

The European Commission should withdraw its patronage of Watec

Dear Mr. Juncker, President, European Commission

Dear Mr. Vella, Commissioner, Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

We, the undersigned European trade unions, human rights and right to water organizations, are alarmed by the European Commission's sponsorship of an event that includes the participation of companies involved in and facilitating violations of international law.

The EC, in fact, is one of the main sponsors of Watec, the Israeli water conference, to be held for the first time in Europe, in Venice, Italy, September 21-23. [1] The program also includes participation at the opening ceremony of Pavel Misiga, of the EC's Directorate-General for Environment.

As documented by international organizations, UN agencies and EU institutions themselves, Israel exercises strict control over Palestinian water resources and denies access to the Palestinian population, which has led to "stark inequalities" in access to water between Israelis, including settlers, and Palestinians, as noted in a January 2016 European Parliament report. [2]

The EC's patronage of Watec comes at a time when Israel is cutting off water to Palestinian communities, leaving tens of thousands without access to water during the hottest time of the year.[3]

In addition, participating companies at Watec 2016 include:

- **Tahal Group International**, which is involved in the construction of wastewater treatment plants in the occupied Palestinian territories that serve the illegal settlements. Tahal developed the master plan for the wastewater treatment system of Jerusalem, which includes the illegal settlements of Neve Ya'akov, Pisgat Ze'ev, Giv'at Ze'ev, Beitar lilit, Ma'aleh Adumim, Adam, Anathoth, and Mitzpeh Yericho; [4]
- **IOSight**, which lists among its main customers Hagihon, a company providing services to the settlements around Jerusalem, and Mekorot, the national water company of Israel documented by organizations such as Amnesty International and many others as appropriating Palestinian water resources and supplying water to Israeli settlements; [5]
- **Aqua Rimat**, whose client roster includes companies such as Danya Cebus, a construction company that has built a number of housing projects in settlements; Solel Boneh, which provided elements for the construction of checkpoints and built a portion of Israel's Wall as well as housing and infrastructure for the settlements and has a factory in the Kiryat Sefer settlement; and KKL/JNF, which has numerous projects in the settlements and is involved in projects for the forced displacement of Palestinian communities. [6]

It is deeply troubling to note that this is not the first time the Commission has sponsored Watec. At the 2013 and 2015 Tel Aviv editions, the main sponsor was Mekorot and the

exhibition included companies and institutions located in or providing services to Israeli settlements. In addition to Tahal Group International, Hagihon, KKL/JNF, participants included Ariel University, located in the settlement of the same name, Netafim, which provides technology and services to settlements and Elbit systems, one of Israel's leading producers of weapons and surveillance systems used against the Palestinian population and along Israel's Wall. [7]

By granting patronage to events sponsored by and involving companies and institutions operating in Israeli settlements, the EC is at odds with the European Union's own official position on settlements. Even worse, it legitimates and encourages illegal activities that trample fundamental rights such as access to water, thereby reinforcing Israel's impunity.

Through its patronage for Watec, the Commission is also giving credibility to the myth of the Israeli water miracle, which was built on the appropriation of Palestinian water resources and the denial of a fundamental right, misleading participating European companies and public opinion.

The Commission should follow the lead of European companies that have ended ties with Israeli companies and projects violating international law, including the Dutch companies Vitens and Royal HaskoningDHV, French companies Veolia, Safege and Poma, Ireland's CRH and Germany's Deutsche Bahn, among others. [8]

As European citizens, we urge the European Commission to withdraw its patronage of Watec 2016. We also call on the Commission as well as all European institutions to fulfill their legal obligation to put an end to all forms of support and assistance for Israeli violations of international law and Palestinian rights.

Sincerely,

Signed:

European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine – ECCP

Center for Encounter and Active Non-Violence, Austria

Association belgo-palestinienne WB, Belgium

Climaxi vzw, Belgium

CNCD-11.11.11, Belgium

FOS socialistische solidariteit, Belgium

Palestina Solidariteit, Belgium

Protos, Belgium

Solidarité Socialiste, Belgium

Vrede vzw, Belgium

ICAHD Finland, Finland

Association des Consommateurs d'Eau de la ville de Sète, France

Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS), France

ATTAC France, France
Eau Secours 34, France

Jüdische Stimme für gerechter Frieden in Nahost, Germany

Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Ireland
Right2Water Ireland, Ireland
Trade Union Friends of Palestine, Ireland

ARCI, Italy
Campagna No Mekorot, Italy
Comitato Italiano Contratto Mondiale sull'acqua-Onlus (CICMA), Italy
COSPE Onlus, Italy
FIOM - Cgil, Italy
Forum italiano dei movimenti per l'acqua, Italy
Rete Ebrei contro l'occupazione, Italy
Un ponte per..., Italy
USB - Unione Sindacale di Base, Italy

Comité pour une Paix Juste au Proche-Orient, Luxembourg, Luxembourg

Diensten en Onderzoek Centrum Palestina, Netherlands
Netherlands Palestine Committee (NPK), Netherlands

Association for International Water Studies, Norway

MAS - Movimento Alternativa Socialista, Portugal
Sindicato dos Professores da Grande Lisboa - Spgl, Portugal

Association of Palestinian Community in Scotland, Scotland/UK

Gibanje za pravice Palestincev BDS Slovenija, Slovenia
Umanotera, The Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development, Slovenia

Palestine Solidarity Campaign, South Africa

KRuHA (People's Coalition for the Rights to Water), Indonesia

Notes:

[1] <http://www.watecitaly.com>

[2]

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573916/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)573916_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573916/EPRS_BRI(2016)573916_EN.pdf)

[3] <http://www.ewash.org/sites/default/files/inoptfiles/160621%20-%20EWASH%20PR-%20Water%20Restrictions%20West%20Bank%20Result%20of%20Israeli%20Discriminatory%20Policies.pdf>

[4] <http://www.whoprofits.org/company/tahal-group-international>

[5] <http://www.iosight.com/customers-2/>

<http://www.whoprofits.org/company/hagihon-company>

<http://www.whoprofits.org/content/mekorot%E2%80%99s-involvement-israeli-occupation>

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdf/mde150272009en.pdf>

[6] <http://www.timesofisrael.com/start-up-says-its-waterprint-tracking-can-save-a-home/>

<http://www.whoprofits.org/company/danya-cebus>

<http://www.whoprofits.org/company/housing-and-construction-solel-boneh-infrastructures-formerly-solel-boneh>

<http://972mag.com/the-jewish-national-funds-list-of-projects-in-the-settlements/90512/>

[7] http://www.salon.com/2012/12/28/israel_establishes_university_in_illegal_west_bank_settlement/

<http://www.whoprofits.org/company/netafim>

<http://www.whoprofits.org/company/elbit-systems>

[8] <https://bdsmovement.net/news/dutch-water-company-terminates-relationship-mekerot-following-government-advice>

<https://www.royalhaskoningdhv.com/en-gb/news-room/news/20140114pr-explaining-terminate-wwtp-east-jerusalem/3339>

<http://europe.newsweek.com/boycott-movement-claims-victory-veolia-ends-all-investment-israel-332337>

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/societes/2015/03/25/20005-20150325ARTFIG00062-telepherique-a-jerusalem-est-suez-environnement-jette-l-eponge.php>

<http://www.independent.ie/business/crh-sells-controversial-stake-in-israels-only-cement-firm-mashav-34345981.html>

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4b6b59fc-7a4b-11e0-bc74-00144feabdc0.html>