



# Israelis dump toxic waste over vital water supply for the region

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WRITTEN BY OMAR GHRAIEB



UK, July 25, (Pal Telegraph – By Peter Eyre) Israelis waste that is disposed of in the landfill at Abu Dis (the West Bank), which is under Palestinian territorial authority is in contradiction to international law which prohibits the transport and disposal of wastes across borders without mutual consent. Moreover, the landfill is near capacity, and additional landfill sites are still undesignated. This fact further emphasizes the urgent need for a comprehensive solid waste policy for the area (Solid Waste Management Policy in the Jerusalem District – September 2008)

An Israeli company - The Ma'ale Adumim Planning and Development Company Ltd has been managing the Abu Dis landfill, near the neighborhood of Abu Dis, since 1998. The site receives waste from Jerusalem and the surrounding localities. The 430-dunam site receives huge amounts of waste every day, from Jerusalem, Ma'ale Adumim and the surrounding localities. This same company is also vigorously selling off industrial land development which also sits over the top of the water aquifers that are so vital to the region. The combination of the landfill site and industrial development over such a precious resource will have devastating effects on the population. When both landfill waste and industrial run off are added together the toxic plumes that radiate out from such locations will not only contaminate the public water supply but will also eventually be picked up by submersible pumps that water vast tracts of agricultural land.

The story of Abu Dis can be repeated in many other parts of Palestine and some locations have received not only industrial toxic waste but also radioactive waste from the nuclear facility at Dimona. It is also totally illogical for anyone to dump their waste in someone else's back hard knowing that in carrying out that dumping you are contaminating vital drinking water for both Palestinians and Israelis. The most logical dumping ground is in the dry desert area that receives no or little rain, which happens to be in Israeli territory.

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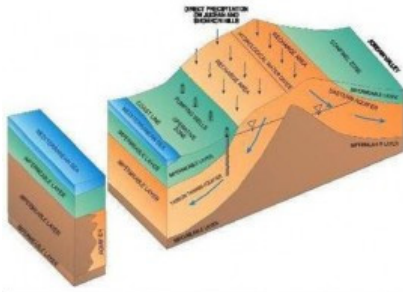
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The direction of the water flow is not exactly as shown in this diagram. Water actually flows, generally speaking, at 90 degrees to the contour lines and therefore moves in many directions. In some cases there are subterranean tubes (like underground tunnels) that allow the water to move very quickly to another location. A dye can be added to the source of the water to see where it comes out. In some countries they actually found the dye coming out into the sea and during heavy rainfall periods sometimes this would be accompanied by the occasional duck or fresh water turtle that had been sucked down the tube from the inland lake. Peter Eyre - Middle East Consultant

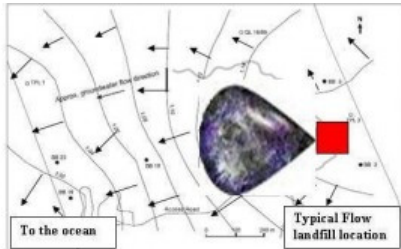
So lets take a look at the current problem and see how the below ground aquifers work. We have to understand that the water table in any given area varies. Just like mountains the underground water supplies have their own contours i.e. high levels and low levels. The best way to describe this is to say you have above ground mountains and hills and below ground mountains and hills. Within these below ground formations are structures that are watertight (impermeable). This can be both above and below and trap the fresh water in what is know as an underground water aquifer. Sometimes the fresh water can manifest itself on the surface such as in ponds or lakes.

The water authority then select a location to drill a well or bore and then within that bore insert a water pipe which will have on the end a spear which with the assistance of a pump brings the water up to the surface. The same applies to the agricultural farmers who do the same to bring water to their crops or alternatively can sink a semi submersible pump to pump the water directly to the crops.

There are therefore two major problems associated with this type of fresh water supply:

- It can be badly polluted if anyone establishes landfill, industry or housing over the top of such an aquifer or
- The water table can be reduced dramatically if too many pumps are placed, especially during years of poor rainfall

It is therefore a crime to establish any such activity over the top of the main aquifer.



