



# The Negev Coexistence Forum Newsletter

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## A word from the editor

This is the 18th newsletter of the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality. As in previous issues, this issue presents a summary of events that have occurred in the Negev in recent months. During the last few months, a couple of incidents occurred in the Bedouin recognized village of Bir Hadaj, where the police used harsh violence while distributing demolition orders and demolishing houses. The Negev Coexistence Forum (NCF) calls for the immediate cessation of violence and for a prompt change in the state's policy toward its Bedouin citizens. NCF will continue to support the struggle of the people of Bir Hadaj and the united Jewish and Arab struggle for civil equality in the Negev.

Visit our website, Facebook, and Twitter to keep informed of current events and activities organized by the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality. We wish to thank the many volunteers who support the NCF's activities and those who have shared their thoughts and efforts to help prepare and distribute this newsletter.

We hope that this newsletter will help you stay informed about events taking place in the Negev.

## Recognition for the Sake of Control

By Ofer Dagan

The home demolitions that took place in September and October in the recognized Bedouin village Bir Hadaj revealed the logic behind the state's policy of recognition of the Bedouin villages. Instead of fair distribution of resources, infrastructure and rights, the policy is of control and reducing the Bedouin living space. In the last 3 years the number of house demolitions in the Bedouin villages has risen. This policy of home demolitions occurs also in recognized villages and not only in unrecognized ones. Also, contrary to the claims of the authorities, the demolition policy does not target only law violations but rather serves the state as a tool to control the Bedouin population and as means to concentrate this population into urban settlements while denying them the right to preserve rural agricultural communities.

On 27.9.2012 inspectors from the Ministry of Interior, escorted by police force, demolished a home in the recognized village Bir Hadaj (south of Beer Sheva, near kibbutz Revivim). Residents of the village attested that during the demolition the driver of the bulldozer spat on a resident. This triggered a violent

skirmish in which the police used tear gas and rubber bullets. That same day the residents rebuilt the house. On 10.10.2012 the inspectors returned to the village with demolition orders. This time the residents were prepared and blocked the entrance to the village. The following day the



Children from Bir-Hadaj sit on the ruins of a house that was demolished in their village.

inspectors returned accompanied by a large police force which crashed violently the residents' resistance, arresting many and using tear gas that even penetrated the school, causing the staff to send the children home. Rubber bullets were used again resulting in some injured residents.

Following the violent incidents the steering committee of the Bedouin of the Negev convened and decided on

a general strike and demonstration in front of the Ministry of Interior in Beer Sheva. The demonstration took place on 18.10.2012. On the eve of the demonstration the police returned to the village to show its power and detained 10 residents which, it claimed, had been involved in

the violent incidents. The people were released the same day. Unfortunately, some of the people that were arrested on 10.10.12 are still detained.

In 2003 the village Bir Hadaj received its recognition from the state. Allegedly this recognition has improved the status of the village compared to the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev. However, until today, almost a decade since the recognition, not much has changed. Still there are no building permits,

no infrastructure (roads, water, sewage, electricity, etc.), and only basic services such as health and education are provided. The house demolition policy is enforced in this recognized village as in the unrecognized villages.

The reason for the demolitions in Bir Hadaj was most probably the state's attempt to prepare the ground for the implementation of the Prawer plan, which was approved by the

government in November 2011. This plan continues the state's policy of concentrating the Bedouin population in small townships with limited territory, thus paving the way for as much as possible Jewish settlements in the region. The way to do it is either to restrict the growth of Bedouin agricultural villages that are spread on relative large territory and turn them into urban settlements, or to transfer their residents to existing urban townships, claiming that the state cannot provide infrastructure to so many scattered agricultural settlements. However, this claim does not prevent the state from initiating new Jewish rural communities in the Negev, nor does it prevent approving

Jewish single family's ranches which are spread in the area.

The residents of Bir Hadaj oppose the state's attempt to turn their rural village into a backward township and their struggle is met by the state's forceful and violent reaction. The violent confrontations reveal the logic and intention that guide the state's policy of recognition of the Bedouin villages in the Negev. This is not a policy of fair distribution of resources, infrastructure and rights, but rather a policy of control and limitation of the space where the Bedouin live.

It seems that the functionaries who are laying out the policy see only two options for the Bedouin

population: either to survive as exotic nomads with no lands, or to live as residents of planned urban townships, resembling the development towns built for the Jews in the 50s. The common ground for both of the above imaginary ways of living is the dispossession of the Bedouins from their historic rights to their lands and the denial of their rural way of living on these lands in the last couple of centuries. The destructive combination of these two imaginary ways of living directs the policies of recognition and violent house demolition. Thus, normative life is denied again and again from the Bedouin citizens of the Negev in favor of the fantasy to Judaize the space.

