



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

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



Photo by NCF Staff

NEGEV COEXISTENCE FORUM FOR CIVIL EQUALITY

For a shared society in the Negev/Naqab where all residents live in dignity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Preface | 1 |
| About Us | 2 |
| Situation in the Negev / Naqab | 3 |
| Our Work in 2019 | 4 |
| Documentation & Bedouin Human Rights Defender's Networks..... | 4 |
| Yusawiruna: Women's Photography..... | 4 |
| Through a Child's Lens: Children's Photography..... | 6 |
| Video Documentation Project: "Recognized" | 7 |
| Human Rights Campaign & Advocacy | 8 |
| Media | 10 |
| Public Outreach & Activism..... | 10 |
| Local Lobby..... | 11 |
| International Advocacy..... | 13 |
| Shared Society: Cultural centre Multaka-Mifgash | 14 |
| Significant Achievements in 2019 | 15 |
| International Community..... | 15 |
| Right to Education | 17 |
| A Special Thanks to our Partners and Supporters..... | 18 |

PREFACE

It is my pleasure to present the Negev Coexistence Forum's Annual Report for 2019. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our partners, donors and supporters. Without each one of you, we would not have been able to carry out the tremendous work NCF is doing in the Negev/Naqab.

In 2019, Israel was left unstable, without government and two failed elections. Discrimination and exclusion of the Arab-Palestinian community in Israel continued to rise. Two laws contributed to this development: The Kaminitz Law, approved in 2017, and the bylaws which were enacted in 2018 and increased the 'enforcement and penalization of planning and building offenses'; and the Nation State Law, approved in 2018, which makes discrimination constitutional.

Furthermore, new reports published in 2019 by [Forensic Architecture](#) and [Haaretz](#) contradict the official statements regarding the death of Ya'aqub Abu al-Qi'ān, during an eviction operation in the village of Umm al-Hīrān in January 2017. The incident was wrongly framed as a 'terror attack' while evidence clearly shows gross police misconduct. NCF calls for an official apology from government officials due to their hateful statements against Abu al-Qi'ān and the initiation of a formal inquiry.

For civil and human rights activists and organizations, 2019 was a difficult year. At NCF, we had to continue working under increased pressure as the de-legitimization campaign against human rights organizations continued. We felt this pressure directly when the Be'er Sheva municipality issued a demand for retroactive payment of taxes for the past seven years of activity in the sum of almost half-million NIS. This was a direct response to the Israeli Supreme Court's ruling that granted us the right to use the public shelter under the principle of pluralism and freedom of speech. In the end, NCF was forced to accept an agreement with the municipality, declaring that it will not seek to renew its contract. Therefore, we will have to leave the shelter that has been operating as an Arab-Jewish cultural center since 2006 and NCFs' offices at the end of October 2020.

Despite this setback, NCF successfully achieved its objectives set for 2019. Especially exciting was the presentation of our documentation projects all over the world: The Child's Lens project participated in the Tbilisi Photography Festival and their photos were exhibited in the MUZA – Eretz Israel museum in Tel-Aviv for over a year; six short films were screened at the Solidarity Human Rights Festival in Tel Aviv; 'Forced from Home', a photo exhibition of four women from the village of Umm al-Hīrān was presented in the "Photoville Festival" in New York.

I believe that the various projects carried out in 2019 have strengthened the Bedouin community. I also believe that we have contributed to amplify the human rights discourse at the local, national and international levels. As an organization, we have grown stronger.

The situation in Israel and the world is complicated and we must continue our efforts without succumbing to the unprecedented challenges we face. We have to aspire and strive for a safe, just, equal and inclusive society where our human relations and our relationship with the planet are based on sustainability, solidarity, and mutual care. With your support, NCF will continue standing alongside the Bedouin communities in their struggle, amplifying their demands for equality, and supporting them in their resistance to the dispossession of their villages, heritage and traditional way of life.

With thanks, Haia Noach, Executive Director

Haia Noach

ABOUT US

The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF) is a grassroots organization established in 1997 by a group of Arab and Jewish residents of the Negev/Naqab who were alarmed by the government's discriminatory policies and practices towards its Arab-Bedouin citizens. Today, NCF is the only joint Arab-Jewish organization focusing specifically on the Negev/Naqab and calling for justice for its Arab-Bedouin residents, citizens of the State of Israel. Our **vision** is that all residents of the Negev/Naqab live in dignity and in a shared society, where everyone enjoy their human rights, equality and justice. NCF has three main **programs**:

1. Documentation and Bedouin Human Rights Defenders' Network: Bedouin children, women, youth and men document their every-day-life as well as home demolitions, arrests, demonstrations, and the daily impact of state neglect and discrimination. All participants of this program take part in building our **Bedouin Human Rights Defenders' Network**. This program consists of three projects:

- “**Yusawiruna - Photographing for Human Rights**”, photography project for Bedouin women;
- “**Through a Child's Lens**”, Bedouin children learn to use photography to document their lives and tell their story;
- “**Recognized**” is a project that teaches women, activists and teenagers to use video documentation to tell their story for advocacy purposes.

