



The Negev Coexistence Forum Newsletter

19th Edition, June 2013

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A word from the editor

This is the 19th Newsletter of the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality. As in previous issues, this newsletter presents a summary of events that have occurred in the Negev in recent months.

We hope that this newsletter, as previous issues, will help you keep informed of events taking place in the Negev. In the course of recent months many homes in the Negev have been demolished. The Praver-Begin plan continues to progress and is in the process of becoming law in Israel while thousands of acres of freshly planted fields have been ploughed up by the Israel Lands Authority. The Negev Forum for Coexistence calls for an immediate change in Israeli government policy towards the Arab Bedouin of the Negev and demands that the new government immediately retracts the Praver Plan and reaches a mutually agreed solution with the Bedouin Community on the basis of a negotiated settlement.

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.

Forests of Guilt, Displacement, and Eviction

Ofer Degan, Field Co-Coordinator, Forum for Co-Existence and Civil Equality

The German States' Forest, which was planted in the area of Lehavim in commemoration of the Holocaust, stands on land that was confiscated from the Abu Freih family by the State of Israel. The forests of the Negev constitute one landscape that conceals another, and do more to obliterate history than relate it.

During recent weeks the SPD (German Democratic Party) has been conducting a campaign to raise funds to plant a new forest in the Negev commemorating Israel's 65th Independence Day. The campaign urges members to purchase a tree in the forest as a Christmas gift for friends and family, and to take part in Germany's contribution to the forestation of the Land of Israel, of which "large parts still suffer from barrenness, lack of water, and rich soil."

According to the campaign, the new forest is a direct continuation of the German States Forest that was dedicated during the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. The German States Forest was financed by a number of organizations and communities throughout Germany and was planted by the Jewish National Fund. A large monument at the entrance to the

forest has sixteen pillars with the names of the numerous German countries, communities, and organizations that contributed to the planting of the forest. Smaller monuments scattered throughout the forest commemorate events, people, or communities connected with the German-Jewish past.

Black Forest in Germany inspired the famous Grimm's fairy tales, the forests of Eastern Europe are filled with mass graves, and this new German forest perpetuates this tradition. This time, however, we are not talking about the painful past of European Jewry, which is not hidden, but inscribed in bold letters for all to see.



German States Forest in the Negev

One might ask: "What's the problem with a project that is both ecological and educational, and strengthens diplomatic relations between nations? Israel gets a forest, and Germany gets another opportunity to atone for its inexhaustible guilt. Everyone is happy." However, as we well know, forests - particularly German forests - tend to hide dark secrets. The

What this European forest, which was planted in the heart of the Negev by the Jewish National Fund, has to hide is the expropriation of land in the areas in which it was planted. Some of the land upon which the forest is planted belongs to the Bedouin family of Abu-Freih. Like many Bedouin Arab citizens, the members of the Abu Freih family were evicted from their land by the military government during the 1950s. Throughout the

1970s and 1980s they submitted claims of ownership of their land whenever they were able, based upon testimony or original documents. The claim regarding the areas upon which the forest was planted was automatically rejected on the pretext that they had already undergone a process of land settlement. The Jewish National Fund, as mentioned earlier, is presently

Forests of Guilt, Displacement, and Eviction

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using the land to complete the strip of forests that physically separate the West Bank from the Gaza Strip and separate both these areas from the Bedouin community in the Negev.

The policy of forestation in the northern Negev is an expression of the ethos of security and sacrifice that serves as the basis of Jewish settlement in the area and shapes the memory of the Holocaust in Israel. The establishment of a Jewish – German memorial site on this piece of land is an expression of denial of the land's Bedouin past, as well as a cynical use of Holocaust commemoration and German feelings of guilt in an attempt to obliterate the past. As Dr. Awad Abu Freih, a resident of Al-Arakib, remarked, "There has been

a massive distortion of history here. I'm certain that if my German friends knew that I can't come back here and that my historical memories and those of my family are being obliterated, they would not have agreed to this."

I want to believe that the German citizens who contributed to the planting of the forest - the mayors and political leaders who supported it - are unaware of the great injustice that is being done by the forestation activities of the Jewish National Fund in the Negev. Jewish citizens of Israel, however, do not have the privilege of living in Europe, feeling guilty, and remaining unaware. Israeli citizens must not agree to the confiscation of Arab Bedouin land that is being conducted under the auspices

of German guilt. Commemoration of the Holocaust is precious and important to many families in Israel, and there is no point in elaborating here on its collective significance. For this reason we cannot agree that it be used cynically to bring about new injustices. In this case we are speaking about a twofold injustice: first, the practical prevention of Arab Bedouin from settling on their native land, and secondly, the symbolic obliteration of Bedouin existence in the area, their eviction from their land, and the replacement of their suffering with memories of Jewish suffering. In this manner, an important and humane act of commemoration has been transformed into a cynical act of forgetfulness, repression, and eviction.

