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Statement by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the oPt, Robert Piper, on the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza



UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities, Robert Piper

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the occupied Palestinian territory, Robert Piper, warned today about the disastrous consequences of a further reduction in electricity-supply to the Gaza Strip on the living conditions of two million Palestinians. He called upon the Palestinian Authority, Hamas and Israel to put the welfare of Gaza's residents first and to take the necessary measures to avoid further suffering. The UN has already appealed to the international community to support its limited humanitarian efforts to prevent the collapse of vital life-saving, health, water, sanitation and municipal services.

Early this week, the Israeli cabinet agreed to a reduction in the supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip, following a decision by the Palestinian Authority to reduce its monthly payments for that supply by 30 per cent.

If, as a result of the Palestinian Authority's instructions, this decision is implemented the situation will become catastrophic. The reduction will bring most households and service-providers down to 2 hours or so of power per day.

Hospitals, water supply, waste water treatment and sanitation services have already been dramatically curtailed since mid-April and depend almost exclusively on a UN emergency fuel operation. An additional reduction in electricity will require the delivery of one million litres of fuel monthly, under the UN operation, to keep minimum functions operating at 186 essential facilities across the Strip.

"A further increase in the length of blackouts is likely to lead to a total collapse of basic services, including critical functions in the health, water and sanitation sectors," Mr. Piper said. "The people in Gaza should not be held hostage to this longstanding internal Palestinian dispute," he added.