OUR RIGHT TO WATER

THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER IN PALESTINE

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Introduction

New developments in the global recognition of the human right to water and sanitation have given new momentum to global water justice campaigns. But can UN resolutions end the unequal water distribution between Israel and Palestine, and bring Israel to account for violations of Palestinian water rights?

Israel continues to defy UN resolutions recognizing the right of return of Palestinian refugees displaced in 1948, calling for an end to Israeli military rule of lands occupied in 1967 and many other resolutions calling on Israel to end the demolition of Palestinian homes and confiscation of Palestinian lands in Jerusalem, and it is unlikely that new UN resolutions alone will bring an end to Israeli violations of Palestinians’ right to water and sanitation. But UN recognition of the right to water and sanitation is being used as a springboard for campaigns to put real pressure on Israel to end its violations.

Unequal Water Distribution

Palestine is actually very rich in water resources, but unequal water distribution is benefiting Israel and Israeli settlers while Palestinians struggle for basic water access.

Palestinians have insufficient access to clean piped water or local filling points. As a result many households purchase expensive tankered water, collect water from unprotected springs and rely on harvesting rainwater during the winter. Because there is no centralized water network with sufficient water flowing through it, it is difficult to calculate exact water consumption.

According to the World Bank, after losses from the network, average net consumption at the household level is 50 liters (13.2 gallons) per person per day. This is just 50 per cent of the World Health Organization’s minimum recommended daily allowance of 100 liters. To contextualize just how little water this is, note that a quick shower uses 50 liters of water, and it takes 9 liters (2.4 gallons) to flush the toilet. Almost one quarter of the communities connected to the water network receive less than 50 liters per person per day. The World Bank also reports that, “In the southern towns, supply to 16% of people living in connected households is less than 20 liters [5.3 gallons] per capita per day.” These extremely low consumption figures are for communities connected to a water network. Ten per cent of the population is still not connected to a water network.

Average Israeli domestic water consumption is 300 liters per person per day. Many of Israel’s settlements in the West Bank, all of which are illegal under international law, contain industries that are using and polluting local water resources. Other illegal settlements, particularly in the Jordan Valley, grow water intensive agricultural products that are exported to Europe, virtually exporting the water used to grow the produce as well.

Understanding the Water Resources

The water resources available in the West Bank are very different from the water resources available in Gaza. The water-rich West Bank is increasingly dependent on supply from Israel, while the water-poor Gaza has to look for its own water.

The Coastal Aquifer

In Gaza, the Coastal Aquifer is basically the only source of “freshwater,” although it is highly polluted and the salinity level is sharply increasing. Up to 95 per cent of the 116 municipal supply wells in Gaza that tap into the aquifer produce water that isn’t fit for human consumption. Since 2005 Israel has damaged or destroyed more than 300 wells in a “buffer zone” unilaterally imposed by Israel inside of the territory of Gaza. Currently the people of Gaza must desalinate the brackish water supplied by municipal wells, but the ongoing siege levied by Israel and the international community is preventing entry of parts, chemicals and materials needed to properly treat the water so that it may be drinkable.

It is important to note that, according to international water law, Gaza has a right to an equitable and reasonable share
of water from the Coastal Aquifer within Israel. Also, it is important to note that Gaza is a city and is best supplied like other cities. Most cities, like New York, London, Geneva or Jerusalem (all of which have far more humid climates), are not supplied from within city boundaries. Yet for years Israel’s position has been that the city of Gaza ought to focus on highly expensive, unsustainable, easily disrupted and un-ecological fossil fuel-fired desalination plants. The Palestinian Authority’s position in recent years has been conforming to this Israeli position, despite the advice of hydrological experts and Palestinian rights under international law.

The Mountain Aquifer and the Western Aquifer Basin

In contrast, the West Bank lies in a mostly sub-humid climate where bountiful rainfall provides for high groundwater recharge rates into the shared Mountain Aquifer, which consists of three basins – the Eastern, North-Eastern and Western Aquifer basins. Among these three basins the Western Aquifer Basin, or Western Aquifer, is the purest and most abundant groundwater reserve in the region. Israel has prevented Palestinians from drilling a single new well in the Western Aquifer since 1967.

According to a World Bank study, “about 85% of the recharge of the Western Aquifer is in the West Bank.”

But the Israeli military is limiting Palestinians to a mere six per cent of this precious resource. If Palestinians had access to only half of the sustainable yield of this aquifer, Palestinians’ total water supply in the West Bank would double.

The Jordan River

Israel controls 100 per cent of the waters of the Jordan River. Israel diverts the lower Jordan River to Israel’s coastal plain and then to the Negev desert in the south, with major repercussions today for the health of the ecosystem, peace in the region and access to water for many Palestinians and Jordanians, who have depended on this resource for centuries. In the 1967 Six-Day War and shortly afterwards, Israel destroyed or confiscated all 140 pumping stations on both the east and west banks of the Jordan River.

Mekorot supply

Palestinians in the West Bank purchase more than half of their domestic water supply from the Israeli national water company Mekorot. Mekorot also supplies the vast majority of water consumed by illegal settlements from wells inside of Israel and from the 42 wells that it controls and operates in the West Bank in violation of international law. Being dependent on water supply from Israel leaves Palestinians in a highly vulnerable position. Mekorot frequently cuts water supply to Palestinian villages and neighborhoods. While it is true that Israel is selling Palestinians far more water than it is obligated according to the water component of the 1995 Oslo II Agreement (Article 40), it is also true that Israel is preventing Palestinians from developing additional quantities of water from new Palestinian wells approved under Oslo. Israel’s obstruction of Palestinian water development has forced Palestinians into a state of dependence on purchasing water from Israel.

Israeli Violations of the Right to Water

Israeli violations of the right to water and sanitation take a number of different forms. An overview of the occupation, Area C, the Wall, and the siege on Gaza will serve to illustrate some of these different violations. The sanitation situation is very telling as well.

Occupation

With the beginning of the 1967 occupation, Israel issued a series of military orders claiming that all of the region’s water resources belonged to Israel and preventing Palestinians from drilling wells or even setting up irrigation systems. Israel also began drilling in the West Bank in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits use of resources within occupied territory for the benefit of an occupier’s citizens. Still, today, as the occupation approaches its 45th year, Israel is bureaucratically obstructing new Palestinian wells and networks, and demolishing Palestinian water infrastructure with bulldozers and during military incursions. Israel also continues to drill deep wells that lower the water table and cause existing wells to be less productive, or dry up altogether.

The 1993-95 Oslo “Peace” Accords only served to legitimize Israel’s military orders. For all intents and purposes, all of the
policies stayed the same. The Israeli military commander still has final say over all water and sanitation development in the West Bank. Today, a so-called “Joint Water Committee” (JWC) occasionally approves water or sanitation projects\textsuperscript{18} — though only some of the approved projects are allowed to be implemented.

