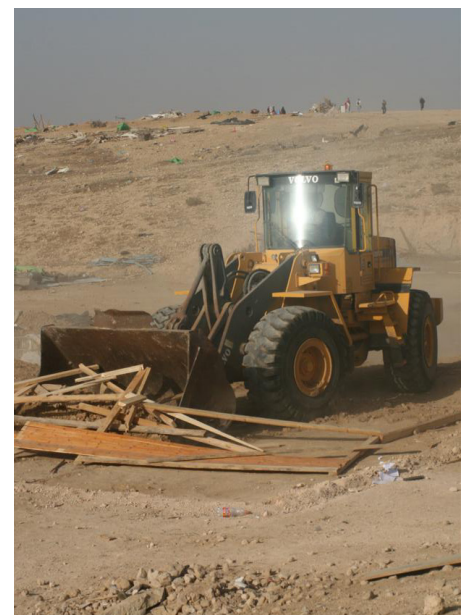


Negev Coexistence Forum
For Civil Equality

منتدى التعايش السلمي في
النقب من أجل المساواة المدنية

פורום דו-קיום בנגב
לשוויון אזרחי



Oren Ziv (Activestills.com)

Message from the Director

During 2010 we witnessed Israeli democracy come under attack from a number of fronts and a visible rise in tolerance of discrimination towards non-Jews across the country. This was evident in numerous disturbing developments such as the loyalty oath, rabbinical decrees not to rent apartments to Arabs, and of most concern to the work of the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF), the dramatic intensification of home demolitions in unrecognized Arab-Bedouin villages.

Al Arakib became the symbol of the larger, ongoing dispute between the Negev Bedouin on the one hand, and the Israeli government's policy of forced eviction alongside and the Jewish National Fund's forestation activities, on the other.

Between July 27 and the end of 2010, Al Arakib was demolished a total of eight times, leaving 300 residents, mostly women and children, without shelter and water. One of these demolitions occurred in the month of Ramadan which was an unprecedented act—Israel has never before demolished houses belonging to its Muslim citizens during this significant religious holiday.

Following the brutality of these demolitions, I have been led to agree with the observations of many human rights activists that Israel is entering an unprecedented period in terms of the threats to its Arab minority.

There was also brighter news. In December the NCF was awarded the **Emil Greenzweig Prize for Human Rights** by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) for constituting “a Jewish-Arab organization struggling for the rights of a national minority from a wide humanistic and civil viewpoint”, and more specifically, for being the prominent local organization supporting the community of Al Arakib. Whilst we are proud that our efforts to support the unrecognized villages have been noted, we recognize that there remains much to be done to achieve equality in the Negev.

The NCF together with many other civil society actors in the Negev, anticipate that there will be a record number of home demolitions in 2011 as a collective result of increasingly draconian government policies and the forestation activities of the Jewish National Fund (JNF).

We believe in a collaborative approach to achieve our goal of equal rights in the Negev. Thus, we look forward to strengthening new found alliances in our struggle for change during 2010 with a number of individuals and organizations including for example, Amnesty International, The Jewish Alliance for Change and others.

In appreciation of your support,

Haia Noach

Haia Noach, Director



Protests

The NCF participated in a number of peaceful protests:

- The NCF was one of the main organizers of this year's May Day Parade in Be'er Sheva. On May 1, more than 100 people joined the march through the streets waving red flags. NCF's Director, Haia Noach, made a speech and called for Arab-Jewish solidarity and equal rights for all minority groups in Israel.
- On May 12, the NCF together with the Recognition Forum, Al Arakib Popular Committee, Village Committee and Hithabrut-Tarabut arranged a large scale protest in Tel Aviv against the JNF's forestation activities around Al Arakib and the house demolitions in the Negev.
- On July 13, NCF activists participated in a large demonstration which took place in Ramle. The aim was to protest housing demolitions and to show solidarity with the residents of Dhamash whose houses received demolition orders and were threatened with immediate demolition.
- Every Sunday afternoon since the escalation of home demolitions in July 2010, the NCF together with the village committee and the popular committee coordinated a protest on the main highway into Be'er Sheva to draw attention to the plight of Al Arakib.
- The NCF participated in the International Human Rights Day March on December 10 which was organized by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. Over 10,000 people and 130 organizations joined the march.
- The NCF coordinated morning shifts to maintain a presence before and after demolitions in front of the JNF's base of operations in Al-Arakib.

