



**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

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Item 7: Report of the HC on allocation of water resources in Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and HC oral update on implementation of S-30/1, followed by General debate

Violation of the Palestinians' right to water

Madame President,

I speak on behalf of the Europe-Third World Center (CETIM) and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), in collaboration with the Union of Agriculture Work Committee (UAWC), a Palestinian non-governmental development organization, established in 1986 aiming at promoting family farmers' steadfastness, sovereignty over natural resources, protecting and defending peasants' rights.

We would like to draw your attention to the violation against Palestinians' right to water. Palestinians are unable to drill new water wells, install pumps or deepen existing wells, in addition to being denied access to the Jordan River and fresh water springs. Israel even controls the collection of rain water throughout most of the West Bank, and rainwater harvesting cisterns owned by Palestinian communities are often destroyed by the Israeli army. As a result, some 180 Palestinian communities in rural areas in the occupied West Bank have no access to running water.

The water shortages are particularly threatening in the Jordan Valley, despite the variety of potential water sources. The lack of water has drastically decreased the capabilities of Palestinian peasants. According to the World Bank, a more equitable distribution of water sources would increase Palestinian GDP by 10%.¹

The Jordan Valley is the key agricultural land mass in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and owns the richest water resources in the whole of the West Bank. It has the potential to be the breadbasket of a future independent Palestinian state. It is estimated that within this area 42% of its Palestinian population depends on agricultural and animal husbandry, and thus on water, for their livelihoods.

In violation of international law, the Israeli occupation is denying Palestinians access to water. The Palestinian share of drinking water and water used for agricultural purposes is shrinking dramatically. While the average Israeli settler consumes 487 liters/person/day, most Palestinians in

¹ Quoted from <http://www.maan-ctr.org/old/pdfs/FSReport/spotlight/Spotlight10.pdf>, MAAN – The Status of Palestinian Agriculture in the Jordan Valley

the Jordan Valley get 15-30 liters/person/day², which is less than the WHO recommended minimum of 100 liters/day.

There are around 300'000 Palestinians in Area C directly affected by Israeli restrictions, over 83'000 people receive bad quality drinking water or have to resort to purchasing expensive and unregulated water. Between 1 January – 30 June 2021, Israeli authorities demolished and seized infrastructure related to vital water distribution systems in Area C, which affected already vulnerable Palestinian communities suffering from water shortages and from the ongoing pandemic. A total of 23 WASH³ structures were demolished, which affected 178 people.

Israeli water policies are in brutal violation of Palestinians' economic, social and cultural rights, as well as of the articles and principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas⁴, which states in Article 20 that "Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to water for personal and domestic use, farming, fishing and livestock".

In conclusion, under international law, the State of Israel, as an occupying power in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, has an obligation to respect the Palestinians' human right to water. However, the Israeli measurements prohibit Palestinian from access to water resources, drilling new water wells, install pumps or deepen existing wells, are strictly prohibited and must be brought to a halt.

We urge the High-Commissioner and UN Member States to take deliberate and concrete steps to ensure that Palestinians right to water is fulfilled and fully realized.

Madame President,
I thank you for your attention.

Geneva, September 27, 2021

² <https://www.uawc-pal.org/Files/pdf/FINAL%20Factsheet.pdf> Statistics on water consumption differ as depending on community, though all publications agree that Palestinians get very limited water compared to Israeli settlers. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) states in <https://law.acri.org.il/camp/Jordan-Valley/#water> – 'in many rural communities in the Jordan Valley, water consumption is lower than the WHO's recommendations'

³ Six-Month Report on Demolitions and Seizures in the West Bank , EUROPEAN UNION Office
https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/EUDEMPT_181120.pdf

⁴ https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/165