

News Release – For Immediate Release - Thursday, May 22, 2008:

Human Rights Groups Claim Israel is Preventing Fuel Supply to Gaza Strip; Systematically Violating Court Order Supreme Court to Issue Ruling

Thursday, May 22, 2008: At a hearing yesterday in Israel's Supreme Court, representatives of nine human rights groups claimed that the **State of Israel is violating its commitment to supply even minimal quantities of fuel to Gaza, and that the fuel restrictions are crippling the functioning of hospitals, water wells, sewage treatment plants, and public transportation – and thus endangering the health and well being of Gaza's 1.5 million residents.** Despite the severe harm being caused to civilians in Gaza, attorneys for the State said it refuses to lift restrictions on fuel supply.

Last October, human rights groups petitioned Israel's Supreme Court against fuel and electricity cuts to Gaza. In a January 2008 decision widely condemned by human rights groups as authorizing collective punishment, the court rejected the petition but ordered the state to supply specified quantities of fuel – supplies which have been mostly blocked since April 9. A fuel strike in Gaza to protest the cuts intensified the shortage, but after it ended on April 30, Israel continued to block fuel supplies to levels well below even the minimal quantities ordered by the court.

The rights groups claim that Israel, as the occupying power in Gaza, is violating its duties under international law to Gaza residents, who are prevented from receiving fuel except via Israeli-controlled crossings. The court will issue a ruling at a later date.

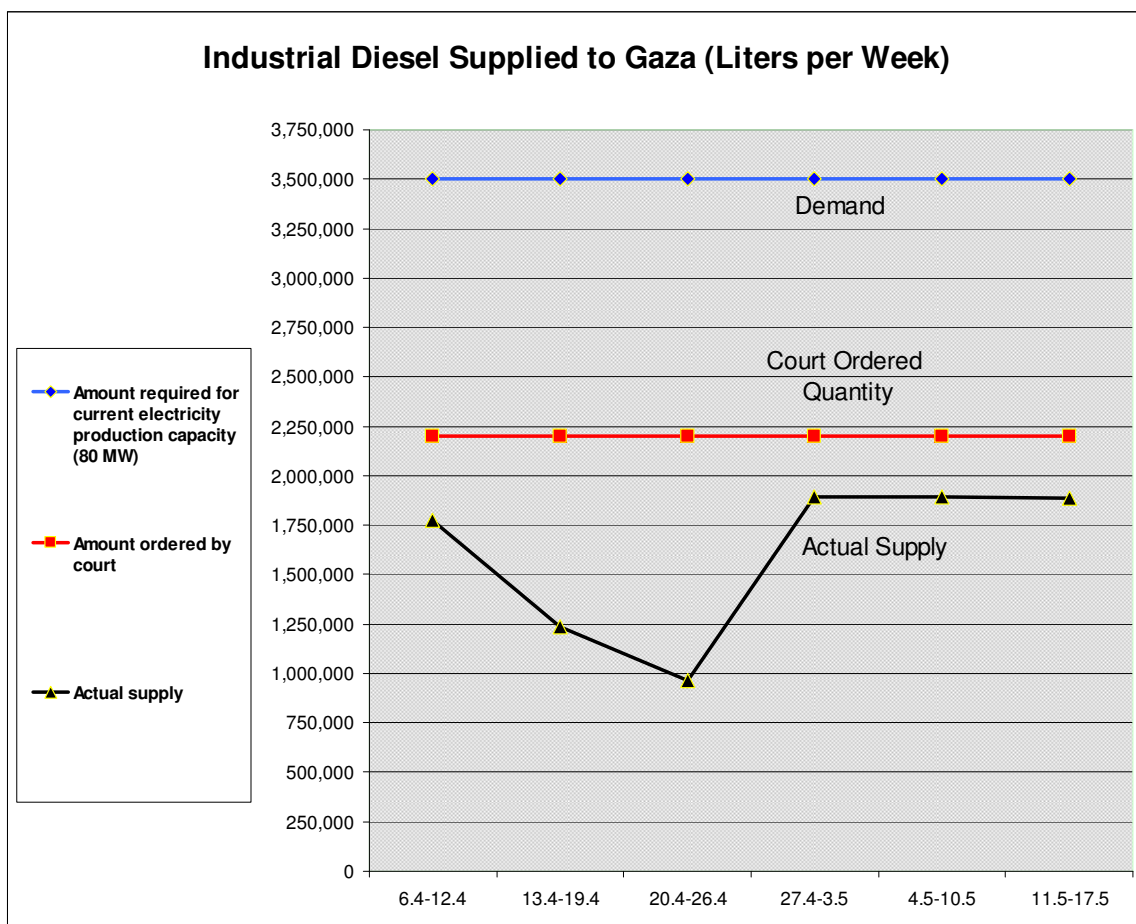
*****Please see graphs presented in the Addendum below, for details of the extent of the fuel cuts since April 9, 2008.**

