

# House Demolitions in the Negev

2012/2013



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



## Executive summary

During 2012 and throughout the first half of 2013, a total of 1376 homes were demolished in Israel's southern district. Of them, 926 were demolished in 2012, with another 450 demolished by July 2013. The vast majority of these houses – namely, 1261, which constitute 91% of the overall demolished properties – were inside Bedouin villages.

Most of the demolitions executed by Israeli authorities, 620 in total, were commissioned by administrative warrants. 551 of these, constituting 99.5% of issued administrative warrants throughout the district, were delivered to the Bedouin population.

Of all demolished houses of Bedouin citizens, about 636 homes were self-demolished by their owners. This is a result of an Israel Land Authority (herein, ILA) policy according to which residents are required to pay for the expenses of demolition. As the threat of carrying the burden of payments became more tangible, many have chosen to demolish their homes themselves. The high number of demolitions conducted this way attests to the efficacy of the ILA policy.

This year, as part of a massive wave of demolitions, entire neighborhoods were destroyed. Unlike previous years, in which only stand-alone structures were destroyed, Israeli authorities have renewed demolition of entire complexes. In the unrecognized village of Atir, for instance, eight houses were demolished last May and hundreds of olive trees were uprooted in a single demolition event.

Furthermore, in the past few years authorities have begun submitting demolition warrants for long-established structures that have been modestly renovated. As such, entire houses were demolished in response to the smallest additions. In January 2013, for example, a house was demolished in the unrecognized village of Dahiyya, north of Rahat, after three stairs were built at its doorway. Such demolitions take place even if the renovation did not result in the expansion of the property, but rather comprised replacement of a leaking roof or wall.

Demolitions this year were executed in the shadow of the Law for the Regulation of the Bedouin Settlement in the Negev, or the so-called Praver-Begin Plan, issued as a governmental directive in September 2011 and given preliminary approval by the Israeli Knesset in June 2013. As part of the plan, budgets

were allocated for the establishment and administration of the "Authority for the Regulation of Bedouin Settlement in the Negev." Significant funds were devoted to enforcement activities, which led to the establishment of the "Coordination Directorate of Land Law Enforcement (MATPA, Hebrew initials), whose role is to administer and coordinate the activities of demolition enforcement bodies in the Negev.

One of MATPA's executive bodies is the police combat unit, "Yoav," whose job is to supervise and enforce planning and construction laws in the Negev. Established in 2013, the unit is equipped with about 150 officers, as well as water cannons and other crowd control technologies, weapons and helicopters. Through targeted recruitment of veteran combat soldiers, the unit is expected to grow to approximately 400 policemen.

With the lack of data, confidentiality of maps, and ambiguity regarding the fate of the unrecognized villages under the Praver-Begin Plan, house demolition cases provide the only indication as to which villages are to be evicted. Such plans exist, but have been kept hidden from the public.



The demolition of the Ziadna family home in the unrecognized village of Hirbat al-Batal.

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## 1. Introduction

The Negev Coexistence Forum publishes an annual report that surveys home demolition events among Arab Bedouin citizens in the Negev, emphasizing their localization in the unrecognized villages. The fourth edition of this report, published December 10th in commemoration of International Human Rights Day, contains data collected throughout the year regarding house demolitions.

The demolition of homes by law enforcement authorities is a prevalent phenomenon that has been taking place in the Negev for years. It is part of the government's broader policy designed to compel Bedouin citizens to abdicate ownership over their ancestral lands and move to recently recognized villages or townships. Though over 70,000 people reside in unrecognized villages in Israel, the state denies their existence. They remain unmarked on governmental maps and are invisible to the planning administration of Israel's Ministry of public security; main roads feature no signs leading to the villages. These localities are denied critical services for the promotion of education, health and employment; suffer insufficient access to water and are not connected to the national electricity grid; and

lack such fundamental infrastructure as paved roads and sewage.