2. Human Rights Campaign and Advocacy: Our work with Bedouin communities and the audio-visual documentation support our Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and advocacy efforts. Through this framework we aim to generate political pressure on the State of Israel to change its policies towards its Arab-Bedouin citizens. We do this by researching and delivering expert analysis on violations of human rights in the context of national and international law. In doing so, NCF gives exposure, within Israel and abroad, to the plight of Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab and brings the subject matter into public dialogue and political debate.

3. Our Shared Society Program aims at promoting a socially cohesive society that is stable and safe and where all those living in the Negev/Naqab feel at home. We promote a society that respects everyone's dignity and human rights while providing every individual with equal opportunities. A shared society is tolerant and respects diversity.

All programs support each other: All research, documentation and audio-visual materials derived from the Documentation and Bedouin Human Rights Defenders' Network program are used for advocacy purposes through our HRC framework. All advocacy efforts are informed by our work on the ground and through our close partnership with Bedouin communities. Based on the 'Do No Harm' principle, NCF carries out its work to promote and protect the rights of residents in the Negev/Naqab in close coordination with residents' groups, our strongest partners and allies.

In 2019, we worked closely with other organizations, including Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel and the Human Rights Defenders Fund on international advocacy; Shatil, Bimkom, RCUV (the Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages), Zazim, Sikkuy, and Sidreh on local activism and advocacy.

SITUATION IN THE NEGEV / NAQAB

In the Negev/Naqab, the indigenous Bedouin population continues to be subject to forced-urbanization, displacement, violence and discrimination particularly regarding land rights.

In January 2019, the Authority for the Development and Settlement of the Bedouin in the Negev (hereinafter: Bedouin Authority) announced a [plan for the forced displacement of 36,000 Bedouin citizens](#) to make way for “national development projects”. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Bedouin citizens and residents in the Negev/Naqab desert have endured multiple forced displacements. As of October 2019, the [Bedouin Authority](#) communicated its plan to use a ‘speedy’ mechanism to forcefully displace tens of thousands of Bedouin citizens into temporary [displacement camps](#). If such a plan would be approved it would enable “temporary” structures to remain for a period of up to six years. This plan generated significant objections, leading the Bedouin Authority to consider a specific plan for each of the “national development” projects. NCF is highly concerned about the actual implementation of such a policy, which is in violation of the indigenous rights of the Bedouin population as well as other human rights such as the right to development and the right to adequate housing. [Development projects](#) include:

- The extension of Road 6 (Trans-Israel Highway) from Shoket Junction towards Negev Junction. Currently the plan is to start construction of the road southward in April 2020;
- The Sde Barir phosphate mine, which will be developed by the Rotem-Amfert corporation, will lead to the displacement of Bedouin residents as well as posing health and environmental hazards to thousands of inhabitants living around the intended closed-zone of the mine;
- The approved expansion of Ramat Beka – a special industrial zone for testing weapons;
- Plans to demolish Bedouin villages and replacing them with Jewish-only villages / neighborhoods. Such is the case of the unrecognized villages of Umm al-Ḥirān and Rass a Jrabah near Dimona.

Meanwhile, in the village of **Al-‘Arāgīb**, police harassment continues. Since 2010, when nearly 1,000 police officers and other law enforcement officials raided and demolished the village for the first time, some residents are still living here, showing incredible resilience. In 2019, there have been more demolitions and confiscation of equipment and infrastructure, including in surrounding areas of the village. Arrests and interrogations of villagers and activists continues. This is the first time since 2010 that we have seen such levels of systematic and ongoing intimidation by policy and state officials.

Over the years one thing remains unchanged: Urban and development plans in the Negev/Naqab are not inclusive nor respectful of the traditional way of life of the Bedouin indigenous population in this region. Such plans are built on the forceful dispossession, eviction, and forced urbanization of entire communities. It is worth mentioning that rural communities are widespread and common in Israel, such as Kibbutzim and Moshavim. But the option of living in rural areas seems to be an exclusive privilege of Jewish citizens. Therefore, while the development of the Negev/Naqab and the allocation of resources is important, such development needs to be done with the full consultation and inclusion of the indigenous Bedouin population and needs to provide significant benefits to this community in order to fill the gap between the two neighboring communities, while respecting their traditional lands, unique culture and way of life.

