

Researcher uncovers hidden facts of Israeli-Palestinian water politics

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The Israeli government has been forcing the Palestinian Authority into approving water infrastructure for illegal West Bank settlements for the past 15 years, according to research by a University of Sussex academic.

The research by Senior Lecturer in International Relations Dr Jan Selby is published today (5 February 2013) in the journal *Water Alternatives*.

It presents the first known evidence of the Palestinian Authority lending its official consent to parts of Israel's settlement expansion programme.

Settlements and related infrastructure are illegal under international law, and are recognised as one of the major obstacles to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The research is based on minutes of the Joint Water Committee – an Israeli-Palestinian body often upheld as an example of good Israeli-Palestinian relations – and interviews with participants. Dr Selby concludes that:

- Israel has repeatedly made its approval of improvements to Palestinian water supplies conditional upon Palestinian Authority approval of new water facilities for Israeli settlements;
- the Palestinians, who face serious [water shortage](#) issues and an underdeveloped supply system, have given this approval in almost every case;

- the arrangement was known about by former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and current President Abu Mazen;
- international donors have known that Israel's approval of donor-funded projects for Palestinians is conditional on Palestinian approval of Israeli settlement infrastructures, but have preferred to remain silent on the issue;
- the Palestinian [water crisis](#) in the West Bank has significantly worsened since the creation of the Joint Water Committee.

Dr Selby says: "None of the parties emerge very well from these findings. Israel has been exploiting Palestinian desperation for improved [water](#) supplies. The Palestinian Authority has been pressured into consenting to its own colonisation and has not contested Israel's cynical tactics as forcefully as it might have done.

"And international donors have variously stood by or been complicit in activity which is contrary to international law, and contrary to their own policies on the peace process, and which has helped to undermine the possibility of a two state solution."

More information: "Cooperation, domination and colonisation: The Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee" by Dr Jan Selby is published online by the journal *Water Alternatives*. www.water-alternatives.org/index.php/view&id=234&Itemid=1

Provided by University of Sussex

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