

New Report Charges Major Corporations as Complicit in Israel's Water Apartheid

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In December, the Palestinian human rights organization, Al-Haq, released a [report](#) accusing major corporations of maintaining Israel's water apartheid on Palestinians living in the occupied territories.

According to Al-Haq, businesses are instrumental in helping Israel restrict water access to Palestinians and destroy Palestinian water infrastructure. Additionally, foreign companies profit from Israel's system of water discrimination.

Al-Haq's paper named both Israeli and international companies as:

"Complicit in the violation of the Palestinian right to self-determination and permanent sovereignty over natural resources, as well as the war crime of pillage and inhumane acts of expropriation of natural resources amounting to the crime of apartheid."

The report detailed the actions of Israeli water companies Mekorot and Hagihon but also included outside firms TAHAL Group International B.V., Hyundai, Caterpillar Inc., JCB Bamford Excavators Ltd. (JCB), and Volvo Car Group.

International Companies Complicit in Apartheid

Generally, international companies' involvement in Israel's water apartheid is through demolitions of water infrastructure such as cisterns, pipelines, and wells. According to Al-Haq's research, from 2017-August 2021, Hyundai carried out 24 demolitions of Palestinian water equipment, JCB is responsible for 16, Volvo demolished 14 structures, and Caterpillar executed seven demolitions.

[Hyundai](#) is a South Korean multinational manufacturer. Its excavators are often used in home demolitions in addition to razing water equipment. [Caterpillar](#) is an American manufacturer heavily involved in Israel's occupation through demolitions, military

agreements, and construction of the settlements and the apartheid wall. The company's major shareholders include BlackRock, an investment company criticized for fueling climate change, State Farm's investment group, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Trust.

[Volvo](#) is a Swedish multinational company with major shareholders also, including BlackRock and Norges Bank Investment Management, which is owned by the state of Norway. JCB is a British construction equipment manufacturer which [helped finance](#) ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson's campaign. In return, Johnson promoted the company's products on the campaign trail.

Company name	Amount of documented demolitions of water infrastructure
Hyundai	24
Caterpillar	7
JCB	16
Volvo	13

Machinery used for water infrastructure demolitions documented by Al-Haq field workers between January 2017-August 2021. Source | [Al-Haq](#)

Other companies involved in the destruction of water infrastructure include Turkish company Hidromek, Japanese engineering firm Daio, and Chinese construction company LiuGong.

Kardan N.V. is a Dutch company specializing in real estate and water infrastructure. It owns more than 98% of Tahal International Group, which has been involved in water development projects in Israeli settlements, over-extraction efforts limiting the availability of water to Palestinians, and has helped enforce the permit system for the development of wells on Palestinian communities.

Al-Haq reached out to these companies but did not receive a response. Daio was the only company that responded to *MintPress News*' requests for comment, stating, "We have not been able to confirm the facts as you have inquired about our group company, Daio Engineering Co., Ltd."

Al-Haq noted that most of these demolitions are done because the structures lack permits or are located on Israeli [state land](#), meaning Palestinian land confiscated by Israel for allegedly not being cultivated after a number of years. Most Palestinian buildings in Area C of the occupied West Bank, which is under the full control of the Israeli military, often lack the proper licenses because Israeli authorities [deny](#) Palestinians permits on the grounds these areas have not been zoned for construction. Yet [zoning plans in Area C](#) are also often rejected by Israeli officials.

"This is part of a broader strategy of harassment against Palestinian farmers to stop their agricultural activities," Al-Haq wrote, describing these demolitions' effect on Palestinian farming and their overall economy. Without the proper equipment, Palestinian farmers

cannot irrigate their land and, thereby are unable to grow produce.

“The World Bank has estimated that out of a total of [about 175,000 acres] of irrigable land in the West Bank and Gaza, only [about 61,000 acres] are irrigated, costing the Palestinian economy as much as \$410.70 million...in irrigated agriculture opportunities and 96,000 agricultural jobs,” Al-Haq wrote.

Al-Haq argues that several Israeli and transnational companies are in violation of international law. The authors wrote:

Since the unlimited water supply to Israeli settlements contributes to their expansion (and prolonged occupation), corporate actors, such as Mekorot, Gihon and Tahal Group International, Middle East Tubes Company (B Gaon Holdings), Mehadrin, Minrav Projects, David Ackerstein Ltd., Einav Ahets are complicit in the transfer of Israel’s civilian population into the OPT and East Jerusalem thus acting in blatant violation of Article 43 and 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.”

It also accused corporations Mekorot, Volvo, Caterpillar Inc, Daio, JCB, LiuGong, Hyundai, and Hidromek of carrying out a war crime for assisting in the destruction and confiscation of Palestinian water infrastructure.

Many of the international companies involved in Israel’s water apartheid have human rights policies on their website, including [Volvo](#), [Caterpillar](#), [Daio](#), and [Hyundai](#).

Kathryn Ravey, a business and human rights legal researcher for Al-Haq and one of the report’s authors told *MintPress News* that Al-Haq highlighted how these companies are going against their human rights guidelines in their letters to the corporations.

“A lot of them even have it in their core principles that they’re going to do due diligence, not be contributing to unequal situations or situations in which human rights are at fault or liable of being violated,” Ravey said. “And they basically ignore them and act against them. And this is the frustrating aspect of business and human rights.”

A Climate Change Issue

Despite Israel touting itself as environmentally conscious, the water apartheid it imposes on Palestinians is actually contributing to climate change.

“The thing with water is it’s linked to so many other things, like the environment and the economy,” Ravey said. Israel [controls](#) 85% of water resources in the West Bank. As previously reported by [MintPress News](#), Israel dominating the West Bank’s water sector diminishes Palestinians’ capability to adapt to climate change. Damage to water infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank — whether through war or direct demolition — reduces its ability to handle heavy rainfall or prepare for droughts and heat waves.

Ravey explained that the diversity of the ecosystem also becomes disrupted when Palestinians are prevented from harvesting various fruits and vegetables because of the lack of water. And soil erosion problems occur when Palestinians are denied permits to fix leaky water pipelines.

Ultimately, these issues lead to a land uncultivated and without the necessary resources for communities to thrive. And with that, it strips Palestinians of their sovereignty.

“A lot of Palestinian communities aren’t able to grow the agriculture that they used to grow. And that also prevents them from profiting off of a lot of agricultural pursuits that they used to live off of,” Ravey said. “And not just profit, but also use from their own land.”

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