas to accuse (9/3) unnamed “capitals” of attempting to influence Palestinian politics, stating that “relations with everyone must be good, but no one will dictate to us any position or idea.” Abbas then launched a multifaceted effort to manage his succession on his own terms.

First, the pres. made moves to convene Fatah’s 7th General Congress. The party had not held a general congress since 2009, and the congress before that one had taken place 20 years earlier. A 7th congress would offer the party a chance to rededicate itself to its platform and elect new leaders, by Abbas’s reckoning, and improve his ability to transfer power piecemeal to his preferred deputies rather than to rivals such as Dahlan. Reports of the proposed congress continued to trickle out of Ramallah throughout 9/2016 and 10/2016, and Abbas ultimately announced (11/1) that it would be held on 11/29.

Abbas also purged suspected Dahlan supporters from Fatah. On 10/22, he expelled senior official Jihad Muhammad Tamliya as well as Fatah’s Jerusalem spokesperson, Raafat Elayyan. Tamliya had recently organized a conference in the name of “party unity,” which many saw as an attempt to bring Dahlan back into the fold, and Elayyan was thought to have similar predispositions. PASF troops then violently dispersed protests in support of Tamliya in al-Am’ari and Balata refugee camps (r.c.), and in Jenin on 10/25, arresting Elayyan only hours after he had

appeared on television discussing his expulsion from the party. In a similar move at the end of the quarter, Abbas reportedly stopped paying the salaries of 57 PA officials in Gaza because of their alleged support for Dahlan.

Finally, Abbas sought to counter the Egyptian-Jordanian-Emirati effort with a regional strategy of his own. On 10/23, he embarked on a 3-day visit to Turkey, where he met with Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, PM Binali Yıldırım, and Grand National Assembly Speaker İsmail Kahraman in an apparent attempt to garner support for himself against Dahlan. Afterward, he flew to Doha, Qatar, for the funeral of Khalifa Bin Hamad al-Thani, who died on 10/23. He used the trip as a chance to meet with senior Qatari officials and, in an unexpected move, with Hamas leaders on 10/27 (see “A New Reconciliation Effort” below).

A few days after Abbas concluded his tour of the region, Dahlan broke his silence, giving interviews to Palestinian and international media in late 10/2016 and early 11/2016. Speaking in Cairo, Dahlan was highly critical of Abbas’s leadership—calling his rule a “dictatorship”—but clarified (10/30) that he had no presidential ambitions. Instead, he threw his support behind Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, who has been in an Israeli prison since 2002. According to the *New York Times* on 11/2, the Arab leaders who had been promoting him “realiz[ed] that Mr. Dahlan’s reputation and Gaza roots may make it difficult for him to win popular support in the West Bank,” and began pushing for a power-sharing agreement instead, with Dahlan serving under a figurehead president. Dahlan lent credence to the rumored proposal (11/2), saying “I’m ready to be part of any team. I’m ready to be a soldier. I’m ready to be anything, but with vision and plans and real leadership.”

He also said (10/30) that he would reject any attempt by Abbas to expel him and his supporters from the next Fatah general congress (see above), setting the stage for a contentious meeting on 11/29.

A NEW RECONCILIATION EFFORT

While observers viewed Abbas's 10/27 meeting in Doha with Hamas leader Khalid Mishal and former Gaza PM Ismail Haniyeh as part of his efforts to stave off Dahlan, the participants framed it as the beginning of a new reconciliation process. According to the official Palestinian news agency, WAFA, Abbas and Mishal agreed to establish a national unity govt. and prepare for elections. Sources close to Abbas said (10/27) that the PA pres. did not rule out the possibility of reshuffling his cabinet in coordination with Hamas. Although Hamas released a statement saying that Mishal had offered Abbas a "comprehensive vision" for achieving reconciliation by, inter alia, adhering to measures and steps "to uphold previously signed agreements," it was unclear how this new reconciliation process would proceed or which contentious issues would be dealt with 1st.

Fatah and Hamas remained tight-lipped about the new effort through the end of the quarter, but Mishal called (11/2) for Hamas to join the Fatah-dominated PLO, saying that it was necessary to have a "united authority" both within and outside of Palestine. PLO Exec. Comm. mbr. Wasel Abu Yousef said (11/2) that Hamas would be welcomed into the fold, but it was unclear how Hamas would reconcile its commitment to armed struggle with the PLO's dedication to nonviolence.

TRANSITIONING HAMAS LEADERSHIP

Rumors began appearing last quarter that Mishal planned to step down from Hamas's

political leadership, prompting renewed speculation about the organization's future. One week after senior official Ahmed Yousef said (9/13) that Hamas was, in fact, planning to hold internal elections in either 3/2017 or 4/2017, Mishal confirmed (9/25) the fact in a speech in Doha, indicating he had no plans to run for reelection. It was unclear who would succeed Mishal at the end of the quarter, but there were at least 2 clear candidates in the running: Haniyeh and dep. leader Musa Abu Marzuq.

PALESTINIAN OPINION

The following data come from a poll conducted by An-Najah National University's Center for Opinion Polls and Survey Studies (OPSSC) on 13–15 October 2016. The results are based on a survey of 1,362 men and women from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. The complete poll, the 53d in a series, can be found at www.najah.edu.

