

Date: August 6th, 2018

To: Executive Secretary, the Inspection Panel
1818 H Street NW, MSN 10 - 1007, Washington, DC 20433, USA
Email: ipanel@worldbank.org

REQUEST FOR AN INSPECTION ON THE IMPACTS OF THE BISRI DAM PROJECT IN LEBANON.

We, Lebanon Eco Movement are a network of 60 environmental NGOs advocating for sustainable development and the protection of the environment in Lebanon. We also represent a group of local inhabitants, workers, and community representatives whose addresses and signatures are attached to this request.

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the construction of a World Bank-funded large dam in the protected valley of Bisri. Our concerns have been already conveyed to the relevant authorities and to the World Bank team in Beirut, but we were disappointed by the Government's neglect of the public opinion on one hand, and by the World Bank staff's insufficient responses on the other. This is further elaborated later in the request.

The World Bank-funded project is planned by the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) in Lebanon and situated on the Awwali River in a valley of high ecological, cultural and archaeological significance. As part of the Greater Beirut Water Supply Project (GBWSP), it aims to funnel water to Beirut and its suburbs from the Bisri reservoir through water transmission lines. The GBWSP is part of the National Water Sector Strategy (NWSS) approved by the Lebanese Government in 2012. Bisri Dam will necessitate the construction of a 73m high structure and the expropriation of 570 ha of mostly agricultural and natural lands from around 10 municipalities of the Chouf and Jezzine districts.

While the project is based on an insufficient understanding of the water balance in Lebanon and an incomplete consideration of alternatives, it will result in the dismantling of an exceptional archaeological complex and the inundation of a unique riparian ecosystem. It will destroy a productive local economy and threaten the safety of local communities. It will be built in an area that, according to several studies, is not geologically convenient.

Following outcry among locals and NGOs, we wish to draw the Inspection Panel's attention to the project's catastrophic harms that outweigh the claimed benefits, and to urge the Panel to take actions to withdraw all support for the dam. On top of the violations of the Lebanese regulations that govern such development plans, the project does not comply with the Bank's goals of fighting poverty, mitigating Climate Change and promoting sustainable development. Furthermore, the dam does not abide by the Bank's Safeguard Policies, the 2030 Agenda, and the Social and Environmental Framework.

The various issues that need urgent attention are highlighted here below:

I. Threats to Natural Habitats and Forests

The National Physical Master Plan of the Lebanese Territory (NPMPLT 2005) classifies Bisri Valley as one of the most important Landscapes in Lebanon and a part of a Natural Regional Park. Unfortunately, the ecological value of the valley is strikingly underestimated in the ESIA of Bisri Dam, and the project does not comply with the World Bank's OP/BP 4.04 on Natural Habitats as well as with OP/BP 4.36 on Forests.

"The conservation of natural habitats, like other measures that protect and enhance the environment, is essential for long-term sustainable development." OP 4.04

The Bisri River Valley encompasses a variety of natural habitats including a unique pine woodland. With its widespread shallow water, the valley is an important habitat for migratory birds, especially the Black Stork, the Sparrow White, the Crane, the White Swan, the White Pelican (all protected by the AEWA Agreement signed by Lebanon) and the Dalmatian Pelican (Near Threatened species according to IUCN). Bisri Valley is an important resting and feeding area for shorebirds and water birds that is only comparable to the Ammik wetlands in western Bekaa. The loss of this unique landscape located on the western migration line cannot be compensated elsewhere. There must be other birds of interest in this area, but this requires a detailed study that extends over a full year and includes the four seasons, which was never done. It is important to mention that Lebanon lies on the second most important flyway for migrating birds in the World.

The biodiversity survey in the ESIA was far from accurate with very little data gathered. The ESIA states that the biodiversity assessment was "rapid" and based on "short visits", which makes the listed numbers incomplete and inconclusive. Nevertheless, even the provided data was not well exploited: 37% of the reported reptiles and amphibians are considered rare, 50% of the fish require attention, 5 of the mammals are rare, etc.

On top of the ESIA's neglect of the ecosystem services, no cost-benefit analysis was conducted. Additionally, The ESIA did not provide an appropriate strategy for Environmental Offset. We believe that the vague proposals of planting trees somewhere else, or establishing an ecologically similar protected area, are not reasonable, since the valley's biodiversity is proven irreplaceable. The dam's impact will reach way beyond its direct boundaries, affecting the ecosystem of the whole river stretch and the surrounding woodlands, let alone the impact on the estuary's ecosystem.