Governmental approval of the Praver-Begin Plan in 2011<sup>1</sup> and the bill for the regulation of Bedouin settlement in the Negev, which passed first reading in the Knesset in June 2013,<sup>2</sup> provided governmental cover for a massive extension of home demolitions throughout 2013 and, particularly, the prevalent dissemination of administrative demolition warrants bound to be enforced in the coming years. According to the Praver-Begin plan, 40,000 people are to be forcibly displaced and many villages will be demolished, some of which were in place prior to Israel's establishment. Alongside the bill, two additional elements compound ramifications of the Praver-Begin plan: a planning element – approval of Metropolis Plan 4/14/23 in 2012 – and an economic element, through which substantial funds have already been allocated to education, employment and law enforcement. In addition to the creation of the Yoav unit, a special coordination directorate has been established to enforce

<sup>1</sup>Governmental decision number 3707 for the implementation of the committee for the regulation of Bedouin settlement in the Negev, [http://www.moch.gov.il/SiteCollectionDocuments/gov\\_decisions/des3708.pdf](http://www.moch.gov.il/SiteCollectionDocuments/gov_decisions/des3708.pdf) [Hebrew].

<sup>2</sup>Ha'aretz, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politi/1.2054353>, last visited 15.12.13.

planning and construction laws. The approval of the plan by the Israeli Knesset and government and transfer to fast-tracked discussions in the Knesset Committee of Public Affairs and Environment, in light of substantial financial investments and the approval of the Metropolis Plan, all serve to prepare the ground for the plan's ultimate implementation.

We contend that home demolitions over the past few years, amounting to about 1000 houses per year, are unprecedented in Israel and the world. The sole purpose of these acts is to threaten the population and signal that these citizens would better off demolishing their houses themselves, evacuating their land and relocating to townships. The promotion of the plan and its effect on house demolitions necessitates close scrutiny of Israeli authorities in order to provide regular reports of violations of the internationally enshrined Human Right to Housing and Adequate Shelter, as well Israel's Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty. The importance of this report lies in the provision of insights and data regarding the daily tangible threat of demolition, which casts a dark cloud over tens of thousands of Israeli citizens. This report is especially significant this year in light of the governmental plan to

demolish entire villages and transfer the Bedouin population into contrived Bedouin townships.



A demolished home in the unrecognized village of Wadi al-Na'am.

## **2. Annals of dispossession, neglect and lack of recognition - Israel's land policy towards the Bedouin of the Negev**

Arab Bedouin are indigenous to the Negev and have inhabited the region for decades. In 1948, the Bedouin population of the Negev numbered between 60,000 to 90,000; some researchers estimate this number to be even higher. During the 1948 war, most of this population fled or was expelled towards Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula. By the end of the war, only 11,000 Arab Bedouins remained in the Negev.

Eviction of these remaining communities began in the immediate aftermath of the war; residents were concentrated by the Israeli military regime within the Sayag – an area of some 1,500 square Kilometers in the east of the Negev, between Dimona, Arad and Be'er Sheva – placed under a military regime that lasted until 1966. Lands in that area were less fertile than those cultivated by Bedouin communities in the northwestern Negev prior to the war. No Bedouin remained in the northern or western regions of the Negev beyond the 1950s. Land in those evicted areas was expropriated by the state and given to newly established Jewish kibbutzim and moshavim (communal agricultural settlements). The forced displacement of Bedouin

communities to the eastern Negev resulted in the dispossession of entire tribes, their concentration on land that did not belong to them and their exile as Internally Displaced Persons (herein, IDPs). The Planning and Construction Law (1965) denied their existence on the ground, marked their lands as agricultural and with a single blow, rendered dozens of villages invisible and unrecognized – in the eyes of the state, illegal.

The policy of non-recognition has persisted in subsequent plans pertaining to the Negev. In fact, plans that dealt with the development of the Negev never took into consideration the 73,000 citizens residing in unrecognized villages. Specifically the plan 'Negev 2015,' adopted by the government in November 2005, completely overlooks the existence of dozens of unrecognized villages. Likewise, the long-term Be'er Sheva Metropolis Plan (14/4) ignores these villages and the tens of thousands of residents therein. These localities do not appear on the plan's maps and Arab villages not already recognized are wholly absent in planning for this entire metropolitan area.

