



# ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

Weekly Bulletin by ORSAM Water Research Programme

Events-News-Politics-Projects-Environment-ClimateChange-Neighbourhoods-Cooperation-Disputes-Scarcity and more



ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

23 June – 29 June 2014

- ❖ **Iraq: Tribal forces brace for ISIS advance on Haditha Dam**
- ❖ **Iraq conflict: Insurgents capture 3 more towns, move on key dam**
- ❖ **Militants pushing toward key Iraq dam**
- ❖ **Sunni fighters march toward key dam**
- ❖ **Clergy members advise Iran on water shortages**
- ❖ **Drinking water shortage in Iran's East Azerbaijan Province at critical level**
- ❖ **Minister: Energy Ministry invests in Persian Gulf water transfer to C. Iran**
- ❖ **Iran, UN Discuss Cooperation in Rehabilitation of 3rd Largest Saltwater Lake on Earth**
- ❖ **Iran seeks UN experience for Lake Urmia revival**
- ❖ **Aleppo's water crisis adds to local suffering**
- ❖ **Water Scarcity May Spark Geopolitical Conflicts: Council**
- ❖ **Ramadan spirit is alive in clean water Project**
- ❖ **Israel's National Water Carrier: both boom and bane**
- ❖ **Israel treads water to avoid drowning in the Syrian crisis**
- ❖ **Eco-justice for Palestine**
- ❖ **Israeli water management experience likely to help Peru**
- ❖ **US-Israeli research fund emphasizes interconnection between energy, water**
- ❖ **Arab countries suffer from neglect of agriculture sector**
- ❖ **Is Water Scarcity Dampening Growth Prospects in the Middle East and North Africa?**
- ❖ **Nile River Politics: When Sisi Met Desalegn**
- ❖ **Egypt, Ethiopia to resume talks over Nile water soon**
- ❖ **Construction on Laos's Mekong dams harried by lawsuits, political pressure**
- ❖ **Laos presses on with Don Sahong dam**
- ❖ **Save the Mekong Coalition Calls on Prime Ministers to Cancel Mekong Mainstream Dams**
- ❖ **The threat of dams on the Mekong River**

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- ❖ **Mekong dams 'will be built'**
  - ❖ **Detroit City Water Shut-offs: UN Says Policy Violates Human Rights**
  - ❖ **India faces severe water crisis: Solve major disputes, clean rivers on priority**
  - ❖ **European Commission asks citizens about Europe's drinking water**



### ❖ Iraq: Tribal forces brace for ISIS advance on Haditha Dam

Baghdad, Asharq Al-Awsat—As Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) fighters seek to gain control of the strategically important Haditha Dam in western Iraq, local Sunni Arab tribesmen have pledged to confront the terrorist group despite also opposing the central Baghdad government led by Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki.

In comments to Asharq Al-Awsat, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Hadithi—a prominent local tribal figure—said: “The tribes inside and around Haditha, including the Jaghayfah tribe inside the city and the Bou Nimr tribe on the west bank of the Euphrates, will not surrender the city. Whatever the differences we have with the central government, which ignored the legitimate demands of the Iraqi people in the western [region] . . . and allowed groups such as this [ISIS] to enter the country, we will not surrender Haditha.”

He added: “Talks between us and ISIS failed and the insurgents gave the tribes two days to surrender the city or else. The tribes will back the government security forces against the insurgents if they try to storm the city.”

The government has sent military reinforcements to Haditha to prevent ISIS taking control of the dam amid fears the militant group could seek to destroy it, flooding central regions and harming Iraq’s power grid. ISIS was able to seize the Albu Haiyat area and the small town of Jubba near Haditha earlier this week and is amassing forces for a concerted push.

Sheikh Ghassab Al-Ithawi, a prominent Anbar tribal figure, said that local tribes had united against ISIS, adding that the militant group’s recent advances in a number of Iraqi regions means the group is increasingly being spread thin on the ground.

“ISIS will not be able to cross the Haditha line because of the strength of the tribal forces in the area,” he told Asharq Al-Awsat.

The Haditha hydroelectric dam produces 1,000 megawatts of power, and is a key portion of Iraq’s electrical grid.

“Iraq: Tribal forces brace for ISIS advance on Haditha Dam”, 24/06/2014, online at:  
<http://www.aawsat.net/2014/06/article55333605>

BACK TO TOP

### ❖ **Iraq conflict: Insurgents capture 3 more towns, move on key dam**

Sunni insurgents led by an al-Qaida breakaway group expanded their offensive in a volatile western province on Saturday, capturing three strategic towns and the first border crossing with Syria to fall on the Iraqi side.

It's the latest blow against Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who is fighting for his political life even as forces beyond his control are pushing the country toward a sectarian showdown.

In a reflection of the bitter divide, thousands of heavily armed Shia militiamen — eager to take on the Sunni insurgents — marched through Iraqi cities in military-style parades on streets where many of them battled U.S. forces a half decade ago

The towns of Qaim, Rawah and Anah are the first territory seized in predominantly Sunni Anbar province, west of Baghdad, since fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group overran the city of Fallujah and parts of the provincial capital of Ramadi earlier this year.

The capture of Rawah on the Euphrates River and the nearby town of Anah appeared to be part of march toward a key dam in the city of Haditha, which was built in 1986 and has a hydraulic power station that produces some 1,000 megawatts. Destruction of the dam would adversely impact the country's electrical grid and cause major flooding.

Iraqi military officials said more than 2,000 troops were quickly dispatched to the site of the dam to protect it against a possible attack by the Sunni militants. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Rawah's mayor, Hussein Ali al-Aujail, said the militants ransacked the town's government offices and forced local army and police forces to pull out. Rawah and Anah had remained under government control since nearby Fallujah fell to the Sunni militants in January.

### **Border crossing control for ISIS**

The Islamic State's Sunni militants have carved out a large fiefdom along the Iraqi-Syrian border and have long travelled back and forth with ease, but control over crossings like that one in Qaim allows them to more easily move weapons and heavy equipment to different battlefields. Syrian rebels

already have seized the facilities on the Syrian side of the border and several other posts in areas under their control.

Police and army officials said Saturday that the Sunni insurgents seized Qaim and its crossing, about 320 kilometres west of Baghdad, after killing some 30 Iraqi troops in daylong clashes Friday.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to journalists, said people were now crossing back and forth freely.

Chief military spokesman Lt. Gen. Qassim al-Moussawi acknowledged Qaim's fall, telling journalists that troops aided by local tribesmen sought to clear the city of "terrorists."

The vast Anbar province stretches from the western edges of Baghdad all the way to Jordan and Syria to the northwest. The fighting in Anbar has greatly disrupted use of the highway linking Baghdad to the Jordanian border, a key artery for goods and passengers.

Al-Maliki's Shia-dominated government has struggled to push back against Islamic extremists and allied Sunni militants who have seized large swaths of the country's north since taking control of the second-largest city of Mosul on June 10 as Iraqi government forces melted away.

### **Shia militias parade streets**

The prime minister, who has led the country since 2006 and has not yet secured a third term after recent parliamentary elections, also has increasingly turned to Iranian-backed Shia militias and Shia volunteers to bolster his beleaguered security forces.

Reporting from Erbil, CBC's Nahlah Ayed said Saturday that over the last few days, there has been a call for volunteers who are willing to contribute to the fight to gather outside Baghdad.

"Today, it has been a show of force by one of the militias marching through Baghdad with flags and uniforms on," says Ayed. "It has been reconstituted over the last little while [that] a show of force raises the tension and certainly raises the sectarian violence, not just in Baghdad, but in the rest of the country."

The parades in Baghdad and other mainly cities in the mainly Shia south revealed the depth and diversity of the militia's arsenal, from field artillery and missiles to multiple rocket launchers and heavy machine guns, adding a new layer to mounting evidence that Iraq is inching closer to a religious war between Sunnis and Shias.

Al-Maliki has come under growing pressure to reach out to disaffected Kurds and Sunnis, with many blaming his failure to promote reconciliation that led to the country's worst crisis since the U.S. military withdrew its forces nearly three years ago.

In Baghdad, about 20,000 militiamen loyal to anti-U.S. Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, many in military fatigues and even some wearing red berets, white gloves and combat helmets, marched through the sprawling Shia Sadr City district, which saw some of the worst fighting between Shia militias and U.S. soldiers before a cease-fire was reached in 2008 that helped stem the sectarian bloodshed that was pushing the country to the brink of civil war.

Similar parades took place in the southern cities of Amarah and Basra, both strongholds of al-Sadr supporters.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most respected voice for Iraq's Shia majority, on Friday joined calls for al-Maliki to reach out to the Kurdish and Sunni minorities a day after U.S. President Barack Obama challenged him to create a leadership representative of all Iraqis.

Al-Sistani normally stays above the political fray, and his comments, delivered through a representative, could ultimately seal al-Maliki's fate.

Al-Maliki's State of Law bloc won the most seats in the April vote, but his hopes to retain his job have been thrown into doubt, with rivals challenging him from within the broader Shia alliance. In order to govern, his bloc, which won 92 seats, must first form a majority coalition in the new 328-seat legislature, which must meet by June 30.

If al-Maliki were to relinquish his post now, according to the constitution, the president, Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, would assume the job until a new prime minister is elected. But the ailing Talabani

has been in Germany for treatment since 2012, so his deputy, Khudeir al-Khuzai, a Shia, would step in for him.

### **U.S. back in the fray**

The U.S., meanwhile, has been drawn back into the conflict with so much at stake. Obama announced Thursday he was deploying up to 300 military advisers to help quell the insurgency. They join some 275 troops in and around Iraq to provide security and support for the U.S. Embassy and other American interests.

Obama has been adamant that U.S. troops would not be returning to combat, but has said he could approve "targeted and precise" strikes requested by Baghdad.

Manned and unmanned U.S. aircraft are now flying over Iraq 24 hours a day on intelligence missions, U.S. officials say.

Iraq enjoyed several years of relative calm before violence spiked a year ago after al-Maliki moved to crush a Sunni protest movement against what the minority sect claimed was discrimination and abuse at the hands of his government and security forces.

Meanwhile, on Saturday four separate explosions killed 10 people, including two policemen, and wounded 22 in Baghdad, according to police and hospital officials. And in an incident harkening back to the peak days of sectarian killings in 2006 and 2007, two bodies, presumably of Sunnis, were found riddled with bullets in Baghdad's Shia district of Zafaraniyah, police and morgue officials said.

All officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to journalists.

"Iraq conflict: Insurgents capture 3 more towns, move on key dam", 21/06/2013, online at:  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/iraq-conflict-insurgents-capture-3-more-towns-move-on-key-dam-1.2683259>

**BACK TO TOP**



### ❖ Militants pushing toward key Iraq dam

BAGHDAD:- Sunni insurgents led by an Al-Qaeda breakaway group have expanded their offensive in a volatile western province of Iraq, capturing three strategic towns and the first border crossing with Syria to fall on the Iraqi side.

The advance Friday and Saturday dealt another blow to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who is fighting for his political life even as forces beyond his control are pushing the country toward a sectarian showdown.

In a reflection of the bitter divide, thousands of heavily armed Shiite militiamen - eager to take on the Sunni insurgents - marched through Iraqi cities in military-style parades Saturday on streets where many of them battled U.S. forces a half decade ago.

The towns of Qaim, Rawah and Anah are the first territory seized in predominantly Sunni Anbar province, west of Baghdad, since fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) overran the city of Fallujah and parts of the provincial capital of Ramadi earlier this year.

The capture of Rawah on the Euphrates River and the nearby town of Anah appeared to be part of march toward a key dam in the city of Haditha, the destruction of which would damage the country's electrical grid and cause major flooding.

Iraqi military officials said more than 2,000 troops were quickly dispatched to the site of the dam to protect it. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

ISIS militants have carved out a large fiefdom along the Iraqi-Syrian border and have long traveled back and forth with ease, but control over crossings like that one in Qaim allows them to more easily move weapons and heavy equipment to different battlefields. Syrian rebels already have seized the facilities on the Syrian side of the border and several other posts in areas under their control.

The vast Anbar province stretches from the western edges of Baghdad all the way to Jordan and Syria to the northwest, and the fighting has greatly disrupted use of the highway linking Baghdad to the Jordanian border, a key artery for goods and passengers.

Maliki's Shiite-dominated government has struggled to push back against the Sunni militants, who have seized large swaths of the country's north since taking control of the second-largest city of Mosul on June 10 as Iraqi government forces melted away.

The prime minister, who has led the country since 2006 and has not yet secured a third term after recent parliamentary elections, also has increasingly turned to Iranian-backed Shiite militias and Shiite volunteers to bolster his beleaguered security forces.

The parades in Baghdad and other cities in the mainly Shiite south revealed the depth and diversity of the militias' arsenal, from field artillery and missiles to multiple rocket launchers and heavy machine guns, adding to mounting evidence that Iraq is inching closer to a religious war between Sunnis and Shiites.

Maliki has come under growing pressure to reach out to disaffected Kurds and Sunnis, with many blaming his failure to promote reconciliation for the country's worst crisis since the U.S. military withdrew its forces nearly three years ago.

In Baghdad, about 20,000 militiamen loyal to anti- U.S. Shiite preacher Muqtada al-Sadr, many in military fatigues, marched through the sprawling Shiite Sadr City district, which saw some of the worst fighting between Shiite militias and U.S. soldiers before a cease-fire was reached in 2008 that helped stem the sectarian bloodshed that was pushing the country to the brink of civil war.

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Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most respected voice for Iraq's Shiite majority, who normally stays above the political fray, Friday joined calls for Maliki to reach out to the Kurdish and Sunni minorities. A day earlier President Barack Obama challenged the prime minister to create a leadership representative of all Iraqis.

Maliki's State of Law bloc won the most seats in the April vote, but his hopes to retain his job have been thrown into doubt, with rivals challenging him from within the broader Shiite alliance.

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“Militants pushing toward key Iraq dam”, 21/06/2014, online at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Jun-22/261073-militants-pushing-toward-key-iraq-dam.ashx#axzz36OraEfXI>

BACK TO TOP

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### ❖ Sunni fighters march toward key dam

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It's the latest blow against Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who is fighting for his political life even as forces beyond his control are pushing the country toward a sectarian showdown.

In a reflection of the bitter divide, thousands of heavily armed Shiite militiamen — eager to take on the Sunni insurgents — marched through Iraqi cities in military-style parades on streets where many of them battled U.S. forces a half-decade ago

The towns of Qaim, Rawah and Anah are the first territory seized in predominantly Sunni Anbar province, west of Baghdad, since fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant group overran the city of Fallujah and parts of the provincial capital of Ramadi this year.

The capture of Rawah on the Euphrates River and the nearby town of Anah appeared to be part of march toward a key dam in the city of Haditha, which was built in 1986 and has a hydraulic power station that produces about 1,000 megawatts. Destruction of the dam would adversely affect the country's electrical grid and cause major flooding.

Iraqi military officials said more than 2,000 troops were quickly dispatched to the site of the dam to protect it against a possible attack by the Sunni militants. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Rawah's mayor, Hussein Ali al-Aujail, said the militants ransacked the town's government offices and forced local army and police forces to pull out. Rawah and Anah had remained under government control since nearby Fallujah fell to the Sunni militants in January.

