



# ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

Weekly Bulletin by ORSAM Water Research Programme

Events-News-Politics-Projects-Environment-ClimateChange-Neighbourhoods-Cooperation-Disputes-Scarcity and more



**ORSAM WATER BULLETIN**

27 July – 03 August 2014

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❖ **‘Century’s Project’ for transporting water to Cyprus to be completed soon: AKP**

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has said that the pipeline project that will transport water from Turkey to northern Cyprus via tunnels under the Mediterranean Sea will be completed shortly.

The AKP’s İhsan Şener, who is in charge of promotion and media affairs, stated that the party expected the pipeline project to be completed and opened in September.

The project, dubbed “The Century’s Project,” intends to provide water from the Anamur Alaköprü Dam to northern Cyprus, according to a written statement by Şener released on July 23.

The project was discussed during President Abdullah Gül’s visit to Nicosia on July 20, during which he attended a ceremony marking the 40th anniversary of Turkey’s military intervention on the island in 1974.

During the ceremony, Turkish Cypriot President Derviş Eroğlu said they expected to see the completion of “The Century’s Project” soon.

“Century’s Project’ for transporting water to Cyprus to be completed soon: AKP”, 24/07/2014, online at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/centurys-project-for-transporting-water-to-cyprus-to-be-completed-in-sept-akp.aspx?PageID=238&NID=69535&NewsCatID=338>

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## ❖ Militants In Iraq Seek Control Of Precious Weapon: Dams, Waterways

In the searing heat of northern Iraq, among its dry, scrubby landscape, there's a surreal sight: a wide, shimmering blue lake, held back by the concrete and steel of a dam. It's on the Tigris River, near the city of Mosul.

Brig. Gen. Mohammad Ali Mughdeed, the commander of the soldiers guarding this dam, says even a small attack on the dam could have major repercussions: flooding, power cuts.

Right now, fighters from the Sunni militants now calling themselves the Islamic State are about six miles south, Mughdeed reckons — and they've already tried to move on the dam more than once.

Islamist extremists have pushed Iraq into crisis. They have taken towns and cities, roads and bridges, and Iraq's army can't seem to push them back.

Now the militants and the army are battling for control of the two great rivers that flow through Iraq: the Tigris and the Euphrates. The extremists are believed to have skilled water engineers among their number, and if they control Iraq's waterways, they could create serious disasters.

### **A Precious, Imperiled Dam**

In a country as arid as Iraq, the rivers are precious and beloved. Mughdeed walks down to the lake to wash his face, while the soldiers he commands skim stones.

These are Peshmerga soldiers, from Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish area. They are posted now on a military base close by, which was abandoned by the national Iraqi army soldiers as Mosul fell to extremists nearly two months ago.

Up at that base, the brigadier general explains why the dam he guards is so important.

If the dam is damaged, he thinks it would flood not just Mosul and the plains around it, but also affect the cities downriver — Tikrit, Beiji, even maybe Baghdad.

He says if the militants capture the dam, they could threaten their enemies with flooding — for example, if the Iraqi army made gains in Mosul. And it's a hydroelectric dam — they could cut off the power. The commander believes the extremists know how to do it

When the Iraqi army was disbanded in 2003, there were military and technical experts who were left jobless. Mughdeed thinks they're now fighting with the Islamic State.

There's other evidence of skilled water engineers among the militants. When the Islamic State took Mosul, they systematically cut off water supply to enemy areas. Then they issued a series of pictures of their men fixing water systems damaged in the fighting.

### **Floods, Pollution And Shortages**

Water has already been used as a weapon in this conflict. In the nearby city of Erbil, Colin MacInnes, UNICEF's deputy director in Iraq, points on a map to the Abu Ghraib area, where [the Islamic State emptied a series of irrigation channels in May](#).

"This is just west of Baghdad," MacInnes says, "and this happened earlier on in the crisis where the communities of Ramadi and Fallujah become points of conflict."

By emptying those channels, the militants displaced 12,000 families, submerging hundreds of houses and at least four schools.

"It's an agricultural area and so all the agricultural lands were flooded and the crops were destroyed," MacInnes says. "The water sources themselves, within the community, became polluted, and so you no longer had clean water in the community."

In areas where water has been cut off, MacInnes says children have been badly affected — [cases of diarrhea and dehydration are on the rise](#).

And as the militants push toward Baghdad, there's been fierce fighting around two dams that are crucial for the capital's water supply: at Haditha, west of Baghdad, and the Hamrin lake to the north. Damage to either dam could create similar problems in the capital - but on a much larger scale.

In Mosul, Brig.-Gen. Mughdeed knows what's at stake.

He says none of his men sleep at night, because they know how much the Islamic State wants the dam.

“Militants In Iraq Seek Control Of Precious Weapon: Dams, Waterways”, 01/08/2014, online at:

<http://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/npr/337034483/militants-in-iraq-seek-control-of-precious-weapon-dams-waterways>

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## ❖ Iraq to survey ISIL conflict zones for harmful chemicals, pollutants

The Iraqi Ministry of the Environment is preparing to launch an environmental assessment in areas damaged by terrorism, conflict or natural disaster in an effort to prevent the spread of disease and to safely dispose of waste, officials told Mawtani.

As part of this project, ministry teams will perform laboratory checks and analysis of water, soil and air in every area that has been cleared and secured of "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL) control, said Luay al-Mukhtar, director of the ministry's department for the regulation of chemicals and polluted sites.

The assessment will study the environmental situation in those areas and "provide quick treatment and the right measures to contain the effect of conflicts or disasters on the environment in general", al-Mukhtar said. It also will "curb the threat to human health posed by epidemics, diseases and deadly pollutants".

"Such activity and technical operations require continuous efforts on the ground for a sufficient period of time in order to draw conclusions and compile valid reports," he said.

In the past, the ministry carried out similar projects in collaboration with national and international parties, he said, among them assessments of contaminated former military industry facilities whose waste was later disposed of and whose environmental effects were mitigated.

"Our teams are fully prepared to carry out all assessment-related operations including monitoring, observation, analysis and environmental improvement in areas freed from terrorist control," al-Mukhtar said. "The aim is to accurately identify the environmental problems in those areas and determine the scope of their effect, their risks, and the ways to combat or control these."

The ministry is directly responsible for taking measures to handle any adverse effects pollutants and waste may have on residents, ministry media director Mustafa Majeed told Mawtani.

The ministry also is working alongside the Ministry of Science and Technology to carry out environmental assessments on military facilities ruined during the rule of the former regime, he said.

To that end, Majeed said, there is collaboration with international parties in order to check, monitor and destroy any residue or waste found at those sites.

[Al-Muthanna chemical facility](#) located south of Tikrit, for example, was "one of the sites that was ruined in the past and treated and cleansed of its waste", he said.

Today, Majeed added, "this facility has no chemicals or chemical weapons and the remains there have lost their effect and do not constitute any danger".

### **PROTECTING IRAQIS**

Earlier this year, the ministry conducted an environmental assessment of areas of [Ramadi](#) in Anbar province, the ministry's deputy media officer Jawad al-Khafajy told Mawtani.

"The assessment included laboratory checks of water from rivers, lakes and other bodies of water as well as water projects," he said. "These aimed at detecting any poisonous pollutants dumped by terrorist groups."

Results of the analysis were reassuring as they did not indicate any contamination of water resources, he said.

The ministry's technical teams are now ready to conduct similar operations to analyse the environmental impact of violence in every area from which ISIL is driven, al-Khafajy said.

"Through the assessment project, we seek to protect residents from any pollutants that could put their health and the health of their children at risk," he said.

"We also aim to prevent any damage to the environment in their areas of residence, since most residents rely on agriculture and grazing as their sources of livelihood," al-Khafajy said.

