Negev Coexistence Forum For Civil Equality
منتدى التعايش السلمي في النقب
من أجل ألمساواه ألمدنيه
פורום דו–קיום בנגב לשוויון אזרחי

The Negev Coexistence Forum Newsletter

15th Edition, October 2011 Published in Hebrew/Arabic bilingual handout format (see www.dukium.org)

A word from the editor

This is the 15th newsletter of the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality. As in previous issues, this newsletter presents a summary of events that have occurred in the Negev in recent months. Much of this newsletter is devoted to discussing the Prawer-Amidror Plan - now known as the Amidror Plan - that has already been approved by the Israeli government. The plan will result in the destruction of numerous Bedouin villages and cause tens of thousands of people to be evicted from their land and gathered and relocated in urban settlements. The Prawer-Amidror plan is due to be implemented in the next few years. If it is carried out, it will bring about changes for the worse in the lives of Jews and Arabs in the Negev.

Please visit the "Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality" website at **www.dukium.org** as well as our page on Facebook for up-to-date information about our activities.

We wish to thank all our volunteers who have supported the Forum's activities and have helped publish and distribute the newsletter. We hope the newsletter will enable our readers to stay informed about what is happening in the Negev.

Before you expel the Bedouin ...

By Mansour Nsasra

Despite the government's approval of the Prawer proposals, the Bedouin will not relinquish their claim to their historical land.

The Prawer Committee recommendations approved by the Israeli cabinet last week call for the "relocation" of some 30,000 Naqab (Negev) Bedouin from their lands. This would be just the latest expulsion of Negev Bedouin – a practice that began in 1948, when more than two-thirds of the 90,000 Bedouin living in the Be'er Sheva district became refugees. Some 11,000 of those who remained under Israeli rule found themselves expelled from the western Negev to an enclosed zone northeast of Be'er Sheva, thus becoming "internally displaced" citizens.



Demonstration against the Prawer Committee proposals, September 11, 2011

Since 2007, first the Goldberg Commission, and now the Prawer Committee, have been charged with resolving the ongoing land-ownership dispute between the Bedouin and the state. The Bedouin claim 600,000 dunams as part of their historical lands, whereas the Goldberg Commission proposed registering one-third of that in their name. Finally, the committee headed by Ehud Prawer, former head of the policy planning department in the Prime Minister's Office, suggested that the Bedouin be given only 27 percent of the lands they say have been theirs since Ottoman times. Implementing the Prawer recommendations means that the majority of those who currently populate the unrecognized Bedouin villages would be forcefully moved to existing townships.

In making such a fateful recommendation, the Prawer panel failed to consider the historical recognition of Bedouin land ownership. If it had done its homework, the committee would have discovered that officials of both the British Mandatory government and the State of Israel gave such recognition in the past. That's what I found in my research in both British and Israeli archives and in personal interviews.

In an interview I conducted with him in 2008, for example, Lord Oxford – assistant commissioner of the Be'er Sheva District under the Mandatory government in 1943-45 – explained that British authorities recognized Bedouin land ownership even without any formal registration procedure: "We did not oppose Bedouin land ownership, nor did we force them to register it," he said. "They were happy with the way they recognized their land, so we thought we would not impose on them something they did not like and would resist." →

Before you expel the Bedouin ...

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The testimony of Lord Oxford, who died this past January, contradicts clearly the Israeli narrative that the Bedouin have not owned the lands they inhabited for generations. British documents also show that they paid taxes on their lands. In a report from January 1940, for example, Malcolm MacDonald, then the secretary of state for the colonies, approved recognition of the "tithes" paid by Be'er Sheva District Bedouin as signifying ownership. Ottoman documents, dating back as early as 1907 and found in British archives, give evidence of tax payments being made in June of that year too.

Recognition that the Bedouin had a legal claim to their lands continued after 1948, under Israeli rule. In 1952, for example, Michael Hanegbi, the military governor of the Negev, in a now-declassified letter to both the Defense Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office, wrote that, "During 1950/1951, a total amount of 19,000 Israeli Lira were collected from the Bedouin as land tax by the Negev military governor with the help of Bedouin. Bedouin paid four grush for each dunam to be recognized." If Hanegbi went to the trouble of asking the Bedouin to pay land taxes, it is clear that he recognized their ownership – something that Prawer and Goldberg seem not to have taken into account.

