
Food rations reduced as a result of closure of Gaza crossings – UN agency

25 January 2008 – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) will be unable to provide a full ration to 10,000 Palestinians on Sunday after all three crossings for goods from Israel into the Gaza Strip were closed today, UN aid officials reported.

Fuel reserves are also expected to run out on Sunday, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which has been warning all week about the deteriorating situation inside Gaza because of the closed border crossings and the restrictions on the supply of fuel, food, medicine and other essential items.

The situation now being faced by Gaza's estimated 1.4 million inhabitants has also sparked concern from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour and other senior UN officials, with calls for Israel to immediately ease the restrictions.

OCHA said 300,000 litres of industrial fuel made it into Gaza today, but the area's power plant has reduced its power output because of limited reserves, causing power cuts of up to eight hours a day.

About half of Gazan households have access to running water for only one or two hours a day, and the area's waste water system is only partially functioning, resulting in the dumping of 30 million litres of untreated sewage into the Mediterranean Sea each day.

WFP – which has described the situation as a "serious food crisis" – has already been forced to reduce food rations to some of its recipients this week, while tensions have been rising at distribution points because of the limited availability of food.

In New York, the Security Council continued closed-door consultations on a draft presidential statement on the situation in Gaza.