"Iraq to survey ISIL conflict zones for harmful chemicals, pollutants", 31/07/2014, online at: [http://mawtani.al-shorfa.com/en\\_GB/articles/iii/features/2014/07/31/feature-01](http://mawtani.al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/iii/features/2014/07/31/feature-01)

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## ❖ Farming reforms offer hope for Iran's water crisis

- \* Agriculture takes 90 pct of Iran's water consumption
- \* Damming, wasteful irrigation, climate change behind crisis
- \* U.N. programme trying to help improve water management

By Michelle Moghtader

DUBAI, Aug 3 (Reuters) - As a child, Mohammad Rahmanpour spent his summers swimming in Lake Orumieh in northwestern Iran - then the largest in the Middle East. In less than two decades, the saltwater lake has almost disappeared, leaving behind a hole in the ground.

"My friends and I would go on the top of trees in our neighbourhood. We could see the lake clearly from that point," said the 32 year-old farmer who grows wheat and beets.

"Now, there is no water left and our whole ecosystem is messed up," he told Reuters by telephone from his home, which once stood one km (half a mile) from the lakeshore.

Water shortages have long been a problem for countries across the Middle East, where a high birth rate, rising consumption and poor management has strained already scarce resources. But Iran has fared among the worst.

The country of 76 million has survived an eight-year war with Iraq, U.S. sanctions imposed over its disputed nuclear programme and violence on its borders. But experts say the main threat it faces today is dwindling water resources that have prompted some cities to consider rationing.

"Water scarcity poses the most severe human security challenge in Iran today," said Gary Lewis, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Iran.

Excessive damming of rivers, bad irrigation practices, drought and climate change have all contributed to Iran's water crisis. On top of this, low water prices encourage wasteful consumption while some farmers and organisations have been accused on stealing precious supplies for their own purposes.

Such factors have combined to drain Lake Orumieh, a UNESCO biosphere reserve that was home to about 200 bird species and 40 kinds of reptile. A few decades ago the lake measured 140 km by 55 km (90 by 35 miles) but now only five percent of its water remains.

"How it happened so fast is an ecological disaster of monumental proportions," said Lewis.

Over the past few months, 12 major cities including Tehran and Shiraz have threatened to implement water rationing should residents fail to cut their use. The Ministry of Energy has called on people to reduce consumption by 20 to 30 percent, but this has fallen on deaf ears.

Water usage increased 10 percent in cities such as Tehran between May and the start of summer in June, the state news agency IRNA quoted city officials as saying.

#### A PIONEER SEEKS HELP

The cause of the crisis is not in residential use; agriculture accounts for about 90 percent of water consumption, with much of it being used inefficiently.

Iran takes pride in being founder of a sophisticated irrigation system during the first millennium BC. Tunnels called qanats carry water from aquifers in the hills to the fields below, and remain in use today.

"If you linked all of these intricate tunnels, it would stretch around the earth nearly eight times," said Lewis.

But outside the tunnels, much irrigation water is lost to evaporation, leakage and theft, while farmers persist in using chemical fertilisers which require use of much more water than organic fertilisers.

Government figures show that only a third of agricultural water use is efficient, say U.N. officials. This inefficient management stretches across Iran and other countries in the region, including neighbouring Iraq and Afghanistan where wars make it difficult to tackle environmental issues.

Major rivers in the cities of Isfahan and Shiraz, and on Iran's border with Afghanistan, have dried up. The depletion of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Iraq has contributed to other environmental problems such as dust and sand storms.

Historically, the seasonal Sistan wind in eastern Iran and western Afghanistan would cause 120 days of sand and dust storms each year. But due to the drying conditions, their frequency has increased to 220 days, say U.N. experts, leading to respiratory and eye problems among residents.

## SOLUTIONS

President Hassan Rouhani has identified water as a national security issue, but experts say some solutions offered by government officials may be too costly.

"Transferring water from the Caspian Sea to Lake Orumieh doesn't really make sense," said Ali Nazaridoust of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

With government policies mired in bureaucracy, the U.N. has offered to help. In 2012, the world body launched a pilot programme to work with farmers near Lake Orumieh.

Farmers learned how to make compost, switched to organic-based fertilisers and attended weekly classes on water management which led to a 35 percent drop in consumption.

The new techniques have also allowed farmers to reduce costs and increase variety of crops from just wheat and beets to add maize, squash, onions and tomatoes.

"It wasn't difficult," said Rahmanpour, who participated in the pilot programme, but he added that some of the farmers had trouble believing the change would make any difference.

"They thought the U.N. was just talk. But, we tested them out and they help our land and provide benefits for our soil," he said. Improved soil conditions will help to prevent salt particles from the dried out basin being blown to adjacent crop lands, slowly degrading the quality of farmers' soil.

The U.N. has since expanded the programme to 41 other villages with about 13,000 farmers benefiting from it. In May, the Japanese government donated \$1 million to save Lake Orumieh.

"God willing, not just my children, but I will see Lake Orumieh filled again," said Rahmanpour.

"Farming reforms offer hope for Iran's water crisis", 03/08/2014, online at:  
<http://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL6NOPX4L120140803>

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### ❖ Turkey delivers drinking water to Gaza

The Turkish Red Crescent delivers 700 cubic meters of drinking water every day to the Gaza Strip, which has been suffering incessant Israeli attacks since July 7.

The aid organization supplies the drinking water to 10 schools in the southern city of Rafah where Palestinians are taking shelter, according to a written statement on Thursday.

On Tuesday, Red Crescent delivered three shipments of medical supplies to Gaza.

Since July 7, Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip with fierce aerial bombardments with the ostensible aim of halting rocket fire from the strip, leaving 1372 people dead and more than 7000 others injured.

The vast majority of the dead and injured victims are civilians: women, children and the elderly.

Gaza-based resistance factions, meanwhile, continue rocket fire at Israeli cities in response to relentless Israeli bombardments.

Israel's military operation, dubbed operation "Protective Edge," is the self-proclaimed Jewish state's third major offensive within the last six years against the densely-populated Gaza Strip – which is home to some 1.8 million Palestinians.

“Turkey delivers drinking water to Gaza”, 31/07/2014, online at: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/news/141667/turkey-delivers-drinking-water-to-gaza>

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## ❖ Gaza: water crisis grows as Israel targets essential infrastructure

*Israel's war on Gaza has seen the systematic and widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure essential for human survival, writes Luisa Gandolfo. This represents an apparently deliberate 'cutting off of life support' to those that survive the bombardment now under way.*

When Operation Protective Edge commenced on July 8, Israel pledged to draw on lessons learned from previous conflicts to ensure that this operation would not near the duration of the 2008-2009 Gaza War.

But it's been three weeks and one day since the conflict began, bringing it in line with Operation Cast Lead.

The infrastructural damage of the previous war has yet to be repaired - and now it has been set back further, following the destruction of Gaza's sole power plant.

Serving 1.8m people, the plant was struck during a seven-hour bombardment in which 128 Palestinians died, bringing the number of fatalities to more than 1,200 Palestinians and 53 Israeli soldiers.

As Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned of "*a long conflict ahead*", residents of the Gaza Strip now confront severe water restrictions as the loss of the station paralyses the region's water pumps and electricity will be unavailable for months to come.

### **Water in Gaza**

Water has assumed a significant role in the conflict: on a basic level it is a source of life and livelihood; at others, it is intertwined with laws that can shape the lives of the civilians dwelling in the West Bank, Negev and Gaza.

When a water source is struck, it adds an additional lethal dimension to the conflict, as survival is not just threatened by weapons, but by the silent killers, disease and deprivation.

During the Gaza War water was a prime casualty, when military attacks caused US\$6m of damage through the destruction of four water reservoirs, eleven wells, sewage networks and pumping stations.

By 2012, 95% of the water was unfit for human consumption as pollutants infused the remaining 117 water wells and the contamination has been exacerbated as efforts to rebuild or sustain existing sources are stymied by transport restrictions.

The result is a deterioration of the water and sewage system, also caused by over-pumping to counter dwindling water supplies.

