



EU Commissioner Louis Michel calls for assurance on Gaza fuel supply

Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, has called upon Israel to ensure delivery of fuel supplies to Gaza. This follows the United Nations warning that its humanitarian efforts there would have to stop in the coming hours because of lack of fuel for its vehicles. The United Nations said on Wednesday that unless petrol was allowed into Gaza, then its humanitarian relief agency UNRWA (UN Relief and Works Agency) and the WFP (World Food Programme) would be forced to discontinue their food assistance to more than over a million Gazans.

Commissioner Michel stated, "It is unacceptable that the UN should find itself having to consider suspending its humanitarian operations simply for a lack of fuel for its vehicles. It is also unacceptable that public services, such as garbage collection, sewage treatment, or hospitals, are at the brink of collapse for the same reason. It's essential that the fuel supply to Gaza is resumed, and in particular that fuel provision for the United Nations agencies as well as basic services be guaranteed immediately."

Mr. Michel recalled the humanitarian principles of the relief operations in Gaza saying, "Humanitarian aid is neutral. It does not seek to confer any advantage on any party or imply any form of political recognition. Humanitarian relief work is about ensuring that a civilian population gets at least its basic needs met. That is why UNRWA's work, and that of the other agencies operating in Gaza, is so important and receives my full support."

The European Commission has a relief package of almost €30 million for Gaza, out of which €10.2 million for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for emergency food aid in the Gaza Strip, funded under the 2007 budget. In addition, under the recently adopted 2008 food aid decision, the majority of the 29.5 M€ allocation for the Palestinian territory is going to Gaza. Additional humanitarian aid funds for the Palestinians are currently being programmed. The relief programmes are implemented by the Commission's operational partners including the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organisations.

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