



# The Negev Coexistence Forum Newsletter

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## A word from the editor

This is the sixteenth edition of the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality's newsletter. As in previous editions, we have brought to you coverage of the events that have occurred in the Negev over the past few months. Following the decision of the government to accept the Praver plan, which we reported about in the last newsletter, the Ministry of Justice announced on January 3rd the legal memorandum "Law on the Regulation of Bedouin Settlement in the Negev". It's worth noting that the memorandum is vague and cumbersome and that it is not accompanied by a map of the future villages (nor are they referred to at all in the memorandum). Objections to the memorandum can be filed until the 18th of March 2012.

You are welcome to keep up to date on the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality website, as well as by way of Facebook and Twitter, where you will also find information on activities and events organized by members of the Forum.

We thank the many volunteers that contribute to the activities of the NCF, and those that help to plan, prepare and distribute this newsletter. We hope that reading this newsletter will enrich your knowledge of events in the Negev.

## The Policy of Bedouin Home Demolitions in the Negev

By Haia Noach

The policy of house demolitions has been employed by the various Israeli governments as a means of concentrating the Bedouin in destitute and neglected towns where there are no means of earning a living. Life in these towns is also contradictory to the Bedouins' traditional rural lifestyle. The Israeli government is attempting to gather the Bedouin in these towns by employing various legislative, legal, and administrative methods. During the 1950s, for example, the army ordered residents of many villages to leave their historical places of residence, and then confiscated their land through the Land Acquisition Law of 1953.

The Bedouins' living space in the Negev has also been reduced by various legislations such as the Planning and Construction Law and the Land Acquisition Law of 1981. This law was also known as "the Peace Law", since the Bedouin were required "to pay the price of peace" with Egypt. An area of approximately 80,000 dunams (20,000 acres) at Tel-Malchata was confiscated by means of this law, and the population of

5,000 local residents was transferred to the towns of Kasifa, Aruar, and other places.



Demolitions, photographed by Yosef Abu-Madigem (age 8) as part of the Negev Coexistence Forum photography workshop, Al-Arakib, January 2011

The courts have also been unjust towards the Bedouin in the Negev. The present government is employing policies similar to previous governments of withholding services and infrastructures such as water, electricity, health care, and education. This policy is designed to force residents of the villages to move to the towns.

The policy of home demolition is perhaps the worst of these actions. This policy constitutes the threat of destruction of the unrecognized villages and the eviction of 53,000 Bedouin residents – who are citizens

of the State of Israel.<sup>1</sup> These people cannot build their homes legally, since there is no government policy or building plan within their villages. The only alternative they are being offered is to move to the towns. The increased enforcement of these policies and their results in the form of increased house demolitions are part of the government's attempts to forcefully concentrate the entire Bedouin population of the Negev in poverty-stricken, neglected towns and to use their land for building Jewish settlements. An

example of this is the plan to build the Jewish settlement of Hiran on land belonging to the unrecognized village of Um al Hiran, the plan to plant forests on the land belonging to the villages of Al-Arakib and Twayil Abu Jarwal, as well as plans to develop industry and pave roads.

House demolitions are an infringement

<sup>1</sup> These numbers are derived from publications of the Central Bureau of Statistics, but apparently do not reflect the exact number of residents, many of whom are registered in existing or planned towns in order to allow them to vote in local elections or for other reasons.

## The Policy of Bedouin Home Demolitions in the Negev (continued from page 1)

upon basic human rights and violate the right to shelter, housing, and suitable living conditions that is granted by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The policy of home demolitions is a racist policy, devoid of any long-range chances of success, and is harming the fabric of life in the Negev.

Thousands of policemen and members of special forces participate in these demolitions. Violence is often used, and families are left without shelter during the cold winter and the hot summer months. The choice of the government to employ the mechanism of house demolition instead of negotiations or dialogue leaves thousands of men, women, and children with severe mental scars and a deep mistrust of the state system that is supposed to protect their rights.

The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality published a report for the second consecutive year

that dealt with the right to housing among the Arab Bedouin in the Negev, and presented a follow-up of home demolitions in the Negev. This year the findings are more serious than those of last year, and are evidence of continued violation throughout the year of the basic rights of the Bedouin living in the Negev. The 2011 report shows that there was a sharp increase in the number of demolitions of homes belonging to the Bedouin residents of the Negev. During 2010 approximately 456 houses were demolished, while 1,000 homes were demolished between January and the beginning of December in 2011 – an increase of 120%. This number does not include the houses that were demolished by state representatives during the month of December.