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

**June** At end of June, Haia Noach, NCF's executive director, and Aziz Abu-Medim, resident of the village of Al-Arakib, participated in a seminar in Sweden. During the seminar they lectured about the situation in the Negev, explained the Bedouin struggle for justice, and talked particularly about the long ongoing struggle of Al-Arakib.

in the elections for the council. The council was established in 2003 and until today no elections were held.

On July 5th, the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning Israel's treatment of its Bedouin citizens, and urged the Israeli government to annul the Praver Plan, which is expected to forcibly displace 30,000 Bedouin from their homes in the Negev.

On July 10th, the committee of the village of Wadi Al-Na'am initiated an emergency meeting, in response to a conference held 10 days earlier in Segev Shalom by the Authority for the Regulation of the Bedouin Settlement in the Negev. At the conference, held by the authority, its officials presented a new plan for the expansion of the township of Segev-Shalom in order to transfer residents of Wadi Al-Na'am into the town.

During the conference at Wadi Al-Na'am, the speakers emphasized their opposition to the Praver-Amidror plan and made it clear, that they do not approve the plan to move them into Segev-Shalom. The residents of the village demanded to stay in their village and to be recognized there.

July 22nd – the South African Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Ismail Coovadia, visited the unrecognized Bedouin village of Al Arakib with representatives of Negev Coexistence Forum and Adallah legal center. The ambassador visited other villages and participated in

a forum of experts. Ms. Haia Noach, NCF's general manager, explained to the ambassador the activities of the Jewish National Fund. During the visit the Ambassador said that he was familiar with the challenges Bedouin citizens were facing in the Negev and that he would take up the issue with the South African government.

On July 27th a protest march to the village of Al-Arakib took place. The march marked two years of the first demolition of the village. At the end of the march the participants were invited to take part in Iftar, the meal ending the Ramadan fast and watched the film Sumoud together with the residents of Al-Arakib.

On July 31st the annual Iftar meal of NCF took place in the Multaka-Mifgash. As in each year, tens of activists, Arabs and Jews, participated in the meal which was followed by a short review of NCF's activities throughout the year.

In July, NCF submitted a report to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The report focused on Israel's human rights record regarding the Arab-Bedouin population in the Negev-Naqab and pointed out how Israel had



Haia Noach, NCF's executive director, during a seminar in Sweden, June 2012

**July** During the first week of July, volunteers from the movement Habonim Dror, in cooperation with NCF, held a summer day camp in the Bedouin village of Umm-Mitnan. 40 kids from the village participated and enjoyed the variety of activities.

July 1st – The NCF secretariat sent a letter to Prof. Assaf Razin, head of the Committee for the Examination of the Appropriate Organization of the Municipal Area and Local Planning Areas of the Bedouin Sector at Be'er-Sheva District, on the issue of the postponement of local elections at the regional council of Abu-Basma. In the letter, the secretariat members explained why there should be no further delay



March in Al-Arakib to mark the second anniversary of the first demolition of the village. July 27, 2012.

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

failed to carry out its commitment to the Human Rights Council to ensure the "full protection of the rights of minorities". NCF drew attention to the stark disparities in the level of services offered in Bedouin and Jewish municipalities in the Negev, the low percentage of Bedouin employed in government offices, the state's home demolition policy, and the government's recently passed Praver Plan, to prove how Israel fails to ensure the "best protection of human rights" for Bedouin citizens.

**August** August 7th – as part of a national campaign of the Social Justice Protest, activists came to the Negev to meet NCF members and to tour the area. The activists had a lookout on the Sayag area and met the residents of the unrecognized village Hashem Zana. The objective of the trip was to find ways to combine the struggles and work together, and to present to the activists the main issues with which the Bedouin community are struggling nowadays, especially the house demolition policy and the housing distress in the Negev.

August 7th – NCF conducted a tour for members of the French embassy in Israel. Guided by NCF's staff, the embassy members travelled around the Negev and visited the Bedouin unrecognized villages Al-Arakib and Wadi Al-Na'am.

August 14th – The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), Bimkom, and Negev Coexistence Forum, petitioned together with residents of several unrecognized villages and of the city of Arad to the High Court of Justice demanding to overturn the government's decision to establish seven new settlements in the vicinity of Arad.

August 27th – after 7 years of legal and public struggle, the high school in the village of Abu Talul was opened.

Partial recommendations of the Committee for the Examination of the Appropriate Organization of the Municipal Area and Local Planning Areas of the Bedouin Sector at Be'er-Sheva District were given in August. The committee stated that there was no place for the regional Abu Basma Council at its current form – "the present form is appropriate for a state's executive arm but not for a regional council in general and particularly not for a Bedouin regional council" – and therefore should be split to several local authorities.

