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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by The Institute for Protection of Women's Rights (IPWR), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Violation of Access to Clean Water in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Introduction

At the beginning of the occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967, the Zionist regime used water as a weapon against the Palestinian people, causing the people of that region, especially in the West Bank to turn to other methods, such as collecting rainwater, to meet their vital needs.

This regime has used water as a strategy for the development of the Israeli regime and to harass the Palestinians. The Zionist regime has prevented the Palestinians from getting the water they need through its racist measures. The human right to water, recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010, is an integral part of public health based on the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

Israel's harsh and discriminatory policies regarding the water right have resulted in widespread human rights violations for Palestinians, which in turn has had serious implications for their right to life, food, adequate housing, work, and health. These policies have led to the forced displacement of Palestinian communities, hindering the economic and agricultural development of Palestinian communities while serving the growth and consolidation of the Israeli regime's settlements. The actions of the occupying power with the unusual extraction of water from the underground aquifers have reduced the amount of water consumed by Palestinians since 1999 and dried up the underground water resources in the State of Palestine. This is because this regime controls about 85% of the water resources in the West Bank.

Israel's restrictions on water resources constitute clear discrimination and a systematic violation of the human rights of Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank, as most Palestinians are deprived of one of their most basic rights, access to a minimum level of safe drinking water. They are forced to buy water at high prices from the Israeli regime, which causes them numerous economic and health problems: Kidney failure, the spread of infectious diseases such as hepatitis and typhoid, etc. Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank use unsanitary water, and in addition to the siege by the Zionist regime, they have lost their only source of water due to seawater and sewage intrusion.

These violations of Palestinian rights constitute a cruel and inhumane act against the residents of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. The refusal of the occupation regime to distribute the water needed by the Palestinians violates Article 40 of the 1995 Oslo Accords between the Zionist regime and the Palestinians and is a clear violation of the 1907 Hague Rules, a treaty that prohibits an occupier from expropriating the resources of the occupied territories for its own benefit, but this regime has continuously violated this international document throughout its existence.

Therefore, the discriminatory actions of the Israeli regime on the water issue are to be considered as water apartheid, we strongly condemn the destruction of Palestinian water sources and water tankers by the occupation regime, while Jewish settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories do have adequate access to drinking water.

Some of the Violations of Access to Water in the State of Palestine Include:

1. More than 5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have only one source of water available, 90-95 per cent of which is unfit for drinking. Many Palestinian communities in the Jordan Valley survive on as little as 20 litres per capita per day (lpcd), which is the minimum amount recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for "short-term survival" in emergency and disaster situations, such as tsunamis and earthquakes. In stark contrast, Israeli settlers residing in settlements in the same area enjoy as much as 700 lpcd.

2. While international transboundary water laws dictate the equitable and reasonable utilisation of shared groundwater resources, Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory only have access to 10 per cent of all available water while Israel has access to the remaining 90 per cent.
3. Furthermore, as many as 313,000 Palestinians are not connected to a water network and depend on water delivered by trucks, paying up to 500 per cent more per litre than those connected to the water network and adding considerable financial strain to already vulnerable populations.
4. In 2011 alone, the Israeli military destroyed 55 water structures in the West Bank, many of which were funded by international humanitarian agencies.
5. It is worth noting that the average Palestinian water consumption per capita is still less than the minimum recommended level globally according to the standards of the World Health Organization, which is 100 liters per day. This is as a result of the Israeli control over more than 85% of the Palestinian water.
6. During 11 days in May 2021, air strikes affected 13 water wells, three desalination plants and 250,000 meters of water pipes, reportedly including the main pipeline carrying water purchased from Mekorot.
7. More than a quarter of diseases in Gaza are water related. Numerous reports point to nitrates from wastewater pollution exceeding by six times WHO recommendations.
8. Cancer and kidney disease are increasingly common, with a 13 percent annual increase in patients suffering from renal failure.

Suggestions & Recommendations:

We call on the international community to:

- be responsible for violating Palestinians' access to clean drinking water;
 - to fulfill their obligations and hold the occupation regime accountable for its actions with effective measures;
 - recognize the reality of the apartheid Israel practices against Palestinians throughout historic State of Palestine;
 - Urgently intervene in support of the Palestinian people, including by supporting the ongoing investigation of the situation in the State of Palestine by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and calling on him to expedite it.
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