The Islamic State's Sunni militants have carved out a large fiefdom along the Iraqi-Syrian border and have long traveled back and forth with ease, but control over crossings like that one in Qaim allows them to more easily move weapons and heavy equipment to different battlefields. Syrian rebels



already have seized the facilities on the Syrian side of the border and several other posts in areas under their control.

Police and army officials said Saturday that the Sunni insurgents seized Qaim and its crossing, about 200 miles west of Baghdad, after killing about 30 Iraqi troops in daylong clashes Friday.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to journalists, said people were crossing back and forth freely.

Chief military spokesman Lt. Gen. Qassim al-Moussawi acknowledged Qaim's fall, telling journalists that troops aided by local tribesmen sought to clear the city of "terrorists."

The vast Anbar province stretches from the western edges of Baghdad all the way to Jordan and Syria to the northwest. The fighting in Anbar has greatly disrupted use of the highway linking Baghdad to the Jordanian border, a key artery for goods and passengers.

"Sunni fighters march toward key dam", 21/06/2014, online at: <http://www.gosanangelo.com/news/2014/jun/21/sunni-fighters-march-toward-key-dam/>

**BACK TO TOP**

### ❖ Clergy members advise Iran on water shortages

Iran's Minister of Power has turned to members of the clergy for advice and support to deal with water shortages and the need for better consumption plans. Senior clergy member Ayatollah Makkarem Shirazi announced that wasting water is "haram" or forbidden in Islam, while Jafar Sobhani recommended Mass Rain prayers.

The Mehr News Agency reports that Power Minister Hamid Chitchian met with six senior Iranian clerics in Qom.

Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi was quoted as saying: "The government officials should use all technological means to solve this problem, and we will use educational and religious tools to tackle the problem."

The meeting with Qom clergy takes place as several of Iran's large cities are already grappling with water shortages.

Officials have reported that, despite warnings to conserve, water consumption in Tehran province has increased by 2.4 percent, and they are now looking at cutting off the supply to households and units that consume too much.

"Clergy members advise Iran on water shortages", 28/06/2014, online at:

[http://theiranproject.com/blog/2014/06/28/clergy-members-advise-iran-on-water-shortages/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=clergy-members-advise-iran-on-water-shortages](http://theiranproject.com/blog/2014/06/28/clergy-members-advise-iran-on-water-shortages/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=clergy-members-advise-iran-on-water-shortages)

**BACK TO TOP**

### ❖ **Drinking water shortage in Iran's East Azerbaijan Province at critical level**

Drinking water and electricity shortage in Iran's East Azerbaijan Province has reached a critical level, the province's Governor Esmail Jabbarzadeh said, IRNA news agency reported on June 29.

Jabbarzadeh instructed the crisis center to normalize the situation and provide the province's population with drinking water and electricity.

Starting from July 2013, water is being delivered to population in several cities in Iranian provinces of Gilan, Hormuzgan, and Kerman in accordance with the schedule.

Previously, Managing Director of Iranian National Water and Wastewater Engineering Company, Hamid Reza Janbaz said there is a drinking water shortage in 517 Iranian cities and this problem has reached a critical level.

He said the water deficit is due to an uneven population growth, increase in the number of residential areas, the disparity of water resources development plans and other reasons.

Iran is located in the arid zone, and for the past 40 years the country has repeatedly faced drought.

The drought in 1992-2002 caused considerable damage to agriculture. Quotas were set for fresh water in some cities, including the capital Tehran.

“Drinking water shortage in Iran's East Azerbaijan Province at critical level”, 29/06/2014, online at:  
<http://en.trend.az/news/society/2289648.html>

**BACK TO TOP**

❖ **Minister: Energy Ministry invests in Persian Gulf water transfer to C. Iran**

Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian said here Thursday his ministry has invested in a project to transfer Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman's water to Iran's Sistan-o-Balouchestan and central provinces after desalination to counter draught problems, IRNA reported.

"Since the salt density of the Caspian Sea would have increased highly after desalination of its water and that was a threat against the aqualife there the Department of Environment (DoE) opposed that plan," he said in a meeting with prominent clerics and sources of jurisprudence in Qom.

The energy minister added that therefore his affiliated ministry then proposed transferring of Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman's water to those provinces instead.

Chitchian elaborated on provision of fresh water for various provinces of the country, keeping in mind the drastic decrease of precipitations up to 47% in 15 provinces during the years of lingering draught in central and southern Iranian provinces.

The energy minister also informed the country's top religious personalities that due to water shortage problem the farmers in those areas have resorted to irrigation using well water.

"If those farmers will turn off their electrical pumps during the four high electricity usage hours of the day their electricity consumption during the remaining 20 hours will be free of charge," he said.

Chitchian said that although the water consumption has increased, the existing water resources have decreased ten billion cubic meters and reached 120 billion cubic meters from the previous 130.

The energy minister rejected the proposals made by some provincial governors and Parliament members for more dam construction to resolve the problem.

"Construction of new dams will not add to any water resources and will instead distribute the same resources' waters, while some of the constructed dams have not reserved much water behind them," he said.

Chitchian expressed sorrow that the rate of water waster in Iran is very high, while 92% of the country's water usage is in agricultural activities, in which the expansion of under-pressure irrigation will lead to decreased usage.

Such mega-projects are being implemented in the country as Iran's soaring population growth further threatens the country's water resources, already low in much of the country from insufficient rainfall and desert environment.

Some 60% of Iran's population is below the age of 25, and continues to increase. Water shortages are expected to remain a key resource problem in Iran, similar to other regions in the Middle East, and



cause regional instability if policy-makers do not develop long-term water management strategies, particularly for irrigation projects.

Social and demographic changes, such as changes in living standards, expectations, consumption habits, rural to urban migration, are creating pressures on available water supplies that must be addressed to meet the needs of the growing nation. Practical steps can be taken to reach equilibrium between population and water resources.

The average flow of rivers and aquifers generated from precipitation is limited in all countries, but not population. The population in Iran doubled from 33.7 million in 1976 to 66.1 million in 2001.

Unquestionably, this growth is creating problems. Water availability is considered a severe constraint on socio-economic development and environmental protection when annual internal renewable water resources decrease to 1,000 m<sup>3</sup> per capita.

Iran's per capita water resources availability decreased to 2,025 m<sup>3</sup> in 1990, and is estimated to continue to reach 816 m<sup>3</sup> in 2025, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Water shortages and pollution affect the country at an almost national level. Devastating droughts are causing vast numbers of rural dwellers to move to urban areas. Consequently, water supplies must be increased through the development and conservation of water resources, and this development cannot be isolated from environmental protection.

Currently, 35% of the total population is suffering from drought and water shortages in northeastern, eastern, southeastern, south and central Iran. The lack of storage dams prevents the practical use of rainfall. Floods occur often.

Tehran city officials began rationing water in 2001 due to water shortages, and this policy may extend to other cities. The government should begin to encourage wastewater recycling, especially in larger cities, to augment water supplies for irrigation.

Untreated industrial wastewater and domestic sewage generated in many Iranian cities are polluting rivers, streams and groundwater. Particularly, the contamination of groundwater from the inadequate handling of domestic sewage is quite common in smaller cities and towns.

“Minister: Energy Ministry invests in Persian Gulf water transfer to C. Iran”, 27/06/2014, online at: <http://en.trend.az/news/society/2289062.html>

**BACK TO TOP**

## ❖ Iran, UN Discuss Cooperation in Rehabilitation of 3rd Largest Saltwater Lake on Earth

UN Assistant Secretary General and the UNDP regional director for Asia and the Pacific Haoliang Xu said that he did not know Orumiyeh Lake problem is that vast and visiting the lake was a great experience.

In a meeting with the governor-general of West Azerbaijan province on Wednesday, Haoliang Xu said that one of the principle works which we are following up here in Iran is issues related to sustainable development, specially in the field of environment.

"During our cooperation with Iran we were able to offer three million US dollars of credit sources for three pilot plans of Shadegan, Parishan and Orumiyeh lakes and we expanded the results of these activities to settle other environmental problems," he said.

Haoliang XU continued that reviving Orumiyeh Lake needs 20 to 25 billion cubic meters of water and it seems that there is a kind of imbalance between economic consumption, human consumption and the lake water needs.

Early in October, during a cabinet meeting in Tehran, the ministers and President Hassan Rouhani okayed a project to rehabilitate Orumiyeh Lake from dry-up.

Recently, some local officials in Orumiyeh and Tabriz, capitals of Iran's West and East Azerbaijan provinces respectively, have expressed concerns about the environmental disaster due to the shrinkage of the lake, and have called on the government to save it to prevent the environmental degradation of the body of water.

Located in Northwestern Iran between the provinces of East and West Azerbaijan and near Iran's border with Turkey, Orumiyeh is the largest lake in the Middle East and the third largest saltwater lake on Earth.

A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and a Ramsar (an international treaty for the protection of wetlands) site said, the lake has shrunk considerably in the past years and could disappear entirely.

"Iran, UN Discuss Cooperation in Rehabilitation of 3rd Largest Saltwater Lake on Earth", 26/06/2014, online at: <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13930405000602>

BACK TO TOP

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### ❖ Iran seeks UN experience for Lake Urmia revival

Iran says it needs the practice of the United Nations in solving the shoaling problem of the Lake Urmia, which is experiencing its worst drought condition for many years.

Governor General of Iran's West Azerbaijan province said Iran needs scientific experience of the UN to revive Lake Urmia and to preserve the province's environment effectively, IRNA news agency reported.

Qorbanali Sa'adat made the remarks in a meeting with UN Assistant Secretary General and UNDP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Haoliang Xu and UN residing Representative in Iran Gary Lewis and the accompanying delegation.

They traveled to Urmia city to visit Lake Urmia and the sustainable agricultural development process in the city.

Sa'adat said that in addition to credit support, Iran needs scientific help as well as the experience of international community and research work results in resolving the critical situation.

"When President Hassan Rouhani called for prompt reviving of the lake as one of his government priorities, we found the opportunity to work more in this field and obtain more experiences in this concern," Sa'adat said.

Iranian President Rouhani has established a working group to tackle the issue of Lake Urmia.

He also went on saying that as the country needs financial supports to save the lake, its most dire need is international experiences in this field.

Over 70 percent of Lake Urmia's water has dried up. The level of water has been declining since 1995.

Sa'adat added that the government officials had different meetings with researches from other countries from Europe and the U.S., but some of the researches feel restraint in offering their information to Iranian side.

He called on all researches and environment lovers to present their plans and programs to Iran in this regard.

The shoaling problem of Lake Urmia is a matter of concern not only for the Iranian government, but also other countries and international organizations of the world.

UN Resident Coordinator Lewis in October 2013 proposed ways to prevent the death of the world's largest saltwater lake, the Lake Urmia.

Lewis warned in his report that the slow death of the Lake Urmia signals a warning for the future.

UN Assistant Secretary General Xu voiced support for Iran's actions to save Lake Urmia and hoped they would lead to satisfactory results.

Xu said the crisis in the lake was a very significant issue.

He said his visit to the province was aimed at reviewing the joint programs, which the UN is undertaking with the Iranian government.

Xu referred to changing climate as the most important challenge to the global environment.

Lake Urmia, located in northwest of the country, is an internationally protected area as both a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and a Ramsar Site.

"During our cooperation with Iran, we were able to offer three million dollars of credit sources for three pilot plans of Shadegan, Parishan and Urmia lakes and we expanded the results of these activities to settle other environmental problems," Xu further noted.

Xu added that 20 to 25 billion cubic meters of water is needed to revive Lake Urmia and it seems that there is a kind of imbalance between economic consumption, human consumption and the lake water needs.

The West Azerbaijan province environment officials said 90 percent of the lake has dried and it has turned into a salty field.

The area of Lake Urmia is the third largest salt water lake on earth, which has 6,000 square kilometers surface. During the migrations of birds the lake becomes their temporary home. The lake's drying up has an impact on the flora and fauna of the region. Experts on environmental issues say that the measures taken by the Iranian government are not enough to save the lake.



The project on directing 600 million cubic meters of water from Araz River into Lake Urmia was launched during a visit by former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and government officials to Tabriz in 2010. Some \$1.2 billion is to be allocated to implement the project.

The Iranian government allocated \$900 million to prevent Lake Urmia's drying up in September 2011.

Also, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has allocated \$135 million to Iran to resolve environmental problems with shoaling of the lake.

“Iran seeks UN experience for Lake Urmia revival”, 26/06/2014, online at: <http://www.azernews.az/region/68338.html>

**BACK TO TOP**

[WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR](http://WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR)

### ❖ Aleppo's water crisis adds to local suffering

ALEPPO, Syria — Aside from the horrors of indiscriminate targeting and bombing of civilians, Aleppans have had to endure orchestrated campaigns of sieges and deliberate starvation. A crumbling infrastructure and collapsed public services mean that for many, what once were basics were now luxury items, well out of reach. With lack of access to utilities and basic health care, new forms of death threaten the inhabitants of this unfortunate land.

Perhaps no city has suffered during the Syrian conflict as much as Aleppo in that regard, in both its rebel- and regime-controlled parts. Both regime forces and rebels have attempted, and are still attempting, blockades against civilians of the opposing areas, aiming to drive them out of their homes and psychologically break them, turning them against those in control. This tactic deliberately targets ordinary people, turning their suffering and misery into a weapon of war, to pressure and affect change in the battlefronts and on the ground.

The rebels besieged western Aleppo entirely for weeks during the summer of 2013, sending prices of fuel and essentials skyrocketing as people struggled to feed their families. The regime seems set to do the same now to rebel areas after taking the central prison last month and closing in on the only route left connecting east Aleppo with the countryside, the Castello-Jandoul road to the northeast.

Power outages lasting days and weeks are frequent here, as fighting damages the grid or, as is often the case, it is deliberately sabotaged. People have learned to cope, and generators large and small provide the cacophonous background music to a city still clinging on to life, with the sound of bombs and gunfire playing the leading duet in this most tragic of symphonies.

But now a new and far more frightening phenomenon has reared its ugly head to add to the people's misery and threaten their already fragile lives: water. The main water plant that provides drinkable running water to Aleppo city and nearby rural areas is at Suleiman al-Halabi, a frontline area between rebel Bustan al-Basha and regime Midan. The plant itself is controlled by rebels and was partially looted last year by the infamous warlord Hassan Jazara, who was later caught and executed by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) as part of its abortive push into Aleppo. An agreement brokered by several local nonprofit organizations (NGOs) meant that the plant could continue to function, and was spared from direct fighting and targeting.

Previously in Aleppo, water shortages would be sporadic and infrequent, since blackouts would mean pumps would stop working and parts of the grid would be damaged by shelling. The plant's backup generators are dangerously overloaded and risk breaking down, so are only used when absolutely necessary. The Syrian Red Crescent, a much respected and important NGO providing critical aid, has frequently overseen the transfer of fuel and purification material to the plant, as well as facilitating the maintenance and repair of pipes in the water grid, and the plant itself.

The water crisis began in May, when the city's water supply suddenly stopped with no reason or explanation given. It then partially resumed in some areas, but it appeared that it was being meddled with. It later became apparent that the rebel Islamist Sharia Council was deliberately tampering with the water supply at the plant, in an attempt to prevent water from reaching regime areas, and for it only to flow into rebel-controlled areas. This risked a catastrophic collapse of the whole water system to the city and surrounding countryside, and in any case proved to be undoable. Water became a scarce commodity in Aleppo, victim to the whims and machinations of armed men with little regard for the consequences of their actions — actions that would detrimentally affect the lives of millions.

