

Thursday, December 21, 2006
Ramallah

Mr. Benyamin Ben Eliezer
Minister of National Infrastructure
Government of Israel

Dear Minister Ben Eliezer:

Re: Advancing the Momentum in Energy Relations

I am writing to request that you use all forces within your capacity as the Israeli Minister of National Infrastructure to advance the momentum that we developed in past energy relations between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

As you are well aware, on 28 June, the Israeli military destroyed critical infrastructure in Gaza's only power plant, which provides electricity to 43 per cent of the Gazan population. As a result of the attack, supply of electricity to 1.4 million Gazans was disrupted for months, and, until recently, Gaza had electrical power for only a few hours a day. The Palestinian Energy Authority (PEA) continues to struggle to overcome this crisis. In this regard I hereby note that the PEA appreciates the role that the Israeli Electricity Corporation has played in overcoming this crisis.

During the most recent attack on Beit Hanoun, the Israeli military targeted the Gaza North substation, destroying transformers, lines and other substation infrastructure. As you know, this infrastructure figures prominently in the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company's and the Israeli Electricity Corporation's (IEC) agreed plan to supply Gaza with electricity through the establishment of a 161 kV line between Nativot substation and Gaza North substation. This most recent attack on Palestinian electricity infrastructure will delay the supply for months, not to speak of the costs associated with infrastructure reconstruction and lost revenues.

These attacks prevent co-operation and investment by the international community in upgrading the electricity system in the area, which should be in the best interests of all parties especially that such attacks breach agreements signed under the auspices of the international community.

I therefore request that you act immediately by taking the following actions:

- Formally demand that your government take all measures in its power to restore and maintain public order and civil life in Gaza;
- Facilitate and accelerate the finalization of the construction of the Gaza North substation;

- Issue a special electricity tariff to the Palestinians to enable the conclusion of the Commercial Agreements between the Palestinian electricity distribution companies and the Israeli Electricity Corporation.

These actions will help avert further crises and a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, and will surely go a long way toward restoring the positive momentum we have developed with you in the past.

Sincerely,

Dr. Omar Kittaneh

Chairman of the Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority