



CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: SAFETY AS AN ELEMENT OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND A PRECONDITION FOR ITS FULL REALIZATION

TO THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION



THIS REPORT IS WRITTEN IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR INPUT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION, MS. FARIDA SHAHEED, FOR HER FORTHCOMING REPORT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL IN JUNE 2025. THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR HAS INVITED STAKEHOLDERS TO PROVIDE INSIGHTS INTO SAFETY AS AN ELEMENT OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND AS A PRECONDITION FOR ITS FULL REALIZATION. WHILE THERE ARE NUMEROUS PRESSING ISSUES RELATED TO THE SAFETY OF BEDOUIN CHILDREN AND THEIR EDUCATION—INCLUDING LONG TRAVEL DISTANCES TO SCHOOLS, INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE, AND GENDERED RISKS, WE HAVE CHOSEN TO FOCUS ON TWO CRITICAL TOPICS THAT DEMAND IMMEDIATE ATTENTION: THE ABSENCE OF ADEQUATE SHELTERS IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS AND THE PROFOUND IMPACT OF HOME DEMOLITIONS ON EDUCATIONAL STABILITY.

Table of Content

Introduction:

- Overview of the Bedouin Community in the Negev/Naqab
- Systemic Discrimination and Marginalization in Education
- Purpose of the Report: Responding to the UN Special Rapporteur's Call for Input

I. Key Issues in Ensuring Safety in Education:

- 2.1 Lack of Shelters and Safe Spaces
- 2.2 Impact of Home Demolitions on Educational Stability

II. Current Gaps in Implementation of International Standards:

- 3.1 Israel's Obligations Under International Law
- 3.2 Safety Gaps in Education Policy

III. Recommendations

- 4.1 Immediate Measures to Enhance Safety in Education
- 4.2 Policy Reforms to Address Systemic Issues
- 4.3 Long-Term Strategies for Equity and Inclusion

Conclusion:

- The Urgent Need for Collective Action: Promoting Safety, Equity, and Inclusion for Bedouin Children

Introduction

The Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab region of Israel represents one of the most marginalized populations in the country, facing systemic discrimination and exclusion from many basic services. The region comprises over 305,000 individuals, and among them, 100,000 live in unrecognized villages that the Israeli government refuses to recognize, resulting in inadequate infrastructure, limited access to essential resources, and persistent threats of displacement. These challenges extend deeply into the realm of education, where Bedouin children face severe barriers to learning in a safe, secure, and equitable environment.

Education, a fundamental human right recognized under international law, is deeply intertwined with the concept of safety—both physical and psychological. For Bedouin children in the Negev/Naqab, however, safety in educational settings is far from guaranteed. The lack of protective shelters in schools leaves children exposed to harm during conflicts, while the ongoing practice of home demolitions creates an atmosphere of instability, forcing many to contend with the psychological toll of displacement and physical endangerment.

This report is written in response to the call for input by the **United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Ms. Farida Shaheed**, for her forthcoming report to the Human Rights Council in June 2025. The Special Rapporteur has invited stakeholders to provide insights into safety as an element of the right to education and as a precondition for its full realization. While there are numerous pressing issues related to the safety of Bedouin children and their education—including long travel distances to schools, inadequate infrastructure, and gendered risks, we have chosen to focus on two critical topics that demand immediate attention: **the absence of adequate shelters in educational settings and the profound impact of home demolitions on educational stability.**

By highlighting these issues, this report aims to shed light on the urgent safety challenges Bedouin children face and the implications these challenges have on education. The report seeks to advocate for meaningful policy changes and encourage international attention to the systemic barriers that hinder the right to education for one of Israel's most vulnerable communities.

I. Key Issues in Ensuring Safety in Education

I.1 Lack of Shelters and Safe Spaces

The Impact of Recent Conflicts: The acute vulnerabilities of Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab were tragically highlighted during recent conflicts. On October 7th, six Bedouin children lost their lives during a large-scale missile attack—more than any other communities in Israel on the 7th, and in April 2024, a seven-year-old child was the only person in Israel severely injured in an Iranian missile strike¹. Both incidents starkly illustrate the dire consequences of inadequate shelter provisions in unrecognized villages. In one village with over 5,000 residents, the only available shelter, built privately by the community, can only accommodate 12 people².

The lack of protective infrastructure not only endangers lives during conflicts but also creates a pervasive sense of insecurity that infiltrates every aspect of daily life, including education. For children, this constant fear undermines their emotional and psychological stability, making it challenging to focus on their studies. Teachers report heightened anxiety among students, particularly during times of conflict escalation.

Unrecognized villages, systematically excluded from state planning and infrastructure development, lack essential safety features, such as bomb shelters. This exclusion stems from discriminatory policies that deny or strongly limit these communities' access to government funding³ and services. Families are often forced to rely on makeshift arrangements or evacuate during attacks, further exacerbating stress and instability. Schools, frequently housed in temporary structures like trailers, offer no protection during emergencies and amplify the children's sense of vulnerability⁴.

