



Israel's water company Mekorot Nurturing *Water Apartheid* in Palestine

Mekorot is the Israeli public water company which provides 90% of drinking water for Israeli citizens. Water management and supply is controlled by the Israeli state inside the Green Line as well as in the OPT. Mekorot provides infrastructure for water supplies in the settlements and manages water stolen from Palestinians in the occupied territories. In the Nagab/Negev Israel refuses to acknowledge the 45 villages where 160,000 Palestinian Bedouins live and prohibits the construction of water networks to provide drinking water in these villages.

Through the denial to access to water and sanitation, Mekorot collaborates with the state of Israel in the implementation of an institutionalized “water apartheid”, which is a central component of Israel’s policies of ethnic cleansing of Palestinian communities and, considering the grave implications of the denial to access of water, may be involved in the crime of persecution. Mekorot further profits from Israeli policies, such as the settlements and the Wall, which imply a large range of human rights violations.



Mekorot implements a series of Israeli violations of rights included in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The right to water has been recognized as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living under Article 11 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The right to water is also protected under other international treaties and is also essential to the enjoyment of the rights to health, adequate housing and food. The human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses.

Water apartheid made by Mekorot

Managing the Israeli water system:

- Mekorot has been responsible for water rights violations since the 1950s when it built Israel's national water carrier, which is diverting the Jordan River from the West Bank and Jordan to serve Israeli communities along the coast and in the southern desert¹. At the same time it deprives the Palestinian community from the possibility of access to Jordan River water.
- At a special meeting of the Knesset Finance Committee to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of Mekorot, its CEO Shimon Ben-Hamo predicted that "already by the start of 2014 Israel will have enough water to replenish 1.5 million cubic meters in missing reserves."² At the same time Israel and Mekorot are systematically depriving Palestinians - not only in the OPT - from their right to water and sanitation.³

Managing the Israeli water theft and apartheid in the OPT:

In 1982 the West Bank water infrastructure controlled by the Israeli army was handed over to Mekorot by a military order.

- Mekorot operates some 42 wells in the West Bank, mainly in the Jordan Valley region, which mostly supply the Israeli settlements.⁴ This allows Mekorot to profit from the settlements and the related human rights violations. Mekorot profits as well from the apartheid Wall and its wells now behind the Apartheid Wall, which bars Palestinians access to their own wells and allows Mekorot exclusive benefit of the underground water resources.
- Mekorot systematically discriminates against Palestinians: Palestinian consumption in the OPT is about 70 litres a day per person – well below the 100 litres per capita daily recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) – whereas Israeli daily per capita consumption, at about 300 litres, is about four times as much. In some rural communities Palestinians survive on far less than even the average 70 litres, in some cases barely 20 litres per day, the minimum amount recommended by the WHO for emergency situations response.⁵
- In recent years, Palestinians have bought some 50 MCM water per year. This water is extracted by Mekorot from the Mountain Aquifer and Palestinians should be able to extract for themselves if they were allowed to dig and maintain their own wells. Mekorot in this way profits from the overall system of human rights violations installed by the Israeli occupation.
- According to the World Bank, "The cost to the economy of foregone opportunity in irrigated agriculture is significant, with upper bound preliminary estimates that could be as high as 10% of GDP and 110,000 jobs."⁶

¹ LifeSource report 'Our Right to Water: The Human Right to Water in Palestine' (March 2012)

² <http://www.blueplanetproject.net/index.php/news-mekorot-may-purchase-greek-public-water-utilities/> ;
<http://www.blueplanetproject.net/documents/RTW/RTW-Palestine-1.pdf>

³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE15/027/2009/en/e9892ce4-7fba-469b-96b9-c1e1084c620c/mde150272009en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE15/027/2009/fr/e9892ce4-7fba-469b-96b9-c1e1084c620c/mde150272009en.pdf>

⁵ http://wedc.lboro.ac.uk/resources/who_notes/WHO_TN_09_How_much_water_is_needed.pdf

⁶ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/WaterRestrictionsReport18Apr2009.pdf> and
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/EconomicEffectsofRestrictedAccessstoLandintheWestBankOct.21.08.pdf>

Mekorot's participation in the systematic denial of access to water by Israeli authorities is therefore as well seriously violating Palestinian the right to work and development.