1. Do you support or reject the [PA's] decision to postpone municipality and local council elections after the ruling of the Palestinian Supreme Court to conduct them only in the West Bank?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1) I support	37.5%	31.8%	35.4%
2) I reject	54.6%	62.6%	57.6%
3) No opinion/I do not know	7.9%	5.6%	7.0%

2. Do you believe that the current circumstances are suitable for conducting municipality and local council elections?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1) Yes	56.3%	53.0%	55.1%
2) No	39.3%	39.6%	39.4%
3) No opinion/I do not know	4.4%	7.4%	5.5%

3. In your opinion, who is responsible for postponing the municipality and local council elections?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1) The PA	37.9%	8.4%	27.1%
2) Fatah	8.6%	11.6%	9.7%
3) Hamas	5.7%	31.6%	15.2%
4) Both Fatah and Hamas	25.3%	31.6%	27.6%
5) Some other Palestinian factions	5.5%	2.2%	4.3%
6) Some independent personalities	3.9%	1.0%	2.9%
7) No opinion/I do not know	13.1%	13.6%	13.3%

4. Do you expect municipality and local council elections to be conducted in the near future?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1) Yes	57.8%	44.2%	52.8%
2) No	36.9%	46.8%	40.5%
3) No opinion/I do not know	5.3%	9.0%	6.7%

5. Do you support or reject the French Initiative which calls for holding an international conference for peace in the Middle East?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1) I support	53.8%	59.6%	55.9%
2) I reject	35.5%	25.0%	31.6%
3) No opinion/I do not know	10.7%	15.4%	12.4%

6. Do you think that the French Initiative to foster the possibilities of peace between Palestinians and Israelis will succeed or fail?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1) It will succeed	17.4%	22.6%	19.3%
2) It will fail	68.8%	53.2%	63.1%
3) No opinion/I do not know	13.8%	24.2%	17.6%

FRONTLINE STATES

EGYPT

With his inchoate peace initiative floundering (see *JPS* 46 [1]), Egyptian pres. al-Sisi disengaged from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict this quarter. Although Egyptian diplomats backed Palestinian efforts inside international institutions (see “The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict” above), they let France, Russia, and the U.S. take the lead on efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Meanwhile, al-Sisi’s govt. continued a rapprochement with Israel and relieved pressure on Gaza with more frequent openings of the Rafah border in spite of continuing violence in n. Sinai.

Israeli-Egyptian cooperation on security issues and the blockade of Gaza had been improving for years leading up to this quarter, although al-Sisi’s govt. was far more hesitant

to trumpet the burgeoning partnership than were the Israelis. In the same vein, the 2 sides advanced joint projects in private, while Egypt denied the growing rapprochement in public.

One telling incident happened early in the quarter, when, according to *Al-Araby al-Jadeed*, Egyptian FM Sameh Shoukry told (8/21) an audience of high school students that Israel's killing of Palestinian children couldn't be defined as terrorism, absent an internationally agreed-upon definition of the term. "Palestine is on our minds and the Egyptian people will remain concerned by the cause," he was reported as saying, "but the question [of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement] is complicated by [questions of] political will [on the part of] Israel, the role of the international community, and the Palestinians' ability to remain steadfast." Shoukry's comments drew immediate fire from the Palestinians and their Arab allies. A Hamas spokesperson castigated (8/22) Shoukry for egregiously softening Israel's image, tweeting, "Anyone who doesn't view the crimes of the occupation as terrorism is physically blind and suffers from moral decline and a lack of direction." In its response, Egypt's Foreign Ministry insisted that Shoukry's comments were misinterpreted. Be that as it may, Shoukry's comments illustrated the growing rift between Arab political establishments and their populations.

In a further demonstration of warming Egyptian-Israeli relations, press reports indicated (10/18) that the 2 countries had recently discussed a series of large-scale projects, and specifically the assistance Israel might offer Egypt. Cairo reportedly sought a new desalination facility and extended cooperation on tourism, and Tel Aviv was willing to assist with solar energy, electricity production, agriculture, irrigation, and gas

projects. In addition, David Govrin presented his credentials to al-Sisi on 8/31 as Israel's amb. to Egypt replacing Haim Koren, who asked to step down after only 2 years in the post.

In addition to more than doubling the number of times it opened the Rafah border crossing this quarter (see "Movement and Access" above), the Egyptian govt. was also considering the establishment of a free trade zone in Rafah, according to the *Times of Israel* on 11/4. As the city straddles both Egypt and Gaza, a free trade zone would effectively ease restrictions on Gazans, allowing them to purchase goods on the Egyptian side of the border. It was unclear, however, how soon the Egyptians intended to create the zone, if at all, since the report remained unconfirmed.

JORDAN

In the 2 years since the National Electric Power Company (NEPC) of Jordan 1st signed (9/3/2014) a letter of intent to import natural gas from the international consortium of companies contracted by Israel to develop its offshore Leviathan natural gas field, the proposed deal had been bogged down in Israeli bureaucracy and drawn heavy criticism from both the Jordanian and Palestinian people. This quarter, however, Israel and the NEPC made the \$10-b. deal official on 9/26 to outcries of protest in Jordanian activist circles. The NEPC is set to import around 45 b. m³ of natural gas over a period of 15 years once the field starts producing.

