

**SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT FROM
THE NEGEV COEXISTENCE FORUM FOR CIVIL EQUALITY**

in collaboration with:

**ASSOCIATION FOR SUPPORT AND DEFENSE OF BEDOUIN RIGHTS IN ISRAEL
RECOGNITION FORUM
PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS - ISRAEL**

presented to

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

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The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality wishes to take this opportunity to report on developments since the adoption of the list of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the third periodic report of Israel (CCPR/C/ISR/3). This supplementary report is in reply to issue no. 7 that appears on that list:

7. Please elaborate on the measures taken by the State party to respect and protect the rights of Arab Bedouins to their land and traditional way of life; to stop demolitions of their homes, and to provide them with adequate basic infrastructure and services, including electricity, water, education and health facilities.

Escalation in number of house demolitions

On 18 February 2010, it was reported that the Israeli Ministry of Interior (MOI), the Israel Lands Administration (ILA) and the southern district of the Israel Police had jointly resolved to triple the demolition rate of Bedouin constructions in the Negev. The decision was reportedly made at a meeting one month prior.¹ As a result it is expected that in excess of 700 Bedouin homes will be destroyed over the course of 2010.

This decision seems to have been put into effect with a dramatic increase in the number of demolitions and the issuance of demolitions orders, particularly over the months of April and May 2010. The

¹ Yanir Yagna, 'Israel to triple demolition rate for illegal Bedouin construction', *Haaretz* (Israel) <<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israel-to-triple-demolition-rate-for-illegal-bedouin-construction-1.263510>> at 4 May 2010

following events have been observed in unrecognized villages by the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality.

In April an estimated 50 homes of the Al-Gargawi family in Wadi Al-Na'am, an unrecognized village near the industrial zone and the toxic dump of Ramat-Hovav, was informed that demolition orders issued in 2004 and 2005 were renewed and will be executed if they do not move to the town of Seev-Shalom. No other alternative housing solutions were given to the families. At the time of writing, no demolitions have yet been carried out.

On April 13, officials from MOI together with the Green Patrol (special force) and ILA officials destroyed some tents and huts in the unrecognized Bedouin villages of Al-Arakib and Twayil Abu Jarwal as described below.

In Twyil Abu Jarwal, six tents and four shacks were demolished. This was the thirtieth demolition that the village has experienced since 2006. The police also drained all water containers in the village so that residents had no source of water. The village's large water tanks had already been destroyed in previous demolitions. Since this incident in April, demolitions have occurred on two other occasions. By way of background, the Talalka people who live in Twyil Abu Jarwal were forced to leave their village in 1951 together with other families and tribes.

In Al-Arakib, three homes were demolished. For one of the families this was the sixth demolition they had endured since 2002. Two of the previous demolitions had occurred in just the previous two months. In addition, the residents of more than ten houses received eviction orders and were given until May 10 to leave. However, they have requested an extension of time to June 10 and was thus still pending at the time of writing.

On May 3, two large demonstration tents that had been built in Al-Arakib were dismantled by the protestors and no licence, as promised by the police, was issued so that they could be legally rebuilt. These structures had been built on April 14 for the purpose of preventing the Jewish National Fund (JNF) to continue carrying out works on lands near the village that belongs to the families and over which the families have filed land claims during the 1970s. These claims are now being heard before the court. Further details about the activities of the JNF are provided below.

In Al-Zaiadnah, located north of the city of Rahat and outside the city municipality borders, dozens of families received demolition orders.

Along with demolition orders that were issued to the Al-Zaiadnah and reissued to Al-Gargawi families and others, more than 1,000 individuals are estimated to have been affected by these actions. In most of demolitions, the families' belongings were destroyed together with their house. In Tawil Abu Jarwal a number of belongings were also buried.