Accordingly, in the 1950s, almost all the Bedouin who remained in Israel paid land taxes to the state. They were collected by the military governor and Bedouin sheikhs. It is also important to note that the tax paid to both the British and Israeli authorities applied also to the currently disputed land.

Similar testimony can be found in the state archives from Yosef Weitz, who headed the Jewish National Fund's forestry division and later helped to found the Israel Lands Administration. In 1952, he was appointed to head a government committee entrusted with investigating Bedouin land claims, and he and his colleagues came up with some interesting solutions. Their report noted that even though some of the 11,000 Bedouin who remained under Israel control after 1948 had been evicted from their historical land and then concentrated in a closed zone – this did not negate their ownership of that land. The report stressed that the Bedouin regarded all the land they cultivated as being owned by them, and it did not challenge that approach.

The Weitz committee proposed that it would nonetheless be possible to "avoid recognizing Bedouin rights on their land even if they prove that they have cultivated it for a long and extended time." One recommendation was to hold off on "the opening of a registration office in Be'er Sheva," so as to prevent any Bedouin from attempting to formalize their title.

Members of the panel also called on the government to speed up passage of a land purchase law, "in order to facilitate the process of transferring the land which in the past was cultivated by Bedouin to Israel development authorities." In the same vein, they declared that the Bedouin "should be compensated if they can prove land ownership."

From this we learn that the committee accepted the fact that the Bedouin had populated the Negev before the founding of the state, recognized land cultivation as constituting evidence of ownership, and recommended compensation to Bedouin whose land was to be expropriated.

Instead of uprooting 30,000 citizens of the state, the Prawer and the Goldberg committees would have done well to first consult both previous Israeli and British records on the subject of Bedouin land claims. If they had done that, as well as listened carefully to the Bedouin themselves, it's unlikely they would have made the recommendations they did.

Despite the government's approval of the Prawer proposals, the Bedouin will not relinquish their claim to their historical land. They will continue to raise the banner of recognition until justice is done.

What's new in the Negev

April 2011 The Fourth Jewish-Arab "Schenim" (Neighbors) Festival was held in Rahat on April 30th. The festival is a cooperative event of the city of Rahat, the Rahat Youth Cultural and Sports Center, Step Forward and the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality. The festival featured numerous booths, traditional Bedouin foods, and performances of songs, theater, and dance. Hundreds of residents of the Negev attended as well as people from the center of the country.

May Attorney Sana Ibn-Bari, the representative of the Negev Coexistence Forum, participated in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues that met in New York during the last two weeks of May. Attorney Ibn-Bari attended the meeting together with over 1,000 representatives of indigenous peoples from all over the world. The Bedouin population of the Negev is recognized as an indigenous people. This is the seventh year that representatives of the Negev Forum for Co-Existence have participated in this convention.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel published a paper describing principles for recognizing the unrecognized villages in the Negev:

http://www.acri.org.il/he/?p=11932



Attorney Sana Ibn-Bari at the United Nation Permanent Forum for Indigenous People (UNPFII), New-York, May 2011

One of the conclusions that this paper proposes is that if the government wishes to put an end to the continued conflict between it and the Bedouin in the Negev, and find a solution for the difficulties of the residents of the unrecognized villages based upon civil equality, it must adopt a systematic solution based upon the human rights of the Bedouin population and must recognize all 35 unrecognized villages in the Negev in their current location based upon objective planning criteria as well as the traditional system of ownership. The solution must be based upon an alternative master plan for the unrecognized villages.

June On June 5th the High Court of Justice ruled that the right to water is a legal right that constitutes a part of the minimal rights for existence and dignity. The court ruled that water must be made available to residents of the unrecognized villages in the Negev. Various organizations

appealed to the water company through this ruling to connect the unrecognized villages throughout the Negev to running water.

The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality appealed to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and various United Nations human rights bodies following the submission of the final draft of the Prawer Report before it was approved by the Israeli government. The Forum warned that the plan is contradictory to international human rights treaties that Israel has signed, and ignores the conclusions drawn by various United Nations committees regarding the Bedouin population in the Negev.

On June 14th the High Court rejected an appeal by Bedouin residents of the villages of Bir al Hamam and Khashem Zana to alter the plan for the future location of Route 6. The plan will result in the demolition of hundreds of homes and eviction of over 2,000 residents without any compensation or solution. (3459/10).