The new Prawer-Amidoror outline plan, which the government approved in September 2011 and which will be brought for legislation in the current Knesset session, is liable to result in the increased demolitions of Arab

homes in the Negev. The objective of the plan, as stated in the outline, is to bring about an “end” to the land conflicts between the Bedouin and the state within five years, but if the plan is implemented it will cause only chaos and deepen the conflict between the Bedouin and the government.

During the month of November state representatives implemented two campaigns that were unprecedented in their expanse. One was called “Firm Arm” and took place at the beginning of November and involved the demolition of 33 homes. The other was called “Guardian of the Negev” and involved the demolition of 22 homes. We need not dwell on the significance of the names of these campaigns, but it should be noted that during each one state representatives threatened home owners that they would be fined the cost of the demolitions. Consequently, 45% of the homeowners demolished their homes themselves.

## A Review of News in the Negev, October 2011 – January 2012

**October 2011** On October 4th activists demonstrating against the Prawer-Amidoror Plan received orders to dismantle their protest tent. The tent was set up opposite the offices of the Administration for Arrangement of Bedouin Settlements in Be'er Sheva on September 20th and was manned by organizations and movements of residents of the Negev. An appeal of the orders was submitted by the Association for Human Rights and an agreement was reached allowing the tent to remain until October 25th.

On October 6th 2,500 Jews and Arabs participated in a demonstration organized by the Governing Committee of the Arabs in the Negev against the Prawer-Amidoror Plan. The plan calls for evicting and uprooting 30,000 Bedouin Arabs from their villages and gathering them into urban settlements. The demonstrators shouted slogans such as “There is no such thing as ‘unrecognized villages’”, “Social justice for Bedouin in the Negev”, and “Stop house demolitions.” Numerous organizations, including the Negev Coexistence Forum, took part in the demonstration.

The Interfaith calendar published by the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality was launched on October 8th. This year’s calendar features photographs taken by children from the unrecognized village of Al-Arakib during a photography workshop that took place in the village. The workshop was sponsored by the Negev Coexistence Forum in cooperation with Jewish and Arab photographers.

The photographs are accompanied by quotations from various United Nations Committees regarding the Bedouin in the Negev.

On October 15th activists from the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality joined residents of the village of Al-Arakib in protest activities against the Prawer-Amidoror Plan at the Beit Kama Junction. The junction was filled with signs protesting the program, and flyers were distributed to passers-by.

On October 25th members of the Negev Arab Steering Committee held a series of demonstrations against the Prawer-Amidoror Plan at various junctions throughout the Negev. Activists from the Negev Coexistence Forum joined residents of Al-Arakib at the demonstration at the Lehavim Junction.

In October 2011 the Forum was awarded the Miriam Fligelman Levy Cross Cultural Prize awarded by the New Israel Fund. The prize was awarded to the Negev Coexistence Forum for activities conducted throughout this year. The NIF noted the mutual respect and deep commitment to the cause that exists between our Jewish and Arab members

as well as the fact that we actively recruit a broad spectrum of voices, including Bedouin women and Arab and Jewish students from the Ben Gurion University of the Negev. .

During the month of October Michal Rotem, head co-ordinator of the Negev Coexistence Forum, participated in a delegation to the United States together with Rawia Aburabia from the Association for Human Rights, Hanan Al Sana from Sidra, and Ta’abat Abu RaRass from Adalah. During the two week visit the delegation met with American leaders, religious communities, and the media. The delegation explained the complex situation that existed in the Negev, the opposition of the Bedouin community to the Prawer Plan, and the difficult situation of the village of Al-Arakib that was demolished by the state.



American women group during a field trip at the village of Al-Arakib, 13.11.2011

# November

An exhibit of photographs taken by children from the village of Al-Arakib opened on November 14th in the Municipality Building of the Second Quarter in Paris. The photographs were taken by children participating in a photography workshop conducted by the Forum. Aziz Abu-Mediam, a resident of Al-Arakib, and one of the leading activists in the struggle of Al-Arakib, traveled to Paris with the exhibit and explained about the village's determined struggle. The photographs were also exhibited in other cities in France

During the month of November Halil Alamour, a resident of the village of Alsira and a member of the board of directors of the Negev Coexistence Forum, participated in a meeting of the United Nations Committee for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights that was held in Geneva. Khalil Alamour read the organization's statement dealing with the problems and challenges that confront the Bedouin residents of the Negev, and emphasized the intense opposition to the Prawer Plan.

