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Palestinians must not be re-imprisoned within the Gaza Strip

Amnesty International today called on the parties involved in the future management of the Rafah crossing at the Gaza-Egypt border to ensure the fundamental rights of the people of Gaza. The governments of Israel and Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas de-facto administration in Gaza must guarantee the local population's rights to health and an adequate standard of living, and their right not to be subjected to collective punishment, including arbitrary restrictions on movement.

"The 1.5 million Palestinians who live in the Gaza Strip have been virtually imprisoned there since June, most of them in abject poverty as fuel, food and medicinal supplies run out as a result of the Israeli blockade," said Malcolm Smart, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme. "They must not be left to live in the same conditions after the re-closure of the border."

"More than 40 deaths have occurred in recent months because patients in need of urgent medical treatment not available inside Gaza, were refused passage out," said Malcolm Smart. "Hospitals in Gaza lack specialised staff and equipment, power cuts mean they're having to rely on generators, and the blockade has made it difficult or impossible to get parts to repair them when they break down. In the meantime Gazans continue to die and this is unacceptable."

Amnesty International called on the Israeli authorities to allow prompt access to medical care by Gazans in need of urgent treatment not available locally. The organization also called on the Palestinian Authority and the governments of Egypt and Jordan to help these patients access healthcare.

Earlier this week as fuel ran out, Gaza's only electricity plant was forced to close down. Despite the Israeli authorities then allowing fuel supplies to Gaza on Tuesday, the situation remains dire and power cuts are expected to continue.

"Egypt has the right to secure its border but Gazans should be allowed to leave by normal means, not have to rely on such an extraordinary measure as the breach in the border wall to provide their only possible means of exit," said Malcolm Smart.

Amnesty International urged the Egyptian authorities to ensure that security forces deployed at the border do not use excessive force against inhabitants of the Gaza Strip passing or attempting to pass through the border.