The rights groups petitioning the court are: Gisha - Legal Center for Freedom of Movement * Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel * Al-Dameer Association for Human Rights * B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories * Gaza Community Mental Health Programme * HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual * Mezan Center for Human Rights * The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights * The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel

According to Gisha Director Sari Bashi, who argued the case in yesterday's hearing: **"The restrictions on fuel supply to the civilian population of the Gaza Strip constitute collective punishment in violation of international law. Israel absolutely controls the entrance of fuel into Gaza – and has a responsibility to permit Gaza residents to receive the fuel they need for their health and well-being".**

Press Release Addendum

Transfer of fuel to the Gaza Strip over the last six weeks April 6 – May 17, 2008

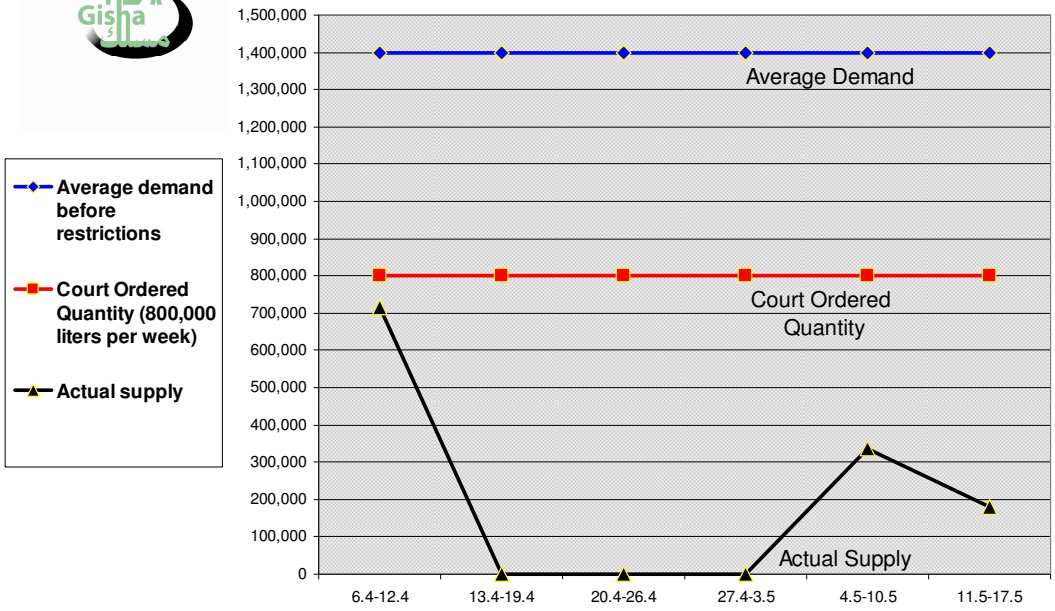


Important Dates:

- **April 9:** Attack on Nahal Oz Crossing kills two Israeli civilians; Israel closes crossing.
- **April 16:** Israel reopens Nahal Oz Crossing reopens – but restricts fuel supply dramatically
- **April 30:** Fuel strike in Gaza (for regular diesel and petrol) ends, fuel distributors collect diesel and petrol from the Palestinian side of Nahal Oz Crossing. The fuel strike did not affect industrial diesel.
- **May 10-11:** Gaza's power plant closes for two days because of shortages in industrial diesel.
- **May 13:** Human rights groups petition Supreme Court against the fuel cuts and violation of the court order.
- **May 21:** Court holds hearing in petition; no decision issued.



Diesel Supplied to Gaza (Liters per Week) April 6th - May 17th, 2008



Petrol (Gasoline) Supplied to Gaza (Liters per Week) April 6th - May 17th, 2008

