



# Negev Coexistence Forum

## Annual Report 2015



*Cover Photo: Umm al-Hiran Photography Workshop - 23.08.2015.*

*Photograph by Udi Goren*





Our friend and colleague Rahel Naparstek has passed away (1943–2016) and will be sorely missed. Rahel, who invested a lot of her time in the development of NFC was a long-time member of the Secretariat and in recent years handled our administrative affairs. She was utterly honest and straightforward and never cut any corners. She was outspoken and never hesitated to express her opinions, a lively presence at our meetings with a good sense of humor. Rahel wanted above all to create through the Forum a world that would be better for all of us, Jews and Arabs alike. We will remember her and miss her. May her memory be a blessing.

## Message from the Director

Dear Friends,

On Behalf of the Negev Coexistence Forum, I would like to express my appreciation for your continued support in 2015. The State policy toward the Palestinian community in Israel including the Arab-Bedouin citizens of the Negev, continued to be harsh and racist, with an array of problematic laws and practices. The demolitions of houses continued and villages received hardly any new services in 2015. Most of the demolitions were carried out by Bedouin themselves and some even without a demolition order because of the threat of a monetary penalty issued by local law enforcement authorities.

The cancellation of a cultural event in NCF's Multaka-Mifgash cultural center in July by order of Beer Sheva mayor Rubik Danilevitch and the threat of losing our home in the bomb shelter provided by the Municipality, meant that an atmosphere of fear also formed part of the working environment for NCF's staff and secretariat in 2015. Despite this, the NCF continued to challenge the government's harmful policies and practices and engage Bedouin and Jewish Israelis in our joint struggle by a variety of means. We worked on training Bedouin women in their communities in visual literacy so that they are able to document their own villages, and the human rights abuses which are unfortunately a part of their everyday lives. The NCF now uses these women's images and videos for advocacy purposes.

Many tours, lectures, conferences and cultural meetings took place at the initiative of NCF staff. The staff also took part in many Jewish-Arab demonstrations, vigils and solidarity visits, as well as attending numerous court hearings in support of activists. We carried out empirical research and documentation of human rights abuses, and published the findings in several reports and a position paper. NCF's advocacy work was directed towards Israeli politicians and ministers, as well as foreign diplomats in Israel, and groups from abroad. Through two missions abroad that took place in 2015, the NCF was able to increase its international lobbying efforts.

We believe that it is very important to continue to oppose Israel's currently prevailing racist, frightening and anti-democratic policy.

We will remain diligent in our struggle for a just and equal Jewish-Arab society in 2016.

Sincerely,



Haia Noach

Executive Director



2015 has been another difficult year for the Bedouin of the Negev-Nagab. Rather than moving towards coexistence, peace and equality, various governmental bodies have continued to violate the Bedouin's basic human rights. The Negev Coexistence Forum (NCF) has made positive strides towards raising the profile of these human rights abuses and the other issues pertaining to the region, but the reality 'on the ground' remains somewhat grave and seems to be worsening year by year.

**The al-Uqbi Case-** In May, the Supreme Court rejected the al-Uqbi case in a pivotal ruling for **Bedouin land expropriation**. While recognising Jewish land-ownership of land bought *from* Bedouin before 1948, Bedouin land owners are not recognized, as many are unable to prove they occupied land before the establishment of the State in 1948 (according to formal Ottoman or British Mandate land registration documents). Historically mistrustful of colonizing forces, few Bedouins registered their lands prior to this time, a point that State forces capitalize on. Aware of the Bedouins' historical reticence with formal bureaucratic procedures, legal requirements for proof of ownership serve as little more than a seamless way to legally dispossess the Bedouin communities of their lands and transfer these into the hands of the State. Moreover, from now on when the State files counter claims for land ownership, the burden of proof will fall upon the claimants\*.