Besides, The ESIA mentioned the potential local climate changes but disregarded the impact of dam constructions on the Global Climate Change. Studies have demonstrated that dams play a negative role in the global carbon cycle and consequently affect Earth's climate, not to mention the high amounts of methane emissions they generate.

Recently, following the second Environmental and Social Panel's request, the borrower initiated a series of meetings with few local representatives to discuss the conservation of an "equivalent" natural habitat, prior to having a thorough understanding of the Bisri Valley's natural habitats, their specific ecological functions and their costs. This is an additional violation of the World Bank's OP 4.04 that insists on conducting *"analyses of any major natural habitat issues, including identification of important natural habitat sites, the ecological functions they perform, the degree of threat to the sites, priorities for conservation, and associated recurrent-funding and capacity-building needs"*. The borrower, regardless of a claimed World Bank monitoring, did not abide by any of the above-mentioned recommendations.

As a result of this project's devaluation of the ecological significance of Bisri Valley, the local community will bear the burden of the degradation of their livelihood conditions.

II. Threats to the Cultural Heritage

The project of Bisri Dam is very far from complying with the World Bank's OP/BP 4.11. In fact, the value of the physical cultural heritage was severely underestimated in the ESIA. Historically, given its unique geographic position, Bisri Valley used to connect the Mediterranean with the Bekaa plain in Lebanon. This made Bisri Valley very important for military, socio-economic and cultural purposes, which explains the valley's abundance with sites that have archaeological, historical, architectural, religious and aesthetic values (83 sites upstream and 29 downstream).

The archaeological remains date back to the Bronze Age, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Mamluk and Ottoman Periods. Studies conducted by the Polish-Lebanese survey team of the University of Warsaw and DGA; Wissam Khalil of the Lebanese University; and a Spanish epigraphic survey, all confirmed the exceptional historic value of the valley. These studies also recognized the potential for future discoveries, with most of the remains still underground. The sites to be further studied include historic trails, a village, a temple complex, a roman bridge, tombs, a convent, houses and others. The old Mar Moussa Church, set to be dismantled, has been a centre for socio-cultural practices and a meeting place for different communities in the region. Many of these sites are protected under the Lebanese Law (Law n. 37) and UNESCO conventions.

"When the project is likely to have adverse impacts on physical cultural resources, the borrower identifies appropriate measures for avoiding or mitigating these impacts as part of the EA process. These measures may range from full site protection to selective mitigation, including salvage and documentation, in cases where a portion or all of the physical cultural resources may be lost."

OP 4.11

"The Bank reviews, and discusses with the borrower, the findings and recommendations related to the physical cultural resources aspects of the EA, and determines whether they provide an adequate basis for processing the project for Bank financing." OP 4.1

We believe that the value of the physical cultural heritage in Bisri Valley, and the associated intangible cultural heritage are worthy of a full site protection as per OP 4.11. A comprehensive survey of the physical cultural heritage should precede - not follow - the decision of building a massive structure in the area. The World Bank's choice of financing the dam prior to gaining an insight into the historic value of the valley was a shocking news to the NGOs and local community. Dismantling the historic village, temple and remains out of their contextual value cannot, in the case of the cultural landscape of Bisri, compensate for the losses.

III. Harms to Agriculture

The geographic characteristics of Bisri Valley, especially its altitude, morphology and proximity to the coast make it suitable for an extensive agricultural practice, with a variety of fruits and vegetables that cannot be cultivated in Lebanon's renowned Bekaa Valley. Agricultural activities are prevalent throughout the area of the Bisri Reservoir, upstream and downstream, and on the adjacent hillsides. They include open fields variously tilled, cropped, lying fallow or under polytunnels. In fact, 57% of the impacted area holds a productive agricultural activity. An estimated 125 million USD is the annual revenue of agriculture in the area. As for the cash compensations to the owners, the ESIA estimated the aging pine trees at 330 USD, while the price of a 75-year-old pine tree in the market is between 4000 and 9000 USD, not to mention the costs of the associated ecosystem resources and the annual fruit yield. This is one example of many that show the unacceptable undervaluation of the agricultural resources, aiming to relieve the stakeholders from accountability.

IV. Insufficient Study of Alternatives

The United Nations World Water Development Report (2018) made it clear that nature-based solutions, as opposed to dams, are essential to meet the Goal 6 of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report emphasized on the need for water management solutions that deliver co-benefits beyond just hydrological outcomes. Such co-benefits include ensuring food security, reducing disaster risks, and boosting decent work. The report provided clear evidence that the costs of nature-based solutions can compare favourably with alternative grey-infrastructure options. Many of these alternatives, though completely relevant to our case, have not been studied at all in the Environmental Impact Assessment of Bisri dam, while other alternatives were studied insufficiently.