Although the NEPC claimed that the deal would save Jordan \$600 m. per year, and Jordan's industry minister said that Amman was demanding that the Israeli govt. allow more Jordanian exports in the West Bank and subsidize the cost of a gas pipeline as a



Demonstrators in Amman protest a Jordanian government deal to buy Israeli natural gas. (7 October, Khalil Mazraawi/AFP/Getty Images)

corollary to the deal, the announcement sparked a renewed swell of criticism in Jordan. Opponents of the deal complained that it would make Jordan dependent on Israel and effectively reinforce the Israeli occupation. Dozens of Jordanians protested outside the NEPC's headquarters in Amman after the deal was announced, and thousands more joined the protests as they spread from the capital to the rest of the country on 9/28 and 9/29. The Islamic Action Front, which had won 15 seats in Jordan's parliament earlier in 9/2016, urged (9/26) the govt. to cancel the deal, and Jordan BDS, a local chapter of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, said (9/27) that "signing this agreement blatantly ignores the will of the Jordanian people who principally and unequivocally rejected the agreement through 2 years of demonstrations across the country, national petitions signed by Jordanians and their political parties, trade unions and civil society organizations."

SYRIA

For the 2d quarter in a row, the plight of the Palestinian residents of Khan Eshieh r.c. outside Damascus was in the spotlight, with continued fighting nr. the Syrian capital placing them in an increasingly dangerous position. According to Emad al-Muslimani, a media activist living in the camp, the shelling of Khan Eshieh escalated in late 9/2016, following a lull in the wake of the initial escalation in 5/2016 (see *JPS* 46 [1]). "Barrel bombs, cluster munitions, bunker-buster missiles, you name it," he wrote in an online article. "It is like the camp is being used as a testing ground for weapons" (Electronic Intifada, 10/12). The Syrian army, with Russian air support, was reportedly attempting to retake towns in the area from rebel groups, and the camp's residents were caught in the crossfire, despite their insistence that there was no rebel presence in the camp at all.

Two particularly devastating incidents lent renewed urgency to the camp's plight in

10/2016. First, air strikes on 10/6 led to the death of an 18-mo.-old Palestinian baby, followed by 2 men later that day. In response, camp residents marched through the streets on 10/11 to call for an end to the shelling and for safe passage in and out of the camp so they could obtain medical and other supplies. Their call was ignored, and further air strikes killed 4 Palestinian refugees and 1 Syrian woman on 10/18. The victims were reportedly attempting to flee along the unpaved Zaki Road, nicknamed “Death Road” because of its frequent targeting by air strikes and sniper fire. One aid worker, who asked not to be identified by name, said that “families that want to go out, or refugees who want to go get bread or medicine, use this bumpy road only at night, risking both crashes and shelling” (Electronic Intifada, 10/25). In response to the shelling, UNRWA released (10/21) a statement saying that Khan Eshieh r.c. was “at risk of becoming another Yarmouk,” referring to the largest Palestinian r.c. in Syria, which the conflict there has all but destroyed. According to UNRWA, the 10/18 strike brought to 31 the number of Palestinian refugees killed in Khan Eshieh since the 5/2016 escalation of violence in the area.

LEBANON

After the single major cross-border incident of the quarter on 10/26 (see Chronology for details), the IDF was reportedly preparing for a possible return to full-scale violence on Israel’s n. border with Lebanon. There were no other signs of an imminent escalation, but Israeli media reports indicated that the IDF was at least considering the possibility of another war with Hezbollah. According to Ynet on 10/27, the IDF was worried that the 10/26 attack, in which unidentified Lebanese assailants driving along the border opened fire on Israeli forces patrolling the other side, exposed a weak point

in Israel’s defenses. Top IDF officials surmised that Hezbollah might send foot soldiers to capture small areas of territory at other similar weak points along the border. To defend against that eventuality, they said, the IDF was working on a 3-year, 30-km border defense project, including reinforced concrete barriers, fortified towers, and other security upgrades. The IDF was also devising a contingency plan in the event of another war with Hezbollah, according to *Haaretz* on 10/18. Deviating from standard Israeli practice, the plan included an outline for evacuating 78,000 residents of the area along the border with Lebanon.

Another major development was the announcement that Lebanon had finally elected a new head of state, former Gen. Michel Aoun. After 4 rounds of voting, Lebanon’s parliament formally elevated Aoun to the presidency on 10/13, after the office had been vacant for 2.5 years. Although it is still unclear how Aoun’s presidency might alter Lebanon’s position on Israel, the incoming president alluded to a possible conflict with the IDF, vowing to free “what is left of our lands under Israeli occupation.” Aoun was reported as saying, “We will always be ready to help and support the resistance forces to liberate every last meter of Lebanese territory that has not yet been returned.” Aoun is an ally of Hezbollah, having signed a partnership agreement between his party, the Free Patriotic Movement, and the group in 2006.

REGIONAL AFFAIRS

TURKEY

As Israel and Turkey implemented the reconciliation deal they announced on 6/27 (see *JPS* 46 [1]), their new relationship took shape. Hours after Turkey’s parliament ratified (8/20)

the 6/27 deal, the IDF launched a series of air strikes against Gaza targets allegedly belonging to Hamas, a long-time Turkish ally. With Ankara keen to improve relations with Israel to secure future energy partnerships while maintaining a positive relationship with Hamas, Turkey's response to the assault was critical in that it set a precedent. Further raising the stakes was a protest against the IDF strikes by 5 Turks who attempted to break into the Israeli consulate in Istanbul on 8/21. The following day, Turkey's Foreign Ministry released (8/22) a statement condemning the "disproportionate" strikes and stating that "the fact that our ties with Israel have normalized does not mean that we will remain silent in the face of such attacks that target the Palestinian people."

