
Pipeline from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea

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The agreement signed by Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority to build a pipeline from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea came as a shock to many politicians and analysts. There is some disparity in Arab and international reactions to the project, while the Israelis view it as a historic agreement.

This disparity dates back to 2002 and the World Summit in Johannesburg when it was promoted by Jordan and Israel in the context of preserving the environment and saving the Dead Sea from drying out. However, the evidence now suggests that the environmental objective was merely a re-packaging of the project in order to reduce criticism that may arise.

The agreement raises some questions about its timing, coming as it does during a delicate phase in the region's history, particularly over the Palestinian issue. A proposal as big as the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal, which is dependent on regional cooperation and large international financial support seem suspicious., not least because it has been said that it can proceed even without an Israel-Palestine peace deal. In other words, Palestinian participation is not essential.

We need to look at the project in more detail, given its potential impact on Palestinian rights, access to water and the distribution of the natural resources of the Dead Sea.

The development of the project

The **idea for this project arose** more than 150 years ago; different parties have studied the idea at different times and for different reasons.

Rivalry between Britain and France in the 19th century over the route to India and the East Indies led the French to convince

the Egyptians to dig the Suez Canal. The British considered alternatives and, in 1850, engineer William Allen proposed to link the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea by digging a canal from the gulf of Haifa to the Jordan Valley; this would raise the water level in the Dead Sea and Gulf of Aqaba sufficient to allow ships to sail from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. He presented his idea in a book: *The Dead Sea, a New Route to India*.

Britain continued to study the project even after it occupied Egypt and controlled the Suez Canal (which was completed in 1869). The UK government sent General Charles Gordon, the governor of Sudan, to Palestine to conduct further studies on Allen's idea. Gordon made some changes and improved the project but British interest waned as there was no real justification for another canal.

However, Zionist scholars, theorists and politicians embraced the idea after adjusting it to suit their own settlement projects in Palestine. In 1899, Swiss engineer Max Burchardt sent the results of his research to Theodor Herzl. It included a brief outline of the projects in which he proposed digging a canal from the Gulf of Haifa to the River Jordan and along to the Dead Sea, in order to take advantage of the 400 metre descent from the Mediterranean to generate power. Herzl presented this project in his book *The Old New Land*, published in 1902, where he mentioned Burchardt's designs for the sea canal project.

In 1919, a Norwegian engineer, Johan Hjorth, proposed digging a direct tunnel between the Judea Mountains in order to use the water fall to generate energy on the coast of the Dead Sea. In 1925, a French engineer named Pierre Gandilion suggested a canal linking the Mediterranean with the Dead Sea through the plains of Marj Ben Amer and extending to the Jordan Valley. Two power stations were to be built, one in the Beisan Valley and the other near the River Jordan.

In 1938, the Jewish Agency tasked American engineer Walter Lowdermilk with studying the water conditions in Palestine. He presented the results of his work in 1944; he proposed to divert the River Jordan to the coastal plain areas and the Negev

region. His project also involved creating a canal connecting the Mediterranean with the Dead Sea.

These projects were linked to a desire to increase Jewish migration to Palestine, and to ensure control of the various water resources, using them for the benefit of the large settlement projects, particularly in the Negev region.

At the beginning of the 1940s, the Zionist movement formed the “Fact-finding Committee in Palestine” in order to look at the possibilities of accommodating Jewish settlers in Palestine based on the maximum utilisation of land and water. The committee, which was headed by American engineer James Hens, along with experts John Savage and Lowdermilk, published its first report in 1943, in which it suggested diverting water from the Jordan River for irrigation purposes, and to compensate the low level of the Dead Sea resulting from this by transferring water from the Mediterranean through a canal, which could also be used to generate power.

Between 1950 and 1955, American John Keaton presented seven projects for seven different canals to connect the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean. In 1968, the idea of digging a canal linking the Mediterranean port of Ashdod to the Red Sea port of Eilat was proposed. Despite many indicators suggesting that Golda Meir’s government would adopt the project, the political, security and economic conditions led to its suspension.

In 1974, a committee was formed to prepare a preliminary study on the benefits of a project to generate energy in the Dead Sea area. After a year of work, its report highlighted the feasibility of a canal between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas in economic terms, and recommended detailed research and the preparation of a preliminary draft.

