

THE NEGEV COEXISTENCE FORUM
FOR CIVIL EQUALITY

2011

ACTIVITIES REPORT

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



SUMMARY OF 2011

Against the backdrop of an increasingly hostile political environment not only for the Negev Bedouin but activists supporting their struggle for recognition and equality, and alarming policy developments, there were some encouraging advancements by members of the international community to spotlight the government's actions violating human rights.

STATE INTIMIDATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST ACTIVISTS AND RESIDENTS

Beginning in 2010, and continuing into 2011, there was a marked increase in the harassment of NGOs and activists. Numerous civil society organizations and grassroots activists came under assault, whether through harassment by government authorities, through a campaign to de-legitimize their activities and expose them as criminals, or through legislation aimed at limiting these actors' freedom of expression and funding opportunities and thereby suppressing their activities. Additionally, we witnessed the Israeli government actively attempting to prevent peaceful assemblies and mass resistance in the Negev via a number of means.

First, in the unrecognized village of Al Arakib which was demolished nearly two dozen times in 2011, activists and residents faced harassment and incarceration



for their peaceful opposition to the state's actions. The police force resorted to the use of violence on a number of occasions resulting in many being hospitalized, arrested and charged. This includes, for example, Ms Haia Noach (NCF Executive Director who was assaulted, twice arrested and charged with frivolous offences), Mr Mumtaz Hatib (an NCF Coordinator), Mr Gadi Algazi (of Tarabut-Hithabrut) and nearly a dozen Bedouin including Dr Awad Abu-Friech (who has led a very high profile in the campaign against the afforestation activities of the Jewish National Fund on his family's ancestral land). Secondly, a number of individuals

had their private property confiscated and were subjected to aggressive interrogation while detained. Thirdly, Ms Noach filed a complaint regarding her treatment but there was no effective action to investigate or reprimand the officers responsible—only serving to undermine accountability and to perpetuate the attitude that activists are legitimate targets by state actors such as the police force. Finally, the state instituted legal proceedings in July 2011 against the residents of Al Arakib for the cost of the demolition operations.

CONTINUED HOME DEMOLITIONS AND THE PRAWER REPORT

2011 was marked by an intensification of the home demolition policy, and in particular, the repeated destruction of the village of Al Arakib. Perhaps the most significant development, however, was the cabinet's approval of the so-called Praver-Amidror Plan on September 11 which purports to regulate the settlement of the Arab Bedouin citizens of Israel in the Negev. While ostensibly proposing a system of compensation for some existing land claims, the plan essentially aims at the forcible relocation of some 30,000 Bedouin to government - planned townships and the destruction of a significant number of unrecognized villages.



UNITED NATION'S FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE NEGEV

In August, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Prof. James Anaya, publicly condemned Israel's treatment of its Bedouin citizens and called on the government to immediately refrain from demolishing any more homes in the Negev and ensure the delivery of essential services to both recognized and unrecognized villages. If the rationale for the government's demolition of unrecognized villages, the Special Rapporteur provided, is the need to clear the way for maintaining a Jewish presence throughout the Negev, such motivation is racially discriminatory. Additionally, Prof. Anaya described the Bedouin Negev as an indigenous people.

Furthermore, in its Concluding Observations of December 2011, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stated that the Praver-Amidror Plan should not result in the forceful eviction of the Bedouin and that any eviction should be based on free, prior and informed consent. Additionally, the state ought to regulate the unrecognized villages, cease the demolition of buildings in those villages and ensure the enjoyment of right to adequate housing.

Finally, in February 2011, during her tour of Israel, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay, publicly expressed her concern of the ongoing demolitions of unrecognized villages in the Negev.

NATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

Alongside the NCF's ongoing activities, we joined the national wave of social protests that swept Israel during the summer of 2011. "Tent cities" sprang up all over the country, including in Be'er-Sheva, with people demanding affordable housing, a 'social' budget, and an end to commercial and economic monopolies as well as other measures to enhance economic security for all.