The fall in water levels is a regional issue. According to a 2013 NASA study, between 2003 and 2009 the Middle East lost 144 cubic kilometres of stored freshwater, an amount on par with the loss of the Dead Sea.

### **Thirst for control**

In the West Bank and Negev, the issue of water is no less bleak: acts of sabotage, the denial of permits to own water cisterns and limitations on access to water sources have been an enduring part of the landscape.

Water has become a means of control, determining the future ownership of a plot of land, the success or failure of a business, or the means to render a community unlivable.

The designation of land for agriculture or forestry affords a means to prohibit the development of existing villages: once designated, residents are banned from constructing further structures, including water cisterns. Should they proceed with the structure, it will be demolished, regardless of its purpose.

Atir, near Beer Sheva, hosts a community of 500 Bedouin, many of whom were relocated to the village in 1956 by Israeli authorities. At the time, it was deemed a suitable location; in 2013, it was decided that it would better serve as a forest and security forces demolished the homes of 70 people, followed by the tents in which the displaced were living.

In the wider region, wells have been drilled to divert water to the settlements in the West Bank, disrupting Palestinian water lines and in a more overt manner, confiscating water tankers.

Deprived of their water source, West Bank residents pay up to 400% more per litre than those directly connected to the water network, while in 2012 water access in the West Bank stood at 25% less than Israeli access.

## Tactical sabotage

Once water is gathered, the quest does not end; rather, the new challenge is retaining the drinkable water. According to Oxfam, between 2011 and 2012, 62 European-funded water structures were demolished in Area C, including in the Jordan Valley.

The sabotage emanates from two sources: demolition by the Israeli army, or by individuals from the nearby settlements. In the latter case, contamination has been caused by putting old car parts or animal carcasses in the cisterns.

In the former, bulldozers are used to destroy structures deemed illegal; in other instances, individual acts of sabotage can be driven by ennui. According to a 2009 report by Amnesty International, soldiers shot water tanks to pass the time, since

*"water tanks are good for target practice; they are everywhere and are the right size to aim at and calibrate your weapon, to relieve your frustration ... or to break the monotony of a stint of guard duty."*

Such sabotage strikes the owner hard, as each cistern costs the equivalent of a year and a half's wages, quite apart from the deprivation the destruction of a water source inevitably entails.

## A profound humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza

Just as the West Bank and Negev have witnessed a slow, steady process of demolition, Gaza is accelerating towards a profound humanitarian catastrophe.

Facing rising pollution and falling supplies, prior to the current unrest 80% of Gazans paid a third of their household income for fresh water.

To the displacement of 200,337 Palestinians can be added restrictions on water and the absence of electricity to power what remains of the health centres and the 85 shelters around the Strip.

On July 14, the prime minister's spokesman, Mark Regev, stated: *"If we know that innocent civilians will be hurt, we will call off the operation."*

Cutting off the electricity means cutting off the life support to those who have a chance to survive the bombardment, whether in hospital or in the shelters.

Water is needed by all and by removing that source, all have been condemned alike.

"Gaza: water crisis grows as Israel targets essential infrastructure", 31/07/2014, online at: [http://www.theecologist.org/News/news\\_analysis/2499292/gaza\\_water\\_crisis\\_grows\\_as\\_israel\\_targets\\_essential\\_infrastructure.html](http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2499292/gaza_water_crisis_grows_as_israel_targets_essential_infrastructure.html)

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### ❖ Life In Gaza Deteriorates As Water, Power Shortages Intensify

At a U.N.-run school where she was taking shelter from the fighting, Fulla Abed Rabou washed clothes in an outdoor sink.

City pipes deliver some water. But with thousands of people taking refuge at schools, much more has to be trucked in. Still, there is sometimes not enough, says Merit Hietanen, a U.N. employee managing water deliveries to the schools.

"One of the major issues is the tanks in the actual schools: The capacity is not big enough," she says. "So if we're tankering water, even if we manage to do it twice a day, they will run out."

Hietanen is contracting with every delivery service she can find, and the price is going up.

"It's a sellers' market right now," she says, "and there's not much we can do about that."

As the Israeli ground offensive stretches beyond its third week, shortages in the tiny Gaza Strip — which already suffered from [electricity](#) and [water supply issues](#) — are beginning to take hold.

In some areas, the price of drinking water has tripled in a week.

The Habib family is feeling the pinch. In Gaza City, 68 members of the extended family are renting a three-bedroom apartment. Their homes were destroyed by bombing in the Shijaiyah neighborhood. In the apartment's kitchen, a big black tank for drinking water sits on the counter. Sayeed Habib says they buy water from a vendor — if he can deliver.

"We call to get it filled every three days," Habib says. "But the water station has no electricity, so the owner needs to buy gas for a generator. To pump it up here needs gas, too. All these costs are passed on to us."

Because water in the Gaza aquifer is salty, it must be desalinated before drinking. People use briny water to bathe and clean. Monther Shoblak heads Gaza's water authority. He

says in the best of times, electricity to run water pumps is limited, so workers have to make constant small adjustments all over the system.

"It needs somebody to go two, three times a day to operate a well. And this is only a well," Shoblak says. "So downstream, the system, there are valves — like you see in the manhole, it's a valve. He needs to come and remove the cover and open a valve in order to switch the water from place to another place."

Most of the wells are in the east of Gaza — behind the Israeli army now. Shoblak says it's been almost impossible for workers to get to wells since Israel's ground invasion started. But the pumps are off. There is not enough electricity to run them.

Power line crews are operating in Gaza City. But like water workers, they can't get to the border, where Gaza's main power lines come in from Israel. Fathi al-Sheikh Khalil chairs Gaza's electricity distribution company. He says Israeli armored vehicles have knocked down transmission poles, often driving right over them.

As a result of the damage, only about 10 percent of the normal amount of electricity supplied by Israel is making it in. Gaza has one power plant of its own, but [it shut down after its three fuel tanks were shelled and caught fire](#).

"One is the daily tank, and two are the main storage tanks," says Khalil. "All the three are melted."

Khalil says he thinks replacing the fuel tanks will take a year. With little electricity, little water and tens of thousands of people living away from home, another basic shortage is beginning in Gaza City. On Wednesday, long lines ran out the doors of many bakeries.

At one, Yassir Saadat had been in line an hour and was still out on the sidewalk.

"I'm going to get two bags of bread," he says. "It's not enough, but that's all they'll let you buy."

Inside the bakery, the line ran past empty shelves to the very back of the shop.

The bakery owner has no time for conversation. He is taking steaming pita bread off a conveyer belt and filling plastic bags as fast as he can.

“Life In Gaza Deteriorates As Water, Power Shortages Intensify”, 31/07/2014, online at:  
[http://www.npr.org/2014/07/31/336765913/water-electricity-and-other-needs-in-short-supply-in-gaza?utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=morningedition&utm\\_term=nprnews&utm\\_content=20140731&utm\\_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm\\_campaign=e26a7aa922-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c1265b6ed7-e26a7aa922-250657169](http://www.npr.org/2014/07/31/336765913/water-electricity-and-other-needs-in-short-supply-in-gaza?utm_source=twitter.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=morningedition&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=20140731&utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=e26a7aa922-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-e26a7aa922-250657169)

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## ❖ Oxfam Says Gaza Crisis Spiralling Out of Control

The crisis in Gaza is fast spiralling out of control with water supplies critically low and a public health crisis imminent, Oxfam warned today. The collapse of the latest brief ceasefire announcement means many more lives will be at risk.

Washington DC - infoZine - Conditions are increasingly desperate in overcrowded schools and buildings where up to 450,000 people are sheltering. Many people are getting as little as three liters of safe water a day, far below international emergency standards. Massive destruction of water and sewage systems and electricity supplies has reduced water supply to Gaza's entire population of 1.8 million people. Spills of raw sewage threaten to contaminate water sources and the threat of disease is rising. There are already reports of 30 cases of meningitis, as well as skin diseases among children and cases of gastroenteritis.

Oxfam teams and local partners are working around the clock to supply water to 70,000 people, but the massive destruction of infrastructure and the ongoing Israeli bombardment means aid workers are increasingly overwhelmed and struggling to meet even basic needs.

The destruction of Gaza's only power plant earlier this week has plunged much of Gaza into darkness and left vital water pumps struggling to keep going. Three of Gaza's four main power supplies have now been completely destroyed or extensively damaged by the violence of the past few weeks, cutting off more than 80 percent of Gaza's power. Most municipal water supplies have now stopped running.

"The outrageous level of destruction is much worse than anything we have seen in previous military operations and the situation is getting worse by the hour. Tens of thousands of families have fled but are trapped with nowhere safe to escape, sheltering in horrific conditions and terrified to move. The international community's response to such suffering has so far been shamefully weak. Every day that this goes on is putting many more civilian lives at risk," said Nishant Pandey, head of Oxfam in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel.

Hospitals that Oxfam works with are struggling to cope. Six of the nine busiest hospitals in Gaza

have been directly hit or badly damaged, with three of them now closed. Another four Oxfam-supported health clinics and many others have been damaged or shut. Many health facilities are running short of fuel to keep life-saving operations going.

"Oxfam condemns the rockets that continue to be fired from Gaza towards Israel, but this does not justify Israel's outrageously disproportionate use of force which has killed so many civilians and destroyed so much of Gaza. All civilians, whether Palestinian or Israeli, have the right to live in security, but military operations that bring such levels of death and destruction will not make anyone safer in the long term," said Pandey.

Oxfam said the international community must do much more to ensure an urgent and permanent ceasefire, but that lasting peace will only be possible with an end to the ongoing blockade of Gaza. For the past seven years people in Gaza have been living under an Israeli blockade which prevents the free flow of goods and people in and out of Gaza, devastating the economy and severely restricting people's livelihoods.

"Oxfam Says Gaza Crisis Spiralling Out of Control", 02/08/2014, online at:  
<http://www.infozine.com/news/stories/op/storiesView/sid/59569/>

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## ❖ **Doctors Warn of Repercussions of Israeli Attacks on Water Supply System, Power Plant in Gaza**

According to physicians with the Palestine Red Cross Society (PRCS), doctors do not have access to water or electricity power, Al-Manar reported.

Earlier this week, Israel bombed Gaza's sole power plant, cutting off electricity and making it even more difficult for hospitals and clinics to function and treat injured civilians.

“We receive, every day, an increasing number of patients coming from the schools, people who took shelter in the schools or with their relatives,” said Dr. Mona El-Farra, who is with the PRCS and Middle East Children's Alliance.

She added that the hospitals and clinics in Gaza were without water and electricity.

Meanwhile, the director of Gaza's Ministry of Health, Dr. Medhat Abbas, slammed the Israeli aggression, saying the “atrocities are barbarity personified.”

Israeli forces have also targeted Gazan hospitals, clinics, ambulances, shelters, and other public locations on numerous occasions over the past 24 days.

This comes shortly after Israeli forces targeted a United Nations-run school in Jabaliya that was being used as a shelter for over 3,000 displaced Palestinians.

According to the UN, at least 16 people lost their lives in the attack, which was a second Israeli attack on a UN shelter school. Among the dead were children who were “killed as they slept next to their parents on the floor of a classroom.”

Israel has been pounding the blockaded Gaza for 24 consecutive days, killing at least 1,400 people and injuring more than 8,200 others.

“Doctors Warn of Repercussions of Israeli Attacks on Water Supply System, Power Plant in Gaza”, 01/08/2014, online at: <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13930510000166>

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## ❖ Water: Commodity or human right?

I'm thirsty. Indeed, I'm overwhelmed by thirst, thinking about those who lack access to clean water. I'm thirsty for a different world.

"In Gaza, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians lack water, including those living in hospitals and refugee camps," Sarah Kendzior wrote in [Al-Jazeera](#) last week. "On July 15, citizens of Detroit held a rally in solidarity, holding signs that said 'Water for all, from Detroit to Palestine.' A basic resource has become a distant dream, a longing for a transformation of politics aimed at ending suffering instead of extending it."

Water is our common need, our common source of being. In bankrupt Detroit (city of my birth), as the world now knows, the poor and struggling segment of the population -- the people whose overdue water bills exceed \$150 -- face water shutoff. The United Nations, for God's sake, has condemned the action by the city's emergency manager as a human rights violation. Thousands of residences -- housing as many as 100,000 people -- have had their water shut off so far, out of a total city population of 700,000.

Ironically, Detroit is surrounded by the Great Lakes, the largest body of fresh water in the world. Michigan license plates used to proclaim: "Water Wonderland."

Austerity, austerity, God shed his grace on thee . . .

As with draconian austerity measures elsewhere, those who bear the greatest burden are the poor, the ones who are barely making it anyway and face the daily and weekly choices of paying for food, paying their rent or taking care of utility and other bills. Alas, the Detroit Water and Sewage Department is owed millions of dollars and has to collect. With the city reeling in bankruptcy, it has no choice. Sorry, poor people.

Except, here's the thing. Many commercial entities also owe money to the DWSD: "Joe Louis Arena, Ford Field, Palmer Park Golf Club and half of the commercial and industrial buildings in the city . . . owe roughly \$30 million in overdue water fees," Drew Gibson writes at [TruthOut](#). And the State of Michigan itself, according to the Daily Beast, owes \$5 million.

The big players may also owe money but they can contest it. They have clout, so they're left alone. Implementing a regime of austerity means squeezing the powerless. And seldom mentioned is the fact that squeezing them costs money. The city's emergency manager has hired a private contractor, Homrich -- for over \$5 million, according to The Progressive -- to turn off Detroiters' water.

Last week's Progressive article, by Ruth Conniff, also notes: "The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department is a public asset valued at \$6.4 billion. Forty-five percent of the utility's annual budget goes to Wall Street banks to service its debt -- a debt the emergency manager has the power to renegotiate."

But water shutoffs for the poor apparently come first. Austerity is in no way meant to interfere with the rich getting richer. Detroit's troubles are framed as straightforward and financial, but that's just part of the game of power and dominance being played here. To the political and corporate sharks in charge of the Motor City right now, the human right to water is not much of a value, not when the possibility of privatizing public resources looms so seductively.

I thirst for a different sort of world, one in which water is not just another commodity, something to be controlled, to one's own advantage and another's detriment.

"There's more blood than water today in Gaza," Palestinian poet Jehan Bseiso wrote this week at Electronic Intifada as the bombardments continued.

And just as the powerful play at austerity, so they also play at war. Brent Patterson, political director at the Council of Canadians, who quoted Bseiso, also cited the Israeli newspaper Haaretz in a recent essay:

"After two and a half weeks of bombardments from the air and ground, roughly two-thirds of the Gaza Strip's inhabitants -- 1.2 million people -- are suffering from severe disruptions to the water and sewage systems, according to Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene, a coalition of around 40 humanitarian groups operating in the occupied territories. In addition to the damage of the central pipeline and the reservoirs -- which affects cities and villages throughout Gaza -- home pipes and water containers on roofs have been damaged by the bombardments."

And an early July article in The Guardian by John Vidal is headlined thus: "Water supply key to outcome of conflicts in Iraq and Syria, experts warn."

While the article focuses primarily on the tactics of the rebel group ISIS, Vidal notes that getting a stranglehold on the water supply is a primary goal of all sides in this desperate conflict -- more important than controlling the oil refineries.

He writes: "Last week Iraqi troops were rushed to defend the massive 8km-long Haditha Dam and its hydroelectrical works on the Euphrates to stop it falling into the hands of ISIS forces. Were the dam to fall, say analysts, ISIS would control much of Iraq's electricity and the rebels might fatally tighten their grip on Baghdad.

"Securing the Haditha Dam was one of the first objectives of the American Special Forces invading Iraq in 2003."

These are the reckless tactics of war -- every kind of war. Revering and protecting our water supply, not merely "controlling" it, is a far better use of our blood, sweat and tears.

