



## **BLUE PEACE**

Blue as the color of water, a two-day conference was held in Istanbul on March 18-19, 2013. The meeting was initiated by Strategic Foresight Group, an international NGO based in Bombay and its very active President Sundeep Waslekar. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss water issues and whether water can become a source of peace and cooperation or ignite wars and regional conflicts; and particularly in the hot and dry Middle Eastern region.

The Conference was hosted by Turkish Review Magazine and Zaman Foundation's headquarters in Istanbul and financed by Swedish and Swiss Governmental and non-governmental organizations. Invited to the meeting was Her Royal Highness Princess Sumayyah bint el Hassan of Jordan who patronized the conference in addition to representatives of Water authorities and media experts from different Middle Eastern countries, Arabs, Turks and Kurds. Moreover, water experts of the Danube and the Rhine rivers provided an extensive display of water cooperation and trans-boundary water flow. Yet, the European model could serve as a model for relaxed cooperation amongst beneficiaries, yet hardly suit Middle Eastern circumstances, a region suffering from water shortage and scarcity of rain water due to lengthy and hot summer seasons.

In the European case of Danube and Rhine flowing waters are rarely used for irrigation or drinking purposes as is the case in the dry Middle Eastern region where countries are competing amongst each other on who gets more or less water from the disputed rivers such as the Tigris and the Euphrates crossing Turkey, Syria and Iraq. Not to forget the fourth country Iran from where some of the water resources emanate, that have been to a large extent diverted inside Iranian territories.

Turkey has erected about 25 dams of different sizes inside its territories thus depriving Syria from a part of its waters, yet the biggest problem is faced by Iraq where parts of the Euphrates are becoming dry and where people can walk on the surface of a former thus river causing ecological and environmental and humanitarian problems for Iraq.

Discussed in a less extensive scope was the hot issue of the River Nile crossing nine African countries that have to settle their dispute through the formation of a joint Commission to discuss their water shares on fair and reasonable basis.

Trans boundary water flow and equitable water sharing is essential for making peace between good neighbors in order to avoid water conflicts. Yet, another hyper hot issue is the water problem of the Jordan River crossing four countries: Jordan, Syria, Palestine and Israel including Lebanon that provides the Jordan River with part of the Hasbani and wazzani rivers originating from Lebanese territories. In this case the state of Israel gets the lion share mainly at the expense of its four neighbors and Palestinians in particular. Yet Israel doesn't suffice itself by exploiting the Jordan waters for irrigation and other economic projects yet, it also exploits the Waters of the Dead Sea for its chemical industry thus reducing its size and surface.

Moreover, Israel controls as well the Water aquifers of the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza which is another kind of water exploitation and additional type of water violation. Actually, Israel controls more than 82 % of Palestinian water aquifers which reflects the classical relationship between the occupying power and the occupied nation in which the strong imposes his will on the weak and exploits his natural resources. According to this formula Israel prohibits Palestinians to dig in for their own water resources whether for drinking water or for irrigation purposes. Palestinian peasants are allowed to dig for water sources only after authorization from the occupation authorities that are not so generous to do so.

Formally, Israel controls all water aquifers of the West Bank, while Palestinians are managing water distribution to Palestinian citizens. Water discrimination starts by providing 24 hours water flow to the Israeli illegally built settlements in the West Bank, while Palestinian water supply to the Palestinian citizens rarely exceed an average of eight hours per day. During summer days Palestinians are supplied with drinking water three days a week or even less and limited hours per day. Palestinian water experts call the Israeli occupation not only a lucrative occupation, but the "liquid occupation".

Since years, Palestinians are subjected to the rule of the occupier and have to buy their own drinking water from the Israeli occupation authorities and pay a higher price than Israeli citizens for their own water. In general Israeli colonists living in the

settlements of the West Bank pay an average of 1.2 Israeli Shekel per one cubic meter, while Palestinian citizens have to pay an average of 5-6 Shekels per cubic meter. On the other hand, Israeli water consumption in the settlements reaches an average of 480 cubic meters of water per citizen per annum (cm<sup>3</sup>/yr), while a Palestinian citizen consumes 130 cubic meters a year.

Water discrimination in the case of Palestinians is a unique example of illegal water exploitation in modern times. It constitutes a flagrant violation against international law and antagonizes fair water sharing between good neighbors. In this case the conference of Istanbul has succeeded to draw attention on water difficulties in the hope to resolve them and not to aggravate dormant tension to the level of active armed conflicts.