Advocacy Efforts and Insufficient Progress: Over the years, organizations like the Negev Coexistence Forum (NCF) have tirelessly advocated for the safety and well-being of Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab. Working in collaboration with other civil society groups, NCF has consistently highlighted the urgent need for protective infrastructure, such as shelters, in unrecognized villages and schools. These advocacy efforts have included lobbying the Knesset, engaging with international human rights bodies, and raising awareness through media campaigns.

As a result of these increased efforts after the outbreak of the current war and the relatively high death toll of children, the Israeli government has made some limited investments, such as the installation of mobile shelters in certain schools. However, these measures remain grossly inadequate. The government-provided mobile shelters ensure safety for only a fraction of the children in need and do not address the larger issue of systemic exclusion of unrecognized villages from state planning and infrastructure development⁵. The lack of adequate action by the State continues to leave thousands of children without access to safe

¹ [A 7-Year-Old Girl Is the Lone Serious Casualty of Iran's Barrage](#), NYT, April 2024

² During a visit, NCF staff and residents tried to enter together in a mobile shelter.

³ [2023-2024 ISRAELI STATE BUDGET FOR ARAB SOCIETY REPORT SUMMARY](#) May 24, 2023.

⁴ [Lack of protection against missiles and rockets in the unrecognized villages in the Negev](#), NCF, November 2023.

⁵ « ['We're Waiting for Death': Israel's Bedouin Still Have No Protection Against Iran's Drones](#) » Haaretz, August 2024.

spaces, violating the principles of safety and stability as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international frameworks.

This persistent lack of safety infrastructure intertwines with a broader fear of displacement, as many Bedouin families in unrecognized villages face imminent eviction. The psychological toll of this dual threat—physical insecurity and the risk of losing their homes—leads us to examine the next critical issue: the impact of home demolitions on educational stability.

1.2 Impact of Home Demolitions on Educational Stability

Home demolitions remain the primary strategy employed by the State of Israel to displace Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab, deprive them of their ancestral lands, and relocate them to concentrated urban townships. Despite their status as Israeli citizens and UN-recognized indigenous status, Bedouin families have long suffered from a lack of suitable housing and are entangled in protracted legal disputes over land ownership with the State. Over the past two years, the intensity of demolitions has surged, accompanied by heightened legal coercion and surveillance of Bedouin communities.

Record-Breaking Demolitions and Systemic Marginalization: In 2023, the Israeli government demolished a record number of structures in unrecognized Bedouin villages, a trend that has intensified in 2024. These demolitions, often justified under the pretext of illegal construction, disregard the historical presence of Bedouin communities on the land. The impact of these demolitions is devastating, as families are left displaced, children's access to schools is disrupted, and a sense of normalcy is entirely severed. Beyond physical displacement, the looming threat of demolition perpetuates a pervasive sense of insecurity, making it difficult for children to concentrate, learn, and thrive in their educational settings.

Immediate and Long-Term Educational Disruptions: When homes are demolished, families often face immediate homelessness, forcing them to seek temporary accommodations in tents or overcrowded shelters with relatives. These living conditions lack basic infrastructure and do not provide a stable environment for studying. For many children, this upheaval results in disrupted school attendance, as they are either unable to travel to their usual schools or are forced to transfer to unfamiliar ones. This instability hinders academic progress and perpetuates inequality. For girls, the challenges are even more acute, as cultural norms and safety concerns limit their ability to travel long distances to reach alternative schools, leading to higher dropout rates.

Psychological Toll on Children: The emotional and psychological impact of home demolitions on children cannot be overstated. Returning from school to find their homes destroyed often results in trauma, which manifests as emotional withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, and declining academic performance. Teachers in these communities frequently report higher absenteeism and dropout rates among students following demolitions, particularly among older children, who feel compelled to help their families during crises. The report submitted by NCF to the CRC highlighted these traumatic

experiences further exacerbate educational disparities, furthering barriers to future opportunities⁶.

Together, the lack of shelters and the impact of home demolitions highlight the structural barriers preventing Bedouin children from accessing safe and stable education. These interconnected issues demand urgent attention and systemic reform to uphold the educational rights and well-being of Bedouin children in the Negev/Naqab.

III. Current Gaps in the Implementation of International Standards

III.1 Israel's Obligations Under International Law

Israel, as a signatory to key international treaties, is bound to uphold the right to education as outlined in the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**, and other relevant instruments. These treaties establish the principles of equitable access, safety, and the holistic development of children. Specifically, Article 28 of the CRC emphasizes the right to free and compulsory education, while Article 29 highlights the need for education to develop children's full potential in a safe and supportive environment.

Furthermore, **General Comment No. 1** of the CRC underscores the importance of the learning environment being free from fear and conducive to the mental and physical well-being of students. The **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** also stresses the right of indigenous communities, including Bedouins, to culturally appropriate education and the preservation of their distinct traditions and identities.