The World Bank reported in April 2009 that only 50 per cent of the projects presented to the Committee had been approved, and only one-third implemented.\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, “106 water projects and 12 large scale wastewater projects are awaiting JWC approval, some of them since 1999.”\textsuperscript{20} These figures do not include the many projects that are no longer brought to the Committee because it is clear that the occupation would not allow them. Since 1967, despite there being a “joint” water committee, Israel has not approved a single new Palestinian well in the Western Aquifer.\textsuperscript{21}

Area C

In the West Bank, Israel continues to zone 61 per cent of internationally recognized Palestinian territory as “Area C” and off-limits to Palestinian development of any kind,\textsuperscript{22} while Israeli settlements continue to sprout up with water and sewage networks. The fact that Area C meanders between and around enclaves where Palestinians are permitted limited development means that Palestinians are prevented by Israeli restrictions imposed in Area C from developing regional water conveyance networks to improve water supply in Palestinian enclaves. Even simple water projects that are not in Area C are impacted by restrictions on workers and equipment passing through Area C.

Area C weaves throughout the West Bank transforming Palestinian populated areas into a series of enclaves that are cut off from one another and often from agricultural land and water resources outside of municipal areas. These disconnected enclaves are also aptly referred to as Bantustans, a term derived from the name of the territories set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa under apartheid and now used to describe a region that lacks legitimacy. Ninety per cent of the Jordan Valley is off-limits to Palestinian development, while illegal settlements in the Jordan Valley export water-intensive crops such as grapes, dates and flowers to Europe.

Sixty thousand Palestinians are prevented from constructing water connections in their homes.\textsuperscript{23} Households that do not have a tap must rely on transporting water. Tankered water costs up to 12 times as much as water from the tap and carries increased risk of water-borne disease.\textsuperscript{24}

Israel routinely destroys rainwater-harvesting cisterns that farmers use to irrigate small patches of land and that shepherds depend on for providing their herds with water. In 2011, Israel demolished a cistern in the village of Susia that dated back to Roman times, displacing the families that depended on it for survival. Israel’s demolition of Palestinian water infrastructure increased this past year, bringing total demolitions of water and sanitation infrastructure since 2009 to over 100 structures in the West Bank alone.\textsuperscript{25} Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, Catarina de Albuquerque, underscored the importance of addressing these demolitions in a news release by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.\textsuperscript{26}

While many organizations are bringing media attention to Israeli restrictions and demolitions in Area C, few are challenging Israel’s policy of demolition directly on the ground. International humanitarian and development organizations for the most part are following Israeli policy in Area C in order to avoid having their projects demolished or other repercussions from Israel. With rare exceptions, organizations only implement projects in the other 39 per cent of
the West Bank, which is already overcrowded. In doing so, well-meaning organizations are actually creating incentives for Palestinians in 61 per cent of the West Bank to abandon their land and relocate to the overcrowded Bantustans where they may have more affordable and more reliable water access.

**The Wall**

In 2002 Israel began to construct a segregation barrier, referred to by many as the “Apartheid Wall.” It impacts Palestinians’ current access to water, but more importantly will have a much greater impact on future access if it becomes an internationally recognized border. Alternately composed of 7-meter high concrete slabs, razor wire and a 50 to 100-meter-wide array of fences, patrol roads and ditches, in places it is twice the size of the Berlin Wall. The route of the Wall meanders both near and far from the internationally recognized 1949 Armistice Demarcation Line, or Green Line, between Israel and occupied Palestinian territory, at times jutting far into the West Bank, grabbing Palestinian land and water to “Israel’s side” of the Wall. The Wall grabs Palestinian wells, springs and cisterns that Palestinians have depended on for centuries. The Wall is also designed to capture most of the few future potential Palestinian abstraction zones of the Western Aquifer. Only a relatively narrow strip along the Green Line has productive conditions because the slopes and mountains are unproductive. The Wall stands to cut Palestinians off from areas that would yield an additional 90 million cubic meters annually. Compare this amount to Palestinians’ total current water supply in the West Bank, which is just 180 million cubic meters according to the Israeli Water Authority.

Today Israel dominates the Western Aquifer by preventing Palestinians from drilling new wells, imposing quotas on existing Palestinian wells and drilling many very deep wells on Israel’s side of the Green Line for Israeli use. Israel’s deep productive wells tap into the Western Aquifer almost exclusively from within Israeli territory, compared to less than a handful of Israeli wells accessing the Western Aquifer from inside Palestinian territory. If the Wall becomes the new internationally recognized border between Israel and Palestine, then Israel will have pre-empted negotiations over an increase in Palestinian shares and abstractions in this shared basin. Israel will retain near-exclusive control of this basin and its benefits, even though it is recharged largely inside the West Bank. Thus it would be able to prevent Palestinians from accessing significant reserves in the Western Aquifer even after the formal military occupation is over.

**Siege on Gaza**

Israel’s siege on Gaza prevents the entry of spare parts, materials and energy needed for the day-to-day functioning of the water and wastewater networks, and furthermore obstructs much needed development of these systems.

The harsh reality imposed by the siege has been made worse by repeated Israeli military offensives, the worst being the Gaza War of 2008–09. Over the span of just 23 days, Israeli military killed 1,400 Palestinians and intentionally targeted and destroyed wells, pipes, wastewater facilities, water reservoirs and the main power station, causing an estimated $6 million USD of damage to water and sanitation infrastructure. Those responsible for Israel’s use of collective punishment and disproportionate force are yet to be brought to justice. The ongoing siege interferes with reconstruction.
Sanitation

The sanitation situation in Gaza seems to be on track to improve, as a wastewater treatment project approved in 2004 is practically the only project in Gaza receiving access to materials through crossings from Israel. Scheduled to be complete in 2014, the project will treat about half of Gaza City’s sewage. All sanitation projects in Gaza had been on hold until the past year as a result of the ongoing siege, which has been restricting entry of needed parts and materials, and also due to Israeli military offensives, which destroy completed work and make it difficult for workers to continue with new construction. In 2003, construction of a planned regional desalination plant halted when one of the workers was killed. For years Gazans have been lobbying to get access to the materials they need to upgrade emergency projects to be able to fully treat their wastewater and re-infiltrate the treated water into the ground to improve the health of the depleted aquifer. The current project will be the first project in Gaza with infiltration basins, while other wastewater treatment plants release effluents into the sea. Israel began facilitating the current project again, despite the siege, after studies showed that untreated and partially treated sewage released into the sea from Gaza was being detected at the Ashkelon desalination plant located 12.5 kms (7.8 miles) directly north of Gaza.

