

Crimes against Humanity: Stealing Palestine's Water Resources

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In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

by Adri Nieuwhof

The Israeli national water company Mekorot undermines Palestinians' access to water, according to a new report commissioned by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The [report](#) finds that deep water drillings by Mekorot and the Israeli agri-industrial firm Mehadrin in the occupied Jordan Valley have caused the drying up of Palestinian wells and springs. About 80 percent of all water drilled in this area is consumed by Israel and its illegal settlements in the West Bank.

Mekorot took over responsibility for the West Bank's water resources from the Israeli military in 1982. The new report documents a clear pattern of discrimination against Palestinians. Whereas Palestinians living in most of the West Bank face "chronic shortages," Israeli settlements enjoy a constant supply of water. Palestinians are prevented from using wastewater provided to Israeli settlements for irrigation and instead have to rely on more expensive water for that purpose. Furthermore, valves supplying Palestinians tend to be cut off when water shortages occur, yet no such restrictions are applied to the use of water by Israeli settlers.

The World Health Organization recommends that each individual should have access to 100 liters of water per day. Israeli settlers in the West Bank typically consume 400 liters per day, the report states, while Palestinians have to make do with just 73 liters or, in the case of Palestinian Bedouins, as little as 10 liters.



A Palestinian Bedouin child drinks water on a road between Jericho and Ramallah; Bedouins in the West Bank have access to as little as 10 liters of water per day.

([Eyad Jadallah](#) / [APA images](#))

Hampered

The new UN report is the result of a mission investigating Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israel tried to hamper field visits to Israel and the West Bank by the mission, led by French magistrate [Christine Chanet](#), by ignoring five request for

cooperation. However, the mission succeeded in obtaining first-hand information during meetings held in Jordan. The report highlights the role of businesses in Israel's settlements.

Information gathered by the mission shows that private firms have enabled, facilitated and profited, directly and indirectly, from the construction and growth of the settlements. It identified a number of business activities that raise particular concerns about abuses of human rights. They include:

- The supply of equipment and materials facilitating the construction of settlements and Israel's wall in the West Bank;
- The supply of surveillance and identification equipment for settlements, the wall and military checkpoints;
- The supply of equipment for the demolition of housing and property, including the destruction of farms, greenhouses, olives groves and crops,;
- The supply of security services, equipment and materials to businesses operating in settlements;
- The provision of transport and other services to support the maintenance of settlements;
- Banking and financial operations helping to develop, expand or maintain settlements and their activities, including loans for housing and business development;
- The use of natural resources, in particular water and land, for business purposes;
- Pollution, dumping and transfer of waste to Palestinian villages;
- The way Palestinian financial and economic markets are held captive by Israel, as well as practices that disadvantage Palestinian businesses, including through restrictions on movement, and administrative and legal constraints.

Fully aware

According to the new report, companies active in the settlements are fully aware that they are abusing international law and contributing to violations of human rights.

Industrial parks in settlements, such as Barkan and Mishor Adumim, are criticized for enticing firms to the settlements with tax sweeteners and by emphasizing how Palestinians are paid lower wages than Israeli workers. Economic activities in these zones are growing, the mission adds.

The mission also notes that a number of banks provide mortgages for homebuyers and special loans for building projects in settlements. In some cases, the banks are physically present there.

It also states that Israel labels all its export products as originating from Israel, including those wholly or partially produced in settlements. Some companies operating in settlements have been accused of hiding the original place of production of their products. This poses problems for the customs authorities of other countries, as well as raising issues in relation to consumers' right to information.

The mission urges private companies to cease operating in the settlements.

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