

# (Toxic) Waste Management as Challenges, Vulnerabilities and Risks for Environmental Security in Palestine

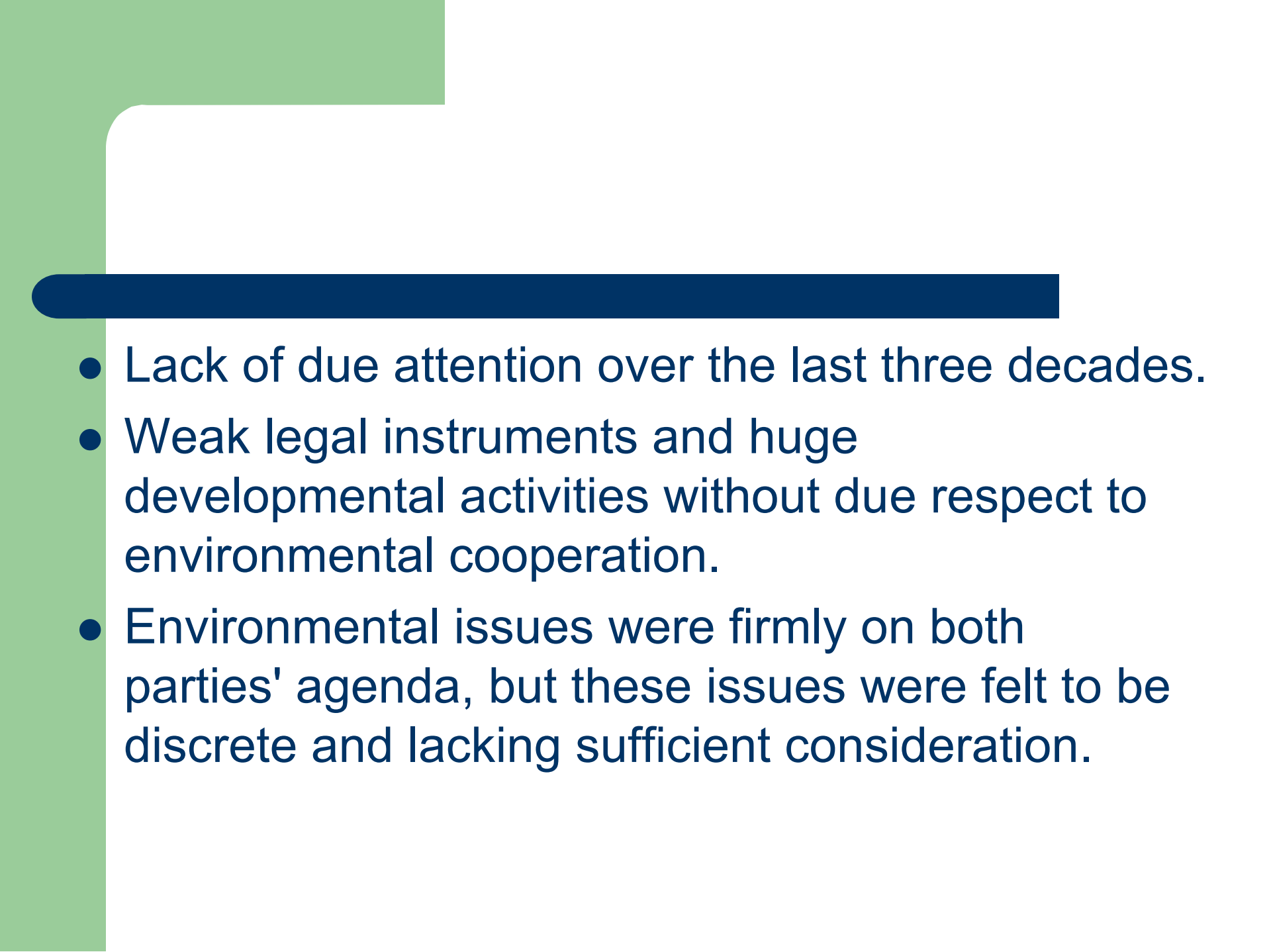
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# Introduction

## *Detrimental Environmental Actions Transcend Beyond Political Boundaries*

Palestinians and Israelis are living within a small geographical area sharing ecological systems. Physical proximity and the sensitivity of shared resources make cooperation a basic condition for sustainable development.

