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Title: **Mideast Water Crisis Brings misery and uncertainty**
Source: **NPR**
Issued: **7 January 2010**

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122294630> (last seen on 24 March 2010)

The Middle East is facing its worst water crisis in decades. For three summers, the annual rains have failed to come. Farmland has dried up across the region in Iraq, Syria, southeast Turkey and Lebanon.

While oil was the resource that defined the last century, water and its scarcity may define this one.

Experts say the climate is warming in the Fertile Crescent, the area of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, contributing to the water shortage and helping to create a new phenomenon — water refugees.

This winter, rain has barely settled into the hard, cracked farmland in northern Syria. There was a time when the fields were green most of the year, but the summer droughts have taken a toll. Farther east is the Badia, a vast rangeland, where thousands of people tend herds of sheep.

Addami is a traditional village where the houses are white domes of baked clay. This summer, Addami was completely abandoned during the driest months.

"There was no water and too much sand," says villager Nofa Hamid, 51, who has been tending sheep since she was a child. "It got into everything, even the kitchen."

"It was crazy; the sand was everywhere this summer," she says.

Life has never been easy in Addami. But Ismar Mohammed, a 43-year-old shepherd wrapped in a black wool robe against the cold, says he was wealthy by local standards as the owner of the area's largest herd.

He had to drive his flock more than 150 miles for water. With no luck and no grass, he had to buy feed for his 275 sheep, and that meant he had to sell some of them to feed the rest.

"No question, I had to do this otherwise they would die, and I had to feed my kids. Before the drought, I used to have 400 head," he says.



"No question, we were doing fine, just except for this drought, which is affecting us very badly," he says."

'Perfect Storm' Creates Water Refugees

More than 160 villages are abandoned now in Syria alone. According to a United Nations report on the drought, 800,000 people have lost their livelihood. Hundreds of thousands left once-fertile land that turned to dust and pitched tents near the big cities, looking for any kind of work.

"It's an emergency," says Syrian economist Nabil Sukkar. "If we have two more years of drought, then we do ... have a crisis."

Formerly with the World Bank, Sukkar now heads a private consulting firm for development and investment. He has been researching the emergency, including its economic and social costs.

"I've gone out and I saw some people in the tents. I told them, 'From where you are coming? How do you manage?' They said, 'We find short-term work,' but this is not sustainable," he says.

The mass migration to the cities has created a new community of displaced people across Syria and Iraq.

"Water scarcity is forcing people off the land," says Hussein Amery, an expert on Middle East water management and a professor at the Colorado School of Mines.

He says the policy failures that have made the emergency worse. "Therefore, these refugees are very much water refugees, they are a product of water scarcity in the region," Amery says.

He says the water crisis has been building for years.

"The water refugees are a product of climate change, mismanaged water resources. It's a product of population explosion; it's a lot of things. It's a perfect storm that is wreaking havoc in the rural farming sector of Syria and Iraq," he says.

Changing History of Outdated Techniques, Waste

Due east of the Syrian capital, Damascus, is the city of Palmyra, a popular tourist destination. The city's ancient Roman ruins are a draw for Japanese tourists — and a livelihood for the locals.



Palmyra, hit hard by the drought, is also the headquarters for the Syrian government response. Emergency measures include food aid for families and low-cost loans for farmers.

At the government office for development, Mohsan Nahas says Palmyra is experimenting with new water-saving techniques.

"I have talked about the oasis we've been setting up. That's being done with drip irrigation," he says.

Nahas offers visitors a slideshow to illustrate what he is up against — a dust storm so large it could be seen from space on Google Earth. Conditions on the ground were intolerable: Sand blew into houses, mixing with food and affecting people's eyesight.

With the widespread drought, a food crisis is looming. For the first time, Syria now has to import wheat.

Sukkar, the economist, says things won't get better unless the country changes a history of wasteful water management and outdated farming techniques.

"Unfortunately, we haven't introduced modern technology, and so we are dependent on rainfall, period," he says.