In true form to this criminal disregard, the rebels then blew up an underground tunnel near the water plant, severely damaging the main pipes connecting the plant to the grid on June 2. The explosion made a massive crater in the ground, and obliterated three of the four main pipes, as well as damaging sewage pipes that seeped into the water supply and poisoning hundreds of unsuspecting people. The water crisis was now a major calamity.

As of this writing, the immense damage to the water grid has not been repaired, and with the flow of water from the plant severely restricted, entire neighborhoods housing millions have been three weeks without running water. Long lines of people, usually of children with plastic containers to fill at wells, run around blocks and crowd the mosques, churches or private residences where they are located. It has become a common sight in Aleppo to see people hauling water in canisters of all shapes and sizes down roads and up flights of stairs. Bottled clean drinking water has become prohibitively expensive, and in any case is subject to fraud — filled from the mains or wells — by unscrupulous war profiteers.

Fortunately, Aleppo has an abundance of groundwater and dozens of wells spread throughout the city, but not all of the water from them is fit to drink. Furthermore, generators and fuel are needed to

pump water from those wells, making them expensive to maintain in the long run, and they'll likely soon run dry because they are being overused. Before the conflict, it was illegal to dig wells or extract underground water without an impossible-to-obtain permit, but now almost every neighborhood is drilling away to get to that most precious of liquids. As with all conflicts, the profiteers are selling water in tankers at exorbitant prices to the rich and well-connected, while a benevolent few have opened their wells to the public for free.

Worrying reports of a dramatic drop in the water level at the Tishreen reservoir have added to the people's anxiety. The dangerously low levels are due to unregulated drainage for irrigation of farmlands, and allegations that Turkey has stopped the flow from its controversial Ataturk Dam on the Euphrates River.

A Syrian government delegation led by Prime Minister Wael Nader al-Halqi recently arrived in Aleppo and promised to remedy the situation, but most people are skeptical. There is little the government can do except temporary fixes, and we've heard many false promises before. In the scorching dry heat of Aleppo's summer, and Ramadan on the doors, the situation is getting very desperate.

In light of the blatant disregard of all sides involved, Aleppans don't believe their lives will get any better, or that their battered city will get on its feet anytime soon. Their daily toil and routine of drudgery and misery continues as both sides seem determined to play their sinister game of who can devise the best ways of inflicting as much suffering to as many people as possible.

"Aleppo's water crisis adds to local suffering", 26/06/2014, online at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/aleppo-syria-water-crisis-infrastructure-war-rebels-regime.html>

BACK TO TOP

[WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR](http://WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR)



### ❖ **Water Scarcity May Spark Geopolitical Conflicts: Council**

Water scarcity may spark geopolitical conflicts in such countries as those around the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile river basins, according to the World Water Council's president.

"Water and politics, they go hand-in-hand," Benedito Braga said in a June 20 interview after the conclusion of the Singapore International Water Week. "With rivers that are shared by two or more countries, the severity of climate and the stress in water may lead to political instability."

There are already signs of transboundary water risks. Egypt opposes Africa's largest power plant being built by Ethiopia, saying it will reduce the flow of the Nile needed by farmers, while the conflict in Syria has been exacerbated by groundwater depletion, drought and poor water management.

Turkey received little snowfall at the start of the year, meaning it will likely use more water stored in reservoirs to irrigate crops. That may affect supplies downstream along the Tigris-Euphrates, where water quality and pollution are also issues, Braga said. The Tigris-Euphrates river basin is shared by Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran.

The water-stressed region around the Nile, which flows through 10 countries including Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt, is another area of possible conflict, Braga said.

"These are examples of situations in which water resource management and water diplomacy will have to be exercised with care in order to minimize risk of other types of conflicts," Braga said by phone from Singapore.

"Water Scarcity May Spark Geopolitical Conflicts: Council", 23/06/2014, online at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-06-23/water-scarcity-may-spark-geopolitical-conflicts-council.html>

**BACK TO TOP**

[WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR](http://WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR)

### ❖ Ramadan spirit is alive in clean water Project

Ramadan is upon us again, bringing with it a special focus on the values we should all try to carry with us throughout our lives. While fasting during the longest days of summer will present some physical challenges, the celebration of the Holy Month will bring tremendous joy as families and friends are united in prayer and at gatherings. A spirit of generosity and the hand of friendship will be extended across the country and the globe.

During this time, people will need to pay extra attention when driving, because fasting can lead to a loss of concentration. In the workplace, colleagues will need to be more understanding and supportive of each other. And those with health problems should follow medical advice on managing their condition during the fast.

Importantly, many people will undertake acts of charity, ranging from simple small acts of kindness to larger philanthropic projects such as last year's programme that clothed millions of poor children, and the annual Adopt a Camp campaign that provides meals for thousands of labourers.

This year will see another highly ambitious project under the patronage of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. The [UAE Suqia](#) campaign, beginning today and conducted in cooperation with the Emirates Red Crescent, will see Dh125 million spent on giving millions of people access to clean drinking water. Preliminary work has already begun in Pakistan and Iraq.

This project recognises the importance of clean water as a staple of life and health, and access to it as a basic human right. Yet, according to the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals Report 2012, 11 per cent of the world population does not have reliable access to safe drinking water.

In helping to address this global crisis, Sheikh Mohammed and those who will carry out the planning and field work are demonstrating a practical understanding of the spiritual values of the Holy Month.

Everyone in the UAE – Muslims and non-Muslims, Emiratis, expatriates and visitors – can learn from the values espoused during Ramadan.

And everyone can join in the Ramadan spirit by supporting worthy projects, such as the Suqia campaign, that truly make a difference in the lives of others.

“Ramadan spirit is alive in clean water Project”, 28/04/2014, online at:

<http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/editorial/ramadan-spirit-is-alive-in-clean-water-project>

**BACK TO TOP**

[WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR](http://WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR)

### ❖ Israel's National Water Carrier: both boom and bane

Fifty years after the ground-breaking project was inaugurated, it appears that its environmental damage may be irreversible.

The National Water Carrier marks its 50th anniversary this month, providing an opportunity to consider this project's great importance, as well as the significant environmental damages it has caused to Lake Kinneret, the Jordan River and agricultural crops in various areas.

The National Water Carrier, whose construction took 10 years, was built by Mekorot, Israel's National Water Company and designed by the Tahal Group. It consists of some 134 kilometers of large pipes, tunnels, reservoirs and 34 kilometers of open canals. Its water flows to reservoirs in the Lower Galilee and are purified and filtered in an advanced facility completed about a decade ago.

Thanks to the water carrier, Israel can channel large amounts of water from one region to another. The Water Authority can decide how to divide the water demand between the Kinneret and the groundwater reserves. The groundwater can also be channeled to the water carrier and to pipes installed between the Yarkon springs and the Negev region, which convey the water 150 kilometers further, to Mitzpeh Ramon.

For many years the water carrier channeled an average 380 million cubic meters of water a year from the Kinneret. In some years, like 2004, the amount increased to 525 million cubic meters. The large amount of water channeled from the lake to other areas lowered the Kinneret level by some two meters. The decision to use the carrier to convey drinking water as well as irrigation water turned it into a vital means of supplying water to highly populated regions.

In recent years the large desalination plants built along the coast have been providing a large part of the water for domestic consumption. Consequently, the dependence on the water carrier has decreased in many regions.

This forced Mekorot to set up a water carrying system in the opposite direction – from south to north – dubbed the new water carrier. At the end of this year 75 percent of the water for domestic consumption will be supplied by the desalination plants in Ashkelon, Hadera, Palmahim and Sorek (near Rishon Letzion).

But alongside the water carrier's achievements, such as its help to developing farming and communities, it has far-reaching environmental impacts. Lake Kinneret, once a natural water source into which water flowed from the Jordan and emerged back into the river on the south side, turned into a reservoir whose southern exit has been dammed. The lake's level still depends on rainwater, but also on the amount of water pumped out of it. Its ecologic system is constantly undergoing changes and fluctuations due to the sharp changes in its water level.

The southern Jordan River and Dead Sea paid the highest price. The amount of fresh water that flowed in them has diminished to less than a tenth of what it used to be, and the lake's level is descending at a rate of one meter a year. The water carrier project has drastically dwindled the water flow in the Yarmuch River, once the Jordan's main tributary in the south. In recent years sewage water and salt springs that had been diverted from the Kinneret were channeled into the Yarmuch, whose water quality deteriorated.

The extended use of Kinneret water also had an impact on the quality of soil and agricultural crops, since the salt concentration in the Kinneret is higher than in groundwater. A case in point is cited in a study conducted by Dr. Avner Silber of the Northern R&D, a division of the Galilee Technology Center (MIGAL). Silber compared between a banana plantation watered with desalinated water and one watered with Kinneret water. The study shows that the plantation watered with Kinneret water suffered damage to the bananas' root system due to the salt concentration, and a larger amount of water was needed to achieve a crop similar to the one yielded by the plantation irrigated with desalinated water.

The salt damages were even greater when treated sewage water, which contains more salt due to domestic use and other sources, was used to irrigate the banana plantation.

Cutting the use of water from the National Carrier and increasing the use of desalinated water could reduce the salt damage. Some scientists believe, however, that irrigation water should also be desalinated, to prevent the salination of soil and groundwater.

As for the fate of the southern Jordan River and Lake Kinneret, it seems the desalination plants will not bring them back to their golden days. The population of Israel and the neighboring countries will

continue to grow in the coming years, and experts fear that despite the added desalinated water, extended use will have to be made of rivers and groundwater.

The Water Authority has recently agreed to convey water from the Kinneret to the southern Jordan River, instead of sewage water from the area's communities, which will be treated and used for irrigation. This will help to improve the river's water quality, but won't make a great difference to the situation.

As for the Dead Sea, unless the ambitious but environmentally problematic project to channel large amounts of water to it from the Gulf of Eilat is implemented, it will continue to shrivel. The bitter truth is that this lake will continue paying the price of the water carrier's triumph and the success of the other facilities vital to human survival in the region.

"Israel's National Water Carrier: both boom and bane", 26/06/2014, online at: <http://www.haaretz.com/life/nature-environment/.premium-1.601284>

**BACK TO TOP**



### ❖ Israel treads water to avoid drowning in the Syrian crisis

For the first time since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, an Israeli civilian was killed during an intentional anti-tank missile attack emanating from Syrian territory. The missile ripped through the Israel-Syria border separation barrier, striking the vehicle of an Arab-Israeli defense contractor in the Israeli Golan Heights on 22 June; the blast immediately killed the employee's 14-year-old son, Mohammad Karaka, and severely injured the boy's father and at least one other person. The Israeli military quickly determined the attack was deliberate with IDF Spokesman Lt. Col. Peter stating, "this is not a case of errant fire, but of an intentional attack." The public military statement confirmed that this attack differed from several other incidents in the Golan Heights - events that Israeli officials ultimately assessed were the result of unintentional spillover or the work of Hezbollah militants. Days after this, Israel's Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman explicitly blames the Assad regime for the deadly assault, stating "we got all the analysis, all the intelligence and it was clear it was Syrian authorities, Assad's forces, who fired on the Israeli boy...I hope Damascus got the message."

The Israeli military retaliated within 24 hours, striking at least nine different Syrian military positions with ground-to-ground Tamuz missiles and IAF fighter jets. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the attacks reportedly killed at least ten Syrian soldiers.

Bashar al-Assad's disgraced regime confirmed the Israeli attacks indicating, "the Israeli occupation forces on Sunday and Monday carried out a new attack against positions inside Syrian territory, which constitutes a new, flagrant violation of the 1974 Separation of Forces Agreement, of the U.N. charter and international law."

Despite the deadly, bold attack that killed an Arab-Israeli child and the subsequent fatal Israeli retaliation, any further escalation between Israel and Syria remains unlikely

Brooklyn Middleton

As sought out and timely as the Assad regime's reflections on international law are, Israel has yet to respond to Damascus' condemnation and subsequent request for the U.N. to take action against Israel.

## Unlikely escalation

Despite the deadly, bold attack that killed an Arab-Israeli child and the subsequent fatal Israeli retaliation, any further escalation between Israel and Syria remains unlikely in the near term; Israel remains focused on its eastern front - closely assessing the threat of ISIS' encroachment on Jordanian borders and its successful capture of the Iraq-Jordan Turabil border crossing. Meanwhile, only hours before the IDF assessed the situation on its northern front following the missile attack, Israeli security forces detained a Palestinian man armed with a hand grenade inside of a southern Israeli community; reports indicated he crossed from Gaza - the first such incident in over a year. The thwarted attack in Israel's south occurred as tensions skyrocketed between Palestinians and Israel in the West Bank, with at least five Palestinians killed during the Israeli military's ongoing "Operation Brother's Keeper." The two week long assault targeting Hamas militants, those suspected of having links to the group, and many Hamas-backed or associated institutions, has failed to bring the three Israeli teenagers back to their families and has led to periodically brutal clashes erupting between Palestinians and IDF personnel. While Israel continues striking Hamas in the West Bank, Hamas lashes out from the Gaza Strip, launching rockets at an increasingly frequent rate.

Notably, at the same time, Assad's calculus regarding Israel remains unchanged; it is unthinkable his military would risk a harsh Israeli response to any attack emanating from Syria, jeopardizing his regime's ability to sustain the tenuous gains he's made.

## Hezbollah militants

However, as the risk of further Israel-Syria escalation remains the same as it did before last week's cross-border attacks, Hezbollah militants are highly likely to attempt to target IDF troops on the border as they've successfully done in March 2014 and months prior. Israel - who holds the Assad regime responsible for all attacks emanating from Syria - is in turn likely to retaliate against Assad positions as it has consistently done so in the past. With that said, despite the likelihood the militant group will continue to carry out low-scale attacks targeting IDF troops, it also remains deterred from striking Israel too hard as it is increasingly likely Hezbollah must step up efforts in Iraq to sustain the gains the group and Assad's regime have made in Syria and any confrontation with Israel would likely render that impossible.

Despite the fact that the region remains on the brink of conflagration and Israel's priorities do not include getting dragged into the Syrian conflict, Israel's response also demonstrated that the Israeli military will continue to adhere to its own, long-stated red lines regarding the Syrian conflict. The Israeli response sent a message that it will continue targeting Hezbollah bound weaponry and retaliating against the Syrian military for any attack on Israeli territory - while also consistently retaliating for rocket fire on the south, continuing its operation in the West Bank, and stepping up cooperation with the Jordanian military.

"Israel treads water to avoid drowning in the Syrian crisis", 27/06/2014, online at:  
<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/2014/06/27/Israel-treads-water-to-avoid-drowning-in-the-Syrian-crisis.html>

**BACK TO TOP**

[WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR](http://WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR)

## ❖ Eco-justice for Palestine

Land is considered central to the conflict between Palestinians and the Zionist movement. Actions taken by the Israeli occupiers have damaged the unique environment of Palestine in addition to harming the people. In light of the conflict on the ground, many Palestinians have forgotten the beauty of their homeland and the importance of preserving it. Palestinians have had to resort to several means of resistance such as political, economic, social, cultural, peaceful and popular. But the success of preservation of the land and its people is intertwined through the use of ecology. Coming from the Greek word *Oíkoç* or *Oíkia*, meaning home or homeland, ecology is the study of how an environmental system works, including both the land and the organisms that live on it. Without the consideration of the ecology of Palestine, the people of Palestine may never find true and lasting justice.

