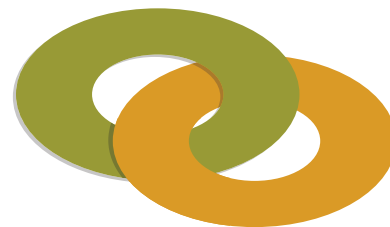


# Minister Benny Begin's Revisions to the Prawer Plan



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

The Begin Plan, approved in the Israeli cabinet on Sunday, 27 January 2013, is an amendment to the Prawer Plan, which was designed to regulate the settlement of the Bedouin in the Negev. However, the Begin Plan does not constitute a substantial change in government policy and leaves the dangers and threats to the Arab Bedouin citizens of the Negev as they were.

The softened rhetoric of the Begin Plan is the product of a "listening process" conducted by Minister Begin. This rhetoric conceals, but does nothing to counter, the State's reluctance to recognize the 36 unrecognized Bedouin villages and to fairly adjudicate the claims over lands expropriated by the State. The Plan is littered with humanistic declarations that are very quickly dismissed on grounds of alleged impracticality, making the declarations devoid of any moral imperative.



We call upon the State to commit to fully recognizing all of the unrecognized villages, even if it involved changing the current regional zoning plan.

## Unfair Settlement of Land Claims

With regards to the settlement of land ownership claims, the Begin Plan again quotes the Goldberg Committee, which asserted the following:

The Bedouins are the residents and citizens of the State; as such, they are not 'transparent' and do not

lack rights and status. Their needs and grievances must be considered, and they should be a part of the processes that will determine their future. Their forced re-settlement in the Sayig area after the formation of the State of Israel and their hold over these lands in the Sayig for many years must not be ignored.

However, even this seemingly benevolent statement is harnessed by "practical constraints" such as the discriminatory land laws that the State utilizes as justification for expropriating Bedouin of their land. Laws that the state has no intention of revising. Therefore, the state offers the claimants a partial compensation of 62.5% of the land. Moreover, Bedouin citizens whose lands were already expropriated by the state, and are not currently holding or cultivating these lands, are not entitled for compensation in the form of alternative plots. This offer blatantly contrasts that given to Jewish settlers evacuated by the State, who receive full compensation and at times more than that.

Moreover, the plan says that this proposition will be off the table in five years' time, at which point, the State will automatically appropriate the contested lands. Minister Begin has repeatedly expressed this condition in the press interviews that have followed the publication of the Plan. This condition reveals the true nature of the Begin Plan: it is presented as a generous compromise, but it actually constitutes a terrible threat and an ongoing and oppressive campaign by the State to forcibly concentrate its Bedouin citizens within a limited space.

The Negev Coexistence Forum objects to these aggressive attempts to solve land issues through the employment of draconian legislation. We call upon the State to reach fair and direct agreements with Bedouin land owners.

## Summary

The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality objects to the recommendations of the Begin Plan, which preserve the discriminatory policy towards Arab Bedouin citizens residing in the Negev. The declarations of a change in policy that are found in the Plan are not backed up by changes to the legal and planning protocols that regulate the distribution of resources in the Negev. The Begin Plan is, therefore, a collection of hollow declarations.

NCF calls upon the Israeli government to implement international standards of redistributive justice in the Negev, where different legal and planning practices are currently applied to the treatment of Jewish versus Arab populations.

## Dismissing International Law

The Begin Plan is dismissive of International Law concepts such as 'transitional justice,' 'semi-nomadic property rights,' and 'native rights'—concepts that are very relevant to the relationship between Israeli authorities and the Bedouin population. The Plan states that "as interesting and thought provoking as [discussing these concepts] is, they have not yet produced an applicable solution that fits with the economic, legal, social and political reality." The Negev Coexistence Forum (NCF) finds the ease with which the State absolves itself of responsibility to international standards and norms to be upsetting. NCF position maintains that If the principles of universal justice and international law do not compare favorably with the social and political reality, it is the latter that must be in the wrong way and should be amended.

## Effectively Nullifying Previous Declarations of Recognition

With regards to the recognition of the unrecognized villages, the Begin Plan attempts to present its recommendations as a shift in policy—from a policy of non-recognition of the Bedouin villages to a policy of recognition. Thus, the Plan reiterates the prescriptions of the Goldberg Committee of 2008, according to which "it is suggested to recognize, as much as possible, the unrecognized villages that have a minimal mass of residents, to be set, and that would be municipally viable. But, [recognition should take place] only when this does not contradict regional zoning plans." However, the relevant regional zoning plan (the Beer Sheva Metropolitan Plan), which was approved after the Goldberg Committee's recommendations had been submitted, allocates many of the areas where unrecognized villages are currently located for prospective, non-residential purposes such as forestation, road construction, and the establishment of military camps and Jewish settlements.

Thus, while the Begin Plan reflects the Goldberg Committee's prescriptions, the Metropolitan Plan has effectively subjected issue of recognition to the determination of regional zoning planners. Consequently, tens of thousands of Bedouin citizens continue to face the imminent threat of evacuation, as was the case in the original Prawer Plan.