



The Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network Friends Of Earth Palestine

We, the Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network (PENGON- FoE Palestine), appeal to environmental organisations around the world to refrain from working with the Jewish National Fund (JNF), an organisation responsible for the displacement of our people, theft of their property, colonisation of land and the destruction of the natural environment.

PENGON FoE Palestine is a non profit, non-governmental organization whose role is to serve the Palestinian environment by acting as a coordinating body for the Palestinian environmental organizations located in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. PENGON was founded in 1996, due to the increased demands and responsibilities of Palestinian environmental organizations to defend the Palestinian environment.

We cover a wide and diverse range of environmental issues such as developing and sustaining natural resources, combating environmental pollution, the conservation of water, the protection of wildlife and the promotion of environmental awareness. All of our activities have one common goal – protecting and defending the Palestinian environment.

PENGON-FOE Palestine is the only environmental network for Palestinian environmental organizations in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Fundamental to PENGON's work is to ensure that the Palestinian environment is dealt within the context of the Occupation and thereby calling on environmental efforts to work hand-in-hand with social justice causes while integrating social, economic and cultural rights as a part of environmental protection and defense.

It is exactly and precisely because of our commitment to the environment and land that we abhor the activities of the JNF and urge you to refrain from collaborating with them. The JNF, since it was founded in 1901 to procure land in Palestine for the benefit of Jews only, has played a central role in the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinian population using various different mechanisms, ranging from legal means to violent acts of expropriation. The JNF has thus been a vehicle through which Israel has created and sustained its colonial and apartheid policies, indeed, as the JNF openly states, its loyalty is given to "the Jewish people and only to them". As the JNF owns 13% of the land in Israel, and appoints nearly half of the board of the Israeli Land Authority which manages a further 80%, this, as *Adalah* have detailed¹, leads to a situation whereby land is distributed along racial lines and discrimination is institutionalised. In other words, JNF contributes to and maintains a system of institutionalised racial discrimination against Palestinians, otherwise known as Apartheid.

Furthermore, due to its high-level collaboration and planning with Israeli 'military experts' in the seizing and conquering of Palestinian villages² in the years immediately preceding the war of 1948, the JNF is guilty of War Crimes, as stipulated in the Nuremberg Charter.³ The actions of the JNF, directly or by proxy, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are also a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention which forbids both the confiscation of property and the Occupying power from settling its citizens in the territory in which it occupies.⁴

Despite (or, perhaps more likely because of) its crimes, the JNF attempts to promote itself as an environmentally friendly organisation. This is a smokescreen and a deception more frequently

1 <http://www.adalah.org/newsletter/eng/aug04/5.php>

2 Meron Benvenisti, "Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land. Berkeley", University of California press, 2000

3 Nuremberg Charter, Article 6 (b) <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp>

4 Fourth Geneva Convention. Articles 49 & 53.

<http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/385ec082b509e76c41256739003e636d/6756482d86146898c125641e004aa3c5>



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being referred to as the 'green washing' of apartheid. The latest eBook released on the JNF exposes the environmental racism and destructiveness of the JNF and goes some way to explaining the ongoing tragedy experienced by the Palestinian environment.⁵

Under the pretence of aiding the environment by planting forests and developing parks, the JNF has worked tactically to conceal the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population of Palestine and deny refugees the opportunity to return to their homes. In doing so, not only have the JNF served as a crucial component of the Zionist colonial project, they have also irreconcilably damaged the natural environment and habitat.

Just one example of disastrous impact that JNF projects have had on the environment in Palestine comes with their attempts to drain Lake Huleh in the Eastern Galilee⁶. As documented in the JNF eBook, the stated aim of the project was to redeem the land under the lake for farming and settlements and to remove the mosquito breeding grounds. In fact, the project was driven more by ideological and strategic interests.⁷ The drainage resulted in an environmental disaster which led to underground peat fires, the eutrophication of Lake Tiberias and the extinction of several species unique to the region.

The JNF subsequently re-flooded part of the Lake in order to salvage some of the wildlife which they had wreaked havoc upon and boasts about the success of this on its website. Presumably they forgot that without their crude intervention then there would have been no disaster in the first place.

Today still, the JNF's projects of ethnic cleansing and forestation on stolen land continue unabated. As part of a plan to 'revitalise, develop and preserve the Negev desert', JNF bulldozers have demolished the Bedouin village of Al-Araqib twenty-one times.⁸ This is to make way for the planting of trees, and to pave the way for the creation Jewish-only settlements in the area.

As is starkly clear, the Jewish National Fund is an organisation with explicitly racist aims of conquest. It is not only a destroyer of homes, dreams, and livelihoods, it is also a destroyer of the natural environment. The façade, the pretence, the green washing of the JNF's destructive projects must end.

PENGON FoE Palestine calls upon our friends and colleagues around the world and all those committed to environmental justice to cease and refrain from working with the Jewish National Fund.

5 JNF eBook (Volume 4, May 15, 2011) Greenwashing Apartheid: The Jewish National Fund's Environmental Cover Up <http://jnfebook.net/JNFeBookVol4q.pdf>

6 Pg 105 JNF eBook (Volume 4 May 15, 2011) <http://jnfebook.net/JNFeBookVol4q.pdf>

7 Pg 107 JNF eBook (Volume 4 May 15, 2011) <http://jnfebook.net/JNFeBookVol4q.pdf>

8 <http://electronicintifada.net/content/palestinian-bedouins-al-araqib-we-wont-leave/9268>