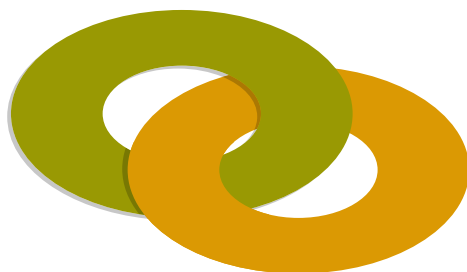




Annual Report 2013

The Negev Coexistence Forum For Civil Equality



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

Annual Report (2013)

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality An Overview of 2013

The Praver-Begin Plan

The Praver-Begin Plan (henceforth the Plan) passes a first reading
The year 2013 saw the Plan passing a first Knesset vote by a narrow margin of only 3 votes. This first successful reading sparked outrage in the Bedouin community and among activists. A number of demonstrations and large protests attracted supporters from across Israel and were replicated abroad. The year concluded with Minister Begin's recommendation that the Plan be shelved since a proper consultation with the Bedouin community had not taken place. Prime Minister Netanyahu who agreed to shelve the Plan, then appointed right-wing Minister of Agriculture Yair Shamir to rework and implement it.

Condemnations by international actors

The most evident positive result for 2013 has been the successful mobilization of a large section of the international and Israeli public against the Plan. The public outcry has been backed up by condemnations issued by global governance bodies such as the UN's Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay in July 2013. In addition, human rights violations in the Negev-Naqab feature prominently in a number of Human Rights reports such as the UK, in its Foreign Office 'Human Rights and Democracy' report, or the USA, in its State Department Human Rights annual report.

Police intimidation of activists

Our work of mobilization continued throughout the year despite attempts of intimidation by police and internal security forces. As reported in Haaretz on the 10th of March 2013, one of our staff was questioned about his involvement in demonstrations against the Plan in 2013 by the internal security service, the Shin Bet rather than by the civil police. This indicates that activity against the Plan is being labelled as a 'threat to national security'. In this manner, the state is not only criminalising protesters but also vastly limiting the political space available to those opposing its plans.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) submitted a petition to the Supreme Court in this regard (petition 5277/13) and we are waiting to hear the results. Another incident in the summer of 2013 saw two of our staff, director and field coordinator, held for interrogation for 4 hours by police after a small vigil outside the offices of the 'Authority for the Regulation of Bedouin settlement in the Negev' in Be'er Sheva. The reason given was 'illegal gathering'. Demonstration permits are necessary only for gatherings of over 50 people and which involve political speeches. Neither of these conditions was relevant to that vigil. In fact the court decision challenged the interpretation of police authorities on this occasion and stated that chanting slogans and using a megaphone does not classify as political speech.

Increased Outreach

The organizing of demonstrations and protests, has gone hand in hand with the planning of tours and solidarity visits which have enabled members of the Israeli public and media, as well as foreign journalists, diplomats and activists to witness first hand daily life in unrecognized villages and meet with Bedouins living on the frontline of this state-minority clash. In 2013 NCF's outreach and coexistence activities have answered a real demand from the public to 'gain a critical perspective' on government plans in the Negev.

In particular the press has eagerly responded to the opportunities we have offered for field visits, interviews and panel discussions. The result of this renewed engagement has been quite staggering with an important increase in the number of articles published about discrimination in the Negev, home demolitions as well as coverage of the mass protests. NCF estimates that over 100 news items, such as articles, photos, videos, have been published and broadcast by the international and national press following direct contact with NCF staff.

This reminds us that the NCF continues to offer and create much-needed occasions for dialogue, education and exchange. This happens in the context of increasing divisions in Israeli society in which dissent to the right wing and even mainstream political discourse is more and more being branded as 'unpatriotic'.

In 2013 we hoped for a chance of a more open dialogue with government authorities but this has not materialised. Yet it is beyond doubt that our work of mobilization and campaigning against the Plan, carried out in concert with many other Israeli and international NGOs and networks of activists throughout 2013, has brought this joint civil struggle to the attention of the authorities, who have had to reckon with a section of civil society refusing to remain incapacitated by fear and a narrow national discourse of blind patriotism. We have nonetheless found a more sympathetic audience amongst our legislators in the Knesset, a number of whom have visited the Negev and pledged to bring up urgent matters such as home demolitions in the Knesset sittings.

