

The Middle East is the most water-poor region of the globe, with the world's lowest per capita consumption of water. The problem attendant to water scarcity is particularly acute in the Middle East, as the region has one of the fastest growing populations. In addition, there are a number of rivers in this region that traverse international boundaries established during the 20th century, and that have become a focus of interstate tensions.

Per Capita Surface Water Availability in
the Jordan and Euphrates Basins, 1990³

	Total Water/year (bcm)	Population (millions)	Per Capita Water (cubic meters)
Iraq	91.20	17.0	5364
Israel	1.95	4.6	424
Jordan	0.77	3.3	233
Lebanon	4.80	2.7	1600
Syria	23.00	13.0	1769
Turkey	100.00	55.0	1818
West Bank/ Gaza	0.20	1.8	111

In this article, I discuss two transboundary river basins in the Middle East: the Jordan River basin, which includes Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank; and the Euphrates River Basin, which includes Iraq, Syria and Turkey. In these basins, no binding arrangements for sharing the waters exist, yet some form of cooperation is imperative in order to meet the immediate and long-term needs of the states and peoples in question. The article is divided into four sections. I begin by outlining the prevailing

³ This table is compiled from various sources. Note that total water availability in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is 650 to 700 million cubic meters (mcm) per annum, but the Palestinian population has, according to some sources, effective access to no more than 200 mcm of it.