"Water: Commodity or human right?", 31/07/2014, online at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/sns-201407301700--tms--rkoehlerctnbk-a20140731-20140731-column.html>

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### ❖ Lack of water, electricity and telecommunications in the Gaza Strip

The citizens of Gaza City have denounced that they have been suffering from power outages since the beginning of the Israeli aggression. This is significantly affecting the lives of the people, public and private services, as besides the power outage, there is also lack of water in the municipal wells and lack of access to it.

Although the lack of water is widespread in the Gaza Strip, the citizens of Gaza City are facing the most serious problems, as the water pumps stopped working due to the power outages.

In some areas the citizens have organized the distribution of water gallons in mosques, schools and public water fountains, but a large number of districts have been so far unable to organize such a system.

Israel launched several airstrikes yesterday at dawn, aimed at the only power station in Gaza. These attacks caused a big fire and considerable damage, exacerbating the suffering of the citizens of Gaza, as experts claim they will need over a year to repair the power plant. Moreover, since the beginning of the Israeli offensive in Gaza their attacks have been targeting power lines that arrive from Israel and Egypt and provide electricity for large areas in the cities.

There have also been complaints from citizens all over the Strip and especially in the Khan Younis governorate about the problems with the communication services and the internet. Reportedly the Israeli Occupation Forces targeted the service provider of the phone and internet company.

“Lack of water, electricity and telecommunications in the Gaza Strip”, 31/07/2014, online at: <http://english.pnn.ps/index.php/human-rights/7890-lack-of-water-electricity-and-telecommunications-in-the-gaza-strip>

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### ❖ **Authorities to link three Madaba areas to sewage network**

AMMAN — Work is currently under way to link households with no access to wastewater services in Madaba Governorate to the sewage network, a government official said on Sunday.

Implementation of the project started this week, the Water Ministry official said, noting that the sewage network in more than three neighbourhoods will be ready by early next year.

“Households will be linked to the sewage network during the first quarter of 2015,” the official told The Jordan Times.

The project, which will cost JD1 million, will end the problem of spreading cesspits in areas not covered by the sewage network, he said, highlighting that this will help preserve underground water from pollution and protect the environment.

Cesspits cause recurring pollution incidents because some of them are not built according to standards, or their owners neglect having them emptied which causes them to overflow and reach part of the water network.

“More projects will follow once funding is secured to link households to the sewage network,” the official noted.

He underscored that the ministry has started working on the blueprints of another wastewater project to cover five residential areas in Madaba, noting that it will cost JD250,000.

Madaba Governorate, with a population of over 150,000, is situated around 33 kilometres southwest of the capital.

Water per capita in Madaba stands at 133 cubic metres, while the water loss percentage is one of the lowest in the Kingdom — estimated at 31 per cent compared with 34 per cent in Amman.

The government official said the sewage network project is funded by the Gulf grant.

In 2011, the Gulf Cooperation Council allocated \$5 billion to finance development projects in Jordan during the 2012-2016 period. The grant is divided between Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, with each country paying \$1.25 billion.

Some \$425.4 million are allocated for water and sanitation projects.

“Authorities to link three Madaba areas to sewage network” , Jordan Times, 31/07/2014, online at:

<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/2014/07/authorities-to-link-three-madaba-areas-to-sewage-network-jordan-times/>

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## ❖ Lebanon taps roots for tourism growth

BEIT MERY, Lebanon: Better known for the capital's glittering nightlife and exclusive beach clubs, Lebanon is launching a new, ambitious strategy to promote something entirely different: rural tourism.

“We need to begin marketing not just the country – but destinations” within Lebanon, Tourism Minister Michel Pharaon said Thursday night at an event launching the Rural Tourism Strategy for Lebanon.

“This project highlights all of Lebanon, the incredible beauty of the land and its people.”

The United States Agency for International Development-funded project was unveiled to a crowd of around a hundred industry stakeholders and public officials Thursday evening at Deir al-Qalaa in Beit Mery.

This strategy is not just for one or five years – this is about building for the next 10 years

Drawn up by Beyond Beirut, a non-profit dedicated to rural tourism, after extensive interviews with stakeholders in the tourism industry, including guesthouses, eco-tourism ventures and NGOs, the strategy aims to develop and market Lebanon's vast tourism potential outside of its urban areas.

“ Lebanon now has a clear action plan to further unlock the great economic potential of rural tourism,” said Anne Patterson, acting mission director at USAID, “and to further assert Lebanon's image as a major tourism destination.”

The 50-plus page plan unveiled Thursday is only a first draft, with a one-month comment period open for tourism operators and the general public to review and make suggestions before the five-year strategy is officially endorsed by the Tourism Ministry.

Touching on a diverse range of topics – from marketing existing destinations and developing new attractions to improving regulations and strengthening environmental and cultural conservation efforts – the strategy takes a long-term view at building a culture of rural tourism among the Lebanese.

“This strategy is not just for one or five years – this is about building for the next 10 years,” Pharaon said.

The new initiative comes as Lebanon is suffering a tourism slump, with regional strife and domestic security incidents scaring off many foreign tourists. The developers of the new rural tourism strategy suggest this is a perfect time to work on developing the industry – especially as the plan places a special emphasis on a different class of tourists: the Lebanese themselves.

While visitors from the Gulf and Western countries are highly sensitive to any instability in Lebanon, the Lebanese, both residents and members of the diaspora, are less affected by the day-to-day situation.

“In light of the current situation where travel bans to Lebanon are affecting tourism in Lebanon, local Lebanese and Lebanese expats living and working abroad are alternative markets,” Martine Btaich, a consultant with Beyond Beirut, told The Daily Star. “They are less affected by the situation because they know it well and have lived it.”

And, while the five-star hotels, luxury shopping and exclusive beach resorts are a main attraction for visitors from the Gulf, planners see an opportunity to expose Lebanese to facets of the country and their heritage that are lesser known.

“People either do not know what is in there and if they know they do not know what to consult or where to go to get the information and how to ‘consume’ or reach the destination,” Btaich said. “Promotional channels to reach out to urban Lebanese haven’t been yet fully explored.”

The strategy highlights a number of existing and potential attractions that can be further developed to appeal to both local and foreign visitors, including eco-tourism, agri-tourism and adventure, wine and religious attractions throughout the country. Organizers said that the key was to build upon the existing successful operations by strengthening them while encouraging growth in new areas and fields to stimulate jobs and economic opportunities in disadvantaged communities.

“We’re not starting from scratch,” Btaich said.

“We need to build on the existing outstanding projects already there.”

While the audience of tourist industry stakeholders attending the launch was supportive and laudatory of the ambitious new strategy, a consistent concern was raised in the panel discussion after the presentation: follow through.

The strategy itself acknowledges that previous strategy plans for the Tourism Ministry had been released with high hopes, only to be filed away in a drawer – a common occurrence in Lebanon due to the political reality and short tenure of many ministers over the last decade.

Pharaon acknowledged these concerns, warning that properly implementing such a strategy would require cooperation not just between the ministry and the private sector, but also with other ministries and the municipalities themselves. But the minister remained optimistic at achieving tangible results, pointing to the success of recent tourism programs, including the new LiveLove Lebanon campaign.

“Within a month, a lot can be handled, but it will take three or four years for other parts,” Pharaon said. “It’s not sufficient just to have a plan, we need to move to projects such as improving guest houses and facilities. ... We have to turn the project into more than just a slogan.”

“Lebanon taps roots for tourism growth” ,Daily Star, 31/07/2014, online at:  
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/2014/07/lebanon-taps-roots-for-tourism-growth-daily-star/>

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## ❖ Drought and Misuse Behind Lebanon's Water Scarcity

BEIRUT, Jul 28 2014 (IPS) - In front of Osman Bin Affan Mosque, in a central but narrow street of Beirut, several tank trucks are being filled with large amounts of water. The mosque has its own well, which allows it to pump water directly from the aquifers that cross the Lebanese underground. Once filled, the trucks will start going through the city to supply hundreds of homes and shops.