In the West Bank there is a lack of wastewater treatment facilities due to Israeli obstruction through the use of bureaucracy and its military. Israeli leaders have claimed that Palestinians are waging a “sewage intifada” on Israel. The Israeli Water Authority states that the lack of treatment facilities “illustrates the lack of interest on their part to treat wastewater.” But the World Bank lists 12 wastewater treatment facilities pending Israeli/Joint Water Committee approval – 10 of these projects were brought to the Committee in the 1990s and were pending approval for 15 years. Adel Yasin, who represents the Palestinians at the Joint Water Committee in negotiating permits for wastewater projects, explains how, meeting by meeting, year after year, the Israeli side asks the engineers to make changes to the plans for “security reasons.” The Palestinian side complies each time, by moving the route of the trunkline, for example, but then at the next meeting the Israeli side insists on a new change.

In one case, the Joint Water Committee actually approved the Salfit wastewater treatment facility. It was permitted and tendered, but in the first month of construction the military declared the site a closed military zone and shut the project down. In the end, Israel paid the contractor a 1 million shekel settlement, admitting its guilt.

Only 30 per cent of Palestinian communities in the West Bank are connected to a sewage network. Many households use cesspits, putting domestic water supply at risk of contamination. Water supply is also at risk as a result of domestic and industrial sewage originating from Israeli settlements.

Prepaid Water Meters: Water Rights Violations by the Palestinian Authority

Within the context of Israeli human rights violations and the increasing interconnectedness of the Palestinian Authority with the occupation and donor states, there is a major issue on the horizon. This issue concerns the recent and increasing commodification of water, which may be setting the stage for the privatization of water resources in Palestine.

In 2007 Salam Fayyad’s caretaker government released the Palestinian Reform and Development Program (PRDP), authored by the British and the World Bank. The main focus of the PRDP is infrastructure repair and improved service delivery in the short term, to ensure “that public infrastructure and utilities are managed on a commercially oriented and financially viable basis and ... [to] increase the level of private sector investment and participation in infrastructure and utilities.” The PRDP champions prepaid electricity meters, and alludes to prepaid water meters.

Salam Fayyad and his Council of Ministers, operating unelected in their roles since 2007, have been promoting the pro-privatization neoliberal agenda of the World Bank. Neoliberalism seeks to promote open markets and maximize the role of the private sector in determining global political and economic priorities. Pressuring Palestine to open their borders to the Israeli economy and to integrate Israel into the regional economy is a major priority of Israel, the U.S., Britain and the World Bank. This has already been happening for some time. Supporting the commodification of water and prepaid water meters as a way to “recover costs” or, worse yet, set the stage for profit-seeking ventures is an extreme interpretation of the neoliberal doctrine.

Prepaid water meters fit all too neatly into the PRDP’s plan to develop local infrastructure with donor money and then turning it over for private profit. Services and people are likely to suffer. We’ve seen this same horror story in too many countries, both poor and rich. Under the guise of humanitarianism, donor money is invested, water networks are
upgraded, service is improved and consumers are satisfied, and then the private sector leaps in and reduces services, and public investment becomes private profit.

Prepaid water meters have been implemented in two areas in the north of the West Bank. These communities, like many other communities throughout the West Bank, have developed large debts by failing to collect payment from citizens for water supplied by the Israeli national water company. In 2009, following support from international donors, the Palestinian national bulk water utility and the Palestinian Ministry of Finance reached an agreement that some villages would have all of their development projects frozen by the Ministry of Finance – including upgrades to water networks, roads and schools – unless the local councils began paying.

These communities, like many Palestinians, get most of their water from the West Bank Water Department (WBWD), which is a water utility directly connected to the Israeli national water company Mekorot. Failure to collect payment for water bills from citizens has translated into large debts to the WBWD for the supply of Mekorot water. The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) reports that Palestinian local councils’ debt for water reached 600 million shekels (approximately $158 million USD) in 2009.43 Israel has transferred these debts from Mekorot and the WBWD to the Palestinian Authority by deducting the total debt from Israel’s collection of Palestinians’ value-added taxes (VATs) owed to Palestinians. Despite the fact that the root of the problem lies in the occupation and its manufacturing of a powerless and dependent economy, the neoliberal authority determined that the local councils would pay their debts.

Faced with pressure to either schedule debt payment or forfeit all public infrastructure upgrades, local councils and mayors began applying to the Council of Ministers for permission to implement prepaid water meters. Prepaid electricity meters have been implemented throughout the West Bank since 200444 and increasingly so since the PRDP was released in 2007. The mayor of the first village to apply for prepaid water meters reasoned that if there are prepaid electricity meters, surely there must be prepaid water meters – and he was right. He got permission from the Council of Ministers and entered into a contract with the Turkish company Elektromed for both prepaid electricity and prepaid water meters. Construction was nearly completed before the PWA held a meeting to discuss the issue with local players.45 By this time, a second regional council of 11 small villages in West Jenin had already applied and received permission to implement prepaid water meters as well. The PWA agreed at the meeting that it would be irresponsible to implement prepaid water meters without a study to evaluate the social and economic effects, as well as the appropriate technical requirements for the meters.

In an announcement published in the newspaper AlQuds in June 2009, the PWA explained that prepaid water meters were being allowed on a trial basis only in these two communities to examine “the social and economic effects, and the people’s acceptance in order to know the advantages and disadvantages of these meters.”46 The Council of Ministers contradicted this position, issuing a series of resolutions allowing local councils to implement prepaid water meters, and the Council of Ministers even decided to subsidize these projects by paying 50 per cent of the cost of the meters.

More than two-and-a-half years have passed, and the PWA has not yet begun the study on the social and economic effects that it announced should be completed in about a year’s time. At the request of the Council of Ministers, the PWA completed a study on the draft technical requirements with the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government.47 The PWA’s position now is that they will conduct a study on the social and economic effects only if the Council of Ministers requests one as well.

There is clearly a need for more research on the economic, social and cultural effects of prepaid water meters, as well as their legality under Palestinian law.48 From the perspective of LifeSource, a Palestinian organization working at the grassroots to grow a popular movement for the right to water, it is important that additional research is carried out by a team well-versed in human rights in general, and in economic, social and cultural rights in particular. LifeSource recently conducted a small study revealing violations of the human right to water, and pointing to some pressing needs. Below are some of the most important issues from LifeSource’s study and from the work done so far.

Prepaid water meters under occupation

Many people interviewed believed that prepaid water meters were not appropriate for Palestine because of the political situation, particularly following the Second Intifada with its increases in closures and concurrent effects on the economy.49 If there is a curfew, consumers will not get their basic rights and services. A curfew in the village of Awarta, in Nablus, meant that for several days people were forbidden by the army from leaving their homes. During this incursion
there was no way for people to get electricity if they ran out of credit. The Minister of Energy admitted: “We made a mistake by not using smart prepaid electricity meters.”