OUR WORK IN 2019

DOCUMENTATION & BEDOUIN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S NETWORKS

6,783 photos collected from women photographers, of which we archived 1,355 photos on flicker;

8,439 photos collected from children, of which we archived 1,821 photos;

2,000 photos collected from NCF's staff;

152 photos used for advocacy purposes;

94 photos posted in our social media channels (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter);

80 photos in our reports and newsletters;

5 short videos produced;

5 exhibitions and international screenings: Photoville in New York; Eretz Israel Museum (MUZA) in Tel Aviv; employment exhibition at the Multaka-Mifgash; international screening in Tbilisi, Georgia; and Solidarity Human Rights' Film Festival at the Cinematheque in Tel Aviv.

YUSAWIRUNA: WOMEN'S PHOTOGRAPHY

Since 2014 NCF has provided workshops and training in photography to women in unrecognized and recognized villages. Participants use these skills to document their lives in the villages and the continual human rights violations perpetrated by the state. Participants receive a camera, which acts as a form of protection, empowering the user and deterring authorities, while the materials compiled are utilized for advocacy efforts.

In 2019, we held at least **100 workshops in seven villages with 50 women** in total. The villages are: Umm al-Hīrān, Hūrāh, Rakhamah, Bīr Haddāj, 'Atir, az-Za'arūrah, as-Sirrah and Tal 'Arād.

The women participated in two **Human Rights Defenders' Network** events: A road trip to Jerusalem and a visit to the Ashkelon National Park.



Huda Abu al-Qi'ān , 'Atir

Photoville Exhibition in New York:

Four courageous Arab-Bedouin women from the village of Umm al-Ḥīrān, documented their life in the village, that they will soon have to leave for ever, for more than 4 years. Their unprecedented photographic testimony was exhibited in a featured exhibition entitled “Forced from home” at the [Photoville Festival](#) in New York in September, which received more than 100,000 visitors. The unique and beautiful photos were exposed to a very large audience and received very positive, empathetic reactions from visitors. Maryam Abo Al-Qian, a teacher from the village of Ḥūrāh, was there to bring a Bedouin woman’s voice to the exhibition. Tal Avrech, NCF’s Head of International Advocacy and Research, mentioned:

“We got more exposure in two weeks than what we normally get in one year”.

The human stories presented were of great interest to visitors, who wanted to know more about the situation in Umm al-Ḥīrān, the Bedouin way of life, and challenges they face. People were impressed with the women, their work, and the way in which NCF works in the communities. They really enjoyed the fact that women themselves tell their own stories and control the narrative. This trip has opened new possibilities for NCF, and we were able to build new relations.

During the visit to New York, Ayesha Ziadna (Bedouin woman and experienced Project Manager) and Tal Avrech participated in a panel discussion on “Israeli Elections & Minority Communities: What the Bedouin Experience Portends for the Future of Israeli Democracy” at the Middle East Institute in Washington DC. The panel was followed by a roundtable discussion. There were around 50 participants. After the event, a [podcast with Peter Beinart](#) and Tal Avrech was recorded.



THROUGH A CHILD'S LENS: CHILDREN'S PHOTOGRAPHY

Through a camera lens, children document their lives, the stories in their villages, and human rights abuses they encounter. Children are empowered and encouraged to take an active role in their community's struggle for recognition. Children not only learn how to take pictures, they also learn how to tell their stories, to raise their voices, and to use photography as means to advocate for their community. Empowered with new skills and a camera, they can present the beauty, wealth and strength of their community and way of life, countering negative stereotypes about Bedouins.

In 2019, NCF and a professional filmmaker facilitated and coordinated **more than 50 meetings (photography workshops and monthly gatherings)**. **Participants included 91 children from six unrecognized villages and one recognized township, aged 8-13 years old. Half of the participants took part in three meetings or more.** The workshops focused on different aspects of photography as a tool for protecting human rights. Young participants were encouraged to use the cameras to tell the stories of their villages. During the monthly meetings, participants reviewed the photographs taken and received suggestions and tips.



Photo by Amani, Rakhamah



Photo portrait by NCF Staff

COMPILATION, DISTRIBUTION & EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo Albums: At the end of the winter workshops, young participants chose 20-40 pictures, which were used to print a photo album for each child.

Calendar: We chose 20 pictures taken by the children of Bīr Haddāj for the September 2019 – December 2020 calendar in three languages (Arabic, Hebrew and English). We printed and distributed 175 calendars among diplomats, partners, donors and photographers.

Tbilisi Festival in Georgia: A video with the pictures of the children was presented at the Tbilisi Festival in September 2019.

The beautiful exhibition in the **Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv**, featuring the photographs of Bedouin children from unrecognized villages, was still open for the public until January 2020, a year and 4 months after its inauguration.