A Review of News in the Negev

November

In the beginning of November, the national planning and construction committee decided to establish a new Bedouin town on 1000 dunams (250 acres) in the regional council of Ramat Negev jurisdiction. The new town will be named "Ramat Tziporim" ("Birds Hights").

In the beginning of November, a group of European Parliament members, members of the European Parliament's Middle East working group, came to visit the Negev and met with NGO's from the area, in order to better understand the Praver plan and the ways it is implemented on the ground. During the visit, the group met some experts from the Negev, including Haia Noach, NCF's executive director, Rawia Aburabia of ACRI, Khalil Alamour of the village of Alsira, Suhad Bishara and Dr. Thabet Abu-Rass of Adalah. After the visit, the working group published a paper that condemned the house demolition policy and demanded the withdrawal of the Praver plan.

In November the High Court of Justice rejected an appeal made in August 2012 by several residents from the Negev, the Association for Civil Rights

in Israel, The Negev Coexistence Forum and Adallah, the Legal Center for the Rights of the Arab Minority in Israel, demanding the withdrawal of the plan to establish 7 new Jewish villages near Arad. The High Court of Justice determined that the appeal was premature since there was no actual plan for establishing these villages.

November 7th - a conference was convened in Arad about the plan to establish 10 villages near Arad. The speakers at the conference, which was organized by a coalition of several organizations, included Salim Abu-Alkayan from the village of Um al Hiran and Attorney Gil Gan-Mor from the Association for Civil Rights.

November 12th - hundreds of Israeli policemen stormed into the recognized Bedouin village of BirHadaj. The policemen escorted representatives of the Israeli Ministry of Interior, who attempted to distribute home demolition orders to village residents.

In Bir-Hadaj, the Israeli police used tactics usually used for the occupied Palestinian territories, including the use of undercover forces disguised as Arabs, known as Mistaravim in Hebrew, whose goal is to create provocations and have the Arabs incur a violent response from the Israeli security forces. Indeed, soon after their arrival in Bir-Hadaj, the Israeli police fired tear gas, and rubber and sponge bullets at residents, injuring many people, including women, children and the elderly. 19 residents --including 7 minors-- were



NCF's annual photography workshop in the village of A-sir, December 2012

arrested in the clashes that ensued, and 29 children were subsequently taken to Soroka Medical Center in Be'erSheva to be treated for tear gas inhalation. This wasn't the first time that the Israeli authorities used extreme violence in Bir-Hadaj. Similar, though less severe, instances of violence also occurred on October 11 and September 27, when Israeli police officers fired tear gas and sponge bullets and injured numerous residents.

November 29th - NCF hosted an experts' round table on the issue of house demolition at the Multaka-Mifgash, our Arab-Jewish cultural center. During the meeting, several experts from different human rights organizations shared important information about the house demolition policy of the Israeli authorities, on its legal, political and practical aspects.

December

During December the annual photography workshop of the Negev Coexistence Forum took place in the unrecognized Bedouin villages of Alsira and Hashem Zaneh. At the first session the village children received new cameras and during the workshop they learned how to use them and to document their lives from a number of photographers who volunteered for the project.

December 7th - Negev Coexistence Forum participated in the annual human rights march in Tel-Aviv, which was organized by the



NCF activists and residents of Al-Arakib during the annual human rights march in Tel-Aviv, organized by ACRI, December 7th 2012



Demonstration in front of Be'er-Sheva Court against the house demolition policy and the police violence during demolitions at Bir-Hadaj, December 20th 2013

Israeli Association for Civil Rights. During the march, NCF members marched together with Al-Arakib's residents, and chanted in favor of the recognition of the Bedouin unrecognized villages and against the house demolition policy of the Israeli authorities. The participants marched with a photo exhibition displaying house demolitions around the Negev.