“The Bank does not support projects involving the significant conversion of natural habitats unless there are no feasible alternatives for the project and its siting”

OP 4.04

- **Groundwater:**

The Social and Environmental Impact Assessment of Bisri Dam (2014) claims that “The last national groundwater assessment study dates back to 1970”. Accordingly, it adopts the old assumption that the annual natural recharge rate of ground water is 500 MCM, and the groundwater extraction nationwide, from these wells, totals 705 MCM, resulting hence in 205 MCM yearly deficits.

In fact, the last national groundwater assessment study was published in the same year of the SEIA, 2014, by the United Nations Development Program in partnership with the Ministry of Energy. The detailed assessment revealed groundbreaking results regarding Lebanon’s water balance and groundwater budget. It made it clear that “there is an overall surplus in the groundwater budget” (attachment 1).

According to the new assessment, Lebanon's groundwater natural recharge amounts to 53% of the total renewable water resources, varying between 4,728 and 7,263 MCM. While the groundwater discharge through streams, springs and extraction is estimated to be around 2,588 MCM, the water balance in the budget is positive, varying between 2,140 MCM for the dry year to 4,675 MCM for the wet year. The assessment added that most of the groundwater basins are not under stress, and that the values reported in the old study of the UNDP in 1970 are underestimated.

These findings challenge the numbers on which the Analysis of Alternatives of Bisri Dam was founded. It is important to note that the numbers of the UNDP 2014 study were already available for the borrower since 2013, while the ESIA of Bisri Dam, paradoxically, referred to the same study when mentioning the numbers of unlicensed wells in Lebanon. It is therefore clear that the new findings regarding the national water balance were intentionally dismissed, favoring the option of the dam.

- **Submarine Springs:**

Lebanon has a significant number of freshwater submarine springs still unexploited. The ESIA of Bisri dam (2014), however, did not study this option. The Strategic Environmental Assessment for the New Water Sector Strategy for Lebanon (2015) proposed this alternative as a viable option to consider. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of some of these springs have already been conducted by the National Centre for Scientific Research in Lebanon (CNRS) and yielded very positive results. According to the Strategic Environmental Assessment, onshore exploitation of submarine springs is economically feasible for several tested scenarios (different flows and depths).

V. Violation of the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) of the National Water Sector Strategy (NWSS).

Since the Bisri Dam project is an integral part of the National Water Sector Strategy (NWSS) approved in 2012, we believe that the impact and efficiency of the project must be viewed in light of this particular framework. It is therefore important to mention that a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) for the National Water Sector Strategy (NWSS) was conducted in 2015, funded by the World Bank. It was followed by a Ministry of Environment (MoE) certificate of approval stating that it should be respected and applied.

The Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) recommended the scaling-back of the dams' program considering its social, economic, and environmental constraints. It specifically described Bisri dam as "land greedy" and criticized its unrealistic amount of resource exploitation. Additionally, the assessment regarded the proposed dams as "highest-regret" measures on the sensitivity-to-uncertainty scale, given Lebanon's hydrogeological conditions and the "inevitable" risks of water losses by seepage. The assessment proposed alternatives to minimize the risk and cost of maladaptation.

Although the World Bank-funded assessment was prepared in compliance with Lebanon's Decree 8213/2012, the Ministry of Energy and Water refrained from accepting the recommendations or even commenting on them.

However, considering that the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessments are essential in the World Bank's environmental and social framework, we believe that the recommendations of the SEIA of the National Water Sector Strategy (NWSS) should be respected. We also believe that the adoption of the EIA of Bisri Dam (2014) alone, bypassing the SEIA (2015) of the overarching NWSS strategy, contradicts the World Bank's vision for sustainable development, where the Bank "*works with Borrowers to identify strategic initiatives and goals to address national development priorities [...]*".

VI. Violation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Social Protection Strategy

The World Bank Group is deeply engaged with the United Nations in helping to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development goals. The vision for water set out in the SDGs and the Paris Agreement is aligned with the World Bank's mission to end extreme poverty and to "build shared prosperity in a sustainable manner". The Bisri Dam project, however, violates these conditions by focusing on one specific goal at the expense of many others.

Target 6.6: "By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes". While dam projects can work in some contexts, our small country's ecological problems are reaching alarming levels, and the need to protect and enhance the remaining ecosystem assets is a must. Building a massive dam in one of the only

remaining and most important natural areas exacerbates the country's environmental degradation.

