

Egypt power outages

This will only take a second!

[Cairo] Egyptians are becoming increasingly frustrated and impatient due to prolonged power outages caused by extreme heat and a shortage of natural gas. The state-owned electricity company is struggling to meet the demand for electricity and air conditioning in a population of over 114 million.

This week, temperatures soared above 104° Fahrenheit (40° Celsius) in Cairo and peaked at 122° Fahrenheit (50° Celsius) in southern Egypt, significantly increasing electricity demand.

"I must charge my wheelchair battery for four to six hours every three days. As it weakens, I'll have to charge it for two hours every day, or I'll have to replace it," said 37-year-old Selim Habib, who spoke by telephone to The Media Line from Minya in Upper Egypt where temperatures hit 104° F Wednesday.

I face power outages every day at home from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and at work from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., which means I have no electricity for four hours daily. There's also a two-hour outage at home during lunchtime. Moreover, due to power outages in my village, I lose my internet connection for four hours every day. Sometimes, this situation can extend to six hours, which affects our sales process.

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Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly chaired a special cabinet meeting on Monday to address the crisis after the Egyptian Electricity Holding Company extended one-hour rolling blackouts, which started in May, to up to three hours of nationwide service interruption. These blackouts were initiated to maintain the operational efficiency of transmission and natural gas networks.

Following the cabinet session, the electricity and petroleum ministries issued a public statement of regret, which is unusual for President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's government. His ten years in office have been filled with confident statements about the success of his development policies, especially in the infrastructure and energy sectors.

"The Ministry of Electricity and the Ministry of Petroleum apologize to the people of Egypt for the announced measures to extend the periods of reduced electricity usage," read the statement from Electricity and Renewable Energy Minister Mohamed Shaker and Petroleum and Mineral Resources Minister Tarek El-Molla.

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Government officials blame the power crisis on the ongoing high temperatures and supply issues, which "disrupted pre-planned coordination to secure the necessary fuel quantities for the increased summer consumption."

An estimated 66% of Egypt's electricity production is generated by natural gas. In 2015, Italian energy company ENI's discovery of a massive deep-water gas field called Zohr, which is 93 miles (150 kilometers) north of Port Said, was billed as a game changer for the country. This gas field has since allowed Egypt to produce enough power for domestic needs and become an energy exporter.

ENI executives and Egyptian officials estimated that the Zohr field held 30 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves, making it the largest in the Mediterranean.

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