VIDEO DOCUMENTATION PROJECT: "RECOGNIZED"

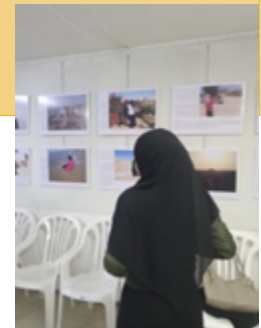
20 Bedouin women and youth from 7 villages (al-‘Arāgīb, ‘Atīr, Umm al-Ḥīrān, Rakhamah, Wadi al Na'am, Tal ‘Arād and Ḥūrah) participated in the project. They participated in **more than 90 workshops and trainings** on audio-visual documentation. They used their skills to produce **5 short videos** (up to 10 minutes) and **8 short clips** (two minutes) for advocacy purposes and exhibitions.

Participants filmed, directed and produced short videos about their lives in the Bedouin villages. They also documented human rights' violations and attacks to their lands and families. They filmed the presence of authorities in their villages and stood guard to document cases of abuse or of home demolitions in real time. Our project coordinators kept in weekly contact with the participants. **The short films were presented at the following events:**

- Solidarity Human Rights Festival at the Cinematheque in Tel Aviv as part of the Human Rights' Week (see below);
- Photoville Exhibition in New York, reaching thousands of people;
- A meeting of Israeli & Palestinian activists in Jerusalem, who later screened the films to young Palestinians from East Jerusalem doing photography workshops;
- Course on community work for 50 social work students at the Ben Gurion University.

Human Rights' Week, December 2019:

- **Report:** On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, NCF published a [report on the human rights situation of Arab Bedouin citizens in the Negev/Naqab](#).
- **Film Festival:** On Tuesday, 10 December, NCF participated at the Solidarity Human Rights Film Festival held at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque. This is the only festival in Israel dedicated entirely to cinema and human rights. This year, NCF presented six short films by women and men from the unrecognized villages in the Negev/Naqab. All videos are included in our [YouTube Channel](#). Participation was higher than we expected (with an audience of 60 people) and feedback was very positive.
- **Celebrating the Yusawiruna Project:** On Thursday, 12 December, we celebrated Human Rights Day at the Multaka-Mifgash cultural center with more than 20 participants. The day was dedicated to the women participating at the Yusawiruna project. On the same day we inaugurated a new exhibition of the photographers' portraits together with a photo album. During the event we presented a range of products from NCF's various documentation projects. During the event we talked about the importance of video-documentation and photo-activism for Bedouin communities.



HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN & ADVOCACY

Summary:

2 position papers and 6 reports published

4 international advocacy trips presenting expert information:

- In March 2019, Amir Abu-Qweider travelled on NCF's behalf to the pre-session working group of the UN CESCR and Human Rights Council (HRC), in Geneva.
- In September 2019, Tal Avrech and Ayesha Ziadna travelled to New York and Washington DC to the Photoville Festival and for advocacy meetings.
- In October 2019, Rafat Abu Aish travelled on NCF's behalf to the UN CESCR in Geneva.
- In December 2019, Huda Abu Obaid travelled on NCF's behalf to UN CERD in Geneva.

4 tours and 5 briefings to diplomats and members of the international community and several communications with various UN Special Rapporteurs.

30 requests under the Freedom of Information Law were filed.

37 newsletters sent to a mailing list of 2,070 people.

50 solidarity visits & events to villages, activists and detainees with more than 1,200 participants.

62 demonstrations & vigils with 1,259 activists.

86 occasions in which our work was covered through different media outlets.

1,462 individuals participated at lectures and alternative Negev/Naqab tours provided by NCF.

RESEARCH & REPORTS

A significant part of NCF's work is based on its comprehensive and professional research on different issues. Project coordinators conduct regular analysis of events at the political level in consultation with partners. NCF regularly files requests for information from different government offices on relevant topics. Our online mapping initiative 'On the Map' is also constantly updated, adding more information on existing villages as well as increasing the number of villages included. Based on this information, we publish reports and position papers, which have been referenced in several reports prepared by third parties.