### **Palestine: A Land of Biodiversity**

Palestine holds a privileged geographical location as it mediates three continents: Asia, Europe and Africa. The variety of climates and differing regions may have contributed to the high diversity of plants and animals found in Palestine. Despite its small land size, Palestine is one of the richest areas of biodiversity in the world. Due to the large variation in climate, geographical terrain and soil types, Palestine has a large number of plant species. There are approximately 2,700 flowering species, about 261 endemic species, 53 species special to Palestine, 12 very rare species and 543 endangered plant species, mainly from the *Alzenbakah* and *Iris* families. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Environmental Affairs, Palestine is characterized by a great diversity of fauna including mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds.

In addition, its location within the “Fertile Crescent” may have contributed to human evolution and stable civilizations. The indigenous people of Palestine, namely the Canaanites, provided a great gift to humanity through the development of agricultural practices and domestication of animals. Palestinians have also been credited with the first cultivation of basic and native agricultural crops such as wheat and barley. In contrast, the Zionist movement needed to seek the assistance of Europeans to introduce the cultivation of grapes for wine production, much like the French colonizers in Algeria.

## **Distortion of History**

In addition to the destruction of the environment, the Zionist movement has distorted the history of the land and its people before the creation of Israel. However, falsifying the narrative of land is not unique to Zionist historians. Benjamin Netanyahu (the current Israeli Prime Minister) claims in his book, *A Place Under the Sun* that writers, politicians, poets and non-Jews have contributed to the formation of the Zionist interests. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Palmerston and even Herzl considered the Zionist movement a European desire, not a Jewish dream. He writes that the Romans put an end to the Jewish presence in Palestine (the Roman army stormed Palestine in 64 BC, ending the Maccabee rule). He claims “Jews did not take the Arab land, but it was Arabs who robbed the land of the Jews,” and “the controversy between Arabs and Jews... is like the debate over ownership of human rights at home.”

He also quotes the French poet de Lamartine, that in the year 1835 "outside the gates of Jerusalem, we have not seen a creature alive and did not hear the voice of any creatures, we came across a total emptiness and silence." The wasteland myth created by Zionism, describes Palestine as empty and the ruins of "the cursed Jericho is today desolate and dilapidated." Jews had found a barren land, not with paved roads or ways of transportation, so they built roads and founded cities, factories, hospitals and turned swamps into farmland. They saw the Arabs in Palestine had built only one new city, Ramla, during the past 1200 years and that "the name of Palestine itself is no longer in use between the Arabs". Netanyahu quotes Churchill's statement, “Left to themselves, the Arabs of Palestine would not in a thousand years have taken effective steps toward the irrigation and electrification of Palestine.” Netanyahu claims that the Jews "have regained their land" through settlement and self-defense, not with blood and fire as the Spaniards did when they regained Cordoba and Granada from "Islamic occupation". Although these claims are not true and woefully misrepresent the history of Palestine and its people, they have been used by the Zionist movement to create the state of Israel.

## **Israeli Land Acquisition**

Historically, Zionists acquired Palestinian land through purchases from absentee landlords and forged land sales. Many organizations assisted in the purchasing of Palestinian land for Jewish immigrants, such as the Jewish National Fund (JNF).

The JNF was founded at the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901. The objective of the non-profit organization was to raise money to purchase and develop land in the then Ottoman Palestine for Jewish settlement. The JNF continued to acquire land throughout the British Mandate and is still active today. Since its inception in 1901, the JNF has contributed to the purchase of hundreds of thousands of dunums (a dunum is equal to about 0.25 acres) for the development of Jewish movement and settlement. Other JNF projects have included the draining of wetlands, land reclamation and Israeli infrastructure development. When the State of Israel was established in 1948, all the land acquired by the JNF was given to the state to use and manage.

Donations collected by the JNF were not just from Jews, but from people of all nations around the world, particularly Europeans. The JNF used many pretexts for international fundraising campaigns such as environmental conservation and forestry. Currently, the JNF is working on projects labeled as tree planting, environmental conservation and the extensive cultivation of exotic trees (started earlier during the British occupation in an effort to create the green Palestine imagined by the West). Many of these projects are on sites of Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948 during the Nakba, often blurring the effects of the occupation and destroying the remaining fig and olive trees and grape vines which once surrounded Palestinian homes.

Being a tool of colonial and expansionist movement, the JNF used environmental reservation as a pretext for controlling more land, which enabled the state of Israel to confiscate Palestinians' property. Because of these actions, most Palestinians regard Israeli environmental policies as anti-Palestinian policies. Palestinians have struggled with the idea of environmental preservation since its beginnings in the region due to the ties with Zionist expansion based on "a land without a people for a people without a land."

### **Changes to the Environment**

Palestine is rich in its diversity, but is threatened by time itself due to occupation. Since 1948, the Israeli occupation has systematically destroyed the environment of Palestine through water plundering, land confiscation, destruction of agricultural and wetland areas, settlement establishment, uprooting of trees, closure of many natural reserves, and construction of the 757 kilometers long apartheid Wall, water contamination from settlement sewage, air pollution and dangerous chemical plants such as those found in Tulkarem and Salfit. Many of these actions remove the Palestinian



architectural heritage through demolition, confiscation, forgery, and obliteration, resulting in the aggressive destruction of the natural environmental balance and devastation of everything in its path.

The occupation has also affected the water in Palestine. When Israel drained Lake Hula, the resulting diversion of natural water flow led to an environmental disaster in northern Palestine. Typically, springs and seasonal streams flow to join the Jordan River, which eventually feeds into the Dead Sea from the east, or descend from the central and western mountains into the Mediterranean Ocean. The diversion or blockage of these natural water systems has caused the conversion of peri-wetlands into dryland areas and an increase in desertification. Exacerbating this problem is the replacement of the freshwater springs and streams with sewage water from Israeli settlements, causing pollution and killing many fish, animals and plants. Additional pollution is a result of overused agricultural land and modern technological methods using chemical pesticides compared to the traditional farming methods utilizing raw materials and cultivating native species. Now due to the competition created by aggressive Israeli agricultural practices, the use of genetically modified organisms has led to the elimination of traditional seasonal yields.

As part of the Israeli effort to confiscate Palestinian Land, several green or protected areas were announced under the guise of environment protection. However, the true reason behind these areas was to prevent Palestinian expansion or use of the land. One example is Abu Ghunaim (Har Homa), a forested area declared a nature reserve for many years in order to stem Palestinian expansion from the Sur Baher and Umm Tuba neighborhoods and the city of Beit Sahour. However, the Israeli government later removed the environmental designation in order to begin development of a new Jewish settlement known as Har Homa. When the mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, announced the start of construction, he stated, “We kept this land with trees and today we will uproot trees and plant Jews in this region!”

The defense of the environment and the protection of Palestinian land are linked together, creating new issues surrounding the occupation, the conflict and defense of the land. All of these problems require international efforts from both the United Nations at large as well as its specialized environmental organizations in order to put pressure on the occupation.

## **Eco-justice Efforts in Palestine**

In an effort to continue defending the Palestinian environment, the Environmental Education Center organized and held an international conference at the end of 2012 entitled “Eco-justice of Palestine”. Local and international experts addressed the procedural violations, destruction of the Palestinian environment and many other issues surrounding the occupation. The conference emphasized ending the occupation as the best way to achieve justice for Palestine in all aspects, including environmental justice.

The conference discussed the importance of repeated invitations to international, human rights and environmental organizations in order to compel Israel to fulfill its legal and political obligations. Currently, Israel ignores all agreements, international charters and conventions in regards to Palestine, including those focused on the environment.

During the conference, it was also concluded that invitations to international communities, data and reports about the difficult environment caused by Israeli violations would contribute to the clarification of the occupation in international public opinion. This understanding would increase the international solidarity found for the just cause of Palestine.

The conference demanded the establishment of an organization dedicated to documenting the environmental violations due to the occupation and providing legal cooperation with official institutions both locally and internationally.

During the conference, it was also reiterated that one of the most urgent actions needed to protect all components of the Palestinian environment is the activation of the International Court of Justice-the judicial statute of the United Nations based in Hague in the Netherlands. In the summer of 2004, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion which condemned and criminalized the apartheid wall built by Israel in the West Bank starting in June of 2002 and considered all Israeli settlements illegal. The use of fences and walls to take uninhabited Palestinian land has destroyed farmland, nature reserves and water sources, as well as creating profound negative effects on various aspects of life, including the environment and biodiversity.

Members of the conference invited friends of international participants to join together for the prosecution of the occupation based on the crimes against the environment and life in Palestine. Official institutions and civil society organizations participating in the conference adopted a decisive stance against working with any parties associated with the Israeli occupation and Israeli settlers through the lens of environmentalism.

The future of the Palestinian people is closely related to the state of their environment. Recognizing and correcting the environmental violations caused by the Israeli occupation and teaching the people of Palestine the value of environmental efforts will benefit the ecological system of Palestine. Dispelling the myths of the history of Palestine and acknowledging its environmental importance will be critical in the establishment of eco-justice for Palestine.

“Eco-justice for Palestine”, 29/06/2014, online at: <http://english.pnn.ps/index.php/opinion/7773-eco-justice-for-palestine>

**BACK TO TOP**

### ❖ Israeli water management experience likely to help Peru

**Lima, Jun. 23.** Peru can replicate Israel's experience in water management, Yosi Aviram, commercial attaché at the Israeli embassy in Peru reported.

According to the diplomat, Israel has an integrated management of its water resources. “In Israel, we recycle 80% of our potable water for agricultural uses, more than any other country in the world. I believe Spain comes in second, with 20%.”

Likewise, Aviram stressed the importance of raising awareness of water conservation. "People should know that water supply is limited and must be preserved. There are technologies that can help companies save money and reduce pollution."

“The idea is to use desalination and recycling in order to maintain the same quality of fresh water that we have,” adding that “Peru has a thousand times more water than Israel, but we have some of the same problems, like, for example, that our population isn’t where the water is, and much of our lands are infertile,” explained Aviram.

Israel's commercial attaché pointed out that water scarcity is a worldwide problem, “Peru has a lot of water, but we have to look at the price of the water, [it’s so low] it doesn’t seem real. People pay much less than its real value, and that’s why there’s not a well-developed water culture.”

Aviran went on to note that International Exhibition & Conference on Water Technology and Environment Control is scheduled for September 17-19 in Lima, and will bring together companies from Israel and from around the world.

Almost half of Israel’s water requirements come from re-used treated wastewater, brackish water, and desalinated water, and Israel’s agricultural sector is a world leader in water use-efficiency and conservation.

The innovative practices and tools that Israel has developed are already being adapted to the needs of other nations that require assistance in water and wastewater management.

At Watec Peru 2014, companies will have the opportunity to discover the latest technologies and methodologies for ensuring high quality water supply services.

“Israeli water management experience likely to help Peru”, 23/06/2014, online at:

<http://www.andina.com.pe/Ingles/noticia-israeli-water-management-experience-likely-to-help-peru-511512.aspx>

**BACK TO TOP**

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❖ **US-Israeli research fund emphasizes interconnection between energy, water**

Projects that focus on the integration of renewable-energy development and water innovation will be a key to future progress of global technology, according to an American- Israeli research fund.

“For us in Israel, the importance of water is very clear,” Limor Nakar-Vincent, US business development and BIRD Energy director at the United States-Israel Binational Industrial Research and Development (BIRD) Foundation, told *The Jerusalem Post* on Thursday.

“But we also know that when we produce clean water the use of energy is really important,” she added.

The BIRD Energy partnership, administered by the US Department of Energy and the Israeli National Infrastructure, Energy and Water Ministry, began as a result of the US-Israel Cooperation in Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 and the Israeli government’s approval of the program in 2008.

It is part of the umbrella BIRD Foundation, and recently announced its sixth call for joint projects between Israeli and US companies – this time with an additional focus on the energy-water nexus.

The maximum conditional grant for a BIRD Energy project is \$1 million, and involves research and development cooperation between two companies, or a company and a university or research institution.

Previously, projects have focused mostly on solar power, alternative fuels, advanced vehicle technologies, smart grid, wind energy and other renewable technologies.

BIRD Energy revealed its fifth-round winners in January, during which the foundation pledged \$3.6m. in direct funding to the projects, which then have the ability to leverage further private-sector investment for a total project value of \$8.8m. Since its inception, BIRD Energy has approved 17 such projects.



“The program after five years has shown clear benefits; it brings mutual benefits for both sides,” Nakar-Vincent said. “You can see the evolvement of the Israeli companies that have participated in the program – they are doing very well and they are growing.”

The added focus on the water-energy nexus is particularly critical, according to Nakar-Vincent, because of the enormous costs associated with producing clean water through methods such as desalination. Research that aims to minimize energy usage and resultant costs is therefore becoming more and more attractive, she explained.

“What we want to let American and Israel companies know is that we are very interested in funding these type of projects,” Nakar-Vincent said.

US Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) recently presented a white paper in the Senate on the importance of progressing with researching combining the two, Nakar-Vincent pointed out. The “Water-Energy Nexus” white paper, published in May, showed that interlinking these resources is “vital for economic growth and sustainability.”

As far as future BIRD Energy projects are concerned – be they about the water-energy nexus or other topics – Nakar-Vincent said that the foundation is open to highrisk projects with promising, early-stage technologies. She also expressed hope that some future projects may be related to the topic of natural gas, though this area has yet to receive approval because does not qualify as renewable energy.

“We are here to share risk with the companies,” she said.

The BIRD Foundation was established in 1977 by the US and Israeli governments to develop and fund industrial research and development partnerships among companies from both countries. To date, BIRD has provided \$308m. in grants for 878 projects, and generates its funding income from repayments by successful projects, as well as interest earned on endowment grants.

BIRD funds up to 50% of each company's research and development expenses, and claims repayments as royalties only if commercial revenues are generated from the project.

Repayments can reach up to 150% of the original conditional grant. BIRD has accumulated \$98m. in repayments from projects and about \$10 billion in sales generated directly and indirectly by foundation- sponsored activities.

“US-Israeli research fund emphasizes interconnection between energy, water”, 22/06/2014, online at:

<http://www.jpost.com/Enviro-Tech/US-Israeli-research-fund-emphasizes-interconnection-between-energy-water-360143>

**BACK TO TOP**

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### ❖ Arab countries suffer from neglect of agriculture sector

The agricultural sectors in Arab countries are almost [neglected or forgotten](#) in the absence of instructions for its recovery and the repair of its operation mechanisms. There may be various reasons for the situations experienced by the agricultural sectors in the various Arab economies. However, negligence or underdevelopment are obvious in the various Arab countries. Agriculture has been facing problems for a long time now, the most important of which are the decline in arable land due to desertification, drought and water shortages. These problems are related to the [environment, the climate and water supply](#).

