

Restrictions on access to water and non-development of water infrastructure in Area C

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Palestinian residents use water from tanker in Khirbet a-Duqaiqah, South Hebron Hills, 19 August 2012. Photo: Nasser Nawaj'ah, B'Tselem.

The Civil Administration is responsible for developing water-related projects throughout [Area C](#), including those intended to serve West Bank residents living in Areas A and B. Each project – such as drilling wells, hauling water, connecting communities to a water supply network or recycling waste water – requires Civil Administration approval. Such approval, however, is rarely given.

Of some 180 Palestinian villages that lie entirely within Area C, the Civil Administration has approved master plans for only 16, and has authorized connecting them alone to a water supply network. Consequently, tens of thousands of Palestinians living in Area C are not connected to any water supply network and are dependent on rainwater, which they collect in cisterns, and on water purchased from private contractors who deliver the water in tankers. The price of water purchased from private contractors is NIS 25 to 45 per cubic meter, depending on the distance from the water source to the village. This sum is as much as four times the highest price of water for household consumption paid by residents of the Israeli city of Tel Aviv (NIS 12.6 per cubic meter for any consumption over 3.5 cubic meters a month), and up to three times as much as the comparable price rate in the settlements of Ariel and Karnei Shomron (NIS 14.8 per cubic meter). In the Palestinian communities that are forced to buy water from tankers, the average monthly outlay on water consumption per family in summertime is NIS 1,250 to 2,000 – as much as half of all monthly expenses. In contrast, the average monthly expenditure for water consumption in the settlements is NIS 150 per family, or 1.4% of family expenditure.



Water tanker in Bedouin community south of settlement of Mishor Adumim. Photo: 'Ammar 'Awad, Reuters, 19 August 2009

As a result of the Civil Administration's policy, water consumption in some West Bank Palestinian communities is significantly lower than the 100 liters per person per day recommended by the World Health Organization. In the southern West Bank, some 42 communities consume less than 60 liters of water per person, per day, while herding communities in the northern Jordan Valley consume only about 20 liters per person, per day. For the sake of comparison, average domestic water consumption in Israel is between 100 and 230 liters per person, per day. Settlements are allocated higher amounts: for example, the settlements of Ro'i and Beqa'ot in the Jordan Valley are allocated more than 460 liters of water person, per day, for household use only – at least 23 times the water consumption per person, per day, in the nearby Palestinian village of al-Hadidiya.

The Civil Administration also takes action to disrupt water supply the residents obtain from alternate sources: Between 2009 and 2012, the Civil Administration destroyed 90 cisterns, 61 wells and 17 reservoirs belonging to Palestinians in Area C. At the same time, it avoids maintaining the natural water resources used by Palestinians and issues demolition orders when residents tend to the matter themselves, such as by placing fences around springs.

In the Jordan Valley, residents who earn their living as shepherds roam with their flocks through vast grazing areas that have no water. To water their animals, they generally transport large containers of water to the grazing areas. Testimony given to B'Tselem shows that over the past few summers, the Civil Administration has confiscated these types of water containers, each of which costs nearly NIS 300, alleging that they were placed in firing zones. Residents have reported that official Israeli representatives dumped the contents of the containers prior to removing them.

International aid organizations endeavoring to promote these types of projects in Area C have told the World Bank that the Civil Administration is a major obstacle to their work. A number of projects that did obtain approval from the Palestinian Water Committee and the Joint Israeli-Palestinian Water Committee were ultimately rejected – after numerous delays – by the Civil Administration. Sixteen projects for water infrastructure, approved by the Joint Committee more than a year earlier, were still awaiting Civil Administration approval in April 2013.