

## **Summary of document on environmental impact of the colonization activities (focus on West Bank)**

Palestine has rich cultural and natural heritage stemming from its geography (crossing road of continents) and geology (lowest point on earth elevated mountains). Our Canaanitic ancestors domesticated animals and plants and thus became part of the cradle of civilizations (the Fertile Crescent). For thousands of years people lived mostly in rural agricultural communities in relative harmony with nature. Things began to change in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with advent of industrialization and of the Zionist project and accelerated as the environment was subjected to human induced climate change, habitat destruction, overexploitation, pollution and invasive species. Furthermore, these threats to the environment are interconnected. This project focused on cataloging the impacts on the environment of Israeli activities (settlers, military, industrial, agricultural) on the Palestinian environment for the purpose of producing advocacy and legal material useful in acquiring environmental justice. For this purpose, the text is organized in sections. Section 1 gives a background on Israeli activities in the West Bank, the logic of planning settlements and military presence, and why environmental issues are important. It is clear that planning is done for exclusion and destruction of Palestinian lives even if the environment is a collateral damage. This started over 100 years ago and continues unabated in the Negev and Galilee as well as areas occupied in 1967.

Section 2 reviews in detail impact of specific activities on our environment. This includes issues of water and water associated resources, the segregation wall, pollution/waste, energy, protected and forested areas, invasive species, quarries and industrial zones, and other military and settlement activities. In water issues for example, Israel is noted to take the water of the West Bank, exploits resources like the Dead Sea, dried up the Jordan river water, and many other activities that are both illegal by international law and also make life very difficult for the local people. The segregation wall affects lives and livelihoods of both local people and wildlife (affecting biodiversity on both sides of the wall).

Section 3 covers issues specific to each of the 11 governorates. In these 11 chapters we expanded more on the Hebron and Bethlehem governorates as important areas to select from them case studies (from the work done in sections 3.10 and 3.11).

Section 4 analyzes and summarizes the dangers (past and impending) related to Israeli activities showing that they have been devastating to the environment (with a focus on the West Bank).

Section 5 on legal issues and power dynamics is composed of three subsections. Section 5.1 shows that Israeli actions are indeed violations of global conventions and customary international human rights and environmental laws. Section 5.2 Discusses issues of local jurisdictions and cases that came before Israeli courts and shows the possibilities and limitations of using colonizer's judicial system. Section 5.3 discusses regional, transboundary, and other issues of relevance arguing that the continuation of the Zionist project also impacts regional stability and sustainability. While Israel unilaterally takes tax money belonging to Palestinians as supposed compensation for waste water going across the green line, Israeli settlement (both residential and industrial) dump solid and liquid waste that impacts human health on WB Palestinians with impunity. Israel also controls and manages national parks (stolen heritage sites that belong to the local Palestinians) and so called "nature reserves" (many are used as military training grounds and for settlement expansion. All of this is contrary to international law.

In section 6, we cover how local people have resisted and continue to resist environmental injustice but this is also covered briefly under each of the governorates (Section 3) and in the cases selected (Section 7). Section 7 goes in detail about case studies selected for follow-up because of compelling data on violations buttressed by good potential for legal and advocacy aspects

The data collected here is highly significant and diverse material for challenging the destructive behavior of the belligerent occupying state in the West Bank. Basically, there is significant theft of natural resources from the occupied Palestinian territories (land, water, stone, oil, gas, etc.) and significant damage to the environment, affecting lives and livelihoods of local people and local fauna and flora. We focused on the West Bank with limited discussion of Gaza or areas inside the Green Line. But all areas suffer from damage that is similar despite some peculiarities because they were driven by the same colonial mentality. However, even though these 300+ pages and 620+ references suggest there is a lot of information, we must emphasize that there is so much more research to be done in these areas of threats and challenges to the Palestinian environment.