ABOUT THE NEGEV COEXISTENCE FORUM FOR CIVIL EQUALITY

HISTORY

In 1997, a group of concerned Arab and Jewish residents of the Negev (the southern desert region of Israel) established the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF) to provide a framework for Jewish-Arab collaborative efforts in the struggle for civil equality and the advancement of mutual tolerance and coexistence. The NCF, also known as “Dukium” in Hebrew, is unique in being the only Arab-Jewish organization established in the Negev that remains focused solely on the specific issues confronting the Negev.

MISSION

The NCF considers that the State of Israel fails to fulfil its responsibility to respect, protect and meet its human rights obligations without discrimination towards its Arab-Bedouin citizens in the Naqab-Negev. As a result, the NCF has set out as one of its goals to advance the civil rights and equality for all those living in Negev.

ACTIVITIES

Within the framework of the Recognition Forum we oppose current government policies and plans for the unrecognized villages and strive to promote alternative plans for recognition for these villages. Our activities include, lobbying and awareness raising at the national and international level, protests and demonstrations, solidarity visits against house demolitions, tree planting, workshops for children and tours of the Negev unrecognized villages. The NCF works hand in hand with its partners and independently in presenting legal challenges, organizing tours and protest actions.

2011 AWARDS

The NCF received the **Miriam Fligelman Levy Award** in honour of Miriam Fligelman Levy who was an innovator and a social thinker. Together with her husband Irving, she dedicated her life to bridge building. Her legacy and her commitment to these values are carried on by her daughter Judith Levy Sender and by her sons Joseph Fligelman Levy and John Fligelman Levy. The Miriam Fligelman Levy Prize embodies the spirit of the progressive conscience of the Jewish community.

In bestowing this award upon the NCF, the New Israel Fund noted the mutual respect and deep commitment to the cause that exists between our Jewish and Arab members and that we actively recruit a broad spectrum of voices, including Bedouin women and Arab and Jewish students from the Ben Gurion University of the Negev. Additionally, our work in running the Multaka-Mifgash Center for Arab-Jewish Understanding in Be'er-Sheva was recognized in the presentation of the award.

PARTNERSHIPS

The NCF's Social Justice Network cooperates closely with local and national organizations that have interest in the issues concerning the Negev. One of the coalitions that we formed in 2002 was the "Recognition Forum" which aimed to achieve recognition for the unrecognized villages. The Recognition Forum includes the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), Taayush – Arab-Jewish Partnership, the Association of Forty, Rabbis for Human Rights, Women's Coalition for Peace, Yesh Gvul, Gush Shalom, The Association for Support and Defence Bedouin Rights in Israel, The Negev Coexistence Forum, New Profile, Alternative Information Center and Social Television.

The NCF also has working ties with organizations such as Community Advocacy, the Environmental Justice Clinic at the Tel Aviv University Law School, Physicians for Human Rights, and the Regional Committees of the Unrecognized Villages, Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Adalah, Hithabrut-Tarabot, Activestills, Alsira Village Committee, Wadi Al Naam Village Committee and Al Arakib Village Committee.

SECRETARIAT

The governing body of the NCF is the Secretariat whose members during 2011 were as follows:

- **Musa Abu Ghanem:** Lecturer and educator at Achva College; school principal; activist in various social domains, especially education; co-founder of the Negev Coexistence NCF for Civil Equality.
- Prof. **Avner Ben-Amos:** Historian of Education, School of Education, Tel-Aviv University.
- **Rachel Naparstek:** Artist, peace and social activist.
- **S'aid a-Sana:** Director of the Bedouin Mobile Health Unit for the past 25 years and active among the Arab Negev population.
- **Rodaina Abu-Freiha:** Teacher, educator, peace and social activist.
- **Khalil Alamour:** Member of the Alsira Village Committee, former member of the Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages (RCUV) in the Negev, educator and active member of Bedouin rights in the Negev.
- **Yaacov Manor:** A peace activist, founder of The Committee Against House Demolition, Recognition Forum, Coalition of Organizations for Peace, The Water Coalition and Olive Picking Coalition.

