

Middle East is Running out of Water.
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California knows how serious it is to have a water shortage. But we are a modern state and know perfectly well what to do about it. For us, it is just a matter of spending money and having the will to do what is obvious: desalinate the ocean water immediately to our west.

But when the entire Middle East is running out of water, it is another thing altogether. This is a region with a minority of scientifically educated people and a majority of ignorant, religious villagers and recent urban displaced country people, not to mention those newly uprooted by the vicious wars riling the region. This flood of newcomers is putting even more pressure on the flagging water supply in the Arab world. Even Egypt's Nile cannot keep up with the demands on it. Hunger is stalking Egypt.

But the Middle East is not just the Arab World. It is also Iran and Turkey, the two non-Arab Muslim countries that have always had the advantage of being in the highlands with watersheds, where lakes and river systems begin (Turkey with the Tigris and Euphrates) and snow-capped mountains and one great lake (Urmia in Iran).

The second and third-largest Muslim states, Pakistan and India, are also running out of water, thanks to over-irrigation from their once lavish deltas and aquifers and prodigal overpopulations.

And worst of all is miserable Yemen, which was once a breadbasket and garden with the world's largest earthen dam (5th century AD), but since that dam's collapse, the country has declined. It is now in collapse, running out of water so that even its capital must move to the coast. It has become an anarchy of rival tribes, and its behavior is so stupid that what water is left is irrigating qat, its drug of choice (like pot). Its favorite bride age (9) has produced a population explosion that uses up what water is left. The IQ declines with it. Dumb and dumber?

The following numbers are taken from a reliable well-sourced article by Daniel Pipes (www.danielpipes.org/15815/the-middle-east-runs-out-of-water): Iran's Lake Urmia has lost 95% of its water; Esfahan's river, the Zayanderud went dry in 2010; over 2/3 of Iran's cities and towns are on the verge of a water crisis in drinking water shortages; already, thousands of villages depend on water tankers. Unprecedented dust storms disrupt economic activity and damage health.

Egypt: Rising sea levels threaten to submerge Alexandria and contaminate the Nile Delta Aquifer. Egypt is alarmed that Ethiopia plans to build massive dams on the Blue Nile that will threaten water to Egypt and Sudan.

Gaza: In a hydrological nightmare, seawater is leaking into sewage, making 95% of the coaster aquifer unfit for human consumption. Yet Hamas continues to dig tunnels to send rockets into Israel.

Iraq: Euphrates River waters are half or what they were. Already in 2011, the Mosul Dam was shut down entirely due to insufficient flow. Seawater from the Persian Gulf has pushed up the Shatt al-Arab, resulting in briny water destroying fisheries, livestock, and crops. Date palms have diminished from 33 million to 9 million.

Pakistan: may be a water-starved country by 2022.

Climate Change and Arab Spring: Prolonged drought led to food shortages and civil collapses in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, and Yemen.

The only country in the Middle East without a water shortage is Israel. As recently as the 1990s, they suffered water shortages too. But thanks to a combination of conservation, recycling, innovative agricultural techniques, and high-tech desalination, the country is awash in H₂O. Israel's Water Authority claims they have all the water they need and are quite willing to sell surplus to such friendly neighbors as Jordan. They have a new technology that can desalinate about 27 liters of water for one U.S. penny. It recycles about five times more water than does second-ranked Spain.

Obviously tradition doesn't work. Could desperation be the mother of some new ideas? Could Israel's neighbors bury the hatchet and consider a common market? The smart ones could consider cooperating on water programs. Egypt and Jordan could, for a start. That could be a beginning of something very fruitful.

688 words

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