

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

International Human Rights Day 2012
**Report on House Demolitions of
Arab-Bedouins in the Negev**

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Jum'ah Abu Habira , a 110-year-old man, standing next to the ruins of his home in Bir-Hadaj

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Introduction

International Human Rights Day marks the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations. We are marking this day for the third consecutive year with the publication of a report concerning the blatant negation of the human rights of the Arab-Bedouins in the Negev-Naqab. This report centers on the issue of house demolitions in the Bedouin villages. Usually the report deals with the unrecognized villages. However this year the report deals also with the recognized villages since unfortunately the demolitions have become routine in the recognized villages as well.

As in previous years, we wish to make the general public aware of the painful issue of house demolitions. House demolitions leave thousands of men, women, and children with deep emotional scars and mistrust of the state system that is supposed to protect their rights.

Hundreds of policemen and special units such as the Enforcement Activities Coordination Forces, the Green Squad, administrators from the Israel Land Authority and the Ministry of the Interior, undercover units, and administrators from the Jewish National Fund participate in these demolitions. All of these forces employ violence, leaving families homeless. These victims will never forget the terrible day on which their home was demolished, and will become more and more alienated from the government.

Background

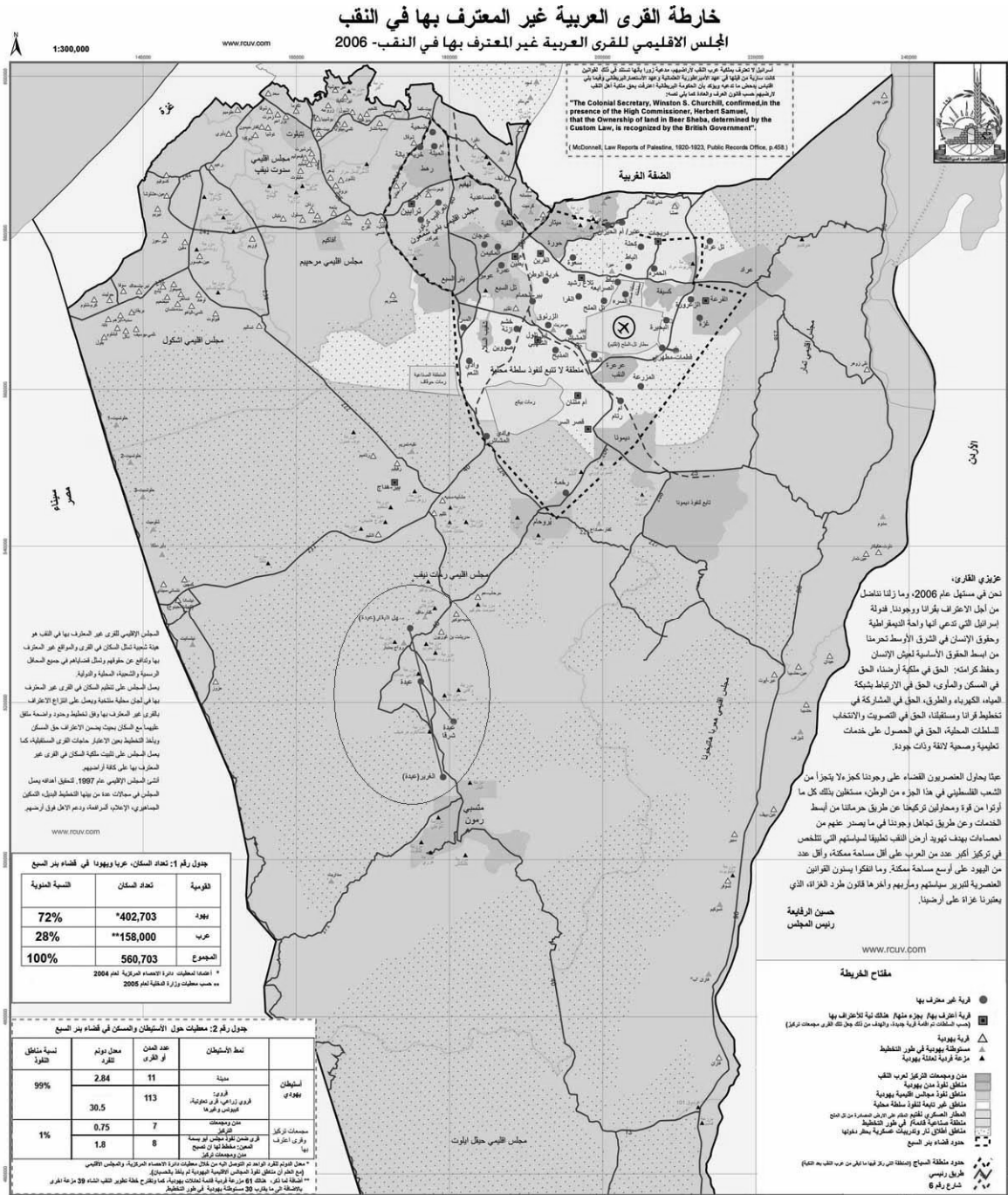
There were approximately 11,000 Arab-Bedouin living in the Negev at the time of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Most were evicted and emigrated to Jordan and the Sinai, and only 10% of the Bedouin native population of the Negev remained. During the 1950s the Israeli government decided to gather the Bedouins within a limited geographical area, 10% of the lands owned by the Bedouins before statehood, known as the *sayig*, and to place them under military rule. The Bedouins were not allowed leaving or entering the area without a permit and this situation continued until 1966 when the Israeli government decided to end the military rule.

