



DISCUSSING RACISM IN THE NEGEV-NAGAB

The International Day for the Elimination
of Racial Discrimination 2015

Miki Kratsman | Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

Miki Kratsman | Miki Kratsman is a distinguished photographer and photojournalist. Kratsman was born in Argentina and emigrated to Israel at an early age. Over the years he has worked for a number of newspapers, among them “Hadashot”, “Haeer” and “Haaretz”. Kratsman has taught photography at many different universities and colleges and in the last eight years, has presided as head of the photography department of Bezalel Academy of Arts, in Jerusalem. Over the years, he has won many awards for his work, among them The Mendel and Eva Pundik Prize for Israeli Art, Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2012); the Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography from the Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology at Harvard University (2011); the Emet Prize for Science, Art, and Culture (2011) and many others.

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality | In 1997, a group of concerned Arab and Jewish residents of the Negev (Israel’s southern desert region) established the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF) to provide a framework for Jewish-Arab collaborative efforts in the struggle for civil equality and the advancement of mutual tolerance and coexistence. NCF, also known as “Dukium” in Hebrew, is unique in being the only Arab-Jewish organization that remains focused solely on the specific problems confronting the Negev. NCF considers that the State of Israel fails to respect, protect and fulfill its human rights obligations, without discrimination, towards the Arab-Bedouin citizens in the Negev. As a result, the Forum has set out as one of its goals to achieve full civil rights and equality for all those living in the Negev.

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Introduction

Every year, on March 21, the world marks the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, published in 1965 and entered into force in 1969, lists the various forms of discrimination and requires state parties to combat racism in general, and racial discrimination in particular. According to the Convention, the term "racial discrimination" means:

“any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life”.¹

The State of Israel ratified this Convention in 1979, however, on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2015, discrimination towards the Bedouin community continues according to a number of criteria outlined in the Convention. Articles in the Convention refer directly to the right to freedom of movement; the right to own property and the right to inherit property, the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; the right to education; the right to housing - and a variety of rights and freedoms that are violated on a daily basis with respect to the Negev Bedouin.

This report presents members of the Bedouin community living in the Negev, who are discriminated against by the State as a result of their origin. Portraits of people from the community who have chosen to participate in the project in order to expose the daily violation of their rights by the State of Israel are shown. Alongside their portraits, the report includes their testimonies, describing different fields in which the rights of the community's members are violated due to the policies employed by the government and its authorities. While these testimonies are personal, they capture a range of problems and difficulties which the community as a whole are currently facing.

While the UN Convention requires state parties to struggle against racial discrimination, the testimonies included in this report all reveal the ways in which the State of Israel itself violates the rights of members of the Bedouin community in the Negev. The ploughing of sown fields and crop destruction; the lack of public transport; the neglect of holy places; the lack of access to electricity and water and discriminatory planning policies are all the result of a deliberate policy implemented by the State.

Therefore, the purpose of this report, published on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, is to expose the areas and ways in which the rights of the Bedouin community in the Negev are being violated on a daily basis. Through the use of portraits and testimonies, the report seeks to present the ongoing discrimination faced by the Bedouin community. As declared in the UN Convention, such discrimination is unacceptable and all State efforts must be employed in order to eliminate it. On March 21, 2015, we call upon Israel to halt its systematic discrimination against the Bedouin community in the Negev, and to ensure the fulfillment and attainment of the rights that the members of this community are entitled to.

¹ International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (1969), part 1, article 1.



Salame Abu Kaf // Umm Batīn - The Hebron Stream

“In the river runs wastewater from Hebron and the surrounding settlements. We have been in an ongoing struggle to find a solution with those responsible, since 1996. Unfortunately, however, none has been reached. In 2003, we turned to the High Court of Justice to solve the problem and find a solution, but those responsible found a way to evade the decisions of the High Court of Justice even though its ruling demanded that a solution be found, and a sewage treatment facility was established. This facility allegedly solves the problem.