The township of Tel Sheva was established at the end of the 1960s as the first Bedouin locality planned by the government. Its establishment was intended to concentrate a rural and

agricultural population within urban centers. By the mid-1990s, six additional townships had been erected: Rahat, Kseife, Arara, Lakiyya, Shakib a-Salam (Segev Shalom) and Hura. The state maintained its urbanization policy for three decades, investing efforts to transfer the Bedouin population into towns, whilst dispersing a Jewish population throughout the region. From the day it was founded, the state of Israel has regarded the Bedouin population a threat to its control of the Negev. Their concentration into townships is regarded as a solution to this problem. Though they provide the Bedouin with basic infrastructure, including running water, electricity and roads, the townships remained starkly neglected. They suffer severe poverty, high unemployment, crime and minimal governmental and commercial services.<sup>3</sup>

Over the years, the debate between the state and the Bedouin population has crossed into the legal arena. In these discussions, beginning in Israel's first decades, the main dispute has concerned the binding legal system for the examination of land ownership in the Negev.

<sup>3</sup>Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (2013), Accessibility of public and private and services in Arab localities, and institutionalized discrimination against Arab public sector employees in the Negev. In English: [http://www.dukium.org/eng/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/racialdiscrimination\\_English\\_2013.pdf](http://www.dukium.org/eng/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/racialdiscrimination_English_2013.pdf).

Based on a report from 1975 written by attorney Plia Albek, the state has argued that the entire expanse of the Negev is to be classified as mawat (Arabic for, 'dead'), an Ottoman legal term to denote fallow land. By law, Israel has appropriated remote, uncultivated land as "State Land." Such definitions have made it difficult for Bedouin claimants to prove their affinity to and ownership of their lands.<sup>4</sup>



Ruins in the unrecognized village of Atir

<sup>4</sup>Shagi-Badarna, Conference held under the title, "Not on the Map", November – 2006, <http://www.adva.org/uploaded/negevprotocol26.11.06.pdf> [Hebrew].

Against such claims, the Bedouin argue that the mawat definition is inappropriate, as they have continuously cultivated the lands and lived off them. Following legislation of the Land Law in 1969, Bedouin claimants filed 3,220 land registration claims in the Ministry of Justice, circumscribing approximately one million dunams, of which 800,000 had not previously been registered.

Parallel to the state's lack of recognition of Bedouin land ownership in the Negev and within the framework of the urbanization policy, Israel launched negotiations with Bedouin claimants, offering compensation in return for a comprehensive cessation of land claims and their immediate eviction and relocation to one of the seven recognized townships. 380 claims have thus far been settled under this arrangement, transferring approximately 205,670 dunam. Of these, some have been mutually agreed with the claimants, while others, as in the case of Tel Malhata, are the result of coercion.

In 2004 the state began a process of "counter claiming," filing its own claims of land ownership against those submitted by Bedouin citizens. The state thus compelled Bedouin claimants to prove ownership and affinity to the land in court. This policy,

which replaced previous negotiations, was harsh and destructive. Within four years, the ILA had submitted 450 counter claims; of the 200 cases that reached court discussion, all have been decided in favor of the state.<sup>5</sup>

Established in 2003, the regional council, Abu Basma, united all of the recognized Bedouin villages. Soon thereafter, in 2005, the state established an agricultural locality for a segment of the Tarabeen tribe and then officially recognized nine additional rural localities: Bir Hadaj, Kaser al-Sir, Umm Batin, Al-Garin, Kuhla, Mkhol, Abu Krinat, Mulda and Drijat. In addition, the Ministry of public security began planning the villages of Al-Far'aa, Abu Talool and Abada. With the exception of Abada, all of the aforementioned localities have been incorporated within Abu Basma, which due to financial difficulties, was split into two regional councils, Neve Midbar (Hebrew for, oasis) and Al-Kasoom.

