



Getting the Facts Right: Correcting inaccuracies in COGAT's factsheet "Water in the West Bank"

Intended to window dress over four decades of military occupation and Israel's systematic denial of Palestinian water rights, COGAT's recent factsheet entitled "Water in the West Bank" is riddled with factual inaccuracies and false claims. This table juxtaposes some of these inaccuracies against the facts.

COGAT claims that	In actual reality
2 million Palestinians reside in the West Bank	2.58 million Palestinians reside in the West Bank. ¹ This discrepancy alone throws into doubt all of COGAT's statistics.
Palestinians are entitled to extract 196 MCM/y of water under Article 40 (Oslo II), with an additional 31 MCM/y to be supplied by Israel.	The total water quantity allocated to Palestinians under Article 40 is 118 MCM/y, with an extra 28.6 MCM to be supplied by Israel in addition to the quantity of water supplied to Palestinians at the time of signing the interim agreement. ²

¹Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2011, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, December 2011

² See full text of Article 40, retrievable at: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/THE+ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN+INTERIM+AGREEMENT++Annex+III.htm#app-40>



<p>Palestinians have access to a total of over 248 MCM/y of fresh water in the West Bank. This includes an additional 21MCM Israel supplies above and beyond its Oslo obligations.</p>	<p>Palestinians have access to little over 150 MCM/y of fresh water in the West Bank. This figure comprises 98 MCM/y that Palestinians extract from natural resources (wells and springs), and an additional 52 MCM/y that Palestinians are forced to purchase from the Israeli water company <i>Mekorot</i> due to ongoing Israeli restrictions on the development of Palestinian water infrastructure, including wells.³</p>
<p>The per capita average for Palestinian water consumption is 124 m³/y.</p>	<p>The per capita average for Palestinian water consumption in the West Bank is 58m³/y.⁴</p>
<p>In violation of the Interim Agreement, Palestinians illegally extract approximately 17MCM/y via unapproved wells located in the Northern and Western Basins</p>	<p>Israel's refusal to permit the construction of new Palestinian wells that are urgently needed, as well as its refusal to allow for the rehabilitation of old wells which have dried up as a result of Israel's over pumping of the shared Mountain aquifer leaves some Palestinians with no choice but to drill wells without a permit. The total amount of water extracted from unapproved wells however, remains small, and is no more that 3 MCM/y. Most of these wells were drilled after 2000, and are shallow (tapping the Eocene aquifer of the Northeastern Basin). None</p>

³ *Water Supply Report 2010*, Palestinian Water Authority, March 2012, p.81

⁴ This figure is derived at by dividing 150 MCM (total freshwater available in the West Bank) by the number of Palestinians living in the West Bank (2.58 million).



	<p>are located in the Western Basin. In contrast, licensed Palestinian wells that have dried up as a result of Israeli over-pumping, and which Israel refuses to allow for rehabilitation, used to produce 4 MCM/y.</p>
<p>Israel only uses the amount of fresh water allocated to it under the Interim agreement, and does not tap into Palestinian allocation.</p>	<p>Israel extracts much more water from the mountain aquifer than the amount allocated to it under the Interim Agreement, and far in excess of the aquifer's sustainable yield. This includes 50 MCM/y that Israel extracts from the Eastern Basin (its allocation is 40MCM/y), and at least 410 MCM/y from the Western Basin (its allocation is 320 MCM/y). In 1999, the World Bank put Israeli extraction from the Western Basin as high as 591.6 MCM/y.⁵</p>
<p>Palestinians face no difficulties in drilling new wells, while the procedure for applying for a permit to drill a new well is the same for Israelis and Palestinians. For wells located in Area C, 99% of all requests receive Israeli Civil Administration approval.</p>	<p>Area C is part of the occupied West Bank, and Israeli water projects located there are intended to service Israeli settlements, which are illegal under international law. As such, there is no equivalence between Palestinian water projects and settlement water projects in Area C. Despite this, Israel makes it virtually impossible for Palestinians to receive a permit to drill new wells, or rehabilitate old wells. At present, 32 PWA well applications are awaiting JWC and/or ICA approval, with some</p>

⁵ *Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development*, World Bank, April 2009, p. 11.



	<p>of these applications dating as far back as 1999. Since 1967 not a single new well has been approved by Israel in the Western Aquifer. Even with JWC approval, wells located in Area C must also receive ICA approval.⁶ Israel does not submit water projects located in illegal settlements for JWC approval.</p>
<p>Israel's policy of demolishing unapproved Palestinian wells is justified on the basis that it enforces the provisions of the Interim Agreement, and protects the main natural water resources from over-pumping.</p>	<p>Palestinians do not utilize the full quota of water allocated to them under the Interim Agreement even when unapproved wells are included.⁷ In contrast, the greatest threat to our shared natural water resources is Israel's continued over-pumping of the mountain aquifer far in excess of its allowed quota under the Interim Agreement. Israel continues to violate the Interim Agreement, and imperil our shared freshwater resources, while its policy of demolishing essential Palestinian water infrastructure is without justification. This is especially the case given the large number of projects Israel has implemented without JWC approval, the most recent example of which is the Wastewater Treatment Plant in Nabi Musa.</p>
<p>Israel does not need to control the West Bank in order to access the underground aquifer.</p>	<p>The mountain aquifer emerges and is recharged from within the West Bank. As the downstream riparian, Israel limits</p>