Joint celebrations of holidays

Through our many community-based activities such as joint celebrations of religious holidays, we aim to open a dialogue between the Bedouin and the Jewish residents of the Negev to promote cultural coexistence, mutual respect and understanding. The following events allowed participants to share values and live together:

- **Iftar:** As we have done every year since 1999, we celebrated Iftar, which marks the month of Ramadan and the New Year, at the Multaka-Mifgash Cultural Center. As before, the event was attended by over 100 people. In addition, during the Iftar the exhibition We Are All Al-Arakib was officially opened. The exhibition was organized with the photography



Protest in Tel Aviv against JNF activities in Tel Aviv in May 2010
(Activestills.com)

group Activestills and showed photos taken by various photographers during and after the demolitions in Al Arakib.

- **Sukkot:** In September NCF activists celebrated Sukkot in Al Arakib by building and decorating a *sukkah* and playground for the children.
- **Pesach:** As part of the Pesach festival tradition, the NCF organized a festival in Rahat in April together with the Rahat municipality, the "Tzaad Kadima" association for the advancement of education in Rahat and the Community Center of Rahat. The event took place in a traditional Bedouin tent where the participants heard stories in Arabic and Hebrew about Bedouin tradition. This was followed by Debka workshops, traditional Bedouin dances and juggling. The artistic program included the Kan Zaman Debka dancing group and musical band System Ali from Jaffa.

Solidarity visits

To express solidarity with the victims of home demolitions, the NCF together with the Recognition Forum and other NGOs' activists conducted a number of visits to affected villages:

13 February – Olive trees were planted in Al Arakib.

20 March – Olive trees were planted in Al Arakib to mark the 34th anniversary of 'Land Day'.

17 April – A solidarity visit was paid to areas where demolitions had taken place or where demolition orders were renewed including Al Arakib, Twayl Abu-Jarwal and Wadi Al Na'am.

31 July – Solidarity activities were held with the residents of Al Arakib in which hundreds of people participated.

17 August – A solidarity visit of the esteemed Israeli author Amos Oz to Al Arakib was facilitated following the fourth demolition. Mr Oz came to the village and said, "My heart is with you, I understand your ties to this place, every person loves his home, the place where he grew, where he lives his life, at the side of his cemetery. Just as I don't want to leave my home, you don't want to leave yours. The Negev is home for the Bedouin and the Jews".

18 December – Following the demolition of seven homes belonging to the extended Abu-Eid family in Lod, NCF activists paid a solidarity visit to offer their assistance.



Coexistence Activities

On the June 10, in collaboration with the NCF, a Jewish-Arab children's ukulele band from the Sharon area performed before 180 children at the cultural centers in Rahat and Bir Haddaj.

Guided Tours

Throughout the year we ran a total of 20 guided tours to communities in the Negev for diplomats based in the Polish, German, Swiss, Filipino, Swedish, Belgian, Peruvian and British embassies in Israel, international peace groups, university students from Israel, Australia, the US and youth groups.

Public seminars

In June, NCF Director, Haia Noach participated in a two-day seminar hosted by the RCUV about housing rights.

To mark International Human Rights Day the NCF organized a discussion at Ben Gurion University on December 8 titled, "Human Rights in the Negev – Al Arakib as a Test Case". Guest speakers included Prof. Oren Yiftachel, Sheikh Sayach Al-Turi Abu Medirem and Attorney Sawsan Zahar from Adallah while Prof. Avner Ben Amos took the role of moderator. Panel members presented different aspects of the continuous violation of human rights in Al Arakib.

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 another report on **International Human Rights Day**, December 10, about the intensification of home demolitions across the Negev. The report presents the government's policy of house demolitions which is aimed at forcing the Bedouins to move to townships. According to the report, the State of Israel demolished a total of 250 houses in the Negev each year and in early 2010 decided to triple the number of demolitions raising the goal to 700 houses per year. The arithmetic is simple—each household consists of an average of six people which means that approximately 4,500 people could find themselves in 2010 with no roof over their heads.