The first Bedouin town of Tel Sheva was established in 1969. The objective was to gather the Bedouins in several settlements whose area was smaller than that of the designated area of the *sayig*. An additional Bedouin town, Rahat, was established in 1979. By the end of the 1990s the Israeli government had established seven Bedouin towns, with the intention of gathering in them the entire Bedouin population of the Negev.

There are presently more than 200,000 Bedouins living in the Negev. One half of this population lives within the seven Bedouin towns established by the government. The other half lives in approximately 40 "unrecognized villages" or in 11 other villages that are recognized by the government (See Illustration 1).

The objective of the urbanization policy is to gather as many Bedouin citizens as possible within limited, crowded urban areas. The government attempts to urge people to move to these towns is by denying services to those still living in the unrecognized villages. Many people feel that this policy stems from the desire of the State of Israel to increase the Jewish population, and to minimize the area in which the Bedouin have been living for generations.

Illustration 1: The Arab – Bedouin Villages in the Negev (Nakab)



تمت طباعة هذه الخارطة بتمويل من صندوق اوكسفام البريطاني

ملاحظة: أسماء القرى غير المعترف بها، موهوبة، وعددا متفاوتة من خطة المجلس الاقليمي لإقامة منطقة محلية للقرى غير المعترف بها في النقب، 1999

اعداد: سعيد أبو سمور، مركز وحدة التخطيط والمخططات في المجلس الاقليمي

The Policy of House Demolitions

In addition to making the moving to the towns a condition for receiving government services, Israel governments have been exerting pressure upon the Bedouins in the Negev in the form of house demolitions. This policy incites constant fear among the Bedouins regarding their fate, as well as insecurity among elderly people, men, women, and children regarding the future of their homes. This policy is designed to evict people from their land and force them to move to permanent, destitute towns so that the government can gain control and confiscate their lands.

The Israeli government approved the Praver Plan in September, 2011 and appointed General Doron Almog (Ret.) as head of the staff for implementing it. These steps further escalated the government's destructive policy. The appointment of an ex-member of the military to head the authority responsible for the Bedouins in the Negev implies that the Bedouins are consistently been related to as a security issue rather than a civil issue, an attitude prevailing since the establishment of the state of Israel. Referring to 200,000 Israeli citizens as a security problem has led to an unprecedented destructive policy of evicting entire villages and moving their civilian populations to neglected, destitute towns that are plagued by poverty, unemployment, and violence. This raises questions regarding the true objective of this policy.