In a normal year, the water trucks do not appear until September, but this year they have started working even before summer because of the severe drought currently affecting Lebanon.

This comes on top of the increased pressure on the existing water supply due to the presence of more than one million Syrian refugees fleeing the war, exacerbating a situation which may lead to food insecurity and public health problems.

*“The more we deplete our groundwater reserves, the less we can rely on them in the coming season. If next year we have below average rainfalls, the water conditions will be much worse than today” – Nadim Farajalla of the Issam Fares Institute (IFI)*

Rains were scarce last winter. While the annual average in recent decades was above 800 mm, this year it was around 400 mm, making it one of the worst rainfall seasons in the last sixty years.

The paradox is that Lebanon should not suffer from water scarcity. Annual precipitation is about 8,600 million cubic metres while normal water demand ranges between 1,473 and 1,530 million cubic metres per year, according to the *Impact of Population Growth and Climate Change on Water Scarcity, Agricultural Output and Food Security* report published in April by the Issam Fares Institute (IFI) at the American University of Beirut.

However, as Nadim Farajalla, Research Director of IFI's Climate Change and Environment in the Arab World Programme, explains, the country's inability to store water efficiently, water pollution and its misuse both in agriculture and for domestic purposes, have put great pressure on the resource.

According to Bruno Minjauw, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) representative ad interim in the country as well as Resilience Officer, Lebanon “has always been a very wet country. Therefore, the production system has never looked so much at the problem of water.”

Referring to the figures for rainfall, Minjauw says that “what we are seeing is definitely an issue of climate change. Over the years, drought or seasons of scarcity have become more frequent”. In his opinion, the current drought must be taken as a warning: “It is time to manage water in a better way.”

However, he continues, “the good news is that this country is not exploiting its full potential in terms of sustainable water consumption, so there’s plenty of room for improvement.”

Meanwhile, water has become an issue, with scarcity hitting particularly hard the agricultural sector, which accounts for 60 percent of the water consumed despite the sector’s limited impact on the Lebanese economy (agriculture contributed to 5.9% of the country’s gross domestic product in 2011).

“Some municipalities are limiting what farmers can plant,” explains Gabriel Bayram, an agricultural advisor with KDS, a local development consultancy.

Minjauw believes that there is a real danger “in terms of food insecurity because we have more people [like refugees] coming while production is diminishing.” Nevertheless, he points out that the current crisis has increased the interest of government and farmers in “increase the quantity of land using improved irrigation systems, such as the drip irrigation system, which consume much less water.” Drip irrigation saves water – and fertiliser – by allowing water to drip slowly through a network of tubes that deliver water directly to the base of the plant.

FAO is also working to promote the newest technologies in agriculture within the framework of a 4-year plan to improve food security and stabilise rural livelihoods in Lebanon.

Sheik Osama Chehab, in charge of the Osman Bin Affan Mosque, explains that, 20 years ago, water could be found three metres under the ground surface. “Yesterday,” he told IPS, “we dug 120 metres and did not find a drop.”

Digging wells has long been the main alternative to insufficient public water supplies in Lebanon and, according to the National Water Sector Strategy, there are about 42,000 wells throughout the country, half of which are unlicensed.

However, notes Farajalla “this has led to a drop in the water table and along the coast most [aquifers] are experiencing sea water intrusion, thus contaminating these aquifers for generations to come. The more we deplete our groundwater reserves, the less we can rely on them in the coming season. If next year we have below average rainfalls, the water conditions will be much worse than today.”

Besides, he cautions, “most of these wells have not passed quality tests. Therefore there are also risks that water use could trigger diseases among the population.”

The drought is also exacerbating tensions between host communities and Syrian refugees.

The rural municipality of Barouk, for example, whose springs and river supply water to big areas in Lebanon, today can count on only 30 percent of the usual quantity of water available. However, consumption needs have risen by around 25 percent as a result of the presence of 2,000 refugees and Barouk’s deputy mayor Dr. Marwan Mahmoud explains that this has generated complaints against newcomers.

However, Minjauw believes that “within that worrisome context, there is the possibility to mitigate the conflict and turn it into a win-win situation, employing both host and refugee communities in building long-term solutions for water management and conservation as well as forest maintenance and management. This would be beneficial for Lebanese farmers in the long term while enhancing the livelihoods of suffering people.”

For Farajalla, part of the problem related to water is that “there is a general lack of awareness and knowledge among decision-makers” in Lebanon, and he argues that it is up to civil society to lead the process, pressuring the government for “more transparency and better governance and accountability” in water management.

He claims that “the government failed with this drought by not looking at it earlier.” So far, a cabinet in continuous political crisis has promoted few and ineffective measures to alleviate the drought. One of the most recent ideas was to import water from Turkey, with prohibitive costs.

“Soon, you will also hear about projects to desalinate sea water,” says Farajalla. “Both ideas are silly because in Lebanon we can improve a lot of things before resorting to these drastic measures.”

“Drought and Misuse Behind Lebanon’s Water Scarcity”, 28/07/2014, online at: [http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/07/drought-and-misuse-behind-lebanons-water-scarcity/?utm\\_source=Circle-of-Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm\\_campaign=9e39a56140-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c1265b6ed7-9e39a56140-250657169](http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/07/drought-and-misuse-behind-lebanons-water-scarcity/?utm_source=Circle-of-Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=9e39a56140-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-9e39a56140-250657169)

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## ❖ The Egyptian-Ethiopian divide

Mistakes begin when we only see what we want to see. Negative repercussions worsen when we insist on our point of view and refuse to look at issues from a different angle.

This applies to how we are dealing with the Nile Basin countries. We have settled with confirming on what's non-negotiable - that would be Egypt's right to get its share and the amount of water it needs from the Nile River. We have for long insisted on this and neglected to see other Nile Basin countries' opposing points of view. We did not try to see things from their angle - which if we did, it would have aimed to achieve a comprehensive vision and not to adopt their point of view. A comprehensive vision would help us understand the problem from all its angles and thus enable us to make the right decision and resolve the crisis while guaranteeing our own interests without losing good relations with countries which we have no choice but to co-exist with until the end of time.

Part of the mistake we committed in the past is that we kept confirming our right to the Nile River and bringing up international agreements and pledges on Egypt's rights to this water but did not engage ourselves in knowing what others want or why others are angry. Are their stances due to their lack of knowledge of these agreements? Are they due to rejecting these agreements or to voicing anger towards a certain behavior or towards a policy that lacked empathy and understanding of someone's political and economic needs? The problem is that we've also adopted a superior behavior in which we felt like we are always capable of successfully acting anytime we sit fit.

We also got occupied by other matters. Amidst our preoccupation, we did not notice that what we thought were constant principles in some areas were no longer as such. We did not notice any of these regions' political, economic and psychological developments and thus failed to realize that we have to alter our vision towards these areas which their own vision of themselves, their alliances, relations and interests have also differed.

International agreements are important but they will not be the solution to the issue of the Nile River. Insisting on our stance and on our right to life must be continuous but insistence alone is not enough.

When I met with late Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, I understood some aspects that haven't been clear to me and which are important to understand. Among what he said was:

-Ethiopia is not demanding an equal division of the Nile River water.. We did not say that. What we are demanding is a fair division.

-We know that Egypt needs more irrigation water than Ethiopia does. It's therefore unreasonable to demand equal shares between Ethiopia and Egypt. We never demanded that.

-Egypt's share of the Nile River water includes the water wasted in canals. If the Egyptians will tell us that they have the right to waste the Nile River water and that we Ethiopians have no right to exploit a single liter of our water even if we are starving, then the Egyptians would not be thinking in a modern way that suits the 21st century.

-There must be mutual recognition of each party's interest. The 1959 agreement does not recognize the interests of seven out of nine countries. It only recognizes the interests of two countries. If you insist on recognizing of the interests of only two countries, you'd be shutting the door towards cooperation. Cooperation's first step is to recognize each other's interests and to recognize the need to reach a solution that benefits everyone.

