

Date: April 6, 2020

To
Dr. Avichai Mandelblit
Attorney General
By Fax: 02-6467001

To
Mr. Naftali Bennett
Minister of Defense
By Fax: 03-6962757

To
Mr. Kamil Abu Rukun
Coordinator of
Government Activities in
the Territories
By Fax: 03-6976306

Dear Sirs,

Re: Removal of ban on entry of communication equipment into the Gaza Strip

We hereby contact you with respect to the matter in reference and to demand the immediate reversal of the ban on the entry of communication equipment into the Gaza Strip, **particularly now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when this equipment is of vital importance**, all as follows:

1. On February 10, 2020, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) posted a notice on its Arabic Facebook page whereby Israel would impose a blanket ban on the entry of communication equipment into the Gaza Strip. According to this notice, the reason behind this measure was an incident in which equipment belonging to the Palestinian telecommunications company, Paltel, was stolen by Hamas-affiliated operatives on January 30, 2020. The notice further indicated that the ban would remain in place until the stolen items were returned.

A copy of the notice from COGAT's dated February 10, 2020, is attached hereto.

2. Indeed, since this sudden, peculiar notice on COGAT's Facebook, Israel has in fact prevented the entry into Gaza of any items defined as "communication equipment," including but not limited to desktop and laptop computers and accessories, printers, internet routers, network cables, landline phones, cellular phones, and accessories and spare parts for these devices.
3. The communication and technology sector has suffered greatly as a result of this decision, with many business owners sustaining substantial losses given that they were unable to receive goods they had already purchased and therefore failed to meet contractual obligations to supply these items. The ban on the entry of communication equipment, which has been in place for more than six weeks at the time of writing, has resulted in shortages and sent prices soaring in this vital sector. As a result, many residents are unable to purchase these products, leaving them, in some cases, without internet connection. Companies supplying communication equipment have had to lay off employees and there are concerns that they will be shutdown completely.

4. **The harm to Gaza's communication sector and the shortages it faces are amplified during this period of the coronavirus pandemic, given that schools, universities and many workplaces have switched to remote working and learning, in compliance with guidelines issued across the globe. What is more, family and social connections now also rely on remote communication technologies. In light of the shortage in equipment and the resultant price hikes, many residents cannot afford to purchase, replace or repair communication equipment, leaving them without internet access, and others are unable to obtain the necessary electronic devices.**
5. As is evidenced in its notice, attached below, the COGAT is acutely aware of the repercussions of its decision to ban the entry of communication equipment into Gaza and of the fact that it primarily targets the civilian population in the Strip, punishing Gaza residents for no fault of their own by denying them basic commodities.
6. The declared purpose behind the decision – applying pressure on unknown individuals to return equipment stolen in Gaza from a company operating in the Strip – is unreasonable, patently inappropriate, and unjustified. It is extremely doubtful that the decision is grounded in any factual or logical basis. **This is a measure Israel must not take, regardless of the motives.** What is more, Israel cannot condition the reversal of its decision on factors that are entirely out of the control of Gaza's residents, who have no hand in the matter.
7. The decision to ban the entry of communication equipment into Gaza is arbitrary and sweeping, causing grave harm to Gaza residents, and infringing on their fundamental rights to property, livelihood, education, and dignity. **This blanket ban is unreasonable and disproportionate. Under the current circumstances, the measure constitutes unlawful collective punishment and a breach of Israel's obligation to respect and safeguard normal living conditions for Gaza's civilian population.**

Given the aforesaid, we ask that you **take immediate action** to lift the ban on the entry of communication equipment into the Gaza Strip, particularly at this time, when such equipment is highly necessary, and to permit its entry unconditionally and without further delay.

We thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Signature

Muna Haddad, Adv.

 المنسق
February 10

Monday, February 10, 2020 at 10:02 AM

#حماس الإرهابية في **#عزة** على مستودع معدات تابع لشركة الاتصالات الفلسطينية **#بالتل** (**#Paltel**)، حيث قاموا بسرقة معدات كثيرة تقدر قيمتها بـ 15 مليون شيكل. ونتيجة لذلك، ستواجه الشركة من الآن فصاعدًا صعوبات جمة لتوفير الخدمات المطلوبة منها لسكان غزة.

من الأهمية بمكان الإشارة إلى أن دولة **#إسرائيل** تسمح بإدخال معدات الاتصالات إلى **#القطاع** بشكل منتظم، إلا أنه وفي ضوء هذه الجريمة التي اقترقتها منظمة حماس الإرهابية، التي تستغل مرة أخرى الخطوات المدنية والتسهيلات الرامية إلى زيادة استقرار الاقتصاد في غزة، وتتمس بذلك بمصلحة السكان بالدرجة الأولى - لن يتم إدخال معدات الاتصالات إلى القطاع إلى ان تتم إعادة كافة المعدات المسروقة.

أعود وأكرر تحذيري للمنظمات الإرهابية: لا تستغلوا المجال الإنساني والخطوات التي تتبناها دولة إسرائيل لصالح سكان القطاع لأغراضكم الإرهابية!

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