



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



المجلس الإقليمي للقرى غير المعترف بها في النقب  
המועצה האזורית לכפרים הבלתי מוכרים בנגב  
The Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev-RCUV



رابطة الأطباء العرب في النقب  
ARAB MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
אגודת הרופאים הערבים בנגב



## Violations of Human Rights of the Arab Bedouin Community in the Negev/Naqab during Pandemics

International Day of Human Rights 2020

***Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF)*** was established in 1997 to provide a place for Arab-Jewish collaborative efforts in the struggle for civil equality and the advancement of a shared society, mutual tolerance and coexistence in the Negev/Naqab. NCF is unique in being the only Arab-Jewish organization that remains focused solely on the problems confronting the Negev/Naqab. 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/Naqab. As a result, NCF has set as one of its goals the achievement of full civil rights and equality for all people who make the Negev/Naqab their home.

***The Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages (RCUV)*** is a democratically elected body, chosen to represent the Arab Bedouin community residing in more than 35 unrecognized villages in the Negev/Naqab. The residents of each village elect a local committee of 3-7 persons, who become members of the general assembly of the RCUV. The primary goal of the RCUV is unconditional governmental recognition of the Arab Bedouin (unrecognized) villages in the Negev/Naqab, which have been completely excluded from any form of governmental support or recognition. This recognition, however, must translate to more than municipal services. "Recognition" implies social, economic, and cultural equality with all citizens of Israel.

***Alhuquq Center*** is an independent, non-governmental, non-partisan association founded to benefit the Arab Bedouin citizens of the Negev/Naqab living in both recognized townships and unrecognized villages in Israel. The Center works to protect their legal, social, human, economic and civic rights in the face of increasingly discriminatory governmental policies. Improving education, stabilizing housing, ensuring voting rights, and fostering self-advocacy are among the Center's top priorities.

***Sidreh Association*** is a non-profit organization established in 1998 in Lakiya with the mission to support the Palestinian-Bedouin woman in the Negev in her pursuit of the full realization of herself and her rights as well as those of her community. Sidreh focuses on 4 main strategic objectives: Access to knowledge; Access to resources; Gender equality and participation; Sustainable development. Sidreh's vision is a society in which the Palestinian-Arab woman has full ownership over herself and decisions, fully enjoys her rights, enjoys safety and stability, feels pride regarding her cultural heritage, and realizes her place as an active member in her society, bringing sustainable development to our community.

***Arab Medical Association in the Negev*** is a non-profit organization established in 2015 with the mission to promote health and raise awareness in the field of health among Arab residents of the Negev. To achieve this purpose, the Association works to make health services accessible to the entire population, including the residents of the unrecognized villages.

## December 10, 2020

This report is a result of joint work with Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. Most of the material in the report was formally presented at the United Nations Human Rights Committees. If you wish to view the full reports submitted to the UN Committees, please see the following links:

If you wish to view the full reports submitted to the UN Committees, please see the following links:

[Joint NGO Report: UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Re: List of Issues for the State of Israel](#)

[Joint NGO Report: UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Re: Reply to List of Issues by the State of Israel](#)

[Joint NGO Report: UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Re: List of Themes for the State of Israel](#)

[NGO Report: UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Re: Review of Israel \(NCF\)](#)

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Front-page photo: A girl standing on the rubble of her uncle's home, who was killed in a Police operation of the village's demolition. Unrecognized village of Umm al-Ḥīrān. Rada, January 2017

Back-page photo: Children photographing their paintings during a kids' workshop. Şūfyā' Abū al-Qi'ān. Atīr 21.10.2020

NCF invests much effort in documenting the Negev/Naqab through various audio-visual projects. Majority of the photos are a product of these projects, where NCF provides video and still cameras to Arab Bedouin women and children who document their everyday lives, as well as human rights violations. The pictures featuring in this report are part of a recently released exhibition titled: ***“Recognized: Life and Resilience Captured by Bedouin women”***, which can be accessed [here](#). The products of the various projects are used to raise awareness of the situation of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab, through participation in film festivals, exhibitions in Israel and around the world, photo-albums, position papers and reports – such as this one.

