

## al-shabaka executive summary

# THE “APOLITICAL” APPROACH TO PALESTINE’S WATER CRISIS

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*Palestine is undergoing a man-made water crisis. Yet government officials, the international community, donor agencies, and even academic literature portray Palestine’s lack of water resources as a result of the region’s climatic conditions. What these narratives fail to address is that Palestine’s water scarcity is a social and political construct that obscures how Israel entrenches its hegemony over water resources, with donor support, resulting in severe water inequality for Palestinians.*

Israel is currently using 85% of the shared water resources of the West Bank, and has forced the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) into dependency on Israel as the main supplier of water. Despite this reality, Israel’s agreements with the Palestinian Authority (PA) address water as a practical issue. The technologically driven solutions proposed disregard the social, political, and cultural elements of water. Moreover, the established transfers, quotas, and swaps fail to acknowledge Palestinian water rights.

The international donor community exacerbates this system of water inequality. The failure to enhance the living conditions of Palestinians, despite the millions of dollars channeled to the OPT water sector, demonstrates how aid has harmed the recognition of Palestinian rights. Donors have continued a business-as-usual approach that normalizes the occupation, engaging with and funding research with Israel and investing in water infrastructure development commandeered by Israel.

The false narrative noted above strengthens the geographical and political separation of the Gaza Strip from the West Bank, treating Gaza as a standalone entity requiring its own energy-intensive facility for water. These claims ignore the fact that the water of the West Bank – almost entirely controlled by Israel – can serve Gaza’s needs.

## Policy recommendations:

### *Relating to donors*

- Highlight how the donor-led water sector development approach is distracting at best, and, indeed, harmful to Palestinian dignity, independence, and overall success in reclaiming water rights.
- Demand that donor-funded projects follow a comprehensive and territorial plan throughout the OPT.



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- Strengthen Palestinian research institutions and universities as hubs of knowledge on natural resource politics and management, where appropriate technologies and applied research are produced to reflect the political, social, economic, and cultural facets of natural resource management under occupation.

#### *Relating to the PA*

- Demand greater transparency of PA authorities to ensure they protect the Palestinian right to natural resources by strengthening and actively joining both local and international water rights campaigns and providing a strong platform for civil society organizations to represent Palestinian water injustice nationally and internationally.
- Build alliances with international and transnational movements to further expose Israeli water rights violations.