However, the facility itself pours wastewater into the stream, as it cannot handle the load. People suffer a great deal from the sewage stream, whether it's from the air pollution, the rats that live in the area, or the mosquitoes that bite people at night. The people live in simple houses, with no nets on the windows. A large number of old people and babies were sent to the hospital as a result of infectious diseases. The main cause for this illness is the wastewater flow in the stream. Unfortunately, no authority, including the Ministry of Health, took the issue as seriously as this issue should be taken. Today, the problem persists.

Unfortunately this problem has yet to be solved. It exists and will continue to exist. I do not see on the horizon any solution that could assist the population. To my regret, generations have grown up in our village under these conditions, and even when our village was recognized and a regional council was established to govern the village, it did not address the issue of the environment and the river with the gravity it deserves. The suffering of the population continues, and we also plan to return once again to looking for legal ways to stop the terrible suffering of the population that is a result of the wastewater flowing in the stream”.



Khaled al-Ja'ar // Be'er Sheva Court

“I am the father of the late Sami. I have eight children, today seven children. This is thanks to the increasing violence of the Israeli police. What can I say? When I heard the stories of death and murder, whether in Kufr Kana or the Arab population of Israel, I almost couldn't digest them, you feel something but it doesn't quite register. When the pain came to my house and I saw what they do and what they say about it afterwards, I stopped believing in this institution that is called 'the Israeli Police Force'.

They gave him a blow to the forehead, I saw that he was bleeding. I came outside barefoot because of the shouting going on outside the house. I told the policeman that I had called in to report what was happening in the school, that my son was not related to that, that it is not legal for him to attack people, and he hit me in the face with his gun, and put the cocked gun against my head. I went inside. There were shots. The shooting didn't stop. Sami, my son, came home with watery eyes, he washed his face, he asked that we take him to the doctor because he couldn't see anything. I didn't see the police but the women here saw them, they say that one of the policemen approached the fence, activated his laser, Sami was behind them, and the policeman shot him. I only saw the moment when he reached me and tried to lift up his shirt. I helped him and saw a bullet wound. I told him it was a surface wound so as not to distress him. He lay on the ground and lost consciousness. We took him in Murad's taxi, he's a family member, we tried to leave the area but a police car tried to prevent us from leaving. We arrived at the medical centre in Rahat. I put my son down in the doctor's room and he sent us out of the room.

When I went out of the room, the detective guys who had been by the house were there. I told them, 'you shot my son', and they immediately said, 'arrest him, he hit us'. I put my hands behind my back and they handcuffed me. They took me to the police station, four, five, six guys. They also handcuffed my feet, and they beat me. When I describe this, I have no way to describe their violence, or the words that came out of their mouths, 'Hamasniks', 'Palestinians', 'Spit on you'. They spat, what did they not do? When they learned that my son had died and I lay almost unconscious and groaning in agony, one of them put his foot on my head, stepped on my forehead and said, 'Only one? If only you were all dead'.



Subhiya Abu Juda // az-Za'arūrah

“Our kindergarten was active for 5 years. The children would come to the kindergarten and learn the alphabet and english here, when they reached school they were asked ‘where did you learn all that?’. The children were very well and happy, until last year they used to come to our kindergarten. Now they come in the morning and I tell them, ‘there is no kindergarten’ and then they start crying and I cry with them. Even yesterday they came to ask when the kindergarten would be open again, so I tell them, ‘Inshallah, soon. Maybe next week, maybe in a month’.

There were 37 children in the kindergarten and in the kindergartens in al-Fur‘ah there isn’t room for them. It’s far to travel to al-Fur‘ah on the bus. Little children can’t climb the stairs of the bus, they can’t travel alone, and they also have to stay there until 3pm when the primary school children travel back home. A young child can’t stay until 3pm. There is no dedicated transport for kindergarten children.