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## **1. Introduction**

*“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”*

*(Universal Declaration of Human Rights).*

Over the years, the United Nations has produced a number of human rights declarations and conventions, some of which Israel signed and ratified into law. Israel also embedded some of the Universal Human Rights<sup>1</sup> in the State's Basic Laws, such as The Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, which protects a person from violations of his right to life, body or dignity. The Israeli courts also acknowledged human rights in its verdicts, such as the Right to Work.<sup>2</sup>

Human rights are guaranteed to every person by virtue of their being human, irrespective of their ethnic identity, political status, religion or gender. However, the State of Israel does not guarantee or respect the human rights of the Negev/Naqab Bedouin people, but rather violates them on a daily basis. Since the outburst of Covid-19, we have seen little to no signs of aid or commitment on behalf of the Government to improve the situation of human rights for Bedouin in the Negev/Naqab. In the middle of a global humanitarian crisis, the Bedouin communities, continue to suffer from poor or non-existent infrastructure and discrimination in distribution of resources, while continuing to suffer from lack of adequate housing, health services and education among other rights.

On the occasion of International Day of Human Rights on December 10, 2020, NCF, RCUV, Alhuquq Center, Sidreh Association, and the Arab Medical Association in the Negev have chosen to publish 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, citizenship and work. This report highlights the various forms in which Israel violates the above rights.



Friday prayer in the village of al-'Arāḡīb after its demolition in 2010.  
Photograph by Šabāh 'Abū Mdiḡim, al-'Arāḡīb, 2011

<sup>1</sup>Declaration of Universal Human Rights, UN, <https://tinyurl.com/y3xelaw9>

<sup>2</sup> Labor Appeal 359/99, Le'a Levin v. Broadcasting Authority. Verdict delivered 28.2.2011



## **2. The Arab Bedouin Society in the Negev/Naqab**

The Bedouin residents of the Negev/Naqab are an indigenous minority with a unique way of life. Members of the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab are also an integral part of the Arab Palestinian minority, as well as citizens of the State of Israel.

The Negev/Naqab's Bedouin community consists of more than a quarter of a million citizens, residing in three forms of settlements: government-planned townships, villages recognized by the state, and villages that the State refuses to recognize. All Bedouin residents in the Negev/Naqab suffer from wide-spread discrimination and violations of their human rights and are, in fact, marginalized from mainstream Israeli society.

According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), by 2030, the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab is expected to number about 400,000<sup>3</sup>. As of 2018, more than 28% of the Bedouin population (around 86,000 people)<sup>4</sup> live in unrecognized villages; civil society organizations estimate that the number is closer to 90,000-100,000 people. These villages do not appear on any official maps. The State of Israel does not provide most of them with basic services such as healthcare and educational facilities; all of them lack infrastructure including connection to the national electricity grid, running water, paved roads and sewage disposal systems. Their residents hardly have any representation in the various local governmental bodies, and some cannot even register to participate in municipal elections. Furthermore, as a result of non-recognition and the absence of approved Urban Building Schemes, it's impossible for them to obtain building permits. The State defines the building of permanent structures in those villages as illegal, so that construction of permanent structures often leads to heavy fines and demolitions.

In addition to non-recognition, since the 1950s the state of Israel has executed plans to forcibly displace Bedouins in the Negev/Naqab from their historical lands and concentrate them into limited geographic areas. These plans were first implemented by concentrating them in a restricted geographical area called al Siyāj, and later, in the 1970s and 1980s, by establishing seven government-planned Bedouin townships in the Siyāj area for the purpose of sedentarizing and controlling them. Besides the inadequate provision of services, all the Bedouin townships are afflicted with poverty, deprivation, high unemployment, crime and social tension. These townships continue to be part of an ongoing, non-consensual, and non-participatory process of forced urbanization.

Since 1999, the State has, in addition to the seven townships, recognized 11 Bedouin villages, hailing their recognition as a fundamental shift in governmental policy, which previously had been focused exclusively on forced urbanization. However, almost two decades later, there is no significant difference between these villages and the unrecognized villages. The residents of most recognized villages continue to be denied access to basic services and are under constant threat of house demolitions.

