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**A report published in the Guardian newspaper on the dismissal of
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Bassam Shaka, the mayor of Nablus, talks to a well-wisher after being deposed by the Israeli authorities

Israelis sack West Bank mayors

From Eric Silver
on The West Bank

Israeli paratroops in armoured personnel carriers with machine guns cocked yesterday kept the lid on Arab anger at the dismissal of the two leading West Bank radical mayors, Mr Bassam Shaka of Nablus and Mr Karim Khalaf of Ramallah.

The mayors, who lost their legs in car bombings two years ago, refused to acknowledge their dismissal by Major General Ori Orr, and their town councils resolved to boycott the Israeli appointed administrators.

The remaining 20 elected West Bank mayors are expected to decide this week-end whether to resign in solidarity with their deposed colleagues. The longest-serving of the pro-PLO leaders, Mr Hilmi Hanoun of Tulkarm, told me that a majority were against resignation, unless the receive specific instructions to that effect from the PLO.

Yesterday's escalation of the

Israeli campaign to undermine supporters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation hardened resistance to the introduction of civil rule, which Arabs interpret as an attempt to impose autonomy and perpetuate the occupation. It followed the dismissal of the

Arabs split on Israeli policy and 'War' on Sinai squatters, page 6; New Goliath, new Davids, page 15

mayor and council of El Bireh.

The paratroops' presence in Nablus and Ramallah reduced the violence of the past week to a token stones throwing and tyres burning. The most serious incident took place in Gaza, where an Israeli sergeant major was killed by a hand grenade lobbed into an army van. Three other soldiers and three Arabs nearby were wounded.

The officer was the first

Israeli fatality in this confrontation, which has claimed five Arab lives in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In Nablus the Red Berrets, who had come from active service evicting illegal settlers from Sinai, played a clumsy game of hide and seek with youthful rioters in the narrow alleys of the medieval Casbah. In Ramallah they chose to ignore a road block and burning tyres outside the main bus station.

For the first time since he weekend there were no restrictions on entering and leaving Ramallah and El Bireh, and the checkpoint had been removed from the entrance to Nablus. Most shops were open as the five-day general strike petered out. It continued in East Jerusalem where dozens of Arab shopkeepers had been arrested for refusing an army order to get back to work.

The two dismissed mayors were summoned by General Orr yesterday morning after a decision had been endorsed by

the Prime Minister, Mr Begin. They were forbidden to talk to each other afterwards. The army commander removed them from office because of "their activity of general agitation, non-recognition of the civil administration, and repeated attempts to disrupt public order and normal government, in accordance with PLO policy and directives," the military spokesman announced.

Mr Shaka said later that a soldier who stopped him from entering Nablus town hall had taunted him for being "only half a man." The mayor replied: "I may have lost my legs, but you have lost your mind."

Mr Shaka said: "We will struggle on. There is nothing more they can do to me. They can deport me, but what good would that do? We will remain loyal to our antionality, our country and our cause. We will never be tools in the

Turn to back page, col. 2