The Bedouin population has continued to suffer the state's various decrees over the years, all designed to bring it to the brink and push citizens to relocate to townships. The means

<sup>5</sup>Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (2012), Processes of Dispossession in the Negev-Naqab: the counter-claim policy against Arab Bedouin. [Hebrew].

have varied: refusal to connect homes to running water, harassments by the environmental enforcement police, surveillance and supervision over live stock, demolition of tents, and finally, demolition of houses. The end of the 1990s was characterized by a relative easing of home demolitions in the unrecognized villages. Yet in the past decade, these acts were renewed and intensified, leading to the destruction of hundreds of homes each year. Demolitions are often accompanied by police brutality against residents. A relatively 'low' number of 225 houses were demolished in 2008, while the Goldeberg Committee (The Committee for the Regulation of Bedouin Settlement in the Negev) was convening. The court supported the demolition of homes in recognized localities and in February 2010, District Court Vice President Justice Sara Dovrat instructed the demolition of 65 homes in the regional council of Abu Basma (DC 253/09). The council filed an appeal against Dovrat's decision in the Supreme Court (SCA 2219/10) and the latter ordered abeyance to enable the council to obtain permits for existing houses. According to reports by the committee for housing supervision, 254 houses were demolished in 2009. This number was tripled in the following years with about 700 homes demolished annually. In 2011, demolitions reached a peak of 1000 houses. About 141,000 people reside today

in the townships. 73,000 continue to live in dozens of villages,<sup>6</sup> the majority of which remain unrecognized and all of which lack basic infrastructure including water, electricity, sewage, paved roads, health and education facilities, and garbage collection.

<sup>6</sup>The number of residents in the unrecognized villages was obtained by subtracting the number of residents in the seven recognized townships from the overall number of Muslim residents in the Be'er Sheva district, as stated in the Annual report of the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics 2013. The actual number of residents in unrecognized villages may be higher as result of individuals' false registration as residents of recognized localities.

### 3. Home Demolitions

Preparation for the implementation of the Praver-Begin Plan and mass eviction of thousands of Arab Bedouin citizens manifests in weekly demolitions, the dissemination of hundreds of administrative demolition warrants each year, and intensified patrols of enforcement units to unrecognized and recently recognized villages, and planned townships. The past year was characterized by exceedingly violent acts of demolition and excessive use of power by hundreds of policemen, combatants and environmental enforcement officers. Furthermore, in addition to hundreds of demolished homes, entire residential areas were demolished.

Following these demolitions up close, the Negev Coexistence Forum found that the frequency of demolitions and dissemination of warrants was especially high. Residents of the villages reported fortnightly tours of enforcement units in their villages. These included three police patrol vehicles accompanied by detection forces. Furthermore, during one of the demolitions in the village of Al-Sharkiyya, the police arrested a woman together with residents of Bir Hadaj and Al-Arakib. Furthermore, the police requested warrants of removal

for residents of Al-Arakib in order to prevent their return to the village and dissuade them from building protest shelters to replace their demolished homes.

### 3.1 Home demolitions in the Negev - contemporary outlook for 2012 and mid-2013

Hundreds of homes of Arab-Bedouin citizens are demolished each year.<sup>7</sup> Table-1 offers an overview of demolitions in the Negev since January 2012 and until July 2013.

House Demolitions						
	Jan 2012-Dec 2012		Jan 2013-Jul 2013		Both periods	
	Non-Jewish Sector	Overall population	Non-Jewish Sector	Overall population	Non-Jewish Sector	Overall population
Administrative warrant	409	410	210	210	619	620
Judicial order	4	21	2	4	6	25
self demolition	449	495	187	236	636	731
<b>Total</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>1261</b>	<b>1376</b>

Table 1: House demolitions for 2012 and half 2013

<sup>7</sup>Note that the Ministry of public security uses the term 'structure' rather than 'home' with regards to demolition acts. Throughout this report we regard every 'structure' a home.

The table shows that 862 Arab Bedouin residences were demolished throughout 2012 and another 399 in the first half of 2013. Further, 410 structures defined as "illegal" were also demolished in 2012 via administrative warrants. Of them, 409 (99.7%) were in the non-Jewish sector. During the same period, 21 structures were demolished due to judicial orders, of which four (19%) were in the Arab sector.

Between January and July 2013, some 210 homes were demolished via administrative warrants. All of these houses belonged to Arab Bedouin. In addition, four structures were demolished following judicial orders, two of which were in the Arab sector.

Furthermore, the ILA and other law enforcement authorities have created a new phenomenon of individuals demolishing their own homes. A result of a 2012 policy that forces homeowners to bear the costs of demolition, this has become quite common. Self demolitions accounted for 52.4% of all demolitions in 2012. Out of 495 individuals who demolished their property, 449 (namely, 90.7%) were Arabs residing in the southern district. During the first half of 2013, 236 houses were self-demolished, 177 of them (i.e. 75%) were of Arab citizens.