Neither Israel nor Turkey allowed their differences over Hamas to get in the way of their reconciliation deal, however. Turkish pres. Erdoğan authorized the deal on 8/31, and Israel transferred (9/30) the agreed \$20 m. to a humanitarian fund set up by the Turkish govt. for the victims of the 5/2010 Israeli raid on the *Mavi Marmara*, the flagship of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla. Meanwhile, a 2d Turkish cargo ship arrived (9/6) in the Israeli port of Ashdod with humanitarian aid destined for Gaza (the 1st arrived late the previous quarter; see *JPS* 46 [1]).

Turkish and Israeli energy ministers met in Istanbul on 10/13 for talks on strengthening energy cooperation, including the potential construction of a natural gas pipeline in the e. Mediterranean. In addition to advancing joint projects, this marked the 1st official and public ministerial meeting between Israelis and Turks since 5/2010. The 2 sides sealed the deal at the end of the quarter with an exchange of amb. Israel sent (11/15) dep. amb. to Britain Eitan Na'eh to Ankara and Erdoğan appointed

(11/16) 1 of his top foreign policy advisors, Kemal Ökem, amb. to Israel.

INTERNATIONAL

UNITED STATES

Military Aid Deal Reached

Following mos. of negotiations, the U.S. and Israel signed a major military aid agreement this quarter. Negotiators had earlier overcome significant differences and while the contours of the agreement were largely known, detractors of the finalized deal spoke up volubly after the announcement, stepping up pressure on U.S. pres. Obama's admin. in the final mos. of his term.

The acting head of Israel's National Security Council, Nagel, and U.S. undersecy. of state for political affairs Thomas A. Shannon signed the new MoU, replacing the current document, at a ceremony in Washington on 9/14. Under the new MoU, the U.S. was to deliver \$38 b. in aid to Israel over the course of 10 years, beginning in 2019. The MoU increased annual U.S. disbursements of direct military aid, or foreign military financing (FMF), from a total \$3.1 b. to \$3.3 b.; set at an annual \$500 m. U.S. funding of U.S.-Israeli cooperative missile defense programs; and phased out, in the 2d half of the 10-year period, the unique provision under the current MoU that allows Israel to spend 26.3% of its annual FMF funds in Israel. It was also reported, but unconfirmed, that Israel agreed not to request supplemental appropriations from Congress, as has been the trend in recent years.

While some Israeli and U.S. politicians criticized the deal, both Israeli PM Netanyahu and Obama proudly touted it as a landmark accomplishment. Representing the Israeli PM,

Nagel said (9/14), “At no stage of the negotiations was there a higher [U.S.] offer on the table than the 1 we ultimately received.” He was preemptively countering complaints from Netanyahu’s opponents, who decried the PM for antagonizing the Obama admin. over the P5+1’s (U.S., France, China, Russia, UK, and Germany) nuclear deal with Iran and who had also cited the frosty Obama-Netanyahu relationship as the reason that Israel received less military aid than it wanted. Obama stated (9/14) for his part that the deal made a “significant contribution to Israel’s security in what remains a dangerous neighborhood,” and reiterated that the U.S. was “Israel’s greatest friend and partner.” Israel’s friends in Congress were unhappy with the MoU. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), who led a campaign to pressure Obama into improving the U.S. offer during the talks, voiced a litany of complaints on 9/16, claiming that the provision annulling Israel’s right to lobby Congress was “absurd” and criticizing Netanyahu for signing a deal too early. “Here is what I would tell Bibi,” he said. “When mbrs. of Congress come to Israel, you do a great job talking about the State of Israel’s needs and threats. Well, don’t tell us about all those needs and threats. When we try to help you, you pull the rug from under us. I think that is bad for Israel.” Graham, along with Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), John McCain (R-AZ), Mark Kirk (R-IL), Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Ted Cruz (R-TX), then introduced (9/20) a bill giving Israel \$1.5 b. in supplemental military aid. Graham stated (9/20) that he intended to introduce more legislation overturning parts of the new MoU.

Rumors of a Peace Push

In the speech celebrating the new military aid deal, Obama said (9/14), “It is because of this

same commitment to Israel and its long-term security that we will also continue to press for a 2-state solution to the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict, despite the deeply troubling trends on the ground that undermine this goal.” His comments, in tandem with the U.S. State Dept.’s increasingly severe condemnations of Israeli settlement growth, strengthened speculation that Obama was considering a major new peace initiative during his remaining mos. in office. With a large military aid pledge firmly in place, Obama appeared to have enough political capital to shield his legacy from opponents in Congress and inside the Israel lobby. Although such rumors never panned out, leaks and unconfirmed reports throughout the quarter suggested that the Obama admin. might, in fact, be preparing a number of options for the outgoing pres. during the so-called lame-duck period.