By August 1980, the Israeli government was ready to implement a project to connect the Dead Sea with Gaza via the “Qatif-Massada route”. In May the following year, work began on the project at the foot of the Yair Mountain, overlooking the Dead Sea near

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Massada. The project faced Arab and international criticism, as Jordan rejected it on the grounds of its impact on the occupied Palestinian territories, its negative economic and geographic effects, and the damage that could be inflicted on the Jordanian potassium factories on the Dead Sea. The issue was addressed at various levels in the region and internationally. The UN also criticised the canal project on December 16, 1982, because it violated the sanctity of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 and harmed Palestinian interests. It called on international committees to refrain from providing any direct or indirect aid to the project.

During the same period, the Jordanian government proposed an alternative in response to the Israeli project. However, independent studies proved that two canals would be unsustainable, leading to an economic and environmental disaster; it was obvious that it would be necessary to agree on a single project, if either project were to see the light of day. Israel rejected the Jordanian project; Prime Minister Menachem Begin invited the government in Amman to take part in the Israeli project instead of going it alone.

After the formation of a national unity government led by Shimon Peres in 1984, the Israeli project was frozen pending the changes in the region that would allow for the implementation of the Israeli plan in a regional context; Israel knew that it was impossible to execute it alone.

The canal project and the peace process

The atmosphere created by the launch of the Middle East peace process after the Madrid Conference in 1991 provided the opportunity to revive many of the projects that could be implemented regionally. Most notable of these was the joint **Israeli-Jordanian project for a canal linking** the Red Sea and the Dead Sea.

The project was discussed seriously on 25 July 1994 after the Wadi Arab peace treaty was signed. Two committees were formed, one for the demarcation of the border and the other to discuss water issues. The agreement to go ahead with the canal

By 1984, Israel knew that it was impossible to execute the project alone and froze it's work

project was announced at the end of August. However, regional events ever since have delayed the project's implementation, although Israel and Jordan have kept in touch pending the right moment to re-launch it onto the world.

In 2002, the two governments used the Earth Summit in Johannesburg to announce the project as a pipeline rather than a canal in order to reduce Arab criticism and the overall cost. It was also intended to give it an environmental flavour, hence the choice of launch venue, in order to distract attention from the political and economic facts of the project. The announcement was greeted with widespread Arab rejection, not least of the timing of the announcement. The Palestinian delegation at the conference stressed that they were not party to the project, and that it challenged the Palestinians' right to the Dead Sea.

Jordan went to great lengths to convince the Arab countries to accept the project and tried to get the Palestinians on board through discussions regarding the project, given that they are the third party linked directly to the Dead Sea. Meanwhile, the government in Amman also tried to erase Egyptian doubts regarding the canal by reassuring its counterparts in Cairo that it would be a pipeline for part of the route and so will not be an alternative or competitor to the Suez Canal for shipping. The fruits of these efforts were reaped during the World Economic Forum in 2003, held on the shore of the Dead Sea, in which the project was announced officially and its immediate execution was agreed upon by all the participating countries, including the Palestinians.

2013 Red Sea-Dead Sea link agreement

After 11 years of negotiations, representatives from Jordan, Israel and the **Palestinian Authority came to an agreement in Washington** regarding the Dead Sea, which, according to the participants, aims to improve the distribution of water resources amongst the countries in the area and to slow down the fall in water level. Water is to be pumped from the Gulf of Aqaba to transfer around 120 million cubic metres to the Dead Sea every year. Israel's Energy and Water Minister, Silvan Shalom, said at the time that the

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agreement “gives a glimmer of hope that we can overcome more obstacles in the future.” In response, his Palestinian counterpart, Shaddad Attili, said: “We have shown that we can work together despite the political difference; we all share the same problems that come from the scarcity of water.” Without water, there is no economic growth or jobs, added Jordan’s Water and Irrigation Minister, Hazem Al Nasser.

The agreement was signed after years of research confirmed its feasibility. The World Bank, in whose office the ceremony took place, agreed that it is possible to use the Red Sea to re-nourish the Dead Sea, which is losing water at an alarming rate.

According to the three parties, the next step is an international tender for the entire project, starting with the building of a desalination plant in Aqaba and laying the first of the four pipes for transporting the water. The tenders are expected to begin in 2014.

