BETHLEHEM - On July 15th, residents of six Mediterranean countries will simultaneously jump into their local rivers, joining its counterpart, the European bi-annual 'Big Jump' event, that calls on governments to clean up their local waterways.

The event will take place at the Jordan River, which is severely polluted and drying up, the Alexandria River (Egypt), the Emilia-Romagna Adriatic Coastline (Italy), the Tanger (Morocco), Catalonia (Spain) and finally, the Rhine River (France), a press release from Friend of the Earth – Middle East (FoEME) said.

In order to stress the importance of the Jordan River for all the peoples in the region and for all three religions, a rabbi, a priest and an imam will partake in the event, alongside Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian mayors from both sides of the Jordan Valley.

"Following the listing of the Jordan River as a World Endangered Cultural Heritage site by the World Monument Fund, it is imperative that the rehabilitation of the Jordan remains on the public agenda," said Israeli Director of Friends of the Earth Middle East Gidon Bromberg in a press release.

"The Big Jump with mayors in bathing suits is on the one hand fun, but the message is serious."

The goal of the Big Jump in the Middle East is to make people and governments aware of the fact that the Jordan River, unique in its natural and cultural wealth, is under threat from excessive water diversion and pollution, FoEME says.

"Israel has dammed up the Jordan River at Degania [south of the Sea of Galilee], and Syria and Jordan have stopped the Yarmouk River [enters the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea]. The stench of raw sewer is all that is now left flowing in the Jordan. It is so polluted that in fact we will do the 'Big Jump' in what is left of the Yarmouk, and kayak to the Jordan," stated Jordanian Director of Friends of the Earth in Amman, Munqeth Mehyar.

Friends of the Earth Middle East, an umbrella organisation that brings together Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian environmentalists, has organised the event in partnership with the Anna Lindh Foundation Euro-Mediterranean for the Dialogue between Cultures. It will take place at the 'Peace Island', which is located close to the junction of the Jordan and Yarmouk rivers (in Jordanian territory), south of the Sea of Galilee, on Sunday July 15th at 16:00.

The event will include short readings about water and peace from the Holy Scriptures, each by its religious representative.