Reporting & Information Dissemination



Khalil Alamour, NCF board member, explaining Iftar



Sukkah in Al Arakib

Awards

Throughout the year, the NCF also maintained its **online record of all home demolitions** across the Negev. It in fact recorded double the number of website visitors in August and September.

Additionally, the NCF issued two printed **newsletters** and two electronic newsletters to over 1,000 people providing an update on developments in the Negev and NCF's activities. The NCF also issued an immediate update following each demolition of Al Arakib.

In December 2010, the NCF was awarded the **Emil Greenzweig Prize for Human Rights** by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel for constituting "a Jewish-Arab organization struggling for the rights of a national minority from a wide humanistic and civil viewpoint", and more specifically, for being the prominent local organisation supporting the community of Al Arakib.

United Nations Advocacy

Attorney Rawia Aburabia attended the ninth session of the **UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues** in New York in April and presented a statement to the assembly about the plight of Bedouin in the Negev. The statement drew media attention.

For the first time, the NCF sent a representative to the **Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People** in Geneva. NCF board member, Khalil Alamour attended the third session in June 2010. Mr Alamour was also presented with the opportunity to attend the **Human Rights Committee's review** of Israel's implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and read out a statement on behalf of the NCF. Mr Alamour was also invited to attend the **UNITAR Training Programme** to Enhance the Conflict Prevention and Peace Building Capacities of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives.

Additionally, both Ms Aburabia and Mr Alamour met in private with the **Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People**, Professor James Anaya, to update him in person about developments in the Negev and particularly Al Arakib.

In October, the NCF submitted its **shadow report** to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in response to the State of Israel's third period report (E/C.12/ISR/3).



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Int'l Human Rights Day March



Tree planting in Al Arakib



First demolition of Al Arakib on July 27, 2010

In our efforts to raise awareness of the deteriorating situation in the Negev, the NCF sent a number of letters throughout the year to the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Minister for Minority Affairs, Israeli President Shimon Peres, United States President Barak Obama and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon about the demolitions in Al Arakib and urging them to take immediate action.

In October, the NCF initiated an open letter to the Jewish National Fund prior to their national conference in Atlanta together with a coalition of 35 Israeli and American Jewish organizations calling on it to end its complicity in the dispossession of the Negev Bedouin from their land. A petition was simultaneously launched and received over 10,000 signatories.

Notable events and seminars which took place in the Multaka-Mifgash Center were as follows:

16 February – Panel discussion with Nassar Gawi (Chairman of the Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood), Orli Noy (spokesperson for Ir Amim Association) and Dr. Eyal Nir (lecturer at Ben Gurion University and activist in the protest activities) on Sheikh Jarrah.

14 April – Screening of the Chilean film Machuca which depicts the life of two children during the military revolution. This was followed by a discussion on human rights.

27 April – Discussion with Dr. Yanina Altman, author of The White Rose – Students and Intellectuals in Germany Before and After Hitler Coming to Power.

28 April – Screening of the film Strike which documents the struggle of Dimona workers to establish a workers' union. This was followed by a discussion about workers' rights and the right to unionize.

9 June – Discussion panel with Dr. Dani Filk and Mr. Roi Yalin titled, "Fascism. Will it not pass?" exploring various issues of the notion of fascism and the Israeli reality.

12 October – The NCF hosted the group "Friends of Daniel Pearl" as part of their Israeli performance tour. Daniel Pearl, an American Jewish journalist who was kidnapped and murdered in Pakistan, was also a gifted musician who believed that music could form a bridge between cultures. His friends fulfilled his legacy and formed a group that performs around the world



Khalil Alamour with Special Rapporteur James Anaya in Geneva in July 2010



Oz Amos in Al Arakib

spreading his doctrine.

26 October – An event to mark the 54th anniversary of Kfar Kassem massacre. Guest speakers included attorney Adel Amar and Prof. Gadi Algazi.

1 November – Discussion panel with Prof. Dan Caspi (Communication Department of Ben Gurion University) and Saliman A-Shafi (former reporter of Channel 2) titled "Minorities and Media".

