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ISRAEL

CRITICAL WATER SHORTAGE DESCRIBED

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[Text] "Water flow in the Jordan and Yarmuk rivers has almost come to a stop. Underground reservoir levels continue to go down, the Sea of Galilee is at a low and water reservoirs are empty," reported Meqorot spokesman Mordekhay Ya'aqubovitz on 9 January as he described water conditions in Israel resulting from the continued drought.

During the week of 12 January a meeting was to be held at the initiation of the Agriculture Ministry. Representatives of the Water Authority were to be among the participants. The meeting was called to give final approval to the Water Authority's plan to cut 100-200 million cubic meters of water to agriculture in the coming summer.

The recent drought has caused further deterioration in the growing hydrological deficit, which now amounts to 1.5 billion cubic meters, an amount equal to the total annual consumption of the whole country. In Meqorot's wells in the Lod area the water is already below the pumps and no more water can thus be pumped.

In the Yavne region the level of the underground reservoir has gone down by 1.5 meters, and in Ma'arit, by 3 meters. The springs which supplied drinking water to Bet-Qeshet in the Golan Heights have all but dried up and Meqorot is now supplying water to the settlement through a special pipe. The level of the Sea of Galilee is 211.82 meters below sea level and water flow in the Jordan and Yarmuk rivers has almost ceased.

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