



منتدى التعايش السلمي في النقب من أجل المساواة المدنية
פורום דו קיום בנגב לשוויון אזרחי
Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

NGO Report

UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Re: Review of Israel

**Violations of the ICERD by Israel against
the Arab Bedouin in the Negev/Naqab desert**

Submitted by:

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF)

1 November 2019

List of Themes (Question 13): Right of the indigenous Bedouin communities to own, develop, control and use their communal lands, territories and resources.

New Plans Submitted by the Bedouin Authority: “Temporary Housing Solutions” to Facilitate Permanent Expulsion

Note to the Committee: These plans were introduced to the public on the 6th of October 2019 in the District Planning and Building Committee.

Bedouin citizens residing in the Negev/Naqab are under constant threats of home demolitions and forced evictions. Unlike Jewish citizens of the area, the Bedouin population is unable to take part in decision-making on nearly all levels of development and planning. While the State of Israel claims that it cooperates with community members, in reality, teams from the Bedouin Authority visit villages and enter into negotiations with residents only to discuss terms of their forced displacement to the Bedouin townships, e.g. the location of new plots and amount of compensation. Displacement itself is a foregone conclusion and not subject to negotiation. In the townships, the Bedouins cannot continue to live a rural lifestyle, consistent with their cultural norms. Therefore, these dealings cannot, in any sense, be called participatory.

In an attempt to expedite the forced displacement of Bedouin population and its concentration in the townships, the Bedouin Authority is promoting plans for “Temporary Housing Solutions and Public Buildings for the Bedouin Population in the Negev”.¹ This new mechanism, much like other mechanisms exposed in NCF’s previous reports to the CERD, is an expansion of the use of national development programs, afforestation, acquisition of land for military purposes and more – are all part of the master-plan for the Bedouin population: forced transfer and dispossession of their ancestral lands.

According to the official explanation, the purpose of the plan is "to provide temporary housing solutions for Bedouin populations presently living in unregulated communities, in cases where the population is urgently required to move from its present location prior to the erection of permanent buildings and in cases where it is necessary to regularize the settlement of the population in its current location in defined residential lots or in their proximity, in either temporary or permanent structures."²

This convoluted explanation is meant as cover for the real purpose behind these plans which is no more than another attempt by the Bedouin Authority to uproot a large part of the Bedouin population currently living in unrecognized villages in the Negev/Naqab and concentrate it in dense, urban townships. The plans, which would apply to the entire planning area of the Eastern Negev/Naqab and two Bedouin Regional Councils (Al-Qassum and Neveh Midbar) will enable the establishment of supposedly **transitional camps**

¹ Planning Administration, Plan No. 624-0765792, “Temporary Housing Solutions and Public Buildings for the Bedouin Population in the Negev” (in Hebrew): <https://tinyurl.com/hjb7oon>; and Plan No. 652-0767921 (in Hebrew): <https://tinyurl.com/hjb7oon>

² Ibid.

that will host tens of thousands of Bedouin people who will be displaced and relocated within the limits (blue line) of currently recognized villages and townships' jurisdiction.

The Bedouin Authority plans to use this “speedy” mechanism to move people from unrecognized villages after forcing them to sign “agreements”, similar to those signed by inhabitants of Umm al-Ḥirān who are being expelled from their village so as to make possible the building of an exclusively Jewish settlement on the same land that they are being forced to leave.

NCF is highly concerned that these “temporary housing complexes” will become camps on the outskirts of regional and local Bedouin councils, leaving more than 100,000 Bedouin people internally displaced under horrific conditions for decades with no real and adequate solution for a long period of time.

On the 6th of October 2019, the District Planning and Building Committee convened in order to discuss objections from the public. Several organizations raised serious concerns and objections to the plans, including NCF, Adalah, Bimkom and the RCUV (Regional Council of the Unrecognized Villages). On the 10th of October 2019, the Committee accepted the general outline of the Bedouin Authority's plans. The plans are currently undergoing regular planning processes: the Bedouin Authority must present the plan to all stake-holders within 45 days. Afterwards, the “public” will be given 60 days to submit their objections.

It must be noted that these plans are new and we are currently unaware of the time-table and the amount of people that will be placed in such “temporary housing complexes”. NCF urges the Committee to ask the State of Israel to provide data on the extent to which these plans are going to be implemented, how many people are currently under the risk of being displaced and moved into these “temporary housing complexes”, how many “temporary” building permits it will provide to residents who wish to regulate their houses, as well as the locations they will be moved from.

The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality was established in 1997, by a group of concerned Arab and Jewish residents of the Negev/Naqab (Israel's southern desert region), with the aim of building a shared society and providing a shared space for Arab-Jewish partnership in the struggle for civil equality and the advancement of mutual tolerance and coexistence. NCF is unique in being the only Arab-Jewish organization that remains focused solely on the specific problems confronting the Arab-Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab.

NCF's mission is to achieve full civil rights and equality for all those living in the Negev/Naqab, since the State of Israel fails to respect, protect and fulfill its human rights obligations, without discrimination, towards the Arab-Bedouin citizens in the Negev/Naqab.

NCF's activities and projects are based on the principle of Arab-Jewish cooperation. Our membership includes concerned citizens, leaders and academics from both the Negev/Naqab Arab and Jewish communities. As a joint Arab-Jewish group, we strive to maintain a balance and equal partnership in all bodies of the organization, as well as in the decision-making processes.