TEAM

During 2011, the NCF had a small team of staff, all of whom, with the exception of the Executive Director, worked part-time:

Haia Noach, Executive Director

Karen Douglas, Resource Development Coordinator

Noam Tirosh, Activities and Tours Coordinator

Michal Rotem, Press and Advocacy coordinator

Momtaz Hatib, Programme Coordinator

Yusrah Abu Kaf, Photography and Video Advocacy Coordinator

Maryam abu Medirem, Al Arakib Learning Center Coordinator

The team was supported by numerous devoted volunteers from the local community.

SUPPORTING THE RESIDENTS OF AL ARAKIB

During the peak of the repeated demolitions of the village in 2011, NCF Executive Director Haia Noach and other members were present in the village



on an almost daily basis to support the residents and to oversee the weekly rally alongside the main highway into Be'er-Sheva. Additionally, numerous protests in the Negev and the centre of Israel were held.

We also collaborated with the Jewish Alliance for Change (JAFC) and Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR) to raise awareness about the plight of Al Arakib and to appeal to individual JNF leaders against the forestation plan.

Other NGOs who were present in the first intense stages of the demolitions later redirected their focus to other issues, leaving the NCF as one of the few remaining civil society actors monitoring JNF and state activities in and around Al Arakib. We are determined that the serious breaches of residents' rights and



their legitimate desire to live peacefully on their ancestral lands will not be forgotten.

WEEKLY VIGIL

Throughout the year, a **weekly vigil** in support of the residents of Al Arakib was held on Route 40, the main highway into Be'er-Sheva. It drew supporters from the area and beyond and maintained the visibility of the village's plight.

DIRECT LOBBYING OF JNF

During February, together with JAFC and RHR, we arranged for a **national call-in day** for concerned members of the public to ask JNF to cease the dispossession of the Negev Bedouin. In March the JNF dismantled their work camp established in January 2011 on land used by residents of Al Arakib to grow crops and located less than 1km from Al Arakib. A new work camp was established in early April near the Jewish village of Gevaot Bar, very near the land of the family of Dr Awad Abu Freich, a prominent figure in the campaign against the JNF. Nevertheless we believe that our first campaign generated part of the pressure to close the camp near Al Arakib. We note, however, the afforestation works did not cease and their activities were simply transferred to other areas.

Further, in early 2011 the NCF conducted **tours** to Al Arakib for members of the JNF Council, in order to highlight the effect of their activities on the residents. In March, Seth Morrison who had took part in one of these visits, decided to resign later on as a JNF board member due to its activities leading to the eviction of Palestinians in Silwan.

In March, Ms Noach attended a **private meeting** along with Dr Awad abu Freich, Rabbi Arik Asherman and Attorney Carmel Pomerantz, organized by RHR, with the Director of the JNF-USA, Mr Russell Robinson in order to convince the JNF to abandon its afforestation plans for Al Arakib and to promote the establishment of an agricultural village for the residents.

TIMELINE OF DIRECT COMMUNITY ACTION

JANUARY 16 | When the village was demolished for the ninth time since the summer of 2010, police brutality, rubber-coated and sponge-tipped metal bullets, tear gas and pepper spray injured several residents and activists. Debris from the demolitions was moved to a local dump by the authorities. The following day, Al Arakib was again demolished and some 15 trucks, escorted by dozens of special unit police, continued to remove the debris and household items left over from the demolition. The police soon returned and fired rubber and sponge-tipped metal bullets at the residents and arrested nine residents and activists.



JANUARY 23 | During a hearing to extend the court injunction against the Jewish National Fund's (JNF) activities at Al Arakib, hundreds of people and NCF activists demonstrated outside the Be'er-Sheva courthouse, calling for an end to the repeated demolitions of the village and to JNF continuing with its forestry plan.

FEBRUARY 1 | More than 100 NCF activists, together with those from other NGOs and Bedouin residents, demonstrated in front of the JNF headquarters in Jerusalem. Banners included slogans such as, "Uprooting People-Planting Trees".

FEBRUARY 10 | During the sixteenth demolition, residents and NCF activists



refused to leave the area and police fired on women and children with crowd dispersal ammunition. The police delayed the arrival of the ambulances for four injured residents, while other wounded residents were treated in the village. Three activists and three residents (including a minor) were detained.

