

# Annual Activity Report 2016

## Negev Coexistence Forum



Cover Photo:

Ahlām Khalīl, ‘Atīr. May 2016

*Yuṣawiruna – Photographing for Human Rights*



Dear Friends,

On Behalf of the Negev Coexistence Forum, I would like to express my appreciation for your continued support in 2016. Government policy toward democracy and human rights deteriorated in 2016, deeply affecting the Palestinian community in Israel in general and the Arab-Bedouin citizens of the Naqab-Negev in particular. Government policy and state authorities continued to be harsh and racist toward the Palestinian community in Israel with an array of problematic laws and practices. The demolitions of houses in the Naqab-Negev continued to create anxiety and despair among the thousands of Arab Bedouins directly affected by it. Many of the demolitions this year were carried out by the residents themselves and some even without a demolition order.

This year was very difficult for human rights organizations like NCF. The atmosphere in Israel, created and led by decision-makers on all levels, has promoted a racist and anti-democratic agenda and delegitimized the work that was done by NGOs and SCOs. New un-democratic laws and bills and the atmosphere of fear influenced the working environment for NCF's staff and secretariat in 2016. The threat of losing NCF's home in the bomb shelter provided by the Municipality still exists and the threat of relocation is more real than ever. NCF is not the only organization facing these threats; this is part of the harsh reality of shrinking space for democratic human rights advocacy and activism.

Despite that, the NCF continued to challenge the government's harmful policies and practices and engage Bedouin and Jewish Israelis in our joint struggle by a variety of means. We worked on training Bedouin women and children in their communities in visual literacy to enable them to document their own lives and villages, and the human rights abuses which are unfortunately a part of their everyday lives. The NCF now uses these women's images and videos for advocacy purposes. Many tours, lectures, conferences and cultural meetings took place at the initiative of NCF staff. The staff also took part in many Arab-Jewish demonstrations, vigils and solidarity visits, as well as attending numerous court hearings in support of activists. We carried out empirical research and documentation of human rights abuses, and published the findings in several reports and a position paper. NCF's advocacy work was directed towards Israeli politicians and ministers, foreign diplomats in Israel, and groups from abroad. Through missions abroad that took place in 2016, the NCF was able to increase its international lobbying efforts. We believe that it is very important to continue to oppose Israel's currently prevailing racist, frightening and anti-democratic policies. We will remain diligent in our struggle for a just and equal Jewish-Arab society in 2017.

Sincerely,

Haia Noach , Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Haia Noach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# Foreword

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF) continues to safeguard and promote the civil and human rights of Bedouin communities in the Naqab-Negev from harmful and unfair government policies. 2016 was a year of great tensions in the Naqab-Negev. It was a year of great hope and solidarity, a year of heightened awareness and more public attention to the Bedouin cause. As the government's treatment of the Arab citizens of Israel worsened, and as the Jewish public often grew more racist and violent towards the other, many individuals and groups chose to act in solidarity, to act for a just Naqab-Negev. More than ever, we have seen a willingness to act, to participate, and to co-resist.



**State policy:** After the Praver-Begin plan was shelved in 2013, no new plan of re-settlement came to light and the status quo of life in the Naqab-Negev continued with increased attempts by authorities on the ground to relocate the Bedouin communities. In June, the State Comptroller issued a very critical report on the years 2008-2014, charging the State with negligent and incompetent treatment of its Bedouin citizens. In November, MK Uri Ariel, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (the ministry that is in charge of the “Authority for the Development and Settlement of the Bedouin in the Negev”), released a draft of the new bill he is promoting to regulate Bedouin settlement. Minister Ariel received supportive media coverage on his “initiative” as he interviewed on the matter in the months leading to the release of the bill. The new bill is essentially the same as the Praver Plan, with minor changes. The suggested changes are measures supposed to “ease” the forced relocation of residents of the unrecognized villages’ to the governmental planned towns. This plan does not involve consulting with the community and although it has been criticized for supposedly being generous towards the Bedouins with land, it is in fact a tool of formal approval to dislocate the residents of the unrecognized villages from most of their lands and to forcibly urbanize them. Such criticism from the political right makes it uncertain whether the bill will pass, as Minister Ariel faces severe pressure from within his party – the Jewish Home, who’s MKs are reluctant that the proposed plan might allocate state lands to Arabs. Another possibility would be that Minister Ariel is using his party colleagues to neutralize objections from their constituents and alter public perceptions of the plan before it is approved. NCF strongly suspects the latter, as Minister Ariel is from the rightmost wing within the Jewish Home and was a vocal objector to the previous Praver plan.



