



Neglected Voices: Human Rights Violations in the Bedouin Community of the Negev/Naqab, Israel, 2023-2024

The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF) was founded in 1997, by a group of concerned residents—both Arab and Jewish, to promote a shared society in the Naqab, Israel's southern desert region, between Jews and Arabs. The organization acknowledges that successive Israeli governments have neglected the Bedouin community in the area, depriving them of full rights and recognition of their villages. NCF works to prevent further harm to recognized and unrecognized villages through various activities, including but not limited to: local and international advocacy, research, community activities, public protests, media and social media outreach. All of these activities are based on the Arab-Jewish partnership. NCF invests much effort in documenting the Negev/Naqab through visual projects. Most of the visual documentation is a result of projects in which NCF provides video and still photography equipment to Arab-Bedouin women and children, in order for them to document their everyday lives, as well as human rights violations.

Nagabiya is NCF's newly-established **Bedouin Society Knowledge And Research Hub**, which aims to address the oversight in official databases regarding unrecognized villages. The center focuses on the neglected living conditions of over 80,000 residing Israeli citizens and provides an annual consensus of life in these villages through consistent data collection and documentation. Nagabiya researches various topics, including the economic viability of women integrating into the labor market, employment programs, patterns of women's employment, and demographic snapshots of the Bedouin population. The center's focus is on the employment challenges faced by Bedouin women.

The report highlights the increasing demolitions and forced displacement of Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab region. These escalating actions, alongside unequal access to essential services and the erosion of land rights, have deepened the marginalization and exclusion of the Bedouin population. Drawing on academic research, civil society reports, firsthand testimonies, and insights from Nagabiya, our newly established research center, the report provides a comprehensive analysis of these systemic violations. By documenting the growing challenges and their impacts, the report aims to inform policymakers, NGOs, international organizations, and UN entities, urging accountability and systemic reform. Through detailed analysis and actionable recommendations, it seeks to safeguard justice, equity, and the human rights of Bedouin citizens in the Negev/Naqab*.

***The Negev/Naqab** is a desert region located in southern Israel. It spans about 60% of the country's land area. The Bedouins were a semi-nomadic Arab ethnic group living in the Negev. Our NGO uses the term "Naqab" (the Arabic name for the region) to acknowledge and respect the Bedouins' cultural and historical ties to the land.

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1. Introduction

The Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab faces an unprecedented escalation in human rights violations. Over the past two years, home demolitions have surged to record highs, uprooting entire families from their land. This alarming trajectory highlights not only the state's failure to uphold its obligations under international human rights law but the pressing need for immediate action to halt the cycle of displacement and marginalization as well. The findings reveal a stark reality: a community systematically excluded from decision-making processes, facing forced urbanization, economic instability, and the erosion of cultural identity.

1.1 Historical Background of the Bedouin Community in the Negev/Naqab¹:

The Bedouin community has resided in the Negev/Naqab region of Israel for centuries, and they embody a semi-nomadic lifestyle characterized by livestock herding and agriculture. This traditional way of life has been central to the cultural identity of the Bedouin people, shaping their social structures, customs, and values.

In 1948, on the eve of the establishment of the State of Israel, approximately 65,000 to 100,000 Arab Bedouins lived in the Negev/Naqab region of Israel. However, when the war of 1948 began, the state initiated an ongoing process of eviction of the Arab Bedouins from their dwellings. By the end of the war, only 11,000 Arab Bedouin people remained in the Negev/Naqab. The imposition of Israeli military rule on Palestinian citizens, including the Bedouin, from 1948 to 1966 marked a significant period of challenge and upheaval. During this time, the Israeli government enacted policies aimed at controlling Bedouin movement and land use, severely constraining their traditional way of life.

1.2 Contemporary Challenges Faced by the Bedouin Community:

Since 1948, the Bedouin community in the Negev has faced systematic displacement, discrimination, and denial of fundamental rights. Israeli government policies of nation-building and territorial consolidation have led to forced removals from lands, land seizures, and demolitions of homes. This marginalization is further entrenched by the **legal ambiguity** surrounding Bedouin villages. Many of these villages remain **unrecognized by the Israeli government**, depriving residents of access to essential services such as electricity, paved roads, healthcare, and educational infrastructure. This systemic neglect perpetuates cycles of poverty and exclusion, isolating these communities from broader societal development.

In addition to these structural barriers, since the establishment of the 37th Israeli government the **2023–2024 period has seen a significant increase in home demolitions and total evictions**. For example, the planned displacement of Umm al-Hiran to make way for a Jewish settlement epitomizes the acute housing insecurity faced by Bedouins². Similar plans threaten thousands of residents in unrecognized villages. Many unrecognized villages, such as **Al-Zarurah** and **Wadi an-Naam**, are located near phosphate quarries and chemical industrial zones, exposing residents to severe environmental and health risks³.

¹ <https://www.dukium.org/the-arab-bedouin-community-in-the-negev-naqab-a-short-background/>

² <https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/NCF-Umm-al-Hira-UN-Emergency-Report-Nov-2024.pdf>

³ Ibid.

The digital divide further isolates Bedouin communities. Limited access to reliable internet connectivity hinders access to education, employment, and vital information. Unrecognized Bedouin villages also lack access to bomb shelters or emergency infrastructure.

Additionally, **Bedouin women face distinct socio-economic barriers** to employment due to insufficient childcare services, inadequate transportation infrastructure, and workplace discrimination. With only **25% of women participating in the labor force**, the economic marginalization of Bedouin women contributes to wider inequality⁴.

1.3 Current Demographics and Socio-Economic Conditions:

Today, over **305,000 Bedouin citizens** reside in the Negev/Naqab, living in various settlement types, including seven government-planned towns, twelve recognized villages, and **35 unrecognized villages**. These settlement types reveal stark disparities in living conditions.

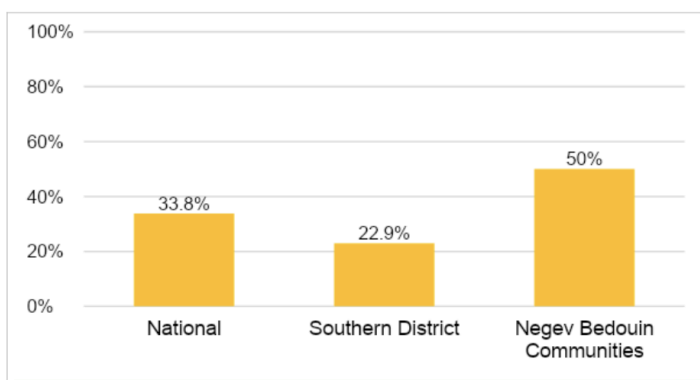
Unrecognized villages face acute neglect. Many lack basic infrastructure such as paved roads, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions. Electricity is often generated through **off-grid solar panel systems**, installed independently by residents, as these villages are not connected to the national electricity grid⁵. While innovative, these solutions are insufficient to meet the needs of the growing population.

In contrast, government-planned towns, though recognized, often struggle with underfunding, high population density, and limited economic opportunities. This divide perpetuates systemic poverty among the Bedouin population.

The **poverty rate among Bedouin citizens** is nearly **three times** the national Israeli average. In households with children, over **50% live below the poverty line**, with even more dire conditions in unrecognized villages⁶. High unemployment, especially among women and youth, exacerbates these disparities.

During the 2023–2024 war, these socio-economic challenges worsened as Bedouin families in unrecognized villages faced food insecurity, lack of emergency shelters, and limited access to humanitarian aid⁷.

