

Daily Briefing Summary

January 5, 2009

(Amman) Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence and Research Center

Participants will meet with Father Nabil Haddad, Executive Director of the JICRC. The JICRC was established in 2003 to promote peaceful interfaith coexistence through research, dialogue, and practical initiatives. Its primary objective is to “provide advice and assistance to governments, organizations and individual decision-makers regarding the issue of peace building...for building a better political, social, economic, cultural, and security environment.” Educational programs that the JICRC implements address issues of coexistence, democracy, women's and children's rights, youth, and environmental protection. www.coexistencejordan.org

January 7, 2009

Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque

This is the third holiest site within the Muslim tradition, and is believed to be the farthest point to which the prophet Mohammad traveled in his Night Journey from Mecca and the location from which he then ascended into heaven. It is situated on Haram Al-Sharif, or the “Noble Sanctuary,” also known as the Dome of the Rock or Mount Moriah. Both Jewish and Christian traditions hold this to be the location of the First and Second Temples, and the place where God chose to rest his Divine Presence, hence the designation “Temple Mount.”

More information: Read *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces*, ed. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley. <http://www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/courses/rel264/JerusalemPoliticsSpace.pdf>

Meeting with Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, Grand Mufti

The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem serves in a government-appointed position as religious leader to the predominantly Sunni Muslim Palestinian population.

Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein was appointed Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in 2006 by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

(Jerusalem) United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Presentation

A representative from OCHA will discuss the current status of Israeli military closures and humanitarian conditions in the Occupied Territories. Established in late 2000, OCHA works to document the humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza and publish up-to-date maps and presentations. The OCHA office produces the United Nations Consolidated Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories determining the need and amount of aid in the Territories. www.ochaopt.org

The Parent's Circle – Families Forum

Drawn together by the loss of immediate family members due to violence in the region, The Parent's Circle-Families Forum was founded in 1995 to foster reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis. The Parent's Circle - Families Forum strives to allow a change of perception and frame of mind, and a chance to reconsider one's views and attitudes towards the conflict and the other side through face-to-face reconciliation programs, public and media activities, lectures, and newsletters. www.theparentcircle.org

January 8, 2009

Meetings with Israeli Government Officials

- **Background**

- **Biographies**
 - **Ehud Olmert, Prime Minister**
 - **Shimon Peres, President**
 - **Tzipi Livni, Foreign Minister**
 - **Ruhama Avraham, Minister of Tourism**
 - **Meir Sheerit, Minister of the Interior**

Background

Following World War II, the British withdrew from their mandate of Palestine, and the UN partitioned the area into Arab and Jewish states, an arrangement rejected by the Arabs. Subsequently, the Israelis defeated the Arabs in a series of wars without ending the deep tensions between the two sides. On 25 April 1982, Israel withdrew from the Sinai pursuant to the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty. In keeping with the framework established at the Madrid Conference in October 1991, bilateral negotiations were conducted between Israel and Palestinian representatives and Syria to achieve a permanent settlement. Israel and Palestinian officials signed on 13 September 1993 a Declaration of Principles (also known as the "Oslo Accords") guiding an interim period of Palestinian self-rule. Outstanding territorial and other disputes with Jordan were resolved in the 26 October 1994 Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace. In addition, on 25 May 2000, Israel withdrew unilaterally from southern Lebanon, which it had occupied since 1982. In the summer of 2005, Israel unilaterally disengaged from the Gaza Strip, evacuating settlers and its military while retaining control over most points of entry into the Gaza Strip. (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/)

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert resigned in September of 2008 in the midst of investigations into his financial dealings. Tzipi Livni, Foreign Minister, succeeded him as Kadima party leader but was unable to form a coalition government. Elections for a new government will be held February 10, 2009.

Ehud Olmert, Prime Minister, Chairman of the Kadima Party

Ehud Olmert was born in Binyamina in 1945. He served in the IDF as combat infantry unit officer. After suffering injuries to a leg and an arm, he completed his military service in 1971 as a military correspondent for the IDF journal *Bamachane*. A lawyer by profession, he holds B.A. degree in psychology and philosophy (1968) as well an LL.B. (1973) from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Ehud Olmert was a Knesset Member from 1973. From 1979-1982 he volunteered in the IDF and completed an officers' course while serving as an MK, volunteering for reserve service in Lebanon. From 1988-1990 he served as Minister Without Portfolio responsible for minority affairs, and from 1990 until 1992 as Minister of Health. In November 1993, Olmert was elected Mayor of Jerusalem, advancing national infrastructure projects such as major thoroughfares and the light rail. He resigned from the Knesset in 1998. After his re-election to the Knesset in 2003, he resigned from his position as mayor in February 2003.

