

Desalination plant to be built in Gaza

March 20 2014



A picture taken on March 20, 2014 shows the implementation of first stone to mark the start of the construction of a major seawater desalination plant in Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip

The European Union and UNICEF launched a project Thursday to build a desalination plant in the Gaza Strip to provide 75,000 Palestinians with drinking water.

A joint statement said the project will be implemented by UNICEF thanks to a 10-million-euro (\$13.7-million) EU grant.

Just 5.8 percent of Gaza households have good quality water because of increased salinity caused by sewage infiltration of groundwater, according to a statement released Thursday by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics ahead of World Water Day on Saturday.

"Access to [clean water](#) is a [fundamental human right](#) for all. And yet many Gazans face acute water shortages on a day-to-day basis," EU representative John Gatt-Rutter said as the first stone was laid for the project.

"Others can only access water of very poor quality," he added, saying the new plant "offers the prospect of access to clean water for many thousands of families".

The plant at Deir al-Balah in the centre of the territory is expected to become operational in 2015, and will supply fresh water to 75,000 people in Khan Yunis and Rafah in the south.

Because up to 95 percent of water in the water table is unfit for consumption, "more than four out of five Palestinians in Gaza buy their [drinking water](#) from unregulated, private vendors, a heavy burden on impoverished families", the EU-UNICEF statement said.

The Palestinian Bureau of Statistics says that 28 percent of the water supplied to households in the West Bank and Gaza is bought from Israeli company Mekorot, and that 85 percent of groundwater supplies are extracted by Israel.

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