On June 23rd the High Court of Justice determined that the mosque in the city of Be'er Sheva would be converted to a museum for Islamic Culture and Eastern Peoples that would also serve the Muslims living in the area. This is the result of a legal hearing that began in 2002 and was appealed by Adalah, which demanded that the mosque continue to be used for prayer (7311/02).

On June 29th the Negev Coexistence Forum submitted an appeal to the United Nations following the approval of the first draft of a law by the Knesset requiring homeowners to pay the cost of administrative home demolitions. The Negev Coexistence Forum appealed to Professor James Anaya, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, and to international human rights organizations in an appeal for help in revoking the proposed law.

July

During the month of July, Bimkom and the Regional Council for Unrecognized Villages published a master plan for the unrecognized Bedouin settlements in the Negev. The plan proposes an alternative to the various government programs and offers the possibility of recognizing the unrecognized villages. The plan presents background, analysis, experts' reports, and concrete suggestions for suitable planning solutions for the unrecognized villages in the Negev.

The summer camp for children of the village of Al Arakib organized by activists of the Negev Coexistence Forum began on July 23rd. The summer camp included a sports day, a day devoted to prepare for the march marking the anniversary of the first demolition of the village, a juggling workshop given by activists from the "Circus Acts" organization, and other activities.

On July 25th activists from the Negev Coexistence Forum and residents of the village of Al Arakib took part in the protest march that was held in Be'er Sheva as part of the national struggle for social justice. Residents of the village joined the march after the demolition squad destroyed their village for the 25th time at noon the same day.

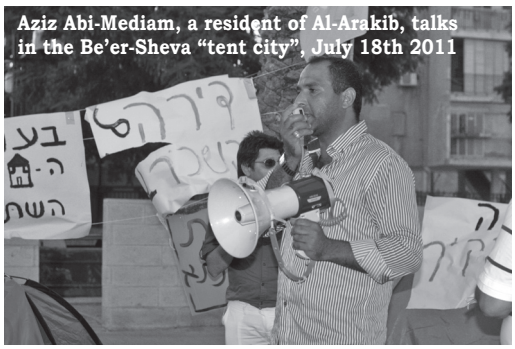


Sheich Sayach Al-Turi from Al-Arakib and activists from the protest tents during a rally in Be'er-Sheva, July 25th 2011

On July 26th residents of the village of Al Arakib received an unprecedented demand from the government for payment of 1.8 million Shekels for the repeated demolition of their village. The demand for payment was issued one day before the anniversary of the first demolition of the village.

On July 27th the residents of Al Arakib marked the anniversary of the first demolition of their village, which had been demolished 27 times at that point. Members of the Village Committee and activists from the Negev Coexistence Forum organized a march from the Lahavim Junction to the village that was attended by 200 residents and activists. The march was followed by a gathering in the village.

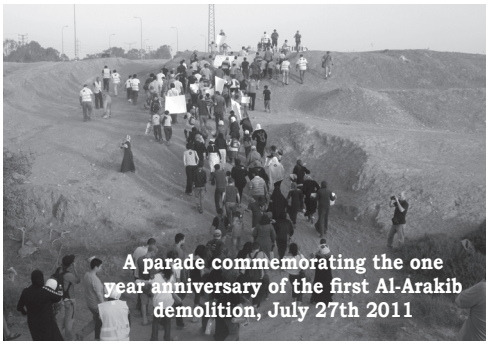
On July 29th activists from the Negev Coexistence Forum helped residents of the unrecognized village of Al Arakib to erect a large tent in the protest tent city in Be'er Sheva. After the tent was erected, Forum activists and village residents held a communal Friday night meal in the tent.



Aziz Abi-Mediam, a resident of Al-Arakib, talks in the Be'er-Sheva "tent city", July 18th 2011

August

On August 13th activists from the Negev Coexistence Forum joined residents of the village of Al Arakib in a large protest rally held in Be'er Sheva as part of the national Social Justice Movement. Dozens of Forum activists marched in the rally together with residents of the village and chanted "The Negev demands social justice."



A parade commemorating the one year anniversary of the first Al-Arakib demolition, July 27th 2011

On August 15th the Negev Coexistence Forum held its annual Iftar meal (the traditional evening meal to break the fast of Ramadan). The meal was followed by a discussion about the coming year and was attended by dozens of our Jewish and Arab activists.

September

On September 11th the Israeli government approved the Prawer-Amidror plan to evict 30,000 Arab-Bedouin from their villages, and to relocate them to urban settlements. This followed the transfer of the plan to Yaacov Amidror, Chairman of the Committee for Internal Security in June 2011. The final plan called for an additional decrease in the area of land designated to the Bedouin as well as a decrease in the amount of compensation the Bedouin would receive.