Now all the children sit at home, none of them go to the kindergarten in al-Fur‘ah. One of the children was bitten by a dog on the way to school in al-Fur‘ah and he was in intensive care for a month. There are many valleys in the village and the children can’t cross these when it rains, so we have to take them by car. The children in the kindergarten are 3-4 years old, now they’re at home, they have no educational framework. al-Fur‘ah is far for these children, they can’t travel all the way there, it’s a shame for these children. 3 year old children learn and eat and then at 12pm they sleep. At school, there is no such thing, they keep them awake until 3pm. There is also no room in al-Fur‘ah, we go to register the children but there is no space. The children were very happy here, but now they have no framework, they don’t have anywhere to go”.



Salim Abu al-Qian // Umm al-Ḥirān

“Here we are standing to the west of the village of Umm al-Ḥirān which was established in 1956. The village exists independently without any involvement from the government, apart from the demolition orders. That’s the ‘assistance’ it receives from the government. Since 2003, 70% of the homes are subject to demolition orders. They want to demolish this village because a number of settlers suddenly arrived in the area and decided that the village suited them. The views are nice, so they decided it was suitable for Jews and not for Arabs, and therefore with complete audacity [chutzpah], they want to destroy this village for no reason. They see no problem, just because we are Bedouin, to concentrate us into the towns where people suffer, where there are no employment opportunities. These are not towns, I call them ‘camps’.

To the left there are a number of family farms - Amos Farm which is a dog farm, belonging to Amos, the dog handler. He has water and electricity and you can see the dogs roaming in the hills. He has a waterpipe, he has a powerline, he has everything. We asked, almost a year ago, to be connected, because we don’t have any water at all. It has been five years now that we have been transporting our water in water-tanks. They don’t want us to have water, so that we won’t be here, this Amos has water and electricity. So does his neighbour, the family farm over the hill, that one also has water and electricity, as does a third farm, Yehuda’s, he works with sewage disposal, he has no reason to be here, he could also live in town. He’s there on thousands of acres. Meanwhile, here, opposite, our herds are within an enclosure with nothing, just dry food and no pasture. They planted trees in order to prevent our sheep from approaching the area, they purposefully planted spiky ones”.



Dr. Younis Abu Rabia // Muslim Cemetery, Be'er Sheva

“This cemetery existed until 1948, it existed before the founding of the State of Israel. Be'er Sheva was built at the beginning of 1906, and the inhabitants of Be'er Sheva including Bedouins were buried here - Sheiks and other important people. Among those buried here is the Sheik from our tribe, who is called Sheik Suleiman Abu Rabia, and two of my cousins are buried here, Salem and Salman, and my uncle is buried here in this graveyard.

In the 1950's or 1960's the Bedouin Sheikhs were called and a fatwa was issued - an authorization from a corrupt Sheik - he gave a fatwa that after a few years the graves could be moved to a different place or that they are no longer important after so many years. Then they called the Bedouin Sheikhs and told them this - once they used to be considerate towards people - and explained to them that this is an area in the middle of the city and suggested to move the cemetery to a better place. The Bedouin Sheikhs were real leaders and did not agree.

You can see how neglected this place is and if you compare between the Muslim cemetery and the Christian cemetery, or the Jewish one in Hazerim, it's as if Muslims don't exist in the world, it's as if the respect for the deceased and towards cemeteries and sacred places is neglected. No one cares, look at this contempt for what exists, that's how it is!

I feel really bad. They talk about equality, and coexistence and about the sacredness of the holy places. In the middle of Be'er Sheva, the capital of the Negev, around which live a quarter of a million Bedouins, how do they feel when they pass by here and see the Muslim cemetery? It should be orderly and well-kept with respect for the deceased, like every other cemetery? When they see this, I don't want to even imagine what people feel. And also the parking of the market was built over Muslim graves. They took a part and wanted to slowly slowly creep and erase the whole cemetery, until people suddenly woke up and managed to stop it so that they wouldn't take the whole cemetery. The junction of the mall is also built on a part of the cemetery and if the Bedouin were not alert to this, we wouldn't see a cemetery here at all”.



