
Cabinet Communique

(Communicated by the Cabinet Secretariat)

At the weekly cabinet meeting today (Sunday, 21 May 2006):

...

5. The cabinet discussed the provision of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population in the form of medical assistance, and decided - in keeping with its previous decisions and in order to allow humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian population - as follows:

- To transfer to international aid organizations, as determined by Defense Minister Peretz in coordination with Prime Minister Olmert, NIS 50 million worth of medicines and medical equipment, to be financed by the funds which it has been decided not to transfer to the Palestinian Authority (PA), for transfer in turn to Palestinian medical institutions. The medicines and equipment will be transferred after coordination with the aforesaid medical institutions via the chosen international aid organizations.

- The cabinet also decided to authorize the Defense Ministry to contact the international aid organizations in order to implement the foregoing.

At its 19 February 2006 meeting, the cabinet decided that, "Towards the conclusion of the caretaker government, money will not be transferred from Israel to the Palestinian Authority." At its 11 April 2006 meeting, the cabinet decided that, "The Palestinian Authority is a terrorist authority that is hostile to Israel; the State of Israel, and all of its official representatives, will not maintain ties with the Palestinian Authority and its elements... Israel will coordinate with the international community regarding humanitarian assistance for the needs of the Palestinian population, not via the Palestinian Authority establishment."

In light of existing humanitarian needs regarding medicines and medical equipment at PA medical institutions, the cabinet decided as per the foregoing.

Prime Minister Olmert said: "The State of Israel feels bound - above and beyond its formal obligations - to see to humanitarian concerns, and to the health of those who are ill anywhere. We cannot, under any circumstances, bear the thought of a sick child without medical assistance, solely because of a shortage of drugs, and this has nothing to do with any kind of formal obligation. This is a moral and fundamentally Jewish concern that we want to uphold. We have no intention of helping the Palestinian government, we will not transfer so much as a penny to any Palestinian official, but I say, we will render such assistance as may be necessary for humanitarian needs. This is, has been, and will be, the way of the State of Israel."

...