Politics, Not Climate, At Root of Problem

But rainfall, or lack of it, is not the only culprit, he says. Syria and Iraq blame Turkey's huge network of dams on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for reducing water supplies by 50 percent.

Turkey is the site of the headwaters of a river system that Syria and Iraq depend on. An informal agreement determines the flow downstream.

"When we had bad relations with Turkey, they reduced the flow of water despite the agreement, and now, thank God, we have excellent relations with Turkey, and hopefully, we will not see any cutoff of water," Sukkar says.

Turkey says there is enough water for everyone, but Syria and Iraq waste their share. Amery, the water expert, says the Turks are partly right.

"The issue is water but it goes far beyond water," he says.



Amery says the key to head off a water crisis is more efficient management of a scarce resource. But he adds politics, not climate, is the problem.

"A lot of Arabs believe that Turkey is trying to assert itself as a regional superpower," he says, "and water is being used as a tool to advance that interest."



Title: Kuwait 2nd biggest investor in Syria
Source: Nam New Network
Issued: 24 January 2010

<http://www.namnewsnetwork.org/v2/read.php?id=108352> (last seen on 24 March 2010)

A Syrian economic report on Arab and foreign investments from 1991-2008 showed Saturday that Kuwait came in second position among Arabs with the first place belonging to Iraqi investments, which also topped overall investments, while Lebanon and Saudi Arabia came in third and fourth respectively.

The report issued by the Syrian Investment Authority revealed that Iraqi investment projects within the specific period were at 40 while Kuwait had 32 projects, Lebanon with 25 projects, and Saudi Arabia with 24 projects.

In terms on volume, Saudi Arabia continued to dominate the charts on the Arab level with Syrian Pound (SYP) 103 billion, said the report. SYP one equals USD 0.02.

The report also indicated that the amount of foreign capital in Syria reached USD 900 million after it did not exceeded more than USD 180 million in 2003.

Finance projects saw an increase of 31 percent since 2008 with the number of projects reaching 273 projects with around SYP 210 billion pumped into in the projects.

Turkey topped investments which benefited from encouragement law with 41 projects worth SYP 18 billion. Kuwait had three projects in this category and the volume was at SYP 377 million.

Also Turkey topped foreign investors with 35 projects worth SYP 27 billion followed by Germany with 13 projects worth SYP 65.7 billion and the Iranian Investments in third with eight projects worth SYP 25.6 billion.

Title: Syria and Japan signed minutes of meeting of the Information Center of Water Resources Project in Syria

Source: Syria News

Issued: 17 February 2010

http://www.syria-news.com/readnews.php?sy_seq=109788 (last seen on 24 March 2010)

وقعت هيئة تخطيط الدولة ووكالة جاياكا اليابانية يوم الثلاثاء على محضر التفاهم حول المرحلة الثانية من مشروع مركز معلومات مصادر المياه في سورية، والذي ستقوم بتنفيذه الهيئة العامة للموارد المائية وهيئة تخطيط الدولة والوكالة اليابانية للتعاون الدولي (جاياكا). ويتضمن المحضر إنشاء مراكز معلومات للموارد المائية في حوض البادية في محافظات حمص و حماة والرقفة والسويداء وتزويدها بالتجهيزات اللازمة للرصد المناخي والسطحي والجوفي وتجهيزات حاسوبية وربط هذه المراكز مع المركز الرئيسي لتبادل المعلومات وإقامة دورات تدريبية لرفع كفاءة العاملين في تلك المراكز وإمداد المركز بالبرامج المتطورة في معالجة البيانات وتحليلها.

كما ستشمل المرحلة الثانية تغطية حوض البادية بالإضافة إلى حوضي بردى والأعوج والساحل. وقال المدير العام للهيئة العامة للموارد المائية حسين مخلوف عقب التوقيع على المحضر إن "المشروع من اكبر مشاريع المنح المقدمة من جانب جاياكا في المنطقة وهو يدل على أهميته وعلى التقييم الناجح للمراحل السابقة للمشروع ويشكل حافزا لنا لتطوير عملنا". وستبدأ المرحلة الثانية للمشروع في أيار المقبل بإيفاد عدد من الخبراء من مختلف التخصصات للعمل مع نظرائهم في الهيئة العامة للموارد المائية.

