WHEN YOU DON’T HAVE ENOUGH WATER

Access to water...

The World Health Organization recommends a minimum of 100 liters (more than 26 gallons) per day, per person.

**People in the U.S.**

303-378 liters (80-100 gallons) per day\(^1\)

**Palestinians in Gaza**

91 liters (24 gallons) per day\(^2\)

**Palestinians in West Bank**

20-79 liters (5-21 gallons) per day\(^3\)

**Israeli settlers in West Bank**

400 liters (105 gallons) per day\(^4\)

The consequences of poor or inadequate water

**Human health deteriorates**

- People who drink contaminated water or reduce washing and bathing because of water shortages are at risk for illnesses like dysentery and diarrhea. This includes 75 percent of people in Gaza.\(^6\)
- Over two weeks in 2017, 25 percent of Gazan households with children under five experienced water-borne infections.\(^7\)
- Dehydration can cause fatigue, digestive problems, stomach ulcers and other infections.

**Agriculture suffers**

- Farmers cannot irrigate their crops or water their animals. In hot summer months, this can be disastrous.
- Lack of water and other basic services in Area C of the West Bank (under full Israeli control) forces many Palestinians to leave their communities, thus allowing Israeli confiscation of land and further expansion of Israeli settlements.\(^5\)

**Economic development reverses**

- Without reliable access to water, many factories and industries cannot function.
- Lack of access to water is a significant factor in the “de-development” of the Palestinian economy since the early 1990s.\(^8\)

A Cry for Home offers stories, videos and fact sheets from MCC on Palestine and Israel. Everyone needs a home – where families are safe and secure, where their basic needs are met, where they can come and go freely, and where they can imagine a future. But that is not the reality for Palestinians – or even for some Israelis. To view other fact sheets and learn more, visit: mcc.org/cry-for-home.
The problem in Gaza: water quality

Gaza’s primary water source, the coastal aquifer, is polluted by over-pumping and wastewater contamination. **96 percent of the water is unsafe to drink.** The UN projects the aquifer will be irreparable by 2020.9

Citing security concerns, Israel imposed a blockade on Gaza in 2007 which prohibits many materials from entering, including cement and iron. These materials are required to repair water infrastructure that has deteriorated or was damaged during Israeli bombings in 2008, 2012 and 2014.

Because of severe electricity shortages, water is not pumped at the allotted times and with the pressure levels required to sustain families. Desalination plants cannot operate at full capacity.

**Access to safe drinking water through the public network plummeted from 98.3 percent in 2000 to 10.5 percent in 2014.**10

The problem in the West Bank: water access

80 percent of groundwater in the West Bank is diverted by Israeli water company Mekorot, mostly for the use of Israeli settlements. Palestinians must buy back their confiscated water from Mekorot and face frequent shortages and high costs.

Palestinian infrastructure is inadequate. New water structures require Israeli permits, which are exceedingly difficult to obtain. Wells, cisterns or other infrastructure built without permits are frequently demolished.

Israel’s unlawful appropriation of natural resources, like water, in occupied Palestine amounts to “pillage,” and violates international law.12

**“No one remembers a time in recent memory when drinkable water reliably appeared out of the tap.”**

—Robert Piper, former UN coordinator for humanitarian aid.11

“Palestinians in the West Bank live with a constant shortage of water that is largely manmade.”

—B’Tselem: The Israeli Center for Information on Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories.13

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REFERENCES


4 Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ), “Water resource allocations in the occupied Palestinian territory: Responding to Israeli claims,” 2012. Israelis within Israel proper use about 287 liters (nearly 76 gallons) per person per day.