**September** In September NCF issued its 6th trilingual calendar. The calendar shows the Christian, Muslim and Jewish year as well as

the Jewish, Muslim and Christian holidays. The calendar is illustrated with photographs taken by women of Al-Arakib village and quotations of Bedouin women of the Negev.

On September 5th and 6th, the Be'er-Sheva wine festival took place at the yard of the Negev Museum and the Mosque. Due to the protest held by Bedouin and Jewish residents of the Negev, the wine was sold outside the area of the mosque and the planned demonstration was cancelled.

September 14th – a group of drummers from Haifa arrived at the village of Al-Arakib, and conducted a drumming workshop for the children and youth of the village. As the drums became an integral part of the village's protests every Sunday, the workshop gave the children the skills they needed to drum and chant in demonstrations.



The clowns Carmen and Lorena, at the end of a clowning show in the village of Umm-Mitnan, 10.09.2012

September 16th and 17th – the duo Carmen and Lorena, clowns from the organization Bailando Esperanza, came to the Negev for a couple of shows and workshops in the city of Rahat and in the Bedouin villages Al-Mekimen and Umm-Mitnan. The clowns entertained the children with their humoristic shows bringing them laughter and joy.

September 22nd – a group consisting of Bedouin, Jewish and international activists went on a solidarity visit to the unrecognized villages of Wadi-Ari'ha and Abde, where houses were demolished during that week.

September 27th – a house was demolished in the village of Bir-Hadaj. The residents reported police violence during the demolition, including firing sponge bullets and other kinds of non-lethal weapon. According to the

residents, at least four people were injured.

September 23rd – the Israeli national planning committee approved the master plan of the new Jewish town Hiran. The committee rejected the objections presented by the residents of Um El Hiran. The establishment of the town Hiran will result in the demolition of the Bedouin unrecognized village of Umm Al-Hiran whose residents were moved to the place by the state of Israel during the 50's.

September 29th – NCF held a tour to the German State's Forest, near Lehavim. NCF's members toured the area with a couple of German activists and with Bedouin residents of the Negev, who owned the lands on which the forest was planted.

**October** On October 10th the Be'er Sheva District Court acquitted Al Arakib residents and village leaders, Sheikh Sayyah Abu Medirem and his son Aziz, of criminal charges. The state had accused them of trespassing and illegally constructing tents on state land. The charges were annulled.

On October 10th, inspectors of the ministry of interior arrived at the recognized Bedouin village of Bir-Hadaj to hand out demolition orders to the residents. The residents of Bir-Hadaj managed to prevent the entrance of the inspectors to the village and the hand out of the demolition orders.

On October 11th, the inspectors came back to the village of Bir-Hadaj, accompanied by police force. While the residents tried to prevent the hand out of demolition orders, policemen started shooting tear gas, rubber coated bullets and live ammunition. Several residents were injured and three residents got arrested. During the tear gas shooting, some of the gas infiltrated into the local school, and the teachers had to dismiss their classes in the middle of the day.



Solidarity visit in the village of Abde, after a house demolition which occurred at the village, 22.09.2012

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

On October 15th the hearing regarding the state's appeal on the decision of the court of Kiryat Gat to annul the demolition orders of the unrecognized village Alsera was postponed.

On October 17th, early in the morning, police arrested ten residents from the village of Bir-Hadaj. All of them were released at the same day, but it is not clear whether indictments will be submitted.



Demonstration against house demolitions and police violence in front of Be'er-Sheva court, 18.10.2012



Al-Arakib's weekly protest in Lehavim Junction

On October 18th, 2500 people participated in a demonstration held in front of the ministry of interior's offices in Be'er-Sheva. The demonstrators protested the house demolition policy, the demolition orders handouts around the Negev, and the arrests of ten residents of the village of Bir-Hadaj the morning before.

## International Lobby

The South African Ambassador to Israel, Ismail Coovadia, visited the unrecognized Bedouin village of Al Arakib on Sunday July 22 with representatives of the Negev Coexistence Forum and Adalah legal center. The Ambassador said that he was familiar with the challenges Bedouin citizens were facing in the Negev and that he would take up the issue with the South African government. "You have our support and solidarity" he said. In early August, NCF conducted a field trip for members of the French embassy in Israel. Guided by NCF staff, the embassy members

visited the unrecognized Bedouin villages of Al-Arakib and Wadi Al-Na'am. On October 24, NCF participated in



The Ambassador of South Africa, Ismail Kovadia, during a visit at the village of Al-Arakib.

an information briefing and tour of the Negev for diplomatic missions in Israel. Organized by Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority rights in Israel, the tour brought representatives from the Greek, Canadian, EU, Belgian, and Dutch embassies, to name just a few, to the Negev in order to better understand the challenges facing the Bedouin community. NCF Executive Director Haia Noach spoke to the group about the Jewish National Fund's role in Bedouin displacement and demolitions in the area.

