

# Israel Steals Palestinian Resources. Gaza without Water and Electricity

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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Ethnic cleansing is official Israeli policy. So is stealing Palestinian land and resources.

Martin Schulz is European Parliament president. He visited Israel. On February 12, he addressed Knesset members. Outrage followed his remarks. Israeli MKs walked out in protest.

Days earlier he met a Palestinian youth. "Why can an Israeli use 70 cubic liters of water daily and a Palestinian only 17," he asked.

Schulz raised the issue in his remarks. He said he hadn't "checked the data. I'm asking you if this is correct."

Right-wing extremist MK Moti Yegorov shouted at him while he was speaking. "Shame on you," he said. "You support someone who incites against Jews."

Fascists infest Israel's Knesset. Naftali Bennett is one of the worst. He's Israel's Economy Minister. He heads the fascist Habayit (The Jewish Home) party.

He's a Netanyahu coalition partner. He deplores political activism. He wants truth and full disclosure suppressed. He and right-wing ultranationalist Avigdor Lieberman are ideological allies.

They spurn rule of law principles. They want settlements expanded. They want Palestinian resources stolen. They want them denied all rights.

Bennett left during Schulz's speech. He said "I will not tolerate duplicitous propaganda against Israel in the Knesset especially not in German."

He accused Schulz of lying. He disgracefully alluded to Germany's Nazi past. "I say unequivocally that someone speaking in German should be even more careful about saying things critical of" Israel, he added.

Culture and Sports Minister Lomir Livnat expressed a similar sentiment, saying:

"We gave him every respect...but when he tells an outright lie, and in German, no wonder MKs and ministers got upset."

Likud party extremist Moshe Feiglin boycotted the Knesset session. He called it "inappropriate that a speech is given in the parliament of the Jewish state, in the language used when our parents were thrust into the railway wagons and in the crematoria."

Netanyahu accused Schulz of repeating claims without “check(ing) first.” Doing so would largely verify his comments.

Israel systematically denies Palestinians their own resources. It steals them for its own use. It sells them for profit.

Schulz’s comments addressed Palestinian persecution, saying:

They “have the right to self-determination and equality.” They want to “live in peace and have unlimited freedom of movement.” Gazans are entirely denied it, he added.

“The blockade...is your reaction to attacks on the civilian population. But it does not allow real development and drives people to despair, which in turn is used by extremists. Perhaps the blockade creates not more, but less, security.”

Before he spoke, he said Israel won’t tolerate justifiable criticism. It’s “quite normal in a democracy,” he stressed.

“The EU stands by its special relationship with Israel, but that does not mean that it has to agree every decision of (its) government.”

B’Tselem monitors human rights in Occupied Palestine. There’s “undeniable (Israeli) discrimination in the amount of water allocated to Israelis and Palestinians,” it said.

Jews get up to over double the World Health Organization’s (WHO) minimum daily recommendation. Palestinians on average get less than three-fourths the minimum needed. In Jenin, they get less than 40%.

More below on B’Tselem’s analysis of polluted water Gazans are forced to use.

On Wednesday evening, Knesset speaker Yuli Edelstein met privately with Schulz. He lied about water amounts Israel allows Palestinians.

He shamelessly claimed “no blockade of Gaza” exists. He lied saying Israelis are bombarded by missiles.

Israel attacks Gaza repeatedly. It does so by air, land and sea. It does so preemptively. It does it lawlessly

It shoots Palestinian farmers in their fields. It uses Palestinian children for target practice. It gets away with cold-blooded murder unaccountably. It calls legitimate self-defense terrorism.

On February 9, [B’Tselem](#) headlined “Over 90% of water in Gaza Strip unfit for drinking.” Offshore waters are dangerously contaminated.

Coastal aquifer water is Gaza’s main source for drinking. It’s “been continuously over-pumped for decades.”

“(T)he Palestinian Water Authority pumps some 180 million cubic meters (mcm) a year...” Replenishment falls way short of what’s needed. It’s about 50 – 60 mcm annually.

Groundwater is significantly lowered. Contamination results from seawater seepage as well

as saline water “rising from deeper in the reservoir.”

Israel sells Gaza 4.2 mcm of water annually. It agreed to sell another 5 mcm of desalinated water a year. Infrastructure to transport it doesn't exist.

It remains to be completed. Besieged Gaza has no proper wastewater treatment facility. Many residents aren't connected to a sewage system.

Domestic waste flows into cesspits. It seeps into groundwater. It contaminates it. “The problem (worsened) in recent years, primarily due to electricity shortages,” said B'Tselem.

