



How He Sees the World

Board Member

Nidal Al-Azraq

Nidal Al-Azraq, a member of our board of directors, was born and raised in the Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine. He has not forgotten what life was like.

Since graduating from Harvard more than 20 years ago, Nidal has worked to improve Palestinian lives, especially in refugee camps. As Executive Director of U.S.-based 1FOR3.ORG, he focusses on critical needs—clean abundant water, food, health, a safe environment—in Palestinian refugee camps.

Nidal supports Grassroots International because of a shared belief in standing in solidarity with global social movements—not by imposing external, western plans, but by enabling communities to build power from within.

“Grassroots movements worldwide are confronting authorities trying to marginalize and oppress the yearnings of the people. I value Grassroots International because they’re on the side of the people, but more importantly, because they’re helping to achieve a more just and equal world.”

-Nidal Al-Azraq

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



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Thirsting for Justice and Water Rights

The United Nations recognizes access to water as a human right, but many regions of the world suffer a critical scarcity of this essential resource — which climate change is worsening. Water is truly life giving, making our defense of water rights more vital than ever.

HAITI

Our Haitian partner, Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP), works tirelessly to promote water rights in Haiti, a nation suffering an ongoing drought. A remarkable 80% of Haiti’s farms depend on rain. Yet climate change is reducing rainfall and surface water so much, there is not enough for livestock and farming. When it does rain, it floods. With 99% of Haiti’s original forests gone, the bare land can’t easily absorb rainwater. To make matters worse, multinational mining and agribusiness companies are tearing up Haiti, polluting much of the remaining water.



water capturing projects to fit local conditions — such as reforesting land to capture and hold water while preserving the soil, and constructing ponds to keep local farms alive.

PALESTINE

Grassroots International’s partner in Palestine, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees

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Water is truly life giving, making our defense of water rights more vital than ever.

But the MPP is bringing meaningful hope and change. It’s building hundreds of water cisterns, digging dozens of wells, and conceiving and carrying out

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From the Executive Director

Water is central to all life, and without it we simply cannot live. This is why defending the human right to water is at the core of our mission, and also one of the central issues our partners organize around. The unequal distribution of water resources exacerbates other existing inequalities, particularly in rural economies where access to water means access to life and livelihood. Through both our grantmaking and advocacy, Grassroots International supports the human right to water as fundamental and essential to wellbeing and justice. A few examples from our partners appear in this newsletter, but dozens more could be told as well.

This World Water Day, March 22, we celebrate the work of our partners for water rights, and dedicate this issue of *Solidarity Notes* to them.

In this issue, you'll read about how our partners in Haiti and Palestine have built water cisterns, wells and pipelines—addressing the needs of the people that local governments have failed to meet—and how Garifuna communities in Honduras are winning back their ancestral coastlines and territories from corporate interests. You'll also learn about the tragedy that accompanies hydro-electric dams in Brazil and how affected communities are organizing to have their voices heard and demands met.

I hope as you read all these stories you understand that your solidarity and financial support bolster each of these struggles. Together we can build strong movements that defend and protect water rights for all people.

In gratitude and solidarity,
Chung-Wha Hong, Executive Director



Thirsting for Justice and Water Rights Continued from page 1

(UAWC), is building local activist movements to address regional aridity, made drier by Israel's appropriation of aquifers. Each Palestinian is forced to make do with less than one-third the amount of water recommended by the World Health Organization—and much of that water must be purchased or is polluted.

The UAWC is strengthening Palestinian communities and lifting agricultural output by investing in water infrastructure. They've drilled 357 wells, set up four concrete ponds to harvest water, built four tanks to irrigate crops, and laid 38 miles of pipes to distribute water to communities and farmland.

UAWC's achievements have earned international acclaim, including the Arab Creativity Award and United Nations' Equator Prize.

HONDURAS

The Garifuna People of the Honduran North Coast have lived in harmony with the Atlantic for centuries, fishing and caring for their stretch of coastline. In the last decade, however, they've lost 80% of their land to climate change and theft by corporations, including oil and gas.

But the Garifuna are resisting. Trained in nonviolent activism by our partner, the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), they are re-occupying stolen coastline and reclaiming land through the courts.

Each of these examples is why we must keep building a global movement, linking activists everywhere. Only worldwide resistance can effectively address



climate change and secure the human right to clean water for all.

In Palestine, Haiti, Honduras, and around the globe, Grassroots International and our partners are defending water rights, but there is much more to do. That's why your generosity is crucial. Your solidarity provides our partners with the financial resources to enable fisherfolk, small farmers, and Indigenous communities to defend their water rights.

One Year After Toxic Tidal Wave: Brazilians Demand A Voice in Hydro-dam Projects

Millions of cubic meters of toxic mining sludge hurtled down a valley, killing at least 300 people, burying entire communities, and poisoning the Paraopeba and São Francisco Rivers when the dam in Brumadinho, Brazil, suddenly collapsed.

That was the immediate disaster. But now, hundreds of thousands of Brazilians must contend, well into the future, with toxic waste poisoning their water sources, ecosystems and lives.

Could the Brumadinho tragedy have been prevented? Absolutely—if the Vale mining company obeyed safety laws, repaired a known crack, and accepted the cost. But that would have required Vale to value people's lives over money, which they refused to do.

That's why our Brazilian partner the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB) exists—to ensure the people affected do matter, and to demand respect for their lives, environment, and human rights. MAB is advocating for the victims of the dam collapse, and organizing with these local communities, ignored for



too long, to raise a powerful collective voice—and win community control of their own water systems.

Right after the dam collapse, MAB organized an emergency brigade to train local communities to advocate for reparations—for material losses, and physical, health, and environmental damage. MAB also exposed Vale's corporate crimes, the causes of multiple catastrophes, to the world.

This January, MAB commemorated the one-year anniversary of the Brumadinho dam collapse with a mass protest. The movement marched 185 miles along the river basin to condemn government inaction. On the march, MAB was joined by its region-wide sister organization, the Movement of People Affected by Hydro Dams (MAR, also a Grassroots International grantee), to expand the fight against Vale and destructive dams across Latin America. To prevent future disasters, these grassroots movements are demanding that corporations guarantee communities a voice in the dam projects that affect their lives.



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