# December

On December 6th the court in Kiryat Gat cancelled demolition orders that were issued in the village of Alsira. The judge quoted Judge Edna Arbel, saying, "The issues that are described in this appeal once again remind all of us of something we already know: the difficult reality that confronts the Bedouin population in the State of Israel obligates an overall, comprehensive and systematic solution, and the sooner the better." The residents of Alsira were represented by Att. Suaad Bashara from Adalah.



Protest against Prawer plan in front of the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem 11.12.2011

On December 6th representatives of the Negev Coexistence Forum, Adalah, and the Council of Unrecognized Villages met with representatives of various foreign embassies in Israel at the home of the Swiss ambassador. They informed the ambassadors of the current situation in the Negev. Haia Noach, director of the forum, spoke about the continued problem of planting forests that are designed to deprive the Bedouin of their land.

On December 6th the Association for Civil Rights and the Bimkom Organization appealed to the Prime Minister and the Government Legal Advisor about the government decision of October 30th, 2011 regarding the "establishment of a series of settlements in the area of Mevo'ot Arad." They requested that the decision to establish ten new settlements on approximately 180,000 dunams (45,000 acres) between Meitar and Arad be revoked. The main argument is that this decision constitutes discriminatory planning regarding existing Bedouin settlements in the same area, and is essentially illegal. They also asked the government to take action to make planning and municipal arrangements for the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the area. It should be noted that the Director of Information and Research of the Knesset prepared a document opposing the decision that will be presented at the cabinet discussion.

On December 7th Att. Sana Ibn-Bari attended the meetings of the EU Parliament in Brussels and the Parliament in London to present the Minority Rights Group (NRG) report to the parliament members and other interested organizations. Farah Mihlar, a representative of NRG, visited Israel and was a guest of the forum. She published a report about the Bedouin in the Negev with emphasis upon the unrecognized villages.

On December 9th The Negev Coexistence Forum published a report in commemoration of International Human Rights Day. The report dealt with the right to housing of the Bedouin in the Negev, and focused upon the policy of house demolitions employed by the government. This policy has reached a peak with the demolition of 1,000 homes in the Negev during the past year.

On December 9th residents of Al-Arakib and members of the Negev Coexistence Forum participated in the march for human rights held in Tel Aviv. During the march the residents and activists carried large cardboard replicas of a house and bulldozer in protest of the demolitions of Bedouin homes in the Negev and the continuing destruction of the village of Al-Arakib.



The children of Al-Arakib with the new drums during the weekly protest of the village, 12.18.2011

On December 11th A large demonstration took place, to protest the Prawer Plan that is designed to evict 30,000-40,000 Bedouins from their villages. The demonstration was held opposite the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem. Thousands participated in the demonstration and demanded that the plan be revoked and that the Bedouin community be involved in finding a suitable solution.

Two photography workshops were organized by the Negev Coexistence Forum in two unrecognized Bedouin villages at the end of December. A still-life workshop was held in the village of Alsira and a video workshop was held in Al-Arakib in cooperation with the village committees and volunteer photographers. The photographs and videos will be included in exhibitions about the unrecognized villages and house demolitions that will be shown in Israel and abroad

In December the United Nations Committee for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights published its final conclusions about Israel. Among other things, the committee referred to the Prawer Plan in Section 27 of its conclusions. The committee voiced its concern regarding the report, and recommended that the State of Israel ensure that "implementation of the plan should not result in forced eviction of the Bedouin." The committee also recommended that Israel officially recognize the unrecognized villages, cease house demolitions in the villages, and allow the Bedouin to enjoy the right to suitable housing.



Protesting in front of the JNF-KKL offices in Jerusalem demanding to stop the dispossession through forestation, 01.29.2012

## What's new in the Negev (cont.)

**January 2012** On January 2nd the Bimkom and Adalah organizations submitted opposition to the Yatir forest plan in the name of dozens of residents of the unrecognized Bedouin village of Atir. The plan calls for the demolitions of the homes within the village and for planting a forest on the land. The 500 residents of the village were transferred to the site in 1948.

On January 3rd the government legal advisor published a memorandum regarding the bill for implementation of the Praver Plan for Arrangement of Bedouin settlements in the Negev. A period of one and a half months ending on February 16th has been allotted for submitting opposition to the memorandum and a "process of listening."

On January 23rd members of the Adalah Organization and the Negev Coexistence Forum held a meeting with representatives from the European Union and informed them of current developments in the Negev.

On January 26th a large protest rally against the memorandum of the Praver Plan Bill was held in front of the government offices in Be'er Sheva. Approximately 1,000 people attended.