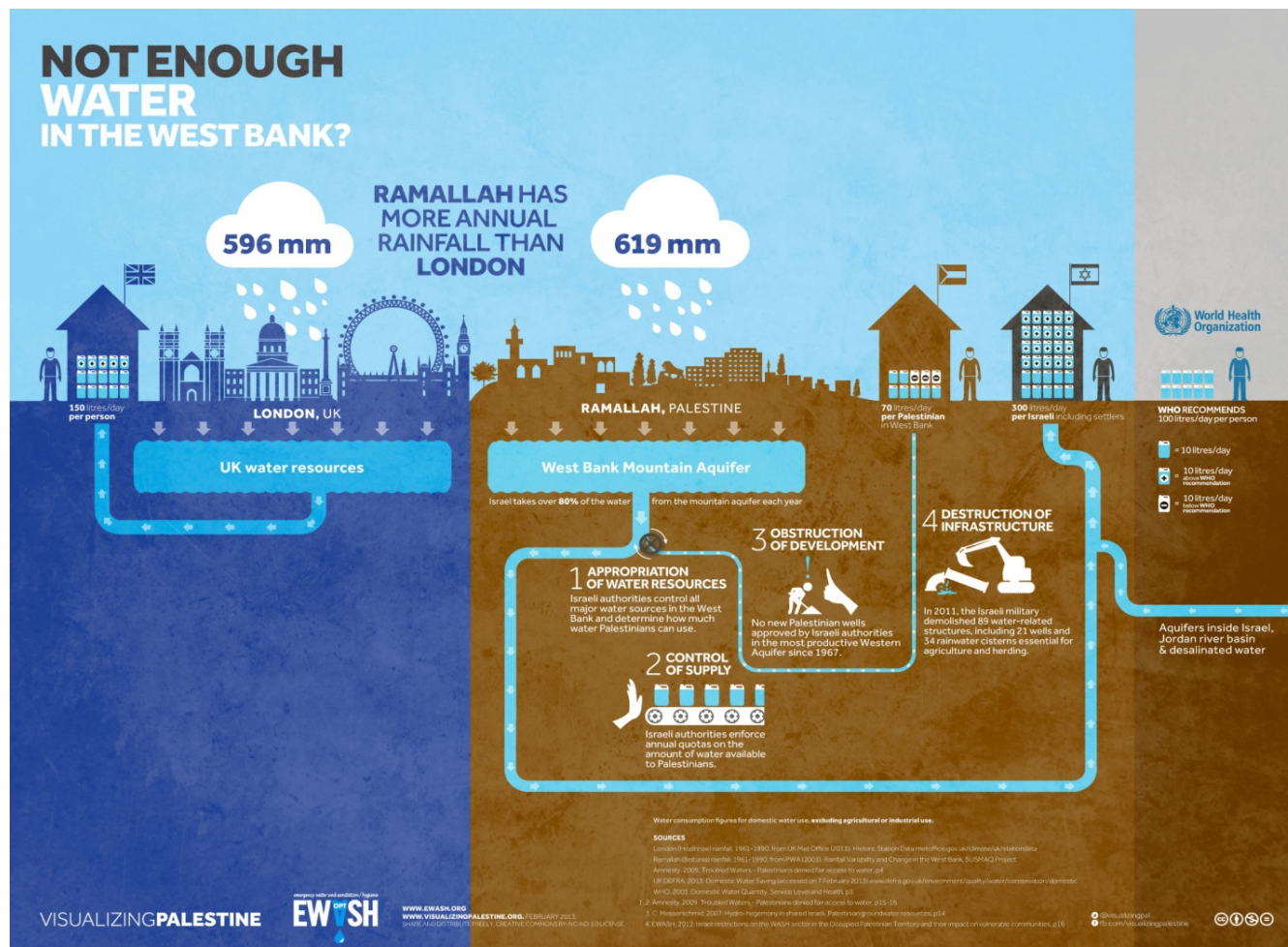


Image from: <http://visualizingpalestine.org/infographic/wb-water>

Where Mekorot Operates

Argentina: In 2010 “the Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires announced that a tender for the construction of a regional water treatment plant in La Plata would be awarded a consortium, of which Mekorot is a part”. The project is still ongoing despite the fact that “the deal with Mekorot will prove to be costly for Argentina. Water specialists have stated that the underground water resources in Buenos Aires are excellent and cheaper than the Mekorot project, which will drive the water bill of 225 thousands residents in La Plata, Berisso and Ensenada up by 33%.”⁷

Mekorot also has another project in Rio Negro.⁸

⁷ <http://www.stophthewall.org/2010/12/28/campaign-against-mekorot-launched-argentina>

⁸ <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/922281-que-pasa> and

http://www.bnamericas.com/news/waterandwaste/Israel's_Mekorot_eyes_desalination_plant_in_Rio_Negro