من جهتها، قالت رئيس البعثة الموفدة من مكتب جاياكا الرئيسي في اليابان هيروشي شيراكاوا إن "المرحلة الثانية من المشروع تركز على استخدام نتاج نجاح المرحلة الأولى وبشكل يضمن استخدام وإدارة المعلومات التي تجمع عن الأحواض المائية بالشكل الأفضل". وركز المشروع في مرحلته الأولى، الذي بدأ في عام 2002، على إنشاء مركز رئيسي لمعلومات الموارد المائية في دمشق واثنين من المراكز الأخرى التابعة له في كل من حوض بردى والأعوج وحوض الساحل". ويأتي التوقيع على محضر التفاهم حول مشروع مركز معلومات مصادر المياه في سورية، بعد أسبوع على توقيع محضر الاجتماع الخاص بمشروع بناء وتطوير القدرات في مجال نماذج التوازن العام الذي سيتم تنفيذه من قبل الوكالة اليابانية للتعاون الدولي "جاياكا"، بالتعاون مع هيئة تخطيط الدولة والمكتب المركزي والإحصاء.

يشار إلى أن وكالة جاياكا اليابانية تتعاون مع الحكومة السورية في عدد من المشاريع منها وضع المخطط الإقليمي لمشروع دمشق الكبرى لتنمية منطقة دمشق وريفها في مجالات العمران والتنظيم العمراني والنقل ومشاريع المياه واستعمالاتها والأنشطة الاقتصادية حتى العام 2025، إضافة إلى إطلاق مشروع تطوير القدرات في المراقبة البيئية في مجالي المياه والهواء تحت إدارة الهيئة العامة لشؤون البيئة.



Title: Syria and Japan signed minutes of meeting of the Information Center of Water Resources Project in Syria
Source: Syria News
Issued: 17 February 2010

State Planning Commission and JICA Signed on Tuesday minutes of meeting of the second phase of Information Center of Water Resources Project in Syria which will be implemented by General Commission for Water Resources, State Planning Commission and JICA.

Minutes of meeting includes creating information centers for water resources in Al Badia basin in Homs, Hama , Raqa and Sweida and providing computers and the necessary equipments for climate, surface and underground monitoring and connecting these centers with the main center to exchange information and having training sessions to enhance the efficiency of the staff and providing the center with advanced programs to process and analyze data. Also the second phase will include coverage of Al Badia, Barada , Al Awaj and Coast Basins.

The General Director of General Commission for Water Resources Mr. Hussein Makhoulf said "this project is one of the biggest grants provided by JICA in the region which indicates the importance and the successful evaluation of the previous phase of the project and it is incentive to develop our work."

The second phase will begin in May by sending number of Experts in various fields to work with counterparts in the General Commission for Water Resources.



Title: Syria plans to increase public investment in next five - year plan
Source: Istockanalyst
Issued: 23 February 2010

<http://www.istockanalyst.com/article/viewiStockNews/articleid/3887289> (last seen on 1 April 2010)

Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mr. Abdullah al-Dardari said the country's next five-year plan will see a significant increase in public expenditure, the official SANA news agency reported on Tuesday.

The senior economic official affirmed on Monday that Syria will increase public investment , particularly focusing on infrastructure constructions and energy security in its 11th Five- Year plan, compared with the 10th plan.

He made the remarks at the opening ceremony of a branch of the Syrian Investment Commission in Suweida governorate.

"We have signed several contracts worth of 5 billion U.S. dollars to produce 5000 MW of electric power by the end of 2013, increasing the generation of electric power in Syria during the next five years to 70 percent." the news agency quoted Dardari as saying.

The Ministry of Electricity earlier announced its plans to build new plants and accessories, which includes upgrade power stations and connecting lines, in addition to work on reducing wastage in the electricity transfer networks.

The demand for electric power in Syria increased for more than 20 percent during past three months, while the consumption of electricity in 2009 to 43.7 billion KWH and will rise in 2015 to 61 billion as the ministry estimated.