December 10th - NCF published two new reports for the annual International Human Rights day. These two documents reveal the role of the Israeli authorities – the Legal System, Ministry of Interior, Israeli Land Administration and the Israeli Police – in the violation of the rights of the Arab-Bedouin citizens in the Negev, done in order to uproot them from their villages and resettle them in urban areas. The first report, "Processes of Dispossession in the Negev-Naqab: The Israeli Policy of Counter Claims against the Bedouin-Arabs," outlines the flaws inherent in the Israeli government's policy of submitting counter-claims against Bedouin land claims in the Negev, the country's southern desert region, which were filed during the 70's. The counter-claiming policy is one of several strategies employed by the Israeli government to further dispossess its Bedouin citizens in the Negev of their ancestral lands. The second, "Testimonies on House Demolitions in the Negev-Naqab" – is a collection of testimonies about the life of the Arab-Bedouin in the Negev under the policy of house demolition, including information about last year's demolitions.

December 10th - a high court hearing was held on the issue of ownership of part of the lands of Al-Arakib, lands of the families of Abu-Freich and Abu-Mdirem. The residents of Al-Arakib were represented by attorney Michael Sfar. The discussion was held due to the Israeli state's appeal against the decision of Judge Netzer, of Be'er-Sheva district court, which ruled that the lands of Al-Arakib cannot be registered as "state lands" without legal discussion. The family of Abu-Freich appealed against Judge Shpasser's decision to register all the lands on the name of the state. The state claimed that lands which were expropriated in 1954, according to the acquisition of land law, were supposed to be registered immediately as "state lands". On the other hand, Al-Arakib's residents claimed

that a discussion should be held before any land will be registered.

December 11th - the Ambassador of Switzerland to Israel, Andreas Baum, visited the Negev, guided by Negev Coexistence Forum. The Ambassador visited the Bedouin villages of Al-Arakib, Bir-Hadaj and Wadi Al-Na'am, and met representatives of these villages; in addition, he was informed about the history of the Sayag triangle, during a lookout on

the area. While the Ambassador visited the village of Al-Arakib, bulldozers and police forces entered the village. Policemen commanded all of the people to leave the area, including the Ambassador. The residents, embassy members and NCF members went into the cemetery of the village, while the village was demolished right in front of their eyes.

December 19th - a New-Media workshop for activists was opened at the Multaka-Mifgash, NCF's Arab-Jewish culture center. The workshop focused on the available opportunities for promotion of various campaigns in the internet. During the workshop the participants studied how to use Facebook and Twitter in order to raise awareness to struggles held in the Negev, while emphasizing the different audiences that are targeted.

December 20th - following the German Social-Democratic party's (SPD) call for donations for KKL trees planting in the German States Forest, Negev Coexistence Forum wrote a letter to the party's members, urging them to stop the donations project, and explaining the complex reality in the Negev. In addition, NCF produced a video in cooperation with Dr. Awad Abu Freich, one of the owners of the lands where the forest was planted. In the video, Dr. Abu Freich describes the injustice caused to his family and to him as a result of the planting of the German States Forest, and explains how expulsion of Bedouin from their land is being done through practices of forestation.

On December 20th a big demonstration was held in front of the Be'er-Sheva court against the state policy of house demolition and the police violence which occurred during demolitions. The demonstration was organized by the popular committee of Bir-Hadaj, where police used harsh violence during the prior months.

January 2013

On January, NCF published a position paper about Praver-Begin plan.

January 12th - Recognition Forum and NCF held a solidarity visit in the Negev.

Approximately 50 activists joined the visit, in the villages of Bir-Hadaj, Wadi Al-Na'am and Al-Arakib. The activists learned about the variety of struggles that were held in the Negev, and about the difficulties which the residents of the villages were facing.

January 27th - the Begin amendment was approved at a government meeting. According to this amendment, slight changes to Praver plan, which was already approved on September 19th 2011, were introduced. Yet, basically, the plan almost didn't change. According to the plan, tens of thousands of Bedouin will be uprooted from their residency and villages will be demolished. The Knesset Constitutional Committee is currently expected to issue a bill in order to determine land and financial compensation for those eligible to receive it.

February

On February 3rd the local court in Beer Sheva cancelled the charges against the Director of NCF, Haia Noach, and against four residents of Al-Arakib: Aziz, Ahmed, Salman and Ali Abu-Medirem. The five, who were represented by Attorney Orna Cohen of



Demonstration against the house demolition policy at Shoket junction, following demolitions in the village of A-Sayed, February 9th 2013

Adallah, were accused of illegal land owning and refusing to leave the area of the village. As stated, the charges were dismissed.

February 9th - a solidarity visit, organized by Recognition Forum and NCF, was held in the villages of Dahiya, Wadi Al-Na'am and A-Saied, which were affected earlier that week by house demolitions and crops destruction. Tens of activists attended the visit and at the end joined the demonstration of the residents of A-Saied at Shoket junction.

