

# Water - The Abundant Scarcity

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## ***"Water, Water Everywhere and Not a Drop to Drink...."***

*These are the lines from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The speaker, a sailor on a stranded ship, is surrounded by salt water that he cannot drink.*

Water is like Peace – it is all around us, but we do not grasp it. We let it go to waste. We let it be polluted, privatized, made scarce so that it becomes a market product. Yet water is a public good. It belongs to everyone. It has been given to us by our generous Mother Earth. Water cannot be scarce, as the total amount of water within the realm of planet earth is always the same – it remains constant.

The chances for Peace are similar. They are in public domain. They are a moral good. Peace is free, no cost. Everybody can grasp it – and work on Peace. Dedicate himself to Peace. Fight for Peace. Pray for Peace. Meditate for Peace. Unlike water – peace cannot be privatized.

We must keep it that way, and make again Water like Peace – a public good, not to be privatized EVER!

*On 28 July 2010, The United Nations General Assembly, through Resolution 64/292, explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights.*

Water's availability may vary from location to location. But water's huge quantity remains unchanged throughout the billions of years of our blue Planet's life.

Water is Life. Peace is Life. Water and Peace are interdependent.

Understanding this connection is understanding why water is an *abundant scarcity*.

However, nothing can be taken for granted, even if it is believed to be secured by a UN Resolution. We, the People, must defend this right, we must nurture it so it becomes from a seed a right engrained into our collective consciousness.

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## Water in the Israel-Palestine Conflict

The *Oslo Accords* of 1993, sponsored by Norway, were to be a guiding path for Peace in the Middle East; for Peace between Israel and Palestine. They were designed to be the first step towards a two-state solution.

One of the major features of the Oslo Agreements was that even during the precursor of the two-state solution, each country, Palestine, and Israel had full and autonomous rights to their natural resources, which included water, a scarce commodity in the Middle East in general, and especially in the Palestine-Israel region.

However, the Oslo Accords went nowhere, since Israel never agreed to them. A major reason was that under the Accords Palestine was to be given sovereignty over their land and resources, including water.

Close to 80% of all the water in Palestine, now including Israel, is on Palestine territory, over or below grounds of the West Bank. Israel would never admit it, but they know it. Israeli settlements illegally imposed on the West Bank are not by coincidence almost always on or near a perennial Palestinian water source.

Palestine knows it but they have no voice in the West.

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To adopt this universal UN-declared Human Right by each and every country remains a challenge. Though, like Peace, the concept of *Water for All*, is still a seed. It MUST be adopted by people's consciousness, and be endlessly nurtured and defended, so, the seed may grow.

Do not forget, no right, not even a Human Right in our day and age, is just God-given. We must work for it, as if it were a seed; water it gently, let it sprout, but watch over it, until it becomes big and independent. The right to water for everyone on this planet is an element of societal consciousness.

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*Water, Water Everywhere – as an Abundant Scarcity* is not a myth. Fresh water is just not equally distributed across the globe. But it can be made accessible to people everywhere.

In abundance available, but made scarce by excessive pollution, excessive use in one place, so that it may create shortages in another place.

The corporate sharks, who speak with a split tongue, pretend to protect water from pollution, but they do just the contrary.

If they succeed pretending that water is disappearing, because it has become so polluted,

that every drop of fresh water is becoming ever rarer — for them it is a justification to privatize water for profit, corporate profit, that is, not for the benefit of the people.



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## Where Is the Available Fresh Water?

By far the largest quantity of fresh water is available in South America.

The map shows a multitude of rivers flowing through the Amazon, carrying trillions of cubic meters of fresh water, largely unused for human consumption, into the Atlantic. Most of them are in Brazil.

About 90% of South America's waterways are draining into the Atlantic. This leaves a relatively thin strip of heavily populated western South America in a state of desert, or semi-desert (see map below).