Although today the Bedouin community accounts for approximately 34% of the total population of the Negev/Naqab, only 12.5% of the land in the region is designated for the Bedouin population. Despite the shortage in housing solutions for the community, the Israeli government continues to ignore the plight of the Bedouin community and acts to dispossess them from their lands and force a change in lifestyle and livelihood on their traditional and agricultural communities.

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<sup>3</sup> Michal Lerer, 'Issues of land regulation among the Bedouin population in the Negev' (2017), Knesset Research and Information Center, p.2 (in Hebrew) <https://tinyurl.com/y9pcfslt>

<sup>4</sup>CBS, Total population estimations in localities, their population and other information, 2018

The reasons given for dislocating the Bedouin communities include making room for Jewish communities to be established on the very same lands that the Bedouin are evicted from, military use, forestation, building highways, railways, quarries and more.

The already existing inequalities and injustices in the Naqab have been significantly magnified as a result of the COVID-19 crisis in Israel.

Today, many of the Bedouin living in the unrecognized villages continue to resist State-led dispossession and are advocating for recognition of their villages and the fulfillment of their human and civil rights. NCF's main goal is to support and join them in their rightful struggle.



A photographer from Tal 'Arād, 2019

### **3. Right to an Adequate Standard of Living | High Incidence of Poverty**

*The right to an adequate standard of living encompasses several specific rights, including the right to food, the right to health, the right to water, the right to necessary social services, the right to clothing, and the right to housing. The right to an adequate standard of living requires governments to consistently improve these rights. It is protected by Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)<sup>5</sup> and Article 25 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>6</sup>*

The Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab is one of the most impoverished communities in Israel. A staggering two-thirds of Bedouin citizens of Israel residing in the Negev/Naqab live below

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<sup>5</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 July 1976) GA. Resolution 2200A (XXI) art 11; The State of Israel became a party to the ICESCR in 1991.

<sup>6</sup>Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted 10 December 1948) GA. Resolution 217A, art 25; Israel never became a party to the Declaration, however, Israel's Supreme Court of Justice mentions the Declaration and adopted its principals in some of its judgments.

the poverty line, three times more than Jewish Israelis. However, Israel has no concrete and targeted plan to alleviate poverty among the Bedouin.

According to the CBS, the Bedouin Regional Councils of Neve Midbar and al-Qassoum are ranked at the bottom of its ten-point socio-economic index, scoring the lowest possible ranking of one.<sup>7</sup> All seven government-planned Bedouin townships also received a ranking of one.<sup>8</sup>

In 2018, the Israeli National Insurance Institute (NII) published data on Bedouin in the Negev/Naqab in its yearly report on poverty.<sup>9</sup> It reports that the poverty rate among the Bedouin population in the south was 68% in 2018, compared to 45% among ultraorthodox Jewish population and 11% among the rest of the Israeli population.<sup>10</sup>

However, these alarming figures significantly underestimate poverty levels among the Bedouin, since the most impoverished group, the 90,000 people living in unrecognized villages, were not included in the NII survey, as a matter of policy.



A photographer from Wādi an-Na'am, 2014.

The impact of the first phase of the Covid-19 outbreak, followed by the declaration of a state of emergency by the Israeli government, has varied substantially across Israeli municipalities. After a second outbreak, a second lockdown was declared on September 18. On both occasions, a strict shut down was imposed. Schools were closed and, people were asked to work from home, while others were laid off. The unemployment rate climbed dramatically. Women were disproportionately affected by the crisis as 56% of unemployment claims were filed by women. The financial crisis, coupled with social distress and stay at home guidelines, lead to a dramatic increase in gender-based violence. The already existing inequalities and injustices in the Naqab

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<sup>7</sup> CBS, "Local Authorities in Ascending Order of the Socio-Economic Index, 2015," Table 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Tal as-Saba' (Tel-Sheva), Šgīb as-Salām (Shegev Shalom), Ar'arah Ba-Negev (Ar'ara), Ḥūrah (Hura), Ksīfih (Kuseife), Lagiyyih (Lakiya), and Rahat.