In February 2003, Ehud Olmert was appointed Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Industry, Trade and Labor and Communications, holding the latter portfolio until January 2005. In August 2005 he was appointed Acting Minister of Finance, and in November 2005, Minister of Finance. On January 4, 2006, when Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a brain hemorrhage Olmert was designated Acting Prime Minister in accordance with the [Basic Law: The Government \(2001\)](#) and

on April 14, Interim Prime Minister. Following elections to the 17th Knesset as head of the Kadima party, Ehud Olmert became Prime Minister of the 31st Government of Israel. He is married, with four children. www.mfa.gov.il

Shimon Peres, President

Shimon Peres was born in 1923 in Vishniev, Belarus, and immigrated to Israel in 1934. He attended the Geula High School in Tel-Aviv, and continued his studies at the Ben Shemen Agricultural Youth Village. He then went for a training period to Kibbutz Geva and later joined Kibbutz Alumot in Lower Galilee.

Politically active from the age of 16, Shimon Peres was elected Secretary of the Labour Youth Movement in 1943. In 1944, he returned to Kibbutz Alumot, where he worked as farmer and shepherd.

In 1947, after having been conscripted by David Ben Gurion and Levi Eshkol to the Hagana Defense Forces, Shimon Peres was assigned responsibility for manpower and arms, an activity which he continued during the early part of Israel's War of Independence. A year later, in 1948, Shimon Peres was appointed head of Israel's navy and at war's end, assumed the position of Director of the Defense Ministry's delegation in the United States. While in the United States, he studied at the New-York School for Social Research and at Harvard.

In 1953, at age 29, Shimon Peres was appointed by Prime Minister and Minister of Defense David Ben Gurion to the post of Director General of the Ministry of Defense, a position he held until 1959. During that period, he shaped the special relations between Israel and France, and established Israel's electronic aircraft industries, as well as its nuclear program.

In 1956, Shimon Peres masterminded the Sinai Campaign.

In 1959, Shimon Peres was elected to Israel's parliament, the Knesset, of which he is still a member, and became Deputy-Minister of Defense. In 1965, he left the Mapai Labour Party together with David Ben Gurion, and was elected Secretary General of Rafi (the Israel Workers' List). In 1967, he was instrumental in forming a union between Rafi and Mapai, giving birth to the Israel Labour Party.

In 1969, Shimon Peres became Minister of Immigrant Absorption, as well as undertaking the responsibility for the development of the occupied territories. From 1970 to 1974, he served as Minister of Transport and Communications. In 1974, after acting for a period of time as Minister of Information under Golda Meir's government, Shimon Peres was appointed Minister of Defense, replacing Moshe Dayan, a position he held until 1977. While Minister of Defense, he revitalized and strengthened the Israel Defense Forces, and participated in the negotiations of the second interim agreement with Egypt.

During his term in office, he also masterminded the Entebbe hostage-rescue operation in 1976 and created the "Good Fence" on Israel's border with Lebanon.

Following the resignation of Yitzhak Rabin in 1977, Shimon Peres became acting Prime Minister. After the 1977 elections, which placed the Labour Party in opposition, he was elected Chairman of the Labour Party, a post he held until 1992. He also became Vice-President of the Socialist International.

In the 1984 elections the Labour Party, headed by Shimon Peres, was the largest party but

coalition necessities obliged it to form a national unity government.. Rotating with Mr. Yitzhak Shamir, he became Vice Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs two years later. From December 1988, until the dissolution of the National Unity Government in 1990, he served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

On July 13, 1992, Shimon Peres became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new Labour Government. During his term in office, he initiated the negotiations with Jordan and conducted the Oslo negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and on December 12, 1994, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in advancing peace in the Middle East.

