

Talking Points on AMA and Gaza Crossings March 7 2007

The AMA in General:

- **Israel continues to openly flout its obligations under the AMA**, with no positive movement on any aspect of the AMA.
- **Without implementation of the AMA, the economic situation will continue to deteriorate**, exacerbating the political and social instability and allowing Israel to continue its collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

Rafah Crossing Point:

- **Since June of last year, the crossing has been closed most of the time**, mainly due to Israeli measures in violation of the agreements. This has resulted in the isolation of Gaza from the outside world and exacerbation of the serious humanitarian crises.
- **Rafah Crossing must open continuously and operate normally** as per the agreements to allow movement of Palestinians (particularly students, expatriate workers and emergency medical cases).
- **Israel continues to refuse to sign the Customs Protocol** to the Rafah Agreement, and refuses to allow Kerem Shalom Crossing to open for its sole purpose – to allow for imports from or through Egypt. This has led to attempts to bring commercial imports through Rafah, causing major operational problems, all of which would be resolved by opening Kerem Shalom.
- **Rafah Crossing has yet to be open to exports to or through Egypt.** Any obstacles to exports from Gaza to Egypt through Rafah should be immediately removed. The Palestinians have raised this issue with Egypt in the past and received a positive response; however, it is not being implemented on the ground.

Karni Crossing Point:

- **For much of this year Karni Crossing has been closed** almost entirely to exports from the Gaza Strip, and with only a trickle of imports into Gaza being allowed to pass. **Karni must be re-opened immediately.** The closure of Karni violates the AMA, particularly the agreement that the “passages will operate continuously.” It was agreed that a crossing would not close unless there was a specific threat to that crossing, and that should a crossing be closed it would reopen as soon as possible. Neither of these are the case at Karni, which Israel closes regularly for punitive reasons.

- **The Karni crossing is crucial as it is currently the only crossing with sufficient capacity**, when fully utilised, to handle the trade needs of Gaza. It also provides the closest link between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.
- **Palestinians are taking concrete steps to improve their side of the crossing** and have worked actively with the USSC team on a comprehensive Security Plan for Karni, training and deployment of security force under the Presidential Guard, as well as reform of the General Administration for Crossings and Borders.
- **As part of the Karni Security Plan, Palestinians welcome international monitors at Karni**, whose role would be to monitor and assist in ensuring proper security and management measures by all sides. The EU BAM presence at Rafah has set a good precedent; We have therefore sought EU assistance in this regard.
- **The humanitarian crisis** in the Gaza is in large part due to Israel's prolonged and unjustified closure of Karni. The best way to rectify this crisis is to open Karni immediately.

Kerem Shalom Crossing:

From Egypt

- **Israel must sign the Customs Protocol and open Kerem Shalom Crossing for imports from or through Egypt immediately.** Refusal to do this is a breach of the APRC. This is particularly egregious because the substance of the protocol has already been agreed by all parties.
- **Palestinians welcome the import of goods from Egypt through Kerem Shalom**, and are ready to assume their posts at Kerem Shalom and clear all such imports, including any humanitarian goods arriving from Egypt, in accordance with the agreements and the Customs Protocol

From Israel

- **Palestinians will not engage on allowing goods from Israel in or out through Kerem Shalom** while Karni remains closed. Under no circumstances will Kerem Shalom be accepted as an alternative to Karni.

Erez Crossing:

- **The Erez crossing is not on the 1967 border.** Palestinians will not engage on the issue of Erez as a crossing point for goods, even on a humanitarian basis, unless and until they receive a written acknowledgement by Israel that such engagement does not prejudice the Palestinian position vis-à-vis the 1967 border in Gaza.

[NOTE: there are three reasons why this is important: (1) the border issue influences borders throughout Palestine in the long term, (2) a change in position now, even if it is slight, would be particularly harmful after holding the position on the 1967 border so strongly thus far, and (3) the structures available/planned at Erez for the movement of goods are worse than those found at Karni, and are contrary to Palestinian interests.]