

Mekorot's involvement in the Israeli occupation

Mekorot is the national water company of Israel, which supplies 90% of Israel's drinking water and provides 80% of its water supplies. The company is state-owned.

Mekorot not only operates within Israel's internationally recognized pre-1967 borders (i.e. within the Green Line), but also in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). It is the Israeli government's executive arm in the OPT for water issues. In East Jerusalem and other parts of the occupied West Bank, Mekorot supplies water to the settlements. It also supplies a substantial share of the water consumed by Palestinians, who are prevented from developing their own water sector.

As a result, Mekorot is actively involved in conducting and maintaining the Israeli occupation. Below follows an overview of the main manifestations of this involvement.

1. Mekorot profits from Israeli control over a Palestinian captive market under occupation

The company supplies almost half the domestic water consumed by Palestinian communities in the West Bank, making it the largest single water supplier in the OPT. Mekorot's control over the Palestinian water market was formalized and legitimated by the Oslo Accords, which obliged the Palestinian Authority (PA) to purchase water excavated from Palestinian land from the Israeli company. The Oslo Accords prevent the Palestinians from developing their own water and sanitation sector and erase the possibility of purchasing water from neighboring countries or international corporations. This imposed a state of dependency on the Palestinians, which Mekorot profits from.

2. Mekorot exploits Palestinian water sources, supplies the settlements and transfers Palestinian water across the Green Line

In 1982 the West Bank water infrastructure controlled by the Israeli army was handed over to Mekorot for the symbolic amount of 1 NIS. Ever since, the company functions as the Israeli government's executive arm for water issues in the OPT and runs a water network that is linked with the Israeli national network. Under the Oslo Accords the company may extract up to 80% of the Mountain Aquifer's water, the only source of underground water in the OPT, for use within Israel proper and in Israeli settlement across the West Bank.

3. Seventy percent of the water allocated to settlements in the occupied Jordan Valley originates in Mekorot drillings

The company is the major and in many cases the sole supplier of water for household and agricultural use in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, in particular in the Jordan Valley. Mekorot also manages the water supply to the Israeli military bases in the OPT.

4. Mekorot enables extensive agricultural production in illegal Israeli settlements

In 2008, 97.5 percent of the water supplied to the settlements in the Jordan Valley was designated for agricultural use. Intensive agricultural production in illegal Israeli settlements depends on the use of water and other natural resources from occupied Palestinian land. The establishment of water facilities by Mekorot enabled the extensive development of Israeli agriculture in the OPT and contributes to the profits made by settlements and settlers from crops and agricultural export.

5. Mekorot provides much more water to settlements than to Palestinian communities

Israeli per capita water consumption is more than five times higher than that of West Bank Palestinians: 350 liters per person per day in Israel and more than 400 liters per person per day in the settlements, compared to 60 liters per Palestinian per day in the West Bank.

This huge disparity can be illustrated by comparing the situation between adjacent communities. The daily per capita allocation in the Ro'i settlement (for household use only) is around 400 liters. In the nearby Bedouin community of Al-Hadidya, the per capita water consumption is less than 5 percent of this figure: only 20 liters (standard of World Health Organization (WHO): 100 liter per capita per day). Al-Hadidya is not connected to regular water supply, despite its proximity to a major pumping facility of Mekorot (Beka'ot 2). This unequal distribution of water between settlers and Palestinian communities actively contributes to the severe water crisis in parts of the West Bank.

6. To service settlers, Mekorot restricts water supplies to Palestinian communities

Particularly in the dry summer months, Mekorot reduces or temporarily cuts-off supplies to Palestinian communities while Israeli settlers next door continue to be supplied with unrestricted amounts of water. Some 230,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) enjoy a continuous flow of water all year long. In addition, Mekorot pipes connecting Palestinian communities are of smaller diameter, reducing the water flow and pressure, as opposed to adequately sized ones for Israeli settlements.

7. Mekorot applies discriminatory water prices, charging Palestinians higher rates than Israelis

The basic price that Mekorot charges settlers and customers in Israel is NIS 1.8 per cubic metre water, compared to an average of NIS 2.5 per cubic metre for Palestinians.

8. Mekorot's extensive pumping is reducing the water quantity in Palestinian springs and wells

Mekorot's over-extraction in the OPT has reduced the Mountain Aquifer's current yield and future reserves and has caused potentially serious damage to the quality of the water supply for both Israelis and Palestinians. Excess extraction also resulted in a sharp drop in water quantity in Palestinian springs of the Jordan Valley.

9. Mekorot's policy and operations ignore the Green Line

As part of the information provided to the public, Mekorot presents a map on its [website](#) of the National Water System, which shows all of the company enterprises. The Green Line is missing on this map, which reveals that Mekorot treats Israel and the OPT as one single territory.

Palestinian communities in the OPT are also missing on Mekorot's map, with only two exceptions (Ramallah and Bethlehem).

In sum, Mekorot develops and maintains a water system, which strengthens Israeli control over the West Bank, favors settlers and ignores the basic needs and even mere presence of the local Palestinian population.