Two villages have been completely destroyed in the past few years: Tawail Abu-Jarwal and the village of Al-Arakib, which has been repeatedly demolished more than 40 times since 2010. The government also intends to evacuate the largest unrecognized village of Wadi AlNaam to the nearby town of Segev Shalom. Many other villages are designated for demolition through the implementation of the Praver Plan. The most blatant example of the government's policy is the plan to establish the new Jewish community of Hiranat the location of the village of Um al Hiran. This plan calls for the eviction of the residents of Um al Hiran to the nearby town of Hura so that Jews can build a new community in their place. This plan is being proposed despite the fact that many existing Jewish communities in the Negev are sparsely populated. There is therefore no justification for evicting Bedouins from their village and establishing another Jewish settlement there.

According to the report by the Israel Land Authority, more than 1,000 homes were demolished during the year of 2011! This number is unprecedented both nationally and internationally. This year there were fewer documented demolitions, and the exact number is not clear. We will have a clear picture of the situation after the Israel Land Authority publishes its report.

Table 1: House Demolitions in 2012 According to Data Received by the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

Name of the Village	Location	Buildings Demolished	Date
Alsira	Near Kuseifa South of Route 31	1 house	January 9 th
Hura	North of Route 31	1 House	January 9 th
Al-Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lehavim Junction and Goral	Demolition of the village tents for the 31 st time	January 18 th
Segev Shalom	Route 25	2 houses	January 18 th
Al Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lehavim Junction and Goral	Destruction of the village tents for the 32 nd time	February 13 th
Ha'shemZana	South of Route 25	1 house	February 19 th
Sawah	East of Hura	1 house	February 19 th
Lakia	Recognized village west of Shoket Junction	5 houses	February 21 st
Sawah	East of Hura	1 house	February 19 th
Lakia	Recognized village west of Shoket Junction	5 houses	February 21 st
Bir el Hamam Wadi Rawin	North of Route 25 Beer-Sheva - Dimona South of Route 21 Shoket Junction – Arad	The Israel Land Authority plowed 1500 dunams (400 acres) of newly planted fields	February 22 nd
Lakia	Recognized village west of Shoket Junction	3 houses	March 6 th
Al-Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lehavim Junction and Goral	Demolition of the village tents for the 33 rd time	March 6 th
According to an announcement from the Israel Land	Tel Arad and area of Aruer and Wadi Al Naam	Plowing of 120, 150, and 1000 dunams of newly	March 7 th

Name of the Village	Location	Buildings Demolished	Date
Authority		planted fields	
Al Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lehavim Junction and Goral	Demolition of the tents of the village for the 34 th time	April 23rd
Um Battin	South of Shoket Junction	1 building	April 23 rd
Hirbet al Battal	Near MishmarHanegev	1 house	May 2 nd
Al Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lahavim Junction and Goral	Demolition of the tents of the village for the 35 th time	May 23rd
Sawah	North of Route 31 Near Hura	1 house	June 6 th
Um Ratam	East of Route 26	1 house	June 6 th
Tel-Sheva		3 houses	June 6 th
Um Battin	South of Shoket Junction	1 house	June 11 th
Segev Shalom	Route25	1 house	June 11 th
Hirbet Al Battal	Near Mishmar Hanegev	3 homes and a chicken coop	June 11 th
Al Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lehavim Junction and Goral	Demolition of the tents of the village for the 36 th time	June 24th
Um Battin	Near Omer	1 house	July 4 th
Segev Shalom	Route 25	1 house	July 4 th
Wadi Aricha	Southeast of Ovdatt	2 houses and a mosque	July 4 th
Al Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lahavim Junction and Goral	Demolition of the tents of the village for the 37 th time	July 17 th
Al Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lehavim Junction and Goral	Demolition of the tents of the village for the 38 th time	August 16 th
Hirbet Al Battal	Near MishmarHanegev	1 house	August 29 th
Abu-Karinat	Route 26 opposite AruraBanegev	1 house	August 29 th
Bir-Hadaj	Near Kibbutz Revivim – Ramat Negev	2 houses	August 29 th
Abu-Siakh Family	Near Arad	1 house	August 29 th

