



Water Shortage: Another Tool of Occupation of Palestine

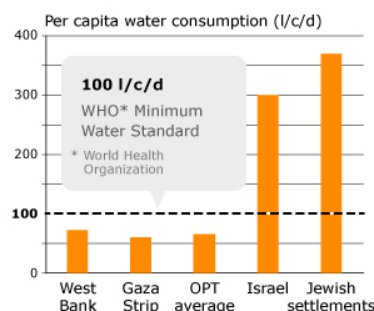
As summer is in full swing, the people of Palestine are grappling with the recurrent manmade crisis of water shortage due to the occupation of its land. Areas throughout Palestine are suffering from adequate water supplies to carry out their daily tasks be they at home or in the agricultural or trade/building sectors. Water is often appropriated to different areas with some receiving tap water once a week or less in other devastated areas.

Drinking, cooking, showering, laundering, and making ablution to carry out the prayers come to a standstill and this does not include farming, small home gardens or watering livestock; complaints filed to international organizations which fall on deaf ears but that is the nature of occupation. Water is restricted to distribution once to twice per week in some better areas some areas stretch to 3 weeks due to poor infrastructure, politics, and settlement fixtures. Residents making due with hand wrenching techniques to utilize every drop of water recycling used water to irrigate home gardens and capturing rainwater from rooftops as a reservoir for summer months. Home swimming pools are practically unheard of throughout the territories that is a usurped luxury afforded to the occupiers of Palestine. Private water tanks are bought at exorbitant prices when taps run dry and the rotation did not resume as planned. Mekorot, the Jewish national water company, profits highly since they are the main water providers for consumption and leave the people with no choice other to buy water tanks from them which is ironic since it pumps water from the Palestinian designated areas.

Resolution No. 158 on 1 Oct. 1967, stipulated “putting all wells, springs and water projects under the direct authority of the Israeli military governor.” It was then followed by Resolution No. 291, also of 1967, which stated that “all the water sources in the Palestinian territories have become the property of the state, according to Israeli law, passed in 1959.” Later the Oslo Accords signed in 1993 and the Water Accord branching from it later signed in 1995 facilitated the chokehold of the water distribution directly by re-routing the water from the Palestinian territories out to the Jewish entity’s cities and settlements. It issued a decision on June 7, 1997, *stating that “all the water in the land that was occupied again is the property of the State of Israel.”* This includes full control over the Jordan River and the Dead Sea.

Foreign attention is marred with red tape by third party committees and international government agencies, again being the nature of occupation. According to the Palestinian Water Authority, the average Jewish consumption of water is 300 liter per person per day, which is more than 4 times that of the Palestinian use of 72 liters per day - well below the 100 liters recommended by the World Health Organization. Some Palestinian village communities live on even less water than the average Palestinian consumption, in some cases no more than 20 liters per person per day. This is starkly shocking as it falls below the poverty line as outlined above.

Figure 1
Consumption of water by Palestinians and Israelis



Daily living and household chores become debilitating responsibilities, with many families anxiously waiting for the water to arrive in their taps or main source line in the area as the

Palestinian Authority Territories are notoriously divided into areas (A, B, and C, Gaza, East Jerusalem) which include a myriad of protocols but for this topic we will focus on the water distribution. The water supplies and filtrations are directly overseen by the Jewish entity and any extraction is strictly forbidden and immediately halted and if any materialization is apparent, it too is immediately destroyed by military orders.

Whereas Gaza is a completely secluded area where the water is unfit for normal consumption, raw sewage is emptied directly in to the Mediterranean Sea (by the Jewish entity) and the suffocation is so severe that the faucets rarely have running water, war-ridden residents go to a water collection pipe with any plastic containers to get their limited fill to take back to their shelters.

PWA Minister Mazen Ghoneim told Al-Monitor, on the sidelines of the World Water Day celebration in Ramallah on March 26, "The water situation in Palestine is very complex in light of Israel's control over 90% of water resources, in addition to its refusal to increase the amount of drinking water sold to Palestine since 1995, which totals up to 52 million cubic meters, for \$55 million... The biggest water catastrophe on earth is in the Gaza Strip, as 97% of the coastal aquifer water is unfit for human use because of seawater intrusion and leakage of sewage water into it." He further speculated that "In 2017, there will be a real catastrophe in Gaza. There will no longer be usable water in the Strip. Should no real actions be taken, the aquifer is threatened to be exhausted by 2020, and thus life in the Strip would become impossible,"

Occupation of a Muslim land affects each and every aspect of living from its water to its land, including denying its inhabitants access to the basic water supply being another war tool to grapple the occupied again the nature of occupation. Rendering this declaration from the Protocol I of the Geneva Convention (1977), as non-binding and non-existent in the case of Palestine: which states: "*It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of a civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, **drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive.**" Thus dismembering any effort for human development before it even begins including agricultural and economic development and progress is proven time and time again with catastrophic impact on the people.*

Under international law it is illegal for the Jewish entity to expropriate the water of the Occupied Palestinian Territories for use by its own citizens, and doubly illegal to expropriate it for use by illegal Jewish settlers. The statistics are appalling, 10-14% of Palestine's GDP is agricultural, 90% of them must rely on rain-fed farming methods. Whereas the Jewish entity' agriculture is only 3% of their GDP, but irrigates more than 50% of its land. Settlers have an unlimited access to the water and do not worry about their clean safe water supply.

What is known that the land of Palestine is filled with blessings and bounties that natural aquifers and springs are abundant and its water is pure but to access the waters is forbidden and closely monitored. There are over 500 natural water springs throughout Palestine yet pumping, drilling or set up of deep-water wells is prohibited so this is another tool in occupying and limiting the access to living a decent dignified less laborious lifestyle of the people.

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