

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



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THE HEAD OF DIVISION

DIRECTORATE North Africa, Middle East I, Middle East II:
Israel, occupied Palestinian territory, Middle East Peace
Process, Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Iraq

Brussels,
AB/dw

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ARES 109474

Subject: Reply -- Thirsting for Justice Campaign

Dear Petitioner,

The European Union (EU) is aware of the challenges related to the access and to the management of water resources shared between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). It consistently encourages both parties to address all final status issues including water during negotiations.

In 1992, bilateral and multilateral peace talks between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority led to the creation of the multilateral Working Group on Water Resources (WGWR). In 1994, the group established the EXecutive ACtion Team (EXACT) to assist its coordination. The EU has funded various projects within the framework of this initiative.

Within this context, the EU has also earmarked *Water, Sanitation and Basic Infrastructure* as one of its focal sectors for financial assistance to the Palestinian people. The EU has several ongoing projects in this sector. These include a contribution to the wastewater treatment plant in the North of Gaza and a €20 million commitment for the construction of a wastewater treatment plant in the Tubas Governorate of the West Bank. As an emergency response to the situation of water in the Gaza strip, the EU is also planning to finance a small-scale desalination plant in Gaza through the Instrument for Stability. The EU has also launched a €1.5 million project aimed at improving the livelihoods and food security levels of poor rural families through improving the availability and management of water for agricultural purposes. The project will construct and rehabilitate 450 rain feed water cisterns that will secure access to water for irrigation of crops, home gardens and livestock to 450 farming families in the West Bank. In parallel, the EU provides support the Palestinian Water Authority to provide collective sanitation, treatment of wastewater and re-use part of it for agriculture purposes.

In the framework of its regular dialogue with the Israeli authorities, the EU has raised its concern regarding the situation of water in the oPt, in particular the destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure during Israeli military incursions. The EU also insists that there should be no obstruction to water-related infrastructure development in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The EU regularly raised the issue of access to humanitarian assistance with Israeli counterparts. With regard to Gaza in particular, the EU has repeatedly called for an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza.

Yours sincerely,



Leonello Gabrici