Eve Tendler, al-'Arāgīb

REPORTS PUBLISHED

1. June 2019, NCF published a report on home demolitions conducted in 2018: "[Mechanism for Dispossession and Intimidation: Demolition Policy in Arab Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab](#)". In 2018, the State of Israel chose to continue investing large budgets in enforcement, which led to an increase in the number of buildings demolished in Arab-Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab. In 2018, 2,326 structures were demolished, 604 of which were used as dwellings. The constant presence of enforcement and police forces, as well as the tremendous fear of economic and criminal sanctions, also led to a drastic rise in the number of structures demolished by their owners (about 89% of the total number of demolitions). [The Jerusalem Post covered the report](#).
2. Four joint NGO reports to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNCESCR) and to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) by NCF and Adalah:
 - January 2019, "[Violations of the ICESCR by Israel against the Arab Bedouin in the Negev/Naqab desert](#)", List of Issues for the State of Israel.
 - September 2019, "[Violations of the ICESCR by Israel against the Arab Bedouin in the Negev/Naqab desert](#)", Reply to List of Issues by the State of Israel.
 - September 2019, "[Violations of the ICERD against the Arab Bedouin citizens of Israel living in the Negev-Naqav desert](#)", List of Themes for the State of Israel.
 - October 2019, "[Violations of the ICERD against the Arab Bedouin citizens of Israel living in the Negev/Naqab desert](#)", additions to our previous report on temporary housing solutions.
3. "[Human Rights' Report 2019](#)" On the occasion of International Day of Human Rights (December 10) NCF published a report focused on the violation of the various rights of the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab: rights to an adequate standard of living, water, sanitation, housing, development, health, education, and work. This report is a result of joint work with Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. Most of the information in the report was formally presented to the United Nations Human Rights Committees.

POSITION PAPERS PUBLISHED

1. August 2019, "[The Governmental Program for Completing Basic Education for Adults in Negev Bedouin Communities](#)". The position paper aims to draw attention to the fact that funding runs out by the end of 2019 with no new funds allocated to this program by the state.
2. We participated in the development of a [position paper](#) by the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations on Implementing the 2030 Agenda (SDGs) in Israel (May 2019). The position paper was written as part of an open and inclusive discussion to lay the cornerstone for the implementation of Agenda 2030 from the standpoint of civil society and present the conditions and mechanisms for realizing it in Israel.

MEDIA

Our work has been covered through different media outlets on at least 86 occasions in Hebrew, Arabic and English. Media outlets included Haaretz, the Washington Post, the Jerusalem Post, News 1, Panet, Kul al Arab, among others.

In 2019, NCF continued to publish relevant information and commentary as well as reports about the organization's different projects on **social media**. On Facebook (7,700 followers), Twitter (1,070 followers in two accounts) and Instagram (368 followers), the organization's outreach steadily grew. NCF's Facebook posts increased their reach from 500-800 in average to 1.6k-1.9k per post. Today, most posts reach over a thousand users.

In addition, we distributed a total of **15 newsletters in English to a mailing list of 159 Diplomats and 652 subscribers. We also distributed 22 newsletters in Arabic/Hebrew to a mailing list of 1,259 subscribers.**

PUBLIC OUTREACH & ACTIVISM

During the reporting period, **945 individuals joined 41 NCF's alternative Naqab tours**, including: journalists and members of the Jerusalem Press Club; students from the Ben Gurion University, Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, MIT, Exeter University, Shenkar College; young Israelis undergoing their Social Service Year; participants of the 'Yahel' Program International; high school students from the 'Leo Back Highschool', 'Mesabacha' Preparatory School; Friends of 'Neve Shalom'; international NGOs working in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; activists and volunteers; youth from the pre-army program 'Derech Eretz' and 'Aderet'; international groups; tourists; among others. In addition, **NCF provided 9 lectures to 517 individuals** about unrecognized villages and joint Arab-Jewish activism for equality.

The case of al-ʿArāgīb: In response to continued harassment, demolitions, and arrests of Bedouin activists in the village of al-ʿArāgīb, NCF organized daily visits during the summer to monitor the behavior of enforcement authorities and accompanying activists and Human Rights Defenders to their court hearings. The village has been demolished for the 174th time (12 February 2020).

In addition, **534 individuals participated at solidarity visits**, mainly to al-ʿArāgīb, but also to al-Bāṭil, Khašim Zannah, Ḥūrah, and others. In addition, we had a **solidarity event with 250 people** at al-ʿArāgīb to commemorate 9 years since the mega demolition that took place in 2010. Another solidarity cultural event with the Bedouin student's organization 'Al Matrah' and al-ʿArāgīb took place in Rahat on 24 August with **200 participants**.

NCF's staff paid **17 visits to 10 unrecognized villages** in the Negev to discuss needs and challenges faced by the communities. Villages included: al-Furʿah, Umm al-Ḥīrān, Khašim Zannah, as-Sdīr, al-Bāṭ, al-ʿArāgīb, al-Baggār, as-Sirrah, and others. Issues discussed included: risks posed by the planned expansion of the industrial center of Arad, insufficient housing alternatives for residents of Umm al-Ḥīrān, lack of public transportation, discussions around the new planned village of al-Bāṭ, home demolitions and freedom of speech and assemble.

Solidarity with activists and detainees: During this period, we saw an increased number of arrests and investigations. NCF staff and local activists have been detained. Activists have been present on **19 occasions to show solidarity and support to activists and political prisoners who are facing court trials. In total, 232 family members and activists were engaged.**

Demonstrations and vigils: On 62 occasions we held demonstrations and vigils mainly at the village of al-'Arāgīb with 1,295 activists.

