

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Geneva, 14 February 2012

Presented by Ms Orna Cohen on behalf of the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

As detailed in its alternative report, the Negev Coexistence Forum is alarmed that the Bedouin in the Negev desert region are increasingly subject to racially discriminatory laws, policies and practices as a result of the state's determination to increase the region's Jewish population at the expense of its Arab citizens.

The Negev is a culturally diverse region. However, the state unequally distributes services, and access to resources and land, in favour of the Jewish population. It coerces the Bedouin to concentrate into specific, neglected townships through simultaneously denying essential services and demolishing homes. In recent years we have witnessed an escalation of home demolitions by the Israeli authorities which are using increasingly aggressive force.

On the other hand, not only were Jewish farms in the Negev retroactively approved recently—unlike the 45 Bedouin villages considered to be illegal—but the development of ten new Jewish settlements around Arad were authorised over an area that currently includes Bedouin homes.

In fact, thousands of Bedouin face forced displacement under the proposed Praver-Amidror Plan that was formulated with barely input from the Bedouin community and approved by the cabinet on 11 September.

We ask the Committee to join our appeal to the Israeli government not to implement the plan in its current form and to involve the Bedouin in a review process. If it does not, the forceful implementation of the plan is only likely to lead to further mistrust and deepen the conflict facing the Negev. This is an historic opportunity for the concerned parties to work together to find a mutually agreeable solution.