Need for protections for the poor

In a workshop hosted by the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) in June 2011, PHG explained that they are against prepaid water meters because with the prepaid system, people cannot access water if they cannot afford it. Meanwhile, the rich will consume high quantities of water, increasing the consumption gap between the rich and the poor, and water will become a commodity. LifeSource’s study confirmed this. LifeSource’s study revealed a range in consumption from 14 liters per person per day (family of seven using three cubic meters per month) to 116 liters per person per day (family of four using 14 cubic meters per month). LifeSource’s findings provide evidence that a number of households in these areas are living in extreme poverty and face extra hardship after being forced to use prepaid water meters.

LifeSource’s study also confirmed what every other study has revealed: that there are no protections in place for households in extreme poverty. It has been more than two years since prepaid water meters were first implemented. While proponents are pushing to implement prepaid water meters in more and more communities, protections for the poor and vulnerable have yet to be implemented. From interviews with different stakeholders it is clear that human rights activists will need to be involved in developing these protections in order to ensure that citizens are not sacrificing dignity for their human right to water. Of course from LifeSource’s perspective, free basic water for all people is preferable to any system that singles out people living in poverty.

In Palestine, prepaid systems are being forced on citizens without giving them a choice. Once a local council gets permission from the Council of Ministers to replace the meters, all meters are replaced, whether or not citizens agree. This is a violation of citizens’ right to self-determination.

Lack of options for additional water sources

Proponents point out that in emergency cases, people can get three or five cubic meters credit to be paid at their next recharge – the amount is different in the two villages. The director of the West Jenin Service Council also adds: “There is a tap in every village where people can fill jerry cans for free if they can’t pay.” In our survey, none of the citizens in either village knew of such a tap, and they don’t believe it is true.

Extremely low consumption

According to the director of the West Jenin Service Council, water consumption per person per day remained constant at 27 liters. This is extremely low. The World Health Organization’s minimum recommended daily allowance is 100 liters. The director explains that the amount of water the villages receive now is the same as the amount received prior to changing the meters. According to his theory, which is also supported by many residents, with the old system some families used water without conserving, consuming more than 27 liters per person, and some families were going without water because the flow didn’t reach all of the households. He reasons that now water is reaching all of the households because families are being more careful to conserve, and now everyone is getting 27 liters a day. Representatives of the PWA also touted prepaid water meters as a water conservation mechanism. While water conservation is a valuable principle, it is extremely problematic to look at a community that receives less than 50 liters per person per day due to human rights violations committed by an occupying power, and suggest that the solution is conservation and improving bill collection.

Need for more research

The majority of citizens do not know the quantity of water they consume each month or the price they are paying per cubic meter, but, with the exception of those living in extreme poverty, they are generally satisfied with their level of supply following the change to prepaid meters. Forty-five per cent of those surveyed knew the total cost they were paying each month. The majority of respondents were women who were not the household member responsible for paying the bills. Further research is needed to independently measure the quantity of water actually consumed in each household and to assess people’s lifestyles to see if families really are consuming only 27 liters per person per day or less – and to better understand what sacrifices people are making.

Also, it is suspect that supply to the villages was the same before and after the prepaid water meters were introduced. Of
course, it goes without saying that someone who is accustomed to using 27 liters per person per day is satisfied as long as this supply continues, but it does not line up that people who were consuming 50 liters per person per day with the old meters would be satisfied using even less.55

**Need for education**

People are going to be in favour of whichever system provides them with the best service and accords them their human rights. Many people do not see that having to prepay for water is a violation of their human rights. Educating people about their human right to water and sanitation is an important prerequisite to consumer satisfaction studies.

It is also important to encourage people to think through the implications of water privatization and to make the connections between prepaid water meters and water privatization so that they can take an informed position.

The Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) recommends from their 2009 study on prepaid water meters in Jaroshiya that: “The water sector, and especially drinking and domestic use water, should not be privatized and should be provided by the government, with monitoring and evaluation to guarantee the durability of the supply and the reach of it to the poor families” (translated from Arabic).

LifeSource adds that prepaid water meters must be prevented now in order to avert the privatization of water in Palestine in the future.

LifeSource invites others to review the LifeSource study and to continue to research this topic more. The Palestinian Society for Consumer Protection has been extremely proactive and consistent on this issue, demonstrating exceptional leadership and vision. The PHG has shown some strong leadership as well.

LifeSource plans to work with these groups and others to use this study as a basis for popular education, popular research and popular action to build alliances within Palestine and to connect with a global solidarity movement to resist prepaid water meters and water privatization.

**Affirming the Applicability of Human Rights Legislation**

Israel refers to the occupied Palestinian territory as “disputed territory” and insists that it is not occupying the territory according to international law. Israel furthermore claims that it is not responsible for the human rights of Palestinians, particularly in areas under Palestinian control. But the UN and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) disagree.56

The UN Human Rights Committee is clear that “State party’s obligations under the Covenant apply to all territories and populations under its effective control. The Committee repeats its position that even in a situation of armed conflict or occupation, fundamental human rights must be respected and that economic, social and cultural rights, as part of the minimum standards of human rights, are guaranteed under customary international law and are also prescribed by international humanitarian law. Moreover, the applicability of rules of humanitarian law does not by itself impede the application of the Covenant or the accountability of the State under Article 2 (1) for the actions of its agents.”57

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted that it was “particularly concerned about limited access to and distribution and availability of water for Palestinians in the occupied territories, as a result of inequitable management, extraction and distribution of shared water resources, which are predominantly under Israeli control.”58 The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination similarly called on Israel to “ensure equal access to water resources for all without any discrimination.”59

Israel and the Palestinian Authority both have obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of Palestinians to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation.

**Resistance to Violations of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation in Palestine**

Resistance to these violations has taken a number of forms, from popular demonstrations in protest, to refusal to pay Mekorot bills, to “illegal connections,” art, boycotts, reporting and human rights advocacy.
Human rights advocacy and reporting

Amnesty International spotlighted Israeli violations of the human right to water and sanitation in its report *Troubled Waters: Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water* released October 2009. *Harper’s* published a feature on “Israel’s Water War With Palestine,” in December 2011. The first major report to bring Israeli violations of the human right to water to center stage was actually a World Bank report published April 2009. This report was published just as the first prepaid water meters were being implemented in Palestine. The report, titled “Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development,” was in fact not about the human right to water at all. However, in assessing Israeli restrictions on Palestinian water and sanitation development, likely with a vision toward privatizing water supply, the report detailed flagrant human rights violations and has been an asset to groups organizing to resist these violations.

Organizations, coalitions, communities and individuals have submitted reports to UN agencies conducting normal reviews of member states’ compliance with human rights conventions. When Israel was up for review in 2010 for their compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and again in 2011 concerning the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN agencies had many reports and affidavits to consider. In both reviews, Israel was found to be in violation of the human right to water and sanitation. It is unlikely that UN recommendations will be put into practice without considerable pressure.

