



URGENT

ISRAEL DEPRIVES GAZA OF WATER, MANUFACTURES CATASTROPHE

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Water is a fundamental human right, essential for life and dignity. However, for the residents of Gaza, access to clean water is an urgent crisis, as Israeli settler colonialism systematically restricts their access.

Gaza's primary source of freshwater is its coastal aquifer. However, over-extraction and natural seawater intrusion have led to about 97% of the water being undrinkable due to high salinity and pollution, according to World Health Organization standards.

Since occupying Gaza in 1967, Israel has maintained control over most of the region's freshwater resources. The Oslo Accords, signed in 1993, allowed Israel to extract more than four times as much water from the West Bank's Mountain aquifer compared to the Palestinians.

Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, which began on October 7th and has involved its launching of hundreds of airstrikes on Gaza, has created an ongoing and rapidly deteriorating humanitarian catastrophe.

Israel is not only waging war on Gaza via airstrikes but also through cutting off the population from accessing the most basic of needs.

The catastrophic situation in Gaza is not a product of recent events alone but has been manufactured by decades of Israeli occupation and injustice, including [total control of water resources](#). Now, the situation regarding water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services is more dire than ever, and demands immediate international action.

As of 12 October, Gaza has been plunged into an electricity blackout, pushing essential health, water, and sanitation services to the brink of collapse. This blackout came in the wake of Israel's [cutting off of electricity and fuel](#) supplies to Gaza on 8 October, ultimately leading to the depletion of fuel reserves and the shutdown of Gaza's sole power plant.

Further, Israeli military operations have inflicted severe damage upon Gaza's water and sanitation infrastructure. Between 7 October through 12 October, Israeli airstrikes have targeted and damaged six water wells, three water pumping stations, one water reservoir, and one desalination plant. These facilities were vital to providing water to over 1,100,000 people. On the evening of 9 October, Israel cut off Gaza's supply of drinking water, affecting more than 650,000 people. Moreover, all three seawater desalination plants, which previously produced 21 million liters of drinking water daily, have ceased operations completely. The [WASH cluster](#) estimates that at



least half of Gaza's population has had no access to tap water since the closure of the last pumping station. On Sunday 15 October, Israel says to have reinstated water supply for one line serving eastern Khan Younis in the south of Gaza. However, Israel destroyed many of the water pipes, and residents cannot turn on the water pumps without electricity, which Israel still withholds. People across Gaza now have severely limited access to clean drinking water, with some having been forced to consume brackish water from agricultural wells. This has raised grave concerns about dehydration and the spread of waterborne diseases, such as cholera. The daily average water usage per person, for all purposes and from all sources, has dipped to only [three liters per day](#).

Palestinians in Gaza warn that even if they survive Israel's bombing, they will die of thirst or starvation.

Essential service infrastructure now relies on backup generators, which are barely being sustained by dwindling fuel reserves. Four out of five of the wastewater treatment plants in Gaza have been forced to shut down due to Israel's cutting of power, and on Sunday 15 October, the final operational plant had to cease operations because of weather conditions. leading to the daily discharge of 120,000 cubic meters of untreated sewage into the sea. Majority of Gaza's 65 sewage pumping stations are non-functional, elevating the risk of sewage flooding. Sewage and solid waste are already accumulating in the streets of some areas, posing health and environmental hazards.

It is imperative to recognize that the present crisis is not an isolated incident but rather the latest chapter in a prolonged and tragic Israeli oppression and control over Gaza's water resources.

Even before the devastation of the past week, the water situation in Gaza was already alarmingly dire, underscoring the systemic injustices inherent in the occupation. Palestinians in Gaza endure restricted access to water, with Israel controlling the flow and distribution of this essential resource. This resulted in chronic water shortages and countless obstacles to accessing clean water. As of 2021, [97% of Gaza's water was unsafe to drink](#), and only [4% of households](#) in Gaza had access to uncontaminated water. That Israel is able to cut off Gaza's supply of basic resources is in and of itself exemplifying of the oppressive nature of the occupation.

Israel is engaging in [blatant violation](#) of the [basic human right to water and right to sanitation](#).

Israel constructed this humanitarian disaster, and its control of Gaza's water, both before and during the current crisis, is illustrative of the grave injustices of the occupation. We call upon the international community to follow through on their commitment to basic human rights by



immediately ensuring that Israel not withhold water resources so that Palestinians in Gaza have access to water. This is an urgent need, and only one small step in addressing the longstanding injustices against Gaza.

Summary: The decision by Israel to cut off water to Gaza, devastating its over two million residents, is not just a severe humanitarian crisis but a blatant violation of international law. Depriving an entire population of water, an essential element for survival, necessarily causes catastrophic health and environmental consequences in a very short span of time. Such actions are in direct contravention of international conventions, most notably the Fourth Geneva Convention, which mandates the protection of civilian populations during times of conflict. This convention, among others, was established to prevent the very atrocities that Israel is currently committing against the people of Gaza. The international community must urgently address this grave violation, as it not only threatens the lives of millions but also undermines the very foundations of international humanitarian law.

We urge the international community to recognize the severity of this crisis and take immediate action. The deprivation of water is not just a violation of basic human rights but also a testament to the ongoing oppression faced by the Palestinian people. We call upon global leaders and humanitarian organizations to condemn Israel's actions and demand the immediate restoration of water and essential services to Gaza. Further, humanitarian aid, including clean water, sanitation facilities, and medical assistance, must be provided immediately. It is absolutely crucial that Israel be held accountable for its blatant and violent violations of human rights and international law. We implore the world to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people and their basic right to live with dignity, free from oppression and injustice. There is no time to spare; people cannot survive without water.

The time for action is now.