

No Sustainable Development in the Lack of Environmental Justice

Hilmi S. Salem

ABSTRACT

Environmental justice is defined in a broader sense as, “The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” In view of this definition, it is fair to say that no nation can achieve sustainable development if it lacks environmental justice. Sustainability or sustainable development is defined as, “The development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.” Accordingly, it is really difficult to maintain sustainable development without having environmental justice. The acts of many governments (particularly those of industrial countries) have, unfortunately, resulted in poisoning of communities and lands, and in genocides of peoples and the environment. As we are concerned here with the environmental status in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), it is important to focus on the injustices and oppressions practiced by the state of Israel and its successive governments, army, settlers, and industries against the environment in Palestine. This article sheds light on the issues of environmental justice (injustice) and sustainable (unsustainable) development in the OPT, in view of the Israeli violations of international law and international treaties, as well as the local and regional agreements related to the environment. Israel, since it occupied the Palestinian territories in June 1967, has committed what is believed to be racism and genocide against the environment and its constituents (land, soil, water, air, and biodiversity). In view of the above, certain principles of environmental justice should be universally affirmed and adopted, taking into account the tremendous violations of the Israeli authorities against the environment in the OPT, in particular, and in Historic Palestine, in general.

Keywords: Mother Earth, sustainable development, environment, environmental justice and principles, environmental injustices and destruction, environmental racism and genocide, Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, Historic Palestine, and Israel and its apartheid system

INTRODUCTION

THE TERM “ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE” first emerged in the United States as a political issue in the late 1980s, after the United Church of Christ (UCC) issued a report arguing that low-income communities, and particularly communities of color, suffer a disproportionate share of the burden of environmental hazards. The UCC report focused on the locations of hazardous waste facilities and suggested that prejudiced policymakers victimized low-

income communities of color because of their relative lack of political power.¹ Many activists refused to use the term “Environmental Justice” and instead they used the term “Environmental Racism,” as a way of connecting their concerns to the civil rights movement.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines “Environmental Justice” as, “The fair treatment

Prof. Hilmi S. Salem is Executive Director at Sustainable Development Research Institute, Bethlehem, Palestine.

¹UCC (United Church of Christ). “Almost Everything You Need to Know about Environmental Justice.” (1994). <http://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/421/almost-everything-you-need-to-know-about-environmental-justice-english-version.pdf?1418423801> (Last accessed on January 13, 2019).

Palestinian state, the environmental issues, as any other issues of conflict, should be the concerns of both peoples. However, until a just solution for the Palestinian question can be reached, international organizations must intervene to protect the environment and the well-being of the Palestinians in the OPT, which should have the mandate to fully monitor the environmental status on the ground and, thus, to impose fines, penalties, and judicial orders on the state of Israel—the occupying power, as it has very badly destroyed the environment.

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Address correspondence to:

Hilmi S. Salem
Sustainable Development Research Institute
Bethlehem
Palestine

E-mail: hilmisalem@yahoo.com