Name of the Village	Location	Buildings Demolished	Date
Rahama	Near Yeruham	1 house	August 29 th
Al Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lehavim Junction and Goral	Demolition of the tents of the village for the 39th time	September 12 th
Bir-Hadaj	Near Revivim – Ramat Negev	1 house	September 20 th
Abdeh	Near SdeBoker	1 house	September 20 th
Wadi Aricha	Near Nafha Prison	1 house	September 20 th
Bir-Hadaj	Near Kibbutz Revivim	1 house	September 27 th
Al-Zarnug	North of Route 25	1 shed	September 27 th
Segev Shalom	Route 25	3 houses	September 27 th
Al Hozayel	Northwest of Rahat	1 house	October 9 th
Kochla	Near Kasifa – Route 31	1 house	October 9 th
Al Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lehavim Junction and Goral	Demolition of the tents of the village for the 40 th time	October 18 th
Segev Shalom	Route 25	1 mini-trailer	November 6 th
Kuseifa	Route 31	1 house	November 6 th
Southwest Al-Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lehavim Junction and Goral	5 houses	November 6 th
Al – Sader	Route 25	1 mosque	November 14 th
Al-Zarnug	Route 25	1 house	November 14 th
Al Arakib	West of Route 40 between Lehavim Junction and Goral	Demolition of the tents of the village for the 41 st time	November 14 th

Note: Homeowners are threatened by the authorities that they will have to pay the cost of house demolition and therefore many homeowners demolish their own homes and re-use some of the materials. Information in many of these cases is not available and doesn't appear in this table.



Illustration 2: Ruins of the home of the Amna Al-Zayyadna Family in Hirbet al-Battal, May 2nd 2012



Illustration 3: Residents of Wadi Ericha in temporary shelter, 20 September, 2012



Illustration 4: Children in the ruins of their home in Bir-Hadaj, September 27th, 2012



Illustration 5 – Children injured by tear gas in Bir-Hadaj are taken to Soroka Hospital, November 12th, 2012

Personal Testimonies of Bedouins whose Houses were Demolished

The Ministry of Internal Security established a special police unit in August 2012 following the government's approval of the Praver Report. The unit consists of 250 policemen and is designed to enforce the building law and to accompany supervisors from the Ministry of the Interior, the Israel Land Authority, and the Jewish National Fund. The unit has already used violence in its actions in unrecognized villages and also in recognized villages such as Bir-Hadaj, in the area that is under the jurisdiction of the Abu Basma Regional Council.

Since every demolished house is a unique case that constitutes a world of its own, which quantitative reports cannot convey, we have decided to include in the report individual testimonies. The following tragic testimonies were given by people who personally experienced the demolition of their homes.

Amna Alzyyadna Hirbet al-Battal, May 2nd, 2012: "I was sitting at home alone when I saw a large contingency of policemen dressed in black. They approached me and asked me to leave the house because they were about to demolish it. I'm elderly and sick and had trouble standing up, so they mercilessly dragged me outside and began to demolish the house. They didn't let us take any of our belongings out. Everything was destroyed, even the battery-powered panels for the electricity. The house belonged to my grandson. I watched them destroying his future with my own eyes."

Nawaf Alzyyadna, a relative of the family, added: "I was meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Interior when the police force entered the village with the bulldozer to carry out the demolition. Everything was demolished: the house and the bedroom and kitchen – even the electric panels. The government is making war on us. They are demolishing our homes without offering us any suitable solution. The government wants to take our land."

Udah, Wadi Aricha: "A large police force entered the village. They were ready for war. They came with three bulldozers and didn't leave anything. They demolished everything. They want to evict us from here and ruin our lives. They don't leave anything: they flatten the entire area. We live here and want to stay here. This is our land, and from our standpoint this is a war for survival. Our young people have stopped getting married because they can't build homes. This house that was demolished today has been here for 30 years. We never received demolition orders before. All we did was replace the roof that was leaking after 30 years because rain was getting into the house. All we did was to replace the roof and then the supervisor came and claimed that this was forbidden and stuck a demolition order on the house. My question is: if replacing the roof is forbidden, than what's permitted? What's the solution? No one from the government comes with a fair solution. They come only to demolish."