LOCAL LOBBY

After two failed elections, the indictment of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and a third election taking place on 2 March 2020, Israel finds itself in political disarray. The Knesset has not been active for more than one year. Therefore, advocacy in the Knesset was limited, but we were able to expand advocacy at the local and regional levels.

- **Day Care Centers:** We are currently assessing the situation of Child Daycare Centers and the lack of funding in Bedouin communities. NCF finished the mapping of Daycare Centers in Bedouin localities and met three Welfare Department managers and some actors responsible for early childhood in the Negev/Naqab. We also visited several Daycare Centers to meet preschool coordinators and talked to women to hear about the barriers they face. We met women trying to open Family Daycare Centers that are limited to five toddlers. Respondents mentioned the lack of resources, places for children, and trust in Daycare Centers for Bedouin children. According to a Knesset report, about 21% of Bedouin children in the age of 3-5 years old had no access to preschool education in the 2016/2017 academic year.

NCF provided support to women that wanted to open or formalize a Daycare Center in their community. As a result, one of the women obtained a formal permit and another will get one shortly. This means that the State will fund those facilities and will check their educational and technical operation.



Photo by Sarah Huzael from Šgīb as-Salām

- **Welfare Departments & Industrial Zones:** We have requested information from 3 Welfare Departments on their programs for Bedouin women. We visited the industrial zones in Rahat and Šgīb as-Salām to explore viable employment opportunities for Bedouin women.
- **Water Prices:** We are working on reducing water prices - and thus family budgets for water. The cost of water is very high for Bedouin residents in all of the unrecognized villages and in some of the recognized villages. We are currently preparing a report on this issue and petitioning the Supreme Court, together with the Village Committee of az-Zarnūg, RCUV and Adalah.
- **Adult Education:** since the Knesset has been in recession for almost one year, we have not been able to discuss the government plan (or lack thereof) for the Adult Education Program for the Bedouin community in 2020. Nevertheless, we organized, together with our partners Sidreh

and RCUV, an emergency conference in Rahat, titled: “Ministry of Education must prevent cancellation of education program for Bedouin Women” (go [here](#) for more information on the conference and [here](#) to see our position paper on this issue).

- **Rayan Centers:** We spoke with local representatives asking for information concerning the training programs for women seeking employment. We realized that they have been barely working for the past year since a new contractor was hired. Women have been unable to receive assistance on vocational training and job propositions. We sent a letter on this issue.
- In June 2019, NCF issued a **formal letter of complaint** to the Broadcasting Authority in Israel regarding the racist and inflammatory remarks made by Dr. Yitzhak Noy on his radio program, as part of the “Shavuot Special”. In the second part of the program, Dr. Noy interviewed Dr. Yitzhak Clinton Bailey, a renowned researcher of the Bedouin population in Israel. Instead of focusing on his research, Dr Noy chose to incite against the Arab Bedouin population with offensive, racist and prejudiced questions. Dr. Noy was suspended for several weeks.

Another letter of complaint was sent to 'Reshet' on Channel 13 to protest Almog Boker's accusing NCF of supporting “terrorists” after we organized an event about political prisoners at the cultural center Multaka-Mifgash. We received an answer from the Second Authority for Television and Radio ombudsman of public denying any wrongdoing.

- **Urgent appeal:** NCF and the RCUV released an urgent letter to officials from the Government and the IDF, demanding an immediate and adequate response to the absence of bomb shelters in the Arab Bedouin villages. This was as a result of the escalation of tensions between Israel and Gaza in May 2019. During this period, it became clear, once again, that hundreds of thousands of Arab Bedouin citizens are left without any shelter during emergencies and are completely exposed to missile threats. In its answer, the State denied its responsibility to ensure the security of all citizens of Israel in instances of attacks and pointed to the local Bedouin authorities as being responsible.



Photo by Amal Abu al-Qi'ān , 'Atīr

- **Political Participation:** Before the second general elections that took place on 17 September, NCF organized with other NGOs a panel discussion with candidates from different political parties. Participants included 20-25 Bedouin women from 4 villages (Tal 'Arād, al-Lagiyiyh, Raḥaṭ and Ḥūrah) and candidates from the Blue and White party (MK Yael German and Marich Radir) and the Islamic Movement (Iman Khatib-Yassin). Women participants talked about the challenges they face in their communities, including home demolitions, insufficient or lack of health services, and lack of public transportation and employment opportunities for women. Candidates promised to be involved and supportive of the issues raised by the participants.

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

We believe it is important to support the Arab Bedouin community in representing itself at the UN level and in other international and regional bodies as well as to meet diplomats in their visits to the Negev/Naqab or abroad. Through our international advocacy program, we also facilitate networking with communities that face similar challenges around the world. In addition, we develop initiatives that will allow Bedouin representatives to present the impact of state policies and international agreements and plans on their lives to the international community.