Fatma Abu al-Qian // ‘Atir

A bus used to reach us three times a day, once in the morning and twice in the evening. It would stop on the road, collect whomever it collected and continue to Be’er Sheva. It would stop at all the Jewish localities and then return. Whenever we wanted we would get on and go, today we don’t have a bus at all. Sometimes I have an appointment at the hospital, I need to get things done, but I can’t go, I can’t leave, there is no vehicle. There is only a school bus, so sometimes I go with them. I leave with the students, but sometimes my appointment is in the afternoon so it doesn’t really make sense to leave with the children at 7am. Difficult or not? And the school bus only goes to Hūrah. On the return I sometimes travel with them, but sometimes I miss the bus. At least from Hūrah, it is possible to catch another bus to wherever you need to get to, the problem is to get to Hūrah in the first place. There’s nothing, nothing.

Sometimes we walk on the road, people sometimes stop, whoever has mercy in their hearts, and sometimes they don’t. Did you understand? The bus that used to pass by on its way to the Jewish localities now takes a different route, so as not to take us. Inshallah, it’ll come back. It would at least help us when it passed, now we can get on only with the children but sometimes they allow us to travel with the children and sometimes they don’t.

You can’t leave from here, only from Hūrah. Whoever graduates from high school and wants to go to university can’t leave from here. My daughter had an exam but she couldn’t get to it, there wasn’t anyone to take her. Her Father and her Brothers leave early in the morning and return late at night. Difficult or not? Difficult!”.



Bilal Abu Bnaya // Wādī an-Na‘am

“I need electricity in order to watch television, and to charge my phone. Now we use electricity from the sun, solar panels and generators. Electricity is important, but the State won’t give us electricity, we can’t do anything, they just don’t want to give it to us. The power station in the centre of the village only disturbs us. We hear a lot of noise from it. The company will not give us electricity, so why does it just generate noise for us, horrible noise? We don’t want to hear that. Sometimes we are woken by the noise in the middle of the night, and we don’t sleep well. If the company would give us electricity, we would be able to deal with the noise. But they won’t give us electricity, only noise. I don’t know why they don’t give us electricity”.



Hilayel Abu Jlidan // al-Baggār

“He came to plough my land, though he is already like family here, he comes to my house, sits, eats, drinks, everything and also eats bread and pitas and all this he eats and then comes to plough over my land, I don’t know what I owe him, this is my father’s land, he doesn’t have land here. It’s my father’s land, I’ll die here. I won’t leave this place, I’ll die here. He can bury me here, and that’s it, end of story. It’s my father’s land, why is he ploughing it? And after he ploughed here, he put up this sign. Do you see, here, from the marks from the tractor, that he installed the sign after he ploughed the land? It’s a crime, an original crime. He comes to destroy people’s livelihoods. What is it that bothers him here? What bothers him?”

I don’t know, this country says it’s a democracy, but it’s a crime, it’s racism and no more. The individual who ploughed here, he eats at mine, drinks coffee with me, drinks tea, he comes to me and I help him with everything. Even when he wants my help, I help him with everything. Yes. His name is Ishai. Ishai from the patrol. What can I say? Walla, We have no rights in this country, no nothing! We have nothing in this country. In the family farm opposite they have olives and everything, and I’m not allowed to sow my land here. It’s my land.

We sowed wheat here, three months ago already, now they came and destroyed everything. I don’t know what bothers him here. What annoys him? He comes and ploughs over people’s crops. He’s a traitor, he comes to eat with you and then destroys your crops, he’s a traitor. He should have invited me to court if I committed a crime, not dealt with it like this. We have nothing left. He came to destroy my crops without even saying anything to me. He was at mine when I ploughed here, he came here, asked me what I was doing. I told him I was ploughing for my sheep. He came and destroyed everything, and after he ploughed over my crops he put up this sign, he didn’t give any prior warning at all, not any.