Following the assassination of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on November 5, 1995, Shimon Peres became Prime Minister and Minister of Defense (November 1995), continuing to serve in this capacity until the May 1996 elections.

From the June 1996 elections, which placed the Labour Party in opposition, Shimon Peres served as Chairman of the Labour Party and head of the opposition. In June 1997 he resigned from this post.

In October 1997 Shimon Peres created the Peres Center for Peace with the aim of advancing Arab-Israeli joint ventures.

In July 1999, when Ehud Barak became Prime Minister in the wake of the elections, Shimon Peres was appointed Minister for Regional Cooperation in his government.

Also in 1999, he was made Honorary President of the Socialist International.

In March 2001 Shimon Peres was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in Ariel Sharon's newly formed National Unity Government.

Following the 2003 elections, he again served as a member of the 16th Knesset and in June 2003, Shimon Peres was once again elected to the position of chairman of the Labour Party, and in this capacity, headed the opposition.

In January 2005, as head of the Labour Party, Shimon Peres again joined Ariel Sharon's government as Vice Prime Minister. In the framework of his responsibilities he was active in the disengagement process from the Gaza Strip, and focused his attention on the promotion of economic cooperation with the Palestinians and the development of the Negev and the Galilee.

In the November 2005 Labour party primaries, Shimon Peres lost his chairmanship of the party, and together with the party, quit the government. He later resigned from the Labor Party, which had been his political home for decades. In readiness for the 2006 elections, Peres joined Ariel Sharon's new Kadima party.

Kadima won the March 2006 elections, and Shimon Peres was again appointed Vice Prime Minister in Ehud Olmert's government.

On June 13, 2007, the Knesset elected Shimon Peres to serve as the Ninth President of Israel.

Shimon Peres is married to Sonia (born Gelman) and has a daughter (Zvia), two sons (Yonathan and Nehemia) and seven grandchildren. www.president.gov.il

Tzipi Livni, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kadima Party

Tzipi Livni was born in Israel in 1958. She served as an officer in the IDF, and later in the Mossad. A lawyer by profession, Livni received her law degree from Bar-Ilan University, and practiced law in a private firm for ten years before entering public life. Her fields of specialization included commercial law, constitutional law and real estate law.

In 1999, Mrs. Livni was first elected to the Knesset, and served as a member of the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, and the Committee on the Status of Women. She also served as the chairperson of the subcommittee responsible for legislation of the Prevention of Money Laundering Law.

In 2001, Mrs. Livni was appointed Minister in the 29th Government and held the Regional Cooperation and Agriculture Portfolios. In the 30th Government, established in 2003, she held the following portfolios: Immigrant Absorption, Housing and Construction, Justice and Foreign Affairs.

Prior to her election to the Knesset, Livni served as Director General of the Government Companies Authority from 1996. In this capacity, she was in charge of the privatization of government corporations and monopolies.

Livni was a member of the Likud Party until the end of 2005, when she, together with other prominent political figures in Israel, formed the Kadima Party. In September 2008 she was elected chairman of Kadima.

In May 2006 Tzipi Livni was appointed Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the 31st Government of Israel. She also served as Minister of Justice from November 2006 until February 2007. She is married and the mother of two children. www.mfa.gov.il

Ruhama Avraham, Minister of Tourism, Kadima Party

Ruhama Avraham was born in Rishon Letzion in 1964. After completing her army service, she received a B.A. in political science from Bar-Ilan University. Elected to the 16th Knesset in 2003, she served as a member of the Finance and Economics Committees, as well as of the Committees for the Advancement of the Status of Women and for Foreign Workers. In the 17th Knesset she chaired the Knesset House Committee and served on the Committees for the Status of Women and the Rights of the Child, and was a member of the Social Lobby and the Lobby for the Druze and Circassian Communities.

Ruhama Avraham served as Deputy Minister of the Interior from March 2005 until May 2006, and as Minister without Portfolio, responsible for liaison with the Knesset from July 2007 until July 2008. In July 2008 she was appointed Minister of Tourism. She is the mother of two. www.mfa.gov.il

Meir Sheerit, Minister of the Interior, Kadima party

Meir Sheerit was born in 1948 in Morocco and immigrated to Israel in 1957. He holds an MA in Political Science from Bar-Ilan University. He served in the IDF, with the rank of captain. Meir Sheerit served as Mayor of Yavneh (1974-87) and as Treasurer of the Jewish Agency (1988-92). He is a member of the Board of Ben-Gurion University, the Open University and Bar-Ilan University. He is the recipient of several awards, including the Local Government Prize, the Knesset Tolerance Shield and the President's Voluntarism award.