**Making the Desert Bloom, for whom?** – The Bedouin villages of Umm al-Hīrān and 'Atīr are the latest to come into immediate danger of destruction. A Supreme Court ruling gave the go ahead for **Umm al-Hīrān to be demolished to make way for a Jewish village** by the name of Hiran, whilst 'Atīr will be destroyed to make way for the extension of the Yatir Forest. This is not a unique instance of population replacement. Government plans recently approved the establishment of **five new Jewish settlements** in the Negev-Nagab, none of which are intended for the Bedouin population. The location of two of these newly approved settlements, corresponds to the location of existing unrecognised and recognized Bedouin villages. Al-Gatāmāt and Bīr Haddāj may also be replaced by Jewish villages as plans indicate modelled on the case of Umm al-Hīrān.

**Coercion and Intimidation-**Repeated and empty threats by government officials warned that those who do not demolish their own homes following the distribution of demolition notices, "will be required to pay the cost of demolition". The number of Bedouins demolishing their own homes continued to rise in 2015. An Arab Bedouin activist working alongside the NCF was summoned to a warning "talk" with the Shin Bet (General Security Service) in an attempt at silencing political dissent.

**Violence and Heavy-Handedness by Police** – 2015 began with the killing of two Bedouin residents from Rahat, in events that have been seen as another incident attesting to the heavy-handedness of police with respect to Palestinian citizens of Israel. An announcement in September by the Governmental Cabinet for Political Defence of new regulations, one of which will allow the Ruger .22 calibre rifle to be used against Palestinians in East Jerusalem and Bedouins in the Negev-Nagab, is of great concern to NCF against the backdrop of the spike in violence in early 2015\*\*.



\*This applies in all cases about Bedouin land ownership. In most such cases, **very little compensation** will be offered to Bedouins for the land they are dispossessed of. Proof of ownership can be demonstrated in one of two ways: one way is to prove that the land was cultivated before 1858 when the Ottoman Land Law passed; the other is to show that the land was registered during the Lands Ordinance of the British Mandate conducted in 1921. The Bedouin mostly refrained from both registration processes.

\*\* Many of these issues are covered in more detail in the report NCF published on International Human Rights Day available on our website: [www.dukium.org](http://www.dukium.org)



*Joint Iftar dinner celebration at the Multaqa-Mifgash, celebrating the end of the daylight fasting in the month of Ramadan- 28.06.2015*

# || 2015 Highlights



1,649 subscribers to NCF's newsletters



22 Arab-Jewish encounters

495 participants



2 reports and 1 position paper



24 news articles



3 solidarity visits

130 people



Over 28 solidarity attendances to legal proceedings



723 Twitter followers



51 tours with 770 participants



2,595 Facebook followers

(Over 595 new 'likes' in 2015)



2 International Advocacy Visits



33% increase in website visitors

20% rise in website page views



Visual literacy projects with 52 women and 30 children in 6 unrecognized villages

# \\Human Rights Campaign

## Project Objectives



*Yoav Unit policeman, at a home demolition at Al-Atrash, Jawarin area 06.01.2016,*

This public relations and advocacy project pursues three strategic objectives:

1. to place political pressure on the state of Israel for **policy change** towards Bedouins by involving local and international stakeholders
2. to deliver an **expert analysis** on violations of human rights in the context of national and international law
3. to **raise awareness** among local and international publics on this issue



## Narrative Documentation

*NCF researchers worked hard on collecting and analysing data pertaining to human rights violations in the Negev-Nagab. The NCF published reports and position papers on a number of topics in 2015:*

**Discussing Racism in the Negev-Nagab** || took the form of testimonies and was accompanied by portraits from renowned photographer Miki Kratsman. The aim of the report was to provide an intimate and human account of the much broader and deeper issue of institutional racism and discrimination.

**Community Under Attack: The Situation of the Human Rights of the Bedouin Community in the Negev-Nagab 2015** || was issued on International Human Rights Day and addressed issues pertaining to human rights violations directed towards the Negev-Nagab Bedouin communities. These violations include strikes against the right to life and security, and the right to health and an adequate standard of living.