Demolitions and Police Violence in the Recognized Villages

Bir-Hadaj, 2012

A series of violent events and house demolitions occurred between September and November 2012 in the recognized village of Bir-Hadaj. These events indicate that the recognition of some Bedouin villages is merely a formality: The same violence and discriminatory policy is being implemented in recognized villages as in unrecognized villages. The Bedouin village of Bir-Hadaj is located in the central Negev near Kibbutz Revivim. It is a recognized village that was established in 2003 following a government decision to establish permanent communities for the Bedouins in the Negev. Bir-Hadaj is one of the communities in the Abu Basma Regional Council.¹ Despite the fact that the village is recognized, it lacks many essential government services. The village also lacks basic infrastructures and is not as developed as the other communities in the Abu Basma Regional Council. The village has no infrastructure for electricity, water, or roads. There are two elementary schools in the village, a high school belonging to the ORT school system, a clinic, and a family health center.

On September 29th, 2012 a large police force and special military forces entered the village of Bir-Hadaj to carry out a demolition order for one of the houses in the village. When the forces exited the village after the demolition the police created a provocation. According to the residents' testimony the police cursed the village children and a riot quickly broke out. The police used weapons for dispersing demonstrations, firing tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition, and called in a helicopter that hovered overhead. The police made several arrests.

On October 10th police once again attempted to enter the village to post demolition orders on additional homes. Since they were blocked at the entrance to the village they returned the following day with larger forces. The police once again fired tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition. Many children were injured by tear gas that penetrated the elementary school through the windows.

¹The regional council was later divided into two separate regional councils following a decision of the Ministry of Interior.

On November 12th a large police force re-entered the village of Bir-Hadaj, together with special military forces. Residents testified that the police used excessive force and undercover agents to post demolition orders on houses in the village. The police fired tear gas grenades in all directions indiscriminately. Some of the grenades were fired at the school. Many children were injured, and approximately 30 pupils required medical attention and were taken to Soroka Hospital in Beer Sheva. The police arrested 19 residents. Some were indicted and many remained in custody. Many residents were injured in the incident.

Testimonies of residents of Bir-Hadaj:

Sliman Alchousi (aged 17): "I'm in the 11th grade in the high school of Bir-Hadaj. When I stood outside my house in the morning I saw a large number of policemen. I went back into the house, but they came inside and began beating me with the butt of their rifles. I had an open wound on my forehead but they continued beating me on the back of my neck. I was detained in the square of the Ramat Hanegev Regional Council in a shed erected by the Red Shield of David (translator's note: the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross) with the rest of the detainees from Bir-Hadaj. We remained there until the evening without receiving any medical care, food, or water. The policemen who passed by spat on us and beat us.

The police arrested me in the morning and I was brought to Soroka Hospital only in the evening, even though I had been injured and bleeding since the morning. The hospital staff refused to give me medical treatment because they claimed that they needed the consent of one of my parents. I asked the policemen to return my mobile phone to call my parents and tell them to come to the hospital, but the policemen refused.



Illustration 6: Police during the violent incidents in Bir-Hadaj, November 12th, 2012



Illustration 7: Children standing on the ruins of their home, Rachama, August 30th, 2012

I'm shocked at the behavior of the police. They are supposed to keep me safe. I don't know what did I do to make them behave the way they did. I'm a citizen of this country and I have rights as a minor. Why did they do this?"

Hanin Alaimital: "I'm 12 years old. I was waiting for the bus in the morning but it didn't come. I returned home and then I saw a police car drive quickly past my house. A policeman fired a rubber bullet from the passing car which hit me in the leg. I managed to get home by myself but I couldn't find my mother."