A few days after the military aid deal was announced, U.S. secy. of state Kerry indicated that the admin.’s frustration with Israel was on the rise. During a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Comm. (AHLC) on 9/19 (see “Donors” below), Kerry repeatedly warned about the declining viability of a 2-state solution, according to Western diplomats in attendance. The senior U.S. diplomat, who was also described (9/25) as appearing extremely agitated, laid most of the blame for the current impasse on ever-growing Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank. Kerry also complained that numerous confidence-building steps pledged by both sides had gone unfulfilled: “I was told the Allenby Bridge [between the West Bank and Jordan] would open 24/7. It never did. I was told that the 3G [West Bank cellular service] agreement signed nearly a year ago would take place within months. It still is not fully implemented.” And finally,

he alluded to a possible step the Obama admin. might take, saying, “We need to fundamentally change the dynamic by resuming the transition to greater Palestinian civil authority in Area C.”

Before news of Kerry’s comments broke on 9/25, opposition to a potential U.S. peace push had already ramped up days before Netanyahu’s scheduled meeting with Obama in New York on 9/21, on the occasion of the UNGA. Addressing the UNGA on 9/20, Obama had said, “Surely, Israelis and Palestinians will be better off if Palestinians reject incitement and recognize the legitimacy of Israel but Israel recognizes that it cannot permanently occupy and settle Palestinian land.” On the same day, 88 U.S. senators signed on to a letter backed by the American Israel Public Affairs Comm. (AIPAC) and J Street calling on Obama to oppose any “one-sided” UNSC res. on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the shadow of Obama’s comments and the anti-UNSC letter, Netanyahu and Obama discussed (9/21) relatively anodyne subjects. Instead of touching on Obama’s rumored peace effort, Netanyahu said the U.S. pres. would always be welcome in Israel, and Obama told him, “We’ll set up a tee time.”

Behind the scenes of the meeting, however, Obama admin. officials were carefully setting expectations on the possibility of a renewed U.S. effort. Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes said, “Obama’s calculations . . . revolve around the question ‘Can I make a positive change by engaging on the Israeli-Palestinian issue?’” Meanwhile, U.S. amb. to Israel Dan Shapiro confirmed (9/21) that Obama was weighing the possibility of a renewed push: “The question Pres. Obama is asking himself is: Can the U.S. contribute to the effort to preserve the objective of 2 states for 2 peoples? . . . This could be a

statement we make or a resolution or an initiative at the UN . . . which contributes to an effort to be continued by the next admin.”

As the Obama admin. deliberated in private, there were further leaks of possible options being considered and the Israeli govt. began mounting a defense in public. On 9/24, and in a phone call with Kerry on 10/8, Netanyahu said he expected Obama to refrain from supporting a Palestinian-backed UNSC res. Kerry told the Israeli PM (10/8) that the pres. had not yet decided, but a week later, a senior U.S. diplomat in Tel Aviv clarified (10/16) that he was reviewing a handful of specific options. The diplomat said Obama was going to wait until after the presidential election on 11/8 to make any announcement, but indicated that he was weighing support for a UNSC res. condemning Israel’s settlements; he added that Obama was considering a major speech outlining the framework for a peace deal Kerry had devised during the last round of talks in early 2014 (see *JPS* 43 [4]) or calling for an enhanced regional approach linking the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with the struggle against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and the civil war in Syria. Although the diplomat said that the speech on regional matters was the frontrunner, no decision had yet been made.

After the surprising results of the U.S. presidential election 3 weeks later, the Obama admin.’s deliberations no longer received much scrutiny. As pres.-elect Donald Trump shared very few of Obama’s positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, attention focused instead on the major changes Trump would make to U.S. policy in the region.

Donald Trump, 45th President

Donald Trump won the U.S. presidential election on 11/8, defeating Democratic

candidate Hillary Clinton in the Electoral College, although Clinton won the popular vote with at least 2.5 million more votes than her opponent. Trump was set to be sworn in as the 45th pres. of the U.S. on 1/20/2017. The Republicans also maintained their majority in the Senate, holding onto 51 seats, and retained 238 in the House. Because Trump and his new congressional allies share few of the Obama admin.'s views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the region in general, their victory signaled a potentially broad shift in U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Despite the inconsistencies of the Trump campaign, the candidate and his advisors did attempt to solidify his reputation as an unflinching supporter of Israel, and particularly of the Netanyahu govt.'s policies as the election approached. Two mos. before the vote, the Trump campaign opened (9/5) an office in Karnei Shomron, an Israeli settlement in the West Bank. The dir. of campaign operations at the office, Tzvika Brot, said (9/5) that it was not meant to be a statement of policy in its own right, but that the goal was to "get [Israel's] U.S. citizens interested in voting in the U.S. election to register before it's too late." However, Mark Zell, the cochair of Republicans Overseas Israel, said (9/5), "While Tzvika said this is not a political statement as such, that's not entirely true. I worked along with reps. of the Trump campaign to get passed a historic amendment to the Republican Party platform, and this amendment specifically omitted any reference to Israel as an occupier and coincided with Trump's own statements that building homes, synagogues, and schools for Arabs and Jews in Judea and Samaria was an issue for the Israeli govt. and people to decide—not something that America should be dictating to Israel" (see *JPS* 46 [1] for more on the Republican platform).

Later in 9/2016, Netanyahu met with both Trump and Clinton while he was in New York for the UNGA. An Israeli source said (9/23) that the meetings resulted from a phone call between the PM's advisors and Trump's campaign staff, and that Netanyahu only set up a meeting with Clinton to maintain balance. (He was reported wary of intervening in U.S. politics after his 2015 battle over the Iran deal and his vocal support for Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney in 2012.)