Peaceful Coexistence

Overall, the climate in Israel has sadly been growing more and more divisive and confrontational but we have kept working to build bridges between the Bedouin and Jewish communities. Throughout 2013 we have continued to create opportunities to learn from each other. Through our solidarity visits, photography workshops, our tours and the events we organize at our centre in Be'er Sheva, the Multaka-Mifgash, we have raised awareness of the situation in the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev. We also demonstrate in practice that another future is possible. We have continued to strive to provide a critical alternative to the nationalist mainstream discourse and we stand firmly in our unwavering belief that cycles of fear and suspicion are far better replaced by dialogue, trust and compromise.

About the Negev Coexistence Forum

History

In 1997, a group of concerned Arab and Jewish residents of the Negev-Naqab (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 respect, protect and meet its human rights obligations without discrimination towards its Arab-Bedouin citizens in the Negev-Naqab. As a result, the NCF seeks to advance the civil rights and equality for all those living in the Negev. Our mission is to bring an end to Israel's policy of discrimination against its Arab-Bedouin citizens in the unrecognised villages and promote mutual respect and understanding among the diverse communities in the Negev.

The Secretariat

The NCF's activities are governed by an active and engaged seven-member volunteer board of directors made up of Jewish and Bedouin community representatives and leaders.

Khalil Alamour: Member of the Alsira village committee; former member of the Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages (RCUV) in the Negev; educator; activist for Bedouin rights in the Negev.

Musa Abu Ghanem: Lecturer and educator at Achva College; scientific high school principal; activist in various social domains, especially education; NCF co-founder
Dr. Yones Aburabia – A physician specialist in diabetics, activist and chair of Yasmin Al Naqab.

Prof. Avner Ben-Amos: Historian of education and lecturer at the School of Education, Tel-Aviv University

Yaacov Manor: Peace activist; founder of The Committee Against House Demolition, Coalition of Organizations for Peace, The Water Coalition and Olive Harvest Coalition.

Rachel Naparstek: Artist; peace and social activist.

Yehudit Keshet, writer and political activist

Members of the Auditing Committee:

David De leeuw (chair): Computer programmer at the health school in Ben Gurion University, social and peace activist.

Nsir Abu Srichan (member): Social worker and PhD student, head of Al Kassum regional council social work department and activist.

Staff

Haia Noach - Executive Director
 Ratb Abu-Krinat – Field Coordinator
 Ofer Dagan – Field Coordinator
 Anna Rose Siegel – International Advocacy Coordinator
 Alison Ramer – Resource Coordinator
 Amir Abu-Kweider – Projects Coordinator
 Doron Karasenty – Multaka-Mifgash Coordinator
 Adel Al-Gafir – Prayer Plan Advocacy Coordinator
 Yoav Galai – Bedouin Villages Documentation Project Coordinator
 Yosra Abu-Kaf – Photography Workshops Coordinator
 Michal Rotem – Social Media Coordinator
 Ori Tarabulus – Researcher

Partnerships

As a grassroots organization with a strong track record of creating successful working partnerships with unrecognized villages - as in the case of Al Arakib, Wadi Wadi Al-Na'am, A-Sir and many others – and of building bridges between Jewish activists and Bedouin communities, we work in concert not only with Bedouin villages but also with like-minded groups such as the Recognition Forum or the Bedouin Coalition for Justice, with prominent Israeli NGOs such as ACRI, Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, Bimkom Planners for Planning Rights, the Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages (RCUV) and a number of international partners.

These collaborations together with our ability to network and connect with diverse audiences and institutions, ensure that the activities we implement at grassroots level have a long-lasting impact and resonate nationally especially at policy level.

In 2013 NCF has been collaborating closely with Adalah, implement a project funded by the European Union and which seeks to advance the rights of the Bedouin minority in the Negev. This partnership has extended far beyond the project into developing a number of awareness raising events such as roundtables and panel discussions which have proved popular with new audiences and of which more details are included in this report.

Successes and Recognition

Past successes and recognitions, such as the appointment NCF as consultative NGO to the UN, the Miriam Fligelman Levy Cross Cultural Prize and the Emil Greenzweig Prize for Human Rights, have singled out NCF as a creative organization able to lobby internationally together with the Bedouin minority and to devise culturally sensitive ideas and participatory events that help increase empathy and understanding at home. Most of all, it is the relationship of mutual trust and respect that we have built with Bedouin communities and the Israeli public for the past 16 years that makes our work possible.

