

The Politics of Water and Medical Care in Israel and Palestine

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Open Invitation

[press release follows]

A water convoy to Qarawat Beni Zayed, Ramallah District
In protest of Israeli Water Authority and Mekorot policies
Arriving in the village at 1:30 PM

From "Halamish" entrance to village cluster: 1:15 PM

From Ramallah: Al Manara Circle at 12:30

From Jerusalem: Liberty Bell Park (Gan Ha'Paamon) at 12:00 noon

From Tel Aviv: Reading parking lot (next to the bus depot) at 12:00 noon

The five villages in Beni Zayed Municipality have been made to be dependent upon purchasing water from Mekorot and each year Mekorot has been reducing their supply during the summer months. This past April water supply from Mekorot to these 15,000 people was less than half than what it was 2 years ago.

Join us as we send a message to the Israeli Water Authority and Mekorot that water supply to all Palestinian communities, including communities located over the Western Aquifer and in Area C must increase during the summer months.

For further details, media opportunities, interview requests, and RSVP please contact:

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For Immediate Release

August 7th 2009: As water supply to Palestinian communities across the West Bank dwindles, activists are organizing a convoy of water to reach thirsty communities in the Ramallah Governorate.

Taps have been running dry – no water for drinking, for washing, for livestock or agriculture. In the villages of Qarawat Beni Zayed, Kufr 'Ayn, Deir Ghassani,

Beitrima and Nabi Salah many residents have not had water from their taps since March 15.

The villages, situated north-west of Ramallah, are inhabited by about 15,000 people, who, at the height of the scorching summer season, receive a rationed amount of water amounting to 37 liters a day per person – almost one half of the average consumed by Palestinians in the West Bank (66 liters a day per person), ONE SIXTH of the average provided to Jewish settlements in Israel and the occupied West Bank (235 liters a day).

Some Palestinians in South Hebron and the Jordan Valley are experiencing an even direr situation, as Israel is preventing them from developing a piped water distribution network due to permitting restrictions posed by the Civil Administration in Area C, which are applied even to basic water and sanitation infrastructure. Palestinian fields are drying up. Meanwhile, Palestinian villagers see beyond the settlement fences and walls that their illegal colonizers are enjoying a bountiful supply.

Ahmad Audy Arrar, a member of Qarawat Bani Zeid council and an organizer of the upcoming water convoy summarizes the situation: “I would like to say that, the water problem here has been increasing every year, it is not this summer only. Mekarot company is decreasing the amount of water to our village every summer, and this year is the worse so far. We are thirsty. Women are taking empty coke bottles to fill up from a local polluted spring for washing. The people are turning their anger to us at the municipality, they know it’s not because of us that they are suffering, but we are their link. The Palestinian Water Authority have visited, the Palestinian Hydrology Group, the West Bank Water Department, with their engineers. We welcome the support now of all the activists in solidarity with us, Israelis and internationals, other Palestinian communities and organizations, working with us to draw attention to this most serious problem. Without water there is no life. We hope for water in Bani Zeid, we hope for water for our families and friends in Hebron and the Jordan Valley, and we hope for water for all of Palestine.”

Recently this situation has been receiving a lot of attention. The Palestinian Water Authority, the West Bank Water Department, the Palestinian Hydrology Group, LifeSource, B’tselem, Israeli Peace Activists and Israeli and international media have visited the village of Qarawat Bani Zayed and Bani Zayed municipality and heard of this difficult situation. Many inhabitants of this village have to purchase water from water tanks at high prices – up to NIS 40 to 1 cubic metre of water, ten times the price of water available through the water network. Water from Aboud spring that gave the communities unlimited water before the occupation has been obstructed from reaching the local Palestinian communities since Mekarot, the Israeli water supply company, has created its own infrastructure here and only allows a small portion of its water to arrive to the village.

These communities are now dependent upon purchasing water from Mekorot and each year Mekorot has been reducing their supply during the summer months. This past April their water supply from Mekorot was less than half than what it was 2 years ago.

Since the occupation in 1967, Israel has taken control over all of the water sources in the West Bank (while some private ownership rights to wells were respected), using them for Israeli clients, including settlers. The Mountain Aquifer is considered a joint (Palestinian-Israeli) underground water reservoir that Israel is permitted to use – but not in the current inequitable way: 86% of the water is taken by Israel and the remaining 14% is allocated to 2.5 million Palestinian inhabitants. In the Jordan Valley alone, it is estimated that Israel is pumping 60 million cubic meters of water a year primarily for agricultural products exported to Europe, while total Palestinian domestic, industrial and agricultural consumption for the whole of the West Bank is limited to 190 million cubic meters, and many Palestinian communities in the Jordan Valley are made to go without.

227,500 people in 220 villages are not connected to the water supply grid. An additional 190,000 people have only partial water supply from the water network.

Supplying enough water to the Palestinian civilians – for their homes, and for their industrial and agricultural needs, is not a favour or act of compassion. This is a legal and moral obligation whose violation is a crime under international human rights and humanitarian law treaties, ratified by the State of Israel. Our water convoy on August 7th aims to put international pressure on Israel to end this ongoing deprivation.

Qarawat Beni Zayed Council, Kufr 'Ein Council, Deir Gassani Council, Beitrima Council, Nabi Salah Council, Beni Zayed Municipality
With support from:

House of Water & Environment, LifeSource, Medical Relief Society, Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network (PENGON), Palestinian Farmers Union, Palestinian Hydrology Group, Palestinian Institute for Water Issues Training, Palestinian Peasants Union, Union of Agricultural Work Committees

Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), International Solidarity Movement, International Women's Peace Service, Michigan Peace Team

Alternative Information Center, Anarchists Against the Wall, Bat Shalom, Coalition of Women for Peace, Combatants for Peace, Communist Party of Israel, Gush Shalom, Hadash Party, Humans Without Borders, The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, The Israeli Committee Against Torture, Machsom Watch, Meretz Party, New Profile, Physicians for Human Rights, Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, Rabbis for Human Rights, Taayush-

Arab-Jewish Partnership, Tarabut-Hithabrut, Sadaqa-Reut, Yesh Gvul, Young Communist League of Israel

For more information contact:

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LIFESOURCE is a Palestinian-led collective of people who recognize it is crucial to address the current and unfolding regional water crisis immediately – on the humanitarian level, the environmental level, and the political level. We are launching a campaign of popular research, popular education and popular action, with the goal of motivating communities to engage in their own analysis of information and direct their own courses of learning and action.