A family standing by its demolished home in the recognized village of Al-Sa'yd.

Judicial orders are warrants issued by the authorized planning committee of the region. In the case of the Bedouin population, which resides in areas devoid of municipal government, the Planning and Construction Committee of the southern district issues judicial orders. The orders are affixed to the structure designated for demolition and can be executed within 24 hours of posting. As administrative warrants cannot be issued for



The demolished neighborhood in Atir. The black tents in the picture were built as a temporary replacement for ten houses demolished in this single event.

properties that have been occupied for longer than 31 days, or whose construction has been completed for 60 days, a judicial order must be issued in such cases. Only a judge is authorized to issue a judicial order, which necessitates initiation of a criminal procedure against the property owner. Demolition expenses incurred as a result of judicial orders are to be paid by the owner of the house.



Felled trees in Atir. These are but a few of the hundreds of trees cut down in a single act.

### **3.2 Repeated demolition of entire neighborhoods in the unrecognized villages**

Another trend observed in 2013 is the demolition of whole neighborhoods in the unrecognized villages. While in the past authorities mainly demolished individual structures, this year we witnessed two cases wherein entire housing areas were demolished. One such instance took place near the unrecognized village of Atir and the other in Al-Arakib, which has been demolished over 57 times since 2010. These two cases represent a growing trend; similar plans to demolish a neighborhood in

the village of Sa'wa and completely demolish the villages of Umm al-Hiran and Atir are currently debated by Israel's Supreme Court.

### **A neighborhood demolition near Atir**

A massive demolition of ten houses and uprooting of hundreds of olive trees took place on the morning of May 16, 2013 in the unrecognized village of Atir. Very large forces, including dozens of trucks, police cars, tractors and bulldozers, barged in at 7:30am. All roads leading to the village were blocked to prevent residents not in the area at the time of the demolition from entering the village and uniting with their families. Furthermore, residents who were present in the village at the time were not permitted to leave the site for several hours. Children were forced to witness their homes being demolished and in most cases, without both their parents. Five hours later, the area was reopened to traffic and the police allowed family members to cross the makeshift roadblocks.

Four months later, on September 17, 2013, five additional homes were demolished in the village, thereby completing the destruction of the entire residential area.

Similar tactics of prevention of movement and entry to the village took place during demolitions in Al-Arakib and the recognized village of Bir Hadaj. Al-Arakib was demolished about 15 times during 2013 and since July 2010, 58 times. Since January 2011, residents of the village have been living in the local cemetery, where their property is protected from the repeated demolitions. Indeed, the cemetery comprises their only shelter.



Demolitions in Al-Arakib

### **3.3 Warrant-bound demolitions due to refurbishments**

The Planning and Construction Law ostensibly allows issuance of an administrative warrant of demolition only in cases where an entirely new structure has built. When a section is added to an existing structure, the administrative warrant legally applies only on the new addition. However, as a part of the harsh enforcement of the law in the unrecognized villages, the ILA has adopted a draconian interpretation of the section of the law that defines changes to a structure. According to this harsh interpretation, demolition warrants can be issued for entire properties, even when refurbishment has been minimal. For example, an entire structure was demolished in January 2013 in the unrecognized village of Dah'ya, north of Rahat, after three steps were built at the doorway. Other demolitions have resulted from homeowners having fixed a window shade and the repair of a leaking roof.

A particularly regrettable case was the demolition of a tin shack occupied for 40 years by a 65-year-old woman now living with her 16-year-old grandson, whom she is aided by welfare authorities to raise after having been abandoned by his parents. Over the years, the shack in which they lived was damaged,

exposing them to the elements. As the woman's medical condition deteriorated, she received a donation to refurbish the house with bricks. Upon the completion of the repairs, an administrative warrant was affixed to the house, followed by its demolition. The woman and her grandson lack alternatives; though authorities had initially offered to purchase the woman a lot in Hura with full compensation, such incentives were denied after the demolition, leaving the two in despair.