In his meeting with Netanyahu, Trump stated that he would "accept the long-standing congressional mandate to recognize Jerusalem as the undivided capital of the State of Israel," according to a campaign press release. Since Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act in 1995, both Republican and Democratic presidents have exercised their right to waive, every 6 mos., the congressionally mandated relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv. Clinton reaffirmed her "unwavering commitment" to Israel and pledged to oppose "any attempt by outside parties to impose a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict . . . including the UN," according to her campaign. Although Trump's stance was clearly more aligned with his own, Netanyahu summed up (9/26) the meetings by stating, "No matter what happens [on 11/8], the friendship between Israel and the U.S. will not only continue but will grow stronger."

Trump's inconsistent positions on Israel received increased scrutiny after the election. By the end of the quarter, however, the pres.-elect had only just begun assembling his cabinet and had not made any definitive statements on the subject.

A document published (11/2) a week before the election, by the cochairs of the Israel Advisory Comm. to Donald J. Trump, Jason Dov Greenblatt and David Friedman, received

considerable attention. Although Trump himself did not lay out the document's positions, Greenblatt and Friedman said each point had been "discussed with Mr. Trump and the Trump campaign" or "stated, in 1 form or another, by Mr. Trump," and the document therefore supplied a definitive list of his policies to date (see Doc. D1). These included support for greater U.S.-Israeli military cooperation (and a pledge that the MoU signed by Obama would not limit that support); new sanctions on Iran "as needed," vetoes of any UN votes that "unfairly single out Israel"; and opposition to any efforts to impose special labeling requirements on Israeli products, to the boycott of Israeli goods, to continued U.S. funding for the UN Human Rights Council, and to the BDS movement, which should be treated as "inherently anti-Semitic." The document also included pledges to order the Justice Dept. to "investigate coordinated attempts on college campuses to intimidate students who support Israel"; recognize the impossibility of the 2-state solution; support direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians without preconditions (as Netanyahu has called for on numerous occasions); recognize "Jerusalem as the eternal and indivisible capital of the Jewish state"; and move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem. The document also accused the Palestinian leadership of undermining "any chance for peace with Israel" by "raising generations of Palestinian children on an educational program of hatred of Israel and Jews."

The Israeli govt. welcomed Trump's election. Netanyahu congratulated the pres.-elect by phone on 11/9, and Trump invited the Israeli PM to visit the White House at his earliest convenience. Education Minister Bennett said (11/8) Trump's presidency offered "an opportunity for Israel to immediately retract

the notion of a Palestinian state in the center of the country, which would hurt our security and just cause." *Haaretz* later reported (11/10) on a leaked Foreign Ministry document listing expectations for Trump's 1st term, saying that Israeli diplomats expected the Trump admin. to reduce U.S. involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while noting that the pres.-elect's statements on the subject did not reflect a consistent position.

The Palestinian response to Trump's election was guarded. A PA spokesperson said (11/8), "We will deal with any president elected by the U.S. people on the principle of achieving permanent peace in the Middle East based on the 2-state solution," including "the June 4, 1967 lines with East Jerusalem" as the capital of a future Palestinian state. Speaking at the annual conference of a Washington-based think tank and educational NGO dedicated to the Palestinian issue, Palestine's amb. to the UN, Mansour, stated (11/11) that if the U.S. moved its embassy to Jerusalem "nobody should blame us for unleashing all of the weapons that we have in the UN."

Throughout his campaign, Trump threatened to "tear up" the nuclear deal negotiated by the Obama admin. with the P5+1 and Iran on 7/14/2015, and his election threatened to upend the fragile relationship developing between Iran and the U.S. in the deal's wake. The Iranian govt., for its part, expressed analogous hesitation. Iran's FM Mohammad Javad Zarif said (11/10), "Iran's options are not limited, but our hope and our desire and our preference is for the full implementation of the nuclear agreement, which is not bilateral for 1 side to be able to scrap."

Legislative Crackdown on BDS

At the state and local level, U.S. officials continued to create new laws to target or

otherwise undermine the campaign to boycott, divest from, and sanction (BDS) Israel. Joining 10 other states (see *JPS* 45 and 46 [1]), California and Pennsylvania both enacted new anti-BDS legislation this quarter. Gov. Jerry Brown signed California's Combating BDS Act of 2016 into law on 9/24, barring the state from doing business with companies that boycott or discriminate against any sovereign country, including Israel. Almost 6 weeks later, a similar bill arrived on Pennsylvania gov. Tom Wolf's desk in Harrisburg, which he promptly signed (11/4) into law. Meanwhile, despite growing support for BDS across New York City, Mayor Bill De Blasio, otherwise known as a champion of progressive causes, criticized the campaign on 8/20, saying, "There are plenty of people who support BDS who have advanced degrees and who call themselves progressives. I look forward to challenging them, because it's ahistorical." The New York City Council later passed, 40–4, a res. condemning "the global movement to boycott, divest from, and sanction the people of Israel," and all "efforts to delegitimize the State of Israel."

PA and PLO on Trial

A year and a half after the U.S. District Court of New York found (2/23/2015) the PA and PLO liable for \$655 m. in damages on terrorism charges related to a string of attacks in Israel between 2002 and 2004 (see *JPS* 44 [4]), a federal appeals court threw out the verdict on 8/31. In a unanimous vote, the appeals panel ruled that the lower court did not have jurisdiction over the case: "The federal courts cannot exercise jurisdiction in a civil case beyond the limits prescribed by the due process clause of the Constitution, no matter how horrendous the underlying attacks or morally compelling the plaintiffs' claims." A lawyer for the plaintiffs then said (8/31) that they would

weigh their options before announcing a new course of action. He indicated that they could ask for a review by the full appeals court or file an appeal themselves with the U.S. Supreme Court.