Brazil, with about 8,200 km<sup>3</sup> annually renewable freshwater, ranks number one with about one eighth (1/8) of the world's total renewable freshwater resources which are estimated at 45,000 km<sup>3</sup>. The Amazon Basin holds about 73% of all of Brazil's freshwater. Renewable freshwater is the composite of annually sustainable surface and groundwater recharge combined (recharge by precipitation and inflow from outside).

The second most water-abundant country is Russia with 4,500 km<sup>3</sup> / year, followed by Canada, Indonesia, China, Colombia, US, Peru, India – all with renewable water resources of between 2,000 km<sup>3</sup> and 3,000 km<sup>3</sup> / year.

By continent, the Americas have the largest share of the world's total freshwater resources with 45 percent, followed by Asia with 28 percent, Europe with 15.5 percent and Africa with 9 percent.

This scenario immediately points to Africa's vulnerability. Africa is clearly the most vulnerable continent from a water resources – survival – point of view. Africa has about 60% of the world's remaining and known available natural resources; resources the west covets and goes to war for.

*South America is home of one of the world's largest single underground renewable freshwater reservoirs, the Guarani Aquifer which underlays 1.2 million square kilometers*



(km<sup>2</sup>), equivalent to about the size of Texas and California combined. Of the Guarani, 71% is under Brazil, 19% under Argentina, 6% under Paraguay, and 4% under Uruguay. Another huge underground water reservoir is underlaying North Africa – see below.

The Guaraní aquifer was discovered in the 1990s. It is named after the indigenous people who have inhabited the area for centuries. The Guarani holds an estimated 46,000 km<sup>3</sup> of freshwater (not to confound with the annual renewable freshwater, of which Brazil has about 8,300 km<sup>3</sup> – see above).

It is said that the Guaraní could supply the current world population for the next 200 years with 100 liters per capita per day.

The present Guarani's extraction rate is a little over 1 km<sup>3</sup> per year, while the potential recharge rate is between 45 km<sup>3</sup> and 55 km<sup>3</sup>/year, meaning that there is so far no risk of over-abstraction. This could however, change quickly.

The real risk for the plentiful Guarani underground “lake” is privatization.

About 35 million people inhabit the Guarani region. In the Brazilian section of the Guaraní, some 500 to 600 cities are currently supplied with Guaraní water – how many of these municipal supplies are already privatized?

In North Africa, the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System (NSAS) covers a surface area of around 2.2 million km<sup>2</sup> extending over four North African countries (Sudan, Chad, Egypt, and Libya). It is together with the Guarani aquifer, one of the largest known reserves of groundwater in the world. It dates from the Quaternary period, some 2.5 million years back.

The NSAS stores an estimated 370,000 km<sup>3</sup> of fresh water. However, only 10% to 20% are renewable and relatively easily accessible. The rest is what is called fossil or non-renewable water.

As fresh water reserves are made believe to diminish, corporate privatization is quietly pushing ahead. Privatization of parts of the Guarani aquifer is a real risk.

Transnational corporations, such as Nestlé, Coca Cola, PepsiCo, Dow Chemicals, and other transnationals with strong water interests, like Veolia, Suez (French), Thames (UK), Bechtel (US), Petrobras and a myriad of others, join with the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), different UN bodies, as well as many bilateral aid organizations and neoliberal NGOs. They are pushing ahead with privatizing fresh water resources, under the pretext of protecting drinking water sources for humanity.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. While the UN narrative of providing access to every world inhabitant to fresh water is ongoing and strong, for the last several decades the number of people without drinking water has barely changed. Today, there are still more than 2 billion people without clean water, making them, especially children, highly vulnerable to water-borne diseases.

It is high time that people are waking up, creating, for example, public trusts to preserve water as a public good for the benefit of humanity. It is one method for the common people to raising the seed “water” and let it grow into the collective consciousness of society.

Here, Water joins Peace – as a MUST Human Project. We, the People, must conserve water,

protect it from pollution and keep it in the public domain – to maintain water as a Human Right, thereby enhancing the United Nations Resolution of 2010 and transforming it into reality.

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