Despite these obligations, the systemic neglect of Bedouin communities in Israel's Negev/Naqab region constitutes a clear violation of these international commitments. The lack of protective infrastructure, the absence of emergency shelters in schools, and the frequent home demolitions and accompanying threats undermine the safety, stability, and learning conditions essential for fulfilling the right to education. These failures reflect a broader disregard for the rights of marginalized populations, contrary to Israel's international legal responsibilities and commitments.

III.2 Safety Gaps in Education Policy

While Israel has made strides in developing a robust education system, its policies fail to address the unique needs of Bedouin communities, particularly those living in unrecognized villages. The lack of specific safety measures for Bedouin children is emblematic of systemic inequities in policy implementation.

Infrastructure for Safety: The absence of bomb shelters in Bedouin schools and unrecognized villages starkly contrasts with the comprehensive protective measures available in recognized localities. These deficiencies expose children to physical harm during

⁶ Additional submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child « [Unrecognized: Assessing Bedouin Children's Rights Infringements in Israel's Negev-Naqab](#) », NCF, August 2024.

conflicts and create an environment of persistent fear, which is further heightened in times of conflict. Despite Israel's obligations under the **Civil Defense Law** to provide protection for all residents, unrecognized villages remain excluded from infrastructure planning, perpetuating safety risks and insecurity.

Displacement and Educational Instability: Home demolitions, which disproportionately affect Bedouin families, exacerbate educational instability. These actions not only violate the **ICESCR**, which guarantees the right to adequate housing as part of the right to education, but they also contradict Article 24 of the **CRC**, which requires states to ensure children's well-being and survival.

Neglect in Policy Formulation: There is a lack of proactive policy development needed to address the unique challenges of Bedouin students. For instance, emergency plans for education during crises do not account for the distinct vulnerabilities of unrecognized villages⁷. Similarly, resource allocation policies continue to overlook the disproportionate needs of Bedouin schools, resulting in overcrowded classrooms and inadequate facilities. In summary, these policy gaps reflect systemic neglect that contravenes Israel's international obligations. Addressing these issues requires not only the equitable allocation of resources but also the recognition of the Bedouin community's exacerbated vulnerabilities and unique rights. Without targeted policies to ensure physical, psycho-emotional, and educational safety, Israel's commitment to uphold the right to education remains unfulfilled.

IV. Recommendations

IV.1 Immediate Measures to Enhance Safety in Education

1. **Provide Emergency Shelters and Infrastructure:**
 - o Install an adequate number of bomb shelters in schools across Bedouin villages, including unrecognized areas, to ensure physical safety during conflicts.
 - o Allocate resources for constructing safe and durable educational facilities to replace temporary structures in unrecognized villages.
2. **Halt Demolitions and Forced Displacements:**
 - o Impose an immediate moratorium on home demolitions in Bedouin villages, particularly those impacting children's education.
 - o Develop alternative housing solutions that preserve community cohesion and allow children to remain enrolled in their current schools.

IV.2 Policy Reforms to Address Systemic Issues

1. **Recognize and Address the Needs of Unrecognized Villages:**

⁷ <https://www.taubcenter.org.il/en/research/supervised-daycare-for-infants-in-arab-society/>

- o Extend civil defense protections, including infrastructure for safety, to all residents of unrecognized villages.
- o Integrate unrecognized villages into State planning frameworks to ensure access to government-funded education and safety services.
- o Collaborate with civil society organizations to design and implement inclusive crisis management strategies.

IV.3 Long-Term Strategies for Equity and Inclusion

1. Strengthen Monitoring and Accountability:

- o Create independent mechanisms to monitor the implementation of educational policies in Bedouin communities, ensuring compliance with international standards.
- o Facilitate regular reviews by international bodies to hold the government accountable for its obligations under human rights treaties.

Conclusion

The safety and education of Bedouin children in the Negev/Naqab are not just local concerns but issues of fundamental human rights that demand urgent and coordinated action. The recommendations outlined in this report require the collective commitment of the Israeli government, international organizations, and civil society to address the pressing challenges of inadequate safety infrastructure, home demolitions, and systemic inequities.

By ensuring protective shelters, stable living environments, and equitable access to resources, educational attainment and psychological resilience among Bedouin children can be fostered.

International support and advocacy are crucial in holding Israel accountable to its obligations under international human rights law. The global community must actively work to amplify the voices of affected, marginalized communities, advocate for the enforcement of Israel's commitments under treaties like the CRC and ICESCR, and provide resources to support the empowerment of Bedouin children and their families.

This report serves as a call to action—to protect not just the right to education, but the broader rights to safety, stability, and dignity for Bedouin children. It is only through meaningful, sustained efforts that we can pave the way for a just and equitable future for all members of Israeli society, regardless of their ethnic, social, or religious background.