Consultative Status with the UN

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), at its Substantive Session of July 2013 adopted the recommendation of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to grant Special consultative status to the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality.

Activities

NCF's work focuses on the following areas: knowledge production and dissemination; advocacy and coexistence. All of our activities fall in one of these three areas and are closely interlinked. At the level of knowledge production we create and disseminate independent, critical and fact-checked knowledge about human rights violations in the Negev. At the level of advocacy, we jointly lobby power holders nationally to respect the rights of Bedouins and internationally to pressure Israel to abide by human rights covenants and international law. Finally, with our coexistence activities we create opportunities for Jews and Arabs, as well as internationals, to learn about each other and forge partnerships.

NCF's activities and projects are based on the principle of Arab-Jewish cooperation and as such, our membership includes leaders and academics from the Negev-Naqab Arab community. As a joint Jewish-Arab group, we maintain equal partnership in all bodies of the organization, as well as in the decision-making processes. In this way, NCF aims to achieve full civil rights and equality for all those living in the Negev.

1. Knowledge production and dissemination

NCF strongly believes in producing knowledge that challenges the national political discourse. For this reason, throughout the year NCF published a number of reports and position papers that use facts, numbers and statistics to expose the state's narrative as limiting and detrimental to the advancement of coexistence. Furthermore, NCF's reports and position papers offer a critical perspective on the latest governmental policies, development plans or planning proposals. NCF has also been compiling the only record of home demolitions and crop destruction in Bedouin localities is making progress with its 'Villages Mapping Project' website which seeks to create an informative archive documenting all unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev. This activity produces valuable resources for journalists, civil society organizations, activists and lawyers working to expose human rights violations.

The information produced is primarily disseminated through NCF's website, social media platforms, such as Facebook and twitter, and our mailing lists. In addition, we sent our reports and position papers to Members of Knesset, Ministers, Journalists and to a variety of leaders abroad. It is produced and disseminated in three Journalists languages: English, Arabic and Hebrew. In 2013 NCF has successfully worked to extend its press contacts in Israel and internationally, especially within the Hebrew language press. An increased number of press releases and invitations for journalists and photographers to visit the Negev has resulted in a higher number of articles, radio and TV items being produced about the situation of Bedouins in the Negev.

Below is a list to the reports, position papers, videos, infographics and data produced and disseminated throughout 2013.

Reports and position papers:

report on "Structural Discrimination and Racism Against Arab Employees in Government Offices in the Negev and Availability of Government Services in Arab Communities" in March 2013

- A report on "The Home Demolition Policy in Bedouin Villages" on International Human Rights Day, December 2013

A position paper explaining "Minister Benny Begin's revisions to the Praver Plan" in January 2013

- A "Position paper of the Negev Coexistence Forum regarding the Praver Plan" in March 2013

- A position paper about the "Administrative governmental Committee's approval of the Praver Plan, A mistake that must be corrected immediately" in May 2013

- A position paper with Adalah about the Praver-Begin plan: "The Praver Begin Bill and the Forced Displacement of the Bedouin" in May 2013

Position Paper Concerning "Forest of German States" in December 2013

- A position paper on "Access to Water" in Bedouin localities in December 2013.

Online Demolitions Record:

NCF's online record of home demolitions was regularly updated. News about other violations and arrests have been posted on facebook and twitter and sent out on a weekly basis to our mailing lists.

Newsletters, mailing lists and updates:

- Two half yearly printed newsletters in Arabic, English and Hebrew were published, sent out to our subscribers and made available at our headquarters in Be'er sheva, the Multaka-Mifgash.

- Staff posted over 50 weekly updates to our mailing lists in Arabic, English and Hebrew following political developments, significant events including house demolitions, solidarity visits and to announce upcoming events. Our subscribers number over 1000.

- Monthly English updates were sent to our English language subscribers who number 250 individuals.

- NCF increased its social media presence and has been uploading new information daily on its Facebook page and Twitter account, including photos and news.

Visual content:

Production of joint Adalah-NCF video comparing the unrecognized village of Umm Al-Heiran to the Jewish community of "Heiran" which is settled in the Yatir Forest while waiting for the demolition of the Bedouin village and the establishment of the Jewish settlement on its ruins.

Production of a number of videos on JNF planting activities, house demolitions, and unrecognized villages.

NCF began producing videos documenting the villages for its upcoming website "Villages Mapping Project".

