

Press Statement

For Immediate Release

Africa Water Justice Network Condemns Siege on Gaza and Urges Respect for Human Rights and International Law

Accra, October 14, 2023 - The Africa Water Justice Network (AWJN) strongly condemns the ongoing siege and denial of water and other basic necessities to the people of Gaza by the Israeli government. We call upon all actors involved to respect human rights and international law in their actions.

The people of Gaza have long endured tremendous hardships, including limited access to safe and clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and adequate healthcare. These conditions are not only inhumane but also a violation of fundamental human rights. The already dire humanitarian consequences of the protracted 16-year siege of Gaza have rapidly deteriorated since Monday October 9, 2023 when Israel cut off the flow of essential resources, including clean water, medical supplies and as it intensified its aerial bombardment over the course of the week. Now that fuel required to operate critical water infrastructure has run out, the United Nations Agency for Palestine Refugees warns that two million people are at imminent risk.

The AWJN stands firm in its commitment to the principles of justice, equality, and respect for human rights. We believe that every individual, regardless of their location, deserves access to clean and safe water, a basic necessity for life. The siege on Gaza exacerbates the already challenging water situation of Palestinians. Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1995, Israel has rapidly consolidated its control of water supplies in the region. It now controls 87% of Palestinian water resources and has established a state of 'water apartheid' in which Palestinians are denied control of and access to water resources and services and consuming far below the minimum water standards set by the World Health Organization.

The situation in Gaza is especially dire, where 97% of the water is not fit to drink. According to human rights monitors, the intermittent and poor-quality supply from Israel has been slowly poisoning residents for years. Historical targeting of water and sewerage infrastructure by Israeli airstrikes, which have also been targeted in the ongoing siege, has led to the over extraction and pollution of groundwater. The denial of water to Palestinians in Gaza for drinking, cooking, hygiene and agriculture has led to severe public health impacts, including higher levels of infant and maternal mortality and the spread of waterborne diseases.

International law, including the Geneva Conventions, stipulates the obligations of all parties involved in conflicts to ensure the well-being of civilians and protect their access to basic necessities. We call upon the Israeli government and all parties in the region to adhere to these legal obligations and prioritize the welfare of the civilian population in Gaza.

The AWJN further urges the international community, including the United Nations and its member states, to take immediate and concerted action to alleviate the suffering of the people of Gaza. We call for an end to the siege, the restoration of access to clean water, and the facilitation of humanitarian aid to address the dire living conditions in the region.

In the spirit of solidarity, we stand alongside organizations and advocates who are working tirelessly to address the water and humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We will continue to raise our voices and advocate for the rights and well-being of the Palestinian people.

The AWJN reiterates its commitment to the principles of justice, human rights, and access to clean water for all. We stand united with those who share our values and aspirations for a more just and equitable world.

For media inquiries, please send request to:

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About the Africa Water Justice Network:

The Africa Water Justice Network is a coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to promoting water justice in Africa. Our mission is to ensure equitable access to clean and safe water for all and to advocate for the protection of water resources and the rights of communities that rely on them.