

“They Fight Us with a Sip of Water”: Ein Samia and the Spring Drained by Settlement Expansion





Settlers Swim in Ein Samia Wells in the West Bank. July 15, 2025 (AFP)

(This is the second report following the story of Ein Samia, the land that resisted settler ambitions through various means—until the pace of seizure accelerated after October 2023.)

A new crime has been added to the series of violations committed against Ein Samia. This time, the victim is its vital spring, and the perpetrators are Israeli settlers. The lifeline for nearly 100,000 Palestinians has become a target of settler rampage.

Thirty-three villages are now deprived of water, their residents left thirsty so that an abandoned pool can be filled and turned into a leisure spot for settlers and their children. And this is just the beginning.

In an interview with Noon Post, Fares al-Maliki, Director of Media and Public Relations at the Jerusalem Governorate Water Authority, described the settlers’ attacks in the Ein Samia area, east of the village of Kafr Malik, as part of a systematic policy and a multifaceted crime against both land and water.

He explained: “Recently, the main water lines have been deliberately targeted, including the primary pump at Well No. 6 in the area. These recurring attacks over the past two and a half months have led to the suspension of water pumping and the denial of water access to thousands of Palestinians.”

Ramifications and Scope of the Crisis

According to al-Maliki, the Ein Samia area contains five key wells that serve as the main—and often only—water source for 19 Palestinian communities. These include Deir Dibwan, Al-Taybeh, Rammoun, Deir Jarir, Al-Mazraa al-Sharqiya, Silwad, Ein Yabrud, Yabrud, Kafr Malik, Khirbet Abu Falah, Al-Mughayir, Turmus Ayya, Sinjil, Abwein, Jiljiliya, and Arura. Additionally, they partially supply 14 other communities, such as Birzeit, Al-Jalazun, ‘Atara, and Abu Qash. Altogether, about 100,000 Palestinians rely either fully or partially on water from the Ein Samia wells.

Settlers have begun dismantling the infrastructure of the station, smashing surveillance cameras, vandalizing main pipelines, stealing iron gates and signage, and severing communication and internet lines. This has left the Water Authority’s teams unable to monitor or control the wells effectively halting the pumping process.

Al-Maliki told Noon Post, “Any attack on the wells forces us to stop pumping operations out of concern for potential water contamination. Our teams conduct thorough testing to ensure water quality before resuming operations.” These disruptions severely affect water distribution schedules and community access.

He added that since October 7, 2023, water authority staff have faced mounting obstacles accessing the Ein Samia area due to Israeli-imposed road closures and the area’s designation as a closed military zone. Now, even staying late into the evening poses a danger, with workers fearing armed settler attacks.

Ein Samia: A Site of Cultural Heritage

Ein Samia is more than just a water source—it is a historic and cultural heritage site dating back 7,000 years. Its main well was dug in 1966, coinciding with the establishment of the Jerusalem Water Authority under Jordanian law—before Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967.

Ein Samia remains one of the most significant aquifers in the northeastern Ramallah area. The wells range from 100 to 500 meters deep and collectively produce around 12,000 cubic meters of water daily, accounting for roughly 17% of the Water Authority’s total output.

According to a report by the Palestinian Observatory, Israel today controls approximately 85% of groundwater resources in the occupied Palestinian territories, while denying Palestinians access to their own water sources. This has worsened with the expansion of settlements and settler-run agricultural projects that heavily consume water. The emergence of pastoral settlement outposts has further jeopardized Palestinian natural resources.

The same report highlights that settlers in the West Bank enjoy water consumption levels two to three times higher than the average Israeli citizen, ranging from 400 to 700 liters per person per day, depending on the settlement’s location and type.

This was confirmed by Salah Khawaja, a member of the Wall and Settlement Resistance Commission, in a previous interview with Noon Post. He stated that settlers have seized around 30 major springs across the West Bank in the past three years—including Ein Al-Auja—and are now attempting to seize Ein Samia.

A 2023 report by Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem noted a significant disparity in water access between Palestinians and settlers. While all Israeli citizens and settlers enjoy uninterrupted water supply, only 36% of Palestinians in the West Bank have daily access to running water.

Al-Maliki emphasized this disparity, stating that settlers consume six to eight times more water than the average Palestinian in the West Bank.

A Water Siege in Ramallah and Its Villages

This summer has been particularly harsh for Palestinian towns and villages in the Ramallah and Al-Bireh governorates, al-Maliki noted. The damage to Ein Samia’s wells has reduced access to water, and any damage or malfunction to water lines in Area C—as designated by the Oslo Accords—requires Israeli permits for repairs. Obtaining these permits may take hours, days, or may be denied altogether.