We don’t know who to turn to, we don’t have anyone. They destroy everything, they plough over everything. I paid a lot of money here, I didn’t steal like he did, he stole the land now. I bought this wheat with money. There is an agreement that they’ll establish a village here, so after they do, we’ll reach an agreement, but you can’t just destroy like this, with no agreement and no village. What is this? It’s just damage they do to us”.



Khaled al-Asam // Şwāwīn

“We have a problem with water in the village. There is only access to water near Route 25, but our homes are located 7km away from that point, or further. We bring the water from the main road with water-tanks. It’s about 250 NIS for four cubic metres. The water we receive is not enough for us. We need water for basic sanitation, but we don’t even have enough for that, without considering agriculture or herds. We approached the authorities several times, and we issued a request every time. We were told that the committee would get back to us with an answer but, it hasn’t got back to us. They say we have enough water. We have no choice but to transport water in water-tanks. The water in the tanks is not good. The tanks are rusty and so are our storage containers. It affects the quality of the water.

It makes us feel bad, we feel that there is racism in this country, there is racism. Next to our village there is a moshav, Nevatim. For every 1000 chickens they keep, they are given as much water as we are for all the residents in our village. Anyone who keeps chickens in Nevatim, gets whatever they want, they are our neighbours in Nevatim. I don’t know what will happen in the future. We want to protest and demand that we are given water, so that we can drink”.



Ali Zanun // Rakhamah

“The ploughing is very damaging, it’s damage that harms the Bedouin, it’s damage so that the Bedouin will leave. But we won’t leave. We are Bedouin, we won’t leave. With force they won’t achieve anything, they’ll only create hate between us and the Jewish people, they won’t achieve anything. They are not capable. No one will go to their side. We know their solution, their solution is only the Supreme Court. Apparent from the High Court of Justice everything is on their side. They think that if we now take it to the High Court of Justice, the court will say that it’s State Land.

I need to live like a ‘kibuztnik’, I asked them to build me a proper agricultural settlement. Talking, they talk and talk, but there is no substance. Only damage, what you can see here. What’s their goal? Is their goal to move us from this country? To extract us from our land? Never. They’re kidding their own people too. They don’t tell them what they do to the Bedouin here. Let them explain to their wives, their sisters, their mothers, what they do to the Bedouin. They need to give an explanation. This explanation is given by the media, today you won’t see this in the media, only if someone dies here will it reach the media. Why?

Why is there no justice? This is not a democracy, even for Jews this is not a democracy. For thieves this is a democracy. I’m not a thief. I served in the army for 30 years and this is what I deserve?”.



Rawia Aburabia // Carmit

“In October 2011 the Government decided to establish seven rural communities in the outskirts of Arad. In documents released explaining the decision it is noted that the plan is part of ‘the Zionist vision to make the desert bloom’ and part of the goal of ‘strengthening the organized Jewish settlement’. The total area of the settlements, some 180,000 dunams, is described as an area ‘void of inhabitants’ apart from two Jewish villages, four family farms and a ‘sparse dispersion of Bedouins’.

This ‘sparse dispersion of Bedouin’ actually consists of six unrecognized Bedouin villages, home to some 8,000 civilians; three of them - ‘Atīr, Umm al-Ḥirān and Tal ‘Arād - have existed in their present location since the 1950s, when the residents of these villages were placed there by the authorities; three others - al-Ḥumrah, Sa‘wah, and al-Bāṭ - before the founding of the State. These villages are desperate for regulation and recognition, but when an expert committee made the recommendation to recognize the villages of ‘Atīr, Umm al-Ḥirān and Tal ‘Arād, it was actually the government that opposed the recognition of these villages and demanded their eviction on the grounds that the area on which they exist is ‘highly sensitive and vital for its environmental and landscape value’. That same government is now proposing to build Jewish settlements in exactly the same area.