Art

A number of Palestinian artists feature the water and sanitation crisis in their work. The Palestinian hip hop artists DAM, who are discriminated against as Palestinians inside of Israel, rap in Hebrew about Israel’s denial of sanitation services to Arab neighborhoods as a tool for displacement: “Health care centers – surrounded by sewage / Kindergarten – surrounded by sewage / There’s no excuse for this / It’s just the city doesn’t care about Arabs / Because the government has a wish: / Maximum Jews – on maximum land / Minimum Arabs – on minimum land.” This particular song is called “Born Here.”

There have been a number of prominent mural projects in the West Bank and Gaza depicting Palestinians’ struggle for their right to water. The first was a project that arose out of a LifeSource workshop with youth in Jabalya camp in northern Gaza, and was featured on Al Jazeera. The Maia Mural Brigade co-created a number of murals with youth depicting water themes at schools in the Gaza Strip, where water purification systems installed by the Middle East Children’s Alliance are providing clean drinking water to 30,000 children. Some of the graffiti on the Wall representing freedom of expression and resistance also captures the restrictions placed on water access.

There are many films artfully depicting the water situation, including Rima Issa’s *Drying Up Palestine*, Pietro Bellorini’s *Filling Point* and others.

Civil disobedience

Palestinians have a vibrant spirit of civil disobedience and non-violent resistance dating back to the First Intifada (1987 to 1993) and earlier. The First Intifada is often remembered by violent images of unarmed Palestinians throwing stones at armored tanks. In fact, most of the resistance tactics of the First Intifada were nonviolent, and they brought Israel to the negotiating table. These included general strikes, boycotts on Israeli products, burning ID cards, refusal to pay taxes, barricades and graffiti.

Today a number of Palestinian villages, particularly in the Jordan Valley, refuse to pay their water bills as an act of civil disobedience to protest Israel’s illegal wells that have dried up their wells. But when Palestinian local councils don’t pay for water purchased from the Israeli national water company Mekorot, Israel deducts the amount from the VATs it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, and Israel gets the money in the end.

Rebel water infrastructure

“Illegal water connections,” or “rebel water infrastructure,” are another form of civil disobedience. In response to Israel’s prevention of Palestinians’ access to sufficient quantities of water, some Palestinians are taking water meant for the illegal settlements. Illegal connections may also affect Palestinian wells. In recent years, Mekorot has been charging the Palestinian Authority for unauthorized use of water in Area C, even though Palestinians have no authority in Area C and are prevented from connecting communities to local springs and filling points.
In 2010, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) replaced a major pipeline in the south of the West Bank to get rid of all of the illegal connections on it and to make it more difficult for Palestinians to take additional quantities of water. Prepaid water meters also have mechanisms to prevent water theft.

In 2009, LifeSource supported communities in the Jordan Valley in receiving water from Palestinian wells and pipes using permitted agricultural pipes. These projects did not technically need Israeli permission by virtue of the sources and the materials that were chosen. However, there are plenty of instances of Israel confiscating or destroying plastic agricultural pipes or demolishing ancient cisterns that do not need Israeli permission. Of the two 2009 LifeSource projects, one is still providing water to about 30 families. The other was destroyed, along with the entire village.

This type of resistance is extremely risky, and it is important to coordinate it in such a way that access to water for other Palestinian communities is not negatively affected, water resources are protected, and individuals, communities or villages cannot be singled out for retribution by Israel or the Palestinian Authority. It is possible that these projects may no longer be strategic if Israel is sure to place the burden on Palestinian coffers and deduct the quantities from Palestinian allowances.

**Popular demonstrations**

Palestine has become famous for its popular demonstrations during the First Intifada and its ongoing popular demonstrations today. A number of villages host weekly demonstrations against the Apartheid Wall to resist the theft of their land and water resources. Bili’in and Budrus may be the most famous due to their successes in rerouting the Wall and their portrayal in films and the media. Jayyous, another well-known Palestinian village, protested the route of the Wall, which isolated all six of the groundwater wells on their land onto Israel’s side of the Wall, along with 72 per cent of their land. Jayyous was successful in moving the Wall to take less land and in getting permission to use one of their wells behind the Wall, but all wells remained behind the Wall. Weekly demonstrations in Nabi Saleh march symbolically toward the village’s freshwater spring, located on the other side of the Wall. Leaders of these demonstrations are frequently imprisoned by Israel under allegations of “incitement.” Israel uses disproportionate force at these demonstrations, and continues to use weapons that are not permitted by the Israeli military commander or in a manner that doesn’t fit the army’s internal code.

Demonstrations for water have a long history in Palestine. We’ve recently witnessed spontaneous demonstrations in Bethlehem when Dheisheh refugee camp went into their second, third and fourth weeks of straight water cuts. In other areas, altercations have broken out when Israel has tried to impose a curfew on Palestinians who had been waiting all day to fill up their water tanks at a filling point. Demonstrations against the Palestinian Water Authority have become increasingly common in recent years.

**BDS for Palestinian water justice**

The movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) arose from a 2005 call from Palestinian civil society for those in solidarity with the Palestinian people to use BDS to pressure Israel and companies profiting from the occupation to comply with international law and to respect human rights. This call came following the ICJ ruling that the Wall is illegal and must be dismantled. According to the ICJ ruling, other countries are obligated to impose sanctions on Israel until Israel complies with this ruling, yet most countries are still not doing so. BDS has become a rallying call for those distressed by Israeli impunity and by the inability of UN resolutions and the ICJ ruling on their own to hold Israel to account. BDS has received increased momentum following the 2008-09 Gaza War. BDS is a nonviolent tool and is one of the mechanisms credited with ending Apartheid in South Africa.

LifeSource has a program called “BDS for Palestinian Water Justice,” supporting boycott campaigns globally with facts and messaging concerning Israel’s violations of the human right to water and sanitation. The goal is for activists to use this information in popular education, targeted campaigns and global movement building to end these violations. LifeSource also leads a boycott of Israeli bottled water and juice in the West Bank.

**Eden Springs** bottles water in the occupied Golan Heights for profit, and this same company sells water throughout Europe. Israeli water bottling companies profit from Israel’s appropriation of Palestinian and Syrian water resources. Meanwhile, Palestinians are denied sufficient water and must purchase either tankered water – with increased cost and risk of waterborne disease – or bottled water, which costs even more. LifeSource supported the London School of
Economics in their successful campaign to boycott Eden Springs water on their campus in 2010.

