



CUTTING THE LIFELINE

#STOPANNEXATION
OF PALESTINIAN WATER

“Today, the temperature in the Jordan Valley has reached over forty degrees. I, my wife and my eight children do not have enough water to alleviate the inferno-like weather by bathing or cleaning with cold water. The water pipelines are only twenty meters away from the tent that is our house, but I am not allowed to use my own water resources. The constructed water networks in the area are only for the illegal Israeli settlers and soldiers in the neighboring settlements and military bases to use them without limits. I see the settlers water the flowers and trees in their huge gardens everyday, while I sometimes do not have water to drink. This is a brutal practice of discrimination and oppression inflicted upon us just because we are Palestinians

“Since the occupation of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, the first steps the occupation forces took were putting their hands on the water springs and rivers running throughout the Jordan Valley. They spread their hegemony over the water resources before they started practically dominating the land through the erection of settlements. The de jure annexation will perpetuate and worsen the de facto situation created since over five decades.”

Abu Mahmoud from Khallet Makhoul, northern Jordan Valley.

and ‘they’ are Israeli Jews,” narrates Abu Mahmoud from the semi-Bedouin community of Khallet Makhoul, northern Jordan Valley. Abu Mahmoud goes on saying that “in addition to our family’s basic daily needs of water, securing water for my livestock is another burden that I can barely lift on my back. Every two or three days, I have to buy trucked water that costs me 220-230 ILS (around 67\$). In total, meeting our water needs, including the livestock’s costs me 25,000 ILS (about 7, 150\$) annually. Being denied access to our water resources triggers another economic crisis. The lack of water implies that we are unable to cultivate crops to feed the livestock in our land. This coerces us into purchasing fodder wheat and wheat grain for the livestock paying 21,000 ILS (6000\$) every four months.

Sometimes, when I cannot market and sell my dairy products, I have to borrow money to buy water and fodder for the livestock. The discriminatory practices of the Israeli occupation squarely deny us access to the core of life, water, and put me in a severe economic crisis while I have 700 dunums of land that, if I have had the water needed to cultivate them, I would live in prosperity without any financial difficulties.”

“The implementation of the Deal of the Century,” Abu Mahmoud adds, “will add insult to the injury as the annexation of the Jordan Valley making it an integral part of Israel will restrict our movement to get water from areas designated as ‘A’ or ‘B’.” Abu Mahmoud also observes that “to emphasize their sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, the Israeli occupation authorities will transform the set military roadblocks into ‘borders’ separating us from the rest of the West Bank, where we might end up lacking water for longer periods of time as the trucked water from areas ‘A’ and ‘B’ we usually order will need permits from the occupation to enter the Jordan Valley.”



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“The Israeli occupation,” Abu Mahmoud says, “has intentionally created, and now is deteriorating this coercive situation of deprivation of water and impoverishment to realize its settler colonial objectives.” Abu Mahmoud bitterly adds, “they simply want our land without its owners.” Yet, “in the past”, Abu Mahmoud notes, “families used to leave their homes for other places where water is available. Today, people who still live in the communities refuse to leave as they are now more aware of the occupation’s manifest aims behind stripping Palestinians of their water resources - to empty the land from our presence and replace it with another presence, the settlers.” The small and daily heroic acts and survival of Abu Mahmoud, his family and many others in the Jordan Valley accumulate into a tale of Sumud, Steadfastness. However, Abu Mahmoud asserts that “although we resist the Israeli occupation’s attempts to eliminate us, the international community, especially Western countries with their institutional presence in Palestine through the NGOs they fund, do not support our Sumud in the right way. Various NGOs construct water pipelines although they know

that the occupation forces will destroy them. And when they do so, no protection for the constructed pipelines or political support is provided. We are here to stay against all odds, but we need more support to hold on despite our systematically constructed tremendous suffering.”



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WEAPONIZING WATER FOR ANNEXATION

The water crisis that Palestinians have been facing is primarily man-made rather than a result of the region's climate conditions. The deterioration of the water shortages that Palestinians in the Jordan Valley and other areas targeted by the impending annexation will encounter is also man-made and intentional. In fact, the areas in the occupied West Bank that have suffered over the last decades most from the ongoing measures of de facto annexation and are now slated for official de jure annexation are abundant with water and the sites of the most important water resources are located there.