Australia: In 2006, both Perth Water and Sydney Water signed research agreements with Mekorot to share technical information. Koor Inter Trade in New South Wales is Mekorot's representative in Australia.⁹

Brazil: In 2009: "Mekorot Development and Initiations Ltd. has signed cooperation agreements with two Brazilian water companies - Companhia de Saneamento Basico of Sao Paulo State (Sabesp) (NYSE: SBS; Bovespa: SBSP3) and Companhia de Saneamento Ambiental do Distrito Federal (Caespb). Mekorot chairman Eli Ronen signed the agreements during his tour of South America, which is aimed at promoting collaboration and projects with local water companies." He also said: "These agreements strengthen Mekorot's global position as a leading water company, especially for arid regions that are dealing with water shortages and poor water quality. The new agreements will strengthen Mekorot's international activity and will help boost its revenue."¹⁰

Cyprus: In 2009 an agreement was signed between the Cyprus government and the Limassol consortium MN – Limassol Water Company (which consists of the Israeli company Mekorot Development and Enterprise Ltd and the Cypriot company Netcom Limited).¹¹ This was followed by a second agreement to construct another desalination plant in Larnaca so the project now supports two desalination plants and supplies almost half of Cyprus' drinking water.

Greece: In 2012: "Mekorot Israel National Water Co. is in informal discussions to purchase the Athens and Thessaloniki water and sewage companies... [and] several [other] Israeli firms are competing for the purchase of Greek state assets as the debt-stricken country pushes ahead with its world-record 50-billion-euro divestment program. ... Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund CEO Costas Mitropoulos revealed the above to reporters in Tel Aviv [last] Sunday, in between meetings with about 50 different potential Israeli investors."¹²

⁹ <http://indymedia.org.au/2009/08/08/australian-water-companies-link-to-israeli-company-stealing-west-bank-water>

¹⁰ <http://www.globes.co.il/serveen/globes/docview.asp?did=1000488219>

¹¹ <http://www.news.cyprus-property-buyers.com/2009/08/11/desalination-plant-at-episkopi/id=002173>

¹² <http://canadians.org/node/8400>

India: In 2012: Mekorot Development and Enterprise gained a contract to create a water control system and a metering system in Uttar Pradesh. The company was also reported to be bidding for contracts in West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.¹³

In 2009 Mekorot was involved in a joint venture with Jain Irrigation Systems.¹⁴

Portugal

South Africa

South Korea

Uganda: 2011: “Mekorot National Water Company will develop Uganda’s water infrastructures under an agreement signed with the government-owned National Water and Sewerage Corporation. Mekorot will ultimately build 11 dams and reservoirs to supply water to two million residents.”¹⁵



United States: 2009 Cleantech, Science and Technology report: “Now Mekorot’s expertise in water management, specifically in desalinating water, is on its way to south California. Ronen confirms that Mekorot has signed a MOU with Water Solutions Technologies (WST) of Fresno, California. The company’s activities in California will extend to water-poor areas such as Fresno in the San Joaquin Valley and other regions like it. [...]Ronen says that once government approval and investment are obtained, 10 to 50 small - to medium-sized desalination plants could be set up in California within 18 months. California has recently allocated some \$12 billion to improve its water sector and the Israeli company is looking forward to being part of the solution. In addition to desalination technologies and their implementation, Mekorot has expertise in reusing wastewater, cloud seeding and drilling deep wells.”¹⁶

In 2012, Mekorot also announced the opening of its first US office in Ohio.¹⁷

Research & Development and Investments

In 2004, Mekorot set up The Water Technologies Entrepreneurship Center (WaTech) to create new water technologies for the international market. It has created the following companies which further spread Mekorot’s influence across the globe:¹⁸

¹³ <http://www.indiawaterreview.in/Story/News/israels-mekorot-bags-major-water-project-in-uttar-pradesh/877/1#.UcwTItiKGSp>

¹⁴ <http://www.dnaindia.com/money/1150780/report-jain-ropes-in-mekorot-for-big-water-play>

¹⁵ <http://israeltech.org.za/2011/05/03/israel%E2%80%99s-mekorot-water-company-to-develop-ugandan-water-infrastructures/>

¹⁶ <http://www.greenprophet.com/2009/12/mekorot-california/>

¹⁷ <http://nocamels.com/2012/02/israeli-water-company-mekorot-to-open-u-s-office-in-ohio/>