**Carmel-Agrexco** used to be Israel’s leading exporter of agricultural products before they went under, due in part to successful boycott campaigns in Italy, France and Britain. Carmel-Agrexco exported water-intensive crops from large agricultural settlements in the Jordan Valley, while Israel confiscated water pumps, destroyed water pipes and demolished entire communities. The **Mehadrin Group** has replaced Carmel-Agrexco as Israel’s largest agricultural enterprise exporting water intensive crops to Europe, and as a target for BDS. Mehadrin operates 19 wells in the coastal and mountain aquifers to supply water to Israeli farmers, and supplies millions of cubic meters of drinking water for domestic consumption in Israel through Mekorot, while Palestinians are consistently denied their equitable and reasonable share.

**Mekorot** has been responsible for water rights violations since the 1950s when it built Israel’s national water carrier, which is diverting the Jordan River from the West Bank and Jordan to serve Israeli communities along the coast and in the southern desert. In 1982 Mekorot purchased all Palestinian water infrastructure being controlled by Israel’s military commander for one symbolic shekel. For years Mekorot has been cutting off water supply to entire Palestinian villages and serving illegal Israeli settlements without disruption. Today, Palestinian villages that are supplied water by Mekorot are the ones receiving the greatest pressure to adopt prepaid water meters, which are increasing the consumption gap between the rich and the poor. Mekorot is profiting from significant contracts in Portugal, Argentina and elsewhere, despite these violations.

**Veolia Water** is a leading privatizer of water globally, buying up our shared water commons for private profit. Veolia has more than 389 water and sanitation contracts in the U.S. alone, serving “approximately 14 million people in 600 communities.” Veolia is a permanent operator in 67 countries, supplying 100 million people with drinking water worldwide. There are countless stories of Veolia failing to deliver on its water and sanitation contracts, while still collecting public money. Veolia is also active in public transportation and solid waste disposal.

Veolia has the contract with Israel for the controversial Jerusalem Light Rail project, which is connecting illegal Israeli settlements to West Jerusalem. Veolia buses also discriminate against Palestinians in their service to the settlements, denying service to Palestinians. Veolia has a landfill in the Jordan Valley that is dumping garbage from Israel in occupied Palestinian territory in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. LifeSource research helped break the story that waste being brought to the landfill originated inside Israel.

LifeSource is active in supporting a boycott against Veolia even though Veolia has no water or sanitation contracts in occupied Palestinian territory at this time. However, LifeSource is against the privatization of water and sees that this campaign can bring together water rights activists and Palestinian solidarity activists to support each other in both the local and global struggle.

These boycott campaigns are both a pressure tactic and educational. As global citizens in an increasingly interconnected world, our actions at home and our choices in which products we buy and which government contracts we allow or resist have direct implications on the freedom of our brothers and sisters to live in dignity, with access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation.

**Youth movement in Gaza and all of historic Palestine**

The youth movement throughout historic Palestine holds a lot of promise for unity, economic freedom and water justice. Arising as part of the Arab Spring in March 2011, the Palestine Youth Movement used facebook as a tool early on in their development to communicate and build a common voice. They then began meeting face-to-face, as political boundaries allowed.

The primary aim of the Palestine Youth Movement is unity between all political parties, primarily Fatah and Hamas. The youth are also hungry for economic opportunity and social freedom. The right to water is already part of their messaging, as they see that there is no drinking water in their homes, that drinking water is expensive, and that this expense puts a lot of stress on families. Palestinian unity is an important factor in maintaining a healthy climate for the joint struggle for water. A common struggle for water may also bring citizens together.

Popular initiatives on the ground, however, require a lot of bravery due to the political situation. In the West Bank, Gaza and Israel there is a lot of political repression from the Fatah government, the Hamas government and the Israeli
government. In each of these territories, activists critical of the local government or critical of Israel are targeted, and media are silenced. People face beatings, other violent “crowd dispersion” techniques or other forms of retribution. This makes organizing in Palestine very difficult and all the more important. Despite the tumultuous political situation, these brave youth remain steadfast in their patriotic and spiritual pursuit of unity and justice.

**Participation in global networks**

Participation in global networks and movements is a solid way of following through on a commitment to solidarity and joint struggle. Global networks also provide an opportunity to share lessons learned.

LifeSource is planning a film festival for the right to water in Palestine, featuring films and popular leaders from different local struggles for the right to water from around the world – from Cochabamba, to South Africa, to Mexico, to India, to First Nations, to Palestine.

Global solidarity is an important tool for ending the impunity of powerful States and non-State actors.

**Recommendations**

The human rights violations speak for themselves.

The way forward is through popular research, popular education and popular action rooted in the principle of global solidarity.

UN findings that Israel is violating the human right to water and sanitation are already being used as a springboard for action.

It is the recommendation of this report that global citizens continue boycott, divestment and sanctions and other forms of resistance that are proving successful in building a global movement, with the aim of generating a global consensus around defying Israel’s illegal restrictions on Palestinian water and sanitation development. This would include establishing a viable port at Gaza, drilling wells in the Western Aquifer, freely constructing water and sanitation infrastructure in Area C, and ending Israeli impunity for human rights violations, including the human right to water and sanitation.

The movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions is also an important way to enforce corporate accountability for human rights violations, such as the demolition of water infrastructure routinely carried out with Caterpillar, Volvo and Hyundai bulldozers, and water cuts by the Israeli national water company Mekorot, which is receiving lucrative research and development contracts worldwide.

Furthermore, it is recommended that humanitarian organizations and donors support Palestinians with the resources and cover that they need to drill wells in the Western Aquifer and construct a port at Gaza. Also, agencies should immediately begin construction of water networks, reservoirs and filling points in the 61 per cent of internationally recognized Palestinian territory in the West Bank labelled “Area C” to protect the human right to water and right to life for the vulnerable communities living there.

Finally, Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority should play a lead role in asserting Palestinians’ rights to the Western Aquifer, the Jordan River and a share of the Coastal Aquifer inside Israel, along with the Palestinian Authority’s right to provide water and sanitation to Palestinians in all of internationally recognized Palestinian territory. It is recommended that the Palestinian Authority reject prepaid water meters and align itself in solidarity with a global movement for recognition of the human right to water and sanitation, including water for all, regardless of ability to pay.
Endnotes

1 UN Resolution 194 recognizes Palestinian refugees’ right of return; UN Resolution 242 calls for an end to the occupation.

2 Israel has defied or is defying many of the 224 UN resolutions directly concerning Israel issued over the course of nearly 45 years. A complete list of the 224 resolutions may be found here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_Nations_resolutions_concerning_Israel

3 50 litres for a quick shower and 9 litres to flush a toilet are conservative estimates from Yotam Feldman and Uri Blau’s article in Ha’aretz Magazine, “A dry and thirsty land” (August 14, 2009). These numbers originally came from a pamphlet published by the Israeli Water Authority. Other estimates for comparison: the water usage calculator at http://www.csgnetwork.com/waterusagecalc.html says a five-minute shower with a standard shower head flow rate of 3.8 consumes 19 gallons (72 liters) of water, a standard toilet takes five gallons (18.9 liters) of water to flush and a reduced-flush toilet takes 1.6 gallons (six liters). According to http://www.uswitch.com/water/how-much-water-use, a standard shower is 80 liters and a standard flush is eight liters.

