



OCHA Flash Update

Gaza's sole power plant shut down triggering up to 20 hours of outage a day

11 April 2016

On 8 April, the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) was forced to shut down completely after exhausting its fuel reserves and being unable to replenish them due to a shortage of funds. This has triggered electricity blackouts of 18-20 hours per day, up from 12 hours previously, further undermining the delivery of basic services.

Prior to this development, the GPP had been operating at about half of its capacity, producing nearly 30 per cent (60 MW) of the electricity supplied to the Gaza Strip; the remaining electricity is purchased from Israel (120 MW) and Egypt (30 MW).

The capacity of the Energy Authority in Gaza to purchase fuel to run the plant has been undermined since the beginning of 2016, following a change in the arrangement with the Ramallah-based Ministry of Finance, which provided the GPP with a full exemption on fuel taxes. The scope of this tax exemption had been gradually reduced since January, significantly increasing the cost of fuel.

The electricity shortage, combined with the lack of affordable fuel have resulted in a further reduction in the water supply to households, which has declined from approximately 80 to 55 litres per person per day. Additionally, the five wastewater treatment plants had to shorten the treatment cycles, thus reducing the quality of the sewage discharged into the sea. The potential shut down of sewage pumping stations also exacerbates the risk of back-flow and flooding of raw sewage onto streets.

Emergency fuel distributions to critical water, sanitation, health and solid waste collection services, primarily to run backup generators, are taking place as scheduled through coordination by OCHA; 579,000 liters are to be delivered in April. Given the available funding, these distributions were planned to last until early May. Any increase in the allocations during the coming days to cover gaps left by the shutdown of the GPP will reduce the availability of the existing supply. No further funding commitments have been secured at this point.