



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



The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

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Between Discrimination and Abandonment: The Bedouin Recognized Villages and the Jewish Settlements in the Negev



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Introduction

Over the past decade, the Israeli Government decided to recognize thirteen Bedouin unrecognized villages in the Negev (Appendix). While the recognition of two of the villages is at an initial stage, the other eleven, on which this report will focus, already have a 'blue line', that defines the area of the village. This step, that was supposed to bring services, infrastructure and detailed planning for those villages, has not changed much on the ground. In practice, in the vast majority of these villages there is no infrastructure, the services are poor and inadequate for the majority of residents, and due to the lack of planning, the house demolition policy and the prevention of building permits continue.

At the same time, over the last decade, three new Jewish settlements were established in the Negev area, two were resettled by Jewish religious communities, and another four Jewish settlements are currently in an advanced planning and establishment stage. These settlements, populated by a relatively small number of residents, enjoy a variety of services allocated by the government, and also receive building permits for new structures and extensions to existing ones. In addition, plans for at least twelve more settlements are now on the agenda, most, if not all, are designated for the Jewish population (Appendix).

Activestills | Activestills is a collective of Israeli, Palestinian, and international photographers, united by a conviction that photography is a vehicle for political and social change. Our images are frequently published by many leading human rights, development, and advocacy agencies. As photographers, we believe in the power of images to shape public attitudes and to raise awareness on issues that are generally absent from public discourse. We view ourselves as part of the struggle against all forms of oppression, racism, and violations of the basic right to freedom.

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality | In 1997, a group of concerned Arab and Jewish residents of the Negev (Israel's southern desert region) 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. NCF, also known as "Dukium" in Hebrew, is unique in being the only Arab-Jewish organization that remains focused solely on the specific problems confronting the Negev. NCF considers that the State of Israel fails to respect, protect and fulfill its human rights obligations, without discrimination, towards the Arab-Bedouin citizens in the Negev. As a result, the Forum has set out as one of its goals to achieve full civil rights and equality for all those living in the Negev.



Building Permits

Over the last decade, mostly because of the lack of a local master plan for the recognized villages, building permits were almost never issued. While in eight of the villages no permits were issued since their recognition, in Abu Krinat, recognized in 2003, only three permits have so far been issued, in A-Sayed, recognized in 2006, only one permit has been issued, and in Tarabin A-Sana, many permits have already been issued. On the other hand, apart from the Jewish settlement of Shizaf, that was established illegally and is now under a process of resettlement to a permanent and agreed location, all of the Jewish settlements in the Negev enjoy building permits and plans for the establishment of tens of thousands of new housing units.