Faiza, Hanin's mother: "I went outside to look for my daughter. I saw a lot of policemen shooting a lot of tear gas grenades. The whole area was filled with smoke and smelled like tear gas. I felt like I was choking and went into my brother-in-law's house nearby. After a few minutes we heard someone banging loudly on the door. The police broke down the door of the house and the kitchen door, and began to harass everyone in the house for no reason – women, small children, everyone. They saw my nephew who was about to leave for work. They beat him and arrested him. When the policemen reached their van one of them came back and fired a bullet at my stomach. I was taken to Soroka Hospital, given treatment, and released. On November 19th my condition grew worse and I was hospitalized again and underwent surgery that treated my stomach."

Jum'ah Abu Assa: "After the police forces entered I went out to get my children who were already in school. On the way I saw a lot of armed forces around the school, and managed to get into the school, but I couldn't find my children among the large number of students who were trapped inside the schoolyard. The police fired a lot of tear gas grenades at them. I was hit in the eye by a rubber bullet and after a few minutes I fell down [lost consciousness] and woke up in the hospital. I underwent surgery on my left eye at Soroka Hospital for a tear in my retina. I can't see well with my eye and the chances for regaining sight in that eye are slim. Why did they do this to us? What did we do? They only came to beat us. I've lost an important part of my life – my eyesight! All I did was try and bring my children home from school, where they had been trapped. My children are afraid to go back to school. They wake up at night crying because of what the police did to us."

Sliman Abu Mhadi, 26, is married and the father of one child. He is disabled and has severe unstable diabetes. "On the first day of the incidents in Bir-Hadaj I went to the clinic in Yeruham with my younger brother. He received treatment and was referred to Soroka Hospital. Since I didn't have my diabetes medication with me, I returned home to ask my father to take my brother to Soroka. On our way home a police vehicle that was standing at the entrance to the village stopped us, opened the doors of our car, and sprayed pepper gas in our faces. They began to beat us while we were still sitting in the car wearing our seat belts. They beat my brother, who has chronic kidney disease and was supposed to go to Soroka Hospital. We were detained in Dimona until the evening, and were denied our basic rights. I asked again and again to bring me my medication. They beat me in the face and broke my nose. My brother Faiz had a swollen head from the beatings."

Salman Abu Rashed, Bir-Hadaj: "A large police force entered the village. They demolished the house. As you can see, I have no other house and I live with my seven children in this house. They destroyed my house without offering any solution. They left my children and me without shelter and without any basic services. We are forbidden to build a house! Where will we go with our families?"



Illustration 8 – Jum'a Abu Assa in Soroka Hospital after he was injured in his left eye by a rubber bullet, November 12th, 2012



Illustration 9: Police weapons that were collected following the incidents in Bir-Hadaj, November 12th, 2012

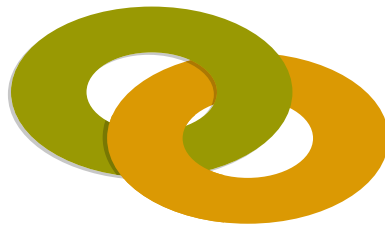
Summary

This report reviews the Israeli government's policy of house demolitions that was implemented in the Bedouin villages in the Negev during the past year. As we have shown in this report, the policy of house demolition was implemented in both recognized and unrecognized villages, and was being carried out using excessive police violence and force. The testimonies of the residents reveal the traumatic experiences suffered by members of the community, as well as the increasing alienation that it creates between the Bedouin citizens and the state and its legal authorities.

This policy is becoming more severe in two ways: the number of demolitions is increasing, and the demolitions are now occurring in the recognized villages as well as in the unrecognized ones. This implies that the policy is designed to prepare the ground for the implementation of the Praver Plan – a plan that is designed to evict tens of thousands of Bedouin citizens from their villages and to transfer them to congested urban settlements. House demolitions are designed to instill fear and terror among the Bedouin citizens. Their objective is to force them to relinquish their land and accept the fate that the government has planned for them – to live in congested, poverty – stricken urban towns.



Illustrations 10 – 12: House east of Hura before, during and after demolition
January 21st, 2012



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