

## **Alternative Water Forum 2012 – The Marseille Declaration**

**”We commit to take action in solidarity with Palestinian human rights, including the human right to water”**

22 March 2012

Occupied Palestine – For years, the United Nations Human Rights Committee and other UN bodies have found Israel to be in violation of Palestinians human right to water and sanitation as part of normal reviews of Israel’s compliance with human rights treaties ratified by Israel.

In 2010 the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council passed resolutions, which together reaffirm “that governments have the primary responsibility for the realization of all human rights, including the right to water and sanitation.”

Yet Israel’s violations of Palestinians human right to water and sanitation are only increasing. Between 2009 and 2011, Israel demolished 57 rainwater harvesting cisterns and 40 wells Palestinians depend on for their lives and livelihoods.<sup>i</sup> Military destruction of Palestinian water infrastructure is both a direct violation of the human right to water and a war crime under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Average household water consumption of Palestinians connected to a network is less than half the World Health Organization’s minimum recommended daily allowance<sup>ii</sup> and 1/6 of average Israeli household consumption<sup>iii</sup>. Some of the poorest families are paying half of their income on water.

Israel’s obstruction of Palestinian water and sanitation development has prevented Palestinians from developing additional quantities of water agreed upon as part of the Oslo “peace process”<sup>iv</sup> and has forced Palestinians into a state of dependence upon purchasing Palestinian water from the Israeli national water company Mekorot. Mekorot cuts supply to Palestinian communities in order to maintain unhindered service to Israeli colonies in the West Bank.

Israel’s illegal Wall through internationally recognized Palestinian land stands to cut Palestinians off from areas that would yield an addition 90 million cubic meters annually.<sup>v</sup> Compare this amount to Palestinians total current water supply in the West Bank, which is just 180 million cubic meters, including water purchased from the Israeli national water company.<sup>vi</sup>

The 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 obstructs much needed development of these systems. The United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict found that Israel intentionally targeted and destroyed wells, pipes, wastewater facilities, water reservoirs and the main power station.<sup>vii</sup> More than 90% of water produced from municipal wells in Gaza is unsuitable 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.<sup>viii</sup> According to international water law Gaza has a right to an equitable and reasonable share of water from the Coastal Aquifer, including from those portions within Israel.

Israel has only newly begun allowing wastewater treatment projects in occupied Palestinian territory. After years of delays, including the murder of an on duty worker, projects in Gaza are now being implemented since Israel detected untreated and partially treated sewage released into the sea from Gaza at the Ashkelon desalination plant (12.5 kms, or 7.8 miles, directly north of Gaza). For fifteen years following Oslo, Israel directly obstructed the development of wastewater treatment facilities in the West Bank using first bureaucracy and then its military. Israel paid one contractor a 1-million shekel settlement admitting Israel was at fault when the military shut down a wastewater treatment project after it was fully permitted. Neighborhoods of Palestinian citizens of Israel often have poor sewage infrastructure despite paying equal or greater taxes than other Israeli citizens. A number of Israeli colonies release untreated sewage into Palestinian communities.<sup>ix</sup>

The Israeli regime of institutionalized discrimination of Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza constitutes apartheid under the Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. The Russell Tribunal on Palestine concluded in its most recent session in Cape Town, South Africa, that, “Israel’s rule over the Palestinian people, wherever they reside, collectively amounts to a single integrated regime of apartheid”. A recent French parliamentary report condemned Israeli policies in withholding water from Palestinians as “apartheid”.

Israel’s violations must be seen within the context of the 1948 Nakba, the systematic expulsion and denial of the internationally recognized right of return of the majority of Palestinians from their homes. Since the establishment of the state of Israel, thousands of ancient springs, cisterns, wells, wadis and river streams have been illegally appropriated from Palestinians. Israel has also modified the hydrological character of the land it occupied, e.g., the drainage of Buheirat el Huleh (Hula Valley) by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) in the 1950s, and the diversion of the lower Jordan River waters, contributing to the dramatic shrinking of the Dead Sea. Just this month, Israel demolished the Bedouin village of Al Araquib in the Negev Desert a 36<sup>th</sup> time in order to allow the JNF to plant a forest and “green the desert”.

We launch this declaration calling upon global citizens of conscience to take action for Palestinian water rights as members of the global water rights movement are organizing to resist the corporatization of our common water heritage. We launch this declaration here in Marseille, France, home to the World Water Council, the corporate think tank and lobby group founded by multinational corporations and the World Bank. As the World Water Council convenes the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum promoting the privatization of water and sanitation services, we call out the corporate members of this Council for profiting from the privatization of water and sanitation services globally – and in particular we call out the transnational French corporation Veolia for also providing sanitation services to the illegal Israeli settlement of Modin Illit which is colonizing Palestinian land, for illegally dumping

garbage from Israel in the occupied Jordan Valley, and for profiting from apartheid transportation services that serve illegal colonies while denying Palestinians service. Our struggles are intricately linked. As we resist corporate and state profiteering from human rights violations in Palestine, we are resisting discrimination in access to water and promoting global water justice.