Left: View of the Jewish community settlement of Givot Bar

Right: View of the Bedouin village of Kaser A-Sir

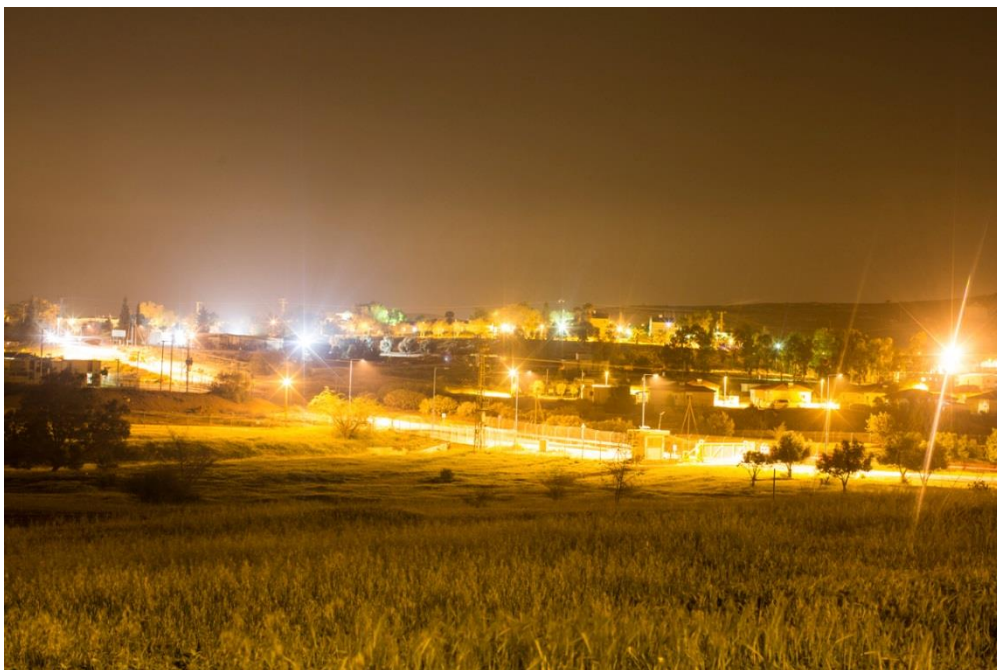


House Demolition

Given the denial of building permits in most of the recognized villages, their residents are subjected to the government policy of house demolition, similar to the situation in the unrecognized villages. New houses that are being built due to population growth, and houses that were even slightly renovated, are considered illegal and are demolished by the Israeli Land Administration and the Ministry of Interior. In most of the demolitions, the state suggests no alternative solution for the dwellers, and they are left without shelter with whatever personal belongings they have managed to save before the demolition. On the other hand, in the new Jewish settlements, no house demolition policy is implemented, and illegal settlements and farms are regularized retrospectively.

Left: House under construction at the Jewish community settlement of Givot Bar

Right: Demolition of a stone house at the Bedouin village of A-Sayyed



Electricity

In most of the recognized villages, one can find electric pylons that bring electricity to the local schools and clinics. Yet, in ten of the eleven villages, the residents' homes are not connected to the national electricity grid, and therefore, they must use solar panels and generators, in order to produce electricity on their own, similar to the case in the unrecognized villages. In some of the villages, like Umm Batin and Abu Tlul, even the schools and clinics are powered by generators. On the other hand, all of the new Jewish settlements are connected to the national electricity grid, both public buildings and private houses.

Left: Night view of the Jewish settlement of Shomriya

Right: Night view of the Bedouin village of A-Sayyed



Water

Connection to running water, which is recognized as a human right by the United Nations, is not a trivial service within the Bedouin recognized villages of the Negev. Ten out of the eleven recognized villages have only central connection stations, and in order to bring the water to the houses, the residents are forced to lay pipelines and infrastructure at their own expense. The maintenance and water carriage costs also devolve on the residents, and due to the low water pressure, residents who live far from the water station, must accumulate water in tanks. Against this, within the Jewish settlements in the Negev, all houses are connected to running water and enjoy pipelines that reach their homes.

Left: Walkway and lawns at the Jewish settlement of Kfar Retamim

Right: Central water connection at the Bedouin village of Umm Batin



Paved Roads

Most of the paved roads in the recognized villages lead only to the local school and clinic. While in Tarabin A-Sana roads are paved, and in Derijat roads are under construction, in the other nine villages there are no paved roads and sidewalks, only dirt tracks. When it rains, driving becomes almost impossible, and some of the villages are completely isolated. In some of the villages, like Umm Batin and Abu Tlul, even the road to the local school and clinic is not paved.

Left: Paved road and houses at the Jewish settlement of Shomriya

Right: End of the only paved road in the Bedouin village of Bir-Hadaj, at the center of the village



Sewage

Ten out of the eleven recognized villages are not connected to the sewage disposal system. For lack of any other option, sewage is disposed in ways that harm the environment and the quality of life of the residents. In Umm Batin, traversed by the Hebron river, sewage from many settlements and factories flows from the Hebron area through the center of the village. On the other hand, the Jewish settlements in the Negev enjoy modern infrastructure for sewage disposal, and connections for each house are already prepared in the early construction stages.

Left: Sewage disposal infrastructure being prepared in the Jewish planned settlement of Cramit

Right: Hebron River that flows through the center of the Bedouin village of Umm Batin



Garbage Disposal

Despite the fact that the eleven recognized villages are ascribed to two regional councils, some do not enjoy garbage disposal services. While in four of the villages these services are available, and in one village this service is partial, in three of the villages garbage disposal is available only for the local school, and in the other three this service is not available at all. In all the Jewish settlements of the Negev, garbage disposal is fully available, and moreover, recycling centers are available too.