On January 28th a solidarity visit was held at the village of Al-Arakib in protest of the State of Israel's demolition of the village more than 30

times. The objective of the visit was to express solidarity with the struggle of the village residents, who have rebuilt their homes again and again after each demolition and continued their determined struggle against the destructive policy of the State of Israel and the Jewish National Fund, who are planting a forest on the land belonging to the village.

**February** On February 8th, The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, Prop. Rachel Rolnik, visited the Negev area. The Special Rapporteur visited the village of Al-Arakib which was demolished by the state of Israel more than 30 times and heard about the situation in the village from the Sheikh of the village, Sheikh Sayakh Al-Turi. The Rapporteur promised to report about the situation and to publish a detailed report about the Negev. Later the Rapporteur participated in an experts meeting with different Negev experts which presented the problems rise from Praver plan and the reasons to the objection to the plan by the community.



Prop. Rachel Rolnik, UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing during a visit in the village of Al-Arakib, 02.08.2012

### Al-Arakib

Members of the Negev Coexistence Forum have joined residents of the village of Al-Arakib in their weekly protest vigil each Sunday since August of 2010.

The Negev Coexistence Forum has been operating a study center in the village of Al-Arakib for the past five months. The center is open four days each week for three hours. Members of the Negev Coexistence Forum visit Al-Arakib at least three times each week to remain informed and to encourage the residents in their struggle. The visitors bring various groups, journalists, and photographers.

## Please recognize - Umm-Batin

Umm-Batin is a village south of Highway 60 between Omer and Shoket Junction. The village became recognized in 2000.



Some of the resident of the village lived there since ancient times;

others were moved there when the Bedouin were transferred to the Siyag area. The biggest tribe in the village is Abu-Kef, and smaller families are Abu-Asa, Abu-Sbit and others. In 2005 the Interior Minister gave Umm-Batin settlement status, but to this day there is no approved master plan, and for that reason there are no building

permits in the village. The village is a communal settlement government by the Abu-Basma local council.

The village has 3,000 residents, from the Abu-Kef tribe and others, living in several large neighborhoods.

In the village there is a long-serving elementary school which serves 1,200 student from kindergarten to 9th grade, and new schools: a middle school and high school were opened in 2010, along with a complex of kindergartens and nursery schools, a clinic and station for mother and child. The village is connected to water through a 12-inch pipe, from which pipes extend to the entire village. There are no electricity, sewage, or garbage removal services. In 2002 The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, the community council

Umm-Batin and The Association of Forty petitioned the High Court of Justice because of the flow of sewage through the middle of the village. In 2003 the judge's



Yosra Abu-Kaf

Pleased to  
**Recognize**



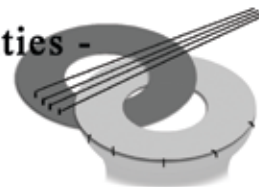
ruling required the state to build a bridge to enable the children of the village to get to school. Despite a purification plant being built next to the village sewage continues to flow within it, polluting the environment. In the winter the bridges that connect the village to Highway 60 collapse, as in February 2012.

Prayer services are conducted in four mosques built by members of the community, as are burial services.

What used to be temporary building in the village, including tin houses and concrete with tin roofing, has changed and become more permanent. Today there are several multistory buildings with concrete or tile roofing.

During the past few months the Multaka-Mifgash – the Arab Jewish Cultural Center in Be'er Sheva that is run by the Negev Coexistence Forum – held numerous events, films, and meetings. Events during the month

## Multaka-Mifgash Activities - an Arab-Jewish Culture House in the Negev



Yigal Rambam, Yehuda Alush and Daniel Dor during an event about the future of the social protest at the Multaka-Mifgash, 11.28.2011

of December included a film festival entitled “Driving Out Darkness” featuring the films “Rule of Law” and “Martin” directed by Ra’anan Alexandrovich, and Ba’abus and “Untitled” directed by Kaid AbuTif. Workshops were also held in English and Hebrew about the Bedouin in the Negev that included four meetings each. There was also a festive screening of the film Soumud – The Struggle of Al-Arakib directed by Jillian Kestler-D’Amours featuring residents of Al-Arakib. A panel discussion took place about the future of the social protests during the winter, and we hosted an introductory meeting with the organization “Combatants for Peace”.