The World Bank did not mention the cost of the project or who will be paying for it, but media reports have reported that it will take five years to complete with costs ranging between \$250 million and \$400 million.

Agreement details

Following the construction of a pumping system in the Gulf of Aqaba, the system would pump 200 million cubic metres of water out of the Red Sea every year. Of this, just over half would be transferred to the Dead Sea. The balance, around 80 million cubic metres, would be desalinated and distributed to Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian territories, which all suffer from water shortages. Israel’s share in this deal will see it get between 30 and 50 million cubic metres of fresh water to be taken from Lake Tiberias (aka the Sea of Galilee); the price will be based on the rate for desalinated water. The agreement also stipulates that the Palestinians would receive 30 million cubic metres of desalinated water, which will help solve the water crisis in the West Bank. They had requested the construction of a large water tank north of the Dead Sea in the Ain Al Fashkha area, but the Israelis rejected the request.

According to Israel's Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, the project is expected to be completed within three to five years.

Justifications for signing the agreement

There are **different justifications cited by the Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis for this agreement**. The Jordanian government justified it with the fact that it is suffering a water deficit amounting to about 300 million cubic meters. "Jordan consumes 900 million cubic metres of water per year," said a government spokesperson, "but only possesses 650 million cubic metres, and Jordan is currently relying on Syria for annual water 'aid', which threatens the security of Jordan in the future."

As for Israel, its share would be about 30-50 million cubic metres to be used for Eilat and Wadi Araba, which would enable it to execute its large settlement project and resettle a greater number of Jewish people around the Negev and Eilat.

In terms of the economic benefits for these countries, they are counting on this project for energy generated by the gradient down to the Dead Sea, which is 400 metres below sea level. There is the potential to produce 500 megawatts of electricity.

Palestinian officials have said that the PA's participation in the agreement was to support a solution for the water crisis in Jordan. They also noted that they would be limited to receiving about 20 to 30 million cubic metres of water from Israel, outside of the framework of the Oslo Accords signed in 1993.

Shaddad Attili told official radio station "Voice of Palestine" that the agreement is limited to a tripartite understanding on the establishment of a water desalination plant in Aqaba, Jordan. The PA, he claimed, is involved at Jordan's request.

Opposition to the project

The project faces growing opposition within the participating countries and in the countries that may be affected by the agreement, such as Egypt. Critics are mainly experts in the environment and politics.

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Environmental experts, for example, believe that the claim that the Dead Sea will dry-up and disappear by 2050 is an exaggeration. It is, they claim, a pretext used to approve the project and raise global and regional sympathy, as well as give it a humanitarian and environmental gloss.

Sahib Al-Rubeai, an expert on the issue of water in the Middle East, believes that the Dead Sea will exist for another 400 to 500 years, at the very least; some predictions claim another 1,000 years. Al-Rubeai says that the first prediction is more realistic because the volume of water in the Dead Sea is estimated at between 300 to 400 billion cubic metres, and estimates suggest that the annual evaporation rate is about one billion cubic metres.

The scientists base their predictions on a group of **scientific studies of the Dead Sea levels and its short-term and long-term future**. “Short-term” refers to up to 100 years from now and the studies predict a worst-case scenario by 2109.

The long-term studies tried to answer the question of whether or not the Dead Sea will dry out, and if the answer is no, then predict the level at which the sea will stabilise. These studies were both qualitative and quantitative:

- The qualitative studies concluded that the Dead Sea will not dry out for several hundreds of years due to the sea’s high level of salinity, which reduces the evaporation rate, as well as the water’s current depth.
- The quantitative studies developed models for studying and predicting the water level at which the sea will stabilise by using several scientific methods and approaches, such as water balances and thermodynamics. These studies concluded unanimously that the Dead Sea will not dry out and predicted that the water level will stabilise at 500-680 metres below sea level in 360-400 years. Of course, the stability of these predictions will depend on the stability of natural and weather factors that were taken into account when formulating the predictions.

The Israeli newspaper Maariv considers the project to be an environmental disaster, saying that it has nothing to do with saving the Dead Sea. It published a report about this agreement; under the heading, “180 km of pipes carry little hope”, it said that saving the Dead Sea by stopping its water level from dropping requires pumping one billion cubic metres a year, while the amount of water expected to be pumped from this pipeline from the Red Sea, will, at best, decrease the annual level drop by just 10 cm. This means that instead of the water level declining by 1.10 metres, it will only decline by 1 metre a year.


