



### Gaza electricity crisis 'not solved'



Gaza's sole power plant. (MaanImages/Wissam Nasser, File)

GAZA CITY (Ma'an) -- The Gaza Strip has not received enough fuel to resume normal electricity levels, a Gaza energy official told Ma'an on Saturday.

Hamas spokesman Taher al-Nunu said on Thursday that the Gaza government had reached a deal with Egyptian authorities to end the electricity crisis that closed Gaza's sole power plant last week, plunging Gaza into up to 18 hour blackouts per day.

But Gaza energy authority director Ahmad Abu al-Amreen said there has been no change in the situation and the authority is still using the same limited pool of fuel. Egypt says it has delivered emergency fuel to Gaza amid the crisis, but the promised deal did not appear to solve the problem of regular supplies.

The deal as described by al-Nunu includes longer-term measures to increase the capacity of the power plant and link Gaza's electricity grid to Egyptian infrastructure. The shorter-term requirement is the delivery of fuel into Gaza, but a disagreement on the route of the fuel still appeared to be pending agreement.

Egypt wants to stop the use of underground tunnels for delivery of Egyptian fuel purchased by Palestinian authorities, and has severely reduced supply through the tunnel network, prompting the current crisis.

The Gaza government is pressing for the Rafah terminal between the countries to be equipped for fuel transfer, and is reluctant to accept fuel to be delivered via the Israeli-controlled Kerem Shalom crossing.

The government fears Israel will use control of supplies to squeeze the coastal strip. Israel severely restricts the movement of people and goods from the Gaza Strip since it tightened a blockade on the territory in 2007.

However, Rafah currently is only fitted for passengers, and its development is restricted by an agreement between Egypt, Israel and the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority.

"We are still waiting for the Egyptian agreement to let fuel enter Gaza officially and legally," Abu al-Amreen told Ma'an.

"If fuel was allowed in Gaza in the next few hours, it will help to operate the whole energy situation. This will not end the crisis but will bring it back to where it was before the lack of the fuel."