Target 2.4: “By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality”.

Bisri dam will inundate much needed 150ha of productive land, resulting in external costs to Lebanon's soil fertility bank. When asked about this issue in our meeting the WB staff in July 2017, they shockingly neglected the agricultural value of Bisri Valley, saying that “You can plant your vegetables in the Bekaa Valley instead”. We believe that this statement contradicts the global trend for decentralized agricultural services, and underestimates the fact that Lebanon ranks very low in the agricultural land per capita index, which means that the country is in much need of augmenting its agricultural lands instead of destroying them.

Goal 15: “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”. Bisri Valley is one of the least vulnerable areas to desertification in Lebanon (NPMPLT 2005), making it a strategic ecological zone that needs to be preserved. However, the environmental impact assessment of Bisri Dam only mentions desertification as a potential cause of precipitation decrease and uses it as an argument for building the dam. However, The EIA doesn't pay attention to the multiple dimensions of the issue, particularly the impact of deforestation and ecosystem destruction on aggravating desertification.

Finally, the Dam is also not in line with the World Bank's Social Protection Strategy that “takes into account the importance of *“having well-functioning social safety nets and promotes effective policies for productive employment which help people gain access to labour markets and accumulate skills, both during recovery from economic crisis and in normal times”*. The Bisri Dam will cause the loss of jobs of several locals.

VII. Lack of Efficient Consultation and Participation

According to the World Bank's social and environmental framework, the engagement of stakeholders, including communities, people affected by proposed projects, and other interested parties, is a requirement for financing the project. However, in the Bisri Dam ESIA's public consultation records, the overall attitude of all four consulted audiences (localities of Amatour, Mazraat El Chouf, Bisri and Mazraat El Dahr) was strongly opposed to the construction of Bisri Dam. People expressed disapproval of the compensation rates, the loss of biodiversity, the loss of jobs and production lands, and others.

Besides, there was an alarming gender inequality among the attendees, with only 6 women attending the sessions in total. Moreover, Environmental NGOs were not invited to the meetings, even though the dam is planned to be built in a protected area, inundating important natural

habitats. Environmental NGOs were invited to previous EIAs of other dams and expressed concerns about the environmental impact of these projects, which explains the intentional marginalization of environmental NGOs in the public consultation of this EIA. All in all, only 0.083% of the total population of the region and 5.69% of the total number of land owners attended the sessions.

The world bank team in charge of the project claimed that meetings were notified to the public via some newspapers. However, they could not explain why the turnout of the sessions was extremely low. According to the World Bank's EA Sourcebook and Operation Manuals, borrowers are required to ensure stakeholders are involved in the planning and designing as efficiently as possible, and to use a variety of consultation techniques to reach a diverse audience. It also emphasizes the importance of contacting targeted groups and notifying them how, when, and where they can participate, using more than one medium to reach them.

Around 1500 residents of the impacted villages ([REDACTED] ...) contested their marginalization, and expressed their opposition to the construction of the dam by signing a petition (attachment 2). Additionally, an online petition was signed by different citizens from Lebanon and around the world (attachment 3).

VIII. Concerns Related to Geology and Seismology

Recommendations of the The National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS):

CNRS is the central public institution in charge of scientific research and policy-making in Lebanon. the National Centre for Geophysical Research, a department of the CNRS, issued several recommendations about dam construction in the region of Mount-Lebanon that includes Bisri Valley.

The recommendations stated that all dam projects in the karst-dominated Mount-Lebanon require extensive scientific studies spread over a long time (a minimum of 10 years) and should receive the scientific guarantee of the best specialists of the karst. In this respect the CNRS urged the Government to defer any project of this type not having received this deposit.

CNRS confirmed that the drying up of the Mount-Lebanon valleys has the most pernicious effects on the coastal environment which receives less and less fresh water: rising salinity and sea water temperature, impoverishment Oxygen content, depletion of marine biomass, climate change in coastal areas. The combination of deep seismic activity and water flow in faults and surface fractures is, according to CNRS, a source of seismic sequences concentrated in time and around valleys. The impoundment of dam reservoirs the context of Mount-Lebanon produces an entirely new seismic activity on the area. Also, CNRS It is possible to consider alternative solutions for the transport of fresh water to Beirut.

Dangers of Infiltration and Reservoir-Induced Seismicity:

The Bisri dam and corresponding lake will directly overly a major active fault, Bisri Fault, which can pose a serious problem from the seismic point of view.