UNITED KINGDOM

There was 1 major Palestine-related development in the UK this quarter. Secy. of State for International Development Priti Patel, a Conservative who rose to power after the Brexit vote earlier this year, announced that the British govt. had decided to freeze the transfer of £25 m. (approx. \$31 m.) to the PA out of concern about the PA's transfer of allowances to Palestinians imprisoned in Israel on terrorism-related charges or to their families (*Haaretz*, 10/7). According to Foreign Office sources, the aid would likely resume in 2017: "We are not stopping [aid] for the PA overall," an official was quoted as saying, "just delaying it."

AFRICA

While Israel's ties with much of the rest of the world were deteriorating, Israeli PM Netanyahu dedicated significant energy to the diplomatic outreach campaign he launched in Africa last quarter. After visiting Guinea for a meeting with Pres. Alpha Condé and other senior officials, the dir. gen. of Israel's Foreign Ministry, Dore Gold, reportedly stopped (8/21) in a so-called Muslim country in Africa with which Israel had no diplomatic ties. There were no reports about the results of the meeting, but it likely had to do with Netanyahu's plans to attend the next Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) summit, due to be held by the end of 2016 in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. The ECOWAS commissioner invited the Israeli PM to participate in 7/2016, but 2 days after Gold's secret trip, there were reports that Nigeria had moved to scupper

the plan. One source close to the group said (8/23) that the commissioner did not secure approval from all mbr. states prior to inviting Netanyahu. Israel's relations with Nigeria soured in 2015 after Goodluck Jonathan lost the presidency. The following mo., Gold met (9/21) with South Africa's FM, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, to "explore ties between our nations," according to a tweet he sent out that day. Three years earlier, Nkoana-Mashabane had said that South African officials would not engage with Israel. As a result, an Israeli Foreign Ministry official stated on 9/22 that Israel considered "the very fact that this meeting was held an extraordinary achievement." Meanwhile, Netanyahu was in New York meeting (9/22) with leaders and reps. (9/22) from at least 15 African nations on the sidelines of the UNGA. According to a press release from his office, Netanyahu told "his interlocutors that he believes that Israel could be an amazing partner for their countries. He said that technology changes everything, including in communications, medicine, agriculture, and education. He noted that Israel wants to share its technology with African countries."

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)

On 9/15, Arab League envoy to the IAEA Wael al-Assad confirmed (9/15) the rumors that the Arab states, normally led by Egypt, would not be submitting a res. at the 2016 IAEA meeting calling for international oversight on Israel's nuclear facilities. "We need to deal with this in a more results-oriented way," he said, "We are not interested in resolutions that have no implementation mechanism." Egypt and other Arab states had submitted such res. in 2014 and 2015, only to see them fail in the face of Israeli and U.S. opposition. Al-Assad added

that their strategy was undergoing "a process of revision" until at least 3/2017.

DONORS

The AHLC, the chief policy-level coordination mechanism for development assistance to the Palestinians, met on 9/19 on the sidelines of the UNGA. The meeting, hosted by UN secy.-gen. Ban Ki-moon and chaired by Norwegian FM Børge Brende, offered the comm. a chance to "take stock of the Palestinian state-building process, and to discuss ways to improve and sustain the Palestinian economy in its effort to maintain the viability of the 2-state solution," according to a Norwegian Foreign Ministry press release. In addition to congratulating the PA and Israel on their electricity deal and expressing hope that it would lead to "even stronger cooperation" (see "The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict" above), the AHLC reaffirmed its support for the 2-state solution, called on Israel to "establish a planning regime for Area C" of the West Bank that would allow the Palestinians to "develop their industrial base," called for increased Gaza reconstruction efforts, and expressed concern "about the diversion and abuse of construction material and other goods entering Gaza," *inter alia*.

Before and after the AHLC meeting, the international community released a string of new announcements, with the EU and its mbr.-states particularly active in this regard. On 8/24, the EU and UN unveiled \$2.1 m. in projects benefiting Palestinian women, including \$1.3 m. to fund international activities opposing Israel's occupation. The EU made its 2d contribution of the year, €10 m. (approx. \$11 m.), on 8/29 to assist with the PA's allowances to poor Palestinian families in the West Bank

and Gaza, and it contributed (9/5) €28 m. (approx. \$31 m.) to help pay the salaries and pensions of PA employees for 8/2016. The EU and PA Ministry of Social Development jointly launched (10/17) a €1.5-m. (approx. \$1.7 m.) program for capacity-building in the social services sector in the oPt. Individually, Belgium allocated (9/5) an additional €10.28 m. (approx. \$11.47 m.) in humanitarian aid to the Palestinians, via a number of NGOs and UN orgs., and according to the Israeli PM's office (9/6) the Dutch govt. had agreed to aid Gaza with improved water and gas supplies.

