

(Translated from Arabic)

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The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with reference to note IW/SW/NM, dated 24 April 2007, containing a request for information on the implementation of Human Rights Council decision 2/104, entitled “Human rights and access to water”, the Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic has the honour to bring the following information to the Office’s attention:

1. Relevant Syrian legislation

Act No. 31 of 2005 regulates water issues and contains instructions, regulations and rules on the management of water demand, together with general provisions on how to use water wisely and properly, to protect water installations from misuse, to preserve, and prevent the depletion of, groundwater, to establish rules for preserving water, to improve the capacity of public irrigation and drinking water networks and to reduce waste.

The Public Drinking Water and Sanitation Authority is the body responsible for supplying the population with drinking water and sanitation networks. It is required to conduct regular inspections to ensure that drinking water is safe for use and meets international standards. It monitors sanitation networks to ensure that they are operating properly.

There is also a body known as the water regulation force, which is tasked with preventing offences against, and attacks upon, the drinking water and sanitation networks.

The Ministry of Irrigation is responsible for protecting public water from contamination. The public water directorate controls water quality, based on the specifications established for all water sources, either through its own laboratories or laboratories accredited to perform environmental tests.

If the results of a check reveal any deviation from the established norms for water, the Ministry of Local Administration and the Environment must be notified and the causes of the water contamination must be investigated in cooperation with the Ministry. The ministry with competence for the entity which caused the contamination is also notified and follow-up is assured by the Ministry of Local Administration and the Environment.

2. Violations of the right to access to water in the occupied Syrian Golan

The Syrian population suffering under the Israeli occupation in the occupied Syrian Golan is being subjected to the theft of the water sources of Golan and the diversion of a significant proportion of that water to Israel and to the Israeli settlers in the Golan. The native population is left with only a tiny fraction of the water, which is inadequate to meet its minimum requirements. Not less than 700 cubic metres of water are stolen each year from the Golan and Lake Tiberias. The actions of the Israeli authorities violate international resolutions, international law and United Nations resolutions.

The Mission affirms the necessity of including, in the study, a special paragraph on Israeli violations of the right to access to water of the Syrian population, which is suffering under the Israeli occupation, since the rights of the population are being violated and denied, and the occupation authorities are stealing water.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic takes this opportunity to convey to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.