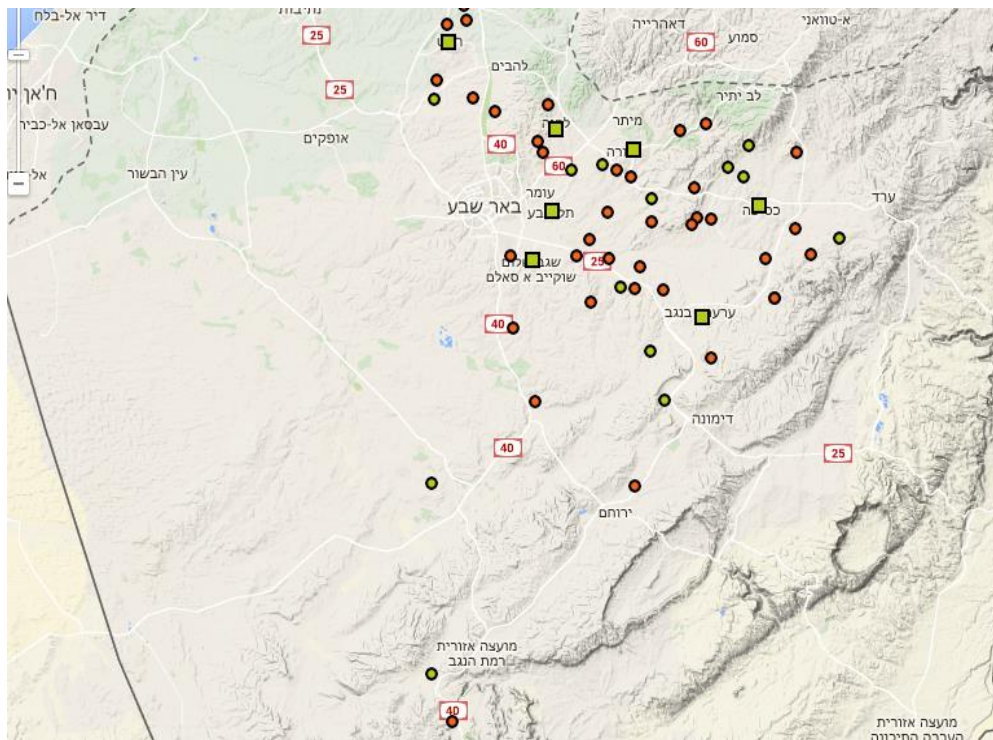
NCF also produced the following: An update for the US State Department's Human Rights Report 2015 || A position paper on the villages of Atir and Umm al-Hirān || Numerous updates including one following the cancellation of *Shivering in Gaza*, a film screening deemed too 'political' by the local authorities and others.



*A demolition convoy leaving the Gawa'in area after destroying houses of the al-Atrash family. 06.01.2016, photograph by Michal Rotem*

## Visual Documentation

Our mapping initiative, *The Villages Project*, continued to expand in 2015. The original map records location, a historical overview, and living conditions in the unrecognized Bedouin villages. In 2015, more villages were added and existing information updated.



One of the main focuses of this work during the year, was to consolidate the information we have in specific relation to historical structures. We believe that many of these structures are a testament to the Bedouin's historical link to the land of the Negev-Nagab. In 2016 we hope to be able to start making this historical data available to the public, in order to counteract the State's attempts to erase villages from the landscape, as well as from its maps. The NCF also developed a database about Bedouin towns. These will be added to the site 2016.

## International Advocacy

*Visitors from the UK tour  
the Negev-Nagab with  
NCF, January 2015,  
photograph by Michal  
Rotem.*



International advocacy efforts went well in 2015. The NCF staff frequently presented at the initiative and invitation of others. We exceeded the quota we set ourselves of 5 meetings with international policy makers, and had the opportunity to meet and present our work to many relevant organisations and activists. Staff members met with over 400 foreign nationals abroad, and many others within Israel, to raise issues facing the Bedouin community.

Khalil Alamour, a Bedouin representative and NCF Board Member, made a visit to the UK. During his visit, he presented the wealth of his knowledge to over 340 people in 6 presentations and one meeting. The meeting was attended by 8 members of the House of Commons and 2 members of the House of Lords.

Later in the year, Haia Noach, the NCF's executive director also made a visit to the UK. She was able to meet with 74 people, including 2 individuals from the Levant Desk at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the MP, Anne Main. Parliamentary Questions has since directed attention to Bedouin issues. Haia continued from the UK to Dublin where she participated in the Eighth Dublin Forum for Human Rights Defenders, to which the NCF had also been invited.