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- Lack of due attention over the last three decades.
  - Weak legal instruments and huge developmental activities without due respect to environmental cooperation.
  - Environmental issues were firmly on both parties' agenda, but these issues were felt to be discrete and lacking sufficient consideration.

- The impact of the current hazardous waste handling procedures in the West Bank and Gaza, along with the nature of relations with Israel are adding to the conflict and triggering a renewed potential for unrest in the area.

## So Far.....

- *"Palestinians have accused Israeli companies of dumping hazardous waste materials in the West Bank." BBC news August 1998*
- *"The degradation of the Palestinian Environment is caused by Israel" Al Quds newspaper, March 1996*
- *"The Palestinians are polluting the Israeli Aquifer" Ha'aretz newspaper*
- *The Pollution is such, that in the end, the land may not be worth fighting for.....*

## And....

- *Israel plans to dump tons of garbage in West Bank, by David Ratner, Haaretz Correspondent.*
- *Israel has decided to transfer garbage beyond the Green Line and dump it in the West Bank for the first time since 1967. (Ha'aretz)*
- *Israeli occupation turns Nablus into waste dump and a settlement sewage system.*

# MENA

Whether from shells or from the scrapings of tanks moving around the countryside, radio active materials enter into the land, the water and the whole food chain, contaminating the densely populated West Bank and Gaza, where water is a scare resource. Wanton radioactive contamination of this region is a crime against all of humanity and a threat to the entire region now and for generations to come.

## The Environmental Impact of the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

- **(Toxic) Waste Management: Challenges, Vulnerabilities and Risks for Environmental Security in Palestine**
- **A number of polluting industries were moved from Israel to the Occupied Territories.**

# Realities.....

- At least seven industrial zones were constructed in the West Bank, located mainly on hilltops and occupying a total area of approximately 746 acres.
- Information about industries in the Israeli industrial zones—including the amount and types of goods they produce, the labor they employ, and the waste they generate—is not available to Palestinians.

# Realities.....

- At least 200 factories are located in the West Bank, notably aluminum, leather-tanning, textile-dyeing, battery, fiberglass, plastic, and other chemical factories.
- Israeli factories operating in the Occupied Territories do not follow pollution prevention measures.

# Some known actions...

- In 1998, Israel illegally dumped several truckloads of toxic and hazardous waste near the eastern border of the Tulkarem municipality and near the residential area of the 'Azzoun municipality—50 meters from its well for drinking water;
- An Israeli company, Telbar, moved its medical waste disposal site from Afulla inside Israel to a site close to the Jewish settlement of Yafit in the Jordan valley;
- A paint factory located in the Israeli settlement of Ganim has dumped its hazardous and toxic wastes in the Palestinian village of Umm Al-Tut.

## Trends so far:

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- Interventions of policy makers so far have not seriously addressed the links between environmental degradation and political instability.
- Gaps in understanding these links prevented parties from developing cooperative mechanisms for peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

# Trends

- The unequal distribution, and unfair usage of natural resources has contributed to violence between neighbors.
- The United Nations call to "systematically address the potential causes of conflict due to natural resources scarcity, mismanagement or depletion" was never translated on the ground in the Middle East.

# The Way Out

- Keeping in mind that: the pollution in the area is such, that in the end, the land may not be worth fighting for, then.....
- More people-to-people concepts, activities and approaches.
- Learn from others experience.
- Re-direction of some donor's assistance into joint "peace making" activities.
- Introduce "joint eco-system" concepts to school curricula.

# The way out

- Follow the water “joint agreement” to keep environment out of the conflict.
- Environmentalists from both sides should be able to influence decision makers to go above politics.
- Respect and implement related treaties and agreements.
- Peace agreements should be reviewed, analyzed and evaluated with all above concepts in mind.
- Based on this, the concepts for the final negotiations protocols should be drafted.

# Other solutions

- The creation of a joint early warning system.
- Environment and poverty alleviation should be linked at a regional level.
- Facilitation of capacity building and institutional cooperation on environmental issues.
- Policies that support the equitable use of resources should be supported.

# Challenges

- Diversity of Actors from both sides
- Legal framework
- Civil Society
- Infrastructure

# Can it be achieved?

- Public opinions
- NGO's
- Governments
- External inputs