

## Water shortages hit southern coast and northern villages

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SIDON/ TRIPOLI: With authorities warning of a possible heat wave this season, some people might be in a worse situation than others, as certain regions are suffering from scarce water supplies.

In the southern coastal city of Sidon and in the northern villages of Dinnieh and Bsharri, water has been limited throughout July, not only threatening the people's daily routines but also their livelihood.

Many reasons were attributed to the problem in Sidon, including rationing, technical problems and malfunctioning of water pumps, but the outcome is the same according to the locals: Poor people pay the price.

"We're begging for a drop of water," said Samah al-Gharibi on Thursday.

The lack of water has hindered the resident's daily tasks, from cooking to showering and cleaning, and complaints have started to rise in the city.

"We've been talking to officials for 10 days but our complaints have fallen on deaf ears. All we get are promises," said Dalal al-Jardali.

Some residents have taken matters into their own hands and have started getting water from the Nahr al-Awwali river. About 10 gallons of water last one day.

Others have sought help at the Sidon firefighting department, where each family receives a small share of water.

"This month is so hot and temperatures are so high, how can they cut the water supply? What country are we living in?" asked local Suha Kirke.

Nonetheless, authorities insist there are reasons behind the problem. An official from the South Lebanon Water Authority mentioned repairing damages, routine maintenance work and rationing. "The crisis will be over soon," he added.

However, these justifications fail to ease the minds of locals. Mahmoud al-Hijazi recalled road works executed last year to place 24 hour emergency electricity cables underground and link them to water pumps.

At the same time, in North Lebanon, the villages of Dinnieh and Bsharri have been witnessing their underground water supplies dry up. The summer heat and lack of water is threatening agriculture, the main activity in the region.

Local officials met earlier this week to discuss the matter, particularly disputes that have begun to erupt between the two villages, which contain over 300 families dependent on farming incomes.

The race to obtain water has allegedly led some people to shift the course of water canals coming from Qornet al-Sawda, Lebanon's highest summit.

Bqaasafrine-Dinnieh Mayor Munir Kanaj urged an end to these violations, saying "a final solution for these annual violations" should be found.

Kanaj then denied Dinnieh locals were responsible for stealing water or cutting off water from other regions. "This was proven to be wrong by many official reports," he said.