## Awareness Raising

Raising awareness of the challenges facing Bedouin communities in the Negev-Nagab is a priority for the NCF. Through a variety of methods, the NCF seeks to engage local and foreign individuals in the struggle for equality and coexistence in the Negev-Nagab. On many separate occasions the NCF, and issues pertaining to the Negev-Nagab Bedouin, appeared as central items of news articles in Arabic (26), Hebrew (29) or English-language (19) media.

Tours were also a key part of awareness raising efforts. Their impact on garnering support for the Negev-Nagab Bedouin and the work of the NCF has become increasingly apparent. During a meeting in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, the head of the Levant Desk mentioned how impressed he had been with the expertise and relationship the NCF staff have with members of the Bedouin communities. Moreover, year on year, it has become obvious that it is those who have been and seen for themselves the scale of the neglect and abuse by the Israeli authorities who became most committed and involved in support and advocacy work. In 2015, **43 group tours** and **26 individual tours** exposed over **770 individuals** to the reality in the Negev-Nagab. Tour participants had the opportunity to meet members of the Bedouin communities and see for themselves the devastation wreaked by the Israeli State's racist and discriminatory policies. The numbers of people exposed to the situation first-hand, met our expectations.



*Demonstration against Works in Umm al-Hiran - 27.08.2015*

# || Human Rights Defenders Network

## Project Objectives



*Human Rights Day Event with all HRDN participants in the Multaka-Mifgash, cultural center in Beersheba, December 2015.*

This community leadership and mobilization project pursues three strategic objectives:

1. to encourage independence and confidence in the **power of grassroots movement**
2. to provide training and **cultivate skills** for public engagement and advocacy
3. to enable mutual exchange and **alter negative perception of the Other**

## Visual Literacy Workshops

The number of participants enrolled in the NCF's visual literacy programs continued to grow. 27 women were successfully recruited in 5 unrecognised Bedouin villages for the Human Rights Defenders Network. 2 Children's workshops also took place in the unrecognised villages of 'Atir and Umm al-Hirān. Both villages are under immediate threat of demolition. The workshops were a huge success and great fun for the kids (and adults)! **All participants receive cameras and training in photographic techniques and human rights issues.**

The projects surpassed all expectations and proved to us that **capacity-building is key**. There is an existing urge to document daily life and human rights violations within the Bedouin communities themselves. It became apparent that the NCF must simply continue to support these efforts by helping to overcome barriers to political mobilization generated by poverty and marginalization, whether these are related to technological needs or competency training on issues pertaining to basic rights.

The NCF continues to hope that one day the images and testimonies collected and compiled into their database will have weight and relevance in legal proceedings. In the meantime, material is continually compiled and published, in a stance against the ongoing attempts at the erasure and destruction of the social fabric and existence of the unrecognised Bedouin villages. The NCF published its first video from the RECOGNIZED project which hands out cameras to local activists.

*Yosra Abu Kaf provides training, as part of the NCF's RECOGNIZED project, photograph by Michal Rotem*







*A lecture about the Bedouin community by Khalil Alamour and Sheikh Sayyah at-Turi at BGU, organized by NCF's students group.*

The NCF held 19 events in the *Multaka-Mifgash*, the NCF's Jewish-Arab cultural centre. These events were attended by more than 470 individuals from the local area and included film screening, concerts, poetry readings and discussion events. Another 75 students from Ben Gurion University were given the background and up-to-date information on the situation of the Bedouin communities through 3 events geared towards students and organised by the NCF. Members of the local Bedouin communities were invited to talk and present their stories to the students first-hand. An event about Arab Feminism was also organised in Ben Gurion University with the support of the student's association there. 50 people attended this event.