The newspaper mentioned other risks that the canal project brings with it. When water from the Red Sea mixes with that in the Dead Sea, it claimed, there will be a chemical reaction that may revive the red algae in the water and create a layer of gypsum; the bacteria will produce hydrogen sulphide, which smells of rotten eggs. This may cause an environmental disaster for the Dead Sea and a major issue for the tourist trade.

Maariv’s report warns of the geological risks being more dangerous than those which threaten the environment. The high pressure necessary to make water flow along the 180km pipeline is a risk given the proximity to the area in the region which is most sensitive to earthquakes, the Asian -African or Great African Rift Valley. The residual salinity of the water could also leak into the groundwater if there are any cracks in the pipeline, damaging the water economy.

Palestinian factions: The Red Sea-Dead Sea link agreement legitimises the occupation: Hamas rejection

One of the strongest reactions towards the project came from Hamas. It rejected the Dead Sea-Red Sea link outright, and stressed that it will not accept any relinquishment or abdication of sovereignty over any part of Palestine or its water. A spokesman said that the agreement “normalises” and “legitimises” the Israeli occupation.

The movement also warned against what it considered the “severe consequences” of this agreement on the future of the Palestinian



*The pipeline will
be 180km long*

cause in light of the open war waged by the occupation against the Palestinian people, land and sanctities.

In a statement, Hamas insisted that the Palestinian Authority does not have the right to relinquish, surrender or negotiate away any part of Palestine or its water. “All of the Palestinian factions and forces reject this agreement and all other agreements that facilitate the theft of Palestinian land and water and enhance the Zionist presence in it.”

Hamas urged the Palestinian Authority not to run after the mirage of so-called “peace” or a “political settlement” and not to make unilateral decisions outside the Palestinian ranks.

The “normalisation” with the Israelis through the project was also criticised by Islamic Jihad in Palestine, whose spokesman, Daoud Shihab, said, “This agreement gives the Israeli occupation a mandate to loot our wealth and strengthens its control over the land.” He added that this project was the dream of the founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, and warned that the agreement seizes water and political rights from Palestinian and Jordan.

Talal Abu Zarifa, a leading member of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, condemned the Palestinian Authority’s participation and signing of the “two seas” agreement despite warnings about its effect on the environment. The DFLP official also stressed that the project aims to enhance the Israeli occupation’s control over the West Bank, especially the Jordan Valley. This, he warned, has to be seen in the context of the American framework proposal to ensure Israeli control over the Palestinian borders with Jordan and keep the Israel Defence Forces in the Jordan Valley under the pretext of Israel’s “security”. He also pointed out that the project serves Benjamin Netanyahu’s extremist government’s policy of settlement expansion, Judaisation and the seizure and looting of the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem.

Furthermore, Palestinian NGOs and the Palestine Liberation Organisation called for an end to all forms of cooperation in the canal project, “because that would undermine the rights of the

Palestinians to the water and will add legitimacy to the deprivation of the Palestinians from their ownership rights over the River Jordan.”

The NGOs also noted that proceeding with the agreement to link the two seas would mean replacing the natural River Jordan water seized by Israel with desalinated water from the Red Sea that will be sold to the Palestinians in small quantities and at high costs.

According to official statistics, Palestinians in the occupied territories only receive 73 litres of water per capita (in some Palestinian communities that figure is as low as 10 litres a day), despite the fact that the World Health Organisation determines that the per capita share of water should be at least 100 litres per day for good health.

Abbas adviser criticises agreement

An adviser to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on water and environmental affairs says that the agreement “disregards” Palestinian rights. **Yousef Abu Safieh said** that it “will deprive the Palestinians from any rights they have to the Dead Sea and will focus its advantages to serve the interests of Jordan and Israel.” The former minister for environmental affairs in the Palestinian Authority expressed strong opposition to the agreement “which limits the Palestinian presence as a formality without real benefits on the ground.” He explained that the Palestinian benefit will be limited to receiving water from Israel, but at a price.

Abu Safieh also pointed out that the agreement will give Israel great benefits, especially in terms of the revitalisation of tourism to the Dead Sea, which has seen a sharp decline. Jordan, he said, will be able to face its severe water shortage as well as revive tourism on its side of the Dead Sea.

