

The Shared Management of Palestinian / Israeli Groundwater Resources: Critical Analysis

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Records show that pre-1948 Jewish and Palestinian communities in the region were consuming similar quantities of water for both domestic and agricultural purposes. Since the establishment of the Armistice Line in 1949, Israel commenced restrictions on the development of wells in the area under Jordanian administration and in parallel Israeli exploitation of water resources accelerated and the water consumption gap between the Israelis and the Palestinian started to widen. In 1964 and without recognition of other Riparian users needs or rights in the Jordan River Basin, Israel implemented the first “out of basin” transfer (National Water Carrier System) of the Jordan River waters to the Negev and southern coastal areas of Israel (Figure 1) (Assaf, 2004). The diversion of the Jordan River has led to a possible change in the climate of the West Bank and a 50% reduction in the surface area of the Dead Sea which constitutes yet another serious ecological, environmental, and economic problem as the Lower Jordan River is now only a flow of sewage and wastewater from many sources of pollution.

Figure 1: Israeli National Water Carrier



After 1967, and with the annexation of the Golan Heights and the occupation of the West Bank, Israel increased control over both the Jordan River headwaters and the lower Jordan River. This control was further extended with the invasion of Southern Lebanon in 1978 and the establishment of the “security zone” – which was returned to Lebanon in May 2000. Further exploitation of the resources of both the upper and lower reaches of the Jordan River continued over this period with total disregard for the other riparians of the Jordan River Basin until the Peace Treaty with Jordan in 1994.



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