: The Poverty Expectancy of Families – The National Security Insurance 2022



These figures underscore the urgency for deliberate policy interventions aimed at addressing systemic socio-economic inequalities. Ensuring equitable access to services, safeguarding housing rights, and respecting the Bedouin community's cultural traditions are critical for fostering a more inclusive and just society in Israel.

⁴ <https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Peripherality-Socio-Economic-Marginality.pdf>

⁵ <https://arava.org/arava-research-centers/center-for-renewable-energy/practical-challenges-of-photovoltaic-systems-in-the-rural-bedouin-villages-in-the-negev/>

⁶ https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Economic-ramifications-of-Israel-Hamas-War_ENG_03-1.pdf

⁷ Ibid.

1.4 Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to shed light on the widespread and intensifying human rights violations experienced by the Bedouin minority in the Negev/Naqab region during 2023 and 2024. It highlights critical issues such as forced displacement, home demolitions, unequal access to essential services, and the erosion of land rights, which continue to marginalize and exclude Bedouin communities.

This document serves as an instrument to inform and mobilize key stakeholders—including policymakers, NGOs, international organizations, and UN entities—to denounce and address the systemic discrimination and marginalization faced by Bedouin communities. By providing a detailed account of these violations and their impacts, this report seeks to promote accountability and encourage meaningful policy interventions aimed at safeguarding the rights and dignity of the Bedouin minority. Through documentation of violations, highlighting areas for reform, and offering actionable recommendations, this report seeks to contribute to efforts aimed at ensuring justice, equity, and inclusion for the Bedouin community in Israel.

1.5 Scope of the Report:

This report explores various human rights violations within the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab region, concentrating on forced displacement, home demolitions, discrimination in accessing essential services, and denial of land rights with limited livelihood opportunities. Drawing from academic research, civil society reports, firsthand testimonies, and research conducted by our newly established research center, Nagabiya, this report offers a comprehensive overview of the challenges Bedouin citizens face. Furthermore, the report examines the broader social, economic, and political contexts contributing to Bedouin marginalization in Israel. Its goal is to advocate for systemic changes addressing the root causes of human rights violations, aiming for the full realization of rights for all Bedouin community members in the Negev/Naqab. Through recommendations for policy reform, legal advocacy, and community empowerment, it seeks to foster a more just and equitable society for Bedouin citizens in Israel.

To address this goal comprehensively, the following report will examine forced displacement and home demolitions, discrimination in service access, and the struggle for land rights, within the context of obligatory international human rights law.

2. Legal Framework & Human Rights Violations Facing the Bedouin Community in the Negev-Naqab

The legal framework in Israel is anchored in Basic Laws that guarantee rights and liberties to all citizens, including the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab⁸. Additionally, Israel is a signatory to international treaties such as the **International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** and the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**, which obligate the State to uphold equality and non-discrimination.

⁸ <https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/activity/documents/BasicLawsPDF/BasicLawLiberty.pdf>

However, the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab continues to face systematic human rights violations rooted in discriminatory policies and practices. Despite being citizens of Israel, Bedouins are denied equitable access to fundamental rights, including adequate housing, essential services, education, and healthcare. These violations contradict both Israel's domestic laws and its commitments under international human rights conventions.

This chapter explores the legal frameworks and policies that contribute to the systemic marginalization of Bedouin communities, highlighting the increasing intensity of violations to Basic Laws in **2023 and 2024**. It examines the broader context of forced displacement, home demolitions, denial of access to services, and the erosion of land and cultural rights.

2.1: Right to Adequate Housing and Forced Displacement in 2023 and 2024:

The demolition of houses and structures is a strategy employed by the State of Israel against Bedouin people in the Negev-Naqab to deprive them of their ancestral land and concentrate them in urban townships⁹. Despite their status as Israeli citizens, for years this community has suffered from a lack of suitable housing and has been involved in lengthy land ownership disputes with the State. Over the last two years, there has been a marked increase in home demolitions and an intensification of legal coercion and surveillance of the Bedouin community

- **International Legal Framework:** Israel's ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1991 and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1979 legally obligates it to uphold the right to adequate housing and prohibit housing discrimination. Article 11 of the **ICESCR** guarantees the right to an adequate standard of living, including housing, while Article 5 of **CERD** mandates equality before the law in housing rights. These treaties require safeguards against forced evictions, including due process, consultation, and provision of alternative housing. Despite these commitments, Israel's policies toward Bedouin communities blatantly contradict these principles.
- **Israeli Land Legislation and Building Regulations:** Israel has a complex set of laws and regulations regarding land ownership and building¹⁰. For the Bedouin communities, however, the process of proving land ownership is intricate due to the historical absence of written land registration, and voluntary and continued discrimination. Consequently, buildings erected without permits, often out of necessity due to the lack of recognition of Bedouin land claims, are deemed illegal by the Israeli authorities and thus subject to demolition orders¹¹.

Bedouin land claims are systematically disregarded under Israeli law, as land ownership among Bedouins traditionally relies on oral agreements and customary practices rather than formal documentation. Laws such as the **Absentee Property Law (1950)** and the **Land Acquisition Act (1953)** have enabled state appropriation of Bedouin lands, leaving communities vulnerable to forced displacement¹². Building permits are virtually unattainable for Bedouin communities due to the lack of village recognition and discriminatory zoning policies. As a result, structures built out of survival necessity are deemed illegal and subjected to demolition orders¹³.

⁹ https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Home-Demolition-Report-2021-2022_ENG_02.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.gov.il/blobFolder/legalinfo/rules_and_regulations_contaminated_land/en/laws_and_regulations_planning_and_building_law_1965_unofficial_translation.pdf

¹¹ https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Home-Demolition-Report-2021-2022_ENG_02.pdf

¹² https://www.gov.il/blobFolder/legalinfo/rules_and_regulations_contaminated_land/en/laws_and_regulations_planning_and_building_law_1965_unofficial_translation.pdf

¹³ Land and Housing Rights of the Bedouin in Israel" - Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, 2021.

Unrecognized Villages: A prominent issue in the Negev/Naqab is the status of 35 unrecognized Bedouin villages, home to 100,000 people. These villages are not formally acknowledged by the Israeli state, resulting in the denial of basic services and infrastructure. Because these villages are excluded from state planning frameworks, residents cannot obtain building permits, trapping them in a cycle of home demolitions. This discriminatory practice violates the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which mandates equal access to housing rights. Furthermore, the unrecognized status excludes these villages from municipal budgets, denying them public funds allocated for community development and perpetuating a cycle of dispossession and marginalization.

- **Record Demolitions in 2023–2024:** In 2023, the **South Enforcement Directorate** ordered the demolition of a **record number of structures in the Bedouin villages**, marking its most active year since the Directorate’s establishment. Despite a three-month suspension of operations due to the beginning of the war, the agency boasted about its ability to exceed prior demolition records¹⁴. These actions reflect an intensification of policy implementation aimed at forcibly displacing Bedouin communities under the guise of legal enforcement, exacerbating systematic marginalization.

