



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة
لفلسطين
لدى الأمم المتحدة

Statement of Mr. Ammar Hiazi, Second Secretary of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations to the Thirteenth Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you on your election and efforts thus far in chairing the 13th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development effectively. I would like to also thank you for giving us this opportunity to discuss issues of concern to Palestine with regards to the water, sanitation, and human settlements.

Mr. Chairman,

Palestine shares the concerns and problems that most developing nations have with regards to water, sanitation, and human settlements. At the same time, Palestine confronts other problems unique to its situation as a country still shackled by the chains of foreign occupation.

Mr. Chairman,

The Middle East region is known for the scarcity of water and water disputes. Though this shortage is caused by nature and not man-made, it is compounded by the lack of cooperation and sometimes hegemony of one party's rights and access over the others'.

Due to the hegemony of Israel, the Occupying Power, over the water resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Palestinians are only allocated 120 million cubic meters of freshwater out of the 850 million cubic meters water aquifers in the occupied West Bank produce. Consequently, the current domestic water supply for Palestinian households only amounts to between 57 and 76 liters per day, which is significantly lower than the World Health Organization's minimum for domestic water consumption. And due to the destruction of water networks and the continued siege of Palestinian villages and cities, Palestinian households now pay 12% more of their household income on water, bringing into question their very ability to access fresh water... After all, the first requirement of accessibility is affordability and this requirement, in many cases now in The Occupied Palestinian Territory, is not met.

Mr. Chairman,

In its review of the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory for 2004, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory reported that because of the continued Israeli military assaults on Palestinian cities and villages, "the erosion of water and sanitation infrastructure... risks contamination of ground and surface water through salinity, nitrates" and other contaminants. In Nablus, an alarming increase in bacteriological contamination. of piped water has been found as the measured contamination rate has reached 59 percent.

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When it comes to contamination though, there is no greater source of environmental devastation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, than the illegal Israeli settlements and the approximately 200 Israeli factories they host. These factories produce toxins such as lead, Zinc, aluminum, and Cadmium others, which devastate the land, agriculture, and underground water in the area.

Also contributing to the water crisis in The Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Mr. Chairman is the construction of the Wall in the West Bank by Israel, the Occupying Power, which it continues to erect it despite the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice in July 2004, which found it illegal and called for its dismantlement. During the first phase of its construction, Israel, the Occupying Power, confiscated 200 cisterns and 36 groundwater wells while threatening at least 14 others that lie in the Wall's so-called buffer zone with demolition. In fact, given its planned route, the Wall threatens the confiscation of the West Bank's richest water sources, including the rich Western aquifer, leaving Palestinians literally thirsty. Logically, these confiscations and demolitions only compound the already grave water situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, .

Mr. Chairman,

In the past four years, over 63,000 Palestinian homes have been completely or partially destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are now homeless after their entire neighborhoods were turned to dust by Israeli bulldozers. In this regard, the Palestinian Authority is working in close cooperation with UN-HABITAT to implement the agency's Special Human Settlements Program for the Palestinian People.

Human settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, have also literally hit a Wall, Israel's West Bank Wall that is. Salfit, known as the "food basket" of the West Bank will lose more than 70% of its land to the Wall once completed. This situation naturally hampers all efforts for growth, development, or simple economic survival.

While the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, seems bleak, the Palestinian Authority continues to extend its hand in peace and cooperation with the goal of improving the lives and future of our children and those of our neighbors. The problems I have discussed today have far-reaching effects and they not only violate the Palestinians' basic rights, they threaten the very prospects of peace and development.

Together with the generous international community, the Palestinian Authority looks forward to working tirelessly on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the water and sewage infrastructure as well as the destroyed homes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. These efforts are essential in enabling Palestine to be an active player in turning the goals we have discussed this session into reality for Palestinians and others in the region.

Finally Mr. Chairman, in order for cooperation in the region to exist in the water and other sectors, occupation and hegemony must first come to end. Cooperation can only flourish and yield positive results when no one party enjoys the benefits of a scarce resource to the detriment of another. The Middle East, Mr. Chairman, is thirsty for solutions that are sustainable and built on good-faith rather than military might.

Thank you