The Jordan Valley is affluent with primary groundwater wells in the West Bank. The Jordan River, also located in the Jordan Valley, is one of the most important rivers in the West Bank, in addition to Al'Ouja River. Much of the Jordan River has been diverted by the Israeli occupation since years and the Al'Ouja River has become a tiny creek due to excessive consumption by the occupation. The Jordan Valley, along with most of the other mountainous areas targeted by annexation plans, is situated to the east of the West Bank, where most of the superabundant water springs are available.



Israel has weaponized water in order to build towards the annexation that has now been green-lit by Trump's proposed Deal of the Century.

FROM THE OSLO ACCORDS TO THE DEAL OF THE CENTURY: PLANNING WATER THEFT

Israeli control of water resources in the West Bank, set to increase by the enforcement of the 'Deal of the Century', is not new. According to the Oslo Accords signed between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Palestinians are supposed to preserve control only over 17% of their water resources, which Israel has cut to 13% through its discriminatory practices on the ground. This entails that the Israeli occupation dominates 87% of the Palestinian-owned water resources.

The interim division of the occupied West Bank into Area A (under full Palestinian control), Area B (under mixed control) and Area C (under full Israeli control) installed under the Oslo Accords for Israel was never temporary but a road map to the annexation of Area C. These areas are defined based on the location of the water resources and annexation will target particularly the water resources in Area 'C' and all the other areas that depend on the water flowing from Area 'C'.

Through its national water company, Mekorot, the Israeli occupation has installed a water apartheid supplying limited amounts of water to the Palestinian population in areas 'A' and 'B' and denying Palestinians in area 'C' access to it. Sami Dawood, the manager of the North Branch of the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) explains that "the water scarcity created by the occupation ensures that Palestinians in area 'C', such as the Jordan Valley, use only 35 liters of water a day. Areas 'A' and 'B' are not exempt from water scarcity as Palestinians living there can just consume 70 liters of water per day. Palestinians all over the West Bank use less water than recommended by the World Health Organization - minimum 100 liters per person a day."



The Israeli occupation limits Palestinians' access to water in area 'C' by banning them from constructing, developing and rehabilitating water infrastructure, such as pipelines or water wells. "Any attempts by our organization to provide Palestinians in area 'C' with water pipelines and tanks are hampered by the occupation soldiers and settlers, who destroy them as happened in the Jordan Valley", states Dawood.

The occupation created water scarcity in Area C even long before the Oslo Accords. "Only three days after the occupation of the West Bank in 1967, the Israeli occupation authorities laid

hands on Palestinian water resources by issuing military orders 92 and 158, which allowed the occupation to shut down all the water institutions that used to be operated by the Jordanian government", says Abdel Rahman Tamimi, the director of the PHG.

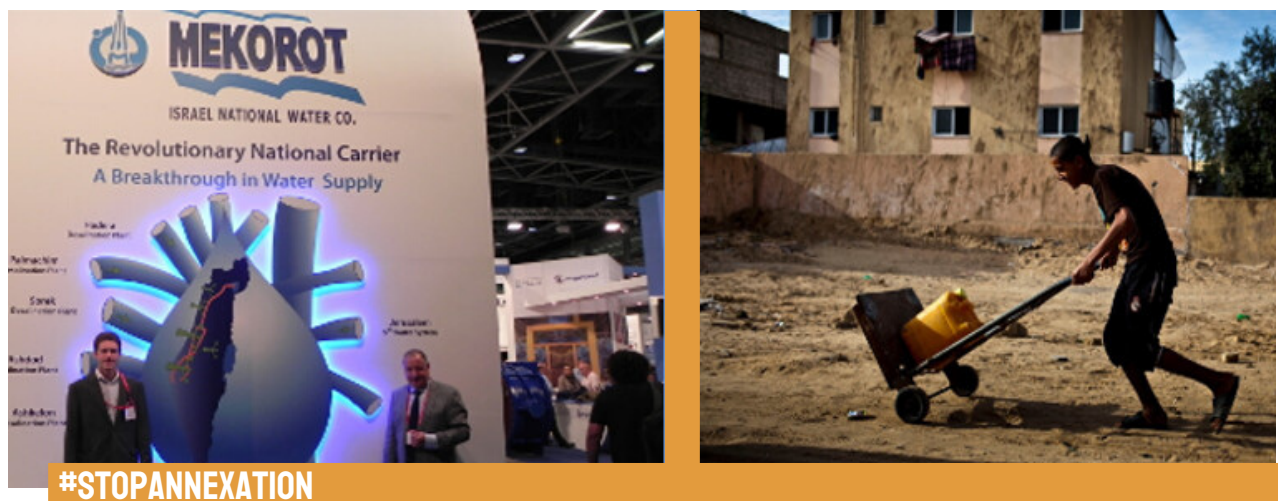
The Israeli discriminatory practices and settlement expansionism have as well heavily affected the supply of water to the Gaza Strip. The Israeli occupation, Tamimi states, "has blocked the water resources that used to flow from southern Hebron in the southern West Bank to the Gaza Strip, which created a water crisis in the besieged Strip." People in Gaza have to deal with various perils due to this water blockade. "97% of the water in Gaza" Tamimi contends, "is undrinkable. The scarcity of water has forced the two million people in Gaza to pump more groundwater. Excessive pumping has caused the pollution of underground water."