This trend has continued into 2024, with demolitions escalating to include entire villages, signaling a shift toward large-scale displacement. Among the most affected are:

- **Umm al-Ḥīrān:** In November 2024, Israeli authorities completed the demolition of Umm al-Hiran, an unrecognized Bedouin village in the Negev desert. The village, established in 1956 following relocation by the Israeli military, was still home to approximately 300 residents. The demolition was carried out to pave the way for a new Jewish settlement named Dror. Residents dismantled their homes to avoid state-imposed demolition fees, and the final structure, a mosque, was demolished by authorities. This action is part of a broader strategy to replace unrecognized Bedouin villages with Jewish communities¹⁵.
- **Wādī al-Khalīl:** In May 2024, the unrecognized Bedouin village of **Wadi al-Khalil** was demolished by Israeli authorities as part of a plan to expand **Route 6**, despite the project lacking a finalized budget and no construction anticipated for at least four years¹⁶. This demolition displaced over 50 families. Some villagers had reached an agreement with authorities, under which they consented to leave their homes if they could be relocated together and provided with proper housing¹⁷. However, this agreement was not honored. No alternative housing was arranged for the displaced families, leaving them without shelter and forcing many into precarious living conditions. Wadi al-Khalil’s destruction

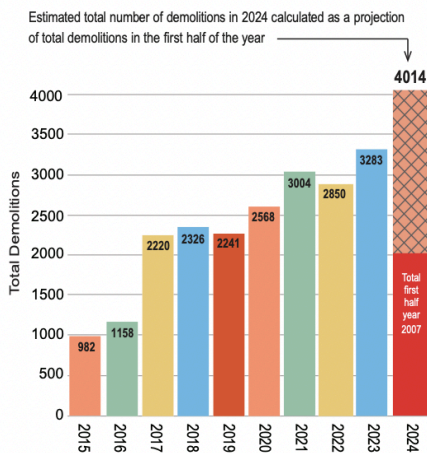
Demolitions in the Bedouin communities in the Negev
2015 - 2024 (estimated)*

An all-time record of building demolitions in the Bedouin sector in the first half of 2024.

A record number of 2,007 building demolitions in the Bedouin communities of the Negev/Naqab were recorded in the first six months of 2024, according to the Administrative Division for Land Law Enforcement, headed by Minister Ben-Gvir, the Minister of Internal Security. This, even before the National Unit for Enforcing Construction Laws was transferred to the responsibility of the Ministry. While the Minister calls this "governance", in reality it is a path to ruin.

Assuming that this trend will continue, a significant increase in the number of demolitions that will be recorded in 2024 is expected. Extrapolation of the first six months of the year indicate an expected total of more than 4,000 demolitions in 2024 - an increase of 22% compared to 2023.

House demolition estimated July - December 2024
House demolitions January - June 2024



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¹⁴ Report obtained via the Hofesh Meida, 2023

¹⁵ <https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/NCF-Umm-al-H%CC%A3i%CC%84ra%CC%84n-UN-Emergency-Report-Nov-2024.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.972mag.com/israel-razes-bedouin-village-wadi-al-khalil/>

¹⁷ Interview with residents from Wadi al Khalil.

was one of the largest demolition actions in recent history.

- **Um Mitnan:** Another deeply troubling case is that of Um Mitnan, where the community of approximately 140 residents, half of whom are children, resorted to self-demolition due to the inability to pay exorbitant fines imposed by the state. These fines, often reaching tens of thousands of shekels, are levied when authorities demolish homes deemed "illegal." Financial constraints left residents with no choice but to dismantle their own properties to avoid further debt and legal consequences. Despite their desire to remain on their ancestral lands, villagers dismantled their homes and now live in makeshift tents, offering little protection against the elements. During a visit, children were seen returning from school to find themselves essentially homeless, underscoring the severe emotional and social impact of these actions. Residents shared maps purchased at significant expense from the government, demonstrating their historical presence and ties to the land, but their appeals for recognition and support have been ignored.
- **Al-R'hul, (Neighborhood 8 in 'Ar'arah an-Nagab/Arara, a government planned town):** On July 13, 2024, 117 structures in Al-Rahul, Neighborhood 8 of Arara, were demolished under eviction orders. The neighborhood, home to descendants of Abraham al-Elayil, has faced years of legal battles and planning restrictions. Residents, including toddlers and disabled people, had been living in makeshift homes, with some repeatedly rebuilding after previous demolitions. Despite the destruction, residents persist in resisting forced displacement, emphasizing their historical ties to the land and their desire for fair resolution. The demolitions left many families, including children, in precarious living conditions, highlighting the systemic neglect and lack of adequate planning for Bedouin communities¹⁸.

- Soon to be demolished and evacuated:

Rās Jarābā, an unrecognized Bedouin village with over 500 residents, faces total evacuation by the end of 2024 to accommodate the expansion of Dimona's new Rotem neighborhood. Despite residing there for decades, the Israel Land Authority (ILA) initiated eviction orders to most of the residents, and the Be'er Sheva Magistrate's Court ruled in favor of their removal in July 2023. Adalah, an Israeli NGO that promotes legal justice, has appealed the ruling, arguing that the eviction promotes segregation, infringes on residents' rights, and disregards their historical ties to the land. Although the District Court upheld the magistrate court's decision, Adalah has filed a request for **leave to appeal** (רשות ערעור) with the High Court of Justice. While this request has temporarily postponed the evictions, the threat of demolition persists. This case underscores the ongoing vulnerability of Bedouin communities to forced displacement in favor of urban development for Jewish populations."

Tal 'Arād, an unrecognized Bedouin village in the Negev, faces a critical situation as nearly half of its residents have received home demolition or eviction notices, with enforcement actions expected to begin in January 2025.

These demolitions and eviction threats are part of a broader policy aimed at concentrating Bedouin populations into designated urban areas, often without adequate infrastructure or consideration for their traditional lifestyles. The systematic replacement of Bedouin villages with Jewish settlements underscores the ongoing marginalization, dispossession, and disenfranchisement of Bedouin communities in the Negev.

¹⁸ <https://www.unrecognizedvillages.org/he/villages-under-threat/>

Planning and Zoning Policies: Israeli planning policy, which involves the forced concentration of large families, who have historically lived on large plots of land, into urban areas and often does not accommodate the traditional lifestyle of the Bedouin communities, such as their agricultural practices and sprawling housing needs¹⁹. This policy, too, breaches the ICESCR as well as the ICEAFRD²⁰, by not ensuring equal housing rights and respect for cultural practices. The practice of demolishing homes violates multiple articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by infringing on the rights to well-being and healthy development.

Impact of Home Demolitions on Families and Social Fabric: The coercive displacement and resulting quest for alternative housing leaves evicted Bedouin families to face compromised living conditions. These often substandard and unsafe environments are likely to result in severe health issues, compromising the safety of children. Displaced families typically resort to living with relatives, which Gottlieb and Feder-Bubis²¹ describe as creating overcrowded and stressful conditions that compound family trauma, and escalate conflicts.

Erosion of Cultural Identity: Forced urbanization undermines the Bedouin's traditional lifestyle, severing their connection to ancestral land and practices²².

Impacts on Women and Maternal Health: Mothers, given their central role in the family and due to societal expectations, frequently face a dual burden. Their concern for their children's well-being and the demolitions' emotional toll often lead to a profound feeling of helplessness and a decreased trust in societal structures²³.

Deterioration of Child Well-being: The heightened parental stress from evictions erodes the ability to provide essential social and emotional support for children, further endangering their mental and emotional health. As for children, losing their homes and communities robs them of stability and security, disrupting their education and social development. Many children experience trauma and psychological distress as a result of witnessing the demolition of their homes and being uprooted from familiar surroundings²⁴.

Contribution to Poverty: The lasting material hardship faced by families post-eviction reveals that eviction doesn't just correlate with, but also exacerbates poverty, leading to a vicious cycle. Many Bedouins rely on agriculture and livestock farming for their livelihoods, and the loss of their homes and lands deprives them of their means of survival²⁵.