Album of 5 infographics on the Plan; comparing access to land; population statistics; and home construction for Jewish and Arab citizens.

NCF produced a new poster to denounce house demolitions and a sticker to advertise its campaign to halt the Plan.

2. Advocacy

International Advocacy

International advocacy helps us ensure that the issue of discrimination against Bedouin citizens in the Negev is well known worldwide. This enables individual countries, as well as entities such as the European Union, to put pressure on Israel to stop treatment of Bedouin that is in violation of recognized international norms and human rights covenants. Once states are made aware of violations committed by Israel against its population inside its internationally recognized borders, they can pressure the state of Israel to abide by international standards if it wishes to build bridges with the international community. In 2013 NCF sent representatives on 3 international advocacy missions.

Advocacy with EU bodies

In June 2013 Attorney Shahda Ibn Bari spoke about the consequences of the Praver Plan at the EU Human rights Council. During the visit, Attorney Ibn Bari briefed the council about the Plan and the variety of potential problems it would generate, and about the inequality between Arabs and Jews in Israel.

Advocacy with UN bodies

In July 2013 NCF sent representative Khalil Alamour to take part in the 6th session of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva. There he presented a statement on the Plan at the plenary session, and at a side event workshop. He also had a private meeting with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, Prof. James Anaya, and with the Austrian representative to the UN, Magdalena Rosch. While in Geneva Mr Alamour gave a number of presentations on the consequences of the Praver Plan for indigenous rights experts, community groups and journalists.

Advocacy with EU political actors

In October, NCF was also able to send representatives Attorney Sana Ibn Bari and Mr Khalil Alamour to Brussels to brief the members of the 'Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament' Group (S&D) about the Praver-Begin Plan. While in Brussels, NCF's representatives were also invited to speak to many other events such as: three events in Antwerp, Leij and Itry; and at a meeting with Amnesty International's activists and staff in Brussels.

Diplomats' briefings

NCF carried out a series of diplomats' briefings in Israel with the Swiss ambassador, the British embassy and the Belgian ambassador. These briefings were complemented by tours targeted to diplomatic staff.

In 2013 these diplomats' tours were attended by staff from the French, Holland, Romanian, German, EU mission, Swedish, American and British embassies. Visits to unrecognized villages for diplomats have been instrumental in ensuring that the issue of discrimination against the Bedouin citizens of Israel is understood and witnessed by foreign country representatives.



Field trip for Diplomats appointed in Israel, November 2013

National Advocacy

At the level of national advocacy, in 2013 NCF has placed much needed emphasis on outreach to political actors in Israel. NCF focused its advocacy strategy on bringing Knesset members to the Negev to witness first hand the situation in unrecognized villages and stir discussions over Bedouin's grievances and concerns.

Lobbying Members of Knesset

Five tours were held for Knesset Members in 2013, for the following participants: MK Ruth Calderon (Yesh Atid); MK Tamar Zandberg (Meretz); MK Merav Michaeli (Labour); the executive board of Meretz and Meretz's MKs Issawi Frej, Zehava Galon and Michal Rozin as well as MK Omer Barlev (Labour).

By bringing MKs to the Negev, we offer them an alternative view of what they usually get in the political system.. It is here that NCF's widespread networks and connection to the Bedouin community play a vital role.

Following the tours, a number of MKs have shown active and continued interest in the Bedouin minority. These visits have helped us form long-lasting relationships and set up direct channels of communication with power holders who can then be regularly updated on local developments.

Targeting the Jewish National Fund (JNF)

In February NCF penned "An Open Letter to Effie Stenzler, Chairman of the Jewish National Fund Directorate" The letter was co-signed by Rabbis for Human Rights, the Recognition Forum, the Women's Coalition for Peace, and Hithabrut-Tarabut Jewish-Arab Movement for Social and Political Change. The letter called for the JNF to stop forestation activities in areas where there are legal disputes over land ownership.

The JNF agreed to our coalition's request to freeze the planting until a court decision is made but in February 2013 work was nonetheless carried out in the Bedouin unrecognized village of Al Arakib. On the other hand, the Israeli Land Administration (ILA) has vowed to continue any works in any location regardless of outstanding land claims and since the JNF and ILA work in partnership, they are complicit in these acts of dispossession and it is proving extremely difficult to ensure that the JNF keeps its word.