According to the earlier official reports, Syria's next Five- Year plan will be ready by next March, which is planned to achieve a growth rate of up to 8 percent and an unemployment rate of 4 percent in the next few years.

According to Dardari, the plan will also focus on health and education sectors to meet the growing needs of Syrian people.

He said it will also encourage local talent who are capable of managing projects to achieve partnership between government and investors and creating comfortable investment climate, which he believe will provide more job opportunities and increase incomes for the Syrian people.



Title: Syria and Kuwaiti Fund Signed Agreement to Expand Damascus Water Network
Source: Sana
Issued: 9 March 2010

On Tuesday, Syria and Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed an agreement to provide Syria with a loan to rehabilitate and expand Damascus potable water network.

The amount of the loan, signed in the State Planning Commission, is 15 million Kuwaiti Dinars (51 million U.S Dollars). The project is expected to meet Damascus and its suburbs needs from potable water till 2022. It will also improve the effectiveness of the network and decrease lost water.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Mohammed Najji Otri reviewed with the KFAED Director General Abdul Wahab Al-Bader prospects of developing the existing cooperation relations between the two brotherly countries in various areas.

Emphasis was put on the Kuwaiti bank's role and contribution in supporting and financing development projects in Syria, particularly electric power, irrigation and agriculture and drinking water projects, including irrigation project of the Tigris River in Hasaka province and dragging the Euphrates water to the central region.

Title: Damascus water festival to raise water consumption awareness
Source: Baladna
Issued: 23 March 2010

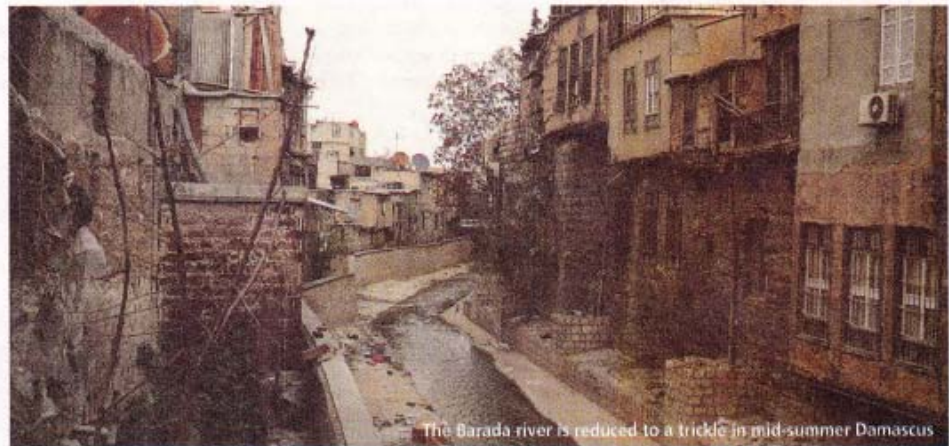
Damascus water festival to raise water consumption awareness

The Damascus Water Establishment yesterday launched the Damascus Water Festival activities, which will last for one month.

AHMAD AL TAYEP, BALADNA
Festival activities will focus on reducing water consumption and increase public awareness of water shortages amongst water consumers in Damascus and the Damascus countryside.

The festival is an initiative of the Syrian Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction, the Damascus Water Establishment, the Water Engineers Association and the German Development Service, in addition to others.

Mofak Khallouf, the general director of the Damascus Water Establishment said: "We aim to raise awareness among people and show them the importance of water in our daily life; the huge



progress the Syrian population has made in water rationalisation and the urgent need for water in ensuring life."

"We are working with our partners in Syria to assure good water resources," he said. "Water protection is everyone's responsibility; we

should change our daily consuming water habits to keep our limited water resources available for future use."

"We have adopted new strategies for the future to assure sustainable water development of our water resources through environ-

mental protection and maintain the Damascus groundwater basin," he said.

The festival will run 20 events and activities during the month, adopting the motto "We are all partners in the water rationalisation campaign."