According to several experts, the dam's water infiltration into the subsurface through the Bisri Fault is inevitable and will naturally induce a seismic activity. Prof. Tony Nemer, Geologist, says that the Bisri Fault is interconnected with the active Roum Fault that caused the destructive 1956's earthquake, and that any induced seismicity will change the delicate stress regimes around the latter, which can lead to a swarm of seismic activity that cannot be predicted neither in extent nor in magnitude. The weight of the water column of the future lake can have similar effects as well.

With what has preceded, any future water body behind the planned Bisri dam can potentially lead to the generation of a major earthquake similar to those reported in the historical record of Lebanon. Separate document that elaborate on the geological and seismological issue is attached to this request (attachments 4,5).

IX. Other Concerns

Access to Potable water:

"Providing potable water for Beirut" is a wording that is being used by CDR and the World Bank team to promote the project. However, based on information from the CDR, the treatment plant at "Wardaniyeh" will be equipped to just treat wastewater pollution, without a special equipment to reach potable water level nor to treat the contamination of the Qaraoun dam water that will be mixed with the water of Bisri Dam. Unlike the current situation where potable water is provided from the natural Spring of Jeita, the Greater Beirut area will never have potable water from Bisri.

Quarries:

The Bisri Dam's Rip rap material is expected to be sourced from quarries outside the immediate project area. The ESIA of Bisri Dam did not provide sufficient details on the location and environmental impacts of these quarries that add to the already substantial ecological costs of the dam. The ESIA assumes that the rocks will "most likely be sourced from an existing commercial quarry located near the Saida area, approximately 15 Km from the dam site."

Recently, it appears that a new quarry is set to be approved in the localities of Kfarfalous and Marous near Bisri, partly for the construction of the dam. The quarry will destroy around 2 million square meters of virgin woodlands and scenic landscapes, with all the ecosystem services they provide.

X. Previous Complaints

As mentioned earlier, we have made a lot of effort to complain to Bank staff:

- We initiated contact with the Bank staff in May 2017.
- We sent several studies and reports that support our cause in June 2017.
- We met with the Bank staff in July 5th, 2017 and followed up by sending additional comments in July and August 2017 (attachments 6,7).

- The WB staff's response (attachment 8) to our concerns was unsatisfactory:
 - It stated that an analysis of alternatives was done in the ESIA. This, however, doesn't answer our concern that the analysis of alternatives was incomprehensive as proved by the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the National Water Sector Strategy in 2015.
 - The answer to our concerns regarding the flaws in the Biodiversity Action Plan was general and evasive.
 - The answer regarding the physical cultural heritage was mainly focused on "documenting historic evidences".
 - The answer on the Sustainable Development Goals was very selective, as if water is a separate product in the environment.
 - The part on reservoir-induced seismicity did not answer our main concerns.
 - There was no answer on the violations of local regulations, the failures of different dams built by the same borrower, the recommendations of the CNRS, the Desertification issue, and many others.

Upon our request, virtual meetings with the Environmental and Social Panel of Experts were held in the Beirut World Bank Office on January 12, February 23 and May 25. However, the outcome of the discussions was unsatisfactory for the following reasons:

- The approval of the Dam by the CDR and the World Bank's Panel of Experts were largely based on the "Report on the Assessment of the Neo-Tectonic Setting and Seismic Sources for the Seismic Hazard Assessment of the Bisri Dam Site, Elias Ata, May 2014" with very little notice made to the rest of the geological and seismological studies of the region. The report declared that Roum and Bisri Faults are not connected. This claim contradicts all previous studies (Dubertret, 1945; Hajjar 1956; Daeron 2005) and is based on just a few months of study in office and very few visits to site in May 2014.

- The Panel's focus sounded to be on the safety of the dam as a structure, regardless of where it is located (i.e. at the intersection of 2 active faults) and what can result from having a dam and a corresponding lake in that specific area.

- The Panel did not sound very aware of the geological, seismological, and structural challenges of the area as follows (more in attachments 9,10):

- One expert thought that the Bisri Fault underneath the proposed dam is not active. Such a wrong declaration and lack of knowledge of a simple geological and seismological fact were shocking.
- The Panel reference's to (Nemer & Megraoui 2006) publication was out of context and showed a non-adequate understanding of the referred material, which required an explanatory answer from the author, T. Nemer, who is part of the Lebanon Eco Movement's team of experts.
- The Panel did not sound appreciative of the fact that the valley's lithologies will definitely cause the lake water to infiltrate and contaminate the water table of the region.