<sup>9</sup> NII, "Report on Social Gaps in Israel – 2018," November 2020, p. 73 (in Hebrew): <https://tinyurl.com/vlpqmvvs>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



have been magnified by the unprecedented global crisis, following the spread of COVID-19. According to a recent report released by the OECD<sup>11</sup>, the infection rate has been particularly high in Haredi towns and neighborhoods, while the infection rate in other Jewish neighborhoods and Arab municipalities has been smaller. Today, all the Arab Bedouin villages are identified as 'green zones' and the number of ill people is under 15 per village. Still, the percentage of tests carried out in Bedouin localities is very low.

High infection rates can be related to large family size, crowded living conditions, intense social and community life, higher dependency on public transportation and higher share of low-skilled occupations with limited possibilities of teleworking. According to the OECD report<sup>12</sup> mentioned above, connecting disadvantaged groups to job opportunities and public services through effective transportation networks can reduce socio-economic differences and foster inclusive growth. However, this has not been part of the strategy that the State of Israel has implemented to overcome the crisis and aid the most vulnerable.

#### **4. Right to Adequate Housing | Home Demolitions during Covid-19 in Arab Bedouin Communities**

*The right to adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948,<sup>13</sup> and in the ICESCR in 1966.<sup>14</sup> Other international human rights treaties have since recognized or referred to the right to adequate housing or some elements of it. The right to adequate housing also includes protection from forced evictions and the arbitrary demolition of homes, the right to choose where to live, and the right to participate in related decision-making.*

Israel's use of demolitions as a mechanism for forced displacement of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab systematically violates their rights, even in their most narrow interpretation. Tens of thousands of Bedouins in the Negev/Naqab currently live in homes that are subjected to demolition orders, in large part due to the lack of approved Urban Building Schemes for their villages, both recognized and unrecognized. In the case of the dozens of Bedouin villages in the Negev/Naqab that are unrecognized, they remain without approved building schemes, and without the possibility of applying for or receiving building permits, for as long as the Israeli Government continues to define them as illegal villages.

Israel's Southern Administration for the Coordination of Enforcement of Land Laws (hereinafter: Southern Administration) classifies demolitions into three types: "initiated demolitions", which are executed by enforcement authorities accompanied by the police; "self-demolitions", which are executed by the structure's owners; and demolitions "performed in procedure", which are done by owners while the administrative processes of obtaining a demolition order is still in progress.<sup>15</sup>

Since March 2020, and in spite of the state of emergency and the government's instruction to home confinement, authorities continued to distribute demolition orders and plow under hundreds of acres of fields in over 11 Bedouin villages, both recognized and unrecognized by the State. This illustrates the continuation of the policies implemented in 2019, with a large investment of resources in enforcement, that led to the demolition of some 2,241 structures during that year<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup>OECD Economic Surveys: Israel 2020 | READ online, 2020

<sup>12</sup>Ibid

<sup>13</sup>See supra note 5, art 25.

<sup>14</sup>See supra note 4, art 11.