It is known, for example, that the Nile River reaches Sudan and Egypt; it stems from Uganda and crosses Ethiopia. Over the past years, problems emerged because of Ethiopia's desire to build the [Renaissance Dam](#), which reduces the flow of water to Sudan and Egypt. Moreover, there are issues of redistribution of effluent water in line with the needs of other African countries that the Nile River crosses. Egypt is haunted by serious concerns regarding these inclinations, since it heavily relies on the Nile waters, and given that over the past years and decades, its water requirements have increased due to its population increase. In Syria and Iraq, the construction of dams in Turkey on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers decreased the flow of these rivers to the two Arab countries and increased desertification in the region of al-Jazira in Syria and several regions in Iraq.

The water problem is not limited to Egypt, Sudan, Syria and Iraq but also includes Jordan and Lebanon. This confirms the importance of seriously considering sustainable alternatives to provide the [necessary quantities of water](#) for various uses and enhance the opportunities for revitalizing the agricultural sector in any of the Arab countries. This may require considering the desalination of seawater using modern technologies at adequate costs. In this respect, it will be useful to benefit from the relevant experiences of several countries and to employ the necessary funds in order to break free from the crisis of water shortages and the rising costs of its production.

While the lack of water resources is the main reason behind the inability to revitalize the [agricultural sector](#), there are other issues related to the economic policies adopted in several Arab countries which led to the disruption of agricultural development. Since the early 1950s, and especially after the takeover of military power in Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Sudan, [Yemen](#), and Algeria, the philosophy of agrarian reform was adopted. This philosophy aimed at achieving fair distribution of income for

workers in the sector and was based on the distribution of land owned by major agricultural landowners to peasants.

It is worth mentioning that the processes of land distribution attempt to achieve higher goals, such as giving workers in agricultural production property rights and freeing them from the tyranny of feudal lords. However, these processes failed to create a production system that achieves efficiency of crop production and modernization of production mechanisms, and promotes the peasants' sense of attachment to the land.

Given the lack of attention to the development of rural areas and the improvement of the levels of services, migrations took place from the countryside to the city, and sometimes to other countries in pursuit of a better livelihood.

The most important responsibilities of the economic departments include developing and increasing the contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP in the various Arab countries, given the rising demand for agricultural goods and commodities, such as rice, wheat, corn, meat and dairy products. Arab countries suffer from an acute shortage of these basic materials, thus relying more on imports which raises the cost of imported goods, increases the deficit of the trade balance, balance of payments and the potential of the growing foreign debt. Although Arab countries have joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), none of them have achieved any significant progress in benefiting from its comparative advantages.

After Arab countries were considered key exporting countries of agricultural commodities, they have become today importing countries. For instance, Egypt was one of the most important cotton-exporting countries, and Iraq exported rice and dates until the late 1950s, while Algeria was known for exporting grapes and their derivatives. Yet, these characteristics have regressed, and Arab countries have become dependent on several countries to [import their needs for food](#), such as EU countries that export their agricultural surplus at low costs, due to the subsidy policy that probably contradicts with the free competition and efficiency that the WTO has as a goal.

In Egypt, the contribution of agriculture to the GDP is 14.5%, in Iraq it is 3.3%, in Jordan 3.2%, in Lebanon 4.6%, in Morocco 15.1%, in Saudi Arabia 2%, in Algeria 4.4%, in Sudan 27.4%, in Syria 17.6% and 8.6% in Tunisia. So, the contribution of agriculture to the GDP in Arab countries is significantly different, probably because of the nature of the economies and the predominance of

important sectors, such as the oil industry in some countries. Yet, things should not be measured by this standard that may be pro-forma. There are important countries where the contribution of agriculture does not exceed 5%, such as the US, Canada and Germany. These countries, however, have an abundant agricultural production, various agricultural products are available in their markets, and they export the surplus.

What is needed is a review of the agricultural situation in Arab countries, and how to adopt policies to revive the production, address fundamental problems — such as lack of water, the provision of funds, innovation in the production process — and to encourage the labor force to join the posts available in the agricultural sector. It may be useful to work on stimulating the private sector in Arab countries in order to establish agricultural production enterprises under modern tools and mechanisms. Moreover, the governments must facilitate the procedures and laws, and develop an infrastructure to encourage work in this sector.

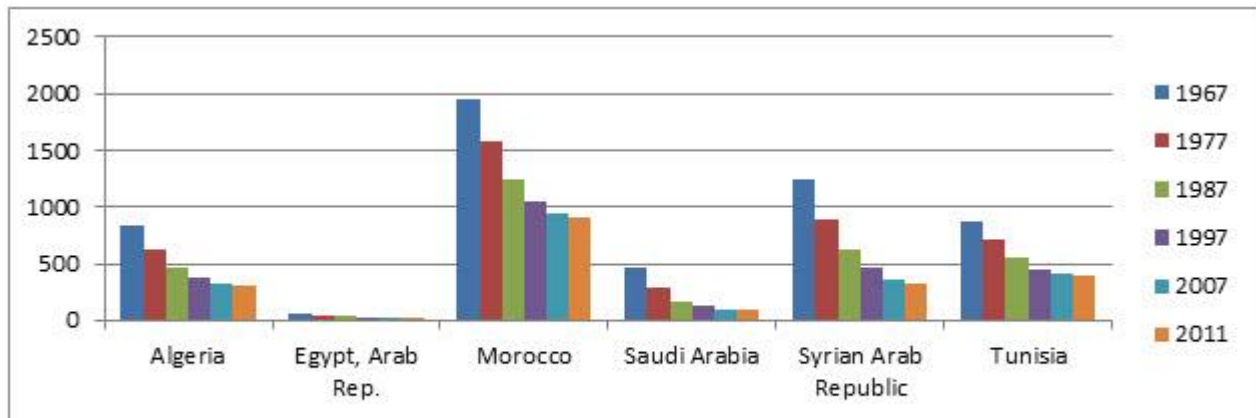
“Arab countries suffer from neglect of agriculture sector”, 26/04/2014, online at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/06/arab-agriculture-sector-neglect-repercussions.html#>

**BACK TO TOP**

### ❖ Is Water Scarcity Dampening Growth Prospects in the Middle East and North Africa?

As turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa region mounts, concerns for water scarcity seem remote in light of deteriorating humanitarian and political circumstances. Yet, the roots of political rebellion in Syria are integrally linked with access to water resources<sup>[1]</sup> and rising water scarcity is viewed by some as the Achilles heel of higher growth prospects for the region as a whole.

**Figure 1. Renewable Internal Freshwater Resources Per Capita, Select Countries (cubic meters)**



Source: World Development Indicators Database Accessed May 2014

### Dwindling Water Supplies

Today, countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)<sup>[2]</sup> are the most water scarce globally, with per capita freshwater supplies well below the water “poverty” line of 1,000 cubic meters per year (Figure 1). Arid conditions, low and variable rainfall and high rates of evaporation characterize the natural environment and compound the region’s vulnerability to climate change. In Syria for example, a predicted rise in temperature, lack of rainfall and unpredictable weather could result in desertification of 60 percent of land area.<sup>[3]</sup>

Such factors, however, have neither discouraged ambitious agricultural development schemes nor dreams of food self-sufficiency and security—frequently at high economic and social costs.

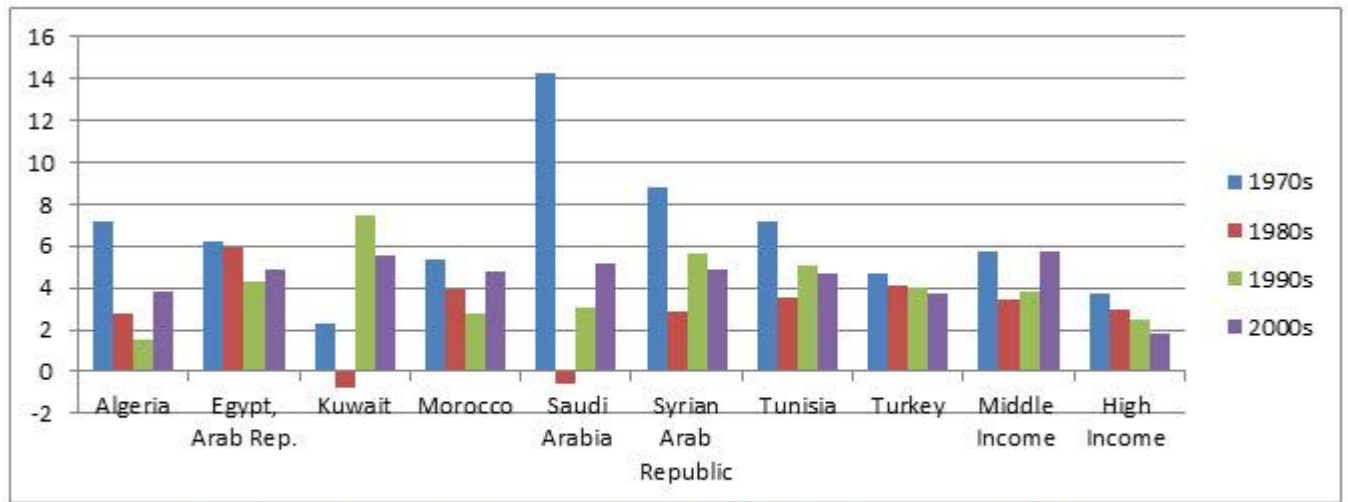
In Saudi Arabia, for example, agricultural development policies and irrigation practices adopted since the 1980s are linked with an estimated depletion of two thirds of the country’s “fossil” water supplies.<sup>[4]</sup>



## Growth and Rising Water Deficits

Is the pace and pattern of growth linked with rising water scarcity? From 1967 to 2011—a period characterized by “modern” growth rates, rapid population expansion and the consolidation of new nation states—per capita freshwater resources in several countries fell by an estimated 60 percent (Figures 2,3). Growth in “relative water demand”<sup>[5]</sup> was commensurate—accelerating in the case of Syria from less than 20 percent in the 1960s to more than 80 percent by the 1990s.

**Figure 2. Average Annual GDP Growth, Select MENA Countries**

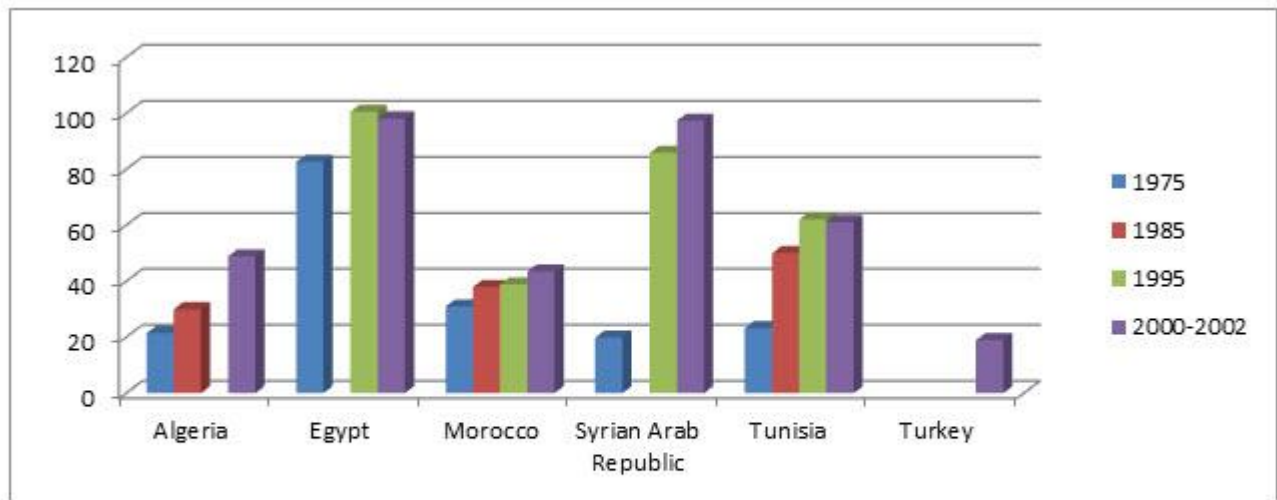


Source: World Development Indicators Database Accessed May 2014. Data is annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency. Aggregates are based on constant 2005 U.S. dollars.

Region-wide, efforts to accommodate growth in demand focused primarily on “supply enhancement” i.e. building dam and desalination capacity, with the costs of such investments likely rising with levels of water development.<sup>[6]</sup> In Morocco, an estimated 400 percent increase in public expenditure commitments to enhance urban, peri-urban and rural water supply and sanitation was linked with an estimated 75 percent increase in access to potable water from 2004/5-9.<sup>[7]</sup> Such figures do not bode well for accommodating future growth in water demand, with potential adverse effects for the region’s growth performance. Maximum rates of output allocated to boost water supplies do not necessarily guarantee higher growth in water constrained environments such as the MENA region. What matters is that the net marginal productivity of capital exceeds the higher output costs of water supply provision and that there are sufficient freshwater resources available.<sup>[8]</sup> On this score, the link between water constraints and future growth prospects also looks challenging. From 1960-98, growth in MENA countries was very capital intensive, with shares of capital much higher than conventional

averages and negligible, frequently negative total factor productivity growth.[9] This trend appears to be continuing: Total factor productivity growth was negative for most of the GCC countries over the 2000s and only slightly above 2 percent for Algeria.[10]

**Figure 3. Total Freshwater Withdrawal As Percentage of Total Actual Renewable Water Resources (%)**



Source: FAO Aquastat Accessed May 2014. Note: Data for individual countries roughly corresponds to periods shown with the following exceptions. Relevant data for Algeria is for 2001, for Egypt 2000, for Morocco 2000, for Syria 1997, 2002, for Tunisia, 2001, Turkey 2003.

### Competing Demands for Water

Today, agriculture remains a vital and volatile economic sector, generating 15 percent of Morocco's GDP, nearly one quarter of the country's exports and employing nearly half the labor force.[11] It is also the largest consumer of freshwater resources. In Syria, agriculture accounted for 95 percent of total water withdrawals during the 2000s, compared to just 3 percent for domestic use and less than 2 percent for industrial use.[12] Water losses are also high, estimated at 60 percent in some areas due to inefficient irrigation and domestic water supply networks.[13]

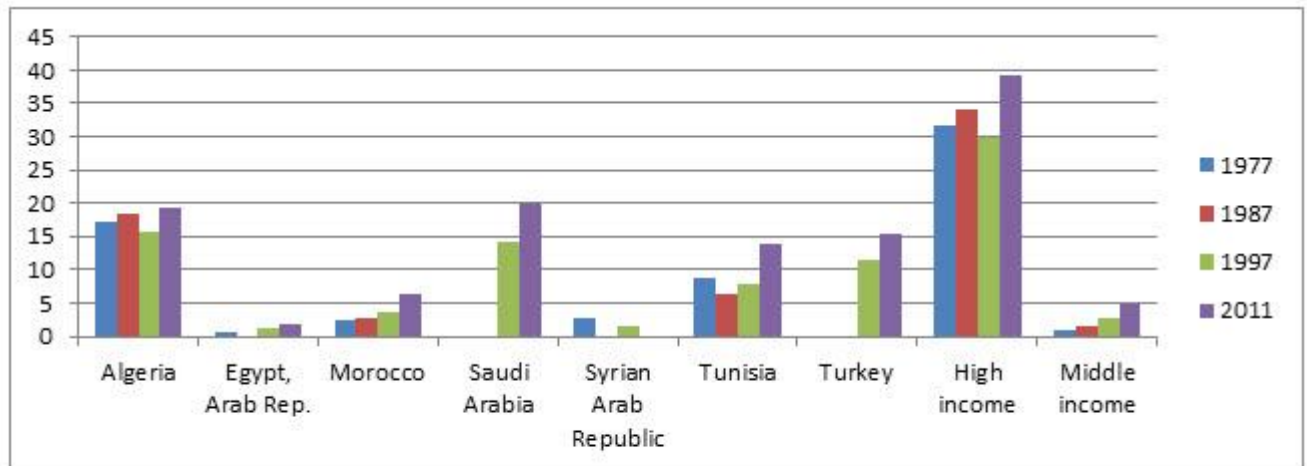
Given that the marginal value of water use in irrigation is generally well below municipal and industrial uses, such outcomes are clearly linked with political, security and ideological concerns. One concern in particular is food security. Arab countries in the MENA region are the largest net importers of cereal in the world and highly vulnerable to variability and shocks in global commodity prices.[14] Generous producer and consumer subsidies for some staple commodities play a role.