2.2: Basic Service Accessibility and Its Decline on Other Rights:

Legal Framework: The right to basic services, such as education and healthcare, is enshrined in International Law; specifically, [Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)* guarantees the right to education, while [Article 12](#) secures the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. These rights are further supported by principles of non-discrimination, as set out in the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#).

¹⁹ Nasser, K. (2021). [Why do the Arabs really want to repeal the Kaminitz Law?](#)

²⁰ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

²¹ Gottlieb, N & Feder-Bubis, P. (2014). Dehomed: [The impacts of house demolitions on the well-being of women from the unrecognized Bedouin-Arab villages in the Negev/Israel](#).

²² <https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Minority-Rights-UN-Call-for-Input.pdf>

²³ See note 13.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See note 14.

Violations: Despite these legal protections, the Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab experience systemic barriers to accessing basic services. Unrecognized villages lack infrastructure such as schools and healthcare centers, and even when such facilities exist, they often fail to meet the communities' cultural and linguistic needs, leading to exclusion and marginalization.

Impact: Denying recognition and therefore, essential services, breaches international legal standards and severely limits the Bedouin community's economic, social, and cultural advancement in the Negev/Naqab. The lack of access impedes children's education from early childhood to higher levels, restricting their future academic and professional opportunities. With limited educational prospects, many Bedouins are confined to low-income jobs or unemployment, perpetuating a cycle of poverty²⁶. This situation impedes the community's ability to thrive and develop, which in turn affects their collective well-being. Similarly, healthcare access is critical for community wellness. The Bedouins' struggle to access medical care, due to remote or absent medical services, often results in untreated health conditions and contributes to shorter life spans, reinforcing the socioeconomic divide.

Thus, the gap in education and healthcare is not a standalone issue; it has a domino effect that touches every aspect of Bedouin life. Poor education is linked to weaker employment prospects and enduring poverty. And when this is coupled with inadequate healthcare, the consequences are devastating.

2.2.1 Violations Related to Lack of Education in Unrecognized Villages and Their Impacts:

- **Legal Framework for Education and Equality:** Under Israeli law, every child is entitled to free education, as mandated by the **Compulsory Education Law**²⁷, which applies to children aged 3 to 18. However, the severe lack of educational infrastructure in unrecognized Bedouin villages undermines compliance with this legal obligation, leaving many Bedouin children without access to adequate schooling. The **Early Childhood Education Law**²⁸ further guarantees the right to early childhood education, yet unrecognized villages lack kindergartens, depriving children aged 3 to 5 of foundational learning opportunities. This not only violates domestic law but also deepens systemic inequalities, with disproportionate impacts on women, who bear the brunt of childcare responsibilities. While the **Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty**²⁹ enshrines equality, disparities in educational resources between Arab Bedouin and Jewish communities highlight systemic discrimination that perpetuates inequality in education.
- **Education**, a fundamental right, remains a challenge within the Bedouin communities of Israel, characterized by persistent disparities and systemic obstacles³⁰. Decades of underinvestment in the Arab Bedouin education sector by the State have widened existing disparities between Arab and Jewish students. Statistical data reveals significant gaps in educational achievements favoring Israeli Jewish students, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the educational funding discrepancies prevalent among Bedouin communities³¹.
 1. **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Many unrecognized villages in the Negev/Naqab lack proper school buildings. Where classrooms do exist, they are overcrowded. At the beginning of the academic year in September 2023, a severe lack of classrooms necessitated learning in makeshift

²⁶ https://www.btl.gov.il/Publications/research/Documents/mechkar_98.pdf

²⁷ <https://israeled.org/compulsory-education-law/>

²⁸ [The Early Childhood Education Law](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/early-childhood-education-law)

²⁹ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/basic-law-human-dignity-and-liberty>

³⁰ <https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/%D7%93%D7%95%D7%97-%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%90%D7%A0%D7%92%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%AA.pdf>

³¹ <https://brookdale.jdc.org.il/en/publication/achievement-gaps-in-high-school-education-among-the-bedouin-society-in-the-negev/>

tents—despite the heat—highlighting systemic inadequacies in educational infrastructure and resulting compromise in the quality of education for Bedouin children.

2. **Transportation Barriers:** Without local education facilities, children residing in unrecognized villages must travel long distances to attend classes. This commute can be difficult and sometimes unsafe, discouraging regular attendance and leading to high dropout rates. Again, when the school year resumed in September 2023, due to a drivers' strike concerning salaries payment issues unresolved by the government, buses stopped working in some areas serving the Bedouin villages' schools. As a result, we witnessed dozens of children traveling to school on camels and donkeys³².
3. **Resource Disparity:** Schools serving Bedouin students frequently receive fewer resources than those in recognized areas or areas where other ethnic-religious groups are present. One important example is the lack of internet access in Bedouin villages.
4. **The Digital Gap:** The Israeli government's inability to provide reliable internet access in Bedouin villages in the Negev/Naqab has increased the digital gap between Bedouin children and children from other ethnic groups in Israel. This issue has a direct influence on children's education and was particularly significant following the COVID-19 outbreak, but this issue has not since been resolved. During the outbreak of the current war with Hamas, for security reasons, all schools were closed for one month. As other students could learn from home, using platforms like Zoom, Bedouin children lacked access to computers, electricity, and internet connectivity necessary to participate in distance learning, exacerbating existing disparities in academic achievement between Bedouin and Jewish students³³.
5. **Early Childhood Education:** Due to the lack of kindergartens in unrecognized Bedouin villages, 5,045 children (17%) aged 3 to 5 lack access to education, in large contrast to Jewish populations, where all children aged 3 to 5 are enrolled in the education system³⁴. Denying Bedouin children preschool opportunities violates Israeli law and deepens existing inequalities. The lack of kindergartens and pre-primary education in unrecognized Bedouin villages discriminates against Bedouin children. It disproportionately impacts women's workforce participation opportunity, as they often bear the responsibility of childcare responsibilities when no other options are available³⁵.
6. **Lack of Secondary and Higher Education Opportunities:** There is a scarcity of secondary schools and virtually no access to higher education within or near unrecognized villages, which directly impacts Bedouins' future economic prospects and ability to break the cycle of poverty³⁶.
7. **Culturally Insensitive Curriculum:** The national curriculum often lacks cultural sensitivity and fails to incorporate the unique heritage and experiences of Bedouin communities. The absence of culturally-relevant content can disengage Bedouin students and foster a sense of alienation, undermining their sense of belonging and value within the education system³⁷.

The educational barriers impede the Bedouin community's path to social, economic, and cultural development. They contribute to a persistent cycle of poverty, limited professional opportunities, and strain the community's efforts to maintain their cultural identity.

The issues outlined reveal a gap between legal provisions and their implementation on the ground, both internationally and within Israel. They further imply a need for policies to align practice with the

³² ACRI: [Thousands of Students are Staying Home Due to the Suspension of Transportation Services](https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Education-and-Internet-position-paper-final.pdf)

³³ <https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Education-and-Internet-position-paper-final.pdf>

³⁴ NCF: [Early childhood frameworks as leverage to reduce gaps Child day care in the Bedouin community in the Negev](https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Peripherality-Socio-Economic-Marginality.pdf)

³⁵ <https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Peripherality-Socio-Economic-Marginality.pdf>

³⁶ [School Dropout in the Bedouin Population in the Negev](https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Peripherality-Socio-Economic-Marginality.pdf)

³⁷ HRW: <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/israel2/ISRAEL0901-12.htm>

legal obligations, in order to ensure that all children have equitable access to quality education without discrimination.

