

The 47th session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Geneva, 14 November 2011

**Presented by Mr Khalil Alamour,
member of Alsira Village Committee and board member of Negev Coexistence
Forum for Civil Equality**

I take this opportunity today to draw attention to passing of a proposal known as the "Praver Plan" which will effectuate Israel's policy of discrimination and dispossession towards its indigenous population in the Negev-Naqab, in the southern part of Israel. In September, the cabinet approved a plan which will see up to **30,000 Bedouin** evicted from their homes in the so-called "unrecognised villages".

I live together with my young family in one of these unrecognised villages: Alsira. We have no essential services provided by the government: no water; no electricity; no schools; no infrastructure. And every day homes, including mine, may be demolished. This year, more than 1,000 homes across the Naqab have already been destroyed.

Under the proposed plan, my village and many others like it will be moved by force and relocated into one of the townships established by the government many years ago but are today overcrowded and suffer neglect.

This plan, prepared without consulting a single resident of any of the affected unrecognised villages, is a clear violation of our historical and property rights and ties to the land. There will undoubtedly be dangerous, and possibly violent, consequences when the homes and personal belongings of thousands of already disenfranchised citizens are destroyed and we are evacuated from land on which we have lived for generations.

Ironically, the plan was approved during a period in Israel in which there was a mass protest movement against inequality. Furthermore, it was approved shortly following Prof. Anaya's condemnation of Israel's treatment of its Bedouin citizens. The Special Rapporteur called for the Israeli government to immediately refrain from demolishing any more homes in the Negev, and ensure the delivery of essential services to both recognised and unrecognised villages.

Evidently these demands have fallen on deaf ears.

Not only is the government continuing to demolish our homes, but it has embarked on a new policy of suing the residents of destroyed homes for the cost of the operation. In July, the state initiated legal proceedings against 34 impoverished residents of Al Arakib, an unrecognised village demolished more than two dozens times in the past 18 months, to recuperate the approximate sum of \$450,000 USD.

The government must immediately abandon its proposed plan and open a dialogue with

us, the Negev Bedouin, to formulate a plan that respects our human rights and includes us in the decision making process. This is the only course of action that will bring about lasting peace and justice for a community that has already suffered decades of neglect and discrimination. We urge the state to recognise all the unrecognised villages and to adopt the master plan prepared by the Israeli organizations, Bimkom and the Regional Council for Unrecognised Villages. The plan proposes an alternative to the various government programs and offers the possibility of recognising the unrecognised villages. The plan presents background, analysis, experts' reports, and concrete suggestions for suitable planning solutions for the unrecognized villages in the Negev.

My people dream of nothing more than living in peace on our ancestral lands in the Negev and being treated as equal citizens in Israel.

Thank you.