**By: Mahmoud Labadi**

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**LAND DAY IN PALESTINE ..... 37 YEARS**

Palestinians all over, whether in Palestine or in the Diaspora celebrated the 37th anniversary of their Land Day. On this opportunity Palestinians demonstrate their attachment to their land and denounce Israeli colonialist measures of dispossession and uprooting from their ancestral homeland. Despite International law violations and the 4th Geneva Conventions in particular Israeli leaders from right and left continue their illegal measures against Palestinians with impunity. Settlement construction and colonization is going on in full speed financed by direct or indirect subsidies from the United States of America. Israel behaves as a state above the law and despises international institutions and world public opinion.

Land Day is no more confined on the Palestinians and the Palestinian territories. It has become an inter-Arab opportunity and is celebrated in most Arab countries in solidarity with deprived and dispossessed Palestinians. The Land Day has become a symbol of Justice against the brutal injustice of the Israeli colonialist behavior.

Palestinians in Lebanon celebrated Land Day in their refugee camps with the insistence to return to their usurped home land.

Yet, the Land Day is also celebrated by international activists in different European and non European capitals. They demonstrate international indignation against the Israeli archaic mentality conducting colonization, land confiscation and ethnic cleansing in the 21st century; a post colonialist era known for its modern values of peaceful coexistence, democracy and human rights.

Palestinians demonstrated their attachment to their land by planting olive trees which were pulled out by Israeli soldiers. They organized other activities such as displaying photographs of their cities and towns confiscated or demolished in 1948. In the village of Sakhnin inside Israel discriminated Palestinians (Arabs of 48) marched in the streets raising Palestinian flags and called for attachment to their land properties and for resistance against repressive Israeli measures.

In Brief, the Land Day has become a symbol of resistance against brutal oppression and an occasion for all peace loving forces to stand with the oppressed against the oppressor.

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## **POPULAR RESISTANCE**

Popular resistance against the Israeli occupation and land confiscation was intensified this weekend of March 29/30, 2013 and took a larger dimension. It was amplified by the Land Day 37th anniversary which was used in all demonstrations as encouragement to intensify resistance activities on the Ground. Demonstrations took place in all hot points of confrontation in the West Bank from the region of Ramallah to region of Hebron passing through East Jerusalem. In the Ramallah region popular resistance and non-violent demonstrations took place in the village of Bil'in, Ni'lin and Nabi Saleh where an Irish journalist was wounded. Palestinians launched their non-violent activities against land confiscation and judaization measures of the Israeli occupation authorities. On the other hand, Israeli soldiers prohibited

Palestinians below 50 years to enter East- Jerusalem to perform their Friday prayers in the Holy Mosque of Al Aqsa.

In the threatened Area of E-1 Palestinians headed by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad went to plant olive trees in order to face Israeli judaization plans and demonstrate their attachment to their lands. The Israeli E-1 project aims at cutting the West Bank into two and prevents the creation of a Palestinian state with contiguous territories.

On the other hand, Jewish settlers broke in the Al Aqsa Mosque on Jewish Easter days and tried to slaughter a lamb in the esplanade of the holy Mosque in an act of provocation against Moslem feelings.

In the area of Hebron Israeli authorities closed the Ibrahimi Mosque on Jewish Easter days thus prohibiting Muslim worshippers to enter the Mosque. Israeli soldiers closed the main road inside the old City of Hebron in order to allow extremist Jewish settlers to roam inside the street for Jews only.

**Maasara:** The village of Maasara situated to the south of Bethlehem conducted its weekly activity on Friday 29th of March 2013 against land confiscation and Walls and were confronted by Israeli soldiers present in the area. The soldiers faced the Palestinian and international peace activists with skunk water, Gas bombs and bullets. A Similar demonstration was organized in the village of Kafr Qaddoum where demonstrators clashed with the Israeli soldiers.

During the weekly activities tens were injured and hundreds had to inhale tear gas and some of them had to be hospitalized or treated by ambulance crews on the ground.

**BanKi-Moon:** On another occasion” UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon reiterated on Friday March 29th 2013 his position about the illegality of the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and considered them illegal. Israeli settlements were also considered as a violation against international law and had to be stopped”, he said.

**Sebastia:** In the village of Sebastia to the north west of Nablus Palestinians conducted an unprecedented demonstration against the Israeli confiscation

measures as well as against extremist settlers' violations and aggressions in the area. The citizens were faced by Israeli bullets and gas bombs.

**Salfeet:** In the area of Salfeet where settlement activities are tangible Palestinians organized a peaceful demonstration against settler activities in the area. Palestinians gathered in the threatened area of Izbet Abu Bassal and were faced by Israeli soldiers. The area of Salfeet with its rich water resources is well known to the extremist settlers who violate international law and attack Palestinian properties and Mosques and vandalize in the area with impunity.

In the Gaza area: In the village of Beit Hanoun Israeli soldiers intensified their military patrols on the fence bordering Israel in order to face the activities of the Land Day.



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