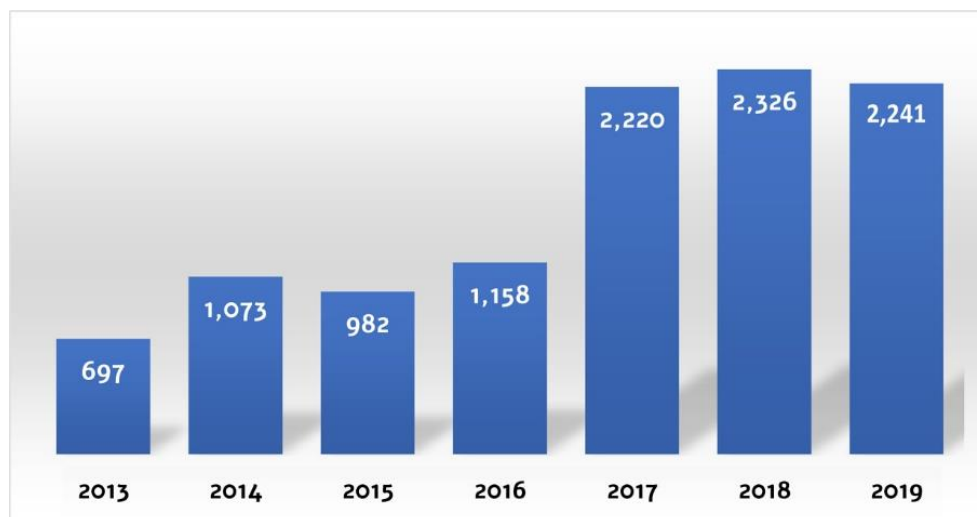
<sup>15</sup> See NCF's report: On (In)Equality and Demolition of Homes and Structures in Arab Bedouin Communities in the Negev/Naqab", July 2020, pp.12-16 <https://tinyurl.com/y2394joi>

<sup>16</sup>Ibid

Out of these 2,241 buildings, an estimated 30% (655) were being used as dwellings, and around 88% of the demolitions were "self-demolitions"<sup>17</sup>.

Moreover, dwellings are rudimentary and crowded with more than six people living in a single room, which makes social distancing impossible. Proper sanitation is also a challenge, as most of the villages' homes lack running water and sewerage disposal.

**Figure 1 - Demolition of structures in the Naqab Bedouin communities, 2013-2019**



The data<sup>18</sup> presented in Figure 1, shows a sharp increase in the number of demolitions in Bedouin communities in the Naqab since 2013. In just six years, the number of demolitions rose from 697 in 2013 to 2,241 demolitions in 2019 - a 221% increase in demolition rates. In six years, some 10,969 structures were demolished in Bedouin communities in the Naqab. These statistics reflect a harsh official policy of increased pressure on Bedouin residents to destroy their own homes through a constant presence of law enforcement officials and demolition teams; distribution of demolition orders; threats of heavy financial fines; aerial photography of villages by drones; and threats that are vaguely disguised as "negotiations" on the part of representatives of the Authority for the Development and Settlement of the Bedouin in the Negev (hereinafter: Bedouin Authority).

On March 2020 and as a response to the urgent letter sent by 22 civil society organizations to Mr. Avichai Mandelblit, Israeli Attorney General, demanding immediate action to stop home destruction in the Naqab during the COVID-19 crisis, the Ministry of Justice committed to the following: A. Existing structures for residential purposes will not be demolished; B. The serving of administrative demolition orders will be reduced - orders will only be issued in relation to new construction (which includes any minor renovations/construction to the home); C. The serving of warnings and notices will be minimized, D. The National Unit for Enforcing Planning and Construction Laws will reduce its direct contact with the population.

However, between March and December 2020, NCF continued to monitor the situation, documenting over 70 incidents in which enforcement authorities continued to distribute demolition warrants, execute demolitions, as well as interrogating livestock farmers, and issuing fines to herders, mainly for the purpose of harassment. That and more - residents of the villages informed

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid

<sup>18</sup>Ibid

NCF that many of the inspectors and police officers were patrolling the villages and interacting with the population without taking any precautions required to prevent people from spreading the virus. As noted above, these enforcement measures, that are effective in driving the populace to destroy their own property, can and do cause extreme duress, especially during a pandemic. As part of our multimedia and advocacy project, we have produced a [video](#) with a compilation of demolition orders served and execution of demolitions that occurred during the Covid-19 crisis in the Negev.