On September 11th members of the Negev Coexistence Forum participated in a large demonstration at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem during the vote on the Prawer-Amidror Plan. Approximately 200 Arab and Jewish demonstrators called upon the government not to accept the plan, and to allow the Bedouin in the Negev to play a part in determining their future and fate.

On September 15th the Negev Coexistence Forum submitted a claim to the Minister of Justice Yaakov Ne'eman that the Prawer Plan that was accepted by the Israeli government is contradictory to the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee for the implementation of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, and the government policy fails to assimilate the recommendations. The committee determined that: "The government must respect the rights of the Bedouin population to the lands of their forefathers and their traditional way of life that is based upon agriculture. The government must also ensure that the Bedouin population has access to medical services, education, water, and electricity regardless of where they reside within the country. The Prawer Plan ignores these requirements and is detrimental to the Bedouin population in the Negev."

On September 19th the Negev Coexistence Forum organized a large demonstration and march in Tel Aviv together with other organizations against the Prawer-Amidror Plan that was approved by the government a week earlier. Hundreds of Jewish and Arab demonstrators marched from the tent on

What's new in the Negev (cont.)

Rothchild Boulevard to Kiryat Hamemshalah (the Government center) in Tel Aviv.

On September 25th Adalah submitted an appeal to the Water Tribunal in Haifa in the name of two residents of the unrecognized villages of Tel Arad and Um al Hiran regarding the refusal to connect them to running water. (Appeal Number 51011-09/11). The appeal was submitted despite the decision by the High Court of Justice that the villages were to be connected to running water (9535/06).



Protestors in front of the Prime Minister's office during the government's decision to approve the Prawer Plan, September 11th 2011

The Interfaith calendar published by the Negev Coexistence Forum was launched on September 28th, the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. This year's calendar features photographs taken by children from the unrecognized village of Al Arakib during a photography workshop that took place in the village. The workshop was sponsored by BSST – British Shalom-Salam Trust and Negev Coexistence Forum in cooperation with Jewish and Arab photographers. The objective of the 2011-2012 Calendar is to increase awareness of the unrecognized villages in the Negev and the United Nations charters regarding the villages.

October On October 4th a demolition order was issued for the tent that was erected in protest of the Prawer-Amidror Plan. The tent was erected opposite the offices of the Authorities for Arranging Settlements of the Bedouin in Be'er- Sheva on September 20th, and was manned by organizations and movements in the Negev. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel appealed in the name of the protesters, and an agreement was reached in which the tent could remain standing until the 25th of the month.

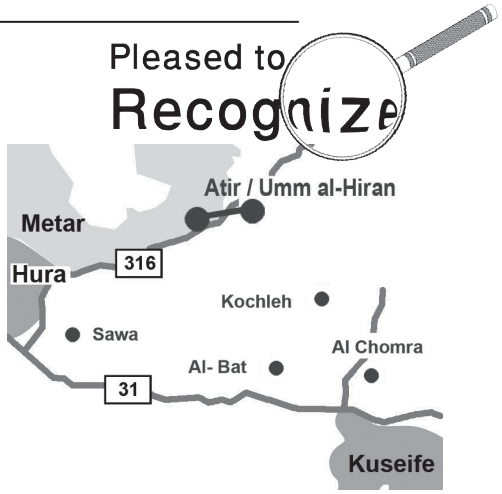
On October 6th 2,500 Jews and Arabs participated in a demonstration organized by the Steering Committee of the Arabs in the Negev against the Prawer-Amidror Plan. The plan calls for evicting and uprooting 30,000 Bedouin Arabs from their villages and gathering them into urban settlements. The demonstrators shouted slogans such as "There is no such thing as 'unrecognized villages'", "Social justice for Bedouin in the Negev", and "Stop House Demolitions." Numerous organizations, including the Negev Coexistence Forum, took part in the demonstration.

Please recognize - Atir – Um El Hiran

The villages of Atir and Um El Hiran are located south and north of Route 316 and northeast of Hura. The villages have a population of approximately 1,000 people who belong to the tribe of Abu Al Kiyan. The residents of the village have been living there since the mid-1950s. They were transferred there by the government after being forced to evacuate their land in Wadi Zubela in the northwestern Negev. Many of people homeless. The homes were illegally rebuilt within a few days with the help of the Recognition Forum and the Israel Committee Against House Demolition.