Tours: During the reporting period, **four tours took place with 30 representatives of the international community and diplomats**, including: Swiss diplomats, European representatives, members of the news outlet Agencia Brazilliana, and international organizations.

We have been in regular contact with at least **60 representatives of international organizations and diplomats** (including 15 embassies) on different issues as well as several meetings and participation at different events.

International Advocacy Trips:

- In March 2019, Amir Abu-Qweider travelled on NCF's behalf to the pre-session working group **of the UN CESC and Human Rights Council (HRC)**, in Geneva.
- In September 2019, Tal Avrech and Ayesha Ziadna travelled to **New York and Washington DC** to the Photoville Festival and for advocacy meetings.
- In October 2019, Rafat Abu Aish travelled on NCF's behalf to the **UN CESC** in Geneva.
- In December 2019, Huda Abu Obaid travelled on NCF's behalf to **UN CERD**.



Amir Abo Kweder at the UN CESC and the HRC in March 2019.

NCF, in collaboration with Adalah, submitted two reports to the **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESC)** ahead of its review of the State of Israel (for more information, please see list of reports on page 9). Both organizations addressed the many violations by Israel of Arab Bedouin's rights. Representatives of the Bedouin community participated in numerous meetings and engaged with UN Member States, Special Rapporteurs, Committee Members and others to advocate for the respect of their rights. Facilitated by NCF, Bedouin representatives presented our report findings during the Review Session of Israel in the CESC, held in October 2019, with Yaair Maayan, head of the Bedouin Authority, present at the deliberations.

NCF, in collaboration with Adalah, submitted a joint alternative report to the **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** regarding violations by Israel against the Arab Bedouin in the Negev/Naqab desert.

SHARED SOCIETY: CULTURAL CENTRE MULTAKA-MIFGASH

Our Shared Society Program aims at promoting a socially cohesive society that is stable and safe and where all those living in the Negev/Naqab feel at home. We promote a society that respects everyone's dignity and human rights while providing every individual with equal opportunities. A shared society is tolerant and respects diversity.



One of the main venues for NCF to promote a shared society is the **Arab-Jewish Multaka-Mifgash Cultural Centre**, which provides a safe space for residents of Be'er Sheva. Through a wide range of activities, we encourage residents to come together, speak and get to know with each other, and be exposed to new ideas and narratives.

In 2019, in cooperation with the **Solidarity Film Festival**, we hosted the screening of various films dealing with different social narratives and stories. We hosted lectures about violations of civil rights, political prisoners, the Nakba, and more. The Multaka-Mifgash is also home to the **"Talking about Nothing"** project that encourages young adults from Arab and Jewish heritage to come together. Furthermore, we started a series of gatherings that give expression to the Palestinian culture and music. We conducted **language-exchange programs** in the Bedouin townships of Šgīb as-Salām, Ksīfih and Tal as-Saba', as well as tours for university students to unrecognized villages. During the year, we had four Arabic language courses for an affordable price, with over 50 students that are now able to communicate in the Arabic language.

We also launched the **"Mojtma'at-Communities"** project, aimed at building bridges between neighboring Arab and Jewish communities. In 2019, we worked with activists from Arad and the villages of Tal 'Arād and al-Fur'ah.

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2019

We were successful in bringing Bedouin voices to different national and international platforms and putting pressure on the State of Israel to address issues raised. We also supported the Bedouin community to challenge forced displacement and dispossession plans and policies, as well as the lack of access to education and employment, among other rights violations regularly committed by the State of Israel. NCF worked closely with partner organizations to increase awareness of new policies and plans that violate the most critical human rights of Bedouin citizens of Israel.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The combination between field documentation and thorough research of human rights abuses brought to the international community through advocacy proved successful in many instances:

- In its Concluding Observations, the **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)** recommends the State of Israel to:
- Immediately stop the evacuation of villages and people and intensify its efforts to resolve the issue of unrecognized villages and ownership claims to the land;
 - Actively act to improve the living standards in the recognized and unrecognized villages;
 - Address employment and educational barriers and deficiencies.

[Read the full list of the CESCR's Concluding Observations and recommendations to Israel](#)
[Read NCF's representative to CESCR, Mr. Rafat abu Aish, statement](#)

- In its Concluding Observations, the **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** recommends the State of Israel to:
- Ensure meaningful consultation with Bedouin communities regarding their right to land and property, recognized their villages, improve their living conditions, and stop home demolitions and the eviction of Bedouin people from their homes and ancestral lands;
 - Address the high dropout rates of Bedouin students, the shortage of classrooms and kindergartens in Bedouin neighborhoods, and improve the quality of education provided;
 - Increase labor market participation of Bedouins, especially women;
 - Take concrete measures to improve the health status of Bedouin populations.