## Please recognize - Nafcha

The village Nafcha Triangle is located near Nafcha prison, 60 km south of Beer Sheva and 15 km north of Mitzpe Ramon, east of Route 40. In the early 80s, following the demand of the Green Patrol inspectors, some families of the Sarahin tribe came to live in the Nafcha Triangle, an area which was not considered a firing zone or nature reserve. Since then the village grew, and about 200 people live there nowadays. A winding, partially paved road from the prison leads to the village. Since the village is close to the route of "Shvil Israel" it offers hosting facilities, including accommodation, to the people walking the "shvil". Like most unrecognized villages, Nafcha Triangle is not connected to electricity and only one water connection serves all its residents. The dry olive grove at the entrance of the village is an evidence to the high price of water the village is charged with. The residents complain repeatedly regarding their inability to

engage in agriculture in view of the high price of water. Their situation is in sharp contrast to that of the ranch of a single Jewish family, whose large green trees are nearby. Lately some home demolitions occurred in the village which had great effect on the children. In September, after receiving a demolition

Salem Abu-Blaia and Yoav Galai

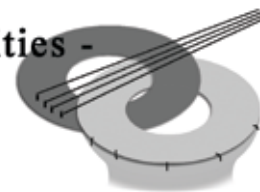
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order, a house was dismantled by its owner in order to minimize the mental damage to the children.



NCF's Arab-Jewish cultural center resumed its activities. At the end of October the photography exhibition: "Joseph Algazi in Black and White – the 60s and 70s of the previous century" by the journalist, photographer and activist Joseph Algazi was opened. At the opening night of the exhibition a discussion was held between Joseph Algazi and the photographer Yoav Galai on the method of documentation of a photographer who is also a social activist. Two days of films and panel discussions took place during the film festival "Queeristan – Queer film festival from a dark point of view". The festival was held in cooperation with the Queer Reading Group. In November the series of lectures "Introduction workshop of the Bedouin of the Negev", held each year by NCF, was opened. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce various issues such as women's status, recognized townships and unrecognized villages, the Bedouins of the Negev and indigenous rights, health and more. The lectures were given by various lecturers, activists and specialists. In addition, a spoken Arabic course for beginners was opened.

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



Joseph Algazi and Yoav Galai, at the opening of the exhibition of Joseph Algazi's photography at the Multaka-Mifgash.

### Home and building demolition - June – November 2012

Village	Location	Buildings demolished	Date
Tel Sheva		Three houses were demolished	June 6
Sawa	North of route 31, near Hura	One house was demolished	June 6
Umm Ratam	East of route 25	Two houses were demolished	June 6
Segev Shalom	Route 25	One house was demolished	June 11
Umm Batin	Near Omer	One fence was demolished	June 11
Khirbet Al-Batel	South of Rahat	Three huts and a chicken pen were demolished	June 11
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 36th time	June 24
Wadi Ari'ha	North of Mitzpeh Ramon	Two houses and a mosque were demolished	July 4
Umm Batin	Near Omer	One house was demolished	July 4
Segev Shalom	Route 25	One house was demolished	July 4
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 37th time	July 17
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 38th time	August 16
Bir Hadaj	Near kibutz Revivim	Two houses were demolished	August 29
Rachmeh	near Yeruham	One house was demolished	August 29
Khirbet Al-Batel	Near Mishmar Hnegev	One house was demolished	August 29
Abu-Sayach Family	South of Arad	One house was demolished	August 29
Abu Krinat	Route 25, near Arara Banegev	One house was demolished	August 29
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 39th time	September 12
Wadi Ari'ha	North of Mitzpeh Ramon	Five houses were demolished	September 20
Abde	Near Sde Boker	One house was demolished	September 20

## Home and building demolition - June – November 2012 (cont.)

Village	Location	Buildings demolished	Date
Bir Hadaj	Near kibutz Revivim	One house was demolished	September 20
Bir Hadaj	Near kibutz Revivim	One house was demolished	September 27
Al-Zarnug	North of route 25	One shack was demolished	September 27
Segev Shalom	Route 25	Three houses were demolished	September 27
Kochleh	Near kseife, route 31	One house was demolished	October 9
Al-Huzaiel	North west of Rahat	One house was demolished	October 9
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 40th time	October 18
Kseife	Route 31	One house was demolished	November 6
Segev Shalom	Route 25	One mini-Caravan was demolished	November 6
South west of Al-Arakib	West of route 40, between Lehavim and Goral junctions	Five houses were demolished	November 6
Al-Sdir	Route 25	A mosque was demolished	November 14
Al Zarnug	North of route 25	One house was demolished	November 14
Al-Arakib	West of route 40, between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The whole village was demolished for the 41st time	November 14



## 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.

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