One can clearly see that the underground contour lines determine the flow of the fresh water and also more importantly the flow of the leachate. The tear drop shapes shows how the toxic leachate radiates out from the landfill and becomes a major problem if landfill is not controlled correctly...especially with toxic industrial waste. Peter Eyre - Middle East Consultant

Historically Israel has dumped both industrial toxic waste and radioactive waste on Palestinian territory some of this has been over the aquifer and some actually inside the Gaza strip close to Gaza city. This is not only absolute madness but is also a crime under environmental law. The other issue here is the fact that the Israeli military over many years have used weapons that contain uranium components or other carcinogenic ingredients. This evil and selfish action has added to further contamination of not only the atmosphere in the region but also the land, soil, crops and fresh water.

This certainly adds new meaning to the term organic farming....one would certainly have to think twice before eating any product that has been subjected to such contamination. What is so ironic is the fact that when the IDF starting using the weapons they were in actual fact "Nuking" their own population and their land.

Monitoring is vital to check on the quality of the drinking water. It is common for observation wells to be sunk at different locations down stream of the main water flow and more importantly wells to be drilled

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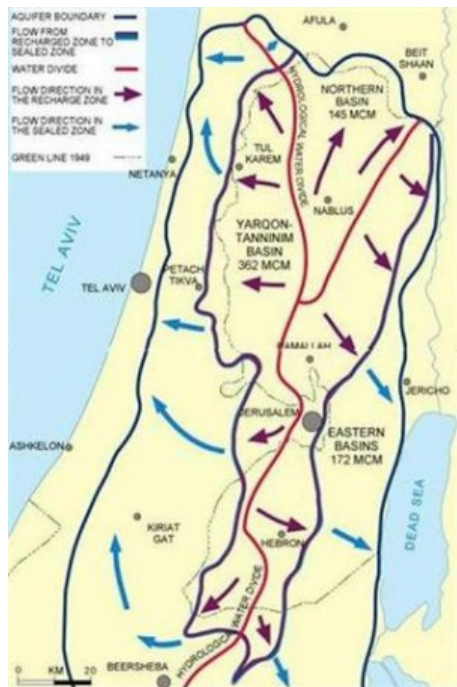
around the landfill location and at various distances so that the toxic plume (Leachate) from the landfill can be monitored for its progress. The toxic plume starts off like a teardrop and expands outwards from its point of origin. I have heard of many cases where this toxic plume has actually reached the coastline (beach) at the low water mark making it sometimes dangerous to swim at such locations

Groundwater monitoring must therefore be undertaken to reveal such progress as follows:

- Detect leachate reaching the groundwater;
- Determine the direction of groundwater flow;
- Assess the quality of the groundwater; and
- Determine the migration of any leachate plume.

The monitoring programme should be undertaken at least every six months or sooner if the advancement of the leachate is greater than was previously assumed. The test should be transparent and the findings released to all Israeli and Palestinian citizens.

We should also add to this the fact that highly infectious hospital waste is also sometime mixed with household waste making this toxic plume very dangerous indeed. Finally we come to the question of sewerage treatment which in Gaza is totally none existent. One has to understand that by the time this contamination has reached the coastal strip and picked up other contaminants on the way it is hardly a good time to add raw untreated sewerage to the toxic plume already in existence.



We have learnt that since the Israeli blockade of

Gaza they have restricted basic supplies and equipment to repair the damage caused to their infrastructure during "Cast Lead." Unfortunately much damage was done to the sewerage system after the above attack which then caused the system to totally collapse.

Raw sewerage was then allowed to flow wherever gravity took it and eventually much of this deadly waste is eventually released into the sea in the offshore Gaza marine area. What I find hard to understand is the Israeli mentality in such a situation. Two things stick out here that really does not make sense:

- Why would you create a dump on top of your supply of fresh water?
- Why would you stop the people of Gaza from obtaining spares to repair the system?

It is clear that the term "What goes around comes around" does not register in the mind of the Israeli Government.

We now see a highly volatile health situation developing whereby the Israelis are allowing the contamination of the drinking water for both their own people and the Palestinians and also putting their own tourism industry at great risk.....in what way you may ask?

