

Israeli soldiers demolish water system in Gaza

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The Israeli daily *Haaretz* reported Monday that over the weekend, in violation of humanitarian law, a unit of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the 401st Brigade of the Armored Corps, rigged a critical water reservoir in Gaza with explosives and then detonated them, destroying the facility known as the Canada Well.

The water facility, located in Tel Sultan neighborhood on the northwestern side of Rafah, the southernmost city in the Gaza Strip, was built in 1999 with funding provided by the Canadian International Development Agency. Equipped with solar panels, it enabled water services to continue for tens of thousands of people in the area despite the destruction of the entire electrical grid in the enclave.

Following the destruction, the IDF soldiers celebrated by posting videos of the operation on their Instagram and X social media accounts, writing, “Destruction of the Tel Sultan water reservoir in honor of Shabbat.” The Israeli army admitted that its soldiers were responsible for the bombing of the Canada Well and said it was investigating if any international laws were violated.

Monther Shoblaq, director general of the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility, speaking with Drop Site, said, “I was shocked when I saw the video. It’s not just that they targeted this water facility; it’s the fact that they planted explosives, celebrated the act on Instagram, and did so under the guise of honoring the Sabbath. It’s deeply cruel. This is the Canada Well in Tal al-Sultan—one of the most important water facilities in the city of Rafah.”

What is being disputed in the Israeli press, however, is whether the brigade commander of the Combat Engineers obtained permission from senior officers of the IDF Southern Command to destroy the facility and not the obvious fact that the operation was typical of the conduct of the IDF throughout the war against the people of Gaza. The areas where the operation took place were considered humanitarian safe zones, which become killing zones whenever the IDF pleases. As is usual in these situations, the army told *Haaretz* it was going to look into the

incident and consider if the military police needed to open an investigation.

Given the international outcry over Israeli war crimes in Gaza, these reports from Rafah are one more embarrassment for the IDF and the Netanyahu government, which will try to manufacture yet another outrageous pretext, perhaps claiming that the operation was necessary to prevent Hamas from accessing potable water for their continued operations. A similar argument could be made for actions to deprive the population of breathable air as well.

Throughout the now more than nine-month-long siege on the Gaza Strip, countless video clips posted on social media have exposed the barbarism of IDF in the killing and abuse of innocent Palestinians, as well as international aid workers who have risked their lives to help the beleaguered population. In each case, neither the Israeli army, Netanyahu, nor the US government has raised a finger to curb the savagery. On the contrary, they have commended and justified these actions.

On the same day as the *Haaretz* report, UN Human Rights Office’s spokesperson, Jeremy Laurence, speaking with Anadolu Agency, said, “It is indeed strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law to attack civilian objects. Moreover, it is prohibited to attack objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as drinking water supplies.”

Furthermore, Laurence noted, “The Human Rights Office has received no information on any investigations by Israel into the specific incident of the destruction of the water reserve. In view of Israel’s well-documented failure to ensure accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law and the international human rights law, remedies at the international level are essential to addressing this long-standing accountability gap.”

The complete destruction of the water supplies in Gaza is part and parcel of the assault on the basic essentials of life for Palestinians from the very inception of the genocidal campaign.

In an interview with Major General (Reserves) Giora Eiland, the adviser to Yoav Gallant, on the IDF's radio station, GLZ, in October 2023, Eiland said, "But there are many wells in Gaza, which contain water which they treat locally, since originally they contain salt. If the energy shortage in Gaza makes it so that they stop pumping out water, that's good. Otherwise, we have to attack these water treatment plants in order to create a situation of thirst and hunger in Gaza, and I would say, forewarn of an unprecedented economical and humanitarian crisis."

The same month, Eiland wrote in the Israeli newspaper, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, "The State of Israel has no choice but to turn Gaza into a place that is temporarily or permanently impossible to live in. Creating a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza is a necessary means to achieve the goal. Gaza will become a place where no human being can exist."

Placing context on the blowing up of the Canada Well water reservoir, Reuters reported yesterday that in July the Israeli army destroyed 30 water wells in Rafah and Khan Younis. And given the incessant bombing and drone attacks, the daily chore to seek water and sustenance has potentially lethal consequences. In May, the BBC reported that satellite data had revealed more than half of Gaza's water sites had been damaged including four of the six wastewater treatment plants crucial to preventing the build-up of sewage.

As the Reuters report noted, "People have dug wells in bleak areas near the sea where the bombing has pushed them or rely on salty tap water from Gaza's only aquifer, now contaminated with seawater and sewage. Children walk long distances to line up at makeshift collection points. Often not strong enough to carry the filled containers, they drag them on wooden boards. Gaza city has lost nearly all its water production capacity, with 88 percent of its water wells and 100 percent of its desalination plants damaged or destroyed."



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