WATER APARTHEID

The Israeli occupation is an apartheid regime that produces and encodes unequal relationships with respect to water in order to coerce Palestinians into leaving their land.

The dual permit regime pursued by the occupation in Area 'C' allowing construction and rehabilitation of water infrastructure for settlers while destroying Palestinian water networks and wells resonates with the settler-colonial doctrine Theodor Herzl's, the founding father of Zionism, expressed in his allegorical novel 'The Jewish State': "If I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish before I construct." Indeed, Israel keeps destroying Palestinians' water infrastructure and property in area 'C' in order to replace them with another infrastructure exclusively serving settlers.



In Area 'C' of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli occupation employs a racialized organizing structure of apartheid and ghettoization by depriving the Palestinian population there from adequate water resources and infrastructure. Blocking the water flowing from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip reinforces the geographical and political segregation of Gaza from the West Bank resulting, among others, in groundwater pollution.

"Taking control over the Palestinian water resources was one of Israel's first steps, right after occupying the West Bank. This indicates the importance of water as a strategic and security issue", says Tamimi. Through controlling water resources, he adds, "Israel can use water as another tool to exercise its hegemony over the Palestinian population." By dominating the occupied population, the Israeli occupation also controls the land on which Palestinians live and expands its settler presence there.

ANNEXATION - A FLUID PROCESS

Palestinians have been facing expulsion and expropriation of their ancestral land since 1948, when Israel was created on the wreckages of over 500 Palestinian villages and cities. Hence, the Nakba was not an event that took place and ended within a certain period of time. It is an ongoing process of territorial expansion and elimination of the native Palestinian population owning the targeted land.

Granting Israel more control over Area 'C', especially the Jordan Valley through the annexation proposed by the Trump plan will intensify the lack of water Palestinians suffer in order to accelerate and increase the forcible displacement of the Palestinian population. As the native people, Palestinians obstruct the settlers' access to and presence in the land. Denying Palestinians access to their water resources in Area 'C', the foundation of life, aims at 'quiet' eradication of Palestinians from their lands.



The so-called 'Deal of the Century' proposed by the Trump administration will reinforce Israeli occupation, colonization and ghettoization. This plan to legalize Israeli apartheid, will inherently legalize also the continuous deprivation of Palestinians of their natural resources, with water confiscation as one of its main elements. Large swaths of Palestinian agricultural lands will desertify while the areas settlers steal and inhabit will bloom, a motto Zionism keeps voicing.

The ongoing de facto and the de jure annexation will deepen the economic crisis of Palestinian farmers and herders, reducing them and the rest of Palestinians to cheap labor in Israeli settlers' farms and consumers of their crops. Moreover, the lack of water for Palestinians to cultivate their land increases the possibility of them losing their land to the Israeli occupation, for Israeli law allows confiscation of Palestinians land uncultivated for three years. The loss of more land will squeeze Palestinians in ever-smaller Bantustans, no different from the ghetto of Gaza.

ISRAEL'S WATER APARTHEID GOES GLOBAL

The international community and corporations take an active part in sustaining Israel's violations of Palestinian water rights. Deals with Israeli water companies responsible for implementing and facilitating the occupation's apartheid and settler colonial practices violate the state obligations not to aid or assist Israel's violations of international law and business responsibility to respect and ensure respect of human rights throughout its supply chain.