The contamination plume (leachate) eventually reaches the coast, as does the untreated sewerage from Gaza. Both of these then drift on the currents, which is helped along with any sea breeze that happens to be blowing at the time. This then means that anyone swimming from Ashkelon in the south (a popular surfing beach) to beyond Haifa in the north will be swimming in water that is totally polluted by this contamination.....my advice would be "Do not swim with your mouth open as you never know what is floating by"

I did read an article once that was written by an Israeli called Jad Isaac in 2000 in which he quoted the following:

"Unfortunately, it is now difficult to recognize the land that was described by early visitors as 'flowing

with milk and honey.' Barren hills have replaced once-rolling woodland covered with thickets and forests, and grasslands have turned into deserts. A fetid trickle of sewage now runs where the Jordan River once flowed.

The water level in the Dead Sea is so low that it is now divided into two separate seas. In short, the land is degraded, suffering from years of environmental mismanagement and neglect that has only worsened during the past 33 years of Israeli occupation."

It was in this same article that he gave reference to the following:

Since the June 1967 war, Israel has colonized the Occupied Territories by building settlements in Gaza (housing 5,000-7,000 settlers) and in the West Bank (housing 380,000 settlers, 190,000 of them in and around East Jerusalem). The settlements are commonly positioned on hilltops overlooking Palestinian communities, and the wastewater from many is discharged into nearby valleys without treatment, polluting adjacent Palestinian communities among them Wadi Qana, Qatanna, Nahhalin, Al-Khader, Al-Jania, Al-Walajeh, Dura, and Bani Na'im.

Moreover, solid waste generated in Israel is dumped without restriction in the Occupied Territories. Solid waste from West Jerusalem, for example, is transferred to the unsanitary West Bank dumping site at Abu Dis, which overlays the infiltration area of the Eastern Aquifer. Similarly, the Jewish settlements of Ariel, Innab, Homesh Alon Morieh, Qarna Shamron, Kadumim, and many others dump their solid waste in the West Bank, as do many military camps and communities located inside Israel.

Israel has moved many of its polluting industries from Israel to the Occupied Territories. For example, Geshuri Industries, a manufacturer of pesticides and fertilizers originally located in Kfar Saba in Israel, was closed down by Israeli court order in 1982 for pollution violations. In 1987, it relocated to an area adjacent to

Tulkarm inside the West Bank, where its waste has damaged citrus trees, polluted the soil, and possibly poisoned the groundwater. The Dixon industrial gas factory, formerly located in Netanya inside Israel, has also moved into the same area.

The Israeli government has constructed at least seven industrial zones in the West Bank. Located mainly on hilltops and occupying a total area of approximately 746 acres, these industries produce industrial wastewater and solid waste that often pollute adjacent Palestinian lands. Information about industries in the Israeli industrial zones including the amount and types of goods they produce, the labor they employ, and the waste they generate is not available to Palestinians. The wastewater and solid waste these industries produce, however, provide important clues about the type and extent of industrial activity. At least 200 factories are located in the West Bank, notably aluminum, leather-tanning, textile-dyeing, battery, fiberglass, plastic, and other chemical factories. Clear evidence that Israeli factories operating in the Occupied Territories do not follow pollution prevention measures is provided by the Barqan industrial zone, which houses factories producing aluminum, fiberglass, plastic, electroplating, and military items. Industrial wastewater from this zone flows untreated to the nearby valley, damaging agricultural land belonging to the Palestinian villages of Sarta, Kufr Al-Deek, and Burqin, and polluting the groundwater with heavy metals. In the central part of the Gaza Strip, the Israeli settlement of Kfar Darom releases sewage and chemical waste from its industrial plants to the Al-Saqa valley.

Despite the fact that Israel is a signatory of the 1992 Basel Convention, which bans the illegal movement of hazardous waste, it transfers such waste, generated inside Israel, to the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has discovered several violations:

- In 1998, Israel illegally dumped several truckloads of toxic and hazardous waste near the eastern border of the Tulkarm municipality and near the residential area of the 'Azzoun municipality' 50 meters from its well for drinking water;
- An Israeli company, Telbar, moved its medical waste disposal site from Afulla inside Israel to a site close to the Jewish settlement of Yafit in the Jordan valley;
- A paint factory located in the Israeli settlement of Ganim has dumped its hazardous and toxic wastes in the Palestinian village of Umm Al-Tut.