-"When the issue is related to Egypt and Ethiopia, there's not even a slight possibility to split and it is not possible to cut relations between the two countries. The Nile River has connected Egypt and Ethiopia and it's impossible to separate them."

Spending these few days in Ethiopia made me realize that we need to look at the matter from different angles. We need to liberally view the situation and abandon outdated behavior.

“The Egyptian-Ethiopian divide”, 29/07/2014, online at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/2014/07/29/The-Egyptian-Ethiopian-divide.html>

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## ❖ **Egypt-Ethiopia relations cannot be reduced to dam issue: Egypt's FM tells honours students**

Foreign minister Sameh Shoukry spoke extensively on ties between Egypt and Ethiopia during a meeting with a group of honours students on Sunday who had just finished their secondary education. Shoukry stated that Egypt-Ethiopia ties are ongoing despite Egypt's diminishing political role in the continent.

"Our relationship with Ethiopia cannot only be reduced to the dam issue," said Shoukry, explaining that Egypt's role in Africa has been negatively affected by what he described as political escalations agitated by leaks that claim Egypt is a threat and intends to veto the construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam (GRD).

He affirmed that last June's meeting between Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi and his Ethiopian counterpart in Malabo has contributed to opening new channels in the relationship between the two states.

The meeting resulted in the issue of a joint statement by the two African states where they affirmed their commitment to mutual respect and cooperation in addition to vowing to respect international law and achieve joint gains.

El-Sisi attended the African Union's 23rd Ordinary Summit in Equatorial Guinea's capital last month following an 11 month freeze on Egypt's membership.

"The Nile that brings us together should be a source of joint interest rather than dispute," he said explaining that Egypt aims to establish joint development projects with Ethiopia.

He added that for his part the Ethiopian prime minister stressed that Egypt's share of water will not be harmed, acknowledging the importance of the Nile river to Egypt.

Speaking to the young students, Shoukry also stressed the necessity of "building trust," adding that the tripartite committee will be meeting soon.

The technical committee was formed by Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan to study the possible effects of the dam and try to generate consensus.

According to state-owned news agency MENA, the committee's meeting scheduled for mid-August in the Sudanese capital was postponed for a week by Ethiopia's request.

The planned Grand Renaissance Dam is a \$4.2 billion hydro-electric dam on the Blue Nile, one of the main tributaries of the Nile.

The project has been a source of concern for the Egyptian government since May 2013, when images of the dam's construction stirred public anxiety about the possible effect on Egypt's share potable water supply.

Ethiopia maintains that Egypt's water share will not be negatively affected by the successful completion of the project.

Shoukry's meeting with students also tackled other aspects of the country's foreign policy.

Regarding Egypt's souring ties with Qatar, Shoukry explained that ties with neighbouring Arab countries are considered by Egypt to be "brotherly relationships" and added that such ties must be based on "mutual respect." He added that if there is room for enhancing the Qatar-Egypt ties it will be for the benefits of the people of the two states.

He also said that the issue of Palestine is still at the top of Egypt's agenda, denouncing the continuous assaults against Palestinians which have lead to the death of over 1,000 citizens, most of whom are civilians.

He added the Egypt is currently "trying to bring back stability" in Palestine.

Shoukry also spoke to Egypt-US ties, stressing their importance in spite of "the tension."

"Egypt-Ethiopia relations cannot be reduced to dam issue: Egypt's FM tells honours students", 27/07/2014, online at:  
<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/107216/Egypt/Politics-/EgyptEthiopia-relations-cannot-be-reduced-to-dam-i.aspx>

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❖ **Egypt forgoes Ethiopia’s dam, accepts diminished influential African role**

Despite the ongoing differences between Egypt and Ethiopia over the construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile, a main tributary on the River Nile, Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry has stressed that their bilateral relations will not be hampered by the matter. The River Nile serves as a source of living for most of the Egyptians living on its banks and they fear that a dam upstream will affect their usual supply. *“The Nile that brings us together should be a source of joint interest rather than dispute,”* Shoukry said.

Although Ethiopia has given assurances that Egypt’s share of the Nile will not be negatively affected, Egyptians are still against the hydroelectric Grand Renaissance Dam project estimated at \$4,2billion. Minister Shoukry during a meeting with a group of honors students who have just graduated from secondary school highlighted that the relations between the countries are very important and *“cannot only be reduced to the dam issue.”* He thinks they should work on *“building trust”* with them.

His comments will come as a relief to the pressure that has been showering on Addis Ababa from Cairo. Shoukry acknowledged that their ties have taken new directions after the meeting between the two head of states in June at the African Union summit held in Malabo, Guinea Equatorial, which was followed by a joint statement reiterating their commitment and dedication to mutual respect and cooperation in addition to vowing to respect international law and achieve joint gains.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister also admitted that the political crisis that the country went through has affected its role in Africa. Political instability and civil disobedience for the past couple of years forced the country’s authorities to be absent from the international political scene.

“Egypt forgoes Ethiopia’s dam, accepts diminished influential African role”, 28/07/2014, online at: <http://medafricatimes.com/3051-egypt-forgoes-ethiopias-dam-accepts-diminished-influential-african-role.html>

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### ❖ Ethiopia: Tendaho Dam Construction Reaches 98 Percent

The Tendaho Dam built to irrigate sugar cane plantation for Tendaho Sugar Factory can now fully supply the water required, according to Water Works Design and Control Enterprise.

Some 98 percent of the construction of the dam that holds 1.86 billion cubic meters of water is finalized.

The dam has the capacity to develop over 60,000 hectares of land and provide pasture land and farm land for the community in the neighborhood.

Out of the 60,000 hectares of land planned to be cultivated, 10,000 will be allotted for social services, and 4,022 hectares of this is already given to members of the community, it was learned.

The remaining 50,000 hectares would be used to cultivate sugar cane for the sugar factory. The construction of the dam was delayed as the locality is susceptible to earthquake.

“Ethiopia: Tendaho Dam Construction Reaches 98 Percent”, 28/07/2014, online at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201407290728.html>

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❖ **Drought in northern Kenya: 'Today you are rich, tomorrow you have nothing'**

Prolonged dry spells push pastoralists to the brink of starvation as food prices soar and cattle raids spiral out of control

This time last year, Samuel Aboto had 600 goats; today, he has none. "I am not exaggerating – everybody knew my goats," he says as he shelters from the sun under a thatch of reeds. Twenty-six months of [drought](#) has hit pastoralists in northern [Kenya](#) hard, and Aboto is facing the fourth poor rainy season in a row. The last good rain in Nayanae'angikalalio, central Turkana, was between March and May 2012.

Two weeks ago, there was one small shower. Aboto points to an outcrop across a few miles of tawny sand and scrub. "There," he says, jabbing with his finger. A line of camels cross the horizon, the only animals the land can currently support.

Aboto, who has four scrawny sheep remaining, draws a comparison to three years ago, when [drought triggered a famine in Somalia and almost 4 million Kenyans were at risk of starvation](#) (pdf). "It was almost the same as this," he says. "That was a combination of lack of grass and disease; this time it's just drought."

The findings of a Kenyan nutrition survey, published this month by the health ministry in consultation with the UN and NGOs, have alarmed experts. In the most vulnerable arid and semi-arid regions, which span about 80% of the country, one in four children is acutely malnourished and requires medical attention.

Overall [malnutrition](#) rates in Turkana, Baringo and Mandera counties, and in the west of Wajir, have deteriorated significantly, according to the World Food Programme (WFP). A malnutrition rate of more than 15% is classified as a critical emergency by the World Health Organisation; in many parts of Kenya it exceeds 20%. "The survey found truly alarming levels of malnutrition," says Challiss McDonough, a WFP spokeswoman.