From Cochabamba, Bolivia to Palestine, we affirm the need for popular resistance to hold states and corporations accountable to a respect for human rights. Today as Palestinians are risking what is left of their land and their homes and the trickle of water that they are able to currently access in order to demand that they be recognized as human beings with human rights, we know that we must take concrete action to support the growing movement demanding an end to Israeli impunity for human rights violations, including the human rights to water and sanitation.

Given the abject failure of world government to hold Israel accountable for its persistent violations of international law, including the right to water, Palestinians have called for people of conscience around the world to implement boycotts of, divestment from and sanctions (BDS) against Israel, inspired by the international nonviolent struggle that succeeded in ending apartheid in South Africa. The pillars of the movement are based on international law and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people with a goal of achieving freedom, justice and equality for all irrespective of race and creed.

As global citizens in an increasingly interconnected world it is imperative that we take action in our communities to protect the human rights of our brothers and sisters globally.

With the goal of holding Israel accountable so that Palestinians have their rights to water restituted and achieve self-determination with their full set of rights, we, activists for water justice, declare our support for the Palestinian-led BDS movement. In particular we pledge to:

1. Oppose the corporate expansion of the Israeli national water company, Mekorot, into international markets, Mekorot being one of the key instruments in denying Palestinians their water rights
2. Boycott Israeli agricultural produce, campaigning to exclude Israeli agricultural companies (e.g. Mehadrin) from access to foreign markets and expose their role in the takeover of Palestinian land and water resources
3. Support the Stop the JNF campaign and educate others about JNF's "greenwashing" of Israeli crimes
4. Boycott and divest from Veolia, the largest privatizer of public water supply in the world, and a main profiteer of Israeli apartheid
5. Call for government sanctions on Israel, in particular, the end of all water-related cooperation agreements

Signatories:

## Confirmed Organizational Signatures

LifeSource - Palestine  
Escuela del Pueblo Primero de Mayo - Cochabamba, Bolivia  
Fundacion Abril - Cochabamba, Bolivia  
Centre for Civil Society Environmental Justice Project, Durban, South Africa  
Socio-economic Rights Institute of South Africa  
Ecological Movement of South Africa  
Focus on the Global South (Thailand, Philippines, India)  
Union Juive Française pour la Paix / French Jewish Union for a Just Peace  
Enginyeria Sense Fronteras / Engineers Without Borders  
Jordan Valley Solidarity  
Middle East Children's Alliance  
Stop the Jewish National Fund  
International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network  
KRuHA-Indonesia, people's coalition for the right to water  
General Union of Palestine Students, Aix-Marseille  
Union Démocratique Arabe en France  
Le Réseau Palestine Bouches-du-Rhône

## Confirmed Individual Signatures

Marcela Olivera - Cochabamba, Bolivia  
Oscar Olivera - Cochabamba, Bolivia  
Blaine Grinder - Tsillqot'in Nation  
Jacki Dugard - visiting senior fellow, School of Law, University of the Witwatersrand  
Liz Marshall – Toronto, Canada  
Irene Bonilla – Guadalajara, Mexico  
Susan Koppelman - United States / Palestine  
Pilar Esquinas - P.C. Canal Isabel II, Madrid  
Daniela del Bene - Forum Italiano Movimenti Per L'Aqua and Cevi Italy  
Marco Iob - Forum Italiano Movimenti Per L'Aqua/Comitato Italiano Contratto Mondiale  
Del L'Aqua  
Jon Arrizabalaga - Ingenieria Sin Fronteras, Madrid  
Steve Fisher – United States / Mexico  
Pancho Ramos Stierle – Oakland, California, Earth  
Shir Hever – Germany/Israel  
Lina Isma'il – Palestine  
Zayneb Alshalalfeh – Palestine  
Colin Miller – Oakland, California  
Prof. Uri Davis – Jaffa, Palestine  
Donna Oakes – United States/New York  
Annelies Broekman, President of the Xarxa per una Nova Cultura de l'Aigua

i EWASH Advocacy Task Force, “Demolition & destruction of water, sanitation & hygiene (WASH) infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT),” Fact Sheet 11, December 2011.

ii 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% of the World Health Organization’s minimum recommended daily allowance of 100 liters. --World Bank (2009), “Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development,” p. 17.

iii Average Israeli domestic water consumption is 300 liters per person per day, including both freshwater and desalinated seawater.

iv “Amongst the well drilling projects not approved by the JWC [Joint Water Committee] 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.

v From Clemens Messerschmid (2011), “The Last Sip: Water crisis in Palestine [Arabic publication],” p. 6.

vi Israel Water Authority (April, 2009), “The Issue of Water between Israel and the Palestinians,” (p. 15).

vii “Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict,” para. 1023, UN Doc. A/HRC/12/48 (15 September 2009).

viii United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (August 2010) “Between the Fence and a Hard Place: The humanitarian impact of Israeli-imposed restrictions on access to land and sea in the Gaza Strip.”

[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_special\\_focus\\_2010\\_08\\_19\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_special_focus_2010_08_19_english.pdf)

ix B’tselem (2009), “Foul Play: Neglect of Wastewater Treatment in the West Bank”.