In most MENA countries, irrigation water is priced below cost and when combined with energy, fertilizer, credit subsidies and price supports, artificially raises the marginal value product of irrigation water and expectations of what farmers “should” pay for government services.[15] Such measures can also subsidize select groups—in many cases benefitting owners of large farms.[16] Energy subsidies, in particular, enable the transfer of surface water across large distances and pumping of “fossilized” groundwater. Most users do not pay a “resource” charge for groundwater use and in countries such as Syria the proliferation of unlicensed private wells in the Greater Damascus region (together with over-pumping, pollution of groundwater and frequent droughts) have contributed to severe water shortages in the city of Damascus since 2000. [17]

### Addressing Policy and Market Failures

New thinking is clearly required on the balance between efficiency and political, security and ideological objectives underlying water pricing and allocation. A key challenge is to raise productivity, particularly in water use (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Water Productivity (constant 2005 US\$ GDP per cubic meter of total freshwater withdrawal)**



Source: World Development Indicators accessed May 2014. Note: Water productivity is calculated as total constant 2005 US\$ GDP per cubic meter of total freshwater withdrawal.

This requires further consideration of broader issues such as identifying workable levels of commodity price volatility, the respective roles of domestic production, imports and strategic reserves, the use of trade policy and market investments to close gaps between domestic and border prices and better targeting of support to vulnerable households.[18]

A combination of quantity controls (i.e. standards, bans, permits and quotas), market based interventions (taxes, user fees, and subsidies) market creation (tradable rights and permits) and technology (desalination, recycling, and water efficient plumbing) together with public engagement (information and conservation campaigns) can improve water resource management.[\[19\]](#) Regional experience in this regard is promising.[\[20\]](#) The combined effects of more flexible water allocation to agriculture, particularly during periods of drought, volumetric pricing (based on irrigation water use, not land area, such as in Tunisia and Morocco), research (such as the International Center Agricultural Research in Dry Areas in Syria) and risk management support to farmers, market and logistics supply chain investments together with water markets (as in Morocco) and “smart” irrigation (see United Arab Emirates) can all help to improve the efficiency of water use and boost agricultural product value per unit of water. Gradual replacement of freshwater with treated wastewater and investments to raise sewage effluent quality to maximize re-use potential in agriculture can increase with more efficient irrigation water pricing.

There is also a need for greater monitoring and regulations to address deteriorating quantity and quality of both surface and groundwater. Satellite images from the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment reveal that the Tigris Euphrates Basin is losing water faster than any other place in the world, except northern India, with the loss of 117 million acre feet of stored freshwater between 2003-2009.[\[21\]](#) Moreover, pollution in the Tigris River caused by the discharge of drainage water from agricultural areas and sewage discharge near Baghdad is a major constraint to freshwater availability in Iraq.[\[22\]](#)

International cooperation across river basins is becoming critical for determining how much water can be consumed while ensuring sufficient flow requirements to mitigate shortages, salinization and pollution for downstream riparians. Such measures appear increasingly challenging but urgent: The International Institute for Sustainable Development estimates that the Jordan River may shrink by 80 percent by 2100.[\[23\]](#) Institutional and organizational arrangements anchored in the subsidiarity[\[24\]](#) principle such as watershed/user associations and river basin management organization can help to lower transaction costs of cooperation.

Preserving groundwater quantity and quality is a particular challenge both within and across countries in the MENA region. In the Sana’a Basin in Yemen, for example, the groundwater table is

falling by as much as 6 meters per year and government officials are considering moving the location of Sana'a, the capital city.[25] “Resource” fees which take into account future value of water use lost as a result of aquifer damage can help to mitigate over pumping, in addition to regulations and fees to address pollution. In countries such as Morocco, the artificial recharge of aquifers has had limited but promising benefits.

Given that price elasticities are higher for industrial and domestic use, pricing interventions can be effective but there are poverty and equity concerns. In the Beirut Mount Lebanon region, for example, which accounts for 60 percent of connected households, consumers receive only three hours of daily water supply during the summer months. Lack of metering, inefficient pricing and poor utility performance all play a role, contributing to the growth of, an off-network private water market accounting for 75 percent of total household water expenditure.[26] For industrial and domestic uses, increasing block tariffs, improved metering and pollution control, refurbishment of water infrastructure and investments to minimize industrial and domestic per unit water use can all boost water savings. Downsizing, greater financial independence and performance standards for public water utilities together with private concessions, appropriate regulatory oversight of tariff caps, service standards and “work” funds can improve service quality as well as connectivity to poor households.

New technologies for wastewater recycling are advancing rapidly, with significant potential for expanded use in MENA countries. In Libya, for example, only 7 percent of wastewater generated is treated and reused in agriculture and landscaping.[27] Similarly, with declining costs and rapid growth in capacity, desalinated water is becoming ubiquitous, supplying more than half of the region’s municipal water needs, to the point where countries such as the UAE are building the world’s largest underground reservoir of desalinated water to safeguard supplies.[28] Environmental costs of desalination are rising, however, given high energy costs and adverse impacts on seawater salinity and marine life.

As economic, social and political pressures mount in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, the international focus will shift increasingly to security and conflict-related engagement. Yet the grim realities of rising water scarcity and its implications for growth, health and living standards can no longer be sidelined in efforts at international dialogue and engagement.



- [1] From 2006-11, an estimated 60% of Syria's land experienced one of the worst droughts in modern history and displaced 1.5 million people, contributing to rising social tensions and instability. Climate and Security Report. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/09/10/drought-helped-caused-syrias-war-will-climate-change-bring-more-like-it/>
- [2] Countries surveyed in this note correspond roughly to the World Bank's Middle East and North Africa region with the addition of Turkey and excluding Djibouti.
- [3] Strategic Foresight Group 2011. The Blue Peace: Rethinking Middle East Water.
- [4] Nonrenewable aquifers represent the major source of water in Saudi Arabia and it is estimated that these reserves may have been formed 600 million years ago. Water in these aquifers can be found at depths ranging from 100-500 meters and up to 2500 meters. For a more complete discussion see E. Elhadj 2004 Camels Don't Fly, Deserts Don't Bloom: an Assessment of Saudi Arabia's Experiment in Desert Agriculture. Occasional Paper No. 48, School of Oriental and African Studies/King's College London. University of London.
- [5] Calculated as freshwater withdrawals as a percentage of total resources.
- [6] For a discussion of the US experience, see K. Frederick 1993 Balancing Water Demands With Supplies. World Bank Technical Paper No. 189.
- [7] World Bank Morocco Water Sector Projects. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/0,,contentMDK:22716336~menuPK:3949143~pagePK:146736~piPK:226340~theSitePK:256299,00.html>
- [8] For a complete exposition see E. Barbier 2004. Water and Economic Growth. Economic Record. Vol. 80, March: 1-16.
- [9] A. Abu-Qarn and S. Abu Bader 2007 Sources of Growth Revisited: Evidence from Selected MENA Countries. World Development Vol 25 (5): 752-771.
- [10] Data are compiled for Nonoil Total Factor Productivity Growth. See International Monetary Fund 2013 Regional Outlook: Middle East and North Africa Region.
- [11] World Bank 2013 Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Global Environment Facility Trust Fund Grant In the Amount of US \$ 6.44million to the Kingdom of Morocco For a Social and Integrated Agriculture Project.
- [12] World Bank 2007. Making the Most of Scarcity: Accountability for Better Water Management in the Middle East and North Africa. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Water withdrawal (water abstraction) is the gross amount of water extracted from any source, either permanently or temporarily for a given use. It can be either diverted towards distribution networks or directly used and includes consumptive use, conveyance losses and return flow.
- [13] Strategic Foresight Group 2011. The Blue Peace: Rethinking Middle East Water.
- [14] For a more complete discussion see J. Lampietti, N. Magnan, S. Michaels, A. McCalla, M. Saade, N. Khouri 2009 Improving Food Security in Arab Countries. Report No. 5022. World Bank.
- [15] For a more complete discussion, see K. W. Easter 1992 Intersectoral Water Allocation and Pricing. In Country Experiences with Water Resources Management: Economic, Institutional, Technological and Environmental Issues. G. Le Moigne, S. Barghouti, G. Feder, L. Garbus and M. Xie Eds. World Bank Technical Paper No. 175.
- [16] The majority of Morocco's agricultural exports (75%) and half of agricultural GDP are generated by a small group of commercial farmers producing high value irrigated crops for international markets and milk for domestic consumption. World Bank 2013
- [17] Strategic Foresight Group 2011.
- [18] For a review of country experiences see World Bank 2007 Managing Food Price Risks and Instability in an Environment of Market Liberalization.
- [19] For further discussion see World Bank 1993 World Development Report: Sustainable Development in a Dynamic World.
- [20] The following paragraphs draw in part from country experiences surveyed in World Bank 2007, Strategic Foresights Group 2011 and Easter 1992.
- [21] J. Hammer 2013 Is a Lack of Water to Blame for the Conflict in Syria? Smithsonian Magazine. June.
- [22] Strategic Foresights Group 2011.
- [23] Strategic Foresights Group 2011.
- [24] Tasks should be undertaken by the most localized entity competent to do so. For a more complete discussion see Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) Water and Development: An Evaluation of World Bank Support 1997-2007. World Bank.



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- [25] IEG 2007 and J. Vidal 2011. What Does the Arab World Do When Its Water Runs Out? Guardian. The Observer, February 19, 2011.  
[26] World Bank 2010 Lebanon: Water Sector Public Expenditure Review.  
[27] World Bank 2007.  
[28] World Bank 2007 and Vidal 2011

“Is Water Scarcity Dampening Growth Prospects in the Middle East and North Africa?”, 24/06/2014, online at:  
<http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/06/24-water-scarcity-growth-prospects-middle-east-north-africa-devlin>

### ❖ Nile River Politics: When Sisi Met Desalegn

Ethiopia's self-financed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is a major issue among the nations of the Nile basin, and especially for Egypt, notes **Nizar Manek**

The guests had been seated at the tables of the great hall in Addis Ababa, and fanfares rang out as the Emperor Haile Selassie walked in with President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt at his right hand. Nasser was a “tall, stocky, imperious man, his head thrust forward and his wide jaws thrust into a smile,” next to him Selassie's “diminutive silhouette,” his “thin expressive face, his glistening penetrating eyes” worn by the years. Behind the extraordinary pair, the remaining leaders also entered in their pairs, writes Ryszard Kapuściński in his chronicle of the fall of the Abyssinian monarchy and the intrigues at Selassie's court. The audience rose; everyone was applauding. “Ovations sounded for unity and the Emperor. Then the feast began.”

Their corresponding persons, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi of Egypt and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn — a pair less extraordinary, their relations less gregarious — find themselves seated together on June 26 at the 23rd Ordinary Summit of the African Union in Equatorial Guinea. During his presidential campaign, El-Sisi spoke of his interest in travelling to Ethiopia “not once, but ten times” for the mutual benefit of the two countries. As El-Sisi addressed the crowd at his presidential inauguration ceremony at the Qubba Palace in Cairo, Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus looked on among Arab royals, the First-Vice President of Sudan, Lieutenant General Bakri Hassan Saleh, and heads of state, from Chad's Idriss Déby and Eritrea's Isaias Afwerki to Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who has held power in Equatorial Guinea even longer than El-Sisi's military predecessor, Hosni Mubarak. El-Sisi professed to the crowd he would protect pan-Africanism, and he wouldn't allow Ethiopia's self-financed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) to “cause a crisis or a problem with sisterly Ethiopia.” Over centuries, the Nile has tied the two countries together. Ethiopia's priority now is power generation, while Egypt, a desert country, prioritises irrigation against the Nile water source countries on the Central African and Ethiopian plateaus, which have greater rainwater.

The GERD is a major issue of peace or war. As he summits in Malabo with Adhanom over Egypt's Nile water crisis, El-Sisi finds himself confronted with deep and changing historical forces. When Britain occupied Egypt in 1882, Britain immediately understood it had become “ruler of a

hydrological society,” and that the irrigation question was central to maintaining stability along its Suez Canal, notes Terje Tved, professor at the universities of Bergen and Oslo and an authority on the Nile. Then everything changed after the First World War, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the Egyptian revolution of 1919, and yet Britain’s strategic interests remained the same. This trickled into a series of colonial treaties, including the 1959 Nile Waters agreement, which contributed to Sudan becoming Egypt’s downstream hydro-political ally, and safeguarded Egypt and Sudan’s over 90 percent share of Nile waters. Ethiopia, the source of the Nile, was left only with ghosts of discord. Selassie himself was left affronted by Nasser’s marginalisation of Ethiopia in the 1959 agreement, and was to be overthrown in a 1974 coup d’état. At the same time, notes a March 21 2011 memorandum from the international businessman and dam engineer Dr Ibrahim Mostafa Kamel submitted to the first post-Mubarak government of Essam Sharaf, since 1969 Egypt has lost an estimated 100 million tons annually of silt, “creating a 4.1 billion silt dump which lies over the Egyptian-Sudanese border.”

Even if he is a diminutive Nasser, El-Sisi’s jaws will not likely be thrust into a smile, even a wry one. It is not even sure whether there will be a feast as in Kapuściński’s tale, or if so, whether it will be sumptuous. Only three days before El-Sisi’s presidential inauguration, the governments of Ethiopia and South Sudan arrested three Egyptians reportedly sent by Cairo to spy on dam projects in South Sudan and western Ethiopia, principal among them the 6,000-megawatt GERD. Egypt fears the GERD is a threat to its lifeline, the Blue Nile at Ethiopia’s Lake Tana upon which Egypt depends for over 85% of its Nile water flow. As the dispute fanned to a flame earlier this year, Egypt boycotted talks over the dam as they ground to an acrimonious standstill, and followed with a diplomatic card game to enlist the support of external stakeholders and African countries keen to capitalise on strategic alliances.