In the past few years, the State of Israel has been promoting various changes in the planning and building laws legislation to restrict construction in Arab communities and enforce violations of the laws. One of the main results of this policy is the Kaminitz Law, what is now known as Amendment No. 116 of the Planning and Building Law.<sup>19</sup>

Amendment No. 116 of the Planning and Building Law, was passed by the Knesset and went into force on October 25, 2017. This amendment facilitates methods of increasing enforcement of planning and building offenses and economic sanctions by imposing fines via administrative bodies so as to avoid the need to conduct legal proceedings and shorten enforcement procedures.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the powers of the administrative enforcement authorities, first and foremost those of the National Unit for Enforcement of Planning and Building Laws, were expanded, and they were afforded extensive judgmental discretion.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, significantly harsher penalties were proposed for planning and building violations, including higher fines and extended terms of imprisonment. In a further intensification of enforcement efforts, the bounds of responsibility for planning and building offenses were redrawn to include persons who do not necessarily have the ability to influence or prevent illegal construction, such as business owners that sell construction materials intended for construction in the unrecognized villages, and building contractors.<sup>22</sup> The transformation of these individuals into accomplices to a crime is a serious aggravation which is liable to lead to the incrimination of innocent people on a large scale.<sup>23</sup>

A complementary step to amending the Planning and Building Law was the adoption of regulations to implement harsher economic and administrative penalties. In June 2018, Israeli former Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked approved the Administrative Offenses Regulations, which set new administrative fines for violations of the Law. The decision to impose the fine is vested in an administrative body, thus eliminating the requirement of judicial oversight. The increased fines set in the new regulations are unprecedented, draconian, and may amount to up to ILS 300,000 as a one-time fine attached to a daily fine of up to ILS 1,500 per day for an unlimited time in the event of an ongoing offense.<sup>24</sup> These fines have the power to reduce almost any and every Bedouin family to a state of abject poverty and to seriously violate their right to live in dignity.

On November 12th, the Justice Ministry issued a notice to the public regarding the Kaminitz Law<sup>25</sup>, which was presented as a suspension of the law for the Arab society. Notwithstanding, it turns out that this is only an "easement" in enforcing the Kaminitz law and not a suspension of the law.

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<sup>19</sup> Planning and Building Law (Amendment no. 116), 2017 (in Hebrew): <https://tinyurl.com/y7evr4ow>

<sup>20</sup> The Association for Civil Rights in Israel and others. The Kaminitz Law (Proposed Planning and Building Law (Amendment 109), 5766 - 2016: Position Paper, 2017, (in Hebrew): <https://tinyurl.com/y88zumnu>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> See supra note 20, article 253-254.

<sup>23</sup> See supra note 20.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Justice, Administrative Offenses Regulations (Administrative Fines – Planning and Building), 2018 (in Hebrew): <https://tinyurl.com/yakjuhwb>

<sup>25</sup> Lis, Y., 2020. The Ministry Of Justice Announced That The Enforcement Of Construction Offenses In Arab Localities Will Be Frozen, (in Hebrew): <https://tinyurl.com/y68srkfg>

The purported suspension applies only to dwellings that were populated before January 1st, 2018 and with the condition that there are no outstanding enforcement proceedings other than administrative fines. In fact, most of the structures in demolition proceedings generally do not meet these conditions.



A house that was demolished in the village of Umm al-Hīrān, after the eviction of the family that lived there. Photograph by 'Āyṣhah 'Abū al-Qi'ān, Umm al-Hīrān, 2017.

## **5. Right to Development | Development-Induced Displacement**

*The right to development was first recognized as an individual and collective right in the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.<sup>26</sup> In 1986 the United Nations also recognized the right to development in its Declaration on the Right to Development.<sup>27</sup> It states that “development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom.”<sup>28</sup> In 2007, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognized the right to development as an indigenous right.<sup>29</sup>*

The policy of the state towards its Bedouin citizens is reflected not only in the demolition of homes and dispossession of land, but also in that it does not treat the Bedouin population as citizens of equal status. One of the key manifestations of this is that unlike other Israeli citizens, the relationship between Bedouin residents and state systems and authorities is mediated by unique institutions established by the state solely for this purpose. Unlike most of the country, Bedouin

<sup>26</sup>African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (adopted on 27 June 1981, entered into force 21 October 1986) art 22, <https://tinyurl.com/kooxt68>

<sup>27</sup> Declaration on the Right to Development (adopted 4 December 1986), GA. Resolution 41/128.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (adopted 13 September 2007) GA. Resolution 61/295.



citizens in the Naqab do not have fully independent local government institutions, and in the unrecognized villages there are no such formal institutions at all.