Media Outreach

The social media and the advocacy coordinators successfully liaised with media outlets both in Israel and abroad. Press engagement in the form of 12 trilingual press releases, interviews and ad hoc tours, has resulted in growing numbers of news updates and features on the Negev-Naqab as well as growing awareness of Bedouin grievances amongst the wider public and political representatives at both national and local level.

As a result of NCF's media outreach, 35 articles were published in Hebrew language Israeli newspapers, 33 in the Arabic language press and 29 in the English language national and international press. Furthermore, 3 television items ran on Israeli TV about NCF's work and the situation in the Negev; 6 radio spots aired in Hebrew and 6 radio spots in Arabic. The work of NCF was also featured on 2 TV programs in Spain and Latin America. NCF's successful engagement with the local and international press has given both Israeli and international audiences increased knowledge and awareness of the situation in the Negev.

Community organizing

Throughout 2013 NCF has placed renewed emphasis on community organizing in order to maximise the results of its advocacy and lobbying efforts.

Advocacy Visits

This activity has seen NCF's advocacy coordinator attend meetings with village leaders and community members in unrecognized villages to discuss the consequences of the Plan, the implications of planning and zoning, issues around recognition and legal as well as policy developments. These meetings also serve to discuss practical strategies to connect villages to the water network and to put villagers in contact with other NGOs working on legal issues, such as Adalah, ACRI or Bimkom, Planners for Planning Rights. In 2013, NCF's advocacy coordinator held over 15 such meetings.

Human Rights workshops

A new opportunity arose in 2013 to implement in partnership with Adalah a project funded by the EU. The project aims to advance and promote the rights of Bedouin in unrecognized villages. The project will run during two years, to the end of 2014.

Thanks to its deep anchorage in the communities of the Negev, NCF was able to hold four human rights workshops in villages at high risk of demolition. A total of 46 Bedouin men and women attended. In Wadi Al-Na'am: 12 men, aged:

20-50; In Al Zarnouq: 7 women aged: 19-21; in Khashem Zaneh 11 men and 4 women, aged: 20-30; in Alsra 12 women - age: 19-60.

The trainings covered subjects such as international human rights standards; instruction on practical techniques towards documenting and disseminating information on violations of human rights; guidance on effectively presenting their grievances to national and international audiences; advice on minimizing the risks associated with documenting injustice through photographs and videos.

The project's activities have enabled local Bedouin residents of the unrecognized villages to produce their own documentation and activate new networks for disseminating information between different villages. The documentation produced has also been crucial in facilitating the work of lawyers, activists, civil society groups and members of the Arab Bedouin community to protect and promote human rights in the Negev-Naqab.

Huda Abu Obaid, 24, from Lakiya, took part in one of the training and describes her experience like this: "It was an amazing workshop. I am happy I could come. Now, I am more powerful and I feel stronger. It is essential information for activists. I know more about my rights, what I am allowed to do and what I cannot do. I can work much more effectively and directly contribute to my community."

Human Right Defenders Network

Groups of human rights defenders have been identified in the villages visited and in the ones where NCF has held human rights workshops. The setting up of these networks answers the demand of the Bedouin community to be more involved in raising awareness about the States' wrongdoing in the Negev-Naqab. These networks are also crucial in ensuring that the advocacy effort is sustainable and becomes anchored in the community.

An SMS network has been set up by groups in participating villages in order to notify other villages, activists and NCF's staff of house demolitions; ploughing of crops; arrests; demolition orders distribution ; and other human rights violations in real time. This means information to notify other villages, activists and NCF's staff quickly and can be shared and disseminated effectively via our website and social media pages. NCF will be working throughout 2014 to strengthen this network and ensure that it will cover the whole of the Negev-Naqab area.

3. Coexistence

Photo/video workshop

In 2013 NCF implemented its visual literacy project. This year the project took place in the unrecognized villages of A-Sir and Khasham-Zaneh. This year the renowned Israeli photographer Tomer Eppelbaum (Haaretz), was assisted by Emil Salman and NCF video maker Yoav Galai.

The workshop started with a distribution of digital cameras that the children are allowed to keep for themselves once the training ends. The children learnt how to use the camera, how to focus and compose a shot. They spent the following days producing images that documented their surroundings.

The photographs taken during the workshop have been presented at a number of photo-exhibitions, in order to raise awareness of the situation in the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev.



Photography workshop for the children of the Bedouin unrecognized village of Khasham Zaneh, January 2013

Exhibitions

NCF held 8 exhibitions in 2013 inside Israel. The exhibitions featured the photos shot by the children of A-Sir and was titled "Recognized".