FEBRUARY 12 | After four consecutive days of demolitions, the NCF led a solidarity visit together with the Recognition Forum, Hithabrut-Tarabut, and the Coalition of Women for Peace.



FEBRUARY 16 & 17 | After a brief few days of relative peace in the village during which approximately 15 temporary wooden structures were erected in between the terraces of earth created by the JNF, the Israel Land Administration (ILA) and the riot police squad ("Matpah") returned. NCF activists were present throughout the two days of demolitions to support the residents. The structures were again demolished by the ILA's bulldozers while the residents, including the children who had not yet left for school, were detained in the cemetery by police.

FEBRUARY 19 | The NCF, together with the Recognition Forum, led a solidarity visit during which residents and activists prepared posters protesting the demolitions and activities of the JNF. The posters were displayed at the entrance to the village.



FEBRUARY 24 | The NCF, together with many other NGOs, participated in a march in Be'er-

Sheva under the heading "Recognition Now", to protest the demolitions and to demand the recognition of the unrecognized villages.

MARCH 12 | The NCF, together with other NGOs, held a solidarity visit. Olive saplings were planted and activists demonstrated in front of the JNF work site, protesting against the forestation works and demolitions.

MARCH 30 | A rally commemorating Land Day was held in Al Arakib. Activists from the NCF participated together with more than 1,000 Negev Bedouin.

JULY 23 | NCF activists organized a summer camp for the children of Al Arakib. Activities included a sports day, a day devoted to the march marking the anniversary of the first demolition of the village, a juggling workshop organized by the "Circus Acts" organization and many other activities.

JULY 25 | NCF activists and residents of Al Arakib took part in a protest march held in Be'er-Sheva as part of the national struggle for social justice. For residents of the village the march followed the 25th demolition of their homes. On the following day, the villagers received an unprecedented demand from the government for NIS 1.8 million (approximately US\$450,000) for the repeated demolitions of their village, and this just one day before the anniversary of the first demolition.

JULY 27 | Residents of Al Arakib intended to mark the anniversary of the first demolition and all the 27 demolitions at the time with a torchlight march from the nearby Lahavim Junction to the village. However, police permission was not granted and the procession took place alongside the main highway culminating in a gathering at the village where residents spoke about their experiences. Organized by members of the Village Committee and the NCF, the march drew some 200 residents and activists.

JULY 29 | NCF activists helped Al Arakib residents erect a tent at the protest camp in Be'er-Sheva and residents joined other protesters in a communal meal.

AUGUST 13 | NCF activists joined residents of Al Arakib at a protest rally in Be'er-Sheva as part of the national social justice movement which swept the country during the summer months. Under the banner of Jewish-Arab cooperation we chanted: "The Negev Demands Social Justice". This was one of the biggest demonstrations ever held in Be'er-Sheva and was notable for the participation of Bedouin citizens especially those from Al Arakib.



SOLLATEK



In June, the NCF received a donation of five solar lights (Glowstar kits) for the residents of Al Arakib allowing them to maintain a presence on their ancestral in the face the an ongoing land dispute. As the village is not connected to any basic services, including electricity, this donation had considerable meaning in their non-violent struggle. The residents use the lanterns around their village and in their tents to provide light for their evening activities and to visually signify to the authorities that they are not abandoning their land.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT



JOINT CELEBRATION OF IFTAR

Through our many community-based activities such as **joint celebration of religious holidays**, we aim to open a dialogue between the Bedouin and Jewish residents of the Negev to promote cultural coexistence, mutual respect and understanding. On August 15, the NCF held its annual *Iftar* meal (to break the fast of Ramadan), attended by over 60 Jewish and Arab guests. The meal was followed by a discussion about the coming year under the shadow of the Praver-Amidror Report.