Throughout all my years of work in ACRI, I have never encountered such a racist governmental decision which embodies so clearly a discriminatory planning policy in relation to existing Bedouin Arab villages and their residents in that area. This decision not only ignores Arab residents but outwardly gives preferential treatment to a potential group of Jewish settlers, not at all present in the region, while ignoring the planning of existing Bedouin settlements and the acute housing shortage of the residents who live in the same space from time immemorial. The involvement of the Settlement Division only clarified the fact that the basis for the decision is ethnic considerations. A country that claims to be committed to the equality of all its citizens cannot decide to remove the Bedouin community in order to establish villages for the Jewish population. Behind the words ‘vision’ and ‘making the desert bloom’, lies a simple truth: blatant discrimination between Bedouins and Jews.

In November 2012, the High Court of Justice dismissed the petition I filed on the grounds that the decision to establish settlements is not yet an operative one”.



Nasser Abu Bnaya // Wādī an-Na‘am

“Racism is when someone is given a right and someone else isn’t entitled to that same right, that might be more in need of it. I am a Bedouin, I live in an unrecognized village. My brother and I were born here. I always dreamt of working my land, living off it, and providing for my children with its help. But with the terrible nature of the political situation we face today, this is not a possibility. We are in a drought, and live only from rainwater, because we don’t have the opportunity, like Jewish farmers, to receive water and assistance to work our land.

The Jewish farmers receive lots of subsidies and we don’t. Even if we make do with rainwater and the crops grow, the State will come and destroy them under the pretext that we are taking-over the Land of Israel, although everyone is well-aware that we were born here, and have lived on the same land for many years, even before the founding of the State”.



Yosra Abu Kaf // Umm Batin

“I had a bus from Route 60, near my house but it was cancelled because in place of the bus stop there is a new workstation for Route 6. The area has become really dangerous, where we used to wait for the bus, lorries drive and we can’t stand there anymore. For several months now, the bus to Be’er Sheva no longer stops at this stop. I can’t get to Be’er Sheva, I can’t get to work. I’m in Be’er Sheva almost every day. The private transits are much more expensive than public transport. It makes me angry because they took my bus. I hope they bring it back although I’m not sure if when Route 6 passes by, it will be possible for there to be a stop here”.



Rafat Abu Aish // Be'er Sheva

“I was under investigation for 12 hours and later for another 5 days under house arrest, because I posted an invitation to a protest on Facebook. It was an invitation to a small protest, not more than fifty people. They took me from University. I was at the police station for an hour, and then I left and went back to the dormitories. Later my family called from home and told me that a police vehicle came and searched the whole house. I was surprised because I had only just left the investigation. I received a call from an unregistered caller and I was told that I was needed for an investigation. I told them that I just left an investigation and they told me it was at a different station and asked me where I was. They came to take me from the dorms. They took me to the Towns’ police station, in the beginning they told me I was detained and not under arrest, and that they’d return me home later. I waited there for 3 hours and no one spoke to me, and then I was told that I was under arrest for incitement and the organization of an illegal protest. After another three-four hours, they took me for investigation. For 45 minutes they asked my questions that were completely unrelated to me: what I do on Facebook, and if I know what the role of Facebook was in the Arab Spring, and then I understood that I was there for no reason. I finished the investigation and returned to the chair I had been sitting on. A wooden chair, I sat on it for 12 hours under air conditioning set at 16 degrees. It was very cold, I couldn’t move from there. I was also fasting that day, I hadn’t eaten anything and I wasn’t brought any food. When I wanted to sleep I put my head on the cupboard that was behind me and one of them took my head and told me ‘this is not a hostel, dude’. After 11 hours there, ‘Captain Tahir’ from the Shin Bet arrived and questioned me for more than 30 minutes, and told me that it was not an investigation but a conversation. He kept trying to scare me, asked if I wanted my father to lose his job, and if I wanted to leave university. They wanted me to work with them. They took me at 3pm and I left at 4-5am. Even after the investigation they kept me several more hours until they decided what to do with me. The officer decided to release me to house arrest. They told me that they would take me back but at 5am I had to find my own way home”.