**Umm al-Ḥīrān, ‘Atir and Al-‘Arāgīb:** In January, the Supreme Court rejected a request for further discussion on the cases of Umm al-Ḥīrān and ‘Atir, upholding the court’s decision not to intervene, meaning approval of their demolition plan. In the case of Umm al-Ḥīrān, the demolition came a year later to make room for the new Jewish town of Hiran. Throughout the year it became more clear that ‘Atir would not be demolished in order to make room for the expansion of Yatir forest, at least not at present, due to changes within the JNF-KKL. In July, JNF-KKL established a new work camp in close proximity to the Al-‘Arāgīb cemetery, on lands under claims currently before the court. Al-‘Arāgīb has been demolished over 110 times by state forces since 2010 to make room for a forest which JNF-KKL plans to plant on the village’s lands. Many of the residents were arrested under false claims of distraction of police work. In Umm al-Ḥīrān, a metal fence was erected in order to allow the heavy earth moving

equipment to work much closer to the residents' homes and form a new construction zone. On July 17-31 between these two unrecognized villages there were near-daily incidents with state authorities and the Yoav Unit (a special police combat unit which accompanies the demolition contractors).

The resistance was non-violent at all times and mostly led by the women of the communities, chanting slogans. Nevertheless, 18 activists and residents were arrested over July in Al-'Arāgīb, and two people (including one woman) were hospitalized as a result of police brutality. All were released from the police station the same day. Even minors have not been spared, with two children (as young as 12 and 13) and three teenagers detained. On July 31, 6 residents and activists, including two minors, were arrested while protesting the built of the fence in Umm al-Ḥīrān. By the end of July, after heavy pressure JNF-KKL removed their work camp from Al-'Arāgīb and have yet to return, but the village has been demolished at least five times since. In December we learned that 7 activists and residents, including 2 of NCF's staff, who were detained in July, were indicted for allegedly obstructing a police officer during the protest against JNF-KKL works. Their trial will start in March 2017. In Umm al-Ḥīrān, residents still await and fear their relocation. In November, the residents discovered the police hired contractors to demolish about 10 houses and animal pens in the village on November 22nd. Activists, MKs and the media all waited for the demolition, cancelled in the last minute by the police as they achieved their goal of brutally pressuring the head of one of the families to peacefully relocate to Hura. Demolitions began in January 2017.



**Multaqa-Mifgash:** Multaqa-Mifgash once again took national headlines when right-wing activists and media pressured Be'er Sheva Mayor Ruvik Danilovich and City Council members to cancel an event regarding freedom of consciences. The event, which aimed to discuss the idea of freedom of conscience in Israel, was referred to as not legitimate, and therefore, right-wing activists claimed, should not take place on a city-owned facility. A few council members and other public stakeholders such as the Deputy Minister of Defense commented on the matter and called for the cancellation of the event. In addition, Mayor Ruvik Danilovich wrote NCF Executive Director Haia Noach an email, which he then released to the media, contained a subtle threat regarding the future of the allocation of the municipal bomb shelter housing Multaqa-Mifgash if NCF continued to "perform provocations" such as this event.

NCF's secretariat wrote back to Mayor Danilovich and explained at length the decision to carry out the event as planned, as they considered freedom of speech a crucial value for democracy in Israel, and such attempts to silence a political discussion is wrongful. NCF continues to stand strong against any attempts to block discussion and information and will continue to work to promote discourse between Jews and Arabs in the Naqab-Negev.