He was first elected to the Knesset in 1981. Sheetrit served as Minister of Finance from February-July 1999 and as Minister of Justice from March 2001 until February 2003.

Meir Sheetrit served as Minister without Portfolio in the Finance Ministry from February 2003 until July 2004, when he was appointed Acting Minister of Transportation and Road Safety, officially receiving the portfolio in August 2004. In January 2006 he was also appointed Minister of Education, Culture and Sport, serving until May 2006. Meir Sheetrit served as Minister of Housing and Construction from May 2006 until July 2007, when he was appointed Minister of the Interior. He is married and has two children. www.mfa.gov.il

Meeting with Mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat

Nir Barkat was born in 1959, and was raised and educated in Jerusalem. He is married and the father of three girls. Barkat joined the army and served as a paratrooper for six years. During his regular and reserve duty service, he served as company commander, ranked Major. Barkat completed a Bachelors degree in computer science, and advanced studies for a Masters degree in Business Management at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

In 1988 Barkat established with three other partners the hi-tech group BRM, which was one of the first in the world in developing antivirus software. Later the company invested in companies such as BackWeb and Checkpoint. Barkat served as the chairman of BackWeb and Checkpoint in the company's early years.

In 1999, Barkat, along with the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, founded "Snunit" non-profit organization - the largest educational website in Hebrew. Barkat was also one of the founders of the IVN venture capital network, which invests in social initiatives throughout Jerusalem.

In January 2003 Barkat retired from his business career and was a candidate for mayor of Jerusalem, heading the "Jerusalem Shall Succeed" faction. Barkat served as a council member for Jerusalem and as head of the opposition. He serves as a member of the municipal education committee, and on the finance committee, and was member of the regional committee for planning and construction.

In the course of his public service, Nir initiated the establishment of the following non-profit organizations:

"Start Up Jerusalem" - encourages the creation of workplaces in the city in areas where Jerusalem has a competitive edge and assists in the development of economic growth in the city.

"New Spirit" - an organization of students which views young people and students as a central resource for growth and for stopping the negative immigration from Jerusalem, while acting to connect the locals to settle in Jerusalem.

"Mishmar Ha'birah" - a voluntary organization which involves and educates residents and organizations for environmental awareness, and taking part in neighborhood cleaning operations.

In November 2008, Barkat was elected for Mayor of Jerusalem after succeeding in the local elections and received 52 percent of the elected votes.

www.jerusalem.muni.il/

Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum

The Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum, “The Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority” is located in Jerusalem and consists of a 4200 square-meter museum and unique memorial sites throughout the museum grounds. Highlights include the Hall of Names, documenting 3.2 millions names of victims of the Holocaust, and the Children’s Memorial, in which a candle is reflected infinitely as a tribute to the 1.5 million children who perished during the Holocaust. www.yadvashem.org

Western Wall

The Western (or Wailing) Wall commonly refers to an exposed section of the retaining wall which dates back to the construction of the Second Temple around 19 BCE. It is revered as the sole remnant of the Holy Temple and the closest accessible site to the Foundation Stone, or Even Ha-Shetiya. For this reason it is believed that prayers issued here rise directly to God, and it has become a common site for people of the Jewish faith to come and mourn the destruction of the temple.

More information: see a short description by Professor Michael Zank at Boston University. If you like maps, be sure to click “Back to Home Page” at the bottom http://www.bu.edu/mzank/Michael_Zank/Jerusalem/wailingwall.html

Meeting with Chief Rabbis

Sephardi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar

Rabbi Shlomo Amar was born in Morocco in 1948 and immigrated to Israel in 1962. A close associate of the Shas Party's spiritual leader and former Sephardi Chief Rabbi Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, Rabbi Amar served as head of the Petah Tikva Rabbinical Court. In March 2002 he was elected chief rabbi of Tel-Aviv, the first sole chief rabbi of the city.