“Practically-speaking, we are not benefiting from the Dead Sea, and the agreement is unfair, as it represents the sacrifice of Palestinian rights in exchange for solving the water crisis in Jordan.”

Furthermore, the presidential adviser noted that Israel will sell 20

*In some
Palestinian
communities in
the occupied
territories, they
receive only 10
litres of water per
day per person*

to 30 million cubic litres of water to the Palestinians while it will continue to control, unlawfully, 600 million cubic litres of water in the occupied West Bank.

Objections of Jordanian parliamentary, union, partisan, popular and Islamist groups:

A number of Jordanian parliamentary, union, partisan, popular and Islamist forces have **objected to the “Red Sea-Dead Sea link” agreement**. Nationalist and left-wing parties, as well as national figures, issued statements saying that the agreement supports the existence of Israel and serves the interests of the enemy in the region under the cover of legitimacy. The criticism was accompanied by a call to cancel Jordan’s peace treaty with Israel and the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Amman.

The trade unions, which make up the political and social forces in the country, said that anyone dealing with the new agreement supports unacceptable normalisation and threatens the stability and security of the country, as well as contributes to threats to Jordan, the least of which are environmental. The unions were surprised that the government signed the agreement without conferring with parliament, and stressed that the deal implies more than just the vague claim of providing 100 million cubic metres of drinking water and saving the Dead Sea from drying out. Perhaps, they suggested, there is an intention to displace people from surrounding areas and fund dangerous nuclear projects.

They added that it would have been better to save the Dead Sea by requiring Israel to stop its continuous violations, its theft of water from the River Jordan and the export of polluted water without it being held accountable and without the Kingdom imposing its rights in this regard.

According to the Jordanian Islamic Action Front Party, most people in Jordan do not trust Israel due to its occupation and the desecration of holy sites in Palestine. “Israel has never hidden its ambitions in Jordan, which are based on racism and greed,” said a spokesman. He proposed that the Jordanians should go it alone or in partnership with other Arabs rather than with the Israelis.

International criticism

International reactions have seen several organisations concerned with the protection of the environment warning against the potential negative effects of adding Red Sea water to the fragile ecosystem of the Dead Sea. Britain's **Daily Telegraph** newspaper reported that, according to Friends of the Earth, Israeli Energy Minister Silvan Shalom is misleading the public in his country by promoting the agreement as an initiative to save the Dead Sea.

The newspaper quoted Gideon Bromberg, Director of Friends of the Earth in the Middle East: "What is being devised here is nothing to do with the Red-Dead Canal project but is a water exchange programme... The link to the Dead Sea that's being proposed here threatens the viability of the project from an environmental and economic perspective. It will bring foreign water into the Dead Sea that would upset its ecosystem, creating Gypsum and quite probably algae."

Tourism industry sources confirmed that Egypt would lose EGP 10 billion a year in the event that the pipeline-canal project goes ahead. They claim that it will destroy the natural water environment in the southern Sinai, especially in the nature reserves in Ras Mohammed and Sharm el-Sheikh. It will destroy the coral reefs as a result of the faster currents and the change in water temperature, which will also have a negative effect on fish stocks in the Red Sea. Moreover, it will contaminate the groundwater due to leakage of salt water. Several conferences are expected to be held to discuss the actions to be taken if the project signed by the three parties is implemented.

There have been **different opinions regarding the extent and seriousness of this canal on the future of the Suez Canal**, and a number of Egyptian diplomats have stressed that the agreement is outdated and cannot be implemented from a technical aspect.

Ambassador Mohamed El-Orabi, Egypt's former Foreign Minister and head of the Congress Party, said that the plan to link the Red Sea and the Dead Sea through pipelines is an old project that was agreed upon in 2008. He pointed out that the agreement will not

Egypt would lose EGP 10 billion a year in the event that the pipeline-canal project goes ahead

affect the national security of Egypt or the Suez Canal.

El-Orabi explained that Egypt participated in discussions about the agreement in order to make sure that it will not affect the Suez Canal, and found that it will actually have no effect on the canal at all. He also noted that the project will benefit Jordan by generating electricity.

Furthermore, Raouf Saad, the former Egyptian ambassador to Russia, confirmed that the issue of linking the Red Sea and the Dead Sea has been raised more than once in the past. However, he claimed that technical difficulties have always meant that no project has gone ahead. He insisted, though, that Israel has always tried to find ways to bypass the Suez Canal and this may be another attempt.

What happens in and to the Gulf of Aqaba is of concern to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, pointed out Ambassador Masoum Marzouk, Egypt's former Assistant Foreign Minister; both countries have shorelines along the gulf. He suggested that the project must be studied from an environmental, coral reef and fishery perspective before being agreed upon as the delicate ecosystem may be affected. "And don't forget that the area is prone to earthquakes," he added. The former official also mentioned that Egypt will not oppose any project that may benefit its fellow Arab states such as Jordan and Palestine.

Israel's objectives for the project

Dr Sufian Al-Tal, an international expert in water and environmental affairs, stressed the great strategic danger posed by the project linking the two seas; he noted that it will help Israel to achieve many of its long-term objectives.

Al-Tal explained that there are three main objectives for Israel in seeking to implement this project. First, the resettling of 1-2 million new Jewish immigrants in the Negev Desert, as well as supplying the settlements with enough desalinated water. Second, it provides a justification for building new nuclear reactors in the Negev. "Israel is now hinting at constructing these reactors in Jordanian territory for Israel's benefit," he claimed. "The third Israeli

objective is to develop the Jordan Rift Valley; Israel has already embodied this development in a 3-D film recently published on the Internet. This would involve extending a fast train service between the Dead Sea and Aqaba.”

The water and environmental affairs expert pointed out that extending the canals and pipelines on Jordanian territory will give Israel new international rights after signing the Wadi Araba peace agreement, meaning that the water and electricity supply in Jordan will also supply Israel. He expressed his great concern over the agreement, noting that the Israeli occupation has a project parallel to this one and more dangerous, involving the construction of a new canal from the Mediterranean Sea to Jerusalem, and forming a large lake of about 20 square kilometres known as “Shalom Lake”. From this, water will flow to the Dead Sea, boosting it as a centre for tourism and holiday resorts.

Negative effects on Jordan

Dr Al-Tal also pointed out that this agreement will have **negative effects on Jordan**, including the fact that a study conducted by geologists at the University of Jordan indicates that the new water pressure on the surface of the Dead Sea will put additional pressure on the fresh groundwater, causing it to flow into the Dead Sea. This will lose Jordan 484 million cubic metres of fresh groundwater.

There are also significant risks for the Arab and Jordanian Potash Company when the water level reaches 386 metres, as all of its facilities will be flooded, including its channels, salt pans, dams, pumping units and all of the drains. This will cause heavy losses for the company, whereas the potash plant on the Israeli side will not be affected because it was built before the diversion of the River Jordan.

Jordan is prone to land slips, and the path that the canal will run through is prone to them. If the canal slips and ruptures it will leak salt water into Wadi Araba and contaminate all of the fresh water in the valley. At a rate of 64 cubic metres of water per second, which is equivalent to a quarter of a million cubic metres per hour or six million cubic metres per day, this is a serious threat.

Conclusion

Based on the information to-hand, Israel stands to gain the most from this project; the Palestinians, who are the legal and historic owners of the land and water resources in question, gain nothing of significance.

It is not enough for Israel to steal Palestine's groundwater; now it has even taken sea water for its benefit and has made the Palestinians sign an agreement that reduces their right to the Dead Sea and River Jordan to a relatively small volume of water at a high cost in comparison to Israel's share.

The Palestinians could have rejected the agreement or at least not rushed to sign the agreement due to their limited benefit from the project, the currently-stalled negotiations and Israel's refusal to meet their demand to construct a residential area for Palestinians close to the Dead Sea. But the Palestinians have agreed and have made the project possible.

Furthermore, this project has come in the middle of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, one of the main points of which is the fate of the Jordan Valley. Israel is insisting on maintaining a long-term military presence in the Valley, or even annexing it if the Palestinians agree, while the Palestinian Authority insists on rejecting any Israeli military presence. However, this project may see the Palestinians accepting an Israeli presence (possibly non-military) along the border with Jordan, which is what Israeli has been seeking to achieve all along.

Before signing this agreement, the Palestinian Authority should have called for a guarantee that the Palestinian water rights to the River Jordan basin and Palestinian groundwater are not affected, and to make sure that the water desalination projects established in the context of this project are not taken as a substitute for Palestinian water rights across the occupied territories.

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