Conclusion: It is vital to take immediate and sustained action to ensure the construction and proper maintenance of school facilities in unrecognized villages and the allocation of adequate educational resources to these areas, in order to eliminate overcrowding and provide a conducive learning environment. The State should also provide essential services, such as reliable transportation. No less important is the need to address the digital divide by ensuring internet access and technology availability for distance learning. Finally, preschools should be built and staffed in compliance with the Early Childhood Education Law, fostering equal educational opportunities from a young age.

2.2.2 Right to Health - Legal Framework and Impact

- **Legal Framework:** The right to health is a fundamental human right recognized under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), specifically Article 12³⁸. Israel, having ratified the ICESCR, is obligated to provide the highest attainable standard of health for all individuals within its jurisdiction. This includes access to essential healthcare services, sanitation, and infrastructure.
- **Systemic Barriers to Basic Services:** Unrecognized villages lack essential healthcare facilities. Even when clinics exist, they are often poorly equipped and fail to address the cultural and linguistic needs of Bedouin patients. This systemic exclusion undermines the right to health and breaches Israel's international obligations³⁹. Of the 35 unrecognized villages, most have no medical facilities. Only four clinics exist in the villages of 'Abdih, Wadi al-Na'am, Khirbit al-Watan, and Az Zarnuq. These facilities are often arbitrarily closed or inadequately staffed, further hindering consistent access to healthcare.
- **Geographical and Infrastructural Obstacles:** Healthcare access in unrecognized Bedouin villages is severely limited due to remote locations, inadequate infrastructure, and the absence of paved roads. Emergency services like Magen David Adom (MDA) often cannot access these areas, posing critical risks during medical emergencies. Residents must frequently travel long distances to reach clinics, which is particularly dangerous for pregnant women and children. Additionally, unreliable or non-existent public transportation compounds the problem⁴⁰.
- **Sanitary Conditions and Health Risks:** The lack of proper sanitation infrastructure in unrecognized villages exacerbates health risks, particularly for vulnerable populations such as pregnant women and children. These unsafe conditions increase the prevalence of infections and diseases. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the absence of infrastructure for safe isolation heightened exposure risks⁴¹.
- **Infant Mortality Rates:** Infant mortality rates in Bedouin communities are alarmingly higher than the national average. Between 2018 and 2022, the national average was 2.8 deaths per 1,000 live births, while Bedouin communities recorded an average of 8.01 deaths per 1,000 live births. This disparity highlights the urgent need for equitable healthcare interventions⁴².

³⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Factsheet31.pdf>

³⁹ NCF, 2022: *Violations of Human Rights of the Arab Bedouin Community in the Negev/Naqab*

⁴⁰ *Perceptions about the accessibility of healthcare services among ethnic minority women: a qualitative study among Arab Bedouins in Israel, 2021*

⁴¹ Ibid.

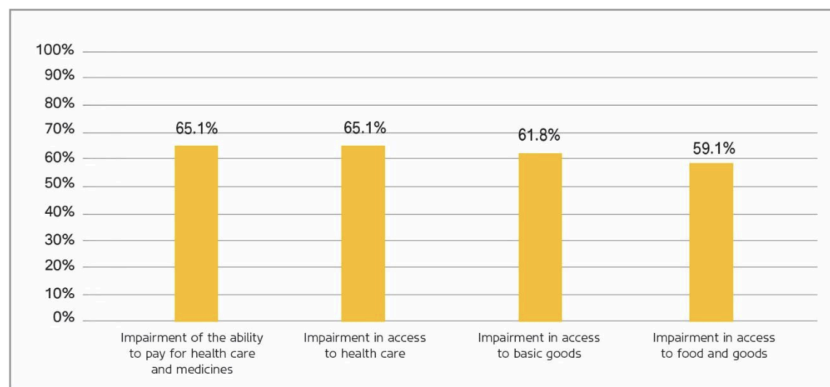
⁴² *Infant mortality rate data per thousand live births, 2018-2022, annual average* (Hebrew).

Ensuring the Bedouin community's right to health is respected and fulfilled is not only a legal mandate but also a moral imperative for the State of Israel. By addressing the health service inequities in Bedouin villages, Israel would be taking a significant step in upholding its international commitments and ensuring a healthier future for all its citizens.

The right to health is deeply interconnected with other fundamental human rights – notably the right to food. Similar to healthcare, food insecurity is a pressing challenge that has severe implications for the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab.

2.2.3 Impact on Food Insecurity:

Food insecurity remains a critical issue within the Bedouin communities of the Negev/Naqab. The already existing severe socio-economic disparities, with high poverty rates and increasing food insecurity, were heightened by the onset of war⁴³. Unrecognized villages lack proper infrastructure and services, making it difficult to access food, maintain food safety, and escape the cycle of poverty. In



unrecognized villages, inadequate electricity infrastructure exacerbates food security by limiting refrigeration and exacerbating food waste and health risks. Incidents like the COVID-19 pandemic and regional conflicts compound this precarious situation. These events underscore the fragility of the existing situation, magnifying the prevalent inequalities and

hardships within these communities.

Moreover, the Central Bureau of Statistics does not conduct studies within the unrecognized villages, resulting in a lack of data that prevents the planning of specific policies. Qualitative research conducted by the Negev Coexistence Forum in collaboration with the ADVA Center⁴⁴ during the coronavirus outbreak—and another by our Research Hub, the Nagabiya⁴⁵, during the first months of conflict, reveals significant job losses and difficulties accessing food, particularly in unrecognized villages. These findings highlight the systemic issues that perpetuate food insecurity, emphasizing the need for comprehensive policy intervention and tailored support to address these communities' unique needs.

Legal Framework and International Standards for Food Safety: While the United Nations (UN) does not have specific international laws regarding food safety, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) collaborates with the World Health Organization (WHO) to establish guidelines through the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The Codex develops international standards, guidelines, and codes of practice to ensure food safety and quality. Though not legally binding, these standards serve as references for national regulations and are recognized internationally. Israel is actively involved in the Codex Alimentarius Commission, contributing to international food safety standards. These standards are then integrated into Israel's national regulations to ensure food safety within the country.

⁴³ NCF-ADVA-Nagabiya: [Food Insecurity in Bedouin Communities in the Negev-Naqab: Assessing The Multi-Dimensional Impact of Crises on the Most Vulnerable Israeli Citizens. 2024](https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/NCF-ADVA-Food-Insecurity-Negev.pdf)

⁴⁴ <https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/NCF-ADVA-Food-Insecurity-Negev.pdf> (Hebrew).

⁴⁵ <https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/NCF-Nagabiya-Research-Shelter-Safety-Feeling-of-security.pdf>

Impact of the Pandemic on Food Security: The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated systemic vulnerabilities in Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab, particularly in unrecognized villages. Job losses, especially among men, worsened household income instability, while deficiencies in infrastructure and emergency response capabilities highlighted the communities' fragility. Despite these issues being evident during the pandemic, little was done to address them. Consequently, these same vulnerabilities were further exacerbated during the recent conflict, leaving unrecognized villages ill-equipped to handle disruptions in food security.⁴⁶

- **Effect of the War on Food Security:** After the October 7, 2023, outbreak of war between Israel and Hamas, Nagabiya Research Center conducted a study involving 350 Bedouin participants from planned towns (46.3%), unrecognized villages (36.3%), and recognized villages (17.4%). The research, conducted in November 2023, analyzed the war's economic and occupational impacts on Bedouin residents, integrating data from surveys and administrative sources like the Israeli Employment Service.