Adalah submitted an appeal in the name of residents of the village to the High Court of Justice to cancel the court decision of the Regional Court in Be'er Sheva, which ordered all residents of the unrecognized village of Atir Um El Hiran to evacuate their homes.



The villages have no infrastructure for water, electricity, roads, or sewage. Residents of the village have provided their own solutions for some of these basic needs. At first residents of Um El Hiran connected the village to water from the Mekorot System in the area of the Yatir Forests and later to Hura, from which they connected pipes to the various neighborhoods in the village. The pipe was subsequently sabotaged, and there is currently no water in Um El Hiran. Villagers are forced to bring water in trucks from various places. Families receive electricity using generators or solar panels that they have provided for themselves. The residents have also provided themselves with a mosque for prayers and burial services.

Residents of the village earn their living from agriculture and raising sheep, but many are unemployed.

The buildings in the village are temporary structures such as tin shacks, houses with cinder block walls and tin roofs or concrete.

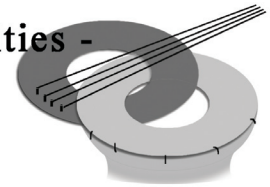
Residents of the village are interested in establishing an urban community settlement that is suitable to their needs. They are currently requesting the government to grant them permission to use the lands to which they were evacuated 50 years ago by the authorities. The government is interested in transferring the residents of Um El Hiran and Atir to the village of Hura.

the houses in the village are currently under threat of being demolished due to plans to build a Jewish settlement called Hiran in place of the village of Um El Hiran.

Residents of Atir and Um El Hiran submitted claims of ownership during the proceedings for land settlement that were conducted with the Ministry of Law in the 1970s, but the proceedings have not yet been completed and they are not registered as owners.

Fourteen homes were demolished at the end of June, 2007, leaving 150

Multaka-Mifgash Activities - an Arab-Jewish Culture House in the Negev



Various activities were held at the Multaka Mifgash - the Arab-Jewish Cultural Center that is run by the Negev Coexistence Forum in Be'er Sheva.

We hosted representatives of the Israeli left at an evening about the awakening of the Israeli left. Lecturers included Mussi Raz (Meretz), Dr. Ephraim Davidi (Hadash), Naftali Raz and Dr. Ali Alassad (Massad).

The Current Arab Cinema Club began featuring the films "Sacrifices" (Syria), "We were Communists" (Lebanon), and "Salta Baladi" (Egypt).

An evening was held about the struggle in Sadeh Brir with Dr. Sarit Oked who is one of the leaders of the struggle in Arad. An evening was held close to the Passover Holiday of Freedom about the thinking of Professor Yishayahu Leibowitz featuring lectures by Dr. Yosef Algazi and Dr. Avshalom Tzur. In commemoration of Holocaust Day we hosted the author Nir Baram who spoke about his book, "Good People." Dr. Fatma Kasam and Dr. Yael Hazan lectured at an evening entitled "Talking about the Nakba". During the month of Ramadan the Multaka Mifgash held a communal Iftar meal. Following the government's approval of the Prawer-Amidror Plan an evening was organized in the Multaka Mifgash about the plan, with lectures by Dr. Tabat Abu Ras, Dr. Yunas Abu Rabiya, and Dr. Erez Tzapadiya. We also began lessons in spoken English for activists and concluded our courses in colloquial Arabic. At the end of April the Negev Coexistence Forum held the "Neighbors" Festival in cooperation with the city of Rabat. This year the festival was held at the Center for Culture, Youth, and Sport in Rahat. The festival featured workshops and events and was attended by hundreds of Jews and Arabs.