The real threat to Egypt is the reaction of Sudan, given its part in the 1959 agreement; not the GERD itself. If there are signs of a rapprochement between Egypt and sisterly Ethiopia, it is by Egypt’s necessity; it coincides with a growing rift between El-Sisi’s Egypt and Omer Hassan Ahmed El-Bashir’s Islamist regime in Sudan, a former ally of Mohammed Morsi’s government of Muslim Brothers. Egypt courts South Sudan in spite of Sudan, and besides Egypt’s anti-Islamist alliance with Saudi Arabia, there are signs of a rapprochement with Libya’s anti-Islamist leader General Khalifa Belqasim Haftar. While the Sudanese vice-president Bakri Hassan Saleh attended El-Sisi’s

presidential inauguration, he has also reaffirmed Sudan's commitment to the GERD; Ethiopia is also an important strategic alliance for Sudan. One reason is its interests in the six-month long conflict in South Sudan.

The Nile Basin Initiative, which met in Khartoum last Thursday, has called on Egypt to re-involve itself in the activities in the initiative, which both Sudan and Egypt left four years ago in protest over the signing of the Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement by four Nile Basin countries (Rwanda, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania). Burundi and Kenya later signed onto the NBI, which removes Egypt's veto power over upstream irrigation and hydro-power projects. It is bound to reduce Egypt and Sudan's historically protected Nile water share. After El-Sisi overthrew Morsi, Sudan returned to the NBI. Its new chairman also happens to be Sudan's Minister of Water Resources and Electricity, Muattaz Musa Abdallah Salim. "I should like to place an appeal to our sister nation Egypt," Salim said at the meeting of Nile Basin water ministers, according to AFP. "Your resumption of your activities in the NBI will further consolidate our gains and integrity in the region."

For M. Jalal Hashim, a professor at Comboni University College and a close observer of Nile politics, the flutters of Khartoum's heart have more to do with Khartoum's calculations for political survival than technical issues connected with transboundary water management. "If Khartoum stood against the GERD, this may lead Ethiopia to host the military opposition of the regime, and the remaining of the regime in Sudan is a matter of inertia, not strength," he says. "There is enough opposition to put it out." During his brief reign, Morsi, who is now languishing behind bars in El-Sisi's Egypt, showed his readiness to give the disputed area of land at the Egypt-Sudan border called the Halayeb triangle to Sudan, a matter Hashim thinks played a role in his overthrow.

When the Ethiopian delegation brought up the topic of the GERD for the first time, in Kampala according to Hashim, the Sudanese delegation was late by hours due to disruptions in airway programmes. When they joined the meeting, he says, they discovered that the Egyptian delegation had already blessed the project. They were "furious" and made clear their reservations to the GERD being built in an area vulnerable to volcanic eruptions and notified their minister, who, by his turn, notified his Egyptian counterpart in protest. "If such a tremor and earthquake takes place and destroys the GERD that would be disastrous to both Sudan and Egypt," according to Hashim. "The

water will be almost 26-metres high in Khartoum for days. The threat of dam collapse can wipe out Sudan, while Egypt would not be affected directly.”

The Sudanese experts repeatedly warned their government while negotiating with the Ethiopians, “hoping that wisdom would prevail, but in vain,” says Hashim. According to him, Khartoum’s position at the time prompted the Egyptian delegation to withdraw their agreement to the GERD, while Khartoum’s position has now aligned with the rising power of Ethiopia, which Egypt continues to contest. Even while Ethiopia’s award of a no-bid contract to an Italian company to construct the US\$4.8bn. dam contributed, alongside Egypt’s earlier protests, to it being left without concessional finance, the World Bank is heavily invested in Ethiopia and region. At the end of last month, the bank approved US\$178.5mn. credit and a US\$254.5mn. grant to help Ethiopia develop its geothermal energy resources to boost electricity supply. Several electricity export contracts have already been signed, and Yemen’s Minister of Electricity Saleh Sumai and Adhanom have now agreed to begin studying electrical interconnection between the two countries across the Red Sea through Djibouti.

Ethiopia seeks to capitalise on its new economic development, part of which involves the Nile; Egypt faces the winds of an economic and national cohesion crisis. Sounds for unity are growing; but because Egypt is fast running out of alternatives, and faces major change on the Nile. As the late rebel-turned statesman Meles Zenawi said in an interview on Egyptian television, the relationship between the two countries is “like a very old marriage, which has no possibility of divorce. It has its ups and downs, but it is very solid. It is of long standing.” “Sometimes we quarrel, sometimes we agree,” Zenawi told the Egyptian interviewer, radio waves fizzing in the background. “That has been the case for thousands of years.”

“Nile River Politics: When Sisi Met Desalegn”, 26/06/2014, online at: <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=66786>

**BACK TO TOP**

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❖ **Egypt, Ethiopia to resume talks over Nile water soon**

CAIRO, June 27 (KUNA) -- Egypt and Ethiopia have agreed on a number of measures to bolster ties and iron out differences of the River Nile Water, said Friday the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

In a press statement, the Foreign Ministry said that a joint statement had been reached following recent talks between Egyptian President Abdelfatah Al-Sisi and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn on the sidelines of the African Union Summit.

In this joint statement, Egypt and Ethiopia reiterated commitment of mutual respect of international laws and joint work to achieve common interests.

The two sides also agreed on resuming the meetings of the joint technical committee, in charge of studying the effect of the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on Egypt's quota of Nile River water.

They concurred on giving priority for water resources development projects in both countries.

"The Ethiopian government has expressed commitment to avoid any possible negative impact for Renaissance Dam on Egypt's usages of Nile water and in turn, the Egyptian government is committed to constructive dialogue with Ethiopia that takes in account the development needs and aspirations of Ethiopian nation," reads the Foreign Ministry statement.

The Egyptian President and Ethiopian PM decided to form a higher joint committee to bolster political, economic, social and security cooperation. (end) zab.ibi

"Egypt, Ethiopia to resume talks over Nile water soon", 27/06/2014, online at:  
<http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2385025&language=en>

**BACK TO TOP**



### ❖ Construction on Laos's Mekong dams harried by lawsuits, political pressure

In a gesture likely aimed at placating its neighbors, Laos has agreed to submit its second Mekong River dam to the regional consultation process it sidestepped last year.

But experts say Laos is nowhere close to abandoning the dam and another it's building on the Mekong. Environmental groups say these projects threaten the livelihood of tens of millions of people who depend on the mighty river.

“I fear that this will, at the best, only delay the construction by six months,” Marc Goichot, who works for environmental group WWF's Greater Mekong program on sustainable hydropower, told *Thanh Nien News*.

“There are not yet any signs that the proponents of the project are taking seriously the concerns voiced by other Mekong riparian governments,” he said, adding that he believes the Lao government is unlikely to reconsider the project.

Last September, Laos announced that it would embark on the Don Sahong project, the second of 11 dams planned by Laos on the lower reaches of the 4,900-kilometer (3,045-mile)-long Mekong, which is second only to the Amazon in terms of biodiversity. Work on the Don Sahong dam is slated to begin in December at a site less than two kilometers from the Cambodian border, according to Lao officials.

Environmental groups have warned that the 260-megawatt dam threatens to block the only channel that currently allows year-round fish migrations on a large scale and will certainly wipe out one of the last populations of endangered Irrawaddy dolphins.

Laos, which shrugged off those concerns altogether, has also been at odds with its riparian neighbors -- particularly Vietnam and Cambodia -- over the project's prior consultation (e.g. regional decision-making) process.

Laos maintains that it need only notify its neighbors of its intent to build the dam because it is located neither in the tributary nor on the mainstream of the Mekong. It's downstream neighbors, however, have demanded that the consultation process take place before the dam is built, citing its trans-boundary impacts.

Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia are bound by a 1995 Mekong treaty that requires each signatory to hold inter-governmental consultations before damming the river. No single country has veto powers and Laos will have the final say on whether or not to proceed.

At a regional meeting of the Mekong River Commission -- a regional body established to coordinate dam projects on the river -- in Bangkok on Thursday, Laos said it would agree to resubmit the Don Sahong project to the prior consultation process.

But environmentalists say they view the process as a diplomatic formality.

During the meeting, Laos' Deputy Energy Minister Viraphonh Viravong told participants "with your support and constructive input, the Lao government will continue to develop the project in a responsible and sustainable manner."

He told reporters that construction would not start during the six-month consultation process. "No, we will not start building. That is courtesy. Laotians are courteous," he was quoted by Reuters as saying Friday.

Naturally, that didn't go over too well.

A recent site visit by International Rivers, a California-based environmental group, has confirmed that construction work towards the Don Sahong dam in southern Laos has continued despite opposition from neighboring governments and ongoing calls for regional consultation.

The site visit held in early June confirmed that workers have begun construction of a bridge connecting the mainland to Don Sadam Island, the group said. The bridge will create an access route for construction on the Hou Sahong Channel, it added.

"One has to wonder how sincere a consultation process is when infrastructure in support of the project is being put into place at the same time," said Ian Baird, an expert on Laos and specialist on hydro-power dams and fisheries at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

#### **‘Laos has few resources’**

In November 2012, Laos broke ground on the US\$3.8-billion 1,260-megawatt Xayaburi dam project despite vehement objections from environmental groups and its neighbors who said the 810-meter

(2,600ft) dam would unleash massive ecological changes on a river that feeds around 60 million people. The project is now 40 percent complete, according to Lao officials.

Opponents of the Xayaburi and Don Sahong projects said their commencement would usher in the construction of the 9 other dams planned by Laos on the Mekong, which begins in the Tibetan plateau and flows through China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam before emptying into the East Sea (internationally known as the South China Sea).

At that time, Laos prematurely insisted that the prior consultation process on the Xayaburi project was already over, which drew sharp criticism from three other Mekong nations. Since then, the four countries have failed to agree on whether or not the process is still ongoing.

“The failure to reach consensus was interpreted by Laos as a green light to move ahead with construction of the Xayaburi dam,” Goichot said. “We cannot see any signs that this will be different for Don Sahong.”

Landlocked Laos plans to become the "battery of Southeast Asia" by exporting the vast majority of its power - mostly to Thailand - and has promoted the Xayaburi dam as a potential source of income and investment that will spur its small economy.

“Laos has few resources. Hydroelectricity is one, and the Lao government is determined to exploit it,” said Martin Stuart-Fox, a Laos expert at the University of Queensland in Australia. “Most dams have been relatively uncontroversial because they have been on tributaries. Don Sahong and Xayaburi are controversial because they are on the Mekong itself,” he said.

“From the Lao point of view, why should they be prevented from exploiting the river?”

### **Light at the end of the tunnel?**

But on the bright side, the concession made by Laos has come at a convenient juncture for environmental groups and activists.

On Tuesday, Reuters reported that a Thai court agreed to hear a lawsuit against state-owned Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and four other state bodies for agreeing to buy electricity from the Xayaburi project. Thailand plans to buy around 95 percent of the electricity generated by the massive mainstream dam.

Villagers from Thai provinces near the Mekong petitioned the Administrative Court in 2012 to suspend a power purchasing agreement signed by EGAT and Laos's Xayaburi Power Company Limited, but the court ruled it had no jurisdiction to hear the case. That decision was reversed on Tuesday when the Supreme Administrative Court sided with villagers, who are demanding full environmental and health impact assessments.

The court will now call on the Thai government agencies to respond to questions and allow the plaintiff to rebut their response. The court could take a year or longer to render a verdict.

“[If] the power purchase agreement is suspended or cancelled, it will be financially risky for the developer to proceed with construction on the Xayaburi Dam as there will be no buyer for the dam’s electricity,” said Ame Trandem, Southeast Asia program director for International Rivers.

A growing civil society movement against dam construction has taken hold throughout the region. Meanwhile, Vietnam and Cambodia have reiterated their calls for a 10-year moratorium on all dam construction on the Mekong's mainstream.

Numerous studies have underlined the threat the dam poses to Vietnam’s Mekong Delta (the world’s rice basket) which is already sinking and shrinking.

Activists say that although it is still not too late to halt the dams and devise a plan to promote the sustainable development of the Mekong, success in doing so would hinge on the political will of governments to make sound scientific decisions before forging ahead with any more dam construction.

If the dam-building binge continues unchecked, “Vietnam, as the most downstream country, has probably the most to lose, but millions of people in Cambodia Laos and Thailand are also at risk,” Goichot said.

“Construction on Laos's Mekong dams harried by lawsuits, political pressure”, 27/06/2014, online at: <http://www.thanhniennews.com/politics/construction-on-laoss-mekong-dams-harried-by-lawsuits-political-pressure-27804.html>

**BACK TO TOP**

### ❖ Laos presses on with Don Sahong dam

Laos looks set to forge ahead with building its controversial Don Sahong hydropower dam project on the Mekong River, despite having agreed to submit the project to the scrutiny of its regional neighbours. The...

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“Laos presses on with Don Sahong dam”, 27/06/2014, online at: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/417617/laos-presses-on-with-don-sahong-dam>

**BACK TO TOP**

## ❖ Save the Mekong Coalition Calls on Prime Ministers to Cancel Mekong Mainstream Dams

**Bangkok, Thailand** - As Mekong ministers meet for the 20th Meeting of the Mekong River Commission Council in Bangkok tomorrow, the Save the Mekong coalition has issued a statement calling upon the Prime Ministers of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam to work together to address the threat posed by a proposed cascade of eleven Mekong mainstream dams to the region's food security and people. The coalition requests that immediate action be taken to cancel the planned mainstream dams, including the [Xayaburi](#) and [Don Sahong](#) dams, which are already under construction. And to ensure that future decisions over the shared river are based on scientific knowledge, transboundary impact assessment, robust consultations, and respect for the rights of all riparian nations and the public to a transparent and participatory decision-making process.

“The Mekong mainstream dams are gambling with our food security, by irreversibly harming vital fish migrations and blocking sediment needed for our floodplains,” said Youk Senglong from the Fisheries Action Coalition Team in Cambodia. “It’s time the Mekong leaders recognize the gravity of the situation and take action. Hundreds of thousands of people in the region and internationally have been demanding the dams to be cancelled through petitions, letters and protests.”

“The Cambodian and Vietnamese governments have repeatedly demanded that the Mekong mainstream dams’ transboundary impacts are studied and that decisions over the mainstream dams are deferred ten years,” said Nguy Thi Khanh from GreenID and the Vietnam River Network. “Yet, Laos has continued to unilaterally push forward with the Xayaburi and Don Sahong dams, without adequate knowledge of the risks and a meaningful consultation process. At the same time Thailand’s companies and banks are profiting at the expense of regional cooperation and millions of people in the region who depend on the Mekong River for their food and livelihood.”

At Thursday’s meeting, the Mekong River Commission (MRC)’s Council is scheduled to make a decision whether the Don Sahong Dam in Lao PDR must undergo prior consultation as requested by Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam, [after failing to reach agreement during a MRC’s Special Joint Committee Meeting in January](#). As the second Mekong mainstream dam, the Don Sahong Dam, is already following the dangerous precedent set by the Xayaburi Dam, in which project construction began while MRC deliberations were underway and unilateral action has triumphed over regional



interest. Furthermore in both projects transboundary impact assessments have been absent, unproven technologies are being proposed as mitigation solutions, and attempts to follow the MRC's procedures have exposed significant ambiguities and problems.

"It's clear the MRC has failed to guarantee a balanced and fair decision-making process, in which upstream and downstream considerations are considered. It's a broken process in desperate need of reform, during a time when the Mekong River's health and productivity is at stake," said Tek Vannara from NGO Forum on Cambodia. "Decisions over the future of the Mekong River cannot continue to be made on a project-by-project basis without consideration of the cumulative transboundary impacts or the opinion of the millions of riparian people who rely upon the river."