Appeal

Based on the above, we, Lebanon Eco Movement ask the Inspection Panel to use all the expertise to investigate into the reported violations, based on the regulations included in this request, but also on other regulations the Panel considers relevant. Accordingly, we ask the Panel to take urgent action to protect the local communities, the archaeological and religious sites, the productive economy and the natural environment. We believe that the World Bank's commitments to the SDGs, if really implemented, can lead to considerable benefits to Lebanon. However, proceeding with the destructive Bisri Dam will cause one of the most regrettable ecocides of the country, destroying a cultural landscape worthy of international attention.

As advised in your Operating Procedures, this Request for Inspection is brief. We can provide you with more particulars. We thank you and we look forward to your response.

DATE: August 6, 2018

SIGNATURE: 

CONTACT ADDRESS: Bealida - Lebanon, info @ lebanonecomovement.org

Attachments: [Yes] [No]

We authorize you to make this Request public [Yes] [No]

We want the attached locals' signatures to remain anonymous [Yes] [No]

Stop Bisri Dam

To: The Inspection Panel - The World Bank

Date: July 2018

Subject: Request to stop the funding for Bisri Dam project

We, the undersigned, authorize Lebanon Eco Movement to represent our concerns to the World Bank's Inspection Panel in regard to the Bisri Dam project.

We are against the funding of this project because of its negative impacts on our environment, cultural heritage and livelihood.

Name	City	Signature
[Redacted]		

Stop Bisri Dam

To: The Inspection Panel - The World Bank

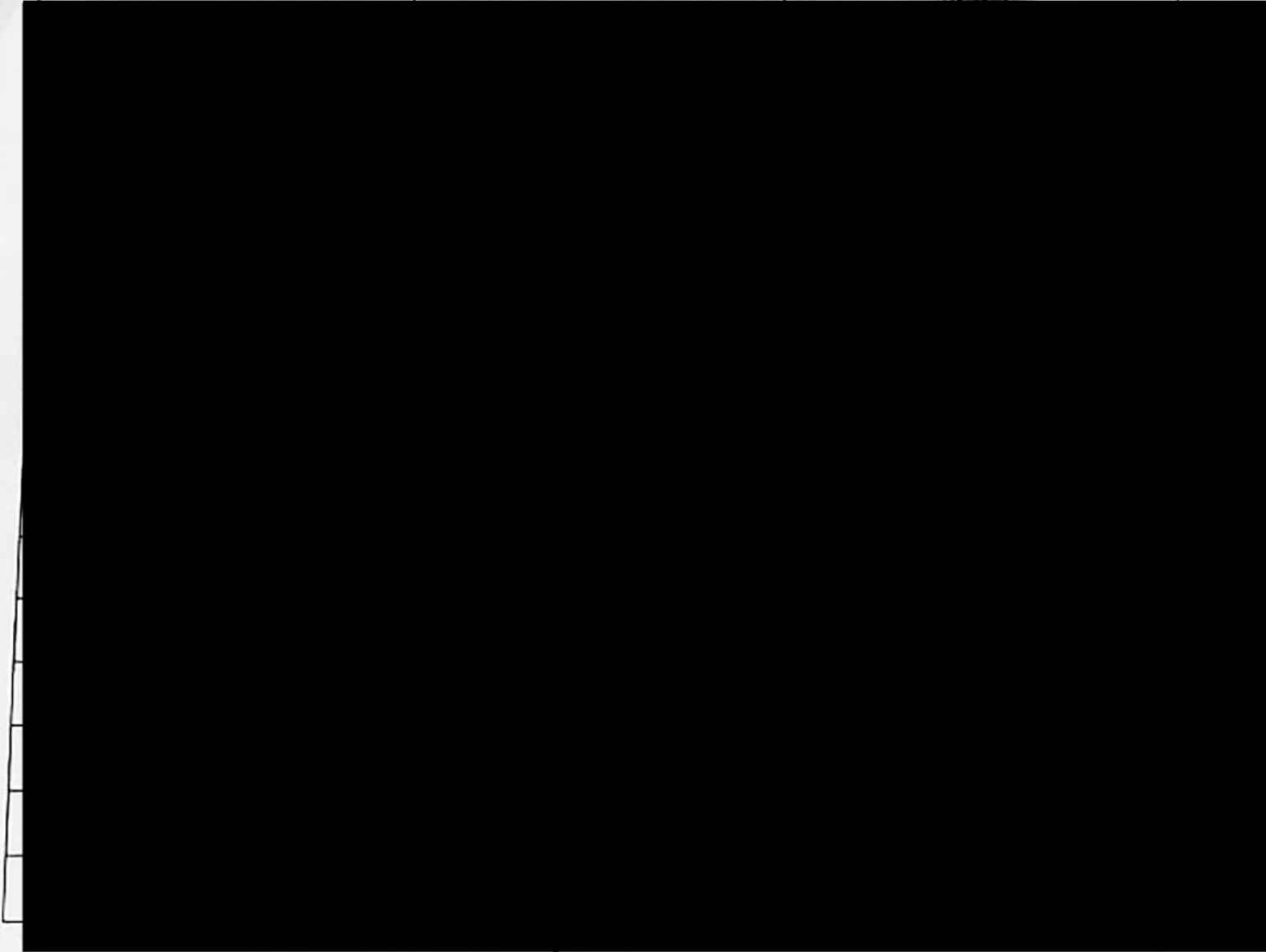
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#	Name	City	Signature
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Attachments to the Request for Inspection
(Available upon request to the Inspection Panel)