Home and building demolition - April – October 2011

Village	Location	Buildings demolished	Date
Area between Bir al-chamam and Umm-Batin	South-west of Shoket junction	1,500 dunams were deep plowed	April 5th
Al-Arakib	West of road 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 20th time and 300 olive trees were uprooted.	April 6th
Kuseifa	South of road 31	Demolition of a house	April 11th
Sawa	East of Hura	Demolition of a house	April 11th
Rachama	North of road 204	Demolition of an elderly woman's house	April 17th
Al-Arakib	West of road 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 21st time.	May 11th
Al-Bcheirah	South of Quseifa and west of road 80	Demolition of a sheep pen	May 11th
Al-Zarnuk	South-east of Shqeb Al-Salam and east of road 25	Demolition of two houses	May 11th
Al-Rara	South of Hura and road 31	Demolition of a house	May 11th
Umm-Ratam	South of Arara Al-Naqab and east of road 25	Demolition of a hut	May 11th
Al-Qrein	South-west of Hura	Demolition of a wall	May 11th
Al-Forah	South-east of Arad	Demolition of the homes of 4 families	May 25th
Shqeb Al-Salam		Demolition of a warehouse	May 31st
Al-Arakib	West of road 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 22nd time.	May 31st
Wadi Al-Na'am	Near the industrial zone Ramat-Hovav, east of road 40	Demolition of 3 houses	May 31st
Umm-Ratam	South of Arara Al-Naqab and east of road 25	Demolition of a house	June 9th
Al-Arakib	West of road 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 23rd time.	June 21st
Sawawin	East of Shqeb Al-Salam	Demolitions of 3 houses	June 21st
Near Chasham-Zaneh	East of road 25 Be'er-Sheva - Dimona	Demolitions of 3 houses	June 21st

Home and building demolition - April – October 2011 (cont.)

Village	Location	Buildings demolished	Date
Al-Qrein	South-west of Hura	Demolition of 2 houses	June 21st
Bir El-Chamam	South of Tel-Sheva	Demolition of a clinic	July 4
Kuseifa	South of road 31	Demolition of a shop	July 4
Al-Bat	West of Kuseifa	Demolition of a house	July 4
North of Kuseifa Al Kreshat	Kuseifa	Demolition of a house	July 6th
Al-Arakib	West of road 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 24th time.	July 12th
Rahat south	Rahat	Demolition of a house under construction	July 19th
Sawa – Al Atrash	East of Hura	Demolition of a house of 8 people	July 19th
Al-Arakib	West of road 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 25th time.	July 25th
Al-Rara	South of Hura and road 31	3 stone houses were demolished affecting 3 families (approximately 30 people in total)	September 8th
Al-Arakib	West of road 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 26th time.	September 8th
Al-Forah	South-east of Arad	One house was demolished	October 5th
Al-Arakib	West of road 40 between Lehavim and Goral junctions	The village was demolished for the 27th time.	October 5th



Membership and Participation in the Forum

The Forum was first established and still exists as an organization dependent on volunteers and voluntarism: citizens who understand that without community action and intervention, government policies in the Negev lead to injustice, discrimination and a depressing future for the Negev and the country as a whole. The Forum's goals are to push equal rights further and forward and to promote tolerance and coexistence in the Negev.

We invite you to join us to help advance the goals of the Forum as they are outlined in this newsletter. If you are interested in doing so you can participate in any of these above-mentioned activities, even those already underway. The Forum is open and pleased to receive ideas and new initiatives for additional activities.

In addition, the Forum needs volunteers to carry out specific roles such as:

1) To develop and maintain the Forum's website.
2) To translate texts from Hebrew to Arabic and English and in the opposite directions.
3) Editor for the Forum Newsletter.
4) Members for the Multaka-Mifgash stirring committee.
5) Investigating ethnic based discrimination in working places, services etc.
6) For spokespersons and public relations persons to face the media and general public.
7) To co-ordinate volunteers activities.
8) To co-ordinate Knesset lobbying activities.

We would appreciate your support of NCF activities. Please send checks to POB. 130, Omer, 84965.

Those who wish to join the Negev Coexistence Forum are encouraged to pay a membership fee as follows:
Individuals - 40 NIS, families - 60 NIS, students and others who wish to pay a reduced fee - 20 NIS.

* Further information regarding the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality can be obtained by contacting one of the contacts at the bottom of the page, or through the Internet at www.dukium.org.
* We shall be pleased to receive the addresses of potential readers of the newsletter, or ideas for other subjects considered suitable to be included in the newsletter.
* If you no longer desire to receive this newsletter please inform us.

The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality is an independent non-party organization that was established in 1997 by Arabs and Jews - Israeli citizens who live in the Negev-Naqab. The Forum's aim is to provide a framework for Jewish-Arab co-operation as a basis for a common struggle for equal civil rights and to promote tolerance and coexistence in the Negev. The Forum's activities are carried out on a voluntary basis, or funded exclusively by private foundations, in particular The New Israel Fund, and donations. These include meetings and social events between the communities, information drives, environment justice campaigns, recognition of the unrecognized Bedouin villages of the Negev, the struggle for employment equality in the Negev and other similar activities.

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