28 December – Lecture about archaeology in Silwan, The City of David. The event was held in collaboration Emek Shaveh which is a non-profit organization of archaeologists and community organizers working to change the role of archaeology in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

29 December – Workshop with Attorney Yossi Wolfzon about what are the rights of activists during arrest in collaboration with the Coalition of Women for Peace

The NCF also held three spoken-Arabic courses in the Multaka-Mifgash Cultural Center and one English course for Bedouin activists allowing them the opportunity to improve their ability to talk to journalists and other concerned people who visit the unrecognized villages.

Finally, during November, the NCF also ran a workshop for university students and other interested people consisting of 10 sessions. Half of the sessions were in English while the other half were in Hebrew. Topics presented and discussed included unrecognized villages, townships, health and the status of women.

Workshops

The project entered its third year and continued to be supported by many volunteers including professional Israeli photographer, Ilan Molcho. A total of 84 children, over seven workshops, in Wadi Al-Na'am participated in the project and learnt the simple art of photography thereby gaining skills and the means to document their lives from their own perspective. It allowed them to tell their story—a story which is generally unknown to audiences both in Israel and abroad. We found that the workshops and exhibitions (described below) promoted the children's self-confidence and opened their eyes to new horizons and possibilities beyond the confines of their village. This year was a critical year for Wadi Al Na'am as many demolition orders on homes that were issued years ago but not enforced, were renewed.



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Children in Al Arakib (Oren Ziv)



Suhib Ismail Gargawi (participant in the children's Visual Literacy Project)

Exhibitions

The children's work was featured in a number of local and international exhibitions:

- **Multaka-Mifgash Cultural Center:** In March, the children's photographs were displayed in the NCF cultural center for the residents of Be'er Sheva.
- **Spiro Ark:** In May, Spiro Ark, a London-based Jewish culture and education center, hosted an exhibition of the children's work in conjunction with a series of talks about the Bedouin.
- **New North London Synagogue:** A short exhibition was hosted at the NNLS in London and NCF board member, Avner Ben Amos, gave a presentation to the congregation.
- **Tel Aviv Port:** On July 5, the exhibition 'Moments of Home' sponsored by Bezeq opened in the Tel Aviv Port and featured a selection of the work by the children. The project was joined by photographer Miki Kretzman.
- **Amnesty International:** In November, the NCF in collaboration with Amnesty International launched an exhibition in their Human Rights Action Center in London. The exhibition was supported by number of panel discussions and accompanied by the work of Italian photographer, Silvia Boarini, in Al Arakib. Three children from Wadi Al-Na'am travelled to London to attend the opening night and meet with visitors.

Calendar

We chose again this year to illustrate our annual NCF calendar with the work of the children participating in our *Azazameh Children Taking Pictures Project*. Over 300 calendars were again printed and distributed this year to embassies, NCF supporters and other concerned people.

The NCF together with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Adallah and others, filed a petition against the Minister of Interior in the Supreme Court challenging the amendments to the law allowing the Minister to indefinitely postpone the first elections of the Abu Basma Regional Councils.

Legal Action



Baker Omar Gergawi (participant in the children's Visual Literacy Project)

NCF Board Members

Khalil Alamour
Prof. Avner Ben Amos
Rachel Naparstek
Musa Abu Ghanem

Yacov Manor
Rodaina Abu-Freiha
S'aid a-Sana

Special Thanks

The NCF takes this opportunity to thank the hundreds of volunteers who generously volunteered their time to make what we do possible, particularly those who stayed over-night in Al Arakib before anticipated demolitions and participated in our weekly demonstrations. Additionally, we extend an especially warm thank you to the following individuals:

Ilan Molcho
Oren Ziv
Silvia Boarini
Miki Kritzman

Marc Marcus
Gadi Algazi
Rachel Ben Porat
Rawia Aburabia

Donors & Sponsors

New Israel Fund
British Shalom-Salaam Trust
Haella Foundation
Robert Arnow
Amnesty International (UK)
Bezeq
Hewlett Plackard



Crop destruction in Al Arakib in February 2010 by the Israeli Land Authority
(Activestills.com)



Al Arakib residents and the police force collide during the crop destruction
(Activestills.com)