AWARENESS RAISING TOURS AND PRESENTATIONS

During 2011, the NCF conducted a total of 24 tours for groups and further 40 tours for individuals. Tour participants included journalists, ambassadors and diplomats, photographers and students. Additionally, NCF took part in a number of presentations. Particularly significant tours and presentations are described below:

JANUARY 18 | The NCF joined a **presentation at Tel-Aviv University** about the ongoing struggle of Al Arakib. Dozens of students, faculty heads and members of the general public attended.

FEBRUARY 8 | Mr Walter Hafner, the **Swiss Ambassador**, and his political aid, Ms Silvana Hogg, were guests of the NCF. Their tour included a visit to the unrecognized villages of Alsira and Al Arakib. The ambassador committed to raise the possibility of removing the name "The Ambassador's Forest" planted on the ruins of Al Arakib with his diplomatic colleagues and also to organize a study day on the issue at his residence.



MARCH 9 | Thanks to the intensive efforts of the Swiss Embassy, the NCF and the Recognition Forum, an **in-depth presentation for ambassadors** to Israel was organized on the subject of the Negev Bedouin. The event was held at the residence of the Swiss ambassador, Mr Walter Hafner and attended by 30 people, including 14 ambassadors. Khalil Alamour (from the village of Alsira), Atyia al Assam (from Abu-Thlul and former chairman of the RCUV) and Dr Awad abu

Freich (from Al Arakib), recounted their experiences as residents of unrecognized villages and described the problems they faced. Haia Noach, Gadi Elgazi (from Hithabrut-Tarabut) and Attorney Rawia Aburabia (from the Association for Civil Rights in Israel) spoke respectively about the geographical, political and legal aspects of the dispossession of the Bedouin from the ancestral lands.

MARCH - APRIL | The NCF conducted a tour of the Negev and the unrecognized villages for the **Czech Republic Ambassador** Mr. Tomáš Pojar and representatives from the **French, South African and Turkish embassies**. All were alarmed by what they witnessed.

VISUAL LITERACY PROJECT

During the two-week winter school vacation, the NCF ran a **photography and video workshop** in Alsira and Al Arakib with the support of a number of professional Arab and Jewish photographers and Activestills. Not only did these activities help the children to process their experiences of the conflict and deal with their emotions through self-expression but also provide an opportunity for the children to simply enjoy themselves. Various aspects of photography were explored with the children such as landscapes, portraits and photojournalism.



In November an **exhibition** was hosted by our partners L'Union Juive Française Pour la Paix (UJFP) in Paris to highlight the impact of the state's demolition policy. It featured the work of photographs taken both by the children of Al Arakib and photojournalist Silvia Boarini who worked closely with the NCF throughout 2010 and 2011. With the support of Amnesty International, Aziz and Ismail Abu Amdiam from Al Arakib,

attended the event to represent their community and shared their experience with visitors.

In September, on the eve of the Jewish New Year, the NCF published its **interfaith calendar** which featured the photographs taken by children from Al Arakib. The motif of this year's calendar was the unrecognized villages and the international human rights treaties.

DOMESTIC ADVOCACY AGAINST GOVERNMENT PLANS OF DISPOSSESSION

SEPTEMBER 11 | During the cabinet's vote approving the Praver-Amidror Plan – potentially leading to the eviction of some 40,000 Arab-Bedouin from their homes and their enforced relocation to urban settlements – the NCF participated in a **demonstration in Jerusalem** by the Negev Bedouin outside the Prime Minister's Office. Following the revision of the plan by National Security Adviser Major General Ya'akov Amidror, it further decreases the area of land designated for Bedouin citizens as well as reducing the amount of compensation they will receive for their expropriated lands. Arab and Jewish demonstrators called upon the government not to accept the plan and to allow the Negev Bedouin to play a part in determining their future.



SEPTEMBER 15 | The NCF submitted an **appeal to the Minister of Justice**, Ya'akov Ne'eman that the Praver-Amidror Plan as 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.

SEPTEMBER 19 | The NCF, together with the Recognition Forum and other NGOs, organized a well-attended **demonstration in Tel Aviv** against the Plan. Hundreds of Arab and Jewish demonstrators took part.

SEPTEMBER 20 | A **protest tent** was established opposite the offices of the Authority for Regulating Bedouin Settlement in Be'er-Sheva, staffed by local NGOs and activists, including the NCF.