The findings highlighted widespread disruptions, particularly in unrecognized villages, where 70–75% of residents faced barriers to accessing essential goods and services. Around two-thirds of respondents reported challenges in obtaining food and healthcare, with 72% experiencing severe difficulties purchasing food and 73.5% noting complications in securing basic necessities.

- **Recent Developments:** A subsequent study by NCF and ADVA, conducted later in the war, provides a deeper understanding of the prolonged impact. The findings indicate that food insecurity among Bedouin communities has worsened over time. Families increasingly rely on emergency aid to meet their basic needs, with a notable increase in malnutrition among children. This research underscores the failure to address systemic issues highlighted during earlier crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving communities unprepared for conflict-related disruptions⁴⁷.

- **Key Factors Driving Food Insecurity:**

1. **Land Confiscation and Displacement:** Traditional farming and herding, crucial to Bedouin food production and livelihoods, are disrupted by land confiscation and home demolitions. This has led to a decline in self-sustenance practices and heightened reliance on external aid.
2. **Poverty and Marginalization:** Economic barriers and the unrecognized status of many villages restrict access to markets where residents can buy or sell food. These challenges deepen poverty and exacerbate food insecurity, particularly for the most vulnerable families.
3. **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Unrecognized villages lack the basic infrastructure required for food storage and preparation, such as reliable electricity and water. These deficiencies increase food waste and health risks while reducing access to safe and nutritious food.

In conclusion, the study draws a direct link between educational attainment and the severity of food insecurity experienced during the conflict. Those with lower education levels, particularly high school or less, reported the greatest difficulty in accessing and affording food, indicating an elevated risk of food insecurity. The residents of unrecognized villages were particularly vulnerable, reporting disrupted access to basic goods, which could lead to more severe food insecurities, if not addressed. These insights emphasize the necessity for targeted support and interventions to mitigate the

⁴⁶ <https://www.dukium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/NCF-Nagabiya-Research-Shelter-Safety-Feeling-of-security.pdf>

⁴⁷ NCF-ADVA: [Findings of a Qualitative Study on Food Insecurity in Unrecognized Villages in the Negev](#) – October 2024

heightened risks of food insecurity among the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab, especially during armed conflict.

- **Conclusions and Recommendations:** According to the United Nations agencies, there is a close relationship among the three domains of security – water, energy, and food (WEF Nexus), and they should be examined simultaneously to formulate policies that take into account all three. As stated on the website of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization:

"The nexus of food, energy, and water means that security in all three sectors—food, energy, and water—is inextricably linked, and actions in one area often have impacts in others."

Our research coincides with this, as demonstrated in this chapter; therefore, we recommend that policies aimed at addressing the challenges faced by Bedouin communities integrate a holistic WEF Nexus perspective. Specifically, we suggest the restoration of confiscated land and the assurance of food security are critical for the well-being and sustainability of Bedouin communities in the Negev-Naqab and their children. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes legal recognition of land rights, support for sustainable agriculture, economic assistance, and improved access to markets. By implementing these measures, the Israeli government can promote justice, stability, and the preservation of Bedouin heritage and livelihoods.

By embracing these recommendations, policies will more effectively promote the simultaneous achievement of water, energy, and food security. Policy improvement will increase the well-being and resilience of Bedouin communities, especially in the face of challenges, such as climate change, economic instability, and conflict.

2.2.4 Lack of Bomb Shelters and Protective Infrastructure:

- **Legal Framework and Obligations:** At the international level, the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** obligates Israel to protect the right to life and security of all individuals. This includes implementing equitable protective measures during armed conflicts, particularly for vulnerable communities. Despite these legal commitments, the systemic neglect of Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab has left tens of thousands of residents exposed to life-threatening risks.

Under **Israeli Law**, specifically the **Civil Defense Law of 1951**⁴⁸, the State bears the responsibility for ensuring the safety of its citizens through the establishment and maintenance of protective infrastructure, including bomb shelters and warning systems. Additionally, **Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty** requires the state to safeguard the lives and security of all individuals under its jurisdiction, without discrimination.

- **Key Issues:**

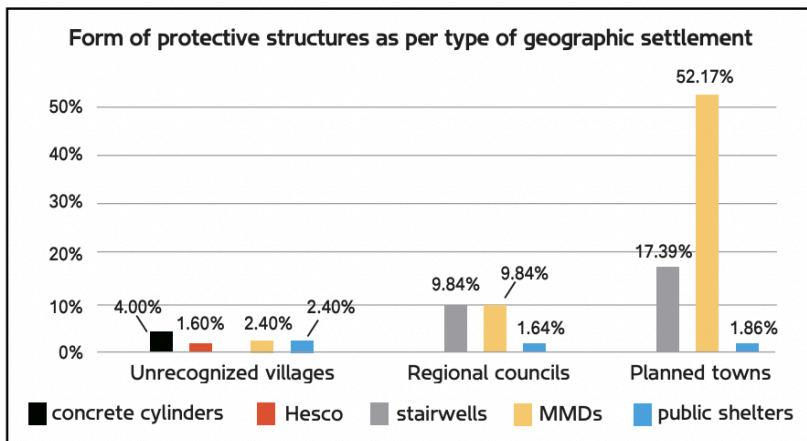
1. **Legal and Policy Gaps:** The Civil Defense Law requires the establishment of shelters in areas where residents are at risk, yet Bedouin communities in unrecognized villages are systematically excluded from this framework. Their unrecognized status often serves as justification for withholding critical infrastructure. Existing zoning and planning laws prevent the allocation of shelters in unregulated areas, perpetuating inequity in protective measures⁴⁹. Despite efforts by

⁴⁸ <https://www.oref.org.il/eng/articles/about/main/1002>

⁴⁹ NCF: [Lack of protection against missiles and rockets in the unrecognized villages in the Negev](#), December 2023

the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF), in collaboration with organizations like the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) and the Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages (RCUV), the Israeli government has made limited progress in addressing the urgent need for shelters and infrastructure in Bedouin communities. Advocacy by NCF and others led to the installation of approximately 80 mobile shelters in schools by the Home Front Command, but these measures remain insufficient, leaving many Bedouin families vulnerable⁵⁰.

2. **Temporary and Inadequate Measures:** Government responses during the 2023 "Iron Swords" war included deploying **Hesco barriers** (4%) and **concrete cylinders** (1.6%), yet these measures were insufficient to meet the vast needs. The absence of permanent shelters and comprehensive warning systems exacerbates the insecurity faced by residents during conflicts⁵¹.
3. **Humanitarian and Psychological Impact:** The absence of shelters led to seven fatalities in Bedouin areas during the early hours of **October 7, 2023**, at the onset of the war. Tragically, six of the victims were children, underscoring the devastating human cost of inadequate protective infrastructure. Parents reported severe psychological stress as they struggled to protect their families without access to safe spaces, highlighting the long-term mental health implications of inadequate infrastructure⁵².



4. Widespread

Vulnerability: Approximately **80,000 individuals** in unrecognized villages and **50,000 in unregulated neighborhoods** lack access to protective shelters. The Nagabiya research findings indicate that **92% of residents in unrecognized villages** cannot access a shelter during missile attacks, compared to **43% in planned towns**. Warning

systems, such as sirens, are virtually nonexistent in these areas, leaving residents reliant on unreliable apps or word-of-mouth alerts⁵³.

