

Dr Margaret Chan  
Director-General  
World Health Organization  
Avenue Appia 20  
1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland

2<sup>nd</sup> January 2008

Dear Dr. Chan,

At the end of October, the Government of Israel ordered that the supply of fuel to the Gaza Strip, of utmost necessity for the production of electricity, should be drastically reduced.

Energy is essential for the purification and pumping of water as well as for the treatment of sewage. Due to lack of fuel, electricity and spare parts for equipment (the Israeli Government controls all imports) inhabitants of the Gaza Strip do not have sufficient clean drinking water. Without clean water and without efficient treatment of sewage, people are likely to be affected by dangerous, and entirely preventable, diseases. Other consequences include lack of sufficient energy in critical facilities such as hospitals, pharmacies, clinics and ambulances, as well as in schools and ordinary homes. Refrigerators cannot work and food decays.

The prolonged siege of the Gaza Strip has resulted in a severe shortage of medicine and medical supplies. According to your own WHO data, 85 essential medicines were out of stock by the end of November 2007. Because of the insufficient supply of spare parts, medical equipment cannot be repaired. Machines for dialysis, ventilators, laboratories and cardiology equipment are not functioning properly and there are no test tubes. The Government of Israel has stopped the supply of other essential goods, such as cleaning materials, toilet paper, sheets, winter bedclothes, paper, etc., claiming that they are “unnecessary”. This makes it impossible for hospitals to function properly and is a claim unsupportable by any health professional.

All of these measures constitute collective punishment, which is forbidden by international law, as well as being inhumane treatment of a civilian population, half of which are children. Added to this, a very vulnerable population has been hit: two-thirds of the population of the Gaza Strip already lives in abject poverty. One must not long deliberate to realize that this situation will certainly lead to epidemics.

European Jews for a Just Peace, a federation of Jewish groups from ten countries, requests that the World Health Organization insists that Israel lifts what effectively amounts to a threat of biological and medical warfare against population of Gaza. We are joined in this request by other Jewish organisations and by health professionals across the globe whose signatures are appended below.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Paola Canarutto - Hospital S. Giovanni Bosco - Turin (Italy)**  
On behalf of European Jews for a Just Peace