- Annex. 1: Debunking the Myths of Groundwater in Lebanon-Is Lebanon's Groundwater Budget Really Depleted?
- Annex. 2: Locals Petitions (in Arabic)
- Annex. 3: Online Petitions
- Annex. 4: Bisri dam project from the geological and seismological perspectives- Dr. Tony Nemer
- Annex. 5: Regarding the reservoir induced seismicity effect of the Bisri dam- Dr. Tony Nemer
- Annex. 6: Review of the Bisri Dam Project Addressed to the World Bank- Lebanon Eco Movement-July 2017
- Annex. 7: Review of the Bisri Dam Project- Reservoir Induced Seismicity Risk- Lebanon Eco Movement- August 2017
- Annex. 8: World Bank Response
- Annex. 9: Notes on IMF meeting of 12-1-2018
- Annex. 10: Notes on Geological Deficiencies During the World Bank Meeting-12/01/2018 and Other important Questions- M. Khawlie
- Annex. 11: Extracts from Strategic Environmental Assessment for the new water sector strategy for Lebanon
- Annex. 12: Recommendations of CNRS
- Annex. 13: Water Policies and Politics in Lebanon: Where is the Groundwater?

Date: October 16th, 2018

To: Executive Secretary, the Inspection Panel
1818 H Street NW, MSN 10 - 1007, Washington, DC 20433, USA

From: Committee of Inhabitants (local Community) in the surrounding villages of Marj Bisri
(لجنة أهالي وسكان البلدات المجاورة لمرج بسري)

Projects concerned:

Lebanese Republic: Water Supply Augmentation Project (P125184); Greater Beirut Water Supply Project (P103063) and its Additional Financing (P165711).

CASE - 127 | RECEIVED: AUGUST 06, 2018 | IPN REQUEST RQ 18/05

Notice of Registration: September 12, 2018 – Request for Inspection –

Subject: Request for intervention (involvement) in the proceedings of the above request for inspection submitted by “Lebanon Eco Movement”.

(طلب تدخل في "مراجعة التفتيش" الوارد ذكرها أعلاه والمقدمة من قبل جمعية "الحركة البيئية اللبنانية")

We, the “Committee of Inhabitants in the surrounding villages of Marj Bisri”, representing thousands of persons from the local community of Jezzine and El Chouf cazas, who are concerned directly and/or indirectly by the “Bisri Dam” project and any infringement on Marj Bisri (the valley) and Bisri / Awali River, wish from the “Inspection Panel” of the World Bank to accept our **Request for intervention (involvement) in the proceedings of the above request for inspection submitted by “Lebanon Eco Movement”.**

We confirm our approval, support and back up to the content of the request for inspection with all attachments and other reports and documentation already submitted concerning the above case, and with registration of the request already accepted by your good selves.

We would like to point out, that the local community has been opposing the “Bisri Dam” project since the beginning of 2012, when the ESIA was in process of scoping definition. Our refusal of the Dam execution continued all through the preparation of the ESIA report and during the various public participations.

(Refer to the content of the article: “استشارات وإتصالات” in the ESIA report, stating that ***“all attendees in the 4 regions were strongly opposed to the Bisri Dam project”***), copy attached to the initial Memorandum (Mouzakararat) dated 02/07/2017 (Item 2 softcopy)

The ministry of Environment gave its approval of the project in June 2014 on condition of strictly applying the ESIA report, but with disregard to the opinion of the local community (attached item 12 /3 softcopy). Following this approval and the confirmation of the Lebanese government of the decree of expropriation for this project, under No. 2066 dated 27/5/2015, published in 4/6/2015 (refer to item 12/0 softcopy), [REDACTED] appeals for invalidation of this decree were submitted [REDACTED]

As a result, we turned to the World Bank with whom we had already initiated contact beginning of 2017. On 3 July and 29 August, 2018 we submitted to the WB the necessary documentations and studies in support of our cause (items attached in softcopy).