Sheikh Sayyakh and the children of Al- Arāḡīb during the weekly demonstration in Lehavim Junction. November 2016, photo by Haia Noach

# 2016 in numbers

Solidarity and support to over <b>15</b> unrecognized villages	<b>79</b> demonstrations and vigils	<b>50</b> children participants of photography workshops
<b>12</b> videos photographers	<b>112</b> media articles	<b>4</b> solidarity visits facilitated
<b>42</b> participants in Yuşawiruna project	<b>597</b> individuals participated in our lectures	<b>914</b> joined our tours, including <b>15</b> embassies and <b>3</b> foreign parliaments
<b>2</b> reports launched, <b>1</b> position paper	<b>18</b> requests for information were sent	<b>45%</b> increase in our social media crowd

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# Activities and projects

## Research and Reports

Our researchers worked hard at collecting and analyzing data on human rights violations in the Naqab-Negev. We filed 18 requests for information from various governmental entities, aiming to expose data and information that is hidden from the public. During 2016, we launched two reports:

*Segregated Spaces: The Spatial Discrimination Policies among Jewish and Arab Citizens in the Negev-Naqab*, published in March, 2016. The report reveals the harsh reality of racial segregation in the different localities in the area. For example, although the Bedouin community comprises 34.1% of the population of the area, only 12.5% of the (recognized) towns and villages are meant for them. Out of the 126 Jewish communities in the Negev area, 91.2% operate Admissions Committee which in practice maintains segregation between communities.

*Enforcing Distress: House Demolition Policy in the Bedouin Community in the Negev*, published in June, 2016, aimed to expose numbers, data, and statistics about the policy of home demolitions. In 2015 alone, nearly 982 structures were demolished – 365 by state authorities, and 617 by the homeowners themselves. The report reveals that over the last three years, more than 50% of the structures were demolished by their owners in those dire circumstances.

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*Research work in Khirbat Kseifeh, January 2016*



## Bedouin Villages- “On the Map”

“On the Map” is our online mapping initiative, giving visibility to villages unrecognized by the state and absent from all official maps and data. The map, launched in 2015, grew during 2016, with added information and photos on the majority of unrecognized villages in the Naqab-Negev. Resources regarding access to infrastructures and state services, brief histories, plans that threaten the future of these villages, and photos and videos documenting the lives in the villages are all available to the public at [www.dukium.org/map](http://www.dukium.org/map)



*Diplomat's tour visit Šgīb as-Salām  
and speak to resident. November 2016*



## International Advocacy

Our international advocacy efforts in 2016 benefited from our intense work on the ground. Having an opportunity to share the realities of the Bedouin communities with stakeholders was an important part of our work, in the hope that diplomacy might be able to bring a change to the discriminatory policies affecting Bedouin lives. We facilitated alternative tours of the Naqab-Negev to representatives from over 15 embassies in 2016, as well as members of three foreign parliaments and various other political organizations abroad. Our reports were sent to stakeholders and decision makers, aiming to utilize our UN-ECOSOC status.

In June Khalil Alamour, chairperson of our board, traveled to participate in the Experts Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and participated in the indigenous rights fellowship in Geneva. In December, our volunteers in the UK filed a question through MP Anne Main. She asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs regarding British attempts to halt the demolition of Umm al-Ḥīrān.



### Media and Social Media

Working to raise awareness to the Bedouin cause is one of the most important missions we took upon ourselves. Through a variety of methods, we seek to engage local and foreign individuals in the ongoing shared struggle for equality. Our media team worked hard to motivate journalists to tell the stories of the Naqab-Negev, to provide them with local connections and background information suitable for their needs. In addition, we regularly issued press releases. During 2016, NCF was quoted in 39 articles in English, 46 in Hebrew, 25 in Arabic, and 5 in other languages.

Our social media audience grew massively during 2016. On Facebook, the number of followers nearly doubled. Particularly popular were those written “live” from the ground, such as the regular updates from the unrecognized villages during demolitions or police violence and arrests. Videos and photos from our photography projects taken by the residents themselves were a meaningful aspect of our online advocacy.



### Tours and Lectures

Our Alternative Naqab-Negev Tours were a big success as well, allowing 914 individuals to witness first-hand the reality of the Bedouin community and the devastation caused by the Israeli state’s discriminatory policies. Among those individuals were high school and university students, diplomats, religious leaders and groups, activists and journalists, both local and international. In addition, 597 individuals participated in our lectures and workshops during 2016.



### Freedom of Expression and Protest

Providing aid and assistance to activists and protest leaders in the Naqab-Negev was a key part of our work in the past year, as we stood alongside the residents of over 15 villages and provided assistance in organizing protests, in case of arrests held, and connected other NGOs that could promote these struggles. We worked alongside fellow Civil Society Organizations to provide training and held a very successful workshop in November teaching dozens of activists and community leaders about their rights of protest.