## Demonstrations and Vigils

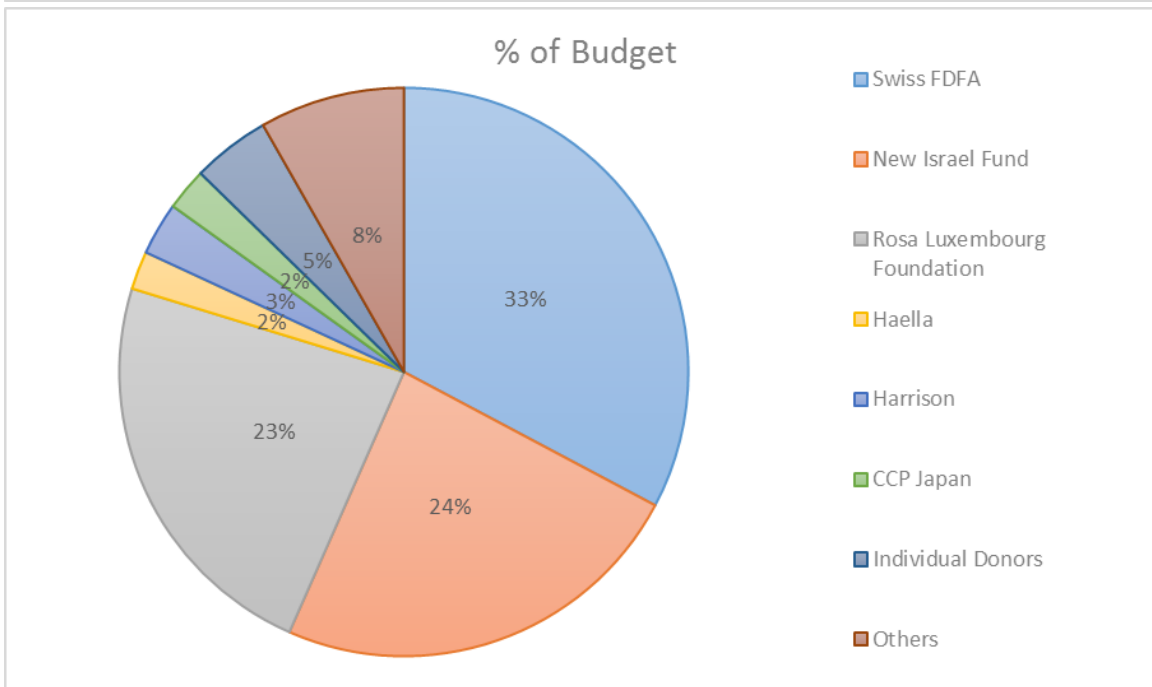
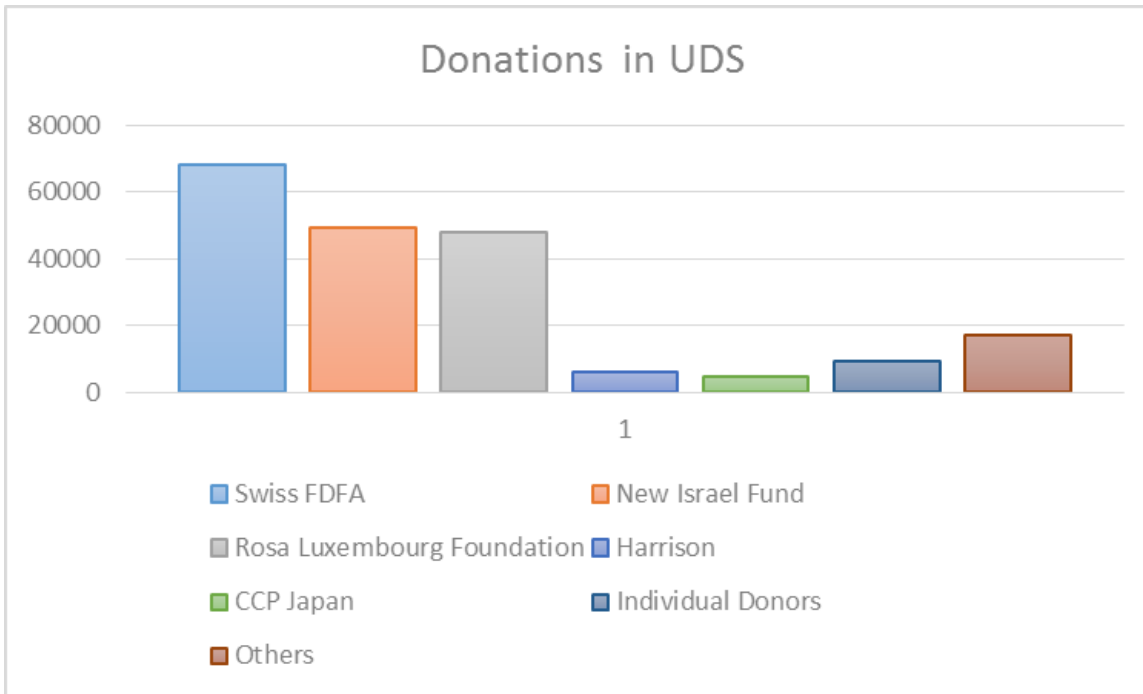