OCTOBER 6 | The NCF and a coalition of NGOs and Bedouin communities advocating against the implementation of the Plan joined a peaceful **demonstration in Be'er-Sheva**, organized by the Steering Committee for the Negev Arabs. Over 3,500 people took part, which is large by Negev standards. Mr Khalil Alamour, resident of Alsira and a member of the NCF Secretariat spoke to the [Jerusalem Post](#) during the protest.





DECEMBER 11 | Between 3,000 and 4,000 protesters gathered outside of the **Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem** to demonstrate against the Plan.

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

ARAB-JEWISH DELEGATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Michal Rotem was selected to join a four-member Arab-Jewish delegation to the US in October 2011 to rally government officials, religious congregations and members of the public against the Israeli government's cabinet-approved Prawer-Amidor Plan. Michal visited Washington DC, New York and Chicago where she met with members of JStreet, synagogues, churches, mosques, Open Society Institute, DePaul University, Northwestern University Law School, Columbia Law School, Al Jazeera, Republican Senators and the Arab American Institute.



ADVOCATING BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS

OHCHR | In February, the NCF attended meeting with the UN **High Commissioner for Human Rights**, Ms. Navi Pillay. She expressed her concern regarding the crisis faced by the Negev Bedouin and concluded that the issue of home demolitions in the Negev will be closely monitored by her office.

UNITAR | For the second consecutive year a representative of the NCF, Attorney Sana Ibn Bari, participated in the **Training Programme to Enhance the Conflict Prevention and Peacemaking Capacities** of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives run by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

UNPFII | In May the NCF sent a Bedouin representative to attend the annual session of the **UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues** for the seventh consecutive year. We were the only Israeli NGO to attend and were represented by Attorney Sana Ibn Bari who presented a statement to the participants.



Special Rapporteurs | Throughout the year, the NCF appealed to the **Special Rapporteur** on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur for Adequate Housing, to draw their attention to the Praver-Amidor Plan, and a bill that would see Bedouin homeowners bearing the full cost of the demolitions of their homes.

CESCR | In August, the NCF submitted its **responses to the list of issues** by the **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (CESCR) in its consideration of the third periodic report of the State of Israel under the the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Among many other matters, the CESCR specifically asked the state to explain what action it had taken to implement the recommendations of the Goldberg Committee, the role of the JNF in the disposition of land resources and progress towards local elections for the Abu Basma Council. Additionally, the NCF drew the CESCR's attention to a rise in the infant mortality rate among the Bedouin population due to reduced access to health services.

In November, Khalil Alamour, a member of the Secretariat, attended the review session of the CESCR in Geneva. He presented a statement to the Committee and met with several representatives and officials within the UN to heighten awareness about the threat of the Praver-Amidor Plan. During the session, Committee members expressed great concern about the rights of the Negev Bedouin and reaffirmed their deep commitment to the minority group.

HRC | The NCF participated in the review process of the **Human Rights Committee** of the implementation of its Concluding Observations on Israel from July 2010 under the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. The NCF highlighted in particular the rise of home demolitions in the unrecognized villages and that the government instituted legal proceedings against the residents of Al Arakib for 1.8 NIS.

SWISS GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

The NCF was pleased to learn that the Swiss government referred to the situation of the Bedouin in the Negev in a recent statement during the 18th session of the UN Human Rights Council in September 2011. We understand that the Swiss delegation made an oral intervention under item 7 regarding Palestine and criticized the human rights violations of the Bedouin. This intervention by the Swiss Foreign Ministry followed NCF's continual updates about what is happening on the ground in the Negev.

COLLABORATION WITH IGOs

In September, the NCF hosted a representative from **Minority Rights Group International**, Farah Mihar. This was part of a research mission which resulted in the publication of a detailed report describing the government's discriminatory policy towards the Bedouin and raising awareness of Praver-Amidor Plan.