February 16th - a Human rights workshop was held in the unrecognized Bedouin village of Wadi Al-Na'am. As part of a new joint project, which is supported by the European Union, Negev Coexistence Forum and Adalah organize human rights workshops in Bedouin unrecognized village under demolitions threats. The workshop included three sessions: the first, led by attorney Aram Mahameed of Adalah, dealt with demolition orders and the right to protest. The second, led by Michal Rotem, NCF's content coordinator, focused on different uses of media and technology in order to promote the village's struggle. The participants studied how to document their village, share the photos and information with the media and on social media websites, etc.

What's new in the Negev (cont.)

The third session, led by Ratb Abu-Krinat, NCF's field coordinator, concentrated on preparing the village for the upcoming struggles against human rights violations, the distribution of different roles between the participants and organizing the village for the continuation of the struggle.

18th February - the film "Summud – The Struggle of Al Arakib" was shown at the Center for Neighbourhood Sustainability in Beer Sheva. The Forum was invited to hold the event there and invited Aziz Abu-Medirem from El Arakib to the screening. Aziz told those present about the ongoing struggle of his village.

20th February - the High Court of Justice rejected an appeal by Adalah (2541/12) to connect the unrecognized village of Umm al Hiran to the water system. The court rejected the appeal despite the fact that the nearest water source to the village was 8 kilometers from the village and in a previous appeal the Court decreed that the residents of the village should have had at least minimal access to water.

March On March 1st residents of Atir appealed to the National Committee for Planning and Construction against the planting of a forest in their village as part of "Yatir Forest", since the planting would mean the demolition of the village which numbers 500 residents. They were

represented by Attorney Suhad Bishara from Adalah and Cesar Yehudkin from Bimkom - Planners for Planning Rights.

March 2nd - a solidarity visit to the Hawalled family was held in the village of Nofit in Northern Israel. Dozens of activists from the Recognition



Sheikh Sayyah A-Turi speaks during a conference against the Praver Plan, organized by Recognition Forum and NCF at the Tzavta club in Tel Aviv, March 18th 2013

Forum and the Negev Coexistence Forum participated and expressed their solidarity with the village's struggle for recognition.

March 18th - Recognition Forum and Negev Coexistence Forum held a conference in protest of the Praver Plan at Tzavta club. Approximately 100 participants arrived at the conference and expressed their support for the struggle. The speakers at the conference highlighted the main problems in the government's bill for the "Regulation of Bedouin Settlement in the Negev", the Bedouin community's objections and the possible future human rights violation that will be a consequence of

the implementation of the plan. Attorney Debbie Gild-Hayo of ACRI said that the bill included several flaws and that while the government tried to present it as a "compromise", it was actually a one-sided agreement. Haia Noach, NCF's executive director, presented the drastic increase in the house demolition policy in the Negev that occurred during the last couple of years, and stressed the media's ignorance of this policy. Sheikh Sayyah Al-Touri, the Sheikh of the village of Al-Arakib, presented the ongoing struggle of Al-Arakib, and Said Al-Kharoumi, the general secretary of the Islamic Movement, described the complete objection of the Bedouin community to the plan.

March 21st - the High Court of Justice rejected an appeal (5150/12) of the Regavim movement (a non-profit organization dedicated to imposing demolition orders on what they term "illegal" construction by Israeli Arab citizens). The appeal called for the closing of the school in the unrecognized village of Wadi Al-Na'am because of its proximity to Ramat Hovav, a site of dumping toxic wastes south of Beer Sheva. The appeal was rejected on the grounds that Regavim was not a side to the issue.

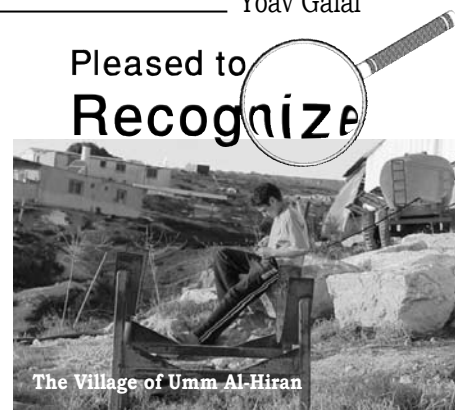
March 30th - the annual Land Day was marked all around the country. The main event at the Negev took place in Shoket Junction.