UNRWA was also the recipient of some major new international aid directed at the Palestinians. The Europeans again were the most active donors. The EU allocated (10/6) €12 m. (approx. \$13 m.) to support the agency's reconstruction efforts at the Nahr al-Barid r.c. in Lebanon; Belgium pledged (9/28) €7 m. (approx. \$7 m.) to the agency's education and shelter programs across the Middle East; and Italy contributed (9/1) €6.6 m. (approx. \$7 m.) to support the core UNRWA programs and services.

Outside Europe, the UAE announced (11/3) a new \$15 m. contribution to UNRWA's education programs in Gaza; Kuwait (10/28) and Norway (10/18) pledged \$5 m. and \$5.5 m., respectively, to the agency's emergency appeal for Syria; and Japan contributed (10/9) \$4 m. to the agency's food assistance programs in Gaza for the 5th year in a row.

In a related development, Palestinian sources said (10/25) that Saudi Arabia had been holding back its monthly \$20 m. contributions to the PA for the preceding 6 mos., since 4/2016. Neither Riyadh nor Ramallah commented publicly on the suspension, and PA envoys were reportedly unable to ascertain the reason for the change.

Unnamed Palestinian officials told Reuters on 10/26 that Saudi Arabia's move might be attributable to its growing frustration with the stagnant Palestinian national reconciliation process.

GAZA AID SCANDAL

At the end of last quarter, Israeli forces had arrested 2 Palestinian employees of organizations that administer international aid in Gaza: Mohammad el-Halabi, the Gaza director of the Christian charity World Vision, and Wahid Abdullah al-Bursh, an official at the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Gaza (see Photos from the Quarter, and also *JPS* 46 [1]). Israel accused both men of diverting aid money or supplies from official disbursement mechanisms to Hamas. Their arrests precipitated an international controversy; both World Vision and the UNDP defended their employees and a number of international diplomats spoke out on their behalf. This quarter, *Haaretz* reported (8/25) that Western officials had complained about Israel's failure to provide any intelligence supporting these charges, implying that the Israeli govt. was interested in creating a diplomatic "buzz" rather than achieving justice. "The Israelis' priorities in this affair are very strange," a Western diplomat, who asked to remain anonymous, was quoted as saying. The Israeli govt. categorically denied the charges. A Foreign Ministry spokesperson said (8/26) that Israel had, in fact, passed its allies some information on the cases and that more would follow: "The claim that Israel had not updated the donor countries to [*sic*] World Vision regarding the background of the arrest of the suspects is incorrect." Furthermore, Israel denied a UNDP request to release al-Bursh, continued litigating both cases, and froze World Vision's bank accounts, forcing

the organization to lay off 120 employees, according to a letter World Vision sent its contractors on 8/29.

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS

Over 170 Palestinian civil society groups launched the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in 2005. 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

Although there were advances in the BDS campaign in the U.S. this quarter, the lion’s share of developments took place in the rest of the world. The student federation at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile passed a motion backing the BDS movement in a 37–2 vote on 9/26. The motion, which was then sent to the university’s president for approval, called for the school to end its cooperation agreements with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Technion–Israel Institute of Technology because of what was described as their complicity in Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians. Meanwhile in France, CGT-INRA, the trade union of the French National Institute for Agricultural Research, endorsed (10/13) BDS at its annual convention in Lyon and called for the govt. to end its persecution of Palestinian solidarity activists. A week later, the town council of Ivry-sur-Seine, a commune in the suburbs of Paris, called (10/20) on the French govt. to end its criminalization of BDS and to pressure Israel until it “complies with international

law.” Another Paris suburb, Bondy, adopted a similar res. in 6/2016.

The BDS movement in Europe received another boost this quarter from an unlikely source, the EU’s foreign policy chief. In response to a query from an Irish mbr. of the European Parliament about BDS on 9/15, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini reiterated the EU’s rejection of the “BDS campaign’s attempts to isolate Israel” and its opposition to “any boycott of Israel.” However, Mogherini also reaffirmed EU citizens’ rights to “freedom of expression and freedom of association . . . , including with regard to BDS actions carried out on this territory.” While the EU’s repeated rejection of BDS seemed to signal a setback for the movement, Riya Hassan, the Europe campaigns officer for the Palestinian BDS National Comm., said (10/28), “We welcome the EU’s belated defense of the right of European and other citizens to stand in solidarity with Palestinian rights, including through BDS tactics.”

Meanwhile, in the U.S., more than 70 academics and intellectuals signed an open letter calling for a “targeted boycott” of all Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The letter, published in the 10/2016 issue of the *New York Review of Books*, was backed primarily by liberal Zionists and ignored by most BDS activists because of the proposed boycott’s exclusive targeting of settlements rather than the occupation as a whole.

While it was a relatively quiet quarter on the BDS front, activists across the world were preparing for a major action in late 11/2016 and early 12/2016. According to a report in *Electronic Intifada* on 10/17, numerous BDS groups were organizing a

week of actions targeting Hewlett-Packard, specifically its massive presence in Israel and its deal to supply the Israeli military with information technology (See Documents and Source Material, “Recommended Reports,” in *JPS* 44 [4]). Scheduled to run from 11/25 to 12/3, the campaign was set to coincide with the UN’s International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 11/29.

DIVESTMENT

In the 1 significant divestment-related development this quarter, on 10/24 Portland State University’s Student Senate passed a res., 22–2, calling on the school to divest from companies that “profit from human rights violations” against Palestinians. The res. specifically mentioned traditional BDS targets Caterpillar, G4S, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions.



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