With the extreme storm sweeping across Israel and the Negev between 11.12.13 and 14.12.13, many houses were severely damaged, including electric solar panels in the unrecognized villages. In light of the aforementioned policy, repair of these houses or their electrical infrastructure may well be used as an excuse for Israeli authorities to issue hundreds of demolition warrants.

### **3.4 Self-demolitions by home owners**

Item 205 (1) of the Planning and Construction Law enables the state to claim all demolition expenses - incurred as result of the implementation of a judicial order - from the homeowner whose property was demolished. Two years ago, a legislative change was initiated to the Planning and Construction Law that

will likewise charge all demolition expenses to the homeowners in cases of demolitions executed by administrative warrant.

While this legislative change has not been finalized – it is supposed to be incorporated fully within the emerging planning reform – the ILA already implements it on the ground, filing suit against citizens whose houses were demolished in order to compel owners to bear all demolition expenses.<sup>8</sup>

Using the threat of carrying state-executed demolition expenses in full, the ILA incentivizes residents to demolish their homes themselves. This report attests to the effectiveness of this strategy; 236 houses, namely 70% of the homes demolished in the Negev in the first half of 2013, were destroyed by their owners.

### **3.5 Uprooting planted fields**

In addition to home demolitions, the past year also witnessed a continuation of the policy to destroy local agriculture. Environmental enforcement agents, together with Israeli police

<sup>8</sup>See a recent survey by the ILA web site of a demolition of 12 ‘illegal’ houses in the Negev, [http://www.mmi.gov.il/HodaotmmiInt/show\\_h.asp?key=1482&CodeMaarecet=1](http://www.mmi.gov.il/HodaotmmiInt/show_h.asp?key=1482&CodeMaarecet=1) [Hebrew]

units and the ILA, razed hundreds of dunams cultivated by Bedouin residents.



Units uprooting fields nearby the township of Hura.

## **4. Excessive use of force by law enforcement authorities**

This year we witnessed demolition events accompanied by numerous enforcement units, including ILA supervisors, environmental enforcement agents, officers of the Southern Coordination Directorate of Land Law Enforcement in the Negev and the directorate's special combat unit, representatives of the Ministry of public security and demolition contractors. These forces may reach hundreds of people who arrive at the area equipped with heavy demolition vehicles, tractors, bulldozers, hydraulic jackhammers, drills and trucks. It is clear that such extensive demonstration of power is disproportionate to the task at hand, which sometimes comes down to the demolition of a single tin shack. This show of force terrorizes residents and instills in them dread of the future.

This excessive and ostentatious deployment of weaponry attests to the way the Bedouin population is perceived by Israeli authorities as a threat and security risk rather than as an equal citizenry in a democratic state.

## **4.1 The Coordination Directorate of Land Law Enforcement**

The bolstering of these sweeping forces of demolition is made possible by a significant budget expansion afforded to the authorities that supervise planning and construction laws in the Negev. One such beneficiary, the Coordination Directorate of Land Law Enforcement in the Negev, founded under governmental decision 3707 to regulate Bedouin settlement in the Negev,<sup>9</sup> is at the center of intensified enforcement envisioned over the coming years as part of the Praver-Begin plan:

"The Coordination Directorate of Land Law Enforcement in the Ministry of public security will design a policy and plan of action, under the policies of the Minister and General Director, as well as coordinate and guide the relevant bodies responsible for enforcing the land law and laws of planning and construction in the Negev, with the intention to concentrate the national effort to significantly narrow the phenomenon of invasion unto, and illegal construction on state land."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>See Item 6(a) of Governmental Decision number 3707 taken 11.9.2011.

<sup>10</sup>Quote from the Ministry of Public Security.

**The roles of the Directorate:<sup>11</sup>**

- Concentration of the national effort to narrow the phenomena of invasion and illegal construction in the Negev
- Coordination, guidance and supervision over enforcement operations vis-à-vis the bodies charged with enforcing land and housing laws in the Negev, including:
  - The national unit for housing supervision in the Ministry of Public Security
  - The ILA supervision unit
  - The 'green' patrol unit of the Ministry of Environmental Protection
  - Local planning and construction committees
- Collect information and knowledge required for enforcement purposes in the Negev
- Devise a national enforcement plan for the Negev
- Prepare annual and multi-annual enforcement plan, while establishing priorities and measurable objectives.

