

Good morning,



'Not a single drop' – that is the amount of water Palestinians can access in more than 60 per cent of the West Bank, even though water is not scarce in a region that contains several aquifers as well as the Jordan River and other natural resources. 'Not a single drop' of water is allocated to the Palestinians, who live barely yards from the intensive-irrigation farms, lush gardens and swimming pools of the Jewish settlers.

As of September 2011, 313,000 Palestinians across 113 communities are not connected to a water network and are suffering from water scarcity. Some communities have access to less than 25 liters per person per day. This amount is well below the minimum 100 liters per person per day, which is necessary for human dignity.

The dire water situation in the OPT is a direct result of unequal and discriminatory policies and practices implemented by Israel for the sole benefit of Jewish settlers, whose colonies in the OPT are illegal under international law.

The situation in the Jordan Valley provides a striking example of discriminatory policies and practices, rendering preferential treatment to Jewish settlers. Palestinians are prevented from accessing more than three quarters of the Jordan Valley area. This includes all access to the Jordan River and adjacent springs. Furthermore, Palestinians have access to only 30 per cent of all water production from the Eastern Aquifer in the West Bank. Israel allocates the remaining 70 per cent largely for settlement use.

Even more concerning, the much deeper wells serving Israeli settlements have dried up local Palestinian wells and springs in the area. The Israeli pumping stations, including those on or near land of Palestinian communities, are closed and fenced. Unsurprisingly, the nearly 10,000 Jewish settlers living in the Jordan Valley consume more than six times the quantity of water used by the 56,000 Palestinians.

Israel conveys privileges to Jewish settlers to the disadvantage of Palestinians, based on national and ethnic origin. This bifurcated practice of discriminatory allocation and access to water is carried out in a systematic and institutionalised manner.

Therefore, Israel's water policies and practices in the OPT embody a formal and direct form of discrimination, and constitute a breach of the prohibition of apartheid as enshrined in Article 3 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Israel's conduct represents a series of measures designed to establish and maintain the domination of one racial group over another. Such domination by the Jewish group is associated with transferring control over land and natural resources, including water, to exclusively Jewish use. The Jewish settler society enjoys superior living conditions and greater access to water. By contrast, disadvantaged Palestinian society living in the same territory is denied their basic human right to water.

This reveals the true nature of this occupation as one that enables Israel to maintain a regime of apartheid.

As Palestinian human rights organisations, we ask the Committee to share our deep concern over Israel's violation of Article 3 of the Convention and to compel the Member State to allow Palestinians to exercise their sovereign rights over their natural resources, including water.

Thank you.