



Special Issue: Palestine

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Foreword

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One land with shared natural resource for two nations! How is this possible? When I was invited to edit a special issue on land and water resources, problems and possible solutions in Palestine, I accepted at once; having the belief that the people of Israel and Palestine are living in one place, where the trans-boundary dimension is a fact of life. The 12 papers here raise policy implications for both sides.

Jad Isaac and Jane Hilal [1] present a detailed analysis of the environmental degradation associated with the Israeli colonies and Segregation Wall. The authors believe that current Israeli policies and practices outweigh opportunities to achieve social justice, and sustainable development in Palestinian communities.

Amer Marei, Ziad Mimi, Saed Khayat, and Mohammad Sbaih [2] analyse the effect of rainfall intensity variation on the hydrology and discharge six major springs in Wadi Al-Bathan. Under Oslo II, the peace agreement between Israel and Palestine, article 40 “the water treaty” underlines the Palestinian water rights in the Eastern Aquifer only. The paper points to the need to protect groundwater resources.

Samer Kalbouneh [3] shows an innovative adaptation of cropping patterns to manage water resources. The cultivation of date palms in Jiftlik is exemplary as a means to overcome the salinity problem.

Marwan Haddad and Numan Mizyed [4] offer an elegant piece of work and another example. But even if Palestine uses hydroponics with recycled wastewater, and adapts to the salinity problem, the disproportionate advantage claimed by Israel must be re-considered; indeed, changed.

Basem Shomar [5] presents the sufferings of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Again, even if Gaza uses membrane based treatment systems, desalination, soil aquifer treatment and recharge with treated effluent, the fundamental need for Palestinians to have their land and their fair share of water must be recognized. In the Gaza Strip, groundwater is the only water source for drinking, yet so polluted that it is unfit for this use.

Subhi Samhan, Klaus Friese, Wolfgang von Tuempling, Harald Poellmann, and Marwan Ghanem [6] analyse the man-made pollutants - trace metals and their enrichment factors – in the Wadi Al-Qilt sediment, using the fingerprint method. The wastewater discharges include those from Israeli colonies. One other cause of environmental degradation that has little to do with Israeli occupation is pesticide misuse.

Orayb El-Sayrafi, Ghasan Daghra, Ratib Hussein, Khalid Swaileh [7] assess the physico-chemical and microbial status of Ramallah municipal dumpsite. Few if any studies exist of such matters. The authors show that health risks follow from uncontrolled waste disposal, and that the leachate infiltrates into groundwater.

Rashed Al-Sa'ed, Asa'd Ramlawi, and Amjad Salah [8] present the results of a national survey on the use of agricultural pesticides in Palestine. There appears to be a trend of general decrease in the use of agricultural pesticides in Palestinian districts due to

recent governmental efforts encouraging integrated pest management practice. But the practices of individual farmers can be greatly improved.

Jamal Amro and Raed Najjar [9] tackle questions related to the Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem. The authors argue that Israel has misused the concepts of green and open space to justify their master plan policies for East Jerusalem. The authors demonstrate that the Israeli policies hinder Palestinian development in East Jerusalem but accelerate the expansion of Israeli colonies in and around the Eastern side of Jerusalem.

Abdallah and Swaileh [10] assess the effects of the Israeli Segregation Wall. If ever any Israeli policy 'created facts' this one does. The Wall has reduced biodiversity, limited grazing and cultivated areas, and annexed to Israel water which should be freely available to Palestinians. The construction of the Wall strengthens the Occupation, and degrades the environment.

Palestinians face not only limited access to their own water resources, but also land scarcity as well. Hundreds of Israeli military checkpoints, the various types of colonies and the Segregation Wall are all impediments to achieving a sustainable and viable Palestinian state. In this regard, **Abdelrahman Tamimi's** paper [11] on the impacts of the Israeli Separation Wall underlines findings of Isaac and Hilal and those reported by Abdallah and Swaileh. The control of the Western Aquifer is an obvious consequence of Israel's policy since 1967. If this purpose is accomplished, Israel's injustice to Palestine will be deepened and Palestine's imprisonment with it.

The paper of **Lynda Brayer** [12] opens up issues defined in fundamental legal categories. The law on the ground seems to be very unfair to those who suffer the consequences. Lynda Brayer analyses the general situation as well as the administrative procedures' by which 'state land' deprives Palestinians of *their* land. If an Israeli lawyer can be so critical of Israel's use of law to deny Palestinians their rights, can Israelis accept the criticism? That is the question.

In the era of the Israeli occupation, limited access to water resources, financial and human constraints, increased population growth, rapid commercial and industrial activities, and the impact of climate change requires the Palestinians to become water-wise, to conserve their limited natural resources and adapt. It is not true that freshwater is so scarce in the region that demand cannot be met for drinking water or irrigation. Innovative technological systems can bridge the gap, provided regional cooperation is sustained. Indeed this cannot be economically sustained otherwise! Israeli practices in the Palestinian Territory are certainly adverse to co-operation. Palestinians are advised to develop practical arguments pertinent to legal-environmental issues' based on current international agreements and local environmental-legal systems.

I hope that through this special issue much good may be achieved. The papers analyse the real facts on the ground caused by the Israeli Occupation. Those facts have generated problems for both nations. Palestine's sustainability is not the only question. Israel's sustainability is governed by its full guarantee for Palestinians, its neighbours, to have freedom, self-determination and prosperity. Two states, one environment; that is the future.

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