A Water Authority statement explained that these repeated attacks have severely disrupted the distribution program, especially in eastern and northern areas like Sinjil and its surroundings, as well as Birzeit and nearby villages—deepening the local water crisis.

Testimonies from the Heart of the Crisis

Mahmoud Asfour, a resident of Sinjil, north of Ramallah, shared his community’s struggle with Noon Post after 18 consecutive days without water due to settler aggression against the Ein Samia wells.

“We had to ration water, even for the simplest tasks like showering. What used to be a 15 or 30-minute shower now lasts only a few minutes,” he said. “We relied on a private well that used to serve six homes but it dried up. We now buy water tanks at over 120 shekels per tank, which barely last a few days.”

He added, sorrowfully, “We used to water our garden. Now that’s a luxury we’ve been deprived of. Water use is now limited to drinking and ablution.”

Asfour called on international and governmental bodies to pressure the Israeli

occupation and its settlers to halt their relentless assaults on Ein Samia’s wells. He stressed the need to support and protect East Ramallah, a region under daily settler threat.

Dr. Sameh Abu ‘Awwad, a professor at Birzeit University and a resident of the town, told Noon Post he has been without water for 45 days. Birzeit relies on Ein Samia for about 25% of its water supply. Due to ongoing settler attacks, the town, like many others, now suffers from prolonged water shortages.

“This summer has been incredibly difficult,” he said. “We’ve had to rely entirely on water tanks for daily use and purchase bottled water for drinking because tank water isn’t potable.” He described the toll as not just economic, but psychological and physical.

He continued, “This isn’t about a water shortage it’s a political strategy. A systematic campaign to forcibly displace us by depriving us of life’s necessities.”

He questioned: “How can the global average for personal water consumption be about 100 liters a day, while Palestinians live under continuous oppression, often consuming less than half that due to Israeli settler violations?”

He also lamented the unequal distribution: “It’s incomprehensible that I received just three cups of water from the Authority over two months, while other areas have uninterrupted supply or face only brief interruptions.”

Sinjil’s Municipality Takes Action

Bahaa Fuqaha, Deputy Mayor of Sinjil, explained that the water shortage began with the start of the war in October 2023, when Israeli bulldozers destroyed a main water line feeding Sinjil and nearby villages. This line ran near the old Nablus road and the Ma’ale Levona settlement. A year later, Israeli forces destroyed another line from Ein Samia to Sinjil.

“Water is not just a natural resource it’s a matter of life or death,” Fuqaha said. “We’re facing an organized effort to displace us through control of our water.”

Given the dire economic conditions in the West Bank, water storage tanks cost 700–800 shekels each, and water tankers are sold at variable, unregulated prices.

In response, the Sinjil municipality purchased water tanks to sell at subsidized prices to economically vulnerable families. Fuqaha added that the municipality plans to buy water storage tanks and resell them at half-price to those in need.

An Unarmed Civilian Against an Armed Settler

“Settler violence is not individual misconduct—it’s state-sponsored violence, a tool used to dispossess Palestinians of their land and water,” stated a B’Tselem

report.

Settler attacks on water facilities continue daily, targeting personnel and property. Nonetheless, water authority teams remain on the ground every day, despite risks. “Our teams are doing their best to protect the wells,” said al-Maliki, “but when settlers are armed and our people are not, there’s little we can do. What we need is international protection and an end to settler violence.”

The Authority has sent multiple appeals to international institutions and hosted delegations from European and international diplomats in Ein Samia to demonstrate the danger faced by water teams. Official letters were handed over, urging global pressure on Israel to stop these attacks.

Abu ‘Awwad concluded by calling for legislation to safeguard water security and establish a strict monitoring system to prevent sabotage. He emphasized the need for equitable water distribution as a means to confront the crisis and bolster resilience.

For his part, al-Maliki reaffirmed the Authority’s message:

“We will not accept settler-imposed realities or Israeli military occupation dictating control over our water. We will not abandon these wells and will continue our efforts to protect this vital resource, which is the foundation of our life and future.”

Fuqaha also urged international bodies to pressure Israel and its settlers to cease their aggression, and called on the Water Authority to resolve technical issues and ensure fair distribution.

In the face of deliberate and systematic thirst, the unarmed Palestinian stands firm. He may lack the luxury of a swimming pool, but he clings to his right to life. The Ein Samia spring is more than just flowing water—it is living history, dignity, and resistance. Will the world finally hear the cry of the water... or remain complicit in silence?