Photograph by 'Amal 'Abū al-Qi'ān, 'Atīr, 2014.

Israel has been attempting to forcibly evict the Bedouin population from the unrecognized villages to the recognized communities without their consent for decades by using “development” as a reasoning for the displacement of an entire indigenous population.

One of the main mechanisms for forced displacement is the Israeli Government Resolution No. 2397 (Government Plan for the Empowerment and Socio-Economic Strengthening of the Bedouin Localities in the Negev for the Years 2017-2021)<sup>30</sup> (hereinafter: Five-Year Plan). The plan ostensibly allocates ILS 3.12 billion (US \$855 million) for the development of Bedouin townships and villages. However, in fact, a major portion of the plan is dedicated to the execution of evictions and home demolitions in the 35 unrecognized Bedouin villages, which are almost entirely excluded from the benefits of the plan.

The Five Year Plan ostensibly allocates NIS 3 billion (US \$855 million) for the development of Bedouin townships and villages. However, it in fact conditions state funding on the execution of evictions and home demolitions in the 35 unrecognized Bedouin villages, which are almost entirely excluded from the benefits of the plan. The Resolution includes a section on “law enforcement” that authorizes the State to “protect state lands” and “prevent illegal expansion” in order to “decrease areas of land on which illegal construction exists.” This section was added after several government ministers refused to approve the resolution without including measures

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<sup>30</sup>Government Resolution No. 2397 of 12.02.2017, Program for Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Population in the Negev (in Hebrew).

to ensure the eviction and demolition of the unrecognized villages, thus conditioning economic development on the implementation of policies of forced displacement, allocating part of its budget to this purpose. This allocation includes NIS 30 million per year for the purpose of planting trees in what it refers to as “evacuated state lands” on which the unrecognized Bedouin villages exist, to prevent the return of their inhabitants; a further NIS 32 million for increased law enforcement personnel; and NIS 10.5 million for additional personnel in the National Unit for Planning and Building Law Enforcement and local planning committees, in order to tackle “illegal construction” by the Bedouin population. The Resolution offers no possibility for development of the unrecognized villages.

According to the Ministry of Economy and Industry analysis of the Five Year Plan’s utilization of commitments<sup>31</sup>, the budget utilization rate is 53% of the commitments at the end of 3 years of the project which indicates a very slow pace of execution. Added to this is the execution of 43% of the funding. The Plan is finalizing its third year and it was expected that the rate of budget utilization would reach minimum 60%. The fact that this did not happen indicates a multiplicity of failures. In Education, the utilization rate is 44%, and as for the Ministry of Health, Mother and Child the utilization rate is 50% which is very disappointing considering the colossal needs that exist in this area. The rate for the Authority for Development and Settlement of the Bedouin in the Negev subsidizing infrastructure and projects on private land was 33%, as for the rate of the Ministry of Transportation, the rate was only 29% to subsidize transportation infrastructure which is very poor and severe in the face of the acute needs of the residents of the unrecognized villages and in view of the government’s statements on the duty to assist employment in general and the employment of women in particular.

According to NCF’s assessment, an urgent budget should be allocated for emergency support in response to the different areas the Covid-19 is impacting. It is essential to strengthen professional training to provide adequate emergency health services, allocate budgets for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence and for prevention of school dropouts as well as for digital and electrical infrastructures needed to support remote learning. It should be noted that the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to contribute to even lower performance in the two years 2020-2021 left to end the Plan.

This indicates a lack of pressure “from above” to utilize the budget and demands the involvement of the Minister in charge - i.e., the Minister of Economy and Industry, and of the Director General of his ministry vis-à-vis the other ministries.

A rate of non-performance of 17.5% of activity in 2019 may be explained by disruptions and delays caused by re-election campaigns and instability in the administration, including difficulty in approving subsidies and budget changes, etc. However, this is a very worrying rate of non-performance. The five-year budget as a whole is particularly worrying if we consider that in 2020 its execution was severely hindered due to the Covid-19 crisis. A reformulation of the budget is needed while shifting to areas and channels that will ensure execution, including support for associations and facilitating accelerated processes for franchise allotments.