Rabbi Amar was sent by then Interior Minister Eli Yishai to Ethiopia to meet with the Falash Mura community there. He subsequently recommended that they undergo conversion to revert to Judaism. In 2003 Rabbi Shlomo Amar was appointed Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel.

Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger

Rabbi Yona Metzger was born in Haifa in 1953. He served in the IDF 7th Armored Brigade, fought in several wars, and was discharged as an army chaplain with the rank of captain. Rabbi Metzger completed his rabbinic studies at the Kerem Be-Yavne hesder yeshiva and continued to teach in yeshiva and in schools. He served as rabbi of the Tiferet Zvi Synagogue in Tel-Aviv and was later appointed regional rabbi of northern Tel-Aviv. He published several books, two of which were awarded prizes by the President of Israel. In 2003 Rabbi Yona Metzger was appointed Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel. www.mfa.gov.il/

Note: Ashkenazim are Jews with roots in Northern and Eastern Europe; Sephardim are descendants from Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 and are from Middle Eastern, North African, and Mediterranean countries.

January 9, 2009

Via Dolorosa

As with so many of our sites, the identification of the Via Dolorosa with the ancient “Way of Sorrows” walked by Christ on the way to his crucifixion has more to do with religious tradition than historical fact. Nevertheless, this roadway continues to draw huge numbers of pilgrims every day. The streets walked through are similar to others in the Muslim Quarter, lined with shops and stalls, but the “route” is marked by fourteen Stations of the Cross, which link events said to have happened on the last fateful walk taken by Jesus Christ. Some stations have only plaques on a wall, while others are located inside buildings.

More information: Check out “The meaning of the Way of the Cross” at the Franciscan Cyberspot, which has great pictures and helpful context.

<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/jsc/TVCmenu.html>

Church of the Holy Sepulchre

The last five Stations of the Cross are all within this structure which is believed by many to be the site of Christ’s crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Perhaps this complex church is the most important in Christendom. The first basilica here was built by Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century upon the suggestion of his mother Helena. The reconstructions and additions that have shaped this over time make it a very complex building to explore.

More information: “This Web site wants to be a ‘virtual visit’ to this most sacred Christian site.” (John Abela, ofm: Franciscan Cyberspot) <http://www.christusrex.org/www1/jhs/TSspmenu.html>

Lutheran World Federation/ Augusta Victoria Hospital

The Lutheran World Federation Department of World Service-Jerusalem, under the direction of Regional Representative Rev. Mark Brown, “focuses on emergency assistance through development; advocacy; peace and reconciliation initiatives; disaster relief; service to refugees, those in poverty, and the marginalized; and ecumenical partnerships.” For over 50 years, LWF-Jerusalem has been providing services to Palestinians through Village Health Clinics, two Vocational Training Centers, the Augusta Victoria Hospital, and the new Mount of Olives Housing Project. The Augusta Victoria Hospital serves the medical needs of Palestinian refugees and provides specialized services not available elsewhere in the Palestinian Territories. Once completed, the Mount of Olives Housing Project will provide 84 affordable housing units to Palestinian Christians in Jerusalem. www.lwf-jerusalem.org

International Center in Bethlehem

Under the direction of visionary Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, the International Center in Bethlehem is a hub of religious, social, educational and cultural activity in Bethlehem and the cornerstone of the Diyar Consortium. Specializing in activities and services “from the womb to the tomb,” the ICB contains the Ad-Dar Hall for conferences and performances, “The Cave” Arts and Crafts center, Abu-Gubran Guest House, and the Bethlehem Media Center. Adjacent to the Christmas Lutheran Church, the ICB is a vibrant example of the role of the ELCJHL in the Palestinian community.

www.annadwa.org

January 10, 2009

Hebron/At-Tuwani

The West Bank town of Hebron is sacred for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It is here that the Mosque of Machpelah (Haram al-Khalil in Arabic) or the Tomb of the Patriarchs stands above a cave traditionally believed purchased by Abraham for the burial of his wife Sarah, from the Hittite Ephron (Genesis 23). It is now divided into a Jewish synagogue and a Mosque with separate entrances.

At-Tuwani is located in the South Hebron Hills area of the West Bank. The village is dotted with caves and simple one or two room structures, where some one thousand Palestinians live part of the year, tending their flocks of sheep, goats, and harvesting their grain. The children of this village have come under frequent attack by Israeli settlers as they walk to school. Because of this violence, the Christian Peacemaker Team took up residence in this village in 2004.