<sup>11</sup>Taken from the Ministry of Public Security. See supra note 10.



A house demolition near the recognized village of Al-Sayed.

## 4.2 The operational arm - Yoav unit

A special unit established in the Ministry of Public Security – Yoav – has been tasked with supporting execution of the Directorate's actions. Specifically, the unit is in charge of enforcing land laws, namely, it provides operational backup for the demolition of houses and villages. Yoav is annexed to the southern district of the Israeli Police and is based at its headquarters in Be'er Sheva. Within the Prawer-Begin plan, the Ministry of Public Security was allocated an overall sum of NIS

215 million for five years. Several million were transferred to the Yoav unit upon its establishment. Yoav agents are equipped with cutting edge technology that includes helicopters, crowd control equipment such as water and paint cannons, telecommunications surveillance equipment and other specialized weapons. The unit, headed by Chief Superintendent Yossi Golan, currently has numbers 150 officers and is quickly expected to grow to 400.<sup>12</sup> The unit patrols the unrecognized villages on a regular basis in order to nominate houses for demolition and accompanies the units that execute such orders.<sup>13</sup> This unit adjoins veteran forces operating in the Negev, including the Authority for Regulation of Bedouin Settlement, the ILA and the Green Patrol Unit. These forces specialize in the enforcement of planning and construction laws and implement the policy of demolition and dispossession.

<sup>12</sup>Minimum requirements to be accepted to the unit include military combat training.

<sup>13</sup>Ynet, 25.10.2013, "How to evict Bedouins from their home,"

<http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4444928,00.html>. Last visited 7.12.2013.

## 5. Summary

The trends we point to in this report – demolition of entire neighborhoods, attempts to encumber residents with demolition expenses, reinforcement of the supervising forces with equipment and manpower – all reflect the tightening of a noose around the unrecognized villages. State demolition policies have likewise been sustained this year, with broader and better-equipped forces.

Combining the data presented herein with the organization's annual review of demolitions suggests that the number of demolitions remains similar. Nonetheless, the scope of powers implementing the demolition policy has increased, and is expected to grow further over the coming years. The buttressing of manpower by enforcement agencies attests to the authorities' intentions in the coming years. It appears that these agencies are being reinforced in preparation for years of extensive demolitions and evictions under the auspices of the governmental plan and law for the regulation of Bedouin settlement in the Negev, expected to displace 40,000 people. As such, the evidence strongly suggests that the number of home demolitions is likely to rise.

Governmental intervention took two forms this year: massive demolition of houses and increased patrols in the unrecognized villages using bolstered forces and advanced tactics designed to instill fear within the resident populations. The deployment of heavy equipment and excessive force serves as a deterrent among residents faced with threats of demolition. We believe that the intimidation policy is designed to make Bedouin residents feel helpless vis-à-vis the authorities, and consequently, to relent and abandon their land.

Significant budget increases, expanded supervisory authority and heightened combat capability all suggest that even prior to its approval, the Praver-Begin plan is indeed being implemented on the ground. Convoys of police cars and ILA vehicles patrolling throughout the unrecognized villages to issue demolition orders, with ILA contract workers and Yoav soldiers following shortly thereafter to demolish homes are a clear indication that execution of the Praver-Begin plan is well underway. The ground is being prepared for the mass eviction of residents.

In the outline of the Praver-Begin plan under discussion by the Knesset Committee of Public Affairs and Environment, there is

no explanation as to how the area is to be redesigned, which villages are to be evicted and to where, or what changes are to be enacted. Yet the plan's intentional vagueness is belied by the myriad demolitions on the ground. These actions provide the most precise indication of the scope of the government's secret plans.

Above all, the massive forces, hundreds of policemen and heavy tools used to demolish homes every week instill rage among the Bedouin residents, who are increasingly frustrated and alienated from their country. In most cases, families are left with no alternative but to devise impromptu shelter and temporary solutions. A clear violation of the Bedouin people's land rights, this policy also bears far-reaching civil ramifications, as it brings discriminated communities, especially children, into a traumatic conflict with the state. It is an encounter that creates tension with the Bedouin population, instills anger and profound frustration, trumping any chance of equality and integration within society.



Life continues under demolitions



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