Left: Recycle center at Yatir Camp, where the Hiran group waits for the Jewish settlement of Hiran to be established

Right: One of the few garbage cans at the Bedouin village of Bir-Hadaj



Schools

While in all the eleven recognized villages elementary schools, combined with junior high schools operate, in only six villages are there high schools as well. For instance, in A-Sayed, (pop. 4000), there is no high school and the pupils must travel each day to the nearby township of Hura. The high school in Abu Tlul, a village with 4500 residents, operates in transportable structures. Although there is a positive process of the establishment of more and more schools in the villages, there is still a lack of classrooms in these schools, especially since they serve the nearby villages as well.

Left: The elementary and junior high school at the Jewish community settlement of Givot Bar

Right: The high school of the Bedouin village of Abu-Tlul



School Bus Stations

Upper: School bus station outside the elementary school of the Bedouin village of Bir-Hadaj

Lower: School bus station outside the elementary and junior high school at the Jewish community settlement of Givot Bar

Conclusion

Article 5 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) states that: “States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights: [...] (e) Economic, social and cultural rights, in particular: [...] (iii) The right to housing; (iv) The right to public health, medical care, social security and social services; (v) The right to education and training; (vi) The right to equal participation in cultural activities; [...]”.

In 2003, with the Ministry of Interior’s declaration of the establishment of the regional council of Abu Basma, the council included seven villages that were recognized by the Israeli government. By 2006, four more villages gained recognition. On the ground, after more than a decade since the establishment of the regional council and the recognition of the villages, according to most of the criteria presented in this report, the situation of the villages remained pretty similar to the situation of the Bedouin unrecognized villages in the Negev.

Apart from Tarabin A-Sana, which, after a long struggle, was re-established in a new location in order to move the village from the area of the Jewish town of Omer, the other ten recognized villages do not enjoy the most basic infrastructure and services – sewage disposal and garbage disposal, electricity, running water and paved roads – are all only partially available, if available at all.

Furthermore, the residents of the recognized villages are still subjected to the house demolition policy, and the denial of building permits. More than ten years since recognition was granted, there is almost no option for the residents to build new houses or renovate existing homes, and every slight change threatens the house with demolition, and imposition of demolition costs on house owners.

On the other hand, with more than one hundred Jewish settlements in the Beersheva area where the average number of residents is only 300 people, and building and extension plans for Jewish towns in the Negev, there is also a variety of additional plans in the offing that aim to move Jewish populations to the Negev area. In addition, in the new Jewish settlements, and in the planned Jewish settlements that are now at an advanced planning stage, tens of thousands of new housing units are planned.

On the international day for the elimination of racial discrimination 2014, the basic rights of the residents of the Bedouin villages that were recognized by the state are still violated. In comparison to the situation of the existing and planned Jewish settlements, the State of Israel must immediately establish infrastructure in the villages, expand the governmental services provided, and cease house demolitions, while issuing building permits for its citizens resident there.

Appendix

Bedouin Villages that were Recognized by the Israeli Government:

A-Sayyed

Abu-Krinat

Abu-Tlul

Umm Batin

Bir-Hadaj

Derijat

Tarabin A-Sana

Kuhle

Molada

Makhul

Kaser A-Sir

* Al-Bagar (initial stage of recognition)

* Al-Fur'ah (initial stage of recognition)

New Jewish Settlements:

Givot Bar

Merhav Am

Kfar Retamim (resettled)

Shomriya (resettled)

Shizaf (planned to move to a new location)

Planned Jewish Settlements:

Carmit (in advanced establishment stages)

Hiran (approved by the government)

Kasif (approved by the government)

Yatir (approved by the government)

* Under the Mevo'ot Arad plan and the plan for the Dimona artery, both approved by the Israeli Government, at least 12 more settlements are planned to be established in the Negev area.