- In July the exhibition opened at the Arab-Hebrew Theatre in Jaffa.
- In July it was shown at the Na'am Centre in Lod.
- At the Mossawa Centre in Haifa
- In August at the Mossawa also displayed the exhibition at a 2 day conference in Nazareth.
- In October at Tel Aviv University main library.
- In November NCF was invited to exhibit the photos at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque on the occasion of a film festival of documentaries about the Naqab And at the Multaka-Mifgash in Be'er Sheva.



Lecture about the Negev during NCF's photo-exhibition at Tel Aviv University, October 2013

Events for the opening night, such as panel discussions, were organized on each occasion. Speakers were drawn from NCF staff, supporters and Bedouin and Jewish activists and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation representatives. These included: Dr. Angelika Tim, Mieke Hartman, Yosra abu Kaf, Prof. Gadi Algazi, Husein al Majerat, Anas abu Daabes, Aziz Al Turi, Sheikh Sayah Al Turi, Ratb abu Krinat, Adel Al Gafir, Ofer Dagan, Haia Noach, Atia Al-Assam, Attorney Shahda Ibn Bari, Hanan Al-Sana, Nili Baruch, Attorney Sana Ibn Bari, Amir Abu Kweider, Kaid Abu Letaif, Khalil Alamour and Dr. Thabet Abu Rass.

A total of 206 participants attended the opening events in the 6 locations. A much larger number visited the exhibitions which remained open for an average of 4 weeks. A feature on Israel's Channel 10 was broadcast about the exhibition in Jaffa.

International Exhibitions

A total of 7 exhibitions took place across France. Each exhibition featured a panel discussion. The total number of participants was roughly 700, amongst them activists, students, academics, people interested in photography and in the political situation in the Middle East."

The film festival at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque

On November 6th and November 7th, NCF held two days of documentary films and discussions about the Naqab at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque. The event was planned in this alternative venue to attract a diverse audience and was successfully executed. It attracted some 300 people, many of whom joined NCF's mailing list, explored and took home the available literature about the negev and participated in the organized panel-discussions.



Panel about the situation in the Negev during NCF's film festival at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque, November 2013



Field trip with the group "Honest Reporting Australia" in the Bedouin unrecognized village of Wadi A-Na'am, November 2013

Furthermore, NCF held 24 individual tours for 50 participants such as: persons and activists from Switzerland, England, Germany and Israel; a reporter from the London Financial Times; consultants for the British Embassy; Members of Knesset as outlined in activity 2; students of politics and anthropology; representatives of the World Ecumenical Council; Reuters journalists; Jerusalem Post reporters; American Embassy staff; a renowned playwright- Yehoshua Sobol; a number of photographers and more.

We received this email message from playwright Yehoshua Sobol. following his tour with NCF. The following text is translated from Hebrew:

Dear Haia,

Thank you for the pictures from the meeting with Sheik Sayach in Al Arakib.

The impressions from the visit were so deep they don't let go of me. I

read meanwhile that the tent was demolished again. Was it the same tent we were sitting in?

I think I will ask my students to develop a theatrical project about the issue of State Bedouin relations in Israel.

I will keep in touch with you and ask for you help in this matter.

Yehoshua Sobol.

Solidarity visits

NCF organized 10 solidarity visits in 2013. These are occasions for activists to demonstrate solidarity with Bedouin villages which have recently suffered home demolitions or where inhabitants have been victims of human rights violations or arrest. The solidarity visits help activists from Tel Aviv, Haifa and all over Israel maintain a level of engagement in the Negev and keep up to date with events in individual villages.

This year the visits focused on villages which have been at high risk of demolition due to an increasingly aggressive policy of home demolitions being implemented by the authorities. The geographical positioning and unrecognized status of these villages, mean the state is eager to remove them in order to 'develop' the area.

- In January one tour took place to Bir Hadaj, Wadi Al-Na'am, and Al Arakib for 50 activists from the Recognition Forum
- In February the visit started at Umm AL-Namillah, proceeded to Wadi Al-Na'am and Al-Sayed and ended with a demonstration at Shoket and Al Sayyed for 50 participants from the Recognition Forum
- In April two visits for 70 people at Um Al Hieran, Atir, Al-Syra and Al Arakib., Al Arakib and Wadi Al-Na'am. These were activists from These were activist from Recognition forum and students from Windows NGO.
- In May two visits brought 40 students and activists from the Recognition Forum to Umm Al-Heiran.
- In June a group of 17 students from Jerusalem visited Umm Al-Heiran and neighbouring Atir.
- In September a group of 20 activists from Tel Aviv (the Recognition Forum and Tarabut) visited Al Arakib to show their solidarity and support due to the recent arrests.