It's one of many serious problems affecting Gaza. Israel bears full responsibility. Cast Lead and Pillar of Cloud attacks severely damaged power and wastewater treatment facilities.

Huge amounts of sewage go untreated. War inflicted damage was largely repaired. Capacity can't keep up with need. “Gaza's wastewater treatment facilities are far from able to meet the required amounts and standards,” B'Tselem explained. Projects to improve things haven't progressed. Blockade restrictions bear full responsibility. Construction materials and equipment are inadequate. Lengthy bureaucratic delays exacerbate conditions.

The Palestinian Water Authority found a dangerous rise in nitrate levels. It's from contamination from agricultural pesticide use. It's from sewage seeping into aquifer water.

“Every day, only some 25 percent of Gaza's wastewater – about 30,000 cubic meters – is treated and recycled for agricultural use,” said B'Tselem.

“Some 90,000 cubic meters of untreated or partially treated wastewater flows into the Mediterranean.” Contamination follows. So do health hazards and damage to Gazan fishing.

Aquifer water is dangerously high in nitrogen and chloride. It makes “90 to 95% percent of (Gazan) water unfit for drinking and problematic for agricultural use.”

PA Water Authority officials said only 6.5% of Gazan well water meets WHO minimum standards.

“Ninety-seven percent of Gazans are connected to the public water supply system.” It doesn't provide enough water. Shortages exist. Inadequate infrastructure and power complicate things.

Residents suffer regular water outages. They “receiv(e) running water for only six to eight hours at a time: 25% of households on a daily basis, 40% every other day, 20% once every three days, and the remaining 15% (in Gaza City, Rafah and Jabaliya) only one day out of four.”

Erratic supplies force Gazans to collect water in containers. They're placed on rooftops.

Power outages put pumps out of commission. Water can't be channeled into containers. Residents are forced to collect water at ground level.

Wafa al-Faran is a married mother of eight. She lives in Gaza City's a-Shuja'iya neighborhood. She explained her ordeal, saying:

"The power outages really interfere with the water supply to our houses. When there's no electricity, there's very little water in the taps."

"We had to buy a pump so that the water would reach the containers on our roof. We have four containers of 4,000 liters altogether."

"When we get running water, we turn the pump on and fill up the containers. But sometimes, there's no electricity when there's water."

"When that happened, we used to operate the pump with a generator, so that we wouldn't run out of water. But the generator uses a lot of fuel, which is very expensive."

"Now there's no fuel from Egypt and the fuel from Israel is very expensive, so we don't use the generator at all. Even at night, when we don't have power, we make do with candles and flashlights."

"A few months ago, my husband bought a new water container, which we put at the entrance to the house, so that we can fill it up when there's no power."

"We get water out of the container in buckets, because it's not connected to our plumbing."

"We don't drink the water that from the pipes and don't use it for making coffee or tea or for cooking. We buy fresh water from water vendors."

"Sometimes, I use the fresh water to wash my daughters' hair, and in the morning we use this water to wash our faces, because the water from the taps burns our eyes."

Imagine living through this daily ordeal. Most Gazans are impoverished. Many can't afford to buy fresh water. Imagine consuming what's unfit to drink.

Imagine the health risks doing it. Average Gazan daily water consumption falls below WHO minimums. Residents struggle to get by.

Ibtesam Kheir a-Din is a married mother of six. "The water we get is salty and unfit for drinking," she said. "Sometimes it even smells bad."

"We only use it to clean the house and do dishes and laundry, but nothing ever feels really clean."

"Clothes smell bad and get stained." She and family use vendor-supplied water for drinking.

Last November, Gaza's power plant shut. Enough fuel wasn't available. Generators ran sewage pumping stations.

In mid-month, one in a-Zaytun broke down. A generator malfunction caused 35,000 mcm of raw sewage to flood the neighborhood. Leakage entered homes.

In 2009, the UN Environment Program (UNEP) recommended ceasing coastal aquifer pumping. At issue is possible collapse of Gaza's water system.

Over-pumping continues. What other choice do residents have? No longterm solution exists.

Gaza's water crisis deepens.

The Palestinian Water Authority and UNEP agreed. Coastal aquifer supplies "passed the point of no return in terms of rehabilitation options."

By 2016, pumping water no longer will be possible. Crisis conditions are serious. Another solution must be found.

At stake is the health and welfare of nearly 1.8 million Gazans. They need potable water to survive. Siege conditions exacerbate crisis conditions. It's unclear how they'll be resolved.

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