4 Average network water losses are 34 per cent. This contributes to the low consumption figure. World Bank, “Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development,” 2009, p. 17.

5 Israeli water consumption includes freshwater and desalinated seawater. Recycled wastewater is used significantly as well in the agriculture sector.


8 Today, the chloride levels are greater than 250 mg/l. It is important to note that the British Hydrological Service observed overpumping of the Coastal Aquifer in 1933 before the territory became overcrowded as a result of the 1948 War.


10 World Bank, 2009, p. 35.

11 The “estimated potential” of the Western Aquifer at the time of Oslo was 362 million cubic metres. According to the Israeli Water Authority, total water supply to Palestinians today is 180 million cubic metres annually in the West Bank. Israel Water Authority, “The Issue of Water Between Israel and the Palestinians,” April 2009, p. 15.

12 The diversion of the Jordan River is a central feature of Israel’s National Water Carrier. Mekorot, the Israeli national water company, was the contractor for this project, completed in 1957.

13 Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are diverting tributaries to the Jordan River within their territories, which is also contributing to the reduction in flow of the Jordan River.

14 Although Israel is occupying Syrian territory to control the Jordan River system, including the Sea of Galilee and its tributaries in the Golan Heights, Israel’s diversion of the Jordan River doesn’t have a major impact on access to water in Syria.


16 Israel agreed to allow Palestinians to develop additional quantities of water as “immediate needs” to be realized before the year 2000, as well as “future needs.” Although Israel is indeed selling Palestinians more than they are obligated to sell, it is also the case that little over half of the additional quantities that Palestinians were promised to be able to develop as “immediate needs” have actually been realized today, and Israel is currently withholding approval for 82 well drilling projects that would allow Palestinians the quantities approved under Oslo. World Bank, 2009, p. 36.

17 August 15, 1967 Military Order No. 92: water considered a strategic resource belonging to Israel. Military Order No. 158 of 1967: it is not permissible for any person to set up or to assemble or to possess or to operate a water installation unless a license has been obtained from the area commander. This order applies to all wells and irrigation installations. The area commander can refuse to grant any license without the need for justification. Military Order No. 291 and No. 457 of 1972, 484 of 1972, 494 of 1972, 715 of 1977 and 1376 of 1991: to achieve complete control over Palestinian water resources.

18 “Amongst the well drilling projects not approved by JWC or still pending JWC or CA [Civil Administration] approval, were 82 well drilling projects which were presented by the PWA as part of the agreed quantum under Article 40.” World Bank, 2009, p. 49.

19 “Out of the $121 million of projects presented to JWC in the 2001-2008 period, 50% by value ($60.4 million) have been approved, and one third have been implemented or begun implementation.” World Bank, 2009, p. ix.


21 The one exception is in Azzun, in Qalqilya district, where under special circumstances a “replacement well” was allowed on condition that the original well be shut down.
Area C was established as part of the Oslo II accords.

OCHA, “Restricting Space: The Planning Regime Applied by Israel in Area C of the West Bank: Special Focus,” December 2009. Also in EWASH Fact Sheet 5: Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Area C, “The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) cluster in the oPt estimates that 60,000 of those living in Area C are not connected to a water network.”

“up to twelve times as much as water from the tap” calculated using figures from the WASH rapid assessment water scarcity data from July 2011, collected by UNICEF.

Diakonia, “Israel’s Administrative Destruction of Cisterns in Area C LEGAL Brief,” September 2011.

“At least 20 cisterns and 12 wells have been demolished since the beginning of 2011, affecting access to drinking water for tens of thousands of Palestinians,’ underscored the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, Catarina de Albuquerque.” OHCHR, September 27, 2011. West Bank: Demolitions and Attacks Against Palestinians Must Stop – UN Experts. News Release.


Also known as Operation Cast Lead, which was the Israeli army’s name for its military operation.


The UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict found that Israel’s military operation was directed at the people of Gaza as a whole, amounting to collective punishment, in a deliberate policy of disproportionate force aimed at the civilian population.


The PRDP is a map for public sector involvement. Its stated guiding principles include supporting and sustaining “the steadfast determination of the Palestinian people to remain on their land and to continue to pursue their livelihoods and build their nation, not succumbing to the pressures placed upon them by the Occupation” (p. 4) and the protection of human rights, vulnerable groups, religious tolerance and gender equality. However, the 140 page document is really about one goal, to “create an enabling environment for a free and open market economy.” Throughout the text, Palestinian sovereignty and control is discussed in terms of increasing private sector involvement. A prime example of this is: “The culture of non payment which, along with other factors described above [namely, ‘lack of sovereignty and control’, ‘political instability and poor security,’ ‘territorial fragmentation,’ ‘institutional capacity and coordination,’ and ‘donor dependency’ are all] ... a powerful disincentive to private sector participation in the sector” (p. 82). There is no mention that all of these issues contribute to human rights violations.

PRDP, p. 83.

The PRDP boldly promotes the implementation of 300,000 prepaid electricity meters by 2010. Although it does not discuss prepaid water meters specifically, the PRDP discusses at length the problem of lack of payment of water and promotes “enforcement measures such as a requirement for citizens to present a ‘certificate of payment’ of utility bills in order to receive public services,” specifying meanwhile that, “these measures will be accompanied by provisions to ensure continued access to utilities and other services for those suffering extreme poverty.” PRDP, p. 43.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoliberalism

Agreement by Palestinian leaders to support Israeli integration into the regional market began with the Israel–PLO Protocol on Economic Relations of 1994. Pressure on Palestinian leadership can be traced back to the Madrid Conference in 1991.

Coincidentally or not, the World Bank’s April 2009 report on Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development was released at the same time that construction of the first prepaid water meters in Palestine was completed.

AlQuds newspaper, February 27, 2009, p. 21.


AlQuds newspaper, February 27, 2009, p. 21.
On June 2, 2009, the PWA issued an announcement in the paper stating that the “PWA did not decide to use this type of meter yet. It will do an experimental study on the ground for a specific time period. The study will show the social and economic effects, and the people’s acceptance.” AlQuds newspaper, June 2, 2009, p. 15. Then, six days later the PWA announced that they would begin a study, that they expected the study to take one year, and that in order “to make this study PWA approves the use of these meters in two areas, Jaroshiya and West Jenin villages.” AlQuds newspaper, June 8, 2009, p. 8.