- In November, 30 activists from Tel Aviv visited Sheikh Sayah Al Turi's Freedom tent in Rahat;
- In December 50 activists from Tel Aviv and elsewhere visited families of Bedouin detained following demonstrations against the Plan in Al Sayyed and also visited the village of Atir which the state plans to plans to demolish and replace with a Jewish village."



Solidarity visit in the village of A-Sayed to families of the "Day of Rage" detainees, December 2013



Visit at the "Freedom Tent" that was built outside Rahat police station following the detention of Sheikh Sayyah A-Turi, November 2013

Panels and discussion:

NCF staff also took part in 21 panel discussions and round-tables on the Plan and discriminatory policies against the Bedouin. These events took place across Israel and attracted 670 participants: students; young volunteers; diplomats; college students; reporters; academics; researchers.

Group discussions at homes

In 2013 NCF held six discussions circles which attracted 101 participants. In this activity our Jewish and Bedouin staff is invited into the homes of Jewish Israelis to discuss democracy and human rights in the Negev. The discussions tackle difficult subjects such as recognition of indigenous land rights and highlight the hurdles that the Bedouin face in accessing their rights despite their full citizenship. The group discussions are aimed at diversifying our audience and appeal to Jewish Israelis who are not necessarily politically active or familiar with the Negev. In 2013 these were held in locations in Jerusalem and Be'er Sheva.



Dozens of participants in the "Cycling for Recognition" 5 days cycling tour among the Bedouin villages in the Negev arrive at the final event in the village of Al-Arakib, April 2013

Cycling

In April, 2013 NCF hosted a cycling tour in cooperation with activists from Belgium and RCUV (The Regional Council of the Unrecognized Villages). During the tour roughly thirty participants biked everyday between a number of Bedouin unrecognized villages. A second group walked between the same villages. The tour opened with an event at A second our cultural center in Be'er Sheva and was concluded with a party hosted in the village of Al Arakib.

It was the first year that activists from Belgium got on their bikes to raise awareness of unrecognized villages. The link between the people of the Negev-Naqab and Belgian activists grows stronger and reminds us of the extent of the solidarity network that together we have been able to build over the years.

Partnerships

Much of NCF's work happens out in the field.

Everyday we are out visiting villages, listening to the stories of people whose house has been demolished, whose relative is in prison, or whose access to water has been denied. Our presence reminds villagers that we are all in this together and that we will continue to do our best to ensure that their right to the land is recognised and that they are considered equal citizens in the state of Israel.

We have developed strong partnerships, in particular with the villages of Al Arakib, A-Sir, Wadi Al-Na'am, Alsira, Abdeh, Umm al Hiran, Khasam-Zaneh, Atir and others and we continue to nurture these relationships with regular visits by our staff, by co-organizing special events and promoting connections with networks of international activists.

Marking Three Years of the Demolition of Al Arakib

Every year we mark the day in which government authorities razed Al Arakib to the ground. On Saturday, July 27th 2013, which fell this year in the fasting month of Ramadan, we commemorated the third anniversary.

A march was held in Rahat in which hundreds of Bedouin, Jewish and international activists took part. The evening was concluded in Al Arakib where an iftar meal was prepared and was followed by speeches delivered by Bedouin leaders, Jewish academics and activists.

Arrests and intimidation in Al Arakib

NCF regularly visited the village of Al Arakib throughout the year as the inhabitants suffered about 17 demolitions (see the 2013 online record of home demolitions). In 2013 police activity in Al Arakib saw an increase as number and length of arrests rose. Following is a summary of our updates regarding arrests in Al Arakib.

On August 26, the village of Al Arakib was demolished for the third time in two weeks and more than 50 times in all. After the latest demolition, 4 of its residents were arrested, including Sheikh Sayah Al Turi, leader of the village. Those arrested were accused of trespassing and disobeying a legal order. The following night, their case was brought before the Be'er-Sheva Court, but the judge decided that his ruling would be presented only three days later. Until that time, the detainees were not allowed to enter their own village. The judge refused to discuss a request to reconsider the release terms, and therefore, the residents of Al Arakib decided to establish a protest tent in front of the Rahat police station. NCF regularly visited the tent and brought solidarity groups with activists from all over Israel.