### Home and building demolition - October 2011 – February 2012

Village	Location	Buildings demolished	Date
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, Between Lehavim and Goral Junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 27 <sup>th</sup> time	October 5
Al-Forah	South of Arad	One house demolished	October 5
Hura		3 houses demolished	October 27
Kasser A-Sar	Next to Dimona	One house demolished	October 27
Khirbet Hura		One house demolished	October 27
Tel Arad	West of road 80 and north of road 31	One home was demolished	October 27
Sawa	East of Hura and road 316	Two homes were demolished	October 27
Al-Qrein	West of Hura and road 31	One home was demolished	October 27
Kassr a-Sir	West of Dimona and road 25	One home was demolished	October 27
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, between Lehavim and Goral Junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 28 <sup>th</sup> time	November 1
Announced by the Israeli Land Administration “Operation Determined Arm”		33 structures demolished across the Negev	November 6
South Rahat		A number of houses demolished by their owners	November 22
Bir Hadaj	Next to Kibbutz Revivim	One house demolished	November 23
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, Between Lehavim and Goral Junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 29 <sup>th</sup> time	November 23
Announced by the Israeli Land Administration		21 structures demolished across the Negev	November 29

## Home and building demolition - October 2011 – February 2012 (cont.)

Village	Location	Buildings demolished	Date
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, Between Lehavim and Goral Junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 30 <sup>th</sup> time	December 21
Atir	North-east of Hura	Five homes were demolished	December 21
Wadi Al-Na'am	West of road 40 in front of Ramat-Hovav Industrial zone	One home was demolished	December 29
	North of Rahat	Three homes were demolished	December 29
Hura		One home was demolished	January 9
Alsira	South of road 31 near Nevatim air-base	One home was demolished	January 9
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, Between Lehavim and Goral Junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 31 <sup>st</sup> time	January 18
Segev Shalom		One structure demolished	January 18
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, Between Lehavim and Goral Junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 32 <sup>nd</sup> time	February 13
Chasham Zaneh	South of road 25 Be'er-Sheva - Dimona	A house that had been partly demolished in the past was completely demolished.	February 15
Sawa	East of Hura	1 house was demolished	February 15



## Membership and Participation in the Forum

The Forum was first established and still exists as an organization dependent on volunteers and voluntarism: citizens who understand that without community action and intervention, government policies in the Negev lead to injustice, discrimination and a depressing future for the Negev and the country as a whole. The Forum's goals are to push equal rights further and forward and to promote tolerance and coexistence in the Negev.

We invite you to join us to help advance the goals of the Forum as they are outlined in this newsletter. If you are interested in doing so you can participate in any of these above-mentioned activities, even those already underway. The Forum is open and pleased to receive ideas and new initiatives for additional activities.

In addition, the Forum needs volunteers to carry out specific roles such as:

- 1) To develop and maintain the Forum's website.
- 2) To translate texts from Hebrew to Arabic and English and in the opposite directions.
- 3) Editor for the Forum Newsletter.
- 4) Members for the Multaka-Mifgash stirring committee.
- 5) Investigating ethnic based discrimination in working places, services etc.
- 6) For spokespersons and public relations persons to face the media and general public.
- 7) To co-ordinate volunteers activities.
- 8) To co-ordinate Knesset lobbying activities.

We would appreciate your support of NCF activities. Please send checks to POB. 130, Omer, 84965.

Those who wish to join the Negev Coexistence Forum are encouraged to pay a membership fee as follows:

Individuals - 40 NIS, families - 60 NIS, students and others who wish to pay a reduced fee - 20 NIS.

\* Further information regarding the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality can be obtained by contacting one of the contacts at the bottom of the page, or through the Internet at [www.dukium.org](http://www.dukium.org).

\* We shall be pleased to receive the addresses of potential readers of the newsletter, or ideas for other subjects considered suitable to be included in the newsletter.

\* If you no longer desire to receive this newsletter please inform us.

The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality is an independent non-party organization that was established in 1997 by Arabs and Jews - Israeli citizens who live in the Negev-Naqab. The Forum's aim is to provide a framework for Jewish-Arab co-operation as a basis for a common struggle for equal civil rights and to promote tolerance and coexistence in the Negev. The Forum's activities are carried out on a voluntary basis, or funded exclusively by private foundations, in particular The New Israel Fund, and donations. These include meetings and social events between the communities, information drives, environment justice campaigns, recognition of the unrecognized Bedouin villages of the Negev, the struggle for employment equality in the Negev and other similar activities.

**Editors:** Rachel Naparstek, Haia Noach **Writing:** Michal Rotem **Arabic translation:** Ratb Abo Krenat **Arabic language editor:** Naser Abu Srihan **English translation:** Bracha Ben-Avraham **English language editors:** Avner Ben-Amos, Dara Levy-Bernstein **Graphic design:** Marc Marcus