To date we know of only two completed studies considering the social and economic effects of prepaid water meters: a very simple report based on an interview with the mayor and nine consumers in Jaroshiya conducted by the Palestinian Hydrology Group, August–September 2009; and an excellent study on West Jenin conducted by Fayez Abu-Hilou and Ayman Jarrar, who both happen to work at the Projects Management Unit of the Palestinian Water Authority, and who embarked on this research independently after getting interested through their work. They presented their results at a conference for Arab Water Week in Amman in December 2010. Today the only official study on prepaid water meters is one completed by the PWA and the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government, a draft technical requirements study requested by the Council of Ministers. In order to finalize this study, prepaid water meters will need to be implemented in more areas with the draft technical standards.

According to Civil Procedure and Palestinian Trade Law No. 2 for the year 2001, Article 112, “It’s the right of customer to complain in front of the court if the water service was cut, regardless the reason.” According to Ahmed Bishawii from the PWA legal department, the interpretation of this law is that the judge will ask that the water be turned back on for the consumer immediately, before even looking at the reason for the cut. Even if the consumer is found guilty, the judgement cannot be cutting the water supply. Currently there are no penalties for cutting water supply.

Interview with Ehab Bargouthi, Consumer Protection Society.


According to a study by the Palestinian Hydrology Group, the Prime Minister sent the mayor of Jaroshiya a memo in 2009 asking him to pay for families living in extreme poverty. But this was never implemented. In June 2010 the Council of Ministers issued Resolution (F.S.O.M/31/51/03) stating that the Ministry of Social Affairs was preparing a study called “the strategy of cash transfer” to develop a program for providing governmental support to people who cannot afford water using the social security mechanism. The Ministry of Social Affairs has not yet established this program.

Citizens who chose to abandon the regular meters earlier may be the only citizens who had been given a choice. They had disconnected their water meter to avoid paying the minimum connection fee while water wasn’t reaching their home. These citizens were using expensive and risky water tankers in the interim and have been happy to have water delivered to their homes for a fraction of the cost. There is no monthly charge with the prepaid meters.

LifeSource learned the cost was six shekels per cubic metre and was able to calculate consumption based on this.

This figure is expected to be higher if those responsible for paying the bills were surveyed.

Israel has already made a name for itself with its water games. In the village of Qarawa Beni Zayid in 2009, Israel led the PWA and the WBWD to believe that it was not reducing water supply. But when LifeSource investigated, LifeSource learned that although annual supply increased, Mekorot was in fact supplying excessive quantities in the winter when the community relied on rainwater harvesting. In the summer the community was receiving a quarter of the supply it had received just three years prior (LifeSource data and press release, “In protest of Israeli Water Authority and Mekorot policies,” April 2009). Israel’s official response was that the months of low supply during the summer were in fact normal supply but the meter was broken. According to the WBWD, Mekorot routinely replaces meters after months of low supply and this is sufficient to absolve Mekorot of responsibility for reducing supply (LifeSource interview with Khalil Ghabeeesh, Director of WBWD, 2008).

UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions such as Resolution 242 and Resolution 338 do not follow Israel’s legal interpretation and consider the oPt to be under belligerent (hostile) occupation.” Diakonia website article: http://www.diakonia.se/sa/node.asp?node=940 EEWASH Parallel Report to ICESCR, p. 23.


Watch this 15 minute film online: www.lifesource.ps/fillingpoint

For example, the six-month general strike of 1936.

“At Bardala, in the North Eastern corner of Tubas Governorate, eight Palestinian wells were constructed before 1967 for domestic and agricultural purposes, with depths ranging from 30 to 65 meters. After the 1967 war, Israel constructed two deep wells (Bardala 1 in 1968 and Bardala 2 in 1979) a few hundred meters from the Palestinian wells. The water level in the Palestinian wells dropped at the rate of 2 meters a year, and salinity increased. Now the Palestinian wells are dry, as are most of the local springs used by Palestinian consumers for domestic and agricultural purposes.

“At Fasayil in Jericho governorate, Israel has drilled six production wells. The yield of the single Palestinian well in the area has fallen to zero, and the formerly abundant local springs have dried up.

OUR RIGHT TO WATER
“At Auja, the very productive Auja spring, which formerly discharged up to 9 MCM a year, has dried up for months on end through the action of five nearby Israeli production wells. A formerly water-abundant village is now buying back water from nearby settlements.” World Bank, 2009, p. 12.

63 Bill’in won a ruling of the Israeli Supreme Court to move the route of the Wall to confiscate less land.

64 Budrus is now famous for their joint grassroots struggle and their success in rerouting the Wall, thanks to the film Budrus by director Julia Bacha.

65 On military incursions into Jayyous, Israel has threatened to cut the village’s water and electricity if they don’t cooperate. If Jayyous had a well inside the village boundaries, Israel couldn’t carry this threat out as easily. However, there are also cases of Palestinians being shot or beaten for trying to get water while under curfew. (From a private interview with a resident of Batir, near Bethlehem, brutally beaten when he was trying to get water for his sick infant brother. Their father later built a cistern and named it after his son, who thankfully survived.)

66 These include shooting rubber-coated lead bullets less than 50 meters from demonstrators, firing regular teargas canisters at less than a 45 degree angle and using high velocity teargas canisters, which are designed for certain tactical situations to blow through a wall and then release teargas, and which have been ruled inappropriate for crowd dispersal by the Israeli army itself. Inappropriate use of these canisters have caused countless casualties, including Palestinian Bassem Abu Rahmeh, who was killed in 2009 when one hit his chest, and Tristan Anderson of Oakland, California, who is suffering from brain damage, paralysis and seizures after he was hit in the head by a canister at a 2009 demonstration.


68 Note: Same company, but bottled from local sources.

69 The Mehadrin Group company profile as part of “Dun’s 100 Israel’s Largest Enterprises.” http://duns100.dundb.co.il/ts.cgi?tsscript=comp_eng&duns=600019582

70 “600-plus communities served; 190-plus wastewater treatment plants operated and maintained; 90-plus water treatment plants operated and maintained; 74 industrial wastewater treatment facilities; 35 industrial water treatment facilities; 2,900 employees in North America; More than 2.2 billion gallons of water and wastewater treated everyday; Services to approximately 14 million people in 600 communities,” from http://www.veoliawater.com/about/locations/united-states.htm. Visit the following website to see if they are active in your community (U.S. residents only): http://www.globalexchange.org/economicactivism/veolia/contracts

71 http://www.veoliawater.com/about/key-figures/#c87f2013z1


73 Frankly, the youth want to have normal young adult social lives, they want to date regardless of which faction the other’s family comes from, they want to have spare change to buy a coffee, and they want to be able to listen to loud music and dance.

74 In March 2011, youth in Gaza passed out flowers door-to-door to citizens and to police officers as a token of forgiveness and unity, but the police responded with brutality.