

Israel cuts off electricity supply to Gaza amid ongoing blockade of all humanitarian aid



Gaza City, March 10 (RHC)-- Israel's Energy Minister Eli Cohen has ordered an immediate halt to electricity supply to Gaza, threatening the functioning of the enclave's desalination plants amid an ongoing aid shortage in the holy month of Ramadan.

In a post on X, Cohen said he has signed an order to "cut off electricity to the Gaza Strip immediately." "Enough with the talk, it's time for action!" he added.

Sunday's announcement comes more than a week after Israel cut off all supplies of goods to the territory to over two million people after renegeing on the ceasefire deal that ended the 15-month-long Gaza war. Nearly 50,000 Palestinians have been killed and vast swathes of Gaza have been turned into rubble after non-stop Israeli bombardment.

Israel wants to extend the first phase of the three-phase deal, while the Hamas group wants the deal to move to phase two, as initially agreed by both sides. Analysts say Israel's refusal to enter phase two shows its unwillingness to withdraw its troops from the Philadelphi Corridor, a narrow strip of land that separates Gaza from Egypt.

Hamas has accused Israel of trying to derail the existing ceasefire agreement and dubbed the aid blockade a "cheap extortion, a war crime and a blatant attack" on the ceasefire. Aid groups and rights campaigners have accused Israel of committing crimes against humanity and violating international humanitarian laws for cutting off aid.

People in Gaza are struggling to get bread and basic supplies as Israel's total blockade has forced the closure of several bakeries and shops.

Al Jazeera's Hind Khoudary, reporting from Gaza City, said that despite the end to the devastating air strikes on Gaza, civilians continue to suffer due to more than one week of Israeli blockade in place.

"Many Palestinians are unable to buy these products, and most of Gaza's population is currently relying on food assistance. "Food, water and electricity, all aspects of Palestinian life are being affected by Israeli actions," Khoudary said, adding that the situation on the ground remains "catastrophic".

Hamas has repeatedly called for an immediate start to negotiations on the ceasefire's second phase. A Hamas source stated on Sunday that its delegation had now left for Doha, Qatar after talks in Cairo, Egypt.

Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Khan Younis, said the Hamas representatives were in Cairo to hold meetings with Egyptian officials on the possibilities of implementing the second phase of the ceasefire agreement.

"Hamas issued a statement agreeing to the establishment of a technocratic independent committee that will run the Gaza Strip and reiterated calls for the entry of humanitarian aid," Azzoum added, saying that the group is also calling for Israel's full withdrawal from the territory as part of any future deal.

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