In Turkana Central, the rate of moderate and severe acute malnutrition is 60% higher than a year ago, according to Kenya's health ministry. Last year, 17% of those surveyed – pregnant women, nursing mothers and under-fives– were acutely malnourished. That proportion has risen to 29%.

Aside from drought, numerous factors are affecting access to food in Kenya's arid north, where the majority of people are pastoralists. Rapidly increasing populations have piled pressure on resources, and people have become less mobile. During a dry spell, herders once moved freely across the borders of Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda in search of fresh pasture. These days, national and regional boundaries, and the proliferation of small arms along them, have made it risky to do so.

Cattle raiding is out of control on some borders. "Conflict in the south and east [of Turkana County] is not traditional cattle rustling. It has become commercialised. There are businesses; men and women waiting to load [the cattle] and take them to market," says the deputy county governor, Peter Lokoel. It must be understood, he says, that conflict is contributing to malnutrition rates across the county, especially either side of Turkana's southern border. "Today you are rich; tomorrow you have nothing," he says, referring to the clashes between raiders in Turkana and Pokot.

As herds dwindle, men in Turkana are increasingly relying on their wives, many of whom sell charcoal or handmade jewellery and baskets. They buy maize flour and oil with the few hundred shillings (only a few dollars) they earn. "The quantities are very small: that's what's hurting the most. Food cost 50 cents or a shilling during the first president's era. These days, you pay hundreds and get nothing," says Rodha Lokirion, an elderly woman who lives in a village 10 miles north of Lodwar, the capital of Turkana County.

In Lodwar, 2kg of maize costs about 180 shillings (\$2.14); in outlying areas, it can cost more. Residents say the decrepit road that connects Lodwar to the rest of Kenya has contributed to high food costs.

For a trader to travel 300km (186 miles) by bus to Kitale, the first town south of Turkana, it takes about six hours and costs 1,600 shillings – approximately what the average Kenyan earns in a week, according to the [World Bank](#). "It's very expensive. When the road is good, the journey would be two to three hours," says Michael Emekwi Peikan, 31, who scrapes a living by driving a rented motorbike taxi.

On Lake Turkana, one of the region's few reliable sources of protein, fish catches are dwindling. "A lot of people are now engaging in fishing. They lack proper gear, so are putting a lot of pressure on the shallow waters that they are able to access," says Billy Kapua, projects manager at Friends of Lake Turkana, a community-led environmental trust. The shallower waters are critical for breeding

fish. "If the government could scale up support for fishermen to make the deeper waters accessible, that would help."

An [aquifer below Turkana](#), which raised hopes of drought relief when it was announced last year, will yield nothing in the short term, Kapua says. There are resources and enough capacity to bolster the relief effort until the end of September, according to WFP, but the country could be hit by a severe funding shortfall thereafter.

"Drought in northern Kenya: 'Today you are rich, tomorrow you have nothing'", 30/07/2014, online at: [http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jul/30/kenya-drought-food-starvation?utm\\_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm\\_campaign=6e41ed8150-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c1265b6ed7-6e41ed8150-250657169](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jul/30/kenya-drought-food-starvation?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=6e41ed8150-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-6e41ed8150-250657169)

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❖ **Drought hits China food production: Xinhua**

Uighur farmers hoe their farmlands to prepare for growing potatoes in Barkol Kazakh Autonomous county, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region May 4, 2014.

Credit: Reuters/China Daily

BEIJING (Reuters) - Severe drought and scorching heat has damaged over a million hectares of farmland in China's Henan and Inner Mongolia provinces, with no immediate relief in sight, state news agency Xinhua reported.

Henan in central China is experiencing its worst drought in 40 years with precipitation at less than half of normal levels, the agency said. Some 900,000 hectares of crops have been damaged, it said.

Henan is a big producer of food crops, including soybeans, barley and rice. In some regions of the province, governments have shut off water supply to businesses such as commercial swimming pools and bath houses, while water intensive industries have been asked to restrict usage, Xinhua said.

In Inner Mongolia, a drought ongoing since April has affected 150,000 hectares of farmland and 16.4 million hectares of pastures, while robbing 300,000 people of drinking water, said Xinhua.

The Inner Mongolia drought was estimated to have cost 229 million yuan (\$37 million) so far.

“Drought hits China food production: Xinhua”, 28/07/2014, online at: [http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/28/us-china-drought-agriculture-idUSKBN0FX0LD20140728?utm\\_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm\\_campaign=9e39a56140-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c1265b6ed7-9e39a56140-250657169](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/28/us-china-drought-agriculture-idUSKBN0FX0LD20140728?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=9e39a56140-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-9e39a56140-250657169)

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## ❖ China's Wenzhou River Turns Red

BEIJING —

River water turned red in an eastern Chinese city in recent days, sparking fears of another environmental crisis in China. The incident is just the latest in a series of environmental scares for people in China.

Late last week, residents in Wenzhou, China, awoke to find the river running through their city a crimson shade of red. Some also complained of an acrid smell in the air. The local environmental protection bureau investigated the incident and said they found no sign of discharge from the factories that line the river, including a paper manufacturer, food coloring company and clothing-maker.

### **Cause undetermined**

Yixiu Wu, who tracks water pollution issues for Greenpeace, said even though the cause of the river water contamination has not been found, it is a sign of environmental problems increasingly impacting urban residents. "I think the water pollution problem, it's no longer a remote problem, only in the countryside," he said. "It's affecting everyone. Even people in the cities."

Wenzhou is a center for commerce on China's eastern coast. It is also a center of Christian faith in China and is often referred to as China's Jerusalem. After the river water turned red some residents posted on social media that the crimson waters were a sign of Armageddon - an event described in the (Christian) Bible as marking the end of the world.

While the river contamination may not be the sign of the end of times, environmentalist Ma Jun said it signifies a crucial time in China's fight against pollution.

"So I think the next 20 years will be quite critical. The government needs to make efforts to reduce pollution to provide a safe and healthy environment for this generation," Ma stated.

The river water change is the latest of several environmental incidents in China. In 2012, the Yangtze river also turned red from illegal dumping by a nearby factory, and last year more than 2,000 dead pigs were found floating through a river in Shanghai. China's government has also identified several hundred so called "cancer villages," where the rates of cancer are unusually high due to industrial pollution.

### **Pollution, a growing problem**

Ma said there are more than 1,700 water pollution incidents in China every year.

"China is facing a serious water pollution challenge. Much of our rivers, lakes and even our aquifers are polluted. Especially in the densely populated regions. This has posed a serious risk. Up to 300 million residents don't have access to safe drinking water," said Ma.

Earlier this year Chinese Premier Li Keqiang vowed to wage war on pollution. Environmental activists say that war will depend on enforcement of existing Chinese laws, which would be welcomed by the residents of Wenzhou, where 80 percent of the water off of the city's coast is considered polluted.

"China's Wenzhou River Turns Red",28/07/2014, online at: <http://www.voanews.com/content/china-wenzhou-river-turns-red/1966473.html>

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### ❖ **Cambodian PM warns of floods as Mekong River almost reaches alarm levels**

PHNOM PENH, July 31 (Xinhua) -- Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen on Thursday appealed to dwellers along Mekong River to be extra vigilant over possible floods as waters in the river has nearly climbed to alarm levels.

"Waters have begun rising and almost reached alarm levels in all provinces along the Mekong River," he said during the inauguration ceremony of a flyover in Phnom Penh. "Therefore, local authorities along the river must keep their eyes on the situation and prepare to evacuate people to safe grounds in case of flooding. "

The prime minister also urged mass media, particularly radios and televisions, to broadly report information about weather so that rural people could learn and prepare for emergency in advance.

Floods usually hit Cambodia between August and October. Last year, the floods killed 168 people and affected other 1.8 million others, according to the National Committee for Disaster Management.

"Cambodian PM warns of floods as Mekong River almost reaches alarm levels", 31/07/2014, online at: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/xinhua-news-agency/140731/cambodian-pm-warns-floods-mekong-river-almost-reaches-alarm->

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