



« Occupation siege cuts West Bank and Gaza »

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Palestinian grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign

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Occupation Siege Cuts West Bank and Gaza

Petrol Supplies

Ramallah, May 13, 2006 - A fuel crisis grips the West Bank and Gaza, the latest result of ongoing crimes by the Occupation against the Palestinian people. The Palestinian economy and social fabric have been brought to the brink of collapse by the concerted efforts of the Occupation and the international community to cut payments and sever bank transfers to the Palestinian Authority. The current fuel blockade comes at the height of a siege attempting to ensure the Palestinian right to exist is dependent upon the Occupation. As gravely needed supplies began to trickle out, Palestinians remained determined not to bow to the cruel measures.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) is forced to buy fuel from Dor Energy, a subsidiary of Apartheid Israel's energy tycoon Alon Israel Oil Company. The PA has little choice but to pay the inflated fuel prices to Dor Energy which enjoys exclusive rights on the sales to the PA. The Authority normally resells fuel at a cheaper price than what it pays to import it, in order to prevent serious harm to the Palestinian economy. Consumers and businesses alike are protected from the exaggerated prices charged by Dor Energy as it reaps the benefits of selling fuel to an Occupied people.

Shortcomings in the PA's payments to the company were previously compensated with the Palestinian tax money. Such tax money is routinely collected by the Occupation from Palestinian economic activity. This system has been perpetually manipulated by the Occupation for its own interests, who frequently withholds the money.

Since the elections in the West Bank and Gaza, all of the Palestinian tax money collected by the Occupation has been stolen from the Palestinian people in this way. Dor Energy no longer considers the tax money a guarantee, sparking the cut-offs in fuel to the West Bank and Gaza one month ago. The dramatic effects of the stranglehold are now being felt as gas and fuel reserves run out.

In Jenin, fuel reserves will be exhausted by this evening, while in the rest of the West Bank and Gaza, fuel stations have begun to shutdown. In Ramallah, no fuel can be found while 16 gas stations in Bethlehem are closed. Public transport has collapsed with Palestinian roads deserted of traffic by Thursday the 11th of May.

Serious effects are being felt in various sectors. Health care services, electricity supplies, and Palestinian agriculture and industry were all being crippled by the crisis. In al-Helal al-Ahmer hospital in Khan Younis, petrol and gas reserves will run out in 48 hours. After that, even emergency services for patients will become severely restricted. In Bethlehem hospital, ambulances are on the verge of running out of petrol. Many other hospitals and clinics in the West Bank and Gaza are also affected.

Many villages depend on fuel engine generators for electricity supplies. In Jenin district alone, 33.000 people in 29 villages using electricity generators will be completely cut off from electricity in the coming days. Meanwhile, wells for agricultural and domestic use also rely upon the use of petrol. Irrigation as well as general water supplies are expected to stop working imminently. Tractors and farm machinery are no longer in operation leaving lands liable to dry out quickly in the warm and dry climate and threatening agricultural production.

In Khan Younis, bread factories have already stopped working and supplying the population. Chickens farms are unable to provide the necessary heating for the chickens as a result of the lack of gas. In Beit Fajjar, 36 of 139 factories and small businesses of the stone industry are already closed, the rest continuing by smuggling small amounts of petrol in from Jerusalem's gas stations.

Palestine suffers not only the throes of an humanitarian crisis, but the increasing severity of a political attack which undermines all aspects of life. All rights and basic services and the means to exist on Palestinian land are being attacked.

Palestinians are not asking the international community to pay the Occupation to lift its grip on life and let fuel flow again. Instead the international community is asked to give up their endeavor to dominate the Palestinian people and end its complicity with Israeli Apartheid and Occupation. The Palestinian people are aware of the oppressive and colonial nature of the sanctions imposed on them, aimed at breaking their determination to resist. However, they remain steadfast in denouncing the crimes of the Occupation, even as they are being strangled by it.

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