More information: See the pictures and read the stories about the plight of these Palestinian farmers. http://www.cpt.org/hebron/documents/Tuwani_media_packet.htm

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

A program of the World Council of Churches, EAPPI operates in six locations throughout the West Bank. Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) monitor and report violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, offer protective presence to vulnerable communities, accompany Palestinians and Israelis in their non-violent resistance to human rights abuses, and participate in advocacy and networking activities. The program has been active since 2001 and draws EAs from 14 different countries. www.eappi.org

January 11, 2009

Reception with the Minister of Tourism for the Palestinian Authority

Khoulood D'eibes - Minister of Tourism and Women's Affairs

Dr. Khoulood was born in Bethlehem city in 1965 and she holds a PhD in Architecture from Hanover University in Germany. She held the post of Minister of Tourism in the national unity government. Previously, she held the post of General Director of the center preserving cultural heritage in Bethlehem and she is an activist in several international organizations in the field of tourism and cultural heritage. In addition, she taught in the Tourism Masters Program at Bethlehem University and worked in Palestinian organizations dealing with cultural heritage. (www.plomission.us)

Meetings with Palestinian Authority

- **Background**

- **Biographies**
 - **Mahmoud Abbas, President**
 - **Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister**

Background

The Palestinian Authority (PA) was created in 1994 with responsibility for security and for civilian welfare in the Palestinian-populated areas of the West Bank and Gaza. It was meant to be a temporary entity, lasting five years at which time the formation of a Palestinian state was to be complete. Negotiations with Israel have not produced a final status agreement, and the PA remains the governing body for Palestinians, while the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remain under Israeli military occupation. Israel withdrew its citizens and force protection from Gaza in 2005, while retaining control of the Gazan borders, coast line, and airspace.

In January 2006, the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, won a majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council, thus giving it control of the PA. The international community rejected the Hamas-led government and moved to isolate it financially and diplomatically. In March 2007 the Palestinian political parties formed a National Unity Government headed by Hamas member Ismail Haniya. In June 2007 Palestinian factional fighting in Gaza led to a Hamas takeover there, after which Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas dissolved the Palestinian Unity Government and formed a government with Salam Fayyad, of the Palestinian "Third Way" party as Prime Minister, declaring the Hamas authority in Gaza illegal. Financial assistance to the PA from the international community began to be reinstated, and diplomatic relations with Israel and other countries resumed. Gaza remains isolated, with its population of 1.5 million Palestinians experiencing severe humanitarian consequences.

Biography: Mahmoud Abbas, President

President Mahmoud Reda Abbas was born in Safad in 1935, located in the upper North of Palestine. He was obliged to immigrate to Syria in 1948.

At the age of 13, he worked to assist his family. Eventually, he returned to school and finished his primary level education and became a teacher. He continued his studies by distance and obtained the secondary level degree. He joined the Damascus University and received a law degree in 1958.

During the period from 1957 to 1970, he was appointed as the Director of Employee West Bank and Gaza Strip many times to select teachers for employment opportunities. During the mid 1950's Abbas was one of several founding members of FATEH (the Palestinian National Freedom Movement). In 1970 he dedicated himself to work for this national cause full time. In 1982, Mr. Abbas received his Ph.D. from the Oriental Institute of Moscow.

President Abbas has represented the PLO in official ceremonies. He signed the Oslo agreement in Washington, DC on the 13th of September 1993. He also signed the Interim agreement in Washington, DC on the 23rd of September 1995.

Mr. Abbas served as the first Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority in April, 2004. He was elected President of the Palestinian National Authority in elections in 2004. President Abbas is married to Mrs. Amina Abbas and they have three sons, Mazen (Passed away), Yasser and Tarek as well as many grandsons.

