

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics Issues a Press Release on World Environment Day

“The Palestinian Environment on World Environment Day”

In the occasion of the world Environment Day, celebrated every year on the fifth of June since 1972, when the United Nations declared World Environment Day at the opening of the Stockholm conference on human environment. At the same time, the UN announced the establishment of the United Nation Environment Program (UNEP), and gave it the responsibility of increasing world attention to the environment, and increasing the awareness of the public about their importance role in the protection of the environment.

The Situation of the Environment in the Palestinian Territory

Databases of PCBS show the reality and status of the Palestinian environment based on surveys (households or establishments) and the administrative records of the Palestinian establishments.

PCBS estimates indicate that the population density in the Palestinian Territory will reach 667 persons/km² in mid 2007. In the West Bank the density will be 445 persons/km² and in Gaza Strip the density will rise to 4,108 persons/km². Data shows that the agricultural land of the Palestinian Territory is mainly comprised of land cultivated with permanent crops, which constitute 77.0% of the total agricultural land in 2005.

88.6% of households in the Palestinian Territory are living in housing units connected to a public water network, and 121 localities (29.0%) obtain water from the Israeli water company (Mekorot)

In 2006, data reveals that 88.6% of households in the Palestinian Territory are living in housing units connected to a public water network, while 70,103 of households in the Palestinian Territory are not connected to a public water network. By region, 84.1% of households in the West Bank, and 97.3% of households in Gaza Strip are living in housing units connected to a public water network. Results show that 5.2% of households in the Palestinian Territory depend on household water wells. The quality of water ranges from good to bad, according to survey results, 50.6% of households in the Palestinian Territory consider their water quality to be good, there of 77.9% in the West Bank and 4.5% in Gaza Strip, whereas 23.1% of households in the Palestinian Territory consider their water to be of bad quality.

Concerning localities, the data of the Local Community Survey 2005 shows that 184 localities in the Palestinian Territory do not have a public water network (31.0% of total localities, and 220,763 persons). The main source of water for the localities connected to the network was the Israeli source (Mekorot) representing 29.0% of the connected localities to water network.

Concerning economic establishments, results show that 86.7% of economic establishments in the Palestinian Territory in 2006 were connected to the public water network, compared to 6.7% of the establishments which used rain collection water wells.

For health care centers, the results in 2006 showed that 92.4% of the health care centers in the Palestinian Territory obtain water for consumption from the water network, whereas 100% of the secondary health care centers, and 91.2% of the primary health care centers, obtain their water from the water network, 99.7% of centers in the other human health activities are connected.

Around 45.3% of the households in the Palestinian Territory are connected to wastewater network.

Wastewater network was used for disposal of wastewater by 45.3% of the households in the Palestinian Territory in 2006, and by 66.8% of the economic establishments, and 67.9% of the health care centers.

Results of the Local Community Survey for 2005 show that 74 localities in the Palestinian Territory were connected to the wastewater network, of which 55 were in the West Bank. Also, 533 localities were using tight cesspits to dispose of their wastewater (509 localities in the West Bank and 24 in Gaza Strip).

2,844 tons of household solid waste are produced daily in the Palestinian Territory

PCBS data in 2006 show that the estimated amount of household solid waste quantity produced daily in the Palestinian Territory was 2,844 tons. The average household daily production of household waste in the Palestinian Territory was estimated to be 4.6 kg: 4.2 kg in the West Bank and 5.4 kg in Gaza Strip. The estimated monthly amount of medical wastes produced from the health care centers was about 426 tons, while the estimated monthly amount of wastes produced from the economic establishments was about 82,023 tons.

27.8% of the localities in the Palestinian Territory suffer from an environmental problem in the field of solid waste collection service.

Municipal waste is the solid waste produced from the Palestinian localities. In 2005 data of the Local Community Survey shows that 166 localities (27.8% of the localities) in the Palestinian Territory did not have a solid waste collection service. And the local authority was responsible for the collection of the solid waste in 56.7% localities. Results also show that 129 localities in the Palestinian Territory collect their solid waste daily, whereas solid waste is collected more than once a week in 266 localities.

164 dumping sites serve 598 localities in the Palestinian Territory.

The number of dumping sites in the Palestinian Territory was 164 in 2005, of which 161 were in the West Bank and 3 were in Gaza Strip. The dumping sites are not monitored by the Ministry of Health. Dumping sites are considered to be sources of insects for 272 localities in the Palestinian Territory and sources of bad smell for 258 localities.

The Effect of Israeli Policies on the Palestinian Environment

The Israeli occupation had intended to destroy the Palestinian environment and deplete the Palestinian natural resources, as was clear from the first military order taken after the occupation of Palestinian Territory in 1967 concerning water resources. The decision was taken on 07/06/1967 concerning transferring the responsibility for water in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the Israeli Military Governor. This decision was followed by other decisions

that restrict and decrease Palestinians' usage of their water rights and prohibit them from digging agricultural and household wells. In addition to these decisions, there were many decisions allowing the digging of wells in the colonies that were established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip lands in order to provide Israel with water from the Palestinian aquifer.

Since the beginning of the occupation until 30/04/2006, more than 1.39 million trees, and more than one million dunums of agricultural lands were destroyed, and more than 420 artesian wells and additional water resources were polluted. Today Israel is controlling more than 85% of the Palestinian water resources and, consequently, the Palestinian per capita drinking water use has decreased to less than 90 cubic meter per year.

During the last five years Israel established the Annexation and Expansion Wall on West Bank lands; construction began in 2002. This wall, which extends inside the West Bank more than 400 meters in some areas, confiscated, closed, and isolated huge areas of land (349,000 dunums) by the end of 2005, besides destroying and isolating more than 90 wells in the West Bank and a large number of springs.

By following the track of the Annexation and Expansion Wall and the topography of the lands which the wall is built on, we found that the area isolated on the western side wall is located over the major northern and western aquifers which have an annual discharge capacity of 507 million cubic meters, whereas the entire eastern area is located over the eastern aquifer which has an annual discharge capacity of 172 million cubic meters. Water is extracted from these aquifers by pumping from the artesian wells or from the natural discharge of the spring. The number of artesian wells in these two areas is estimated to be 165 wells with an annual discharge capacity of 33 million cubic meters. The number of springs is estimated to be 53 springs with an annual discharge capacity of 22 million cubic meters. The extracted water from wells and springs in the isolated and confiscated area is used for human, agricultural, industrial and tourism activities. The localities inside these areas cannot benefit from this water, since the water is transported and used in the areas and localities behind the wall, that is to say, Israel is stealing a huge percent of the Palestinian resources, and this will frighten the life of the Palestinians¹

¹ Study published by the Palestinian Water Authority.