⁶ For some of the obstacles Palestinians face in receiving ICA permits, see the PWA's "Brief on ICA Trends

⁷ *Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development*, World Bank, 2009, p. v



	<p>Palestinian access to the aquifer in the West Bank in order to preserve its near exclusive utilization of the aquifer. In particular, <i>Mekorot</i> maintains a number of wells in the West Bank while the route of Israel's illegal Wall de facto annexes those parts of the West Bank where water extraction is the easiest.⁸</p>
<p>Palestinian water theft through illegal connections to Israeli water infrastructure (and collateral damage resulting in water spillage) continues in breach the Interim Agreement.</p>	<p>Notwithstanding Israel's serial breaches of the Interim Agreement noted above, all illegal Palestinian connections are occur in Area C, over which Israel retains full civil and security control. The PWA has no jurisdiction in this area. Despite this, <i>Mekorot</i> still includes the cost of the water lost through illegal connections in its monthly bills as amounts sold to the Palestinian Authority.</p>
<p>Untreated Palestinian sewage in the West Bank is endangering the underground aquifer and surrounding environment. 17 MCM of this sewerage flows into Israel, which Israel is compelled to treat.</p>	<p>Over the past two decades, Israel has deliberately hindered the development of Palestinian wastewater and sanitation facilities. Of the 30 Palestinian wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) projects submitted to the JWC since 1995, only 4 received approval. Even then, not all received subsequent ICA approval. Israel has exploited the resultant lack of Palestinian WWTP's, and unilaterally deducted over US\$40 million from Palestinian</p>

⁸ *Troubled Waters: Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water*, Amnesty International, 2009, pp. 52-58



	tax revenues since 1996 for the construction and maintenance of WWTP's in Israel that treat Palestinian sewage. Many illegal Israeli settlements continue to dump raw sewage directly in the surrounding environment. ⁹
Israel does not sell water to Palestinians at inflated prices. The PWA purchases water at a cheaper price (2.6 NIS per cubic meter) than Israeli municipalities (3.86 per cubic meter).	Palestinians must purchase water at higher bulk prices than Israeli providers. The discrepancy in price for individual purchases relates to differences in cost recovery.
Israeli settlers do not get more water than Palestinians.	Israel's discriminatory water policies and practices continue to result in enormous discrepancy between Palestinian and Israeli water use. ¹⁰ This extends to water use by Israeli settlers. According to B'Tselem, just over 9000 Israeli settlers living in the Jordan valley consume the equivalent of one-third of the entire amount of water made available to all 2.5 million Palestinians living in the West Bank. ¹¹
Of 66 domestic Palestinian wells approved by the JWC, 24 have	All of the 24 wells in the Eastern Basin that received JWC

⁹ *Foul Play: Neglect of Wastewater Treatment in the West Bank*, B'Tselem, 2009, p. 7. Almost 40% of all sewage flowing in the West Bank originates from Israeli settlements and both East and West Jerusalem

¹⁰ Israeli restrictions limit domestic water consumption among Palestinians to an average of **just 70 litres of water per capita per day**. This is less than the World Health Organization's recommended minimum standard of 100 litres per capita per day and far below the average of 300 litres per capita per day that Israelis enjoy.

¹¹ *Dispossession and Exploitation: Israel's Policy in the Jordan Valley and Northern Dead Sea*, B'Tselem, May 2011.



<p>not yet been built – despite the fact that all 24 wells hold the appropriate Civil Administration permit.</p>	<p>approval were located in areas characterized by very low groundwater potentiality. Their locations were chosen by Israel, which has refused to approve alternative sites. Since 1999, the PWA has submitted more than 5 applications to drill deep production wells in the Northeastern Basin. Only two of these applications have received Israeli approval subject to severe restrictions on their locations, depths and proposed extraction rates.</p>
<p>The average amount of fresh natural renewable water available in the area covering Israel and the West Bank, (but not including Gaza) is 1433 MCM. This figure does not fluctuate much.</p>	<p>The average amount of fresh natural renewable water available in the area covering Israel and the West Bank is more than 2400 MCM/year. The long term annual average of the Jordan River tributaries alone is 1030 MCM/year.¹² The groundwater aquifers in Carmel, Gallilee and Tiberias, as well as the three shared aquifers produce more than 1400 MCM/y.¹³ Hence there is about 1000 MCM/year missing in COGAT’s report.</p>

¹² *Water Resources in Palestine*, PWA, 2010

¹³ *Ibid.*