

Knesset Plenary, December 18, 2013

Excerpts from the protocol: MK Michal Rozin (Meretz) submits an urgent parliamentary question to Minister of Defense Moshe Ya'alon.

Michal Rozin (Meretz):

Last week, the media reported that Israel refuses to use a scanner the Dutch government donated for the Kerem Shalom crossing due to security considerations. I would like to ask: Can the scanner help prevent people and weapons from being smuggled, and if so, why is it not used for transferring goods between Gaza and the West Bank?

Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon:

Honorable Speaker, fellow Members of Knesset. There is some confusion in this question with respect to what the scanner is, what its role is and what it is used for today.

There are, in fact, two scanners. One was installed at Allenby Bridge, the other at Kerem Shalom Crossing into the Gaza Strip. They were donated by the Dutch government. What we are talking about is a scanner that was created [sic] at Kerem Shalom. This scanner is active, functioning and allows scanning merchandise that leaves the Gaza Strip for export to Europe, mostly through the Ashdod seaport.

Whether goods from Gaza can be shipped to Judea and Samaria is a different question. It has nothing to do with the scanner. It has to do with a security policy whereby, according to the recommendation of all security agencies, we should not allow merchandise to be transferred to [sic] the Gaza Strip and the West Bank for security reasons. And why?

Yes, the scanner is effective. If a person tries to hide or if someone tries to smuggle certain weapons, the scanner is supposed to detect that. But the scanner does not detect everything people want to smuggle from the Gaza Strip to Judea and Samaria; which is in fact, a security reality that comes out of the Gaza Strip. There is a functional Hamas command center today. As an example, there are other actors at play there - Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Salafist organizations, global Jihad organizations, who would very much like to export terrorist activity to Judea and Samaria.

The Hamas command center in Gaza has been trying for a long time to set up, establish and activate Hamas cells in Judea and Samaria and the reason they have had a hard time doing this has to do with their ability to communicate with Judea and Samaria. If we open this channel, that allows shipping merchandise, it will be possible to hide things in this merchandise that we don't want to reach the Judea and Samaria from Gaza and which the scanner can't detect.

Therefore, the scanner is used to transfer goods to Europe, and we do not intend to allow the export of merchandise from Gaza to Judea and Samaria, because of the security threat involved.

Unofficial translation by Gisha. For inquiries, info@gisha.org.

Original text in Hebrew can be found here:

<http://online.knesset.gov.il/eprotocol/PLAYER/PEPlayer.aspx?ProtocolID=33189>

Michal Rozin (Meretz)

If, as you say, the motives are entirely security related, the Dutch government built the scanner according to Israeli government standards, and, according to the security forces of the Government of Israel, the scanner was built in order to provide a solution to security concerns. If it's possible to transport merchandise via Israel, as you say, to the Ashdod port, Ben Gurion International Airport, Allenby Bridge, for export abroad, and if the scanner was built according to Israeli security requirements, and it scans the merchandise in a manner that makes it impossible to transfer objects that put security at risk from Gaza to the West Bank - and you say this is the reason - so isn't the reason unrelated to security? Isn't it political? If it's political, then explain the reason for this policy, for this theory of separation - How does it contribute? How does it help? How does it promote this government's intention of advancing the negotiations with the Palestinians? You said yourself that the reasons are security. If it's not security, because the scanner can actually detect everything the security establishment requires it to - then why? What are the political reasons? Thank you.

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[Questions by other MKs submitted at this stage]

Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon:

Since I am familiar with all the answers to the questions, I will answer all of them. On the first question, by MK Rozin, I recall what I've already said. The reasons that will not allow for the exit of goods from Gaza to Judea and Samaria are reasons of security. I am willing to provide details on the exact security reasons why the IDF objects, the ISA objects, I object to the transfer of goods from Gaza to the Judea and Samaria Area, to the Foreign Affairs and Security Subcommittee, and the reasons are security.

It's true that the Government of Holland made an issue of it, given that it donated the scanners. I met the foreign minister of Holland while he was here on a visit recently along with his government, no one promised that the scanner would allow or would compel us to allow transfers of goods from Gaza to Judea and Samaria.

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I said from the outset that at Allenby it's for export - to Jordan. In Gaza it's for export outside the territory, not to Judea and Samaria. And the Dutch government certainly will not dictate how we define security threats or how we respond to them. So yes, it caused some kind of discomfort, I stood my ground and I will stand my ground, we can in the Sub-committee on Foreign Relations and Security.