



Diputado al Parlamento Europeo

Ms Federica Mogherini  
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs  
and Security Policy/ Vice President of the Commission

Brussels, 23 June 2017

Dear Ms Mogherini,

We are writing to you in order to express our deep and urgent concern for the situation in the Gaza Strip.

On 17 April, Gaza's sole power plant (GPP) was forced to shut down completely after exhausting its fuel reserves and being unable to replenish them due to a shortage of funds. The shutdown occurred in the context of an ongoing dispute between the Palestinian authorities in Gaza and Ramallah on tax exemption for fuel and revenue collection from electricity consumers. This manoeuvre has caused Gaza's sole electricity plant to cease operating, which was already insufficient to meet the needs of the 1.9 million residents of the Strip.

Moreover, on Monday 12 June, the Government of Israel announced the cut of its electricity supplies to the Gaza Strip by 40 per cent, in line with a request of the Palestinian Authority (PA). The closure of the power plant reduced supply to four hours per day, and if Israel reduces its supply as announced last week, this will cause supply to fall to approximately two hours per day, according to several humanitarian organizations.

The poor supply of electricity and fuel threatens to create an enormous humanitarian crisis, as 80 per cent of Gazans rely on humanitarian aid to survive. Currently, hospitals are working at minimal capacity and the water pumps and wells use has reduced dramatically. According to UN sources, this situation will immediately be life threatening for 113 new-borns currently in neonatal intensive care units, 100 patients in intensive care and 658 patients requiring bi-weekly haemodialysis. Current water supply stands at only four to eight hours every four or five days, and sanitation services are weak (120 million litres of untreated sewage are discharged into the Mediterranean Sea every day), as stated in the latest OCHA report.

For the abovementioned reasons, we ask that:

- a) you mobilize your services to carry out an immediate assessment of the needs of the Gazan population in terms of energy and to identify means to provide an immediate relief to the current crisis, as well as a sustainable solution to the longstanding energy problem of Gaza;
- b) Israel, as the occupying power in the OPT, has the primary responsibility for ensuring the wellbeing of the occupied population and, according to the EU-Israel Association Agreement, the government should comply with the human rights clause contained in Article 2. Thus, Israel must act to guarantee that the electricity supply meets the needs of the Gaza population

and upholds their right to energy, as regarded in the IV Geneva Convention, no matter the actions requested by the PA.

- c) Following the regrettable declarations of Mr Usama Al-Qawasmi, spokesperson for Fatah, - stating, *"we are not targeting the citizens [...], we are targeting Hamas which is running the Gaza Strip"*- and Hamas threatening that this decision would increase the likelihood of conflict, we call to urge both parties to take responsibilities towards their own people and address their political tensions. It is deplorable that population is used as bargain chip in political disputes.

The situation is unacceptable and the international community, notably the European Union, must step in to ensure that the PA, the Government of Israel and Hamas urgently implement sustainable solutions for the power crisis in the Gaza Strip, resuming the supply of fuel and to commit to take no further actions that infringe the fundamental rights of its own citizens under an illegal Israeli blockade that has lasted for a decade.

With the EU having been the first trade partner for Israel and the first donor for the Palestinian Authority, we must stand as the first political player in the region. Therefore, we urge you, HRVP, to use your political dialogue with Israeli and Palestinian leadership to ensure that this unsustainable situation ends. We have considerable power of influence and pressure given the strategic dependence and relationship we have with the parties. Let us make use of it.

As the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process stated on June 20th at the UN Security Council: *"We have a collective responsibility to prevent this. [...] a duty to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe"*.

Sincerely,

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