“Cut off water supply to North areas during Ramadan is new evidence on Israel’s violation against basic human Palestinian needs”

As of the beginning of June this year, and without any prior notification during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, and at the time of frequent hot summer heat waves where demand on water increases naturally, the Israeli water carrier Mekorot, has cut off water supply to large areas of the northern West Bank governorates leaving more than 150,000 Palestinians without drinkable water; including several villages in Nablus Governorate (Huwara , Deir Al Hatab, Salem , Azmout, Jeet, Sarra and Kafr Qaddum), in Qalqilia Governorate (Al-Funduq, Jinsafut), as well as the city of Salfit and its surrounding villages (Qarawat Bani Hassan and Biddya). Mekorot also reduced water supplies to Jenin Governorate (Fandaqumiya, Asa’sa, Silat ad-Dhahr), leaving families under severe conditions; searching for scarce alternative temporary water resources to drink and meet their basic human needs, and unable to access water for agricultural nor other farming purposes.

This Israeli unilateral action has reduced water supply to line areas by 50% - 70%. This shows clearly the immoral actions of Israeli occupation authorities that occupy and control over 85% of the historical ground water resources. Through this decision, Israel, the occupying power, has shown its complete disrespect for its obligations under International Humanitarian Law as well as Geneva International Conventions. More importantly, it highlights and emphasizes the magnitude of Israeli forceful control over Palestinian lives, denying tens of thousands of Palestinian families their basic right to water and sanitation. Given the fact that Israel can turn on and off the tap to Palestinian occupied areas at its own choice; anytime and anywhere; millions of Palestinians

feel they are living every day under the threat of denied access to water at the mercy of Israeli changing policies.

This latest criminal Israeli decision to cut off water supply in certain urban areas is the last among several decisions taken to blackmail the Palestine Water Authority, after its refusal to approve water projects that would benefit illegal Israeli settlements built within the occupied State of Palestine. Israel continues to use the “Joint Water Committee” in order to legitimize its occupation and colonization, rather than to promote an agenda of peace leading to an end of the Israeli occupation that began in 1967.

Israel continuously and systematically uses the Joint Water Committee’s outstanding projects as a pretext to the approval of needed Palestinian water supply projects. Simultaneously, there are dozens of new infrastructure projects serving illegal settlements that Israel as an occupying power has implemented without the approval of JWC. PWA's position is consistent with the international community’s position of rejecting the legitimization of settlements, and we will continue to refuse the Israeli extortion to obtain our approval for any infrastructure that will benefit illegal Israeli settlements.

Moreover, in general the Israeli Civil Administration’s (ICA) planning regime is designed to restrict the development of Palestinian communities and Palestinian presence in Area C. This situation is expected to continue so long as Oslo II and the related A-B-C division of the West Bank remain in place – irrespective to what happens in the JWC.

It is extremely alarming and problematic should the decision to cutting off water supply be part of a new Israeli strategy to face the increase in summer demand according to the Israel claim. The cut off water supply to areas already suffering from water shortage will threaten the livelihood of families there, and will have adverse implications on their health, and socio-economic and environmental situations. This is a strategy of disregard, irreverence, and discrimination against the very basic rights of the Palestinian people who pays the price of Israeli challenges; while Israelis continue to enjoy their usual lives.

We would like to state that this is not the first time that the Israeli occupation, and its company Mekorot, affect the water supply for Palestinian towns and villages. Several Palestinian communities have been forced to buy higher priced tankered water.

One should look at our water resources being exploited by illegal Israeli settlements, to negate the Israeli claims that shortage is taking place due to the "increase of water demand". Illegal Israeli settlers consume an average of 7 times the amount of water consumed by a Palestinian under Israeli occupation.

In order to understand the water situation in Palestine, one only needs to reviewing water supply figures; the Oslo Interim Agreement defined around 118 MCM/y as a temporary water allocation for the Palestinian side from all shared basins in the West Bank. To date, the total Palestinian utilization from these basins does not exceeding 103 MCM/Y (by wells and springs). Palestinians are receiving today the same water quantities since more than 20 years ago,

despite the population increase and the related natural increase in demand due to development.

Furthermore, this water quantity is available for more than 2.7 million Palestinian citizens in the West Bank for all uses. Around less than half of this quantity (about 49 MCM) is being used only for domestic purposes in the West Bank. Meanwhile, the current total estimated water needs for domestic purposes only is around 121 MCM/y and it is expected to reach more than 155 MCM/y by the year 2026. Thus; in order to alleviate the water shortage problems in Palestinian communities of the West Bank, PWA is forced to purchase around 55 MCM from Israeli Mekorot Company for domestic purpose.

As a result of these facts, the average per capita per day of West Bank inhabitant is not exceed 79 liters theoretically, and it doesn't exceed 50 liters if we calculate the variations between areas and the high percentage of water loss, while the International Standards recommended minimum of 100 liters per capita per day.

In spite of this critical Palestinian water situation, and contrary to their promises to PWA to increase water supply to face summer water crisis, Israel didn't stop its continuous approach of group punishment of Palestinians and part of it is the continue cut off water supply to Palestinian areas.

In the same context, we denounce the latest radical voices, allowing Israeli settlers to poison Palestinian water sources in Palestinian cities and villages in West Bank. PWA considers this decree a new Israeli incitement aims to push the Palestinians to leave and pave the way for Israeli settlers to take over their

lands. These provocative decrees again prove the Israeli policy of discrimination and oppression against our people.

The PWA puts on Israeli authorities the full responsibility of our people's lives including children, women and elders. And we appeal the international community to take its responsibility to stop this criminal and systematic Israeli behaviors that continue to use water as a weapon on its attempts at consolidating the colonization of the occupied State of Palestine while violating all International and humanitarian laws and conventions.

Today, the international community is requested to take immediate actions to deter Israel in order to protect the Palestinian people and to prevent the implications of situation explosion on peace and security in the area.