Crop Destruction

On February 10, the Green Patrol deep ploughed approximately 4,000 dunams (1,000 acres) of a new barley crop adjacent to the Al-Arakib with tractors. According to governmental sources 7,400 dunams were ploughed this winter.²

Jewish National Fund afforestation activities

There has also been an intensification of pressure on Bedouin communities to relocate through the activities of the Jewish National Fund (JNF). The JNF is a non-profit corporation established by the Zionist movement and has been granted quasi-government powers in Israel as part of the ILA. The JNF charter specifies reclamation of land for Jewish people as its primary purpose. In 2003, the JNF introduced its 'Blueprint Negev' initiative to revitalize Israel's southern desert region, increase the Jewish population and 'improve living conditions for all its inhabitants.'³ Pursuant to this initiative the JNF has planted tens of thousands of trees in the Negev and created numerous parks with neither the consent nor cooperation of the indigenous owners of the land in question.

It has become increasingly clear that the Israeli government sanctions JNF-funded activities to indirectly and arbitrarily take control of disputed land from the Bedouins through planting forests on land subject to pending ownership claims by Bedouins in court. The ILA actively encourages and supports the JNF to further the eviction of the Bedouins through tree planting projects on the ancestral lands of the Bedouins which are the subject of disputed ownership claims before the court. One such specific example of afforestation in which the Negev Coexistence Forum is heavily involved is the area around the village of Al-Arakib. In the summer of 2009, the JNF began cultivating El Okbi tribal land without any form of prior consultation and before a court ruling with regards to the ownership of the land. As a result of the JNF activities, residents of Al-Arakib have been forced off the land and can no longer use it for agricultural or grazing purposes. There have been a number of clashes between residents of Al-Arakib and the JNF workers.

In March 2010, a total of 40 indictments were been filled against Mr. Nuri Al-Uqbi, a leading figure in the Bedouin's struggle against dispossession while he has land claim continues in court against the State of Israel. Mr. Al-Okbi was born and grew up in Al-Arakib, however, in 1951 the Al-Okbi tribe was forcibly removed from their land which was later confiscated by the government. In 2006, Mr. Al-Okbi returned to live on the country that had been owned by his family for generations, however, he has been detained and beaten on several occasions and his tent destroyed by members of the JNF. In early March 2010, Mr. Al-Okbi was imprisoned again, however, on this occasion he was charged with dozens of offences dating from 2006 including trespassing and disrupting the work of the JNF when they began to

² Israel Land Administration Website (in Hebrew) from 24/2/2010
http://www.mmi.gov.il/Hodaotmmilnt/show_h.asp?key=916&CodeMaarecet=1

³Emphasis added. Jewish National Fund, 'Blueprint Negev', <<http://www.jnf.org/work-we-do/blueprint-negev/>> at 17 March 2010.

flatten his father's land. The treatment that Mr Al-Okbi has suffered is just another example of a broader policy of intimidation and police brutality to coerce the Bedouins to leave their land.

Extension of Route Six

The government's plans to extend the Trans-Israel Highway, also known as Route 6, south into the Negev will force more than 2,500 Bedouins citizens to relocate. The planned route does not take into consideration the location of Bedouin populations and will affect both recognized and unrecognized villages. It is estimated that 400 structures will be demolished to construct the highway and a further 200 located adjacent to the planned route will be adversely affected. Among the villages likely to be harmed by the planned highway are Al-Mas'adiya, Al-Garin, Khirbat al-Watan, Bir al-Hamam, Khashem Zana, Sawin, A-Shahabi, Wadi Al-Na'am, and Al-Mashash. A petition to the Supreme Court was filled in May 2010 (3459/10).⁴

Inadequate health facilities

In October 2009, three maternity care units were closed in the unrecognized villages of Abu-Tlul, Wadi Al-Na'am and Kassar Al-Sir on the grounds, the Ministry of Health claims, that there was a shortage of nurses. In December 2009 a petition to the Supreme Court was filled but as yet there has been no decision.

Connection to the electricity grid

In March 2010, the two schools in the unrecognized village of Abu-Tlul and Al-Amal school in Khirbat Al-Watan were connected to the main electricity grid following a petition to the Supreme Court (5475/09).

All other villages and schools remain with no connection to the power grid.

⁴ The Association for Civil Rights in Israel web site (in Hebrew) Press release from May 5th 2010
<http://www.acri.org.il/Story.aspx?id=2477>