- Recommendations:

1. **Legislative and Policy Reform:** Amend zoning and planning laws to enable the construction of protective infrastructure in unrecognized villages and underserved areas, aligning with the Civil Defense Law's mandates. Ensure the Civil Defense Law is applied equitably across all populations, regardless of settlement status.
2. **Immediate Infrastructure Deployment:** Construct permanent, fully equipped bomb shelters in unrecognized villages. Expand warning systems to include sirens and reliable alerts in underserved communities.
3. **Equitable Resource Allocation:** Address disparities in protective infrastructure by prioritizing Bedouin communities and ensuring parity with other population groups.
4. **Community-Inclusive Planning:** Engage Bedouin representatives in developing tailored protective solutions that respect their cultural and settlement patterns.

⁵⁰

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-08-06/ty-article-magazine/premium/waiting-for-death-israels-bedouins-still-have-no-protection-against-irans-drones/0000191-2750-dcd6-abf7-77574c9a0000>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Nagabiya: [Survey Findings Shelter, safety, and feelings of security within the Negev Bedouin society in the shadow of the war between Israel and Hamas](#) - November 2023

2.3 Denial of Land Rights and Limited Livelihood Opportunities:

The denial of land rights and limited livelihood opportunities represents a persistent and fundamental violation of the human rights of the Bedouin community in Israel. Despite their historical ties to the land, Bedouin citizens face systemic challenges in securing land ownership and tenure. Policies of land confiscation and restrictions on Bedouin land claims not only marginalize these communities but also hinder their economic stability and development.

Historical Context and Legal Framework: Since 1948, Israel has implemented discriminatory land policies in the Negev, facilitated by laws such as the **Absentee Property Law⁵⁴ (1950)** and the **Land Acquisition Law⁵⁵ (1953)**. These laws enable the State to claim Bedouin land as state-owned or for military purposes. Despite thousands of land ownership claims, no Bedouin family has won a court case against the State, leaving communities vulnerable to forced displacement⁵⁶.

Impact on Livelihoods and Economic Stability: The denial of land rights and limited access to resources severely affects Bedouin livelihoods. Bedouin households rely on agriculture and pastoralism, but face challenges due to land confiscation and restricted access to grazing areas. Discriminatory practices in the labor market exacerbate economic vulnerability, with Bedouin citizens experiencing higher unemployment rates and lower wages.

Legal Framework Challenges in Israeli Laws: The legal framework in Israel presents several challenges in the protection and realization of human rights, particularly for marginalized communities like the Bedouin population in the Negev-Naqab region. Despite Israel's ratification of international human rights treaties and conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the practical application of these rights faces significant hurdles. One of the primary challenges is the absence of explicit provisions for equality within Israel's Basic Laws. While the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty safeguards individual rights to life, body, and dignity, the concept of equality is not explicitly articulated. As a result, the defense of minority rights and equality relies heavily on judicial interpretation, leading to inconsistencies in legal outcomes and protections.

Property rights are a contentious issue in the Israeli legal system, particularly regarding Bedouin land claims in the Negev-Naqab. While Israeli land laws offer some protections, they create barriers for marginalized communities. Bedouins' customary land ownership often conflicts with legal requirements, complicating their ability to prove ownership. The civil court process for resolving disputes is costly and lengthy, further disadvantaging Bedouins who may lack resources. As a result, Bedouin communities face political resistance and government counter-claims, leading to ongoing challenges in asserting their land rights and experiencing cycles of displacement.

The manipulation of land laws and planning mechanisms further compounds the challenges faced by Bedouin communities. Infrastructure projects, such as roads and electrical lines, are strategically routed through Bedouin villages targeted for demolition, exploiting legal loopholes and exacerbating land expropriation efforts⁵⁷. These practices not only violate human rights principles but also undermine the rule of law and the protection of property rights for marginalized populations.

⁵⁴ Adalah: <https://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/Public/files/Discriminatory-Laws-Database/English/04-Absentees-Property-Law-1950.pdf>

⁵⁵ Adalah: <https://www.adalah.org/en/law/view/533>

⁵⁶ NCF: [Home Demolitions in Bedouin Communities Negev-Naqab, Israel](#) 2021 - 2022

⁵⁷ NCF: [Demolitions and Displacement in Umm al-Hirān and Bedouin Communities in the Negev/Naqab](#), November 2024

- **Call for Action** Addressing the denial of land rights and promoting economic opportunities for Bedouin communities requires a multifaceted approach. Recommendations include:
 - **Recognizing Historical Land Rights:** Israel must acknowledge Bedouin historical ties to the land and provide legal recognition of their claims, in alignment with international human rights obligations.
 - **Reforming Land Use Policies:** Amend discriminatory land and planning laws to ensure equitable access to land and resources for Bedouin communities.
 - **Economic Development Initiatives:** Invest in job-creation programs and infrastructure development tailored to the needs of Bedouin communities, fostering sustainable economic growth.
 - **Judicial and Legislative Reforms:** Strengthen legal frameworks to explicitly protect minority rights and provide effective mechanisms for resolving land disputes.
 - **Community Engagement:** Include Bedouin representatives in decision-making processes regarding land use and regional development to ensure their needs and perspectives are respected.

Conclusion: The denial of land rights and limited livelihood opportunities reflects a broader pattern of systemic discrimination against the Bedouin community in Israel. By addressing these injustices and implementing inclusive policies, the Israeli government can take significant steps toward upholding the principles of equality, justice, and human rights for all its citizens.

3. State Responsibility and International Law

As a member of the international community, Israel is obligated to uphold international human rights laws, which guarantee fundamental rights and require the protection of all persons within its jurisdiction. These obligations extend to marginalized communities such as the Bedouin in the Negev/Naqab, who face systemic discrimination, displacement, and a lack of access to basic rights and services.

This chapter examines Israel's compliance with international human rights treaties, highlighting critical violations concerning civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Particular focus is given to policies like the Minister Chikli Plan and the Riffman Law, which illustrate systemic marginalization through forced displacement and exclusionary governance.

3.1 Israel's Obligations Under International Human Rights Law:

As a signatory to treaties such as the **International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** and the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**, Israel is legally bound to:

- Prevent discrimination and protect marginalized communities.
- Safeguard access to essential services, including housing, education, and healthcare.
- Guarantee cultural preservation and the right to participation in governance.

Under these frameworks, Israel is required to respect indigenous rights as outlined in the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples⁵⁸ (UNDRIP)**. Yet, Israel's policies in the Negev/Naqab, particularly forced evictions and urbanization efforts, directly contravene these commitments. Discriminatory land policies and the exclusion of Bedouin communities from planning processes undermine international norms and deepen systemic inequalities.

3.2 Violations of Civil and Political Rights: Minister Chikli Plan:

Overview of the Chikli Plan: Introduced in 2023, the Chikli Plan aims to centralize Bedouin communities into designated areas, such as Rahat, Hurah, Mareit, and Bir Haddaj. While the plan is framed as a solution to unauthorized construction, its implementation raises significant concerns:

1. **Forced Displacements:** Villages like Tal-Arad, al Bquea, Umm-Badūn, Rās Jarābā, and more face mass evictions without viable alternatives for housing or livelihoods.
2. **Exclusion from Decision-Making:** Bedouin representatives were not consulted in the plan's development, violating principles of participatory governance under international law.
3. **Contradictory Priorities:** While the Chikli Plan forcibly relocates Bedouin communities, the government simultaneously promotes new Jewish settlements in the Negev, exposing discriminatory land-use policies⁵⁹.

These measures conflict with the **Right to Adequate Housing** and the **Right to Participation**, as enshrined in the ICCPR and UNDRIP. They also undermine the **Right to Development**, which emphasizes equitable and inclusive planning.

3.3 The Riffman Law and Its Implications

Overview of the Riffman Law: Introduced in 2024⁶⁰, this Law represents a continuation of exclusionary policies that prioritize state interests over Bedouin rights. The law seeks to regulate and consolidate Bedouin communities into state-controlled urban settlements under the pretext of development and modernization. While framed as a solution for unrecognized villages, this approach perpetuates cycles of displacement, poverty, and cultural erasure, further marginalizing the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab.

Differentiation Through Unique Laws: The Riffman Law establishes a legal precedent for treating Bedouin communities differently from other Israeli citizens. By creating specific laws that apply only to Bedouins, the bill reinforces segregation and perpetuates a sense of otherness. This differentiation denies Bedouins equal access to national planning processes, public resources, and basic rights guaranteed to all citizens under Israel's Basic Laws and international obligations.

Control Mechanisms: The law introduces strict control organs to oversee planning, education, and local governance in Bedouin communities. These mechanisms allow for state intervention in areas such as:

- **Urban Planning:** The law restricts Bedouin communities to designated urban settlements, often against their will, while denying recognition of traditional or rural living patterns.

⁵⁸ [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

⁵⁹ <https://www.dukium.org/newsletter-june-2023-updates-from-the-negev-naqab/>

⁶⁰ <https://allisrael.com/the-riffman-law-integrating-bedouin-society-and-transforming-the-negev>

- **Education:** The establishment of state-controlled oversight limits the autonomy of Bedouin educational institutions, further marginalizing cultural and linguistic heritage in schools.
- **Municipality Governance:** Local authorities in Bedouin areas are subjected to direct supervision, limiting their ability to independently address the needs and priorities of their residents.

Key aspects of the Riffman Law include:

- **Denial of Land Claims:** Through complex bureaucratic processes, Bedouin land ownership claims are systematically dismissed.
- **Prioritization of Infrastructure Projects:** State development projects often take precedence over Bedouin land use and livelihoods.
- **Lack of Compensation:** Displaced families are not provided with adequate alternatives, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization.

Economic and Cultural Impacts: The Riffman Law disrupts traditional agricultural and herding practices, which are central to Bedouin culture and livelihoods. These disruptions exacerbate unemployment, food insecurity, and economic instability while undermining Bedouin cultural preservation.

Criticism of the Riffman Law: Human rights organizations have criticized the Riffman Law for violating Israel’s commitments under the **ICESCR** and **UNDRIP**, which emphasize equitable development and the protection of indigenous rights. By excluding Bedouin representatives from planning processes, the law perpetuates systemic marginalization⁶¹.

3.4 Implications for International Law Compliance:

The Chikli Plan, the Riffman Law, and related policies reflect systemic violations of Israel’s obligations under international treaties:

1. **Right to Adequate Housing:** Forced evictions and urbanization efforts contradict Israel’s commitments under the ICESCR.
2. **Right to Cultural Preservation:** The disruption of traditional Bedouin practices undermines indigenous cultural rights, as recognized by the ICCPR and UNDRIP.
3. **Right to Non-Discrimination:** Discriminatory land allocation and law enforcement practices violate the principles of equality enshrined in international law.
4. **Right to Participation:** Excluding Bedouin voices from planning processes violates their right to democratic representation and self-determination.

3.5 Recommendations for Policy Reform:

To align with international human rights obligations, the Israeli government must:

- **End Forced Displacements:** Halt home demolitions and evictions without providing sustainable alternatives.
- **Ensure Participation:** Involve Bedouin representatives in all planning and decision-making processes.

⁶¹ ["Riffman Bill Draft" Proposal: Designing a Separate Mechanism for Controlling Bedouin Lives](#), November 2024 (Hebrew)

- **Reevaluate Existing Policies:** Review and revise frameworks like the Chikli Plan and Riffman Law to prioritize equity and human rights.
- **Promote Inclusive Development:** Design infrastructure projects that benefit both Bedouin and Jewish communities, ensuring equitable resource distribution.
- **Strengthen Legal Protections:** Amend land and property laws to recognize Bedouin land rights and prevent arbitrary expropriation.
- **Uphold Indigenous Rights:** Align policies with international standards to protect Bedouin cultural heritage and livelihoods.

Conclusion: Israel's policies in the Negev/Naqab highlight a troubling disconnect between its obligations under international human rights law and their implementation. Frameworks like Chikli and Riffman prioritize state development, leading to forced displacements and economic marginalization of the Bedouin community, which violates rights protected by treaties such as the ICESCR, ICCPR, and UNDRIP. To address these issues, the Israeli government must reform its policies to prioritize inclusion and human rights. Engaging Bedouin communities as partners in planning and development is crucial for fostering justice and ensuring compliance with international standards.

4. Recommendations & Conclusion

This chapter presents urgent measures and long-term recommendations to address the systemic human rights violations faced by the Palestinian Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab, ensuring alignment with Israel's obligations under international law and promoting equity and justice.

4.1 Urgent Measures to Address Human Rights Violations:

The violations detailed in this report underscore the necessity for immediate and decisive action to uphold the rights of Bedouin communities. As a signatory to various international treaties, including the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** and the **International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**, Israel must ensure the protection and fulfillment of fundamental rights for all its citizens. To that end, we propose the following actions:

End Demolitions and Forced Displacement

- Halt all home demolitions and forced evictions, ensuring compliance with international law, such as the Fourth Geneva Convention and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).
- Engage directly with affected communities to collaboratively develop urban and rural development plans that respect their cultural, social, and economic needs.

Recognize Bedouin Land Rights

- Formally recognize Bedouin land ownership claims and provide secure tenure over ancestral lands in accordance with international standards, such as Article 17 of the UDHR and Article 11 of the ICESCR.
- Guarantee fair compensation or alternative housing for communities displaced by state projects, ensuring their rights to housing and livelihood are protected.

Ensure Access to Basic Services

- Eliminate disparities in service provision by investing in infrastructure for unrecognized villages, including access to electricity, water, education, healthcare, and sanitation.
- Address digital inequality and improve access to technology for Bedouin communities, enhancing education and employment opportunities.

4.2 Strengthening Accountability and Justice Mechanisms:

The current mechanisms to address human rights violations in the Negev/Naqab are insufficient. Israel and the international community must collaborate to ensure robust accountability and justice mechanisms, informed by the following recommendations:

Legal and Technical Assistance: Provide training to Israeli authorities and human rights advocates on international human rights principles to bridge the gap between legal commitments and practical implementation.

Diplomatic Advocacy: International actors should engage with Israeli authorities to encourage compliance with human rights standards, issuing diplomatic statements of concern when violations occur.

Civil Society Empowerment: Empower local NGOs and grassroots movements by providing sustained financial and logistical support, enabling them to advocate for Bedouin rights and offer direct assistance to affected individuals and communities.

Transparent Monitoring and Reporting: Establish independent monitoring mechanisms to evaluate the implementation of human rights measures and make the findings publicly accessible to promote accountability.

Conclusion: The systemic discrimination and human rights violations faced by the Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab are a pressing issue that demands immediate attention and action. Despite the legal framework in Israel and its commitments under international law, the practical application of these principles has been inconsistent, disproportionately affecting the Bedouin population.

Discriminatory policies, forced displacements, and inadequate access to essential services undermine the rights guaranteed by both domestic Basic Laws and international treaties, such as the ICCPR and ICESCR. Addressing these issues requires a collaborative approach that respects the cultural identity and rights of the Bedouin community.

Through the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report, Israel can begin to redress historical injustices, uphold its international commitments, and foster a society where human rights are universally respected and protected. A future rooted in equity and justice is not only a moral imperative but a necessary step towards sustainable and inclusive development for all citizens of Israel.