Muhammad Abu Juda // az-Za‘arūrah

“House demolitions happen all the time in our village, everything that anyone builds always ends up with a demolition order on it. There are demolitions all the time. This problem needs to be solved and there is no solution. There is no solution for people whose houses are subject to demolition. They are not given another place to live, they are left hanging, up in the air. Every smallest repair, they come straight away and say that the whole house needs to be demolished. Even if you build a room next to an existing room, both rooms are destroyed. There are people who demolish by themselves, and there are people to whom the state comes with bulldozers and demolishes for them. It’s not good, a solution to this needs to be found - either they’ll find a real solution for those who are subject to demolition or they should leave them alone until they find a solution. Where will these people live? Between heaven and earth? In the winter, it is terribly cold here and there is even snow. One day before the snow this year they destroyed about 7 houses.

It’s annoying, it’s upsetting, the children say ‘here are the Jews destroying our homes’, it only creates hatred. It’s not a solution. I don’t know why they demolish our homes. We want our villages to be recognized on our land, so that we can live on them. But they don’t want to, they say ‘the land is not yours’. We have been here since before the founding of the State”.



Nuri al-Oqbi // Mishmar HaNegev

“Racism is the thing I hate most. It is carried out by evil people and it affects good people, especially good people. Racism causes unnecessary hatred between groups of people, distances any chance of understanding and peace. I expected that this country would be just towards all its citizens equally, and that they would stop planting forests of thorns instead of allowing the owners to use their land. The JNF plants trees on the land and enacts the invalid policies of Israel’s governments. In the last month the JNF started working on my land, but it is important to remember this policy has existed for many years and under all Israeli governments, it is carried out against ordinary citizens. I don’t forget what they’ve done since the 1950’s and until today. Every government is worse than the last.

The problem is a problem of not recognizing the Other’s rights, the citizens of the state. It causes the authorities to play up, to confiscate land, demolish homes and uproot trees. Everything is done against the weakened group, the Arab citizen of Israel. Everything happens from within the racist policy. The JNF and others are the tools of this invalid policy”.

Summary

Every day, the State of Israel violates the rights of Members of the Negev Bedouin community in a variety of ways as presented by this report. This is despite having ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of the United Nations, as early as 1979, which states that:

“1. States Parties condemn racial discrimination and undertake to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and promoting understanding among all races, and, to this end: (a) Each State Party undertakes to engage in no act or practice of racial discrimination against persons, groups of persons or institutions and to ensure that all public authorities and public institutions, national and local, shall act in conformity with this obligation;”²

Instead of working to combat racial discrimination, the various state agencies are in fact those that maintain such discrimination against the Bedouin community in the Negev. The plan to establish the Jewish settlement of Hiran in place of the existing Bedouin village of Umm al-Ḥirān; the State’s plans to establish dozens of new Jewish settlements in the Negev while refusing to recognize the existing Bedouin villages; the destruction of crops that the Green Patrol carries out across the Negev and a variety of other activities that are mentioned in this report, all do damage to the Bedouin community in the Negev and the protection of their rights.

These actions not only violate the rights of the Bedouin community, but also contribute to the ongoing rift between Negev Bedouin and Jewish residents of the region. While the Convention requires the promotion of understanding among all races, the State’s everyday actions, promotes the opposite. Rather than working to advance equality between the residents of the region, which would create the opportunity to live together in a shared space, the various state agencies actually work to increase the gaps between the groups inhabiting the Negev, and as evidenced by many of the examples in this report, they harm the social fabric of the region.

On the day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2015, we call upon Israel and the various governmental authorities to listen to the evidence and look at the portraits presented in this report. It is time to take action to further the rights of members of the Bedouin community in the Negev which are being breached. The state should create equal access to education, health, electricity and water, create a policy that will reduce the gaps between different groups living in the Negev and act to develop the Negev for all its residents, creating a shared space in the region, based on justice and equality.

² International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (1969), part 1, article 2.

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