[Read the full list of the CERD's Concluding Observations and recommendations to Israel.](#)

- **UN Special Rapporteurs** expressed serious concerns regarding Israel's continued violations of Arab Bedouin's human rights and the persecution of the Arab Bedouin human rights defender Sheikh Sayah Abu Madhi'm A-Turi. The statement was released to the public on June 30th, 2019. The letter was sent early May 2019 to the Israeli Government and includes the concerns of six different Special Rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on Minorities; the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing; and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders. The letter is the result of ongoing international advocacy by the Negev Coexistence Forum and the Human Rights Defenders Fund.

[Read the letter sent by UN Special Rapporteurs to the State of Israel.](#)

- In January 2019, **Amnesty International** issued an urgent action to call on the Israeli President to immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Sayah as 'he is a prisoner of conscience and is imprisoned solely for peacefully defending his human rights and those of his community'. This urgent action was triggered in part to the work of NCF.

[Read the urgent action call on Amnesty International's website.](#)

- Since 1968, **IWGIA** has cooperated with indigenous organizations and international institutions to promote recognition and implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples. IWGIA's publication, "The Indigenous World", is the result of a collaborative effort between indigenous and non-indigenous activists and scholars who share their valuable insights and analysis. In 2019, the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab was included, following a contribution submitted by NCF. Over the last 33 years, the publication has documented an increasing trend towards harassment and criminalization of indigenous peoples and communities. The Indigenous World augments efforts to protect indigenous rights' defenders by chronicling many of the most egregious assaults on the rights of indigenous peoples.



[Read the online publication \(page 375\) on IWGIA website.](#)

- The **US State Department** releases a yearly report on "Israel and the Golan Heights' Human Rights Report". NCF submitted in 2019 a report on the situation of human rights in the Bedouin communities in the Negev in 2018, which were included in the 2018 Report.

[Read the full publication for 2018.](#)



Photo by Ahlam Abu al-Qi'ān , 'Atīr

RIGHT TO EDUCATION



New High-School in Al Zarnug, photography is a courtesy from the village committee

New High-School in az-Zarnūg: A new high-school was opened in October in the village. The school is currently serving 300 of the village's children, a number that is expected to rise to around 500. This is a significant achievement after years of work by the local committee, Bedouin leaders and civil society, including RCUV, Adalah, Sikkuy, and NCF.

Thanks to a freedom of information request submitted by NCF, we learned of significant funding cuts in 2018 and 2019 to the **Adult Education Program**. In response to this information, an ad hoc coalition of civil society organizations built by NCF started a national campaign. Together with partner

organizations like the Regional Council for Unrecognized Villages, Sidreh, Al-Huquq, Adva center, Adalah and Shatil, we sent two letters to the Ministry of Education and launched a national campaign on social media. Haaretz correspondent Almog Ben Zikri published about the campaign in Haaretz, and MK Itzik Shmuli from Labour talked about it in the Knesset. We engaged with MKs from the entire the political map (Itzik Shmuli, Merav Ben Ari, Yossi Yona, Mossi Raz, and most of the Arab MKs). Ahmed Tibi put pressure on the Ministry of Education. Mossi Raz and Yossi Yona initiated an urgent discussion in the Education Committee in November 2018, to which we brought Bedouin women from the program to speak. During the discussion Merav Ben Ari from 'Kulano' promised to talk to the Minister of Finance. However, the Knesset went on leave and then the first failed elections took place, bringing the Knesset to a complete halt for over a year. We continued researching the matter and engaging with local decision-makers, culminating with a [large conference in Rahat](#). Following this **national campaign** and discussions at the Knesset's Education Committee, part of the budget (2 million NIS) was reinstated and guaranteed until the end of 2019.

Despite this progress, we would like to emphasize that major, unpredictable legislative and policy changes and opaque governmental plans are being introduced and implemented by the State throughout the Negev/Naqab. The situation of the Bedouin overall remains dire, and their communities are very vulnerable to the risk of forced displacement and to further deterioration in their access to basic rights and services.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

We are proud to say that as a result of cooperation with friendly states and international organizations that promote human rights, most of our funding comes from 'foreign entities'. We are forever thankful to all our supporters and partners in Israel and abroad (in alphabetical order):

CCP Japan

Delegation of the European Union

Fondation Pro Victims

Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada

Foundation for Middle East Peace

Institute of International Education (IIE)

Kisha Bari & Adi Lavi, Curators Photoville exhibition

Lush Charity Pot

Mazon – A Jewish Response to Hunger

New Israel Fund

Open Society Foundations

Private Donors

Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs