

December 18, 2013

NGOs and the Libel Campaign Against Mekorot Water Company

Background

- On December 10, 2013, a major Dutch water company, Vitens, decided to terminate its ties with the Israeli water company Mekorot.
- Mekorot is part of the “Dutch-Israel Cooperation Forum,” which has been established to boost economic activities between the two countries by encouraging partnerships between Dutch and Israeli businesses.
- The Dutch Government [claims](#) that it did not advise Vitens to suspend its partnership with Mekorot. In fact, in response to criticism, FM Timmermans [declared](#) that **the Dutch cabinet previously informed Vitens that it does not see a problem with cooperation with Mekorot.**
- Criticism targeting Mekorot is part of a libel campaign, suggesting that Israel steals water from Palestinians. In fact, Mekorot is acting in accordance with the stipulated and internationally recognized water agreements between the Israelis and the Palestinians, including the 1995 Oslo Accords.
- NGO Monitor’s research shows that several Dutch and Palestinian NGOs were instrumental in Vitens’ decision to discontinue its partnership with Mekorot.
- **This incident demonstrates how certain political NGOs are willing to sabotage mutually beneficial treaties and ignore international law as part of their larger campaigns to delegitimize and demonize Israel.**
- **It also illustrates how companies, such as Vitens, are willing to overlook Dutch government policy and advice, as well as international legal guidelines, due to the influence and propaganda of powerful NGOs that promote anti-Israel BDS (boycotts, divestment, and sanctions).**

Examples of NGO advocacy calling for a boycott of Mekorot:

United Civilians for Peace (UCP)

- UCP, a platform established by the Dutch NGOs [ICCO](#), [Oxfam Novib](#), [IKV Pax Christi](#), and [Cordaid](#) to campaign on the Arab-Israeli conflict, has been a powerful promoter of BDS activities targeting Israel.
- Some of the organisations involved in UCP provide support to Israeli and Palestinian BDS NGOs, lobby Dutch and international frameworks, and release biased reports that advocate for BDS efforts. See [NGO Monitor’s fact sheet](#) for more information on how UCP affiliate ICCO is involved in BDS campaigns.
- UCP issued the following biased, misleading, and distorted [statement](#): “Mekorot is an Israeli national company that is involved in the Occupation of Palestine and in discrimination of Palestinians in Israel. Mekorot pumps water from Palestinian underground aquifers and supplies it to illegal Israeli settlements. In Israel itself, and in the Negev, Mekorot does not supply water to 45 villages, home of 160,000 Palestinian Bedouins. This does not only cause for an imbalance in the water supply between Israelis and Palestinians, but also raises

the issue of looting natural resources and excessive Israeli water use, including in the settlements. Mekorot is therefore involved in activities that are quite possibly in violation of human rights and humanitarian law."

Palestinian NGOs

- In response to Dutch cooperation with Mekorot, **12 Palestinian NGOs** pressured the Dutch to suspend such collaboration.
- Many of the NGOs behind this statement [receive](#) Dutch financial support including: [PCHR](#), [Al Haq](#), Addameer, [Al Mezan Center for Human rights](#), Women's Centre for Legal Aid and [DCI-Palestine Section](#).
- In a [letter](#) directed at Foreign Minister Timmermans and Minister of Development and Cooperation Lilianne Ploumen, the NGOs state: "Furthermore, the Forum's website lists the Israeli national water company Mekorot as a potential 'match-making' partner. Mekorot is the single largest supplier of water in the West Bank and currently extracts from Palestinian water resources in order to ensure that copious amounts of water reach the settlements and Israel. As such, Mekorot has played an instrumental part in furthering the settlement enterprise, ensuring discriminatory allocation of water, and in denying Palestinian control over natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)."

Coalition of Women for Peace (CWP)

- [Fact sheet](#): "Mekorot develops and maintains a water system, which strengthens Israeli control over the West Bank, favors settlers and ignores the basic needs and even mere presence of the local Palestinian population."

Israel Social TV (partner of the Dutch NGO [Cordaid](#))

- Produced a five minute [video](#) on "Agriculture in the Jordan Valley." The video includes statements by CWP researchers and claims that Mekorot dries up water springs leading to "no agriculture and no work."

War on Want (UK)

- [Tweet](#): "Israel's water company Mekorot that is at the heart of Israel's theft of Palestinian water and its illegal settlements."