- Since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, Mekorot implements and sustains the colonial conquest of the land through practices of water apartheid. One of Mekorot's most recent projects is the bypass pipeline system near the village of Bardala, northern Jordan Valley, that will facilitate the transfer of water supply to nearby settlements while bypassing Palestinian towns and villages. The Bardala project, signed in September 2018, is implemented in partnership with other Israeli and international companies, including CETCO Mineral Technology (USA), Hai Dolev Holdings Ltd (Israel) and Herrenknecht AGIn (a German company based in Belgium). Related projects are being implemented in the Palestinian towns of Huwara, Nabi Elyas and Azzun Atme.
- Netafim was established in 1965 in Kibbutz Hatzerim – an Israeli agricultural settlement in the Naqab, shortly after Israel had concluded the expulsion of most of the Palestinian Bedouin communities from the area. It works with several settlements in the Jordan Valley, Hebron and beyond to develop technology to ensure they make the best profits from the stolen land. Netafim has been able to sell its brand as a global leader in sustainable agriculture to 25 countries across the world, while, in fact, it plays a key role in sustaining illegal agro-business settlements on stolen Palestinian land and fed with stolen Palestinian water.

The methodologies developed by Mekorot and Netafim for a society and agro-business that sees water as a privilege of the few are being sold across the globe, doing harm not only to Palestinians.

The international complicity in perpetuating Israel's water apartheid is expressed even in projects that claim to 'aid' Palestinians. The Sea Water Desalination Project to address the water deficit in the Gaza Strip, funded by the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank, according to Tamimi "deepens the division and separation, the occupation has created between Gaza and the West Bank. Further, a huge amounts of energy is needed to desalinate the sea water, which will make Gaza rely more heavily on Israel to secure the energy. The donors of this project only help Israel to maintain its water apartheid and magnify its profits by selling energy to Palestinians there. If western countries and donors really want to help Palestinians in Gaza to overcome their water crisis, they should rather pressure the occupation to allow Palestinians in Gaza to access the water resources in the West Bank, which suffice their needs."

ANNEXATION - WE CAN STOP IT

The Stop the Wall Campaign fully supports the united [Palestinian civil society call](#) for action to stop the illegal annexation of West Bank land.

"Israel's new right-wing government is once more set to formally annex large swathes of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). This de jure annexation would culminate years of gradual de facto annexation through the appropriation of land, forcible displacement of Palestinian population and the transfer of Israeli settler population in the OPT.

Indeed, Israel has violated the laws governing belligerent occupation since 1967 by progressing its colonization of the Palestinian territory. This has been facilitated by the imposition of an apartheid regime of racial discrimination, segregation and territorial expansion that is enshrined in Israel's domestic law."

Ban arms trade and military-security cooperation with Israel.
Suspend free-trade agreements with Israel.

Prohibit all trade with the illegal Israeli settlements and ensure that companies refrain from/terminate business with Israel's illegal settlement enterprise.

Ensure that individuals and corporate actors responsible for war crimes/crimes against humanity in the context of Israel's regime of illegal occupation and apartheid are brought to justice.

- the UN General Assembly and Security Council, national governments worldwide, as well as on the European Council of the EU, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the African Union, BRICS, Mercosur, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) and others to adopt and enforce, immediately and as a matter of priority, a comprehensive ban on arms trade and military-security cooperation with Israel, and to suspend free-trade agreements with it.
- governments, legislators and political parties to, as a first step, adopt national legislation that will prohibit all trade with illegal settlements within their jurisdictions, following the example of the Irish Parliament.
- national governments to ensure that companies within their jurisdiction, or domiciled in their territory, respect human rights and humanitarian law and refrain from/terminate business with Israel's illegal settlement enterprise. Governments should promote the UN database of companies involved in business with Israel's settlements and support the mandated annual updates of the database by the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights.
- all States to investigate and support the investigation of individuals and corporate actors in their jurisdictions responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the OPT. We urge States parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to respect and support the Prosecutor's request to open a formal investigation into the Situation in Palestine, and protect the Prosecutor, staff at the ICC, lawyers, judges and Palestinian civil society working on providing evidence to the Court, and Palestinian victims, from retribution and attacks by Israel and the United States.