



Urgent

6 March 2014

Mr. Silvan Shalom
Minister for the Development of the Negev and Galilee and Minister of Energy and Water

Dear Sir,

Re: Problems with Water Supply for Tens of Thousands of East Jerusalem Residents in Neighborhoods Beyond the Separation Barrier

1. We are appealing to you on behalf of residents of Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the separation barrier, who remain within the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality, to ensure the immediate resumption their water supply. The termination of the water supply has affected the neighborhoods of Ras Khamis, Ras Shehadeh, Dayhat a-Salam and the Shu'afat Refugee Camp.
2. Over the last two days, the water supply is non-existent in almost all houses within these neighborhoods. According to reports from local residents, and as confirmed by an inspection conducted by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel on March 5, 2014, very few houses have access to water, and those few that do have abnormally low water pressure. According to the residents, in the last two weeks there has been a sharp drop in water pressure, and between the 4-5 March 2014, a vast majority of homes had no water supply. In the morning of 6 March 2014, residents reported that the water supply had returned in some houses.
3. According to estimates provided by the UNRWA, more than 20,000 people live in the Shu'afat Refugee Camp. This is in addition to the tens of thousands of people who live in the other three neighborhoods. The exact number of residents is unknown to the Jerusalem Municipality and other government agencies due to the severe neglect suffered by these neighborhoods following the construction of the separation barrier, despite the fact that most of its residents are permanent Israeli citizens with Israeli identity cards.
4. In a conversation with Mr. Eli Cohen, Associate Director of The Gihon Corporation, the water corporation responsible for supply water to Jerusalem, ACRI was told that the company's water systems and gauges did not indicate that there was any problem with the water supply to these areas. This however does not change the harsh reality of tens of thousands of people, including infants, children, women and the sick, being left without water. It is essential to remember that the right to water is a fundamental right, the absence of which has serious implications on the right to life and health.
5. The Gihon Corporation and the Jerusalem Municipality correctly assert that the current water infrastructure in these neighborhoods is insufficient to meet the water demands of the residents. Indeed, this grave situation has been exacerbated in recent years by natural population growth together with the erection of the separation barrier that disconnects them from the rest of the city. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of National Infrastructure to intervene to find an immediate solution to this

water shortage and ensure that these residents have access in the long term to a secure water supply.

6. In recent years, the Gihon Corporation has held meetings with representatives of the residents in an attempt to find a solution to the water connection problems in the area. Unfortunately, no solutions have emerged and the situation continues to deteriorate. The ministry you lead, which is responsible for this issue, must now intervene to find solutions for this problem and safeguard the rights of these residents.
7. It should be recalled that according to government decision 3873 on 10 July 2005, the approval of the route of the barrier that separates certain neighborhoods in Jerusalem from the rest of the city, obliged a long list of government agencies to employ creative solutions that suit the new reality. Almost a decade has passed since that government decision, yet very little has changed.
8. We call for the immediate resumption of water to this area, and for the adoption of a long-term solution to the infrastructure situation causing intolerable daily misery for tens of thousands of residents.

Sincerely,

Ronit Sela

Director of Human Rights in East Jerusalem Project
Association for Civil Rights in Israel

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