



■ **Gaza-Jericho Agreement, 4 May 1994**

The Oslo I Agreement, which only applied to the water and wastewater resources and systems in the Gaza and Jericho areas, tackled the water issue in the context of environmental protection and prevention of environmental hazards. It allowed for the drilling of new wells as long as they caused no harm to Israel's current water utilization. It confirmed the need to adopt, apply and ensure compliance with internationally recognized standards for acceptable levels of land, air, water, and sea pollution, and standards for solid and liquid waste treatment and disposal. A subcommittee was to deal with all issues of mutual interest; the institutional mechanism was an Environmental Expert Committee to be convened when the need arises. Oslo I focused more on the "no harm principle" and the continuation of current water entitlements than on substantive or procedural rules.

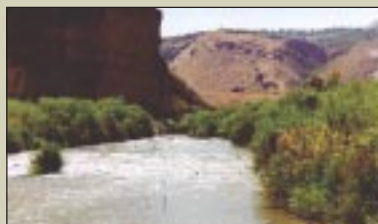
■ **The Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Taba, 28 September 1995**

In the Oslo II Agreement both parties recognized the need to protect the environment, utilize natural resources on a sustainable and environmentally sound basis, and cooperate in sewage, solid waste and water issues. The agreement explicitly states that Israel recognizes Palestinian water rights, to be negotiated in the final status talks without further elaboration on the nature of these rights, or the principles governing the rights and obligations of both parties. Article 12 expressly recognized water as a natural resource.

Annex III, Appendix I, Article 40 of the agreement deals with water allocation but refers to the immediate needs of the Palestinians without considering the principle of equitable and reasonable utilization of the water resources by both sides. Amounts of 70-80 mcm/yr were allocated for the Palestinians with 28.6 mcm/yr identified as immediate needs. The two parties agreed to establish a Joint Water Committee (JWC) to serve as an institutional mechanism for the interim period, mainly to oversee the implementation of Article 40.

■ **Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty, Arava/Araba Crossing, 26 October 1994**

In the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty Article 6, the parties agreed to recognize their rightful water allocations from the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers and the Arava/Arava groundwater in accordance with the agreed upon principles, with the quantity and quality to be respected. They further agreed to find practical and just solutions to their water problems, not to harm each other's water resources, and to cooperate in regional and international research and development projects, investigating existing and new water resources, water availability, conservation of water resources, etc.



Yarmouk River

■ **The Multi-Lateral Negotiations**

The Working Group on Water Resources (WGWR), established by the multilateral negotiation track with the US as gavel holder and Japan and the European Union as co-organizers, has

established four broad agenda items addressing the availability of water data, water management practices, water supply, and regional water management and cooperation. The main activities to date are as follows:

→ The Regional Water Data Banks Project works to improve the availability and applicability of water data information to support the decision-making process for the Palestinian Water Authority, the Israeli Hydrological Service and the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

→ The Middle East Desalination Research Center (MEDRC), established in Oman in late 1996 to coordinate and sponsor research in the area of desalination.



→ The Middle East Regional Study on Water Supply and Demand Development undertaken by Germany (1998) to determine long-term strategies for the development of additional water resources and future joint water resource management, considering issues such as population growth, water use and water quality.

→ A comparative survey of regulatory and legal frameworks of water laws, pricing and management in Israel, Jordan and Palestine, funded by Norway.

→ Optimization of Intensive Agriculture under Varying Water Quality Conditions, established in 1996 and managed by Luxembourg to demonstrate how brackish and saline water can be used to support sustainable farming. A demonstration farm at Beit Hanoun, Gaza, is led by Al-Azhar University and used to support technology transfer in the field of water use.

► **Israeli and Palestinians Positions**

The official Israeli position, reflected in their negotiation style in the last seven years, objects to equitable and reasonable utilization of the shared water resources. An official stated goal of the Israeli government has been "... to prepare legal and political bases which will guarantee Israeli control and administration of water resources in Judea and Samaria, regardless of the future political status of these areas." (State of Israel, *Cabinet Minutes*, 14 May 1989). The water issue is only discussed to serve the immediate needs of the Palestinians, but not as a permanent solution, which has been postponed for the final status negotiations.