(From the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mission to the United States, Washington, DC.
www.plomission.us)

Biography: Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister

Dr. Salam Fayyad was born in Nablus, Palestine in 1952. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science from the American University of Beirut in 1975. He received an MBA from St. Edward's

University in 1980 and a PhD (Economics), University of Texas at Austin in 1986. He held several teaching and research assignments at the University of Texas at Austin and Yarmouk University (1983-1986) and was a Visiting Scholar at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (1986). Before embarking on a political career, Dr. Fayyad worked for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) from 1987-2001, acting as resident representative in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from 1996-2001. He left the IMF to work as Regional Manager of the Arab Bank, Palestine in 2002. He was appointed Minister of Finance in June 2002. Dr. Fayyad resigned from the Ministry of Finance in December 2005 and, in January 2006, he was elected for the Palestinian Legislative Council and served as Chairman of the PLC's Budget and Finance Committee. In March 2007, Dr. Fayyad was appointed again as Minister of Finance in the National Unity Government. Three months later, Dr. Fayyad was appointed Prime Minister and has formed an emergency government, in which, in addition to being the Premier, he serves as Minister of Finance and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Fayyad is married and has three children.

(From the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mission to the United States, Washington, DC.
www.plomission.us)

Presentation by US Consul General and Canadian Representative U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem

The U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem is the official diplomatic representation of the United States in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, and the provider of citizen services to the more than 80,000 U.S. citizens who live in these regions.

U.S. Consul General, Jerusalem, Jacob Walles

Jake Walles began his assignment as Consul General and Chief of Mission in Jerusalem on July 20, 2005. Previously, he served as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Athens, Greece from June 2003 to July 2005. In this position, he coordinated U.S. involvement in the 2004 Athens Olympic Games.

Prior to his assignment in Greece, Mr. Walles served as Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs from January to June 2001. During this period, Mr. Walles managed U.S. bilateral relations with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinians and coordinated efforts to promote peace in the Middle East. Previously, he served as the Director of the Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs from 1998 to 2000 and as Deputy Principal Officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem from 1996-1998.

From 1988 to 1996, Mr. Walles served in a number of other positions involving Middle Eastern affairs, including Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, Special Assistant for the Middle East Peace Process in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and First Secretary at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. He was also assigned to the American Consulate General in Amsterdam from 1982 to 1984.

Mr. Walles is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister Counselor. From September 2001 to June 2002, he was a member of the 44th Senior Seminar at the State Department. Mr. Walles also received the Department's Superior Honor Award in 1994 and again in 2001 for his work in promoting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Walles was born in Wilmington, Delaware and is a graduate of Wesleyan University and the School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University.

<http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov>

Representative Office of Canada to the Palestinian Authority

The Representative Office of Canada in Ramallah, in accordance with the Oslo Accords, is responsible for the delivery of Canada's economic and development assistance to Palestinians. www.WestBankandGaza.gc.ca

January 13, 2009

The Schools and Educational Programs of the ELCJHL

The Lutheran tradition in Palestine of co-educating Christian and Muslim girls and boys dates to the Lutheran Schools' origins in the mid-nineteenth century. The present educational ministry of the ELCJHL continues to prepare leaders for Palestinian society in the midst of the difficult financial and social conditions in East Jerusalem, the Bethlehem area, and Ramallah--regions experiencing increased unemployment and economic hardship after forty years of Israeli Occupation. In recent years additional financial strictures caused by the Israeli Separation Wall have exacerbated economic conditions for our students and staff.

The educational ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land now includes four Lutheran Schools and four educational programs in Jerusalem and the West Bank. All the schools educate Christian and Muslim boys and girls from three years through Grade 12. The oldest is the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahour, adjacent to Bethlehem; this school has an enrollment of 480. Talitha Kumi Lutheran School, located in Beit Jala, which is also part of the Bethlehem area, has 805 students. The Evangelical Lutheran School of Hope in Ramallah, begun in 1970 under the leadership of the local pastor, has 482 students. Dar Al Kalima School with 270 students in the town of Bethlehem was built in 2000 to replace the original school, renovated and expanded to become Dar Annadwa, the International Center in Bethlehem.

In addition to the schools, the ELCJHL also sponsors in East Jerusalem the Al-Mahaba Kindergarten for sixteen preschoolers near the Augusta Victoria Hospital on the Lutheran World Federation campus; in Beit Jala the Boarding Home for 26 boys and the Environmental Education Center, which serves an annual clientele of 3000-5000 from area schools and community groups; and the Martin Luther Community Development Center adjacent to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem's Old City.