Please recognize - Umm Al-Hiran

Yoav Galai

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

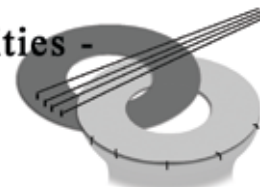
most unrecognized villages, Nafcha Triangle is not connected to electricity and only one water pipe serves all its residents. The dry olive grove at the entrance of the village is an evidence to the high price of water the village is charged with. The residents complain repeatedly regarding their inability 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 order, a house



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

During the last months a variety of cultural events were held at the Multaka-Mifgash, the Arab-Jewish cultural center founded by Negev Coexistence Forum in Be'er-Sheva. At the end of December a screening of the film "Sharqia" was held, followed by a discussion with the director, Ami Livne and the main actor, Adnan Abu-Wadi. In January the film "Once I Entered a Garden", directed by Avi Mograbi, was shown. At the end of February a screening of four films by Palestinian film-makers was held followed by a discussion with two of the directors, Ziad Bachri and Misson Hamad. During February and March 2013 two joint musical sessions were held. Also in March, an introductory workshop in English was held with Arab-Bedouin

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



from the Negev. In addition, the Massad - Social-Democratic Movement - participated in a meeting open to the public. Land Day was marked by an evening of study and discussion at the Multaka-Mifgash, with the participation of Dr. Thabet abu Ras, Attorney Shahda Ibn-Bari and Umm Omar A-Ziadaneh who presented aspects of Land Day relevant to the Negev.

House Demolitions and crops destruction – November 2012 – March 2013 _____

The house demolition record is partial, given the fact that it is based only on data collected by NCF. In addition, it does not include the cases of many families that decided to demolish their houses on their own, due to authorities' threats and the opportunity to save some of the construction materials and personal equipment.

Date	Village	Location	Buildings demolished
November 6	Segev-Shalom		One mini-caravan was demolished
November 6	Kseife		One house was demolished
November 6	South of Al-Arakib	West of route 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	Five houses were demolished
November 14	Al-Arakib	West of route 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 41st time
November 14	Al-Sdir	North-east of Aroer junction	A mosque was demolished
November 14	Al-Zarnug	Near Nevatim north of route 25	One house was demolished
December 11	Al-Arakib	West of route 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 42nd time
December 19	Umm-Batin	North-East of Tel-Sheva	One house was demolished
December 19	Al-Zarnug	Near Nevatim north of route 25	One house was demolished
December 24	A-Sayed	West of Hura	70 olive trees were uprooted
December 24	Segev-Shalom		One house was demolished
January 9	Tel-Sheva		One house was demolished
January 9	Umm-Namila	North of Rahat	One house was demolished
January 12	Tel-Sheva		One house was demolished
January 12	Dakhia	North of Rahat	One house was demolished
January 17	Lakiya		One house was demolished
January 17	Al Madbakh	East of Segev-Shalom	Two houses were demolished
January 17	Al-Arakib	West of route 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 43rd time
February 5	South of Rahat		Hundreds of acres of fields were plowed
February 6	Wadi Al-Na'am	Near Ramat-Hovav east of route 40	One house and one stable were demolished
February 6	A-Sayed	West of Hura	Three houses were demolished
February 12	Hirbat Al-Batel	South of Rahat	Hundreds of acres of fields were plowed
February 12	Lakiya		Hundreds of acres of fields were plowed
February 12	Umm-Batin	North-East of Tel-Sheva	Hundreds of acres of fields were plowed
February 12	Al-Arakib	West of route 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 44th time.
February 12	West of Al-Arakib	West of route 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	Five houses were demolished

House Demolitions and crops destruction – November 2012 – March 2013 (cont.)

Date	Village	Location	Buildings demolished
February 19	Wadi Al Naam	Near Ramat-Hovav east of route 40	Fields were plowed
February 21	East of Kaser A-Ser		Dozens of acres were plowed
February 21	Sawa	East of Hura	Dozens of acres were plowed
February 21	North east of Hura		Dozens of acres were plowed
February 27	Umm-Batin	North-East of Tel-Sheva	One house was demolished
February 27	Al Zarnug	Near Nevatim north of route 25	One animal pen was demolished
February 27	Kseife		One house was demolished
March 11	Makhul	North-West of Kseife	One house was demolished
March 11	West of Kseife		One shack was demolished
March 11	Tel Al-Malach	West of Kseife	One house was demolished
March 13	Al-Arakib	West of route 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 45th time
March 13	Wadi Al-Meshash	North of route 25	One house was demolished



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.

* 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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