On November 20 bulldozers and policemen arrived at the village and demolished all of the tents outside the cemetery. During the afternoon, policemen came back to the village and detained Sheikh Sayah Al- Turi and four other residents, including three minors. The police released four of the detainees unconditionally on the same day, although they previously made clear they would demand release on condition of house arrest. Sheikh Sayah Al-Turi remained in detention for a further nine days.

The year ended with the Be'er-Sheva District Court ruling, on December 10, 2013 that Sheikh Sayah A-Turi be free to return to his village without any restrictions being imposed on his freedom of movement.



NCF's placards for the protest against "Praver Plan", August 2013



The Al-Arakib weekly protest against the ongoing demolitions of the village at Lehavim junction

Demonstrations

In 2013, 3 mass demonstrations against the Plan were organized by a coalition of organizations spanning Israel, Palestine and international networks. NCF was active in mobilizing protesters for the 'Day of Rage' protests in July; August and November.

NCF participated in the monthly demonstrations in Rahat. Throughout the summer NCF also organized five vigils outside the 'Authority for the Regulation of Bedouin Settlement in the Negev' in Be'er Sheva. We continued for the Regulation to support the residents of Al Arakib in the weekly demonstration at Lahavim junction against demolitions in the Negev-Naqab and particularly in Al Arakib. Furthermore, NCF initiated and participated in a protest at Sedeh Boker Field School during a government meeting about the construction of a temporary base for the people of Hieran (see above video about Umm-Al-Hieran and Hieran).

NCF also organized two protests outside the Be'er Sheva District Court in December.



Signs for Demonstration against Prayer Plan on Prayer Plan, Summer of 2013

Multaka-Mifgash

NCF's cultural center is housed in a bomb shelter and is quickly establishing itself as a cultural hub. Apart from the Multaka, there is only one other example of a Jewish-Arab cultural centre, the state-funded 'Beit Hagefen' in Haifa. The Multaka has been instrumental in attracting new audiences and setting an example of partnership in action. The discourse of equality that the Multaka strives to promote, answers a very real need in Be'er Sheva. This is a multi-ethnic city that still remains segregated and is not benefiting from the richness and diversity of the cultures it hosts.

In 2013 the Multaka hosted a total of 16 events. These included 2 days of film screenings; 4 events packed with lectures on the Negev Bedouin and the Prayer Plan; 2 film screenings followed by Q&A with the directors; A day of short-films screenings; an introductory workshop on the Negev Bedouins; a Queer festival; English lessons for Bedouin and Jewish activists; and Arabic a day lessons for Jewish activists. It also hosted our photo-exhibition 'Recognized' from the workshops run in A-Sir and an exhibition by the photographer Aiob Abu-Madegam.

NCF's Arab-Jewish annual Iftar

As is customary during the month of Ramadan, NCF hosted the traditional joint Iftar meal at the Multaka-Mifgash. This occasion brought together Bedouin, Jewish and international activists. After the meal impressions were exchanged on the headway made until now against the Plan and the difficult road ahead. This was both a celebration and a moment of reflection.

As is customary during the month of Ramadan, NCF hosted the traditional joint Iftar meal at the Multaka-Mifgash. This occasion brought together Bedouin, Jewish and international activists. After the meal impressions were exchanged on the headway made until now against the Plan and the difficult road ahead. This was both a celebration and a moment of reflection.



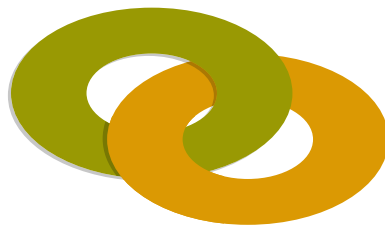
2013-06-11 Multaka - exhibition opening - Aiob Abo
Madegem - June 2013

Donors

We would like to thank our donors for their continued support. Their interest in our activities together with the resources they put at our disposal, enable us to continue our work to end discrimination in the Negev.

In 2013 our donors were: The Federal Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The EU, The New Israel Fund, The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, The Harrison Foundation, The Feldman Family and many other generous private individuals

THE END



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

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

P.O. Box 130, Omer, 84965 | Mobile: ++972-50-7701118 / 9
info@dukium.org

www.dukium.org