

Troubled Waters

Fact Sheet: Water Injustice in Palestine

Land and water are at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories are portrayed as a region where water is scarce and where innovation has enabled Israelis to “turn the desert green,” the truth is far more troubling. Namely, control of water in the region relies on a system of profound inequality based on a 60-year grab of Palestinian water resources.

The Israeli Occupation as a Water Grab

- Palestinians have access to only 70 liters of water per day per person, well below the 100 liters recommended by the World Health Organization. In some cases Palestinians have access to as few as 20 liters per day. Israeli citizens—including settlers—consume 300 liters per day.
- Ramallah receives more rainfall annually than London, contrary to myths of water scarcity in the region.
- Approximately 85 percent of the Separation Wall lies in Palestinian territory, and it is one of the major impediments to Palestinian access to water.
- The Wall cuts Palestinians off from the Western Mountain Aquifer which is the only direct source of water for Palestinians in the West Bank and lies under Palestinian territory. 80 percent of its water goes to Israel and Israeli settlements.
- Israeli Authorities have not approved any new wells in the Western Mountain Aquifer basin since 1967, even though the Wall now blocks access to numerous wells.
- The 2008–2009 Israeli war on Gaza (Operation Cast Lead) severely damaged Gazan water and sewage facilities. The United Nations called Israeli destruction of waterworks in Operation Cast Lead “deliberate and systematic.”



Palestinians use black tanks on their rooftops to store water since they have no guarantee of access to running water. Meanwhile, most Israeli settlements have swimming pools, ample running water, and lush irrigated gardens.

“Water is the real conflict. Without water you have nothing, no food. Nothing.”
--Samah Darwish Director of Grassroots, Policies and Advocacy Department at the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) in Palestine

Grassroots International works in partnership with social movements to create a just and sustainable world by advancing the human rights to land, water, and food through global grantmaking, building solidarity across organizations and movements, and advocacy in the US.



- The Israeli blockade in the Gaza Strip prevents Gazans from accessing the materials necessary to repair damaged infrastructure. Damage to water and sewage systems has also contributed to water pollution.
- The Coastal Aquifer, the Gaza Strip's only source of fresh water, is heavily polluted because, without access to alternative water sources due to the blockade, residents overdraw from the aquifer. The resulting lower water level leads to the intrusion of sea and brackish water.
- In Gaza, 95 percent of water is not potable. Of 117 municipal wells, almost all are polluted with salt and other pollutants. Water pollution is a major source of disease in the Gaza Strip.
- Palestinians have been denied access to water from the Jordan River since the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967. The entire Jordan Valley continues to remain under Israeli control after the Oslo Accords.
- Israeli Authorities control Palestinian access to running water and enforce annual quotas on the amount of water available. Water runs at strictly limited times, if at all.
- Nearly all Palestinian homes use roof-top water tanks to store water. Israeli soldiers have given testimony of deliberately shooting Palestinian water tanks for amusement.
- When water is unavailable Palestinians have to purchase water from the Israeli water company Mekorot. Palestinians pay as much as 4 times the average water tariff paid by Israelis.



Elbit Systems Ltd., Profiting from Water Theft

- Elbit Systems Ltd. is one of the world's largest security and defense electronics contractors. Elbit specializes in military electronics and unmanned air vehicles or "drones."
- Elbit has a lucrative contract to build the Wall in the West Bank, and to provide military surveillance systems. At an estimated \$2 million per kilometer in construction costs, Elbit stands to profit significantly from the violation of Palestinians resource and human rights.
- The Wall is one of the major impediments to Palestinian access to water and has been declared illegal by the International Court of justice.

What You Can Do:

Sign a petition to push TIAA-CREF to divest from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation.

Donate to Grassroots International, to accompany our Palestinian partners in their struggle for rights to land, water, and food sovereignty.

Spread the word with your networks, friends and family.

Join our e-advocacy list to receive e-mails with actions you can take.