2 meetings were held with the Bank representatives and experts on 25 July and 11 September; their answers were not at all satisfactory, being almost a duplication of most of the content of ESIA report that was initially disputed by us, except for its Appendix E: “GEOLOGICAL AND GEOTECHNICAL REVIEW REPORT” (never taken into consideration by WB and experts !?).

In light of the unsatisfactory responses, adding to it the constant refusal of the WB representatives for any kind of site visits in spite of being essential for a good understanding of the Dam site, we agreed with the World Bank Team to hold video conferences to hold with the "Independent" experts of both the DRB and ES Panels.

We met with the 2 panels of experts 3 times alongside "Lebanon Eco Movement" NGO (12/01/2018, 23/02/2018 and 24/05/2018); the results were similarly negative to what happened before with the WB representatives, as if there were a full coordination and understanding between all of them (item 7/1 softcopy).

These meetings were supposed to continue in Lebanon, especially with the experts of the ES Panel; and we were always hoping that site visits will be planned to have place with all the experts (especially the ones of the DRB) even though it was already very clear that we were not effectively dealing with fully independent individuals but with experts driven at least by the restrictions of their "TOR"!!

Since the end of July 2018, we tried to revive this whole process, but few days ago (14/10/2018) and after many email exchanges with the WB team, we realized that it became useless to continue the discussion with them, and that they will never initiate any site visit... (Please read the various correspondences attached under item 7/2 softcopy, which will clearly reveal the reasons why). Consequently, we decided to submit our request for involvement in the undergoing process responding to the request for investigation submitted by "Lebanon Eco Movement" NGO and held with the WB "Inspection Panel".

Accordingly, please consider this letter (with its attachments) to be an official Request from our side for intervention (involvement) in the proceedings of the above noted request for inspection. And we ask the "Inspection Panel" to review and take into consideration the contents of all the herewith attachments (Softcopy), irrespective of the decision concerning our request.

Thanking you in advance,

With all due respect,

Best Regards

Committee of Inhabitants in the surrounding villages of Marj Bisri

(لجنة أهالي وسكان البلدات المجاورة لمرج بسري)

Attachments:

+ Hard Copy: 12 reports and various documents

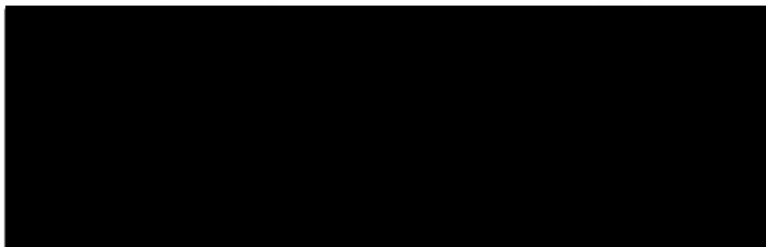
+ Softcopy: USB (20 GB)

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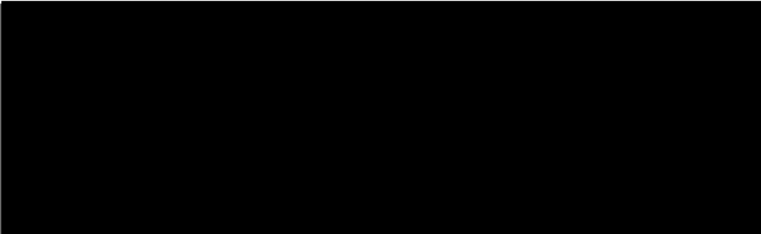
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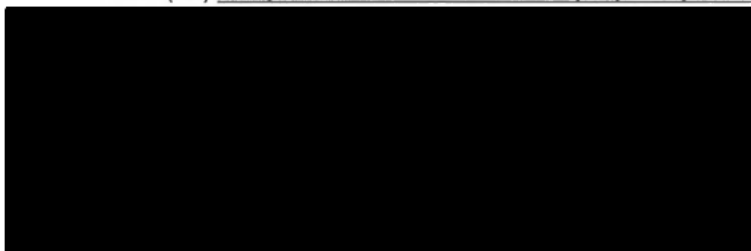
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