*Demonstration against the uprooting of Umm al-Ḥīrān and 'Atir. March 2016*



### Solidarity Visits

Over 2016 four solidarity visits took place in collaboration with Recognition Forum, giving 425 activists from all over the country the opportunity to meet and express their support for the residents of the Bedouin villages in the Naqab-Negev. In March, we visited Al-Ajami, a Bedouin family facing a threat of demolition of its entire farm due to a plan to expand the community settlement Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam. In May, we visited Maysam Abu al-Qian in his parent's house in Hura, after he was brutally assaulted by a dozen of Border Police officers in central Tel Aviv. In July we joined the residents of al-'Arāgībīn marking 6 years since the first demolition of their village. In November, we visited the residents of Bīr Haddāj after a massive home demolition in the village, and we visited the family of Mazen Abu-Hbak who was killed by police – yet his case still remains unresolved.



### Through a Child's Lens: Children's Visual Literacy Workshops

During 2016, the children's visual literacy workshops bloomed into a continuous source of pride for NFC. During January, we continued our 10-day workshops in 'Atir, which started in December, 2015. The workshop was a great success, resulting in various visits by our staff, continuing to work with the participants and incorporating aspects of sustainable environments in the struggle for human rights. The photographers documented protests, the camera giving them a role in their family and village's struggle, gave them a voice to tell their stories. Their stories were regularly exhibited in media articles and on our social media pages. In December 2016, we held two additional 10-day workshops, in Khašīm Zannih and az-Zarnūg.



### Recognized: Documenting life in the Negev

Over 2016, NCF's Recognized Project kept on growing, with more volunteers from unrecognized villages who received video cameras and ongoing one on one training. The devoted team of Bedouin video documentarists, spread all across the Naqab-Negev, presented incredible work of skill in the passing year. Their short videos, documenting key issues in the struggle such as the lack of electricity and government services, and the daily life in the unrecognized villages , were tremendously viral on social media and generated a great deal of pride for the community. Videos showcasing demolitions or police violence and arrests were meaningful as well, reaching tens of thousands of users on social media and bringing what used to be small isolated incidents to the public's knowledge. Such was the case of the demolition of the mosque in Rakhamah in January 2016, and the police brutality in Umm al-Ḥīrān in July.



### Yusawiruna – Photographing for Human Rights

During 2016 the participants of Yuṣawiruna continued to use photography as a means for the promotion of social justice and civil equality, and to struggle against human rights violations. The women photographers documented the struggles carried out in their villages, their unique daily lives as well as house demolitions. They were there with their cameras in the protests in Al-‘Arāgīb and Umm al-Ḥīrān in July, and they were there to document their village's lack of access to basic services such as water and electricity, and proper infrastructure. During 2016, we worked in the unrecognized villages of az-Za‘arūrah, az-Zarnūg, al-‘Arāgīb, ‘Atir, Umm al-Ḥīrān and Rakhamah. The network's participants met a couple of times over the year, during visits in the villages, a trip to Jaffa, and an end of year assembly. The end of year event took place in December, markin the International Human Rights day, in which we launched the project's photo exhibition and new shared album, showcasing the two-pronged policy of lack of infrastructure in addition to home demolitions as a political tool to displace the villages.



*Children's  
photography workshop  
in Umm al-Ḥīrān,  
August 2016. Photo  
taken by Ana Abu al-  
Qian.*

## Multaqa-Mifgash

In 2016 Multaqa-Mifgash marked 10 years of serving as a community culture center for Jews and Arabs in the Naqab-Negev. It hosted a wide variety of activities promoting shared values and political discourses. From movie screenings to crafty workshops, lectures and discussions - our home gathered a new vision for a community.



## Demonstrations and Vigils

Our team and volunteers took part in 79 demonstrations and vigils over the last year, providing counseling before and after, advice, and resources where needed. Those protests and vigils, included an ongoing and recurring vigil alongside the residents of al-‘Arāgīb every Sunday, big demonstrations in Be’er Sheva and Bīr Haddāj, Šgīb as-Salām and many more. In many cases NCF provided buses and transportation for those coming from afar to participate.



