Targeted Environment: The Effects of Israeli Occupation on the Palestinian Environment

Solid Waste

Israel contracts Palestinians to smuggle dangerous and toxic waste to the West Bank. The amount of waste smuggled into Hebron reaches

100-500 tons daily and more than 500,000 tons of illegal waste have been transferred to the environment in Hebron district in 2020, while some cases of waste burning in random landfills were prevented by the Palestinian Environment Quality Authority.

Hundreds of tons of organic fertilizers polluted with heavy metals have been transferred to the Jordan Valley area. [July 19, 2017]

Industrial Settlements

More than 300 Israeli factories are operating in the West Bank. Most of these factories are extremely dangerous to the environment and public health. They include industries such as aluminum, cement, food, copper, fiberglass, rubber, alcohol, ceramics, marble, cleaning chemicals, paint, metal forming and production, batteries, pesticides, chemical fertilizers, gas, plastic, leather, and others. [April 2011]

Wastewater

Israeli settlements cause direct damage to the Palestinian environment through the discharge of wastewater. According to 2008 statistics, around

40 million m³ of wastewater is discharged by settlements onto Palestinian valleys and agricultural lands annually.

Although 80% of the settlements are connected to a central system, only 10% of wastewater is treated. The rest is discharged into the environment. [April 2011]

Attacks on Agricultural Land

In 2020, the Israeli occupation’s attacks on agricultural lands and the environment extended to

3,830 dunums in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This includes bulldozing, flooding with wastewater, torching trees, confiscation and destruction of irrigation systems, and using land for military training, waste disposal sites, etc. [April 2021]

Wastewater

In the last attack on Gaza in 2021, more than 300 industrial and chemical facilities were damaged and 7 factories were completely destroyed that make up the industrial and chemical sector. Burning hundreds of tons of pesticides, fertilizers, and raw materials such as plastic, sodium and water pipes. Toxic gases emitted by the burned pesticides are hundreds of times more toxic and dangerous to humans and the environment than the inherent toxicity of pesticides during their normal use.

The Israeli occupation deliberately damages the waste and pollution control services during the 2014 attack led to the accumulation of nearly

80,000 tons of solid waste in the streets of the Gaza Strip. [May 11, 2021]

Solid Waste

The Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem has found that there are at least

15 waste treatment facilities in the West Bank operated by Israel.

The following graph shows the affected lands in dunums in 2020 due to the arbitrary Israeli attacks.

Jerusalem: 2,038
Hebron: 2,337
Nablus: 1,905
Al-Ram: 56
Qalqilya: 27
Tulkarem: 333
Tubas: 71
Jenin: 57

Significant heavy metal contamination of the lands affected during the attacks of 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021 has caused contamination and loss in soil fertility. The water quality will further deteriorate in terms of heavy metals and radioactive contamination as a result of the 2014 attack. Experts warn that the heavy metals that have contaminated the soil will percolate slowly to the aquifer adding pollutants such as cadmium, copper, and lead. Such contaminants pose serious health risks including cancer.

The improper treatment of wastewater results from the fact that electricity is needed to operate wastewater treatment facilities. The wastewater National Plant has caused serious damage to the marine environment, in addition to health problems.

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Water

A total of 802 wells, reservoirs, pools, artesian wells, and springs were demolished in the West Bank between 2002-2020.

Water wells dry up as a result of over-pumping and contamination by Israel, especially in settlements. Israel prevents Palestinians from digging new water wells, install pumps or deepen existing wells, especially those located in the Area C.

Israel directly controls 85% of water resources in the West Bank. [April 2011]

Energy Shortage

In the Gaza Strip, 188 health, water, sanitation and solid waste collection facilities were closed due to power shortages between the fall 2016 and summer 2017.

The Israeli occupation is cutting power supplies to Gaza.

The water audit assessing the impact of power cuts on water services in Gaza in 2016 estimated air pollution with smoke, chemicals, and polluted particles. The bombing of gas stations also caused large-scale fires, which caused additional pollution.

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