In May, the NCF hosted colleagues from the **Amnesty International-UK** at Al Arakib to provide a clearer understanding of the situation and offer the opportunity to hear directly from the residents. As an organization working on the ground, AI draws their information heavily from NGOs such as the NCF, providing reports and first-hand information. This provided to be an effective alliance and AI-UK reissued their international appeal against the destruction of Al Arakib.

REPORTING AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

The NCF released a report to coincide with the **International Day Against Racial Discrimination** observed annually on March 21. The report documented the lack of opportunities for Arabs in the public service in the Negev. It also revealed the poor level of government services in the Bedouin communities in comparison with nearby Jewish communities as well as services for the Arabic-speaking population.

The NCF issued its second report on **International Human Rights Day**, observed annually on December 10, which documented the intensification of the government's policy of house demolitions. The report revealed that 1,000 houses were demolished in 2011, which was more than double the number of homes compared to the previous year.

Throughout the year, the NCF also maintained its **online record of home demolitions** in the Negev and rapidly updated **social media tools** including Facebook and Twitter following major events.

Additionally, the NCF issued two printed **newsletters**, two **e-newsletters** and weekly **email updates** to over 1,000 people in English, Hebrew and Arabic.

MULTAKA-MIFGASH CENTER FOR ARAB-JEWISH UNDERSTANDING

The NCF believes that meeting the people at the heart of the debate face-to-face is an invaluable experience towards changing the way people think and dispelling myths and prejudices. Thus, in 2006, we opened the Multaka-Mifgash Centre for Arab-Jewish Understanding in Be'er-Sheva. 'Multaka' and 'mifgash' mean 'meeting' in Arabic and Hebrew respectively and is thus reflective of the Centre's purpose of bringing communities together.

It serves as a neutral meeting space for joint Arab-Jewish cultural, educational and political activities that encourage interaction and dialogue among the Jewish and Arab communities in the Negev. Through a variety of activities we provide opportunities for Jews and Arabs to come together in meaningful ways. The Centre is the first of its kind south of Tel-Aviv and today there are no more than three other places like it in Israel.

Films screened over the course of the year included *Martin* (directed by Ra'anana Alexandrovich), *Ba'abus*, *Untitled 1948*, *The Law in these Parts*, *Soumud – The Struggle of Al-Arakib*, *Recognized* (directed by Ori Kleiner), *Sacrifices* (directed by Osama Mohamad), *Did you hear about the Black Panthers?* (directed by Nisim Mosek), *Destiny Hills* (directed by Lior Kaufman and Mohamad Al-Tlalka), *Budrous* and more. The NCF also marked International Women's Day with the Arabic play *Mastura*.

Discussion workshops were held with a number of **authors** including Nir Baram (*Ordinary People*) and Dr. Fatma Kassem (*Palestinian Women: Narrative Histories and Gendered Memory*). Additionally, there was a discussion about *Occupation of the Territories: Israeli Soldiers' Testimonies 2000-2010* published by Breaking the Silence.

Other **discussion panels** were held concerning proposed Praver-Amidror Plan which included Dr Thabet Abu Rass, Dr Yunes Abu Rabia and Dr Erez Zfadia; the summer social justice movement which included the movement's leaders Yigal Ramban, Yehuda Alush and Daniel Dor; the establishment of a phosphate mine in Sdeh Barir; and the awakening of the Israeli left. Further, the NCF presented an introductory workshop to the Negev Bedouin over the course of a number of evenings.

In April 30, the fourth "**Neighbours Festival**" in the Rahat Community Center was held. This is a yearly festival in cooperation with the Rahat Community Center, Rahat Municipality, A Step Forward and the NCF. The festival featured numerous booths, traditional Bedouin foods, and performances of songs, theatre, and dance. Hundreds of residents of the Negev attended as well as people from all over the country.

Finally, a **spoken-Arabic course** consisting of 12 meetings was offered for approximately a dozen students.

SUPPORTERS

Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Government

New Israel Fund

Feldman Family Foundation

British Shalom-Salaam Trust

Paixjuste au Proche-Orient

Humanitarian Fund Amsterdam

Haella Foundation

Jews for Justice for Palestinians

Children of Peace

Robert Arnow

Collectif Urgence Palestine

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