*Solidarity Visit in Hura, May 2016*



## *Our staff*

**Haia Noach** | Director

**Michal Rotem** | Research, Media and Narrative Documentation Coordinator

**Yosra Abu Kaf, Basma Abu-Khuti** | Visual Documentation Coordinator

**Sabreen Abu Kaf** | Visual Documentation Coordinator

**Kessem Adiv, Arnon Peleg** | Awareness Raising Coordinator

**Rafat Abu Aish, Mofeed Abu Swelim** | Community organizer, Freedom of Protest Coordinator

**Ratb Abo Krenat** | Arabic Media Coordinator and translator

**Shani Michael, Avigail Kori, Alham Azbarga** | Community Organizer

**Abeer Alatrash** | Archivist

**Shahaf Weisbein** | Resource Development Coordinator

**Ben Fargeon** | Administrative Coordinator

## *Our board*

**Professor Avner Ben-Amos**

**Atn. Khalil Alamour**

**Yehudit Keshet**

**Yaacov Manor**

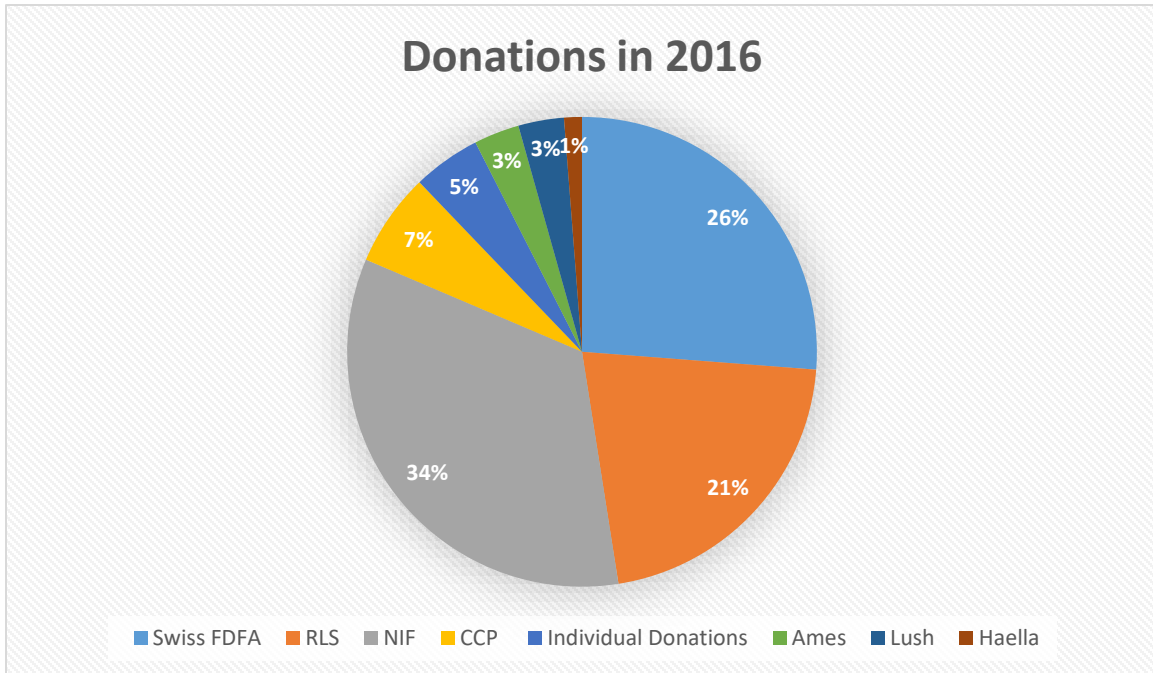
**Dr. Yones Aburabia**

**Adel Gafeer**

**Atn. Sana Ibn Bari**

# Donors and income

Swiss FDFA - 233,010 NIS | Rosa Luxembourg - 189,382 NIS | New Israel Fund - 301,353 NIS |



Ames Foundation - 27,782 NIS | Lush - 27,930 NIS | CCP Japan - 57,068 NIS | Haella - 10,960 NIS | Individual Donations - 41,512 NIS

**Total: 888,944 NIS**



# Donate

We rely upon the generosity of donors like you in our efforts to achieve justice in the Negev. In order to secure our independence, NCF does not receive any governmental or partisan support.

Please visit our website to learn more about possibilities of making a contribution online, from Israel, and abroad.

<http://www.dukium.org/support-ncf/>

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منتدى التعايش السلمي في النقب من أجل المساواة المدنية  
Negev Coexistence Forum For Civil Equality



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