"It's time to cancel the Mekong mainstream dams and protect the river for present and future generations. Thailand doesn't need electricity from destructive dams that will undermine our development," said Terrapong Pomun of Living River Siam in Thailand. "We urge the Lao government to immediately stop all construction of the Xayaburi and Don Sahong projects, for Thailand to cancel the Xayaburi Dam's power purchase agreement, and for the riparian rights of neighboring countries and all peoples dependent on the river to be respected. As a first step towards improved Mekong cooperation, the Don Sahong Dam must undergo prior consultation."

"Save the Mekong Coalition Calls on Prime Ministers to Cancel Mekong Mainstream Dams", 24/06/2014, online at: <http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/8350>

**BACK TO TOP**

## ❖ The threat of dams on the Mekong River

### ***Laos refuses to stop construction, China has already built a half dozen, reports Asia Sentinel***

Two crucial decisions face authorities this week on the Mekong River, one of the world's greatest waterways and the primary source of fish for 60 million people. The Mekong, the world's greatest fishery, is under growing threat from a wide variety of sources as riparian countries, particularly China build more and more dams on its tributaries.

Despite efforts to stop them, environmentalists warn, the most immediate threat is two hydroelectric dams being built in southern Laos on tributaries of the river, endangering fish populations, interfering with the river's natural flood-drought cycle and blocking the transport of sediment downstream, which affects ecosystems along the length of the river.

The Supreme Administrative Court of Thailand is scheduled tomorrow to decide whether to accept a lawsuit against five government bodies, including the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand who have agreed to purchase 95 percent of the power from the Xayaburi Dam, now about 30 percent completed in southern Laos. And, on Thursday, a Mekong River Commission Council meeting is to be held in Bangkok to call for immediate action to stop the two dams.

"It is once again reckoning day for the future of the Mekong River, however this time around there can be no confusion as to the position of Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. Laos must recognize and accept that the Mekong is a shared river, and decisions must be made jointly among Lower Mekong countries, to preserve the future of this irreplaceable resource," said Pianporn Deetes, Thailand Campaign Coordinator for International Rivers, in a prepared release.

But the river is under threat from far more than the two dams. China has already built seven megadams on the upper reaches of the Mekong, called the Lancang in China, with another 20 planned or under construction in Yunnan, Tibet and Qinghai, according to the Berkeley, Calif.-based NGO International Rivers. The Chinese have never consulted the downstream countries on the construction of their string of dams.

"The threat of dams on the Mekong River", 24/06/2014, online at: <http://asiancorrespondent.com/124097/the-threat-of-dams-on-the-mekong-river/>

BACK TO TOP

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❖ **Mekong dams 'will be built'**

Laos will proceed with plans to construct hydropower dams on the Mekong River and its tributaries, despite opposition from villagers and environmentalists in Thailand, a Lao minister says. Vice Minister...

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“Mekong dams 'will be built' “, 28/06/2014, online at: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/417772/mekong-dams-will-be-built>

**BACK TO TOP**

### ❖ Detroit City Water Shut-offs: UN Says Policy Violates Human Rights

Every week thousands of homeowners in Detroit watch their water get cut off due to unpaid bills. City officials say they're doing what they can to help poor customers, but the United Nations and local community organizers have spoken out against the shut-offs, calling the practice inhumane.

A coalition of welfare rights groups, including the Detroit People's Water Board, Food and Water Watch and the Blue Planet Project, sent an [open letter](#) to U.N. authorities last week asking for intervention.

"The case of water cut-offs in the City of Detroit speaks to the deep racial divides and intractable economic and social inequality in access to United States," it says.

Days later, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights responded, saying the practice was an affront to human rights.

"Disconnections due to non-payment are only permissible if it can be shown that the resident is able to pay but is not paying," Catarina de Albuquerque, water and sanitation expert, said in a [public statement](#).

"In other words, when there is genuine inability to pay, human rights simply forbids disconnections," she said, adding that states are obligated under international human rights law to provide "urgent measures," which includes financial assistance, to ensure access to essential water and sanitation.

Around 3,000 homes in Detroit watch their water get cut off every week, if they're more than two months behind on payments. Local activists estimate it could impact nearly half of the city's poorest residents, between 200,000 and 300,000 people, [according to The Guardian](#).

The City of Detroit Water & Sewerage Department Deputy Director Darryl Latimer [told CBS Detroit](#) that his agency treats every account the same.

"The majority of our customers [who] are in delinquency status they just built a culture of 'you're not making me pay -- I am not going to pay,'" he said.

The agency published a press release this week disputing the claims.

“In the past several days, there has been significant misinformation being circulated about the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD)," [the release](#) says.

It reports that the department has more than 17,000 customers enrolled in a payment plan program designed to fit their financial situation, and is planning to launch a new financial assistance program next month.

The agency also said that of 46,000 shut-off notices sent in May, only 4,351 customers actually had their service shut off, and 60 percent of those paid their bills in full within 24 hours, restoring their service.

“Our goal is to have as few shut-offs as possible,” DWSD Director Sue McCormick said in a statement.

The average Detroit customer pays \$64.99 every month, according to department data. But an [8.7 percent increase](#) announced this month by the Detroit City Council will add about \$5 to their monthly totals starting in July.

Michigan Democratic Republican John Conyers condemned the shut-offs on Tuesday, calling the strategy “economically short-sighted.”

He [told the Detroit Free Press](#) that Detroit residence have seen their water rates increase by 119 percent over the past decade.

Built on top of the Great Lakes, the city’s water system was once a prized resource. The City of Detroit declared bankruptcy in the summer of 2013 and hired an emergency manager, Kevin Orr, to get the city’s finances in order.

By March this year, the city’s water system was \$6 billion in debt, and Orr made a public request for bidders interested in buying the entire network, comprised of nearly 3,000 miles of pipe, [according to Crain’s New York Business](#).

In April, the same month, officials [announced](#) the DWSD would resume efforts to shut off water service to more than 150,000 delinquent customers to collect \$118 million in outstanding bills, targeting customers with bills more than two months late.

In April they sent out 44,200 shut-off notices and cut water to 3,025 properties. In May, 4,531 accounts were cut off, [according to the Detroit Free Press](#), which also reported that of all 323,900 water accounts in Detroit, 150,806 are currently delinquent.

“There are people who can’t cook, can’t clean, people coming off surgery who can’t wash,” said community organizer Charity Hicks, who had her water supply shut off, [to the Guardian](#).

“This is an affront to human dignity,” she said.

“Detroit City Water Shut-offs: UN Says Policy Violates Human Rights”, 27/06/2014, online at: <http://www.ibtimes.com/detroit-city-water-shut-offs-un-says-policy-violates-human-rights-1614172>

**BACK TO TOP**

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### ❖ **India faces severe water crisis: Solve major disputes, clean rivers on priority**

You know how bitter the longstanding dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over the sharing of the Cauvery waters has become when movie stars of the two states wade into it.

For instance, when Karnataka objected in 2008 to a drinking water project Tamil Nadu was planning in a town close to the border the states share, Tamil actors went on a protest and Rajinikanth, a Maharashtrian who grew up in Bangalore, wondered aloud: "If Karnataka objects to us taking the water that is rightfully ours, should we not teach them a lesson?" The poser invited threats from Karnataka that his films would be banned there.

Whenever there is a legal decision in the matter that is adverse to Karnataka, it is inevitable that cinema owners in Karnataka will stop screening Tamil movies and cable operators will pull Tamil television channels out of their offerings, which last happened in late 2012.

The latest in the conflict is Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa demanding that the Centre set up the Cauvery Management Board as part of the 2007 order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT). However, her Karnataka counterpart Siddaramaiah said it cannot be done till the Supreme Court decides on the states' petitions on the tribunal's verdict, which asked Karnataka to release 192 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) to Tamil Nadu in a regular monsoon year.

Both the states challenged the order in the apex court, with Tamil Nadu saying it was lower than the 205 tmcft awarded in an interim order. Even Kerala and Puducherry are party to the dispute, though their share is much lower.

### **Dispute Across Decades**

The Cauvery originates in the Brahmagiri hills of Coorg, Karnataka, and the dispute dates back to two agreements signed between the erstwhile Mysore state and the Madras Presidency in 1892 and 1924.

After the second agreement expired in 1974, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu started sparring on how to share the water and Tamil Nadu demanded the setting up of the CWDT which materialized in 1990, thanks to the apex court's directive. It took the tribunal 17 years to reach its final verdict, but the conflict is unlikely to be resolved soon, given its political implications.

S Janakarajan, professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies, calls the tribunal's decision "excellent given the circumstances". MB Patil, minister of water resources in Karnataka, denies that the state's stance is determined by political parties' vote banks.

"Every state will have its own interests and we have to protect our farmers. We are willing to hold talks and settle it out of court. Our position has always been that whenever there is water we will release it to Tamil Nadu. Though we are supposed to release only 192 tmcft to Tamil Nadu, last year we released 260 tmcft," says Patil.

The Tamil Nadu government could not be reached for comment. This is hardly the only river that has been in the crosshairs of two or more states. Karnataka is battling Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra over Krishna, and Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are locked in a dispute over Ravi and Beas.

Though water is a state subject, the Centre steps in when there is an inter-state dispute, which is governed by the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956. Bharat Sharma, coordinator of the International Water Management Institute's (IWMI's) India program, says India can learn lessons from the management of the Murray-Darling basin in south-eastern Australia.

"It's a great example of river sharing and management," adds Sharma. The basin contains the country's three longest rivers, covers 14% of its land area and runs through four of its six states and one of its two territories.

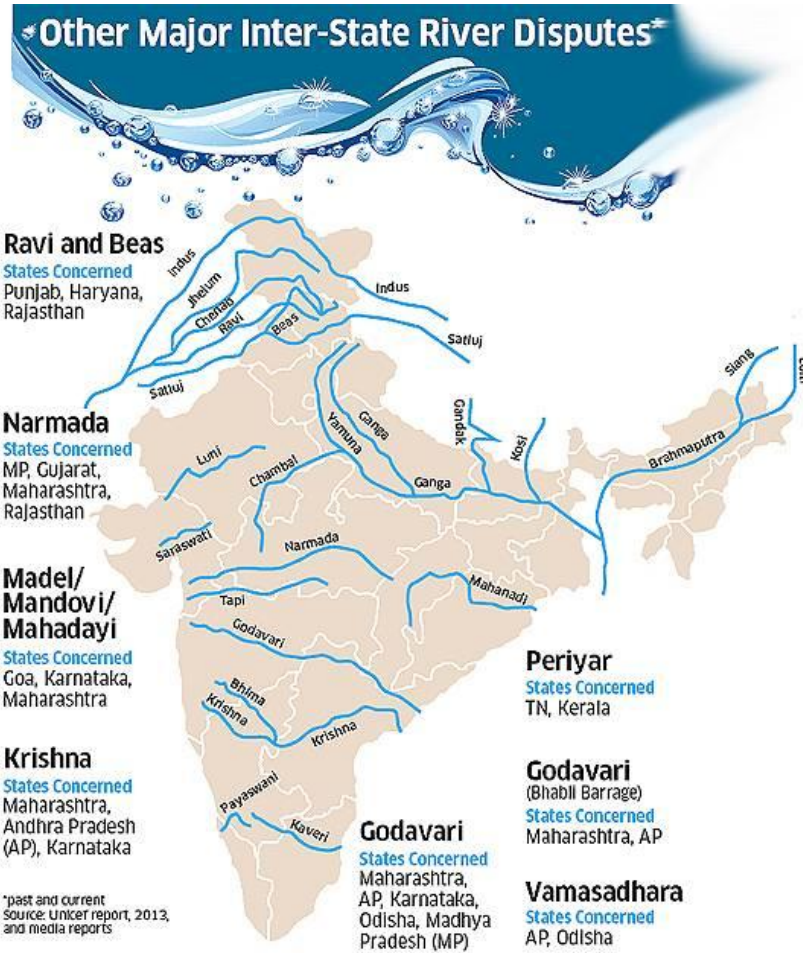
### **"Damn the Dams"**

No Indian river has been as much in the news in the last three decades as the Narmada, which runs through Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The opposition to the proposal to build 30 large dams on it, particularly the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat, has been instrumental in the rise of environmental activism and people's movements in India.

With thousands displaced by the dams, which activists claim have also caused serious environmental damage, the river will continue to be the country's most contentious. The Centre recently okayed raising the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam by seven metres to its final height of 138.72 metres.

Activist Medha Patkar says the government has not yet rehabilitated those displaced by the dam in the past and that the water meant for irrigation in the Kutch and Saurashtra region has been directed

to industries. "The government does a cost-benefit analysis of dams by understating the costs and overstating the benefits. Not all costs are quantifiable," says Patkar.



"India faces severe water crisis: Solve major disputes, clean rivers on priority", 29/06/2014, online at: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-06-29/news/50946870\\_1\\_cauvery-water-disputes-tribunal-tamil-nadu-cwdt](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-06-29/news/50946870_1_cauvery-water-disputes-tribunal-tamil-nadu-cwdt)

BACK TO TOP

### ❖ European Commission asks citizens about Europe's drinking water

The European Commission has today launched a public consultation on EU drinking water policy, to see where improvements could be made. The consultation is a concrete response to Right2Water, the first successful European Citizens' Initiative.

Environment Commissioner Janez Potocnik said “the supply of safe, good quality drinking water across the EU is a major achievement of EU legislation. But we have to look to the challenges ahead, and address the concerns raised in this European Citizens' Initiative. That means continuing the citizen-driven dialogue, and listening to the expectations of consumers and other stakeholders for EU drinking water legislation in the future.”

Vice-President and Commissioner for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration Maroš Šefcovic, who was responsible for creating the framework for European Citizens' Initiatives, said. “the conclusion of this first successful ECI, when the Commission set out how it intended to respond, was in fact just the start of the process. Now we are starting to deliver on our promises. This is further evidence of the real impact an ECI can have on European decision-making.”

The consultation should provide us with a better understanding of citizens' and stakeholders' views on the need for and possible range of actions that could be undertaken to improve the supply of high quality drinking water. The questions cover areas such as the current level of drinking water quality, the main threats to drinking water, the information needs of citizens, and possible additional actions that could be taken at EU level.

The consultation is open until 15 September 2014. The results will feed into a process of reflection on whether improvements might be needed to the EU Drinking Water Directive.

In addition to the consultation, the Commission will also soon launch a structured stakeholder dialogue looking at transparency in the water sector. This is another follow-up action from the European Citizens' Initiative.

The objective of the Drinking Water Directive is to protect human health from the adverse effects of any contamination of water intended for human consumption, by ensuring that drinking water is wholesome and clean.

The quality of drinking water in the EU is generally good, and the level of implementation of the Directive is overall very high. Member States have to take measures to ensure that these objectives are met, and these measures must not allow any deterioration of the quality of drinking water.

“European Commission asks citizens about Europe’s drinking water”, 23/06/2014, online at:

[http://gozonews.com/50932/european-commission-asks-citizens-about-europes-drinking-water/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=european-commission-asks-citizens-about-europes-drinking-water](http://gozonews.com/50932/european-commission-asks-citizens-about-europes-drinking-water/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=european-commission-asks-citizens-about-europes-drinking-water)

**BACK TO TOP**

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