*Sheikh Sayyah at-Turi of al-Araqib and Haia Noach, NCF's executive director taking a selfie during the al-Araqib weekly protest at Lehavim junction.*

Most demonstrations and vigils organised by the community were attended by staff members and volunteers were possible, including a demonstration on the first day of the school year in September in Az-Za'arūrah, which sought to raise awareness around the unequal provision of schooling for Jewish and Arab populations in the region. Staff members were regularly present at the weekly vigil for the unrecognised Bedouin village of Al Aragib, held at the Lehavim Junction throughout the year. In 2015, the NCF also supported efforts to ensure the commemoration and indictment around the killing of Sami al-Ja'ar, a 22-year-old resident of the Bedouin city of Rahat, murdered by police on 14th January 2015. The NCF's reliable and constant presence at demonstrations and vigils, as well as attempts to raise the profile of such events through contacting media outlets, publicizing events on social media and helping with logistics has gained the NCF recognition within the Bedouin communities, as a true partner to their struggle. NCF staff were present at over 28 legal proceedings in court as a gesture of support, and to show that there is vigilance over the fair and just unfolding of legal proceedings. **Bearing witness** to the Bedouin struggle for equality is an important part of the NCF's work.

# || Behind the Scenes

## Donors and Income





## Staff, Board and Partners

### Staff

Haia Noach | Director

Michal Rotem | Research and International Lobby Coordinator

Yosra Abu Kaf | Visual Documentation Coordinator

Sabreen Abu Kaf | Bedouin Community Organizer

Kessem Adiv | Awareness Raising Coordinator

Rafat Abu Aish | Bedouin community organizer

Raneen Agbaria | Arabic Media Coordinator

Shani Michael | Community Organizer

Dijana Mujkanovic/ Maya Avis | Resource Development Coordinator

Mirit Ashkenazi / Ben Fargeon | Administrative Coordinator

### Board

Professor Avner Ben-Amos

Atn. Khalil Alamour

Yehudit Keshet

Yaacov Manor

Dr. Yones Aburabia

Adel Gafeer

Atn. Sana Ibn Bari

## Partners

**Beoduin villages** | Wādi an-Na‘am, al ‘Aragib, Umm al-Hīrān, ‘Atir, as-Sirr, Rakhamah, Khašim Zannah, ‘Abdih, Umm Batīn.

**Networks** | Recognition Forum

**Israeli Nonprofit Organizations** | the Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages, Association for Civil Right in Israel, Adalah—Legal Center for the Arab Minority in Israel, Physicians for Human Rights, Rabbis for Human Rights, Bimkom—Planners for Planning Rights, Amnesty Israel, etc.

**International Organizations** | Amnesty International UK, Jews for Justice for Palestine, Telos group, Heartland.

## Donate

We rely upon the generosity of donors like you in our efforts to achieve justice in the Negev.

In order to secure our independence, NCF does not receive any governmental or political support.

Please visit our website to learn more about possibilities of making a contribution online, from Israel, the UK or the US.

[www.dukium.org/together-we-shall-change-the-world](http://www.dukium.org/together-we-shall-change-the-world)

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



[www.dukium.org](http://www.dukium.org)

[info@dukium.org](mailto:info@dukium.org)

08-6483804