Rotec: Grant from NATO for the development of plants in Israel and Jordan. “According to the terms of the project, three universities – Ben Gurion University in Beersheba, the Hashemite University of Jordan and the University of Colorado in the United States – are to implement a new Israeli reverse osmosis desalination technology at two pilot sites. Developed originally at Ben Gurion University by Dr. Jack Gilron of the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research and Prof. Eli Korin of the department of chemical engineering, a new six-person company called Rotec is commercializing the research and turning it into a product. The universities, as partners, will implement the new reverse osmosis Rotec technology at an existing water plant near Eilat run by Mekorot, Israel’s national water carrier. A second pilot site north of Amman in Al Zareqa could become a new water plant if the pilot goes well.”¹⁹

Aqwise: According to a 2009 press release, the company is focusing on work in China and India and already operates in the US, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and Asia Pacific.²⁰

Desalitech: In 2012, signed contract in the United States to supply irrigation water to a historic golf course in Massachusetts.²¹

Popular campaigns against contracts with Mekorot

Lisbon

The BDS campaign against Mekorot received support from three main political parties, two of the largest trade unions as well as from government and parliament members that were activists in the aforementioned campaign. This coalition concluded that an agreement with Mekorot is “an immoral agreement and should be terminated immediately”. <http://electronicintifada.net/content/portuguese-water-companys-immoral-collaboration-israel/8526>

Los Angeles

The United States grants 3 billion dollars in military assistance per year to the State of Israel and thousands more in indirect economic assistance. However, in 2008 the citizens of Los Angeles opposed the fact that the Los Angeles Department for Water and Power (LADWP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Mekorot. This campaign is still in force today.

<http://www.bds-la.org/>

Buenos Aires

An unclear contract and a rise in water rates by up to 33% for unnecessary work has mobilised trade unions and users. This campaign is still underway and so far, Mekorot has still not started the work that was intended to be in 2011.

<http://donficticio.piesnegros.org/files/2010/12/BUENOS-AIRES-Aguas-turbias-informe-Federpal.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.israelnewtech.com/2012/03/mekorot-making-waves-in-water-provision/>

¹⁹ <http://israel21c.org/environment/nato-aids-water-bridge-between-israel-jordan-and-the-us/>

²⁰ <http://www.aqwise.com/page.asp?cat=179&type=5&lang=1>

²¹ <http://desalitech.com/desalitech-wins-contract-to-supply-irrigation-water-for-a-historic-massachusetts-golf-course/>

Where it could be in the future

Mekorot clearly has a global standing and contracts and projects with many countries across the world. Do we really want a company that carries out institutional policies of apartheid and ethnic cleansing to hold such a global position as a leading water company?

Mekorot is clearly looking for markets where governments are privatizing or outsourcing water management at the expense of the human right to water of their own populations in order to finance its water apartheid and ethnic cleansing policies against the Palestinian people.

Part of Mekorot's purpose lies in building ties with other countries that may not be so connected to Israel. Currently it has few links with Arab countries, however, in one interview last year, it was stated that Mekorot does not rule out the possibility of working in countries like Qatar or Kuwait, which may suffer from water crises in the future.²²



Public and United Nations Institutions:

- Ziegler, Jean - Special Rapporteur on the right to food, report for the 60th session of the Human Rights Commission, October 2003
<http://www.righttofood.org/new/PDF/Occupied%20Palestinain.pdf>
- Sr. Miloon Kothari, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to adequate standard of living, report for the 59th session of the Human Rights Commission, June 2002
[http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/36351ea8a4425f1cc1256c84003e0c84/\\$FILE/G0214506.pdf](http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/36351ea8a4425f1cc1256c84003e0c84/$FILE/G0214506.pdf)
- Mission of the French Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee, Information Report, December 2011
<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/pdf/rap-info/i4070.pdf>

²² <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/07/us-israel-mekorot-idUSBRE8560HA20120607>

International and Palestinian Organizations:

- Amnesty International, Troubled Waters: Palestinians denied fair access to water, 2009, http://www.amnesty.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_19771.pdf
- Human Rights Watch: Separate and Unequal Israel's Discriminatory Treatment of Palestinians the Occupied Palestinian Territories, 2010, http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/iopt1210webwcover_0.pdf
- EWASH (almost 30 international and national NGOs and UN Agencies that operate in the Palestinian occupied territories) and al Haq: Joint Parallel Report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, September 2011: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/ngos/EWASH-Al-Haq_Israel_CESCR47.pdf
- ADALAH: Report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights "The Rights of Palestinian Arab Citizens of Israel", October 2010, <http://alturl.com/8xbdb>
- COHRE, Policies of denial: Lack of access to water in the West Bank, December 2008 http://www.cohre.org/sites/default/files/policies_of_denial_-_water_in_the_west_bank_dec_2008.pdf