Moreover, according to a study published by The Center for Development Work in Ramallah, Israeli companies are flooding the Palestinian market with internationally banned pesticides. Their Israeli manufacturers are also using Palestinian land to test new pesticides.

Israel has declared 290,970 acres of the West Bank (20.2 percent of its total area), mostly in the Jordan valley, as closed military areas, and has created an additional 29 closed military areas in Gaza (420 acres). Moreover, Israel maintains 71 military bases in the West Bank (totaling some 9,563

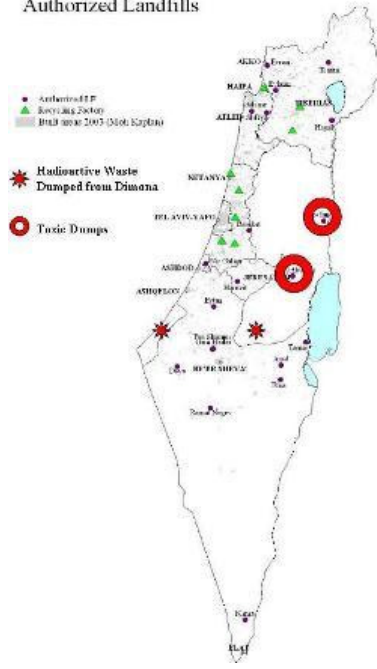
acres). Although most of these areas have low agricultural value, they constitute the major grazing areas in the West Bank. Since Palestinian pastoralists are denied access to these areas, the remaining grazing areas suffer from severe overgrazing and are under threat of permanent desertification.

About 80 percent of this deforestation is attributable to the Israeli occupation: to the establishment of military bases (two percent), to settlements (78 percent), and to bypass roads (less than one percent). Local Palestinians are responsible for deforesting 14 percent of the land, while the remaining six percent is privately owned. Moreover, the Israeli army and Jewish settlers have uprooted more than half-a-million fruit trees, mainly olive trees, on privately owned land. While the British Mandate government, and later the Jordanian Administration, first implemented and later accelerated afforestation programs in the West Bank and Gaza, all afforestation programs ended with the Israeli occupation.

Approximately 2.18 million dunums (35 percent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip) are natural grazing areas. Only 47 percent of the total grazing area is accessible to Palestinian livestock owners, while the remainder has been confiscated for Israeli settlements, nature reserves and closed military areas. Overuse of the accessible areas has resulted in progressive desertification.

I have used much of the text from Jad Isaacs article which first appeared in his Information Brief No. 27, 14 March 2000. "The Environmental Impact of the Israeli Occupation," It is important for both Israelis and Palestinians to appreciate the work carried out by Jad and to understand his compassion and concerns for the environment in the area. We are now ten years on since this report and the situation has since become dire to say the least.

Authorized Landfills



It is time the people of Palestine and the people of Israel fully understood the predicament their respective governments are putting them in. One could say the situation is extremely serious and should the rainfall fail in any particular season then the risk factor would increase putting many lives at risk, especially small children who require clean air, water and food in their early development. Add to this the gross contamination caused by the dumping of highly radioactive waste from the Dimona Nuclear Facility that was dumped primarily at two locations, one being close to Hebron and the other in central Gaza along with other toxic waste.

Finally when you think you have heard enough about Israel's atrocious past we learn that the IDF used weapons that contain uranium components that has now added to the demise of both the Israeli and Palestinian populations. It is with great sadness I have to say the future for both Israel and Palestine is rather bleak to say the least unless Israel is forced to remove such weapons from its arsenal. This is not going to happen for some considerable time (if at all) as the US has now doubled the existing stockpile in Israel (which allows the IDF to use as required) in readiness for a potential attack on Iran with additional conflicts expected with its neighbours in Syria, Lebanon and Gaza .

Peter Eyre – Middle East Consultant – 23/7/2010