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<sup>31</sup>2020. Planning versus execution report for the years 2019 - 2017. The program for economic-social development among the Bedouin population in the Negev 2017-2021.



This unpaved road is the path to school for children, a walk of 30 minutes.  
 Photograph by Waḍḥah ' Abū Jūdeh, az-Za ' arūrah, 2016

## **6. Right to Education | Unequal access to Internet, cellular services and Education, and Persistently High Drop-Out Rates as a result of remote learning**

*The right to education has been recognized as a human right in a number of international conventions, most notably the ICESCR. Article 13 of the Covenant<sup>32</sup> recognizes that the right to education includes free, compulsory primary education for all, an obligation by State parties to develop secondary education accessibly to all, introduction of free secondary education, as and an obligation to advance access to higher education. The Covenant also states that “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”.<sup>33</sup>*

Decades of inefficient investment or total lack of investment by the State in Bedouin education have taken a heavy toll during the pandemic, especially since students have had to adapt to new remote learning conditions which have resulted in high dropout rates. Despite lower levels of educational achievement among Arab students at all stages of education – Israel has the largest gaps in educational achievement of all OECD countries, with Arab children scoring on average 133 fewer points than Jewish student in the 2012 PISA tests<sup>34</sup> – investment in their schooling is less than that of higher-achieving Israeli Jewish children.

The Bedouin population has little access to the internet, and there are difficulties in connecting due to lack of electricity and wireless connection – this is the case in most of the Bedouin villages and townships.

<sup>32</sup>See supra note 4, art 13.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>YardenSkop, “Israel Has Largest Gaps in Student Achievement of All OECD Countries, Study Shows”, Haaretz, 2 April 2014: <https://tinyurl.com/yd8x9sep>



The percentage of households connected to the Internet in Bedouin localities is only 34%<sup>35</sup> and in the unrecognized villages, where there is no basic infrastructure for internet connection, they are forced to rely on the cellular network. However, that also is not a real solution since in many unrecognized villages there is no cellular reception at all, while in the rest the reception is only partial. Thus, the residents are not able to connect and most of them lack computers and devices with access to Internet. In many communities, access to television or cellular services is also limited. As a result of the crisis, many services and much information were provided online – however, the lack of basic services hindered their ability to access this valuable information, receive their benefits and allowances, apply for unemployment, and more. The lack of basic internet and cellular services also impedes Bedouin children and college/university students from accessing the remote-learning system. There is much concern that many of the students will drop out because of the gaps in access to education and communication.

In Rahat there is a need for 17,000 computers but the Ministry of Education will provide only 1,000, reaching about 6.0% of the kids (according to the Follow up committee of Arab Education in Israel)<sup>36</sup>. Ksīfih has need of 6,000 computers and the State will provide only 805. In Al Qasum the need is for 6,592 while the State will provide 186 computers<sup>37</sup>.

The Ministry of Education had to request a special budget from the Ministry of Treasure and based their numbers on an OECD report that stated that the need was of 140,000 computers, rather than using the numbers provided by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics. The criterion used to calculate the number of required computers is unknown to us.



Şabāḥ 'Abū Mdīgīm, al-'Arāgīb, 2011.

The extent of these difficulties is clear in a recent study by Hama Abu-Kishk, a senior faculty member of the Sapir Academic College Communications Department, and Yonatan Mendel of

<sup>35</sup>Abu-Kishk, H. and Mendels, Y., 2020. Digital Divide and Distance learning among Bedouin students during the Covid-19 crisis.

<sup>36</sup>The Follow Up Committee on Arab Education-Israel, 2020. Arab life in Israel: Needs and problems that require immediate treatment in preparation for the opening of the 2021-2020 school year

<sup>37</sup>Ibid



the Mofet Institute<sup>38</sup>. Of 257 Bedouin students in academic institutions in the south, 90% said they had “special difficulties” in remote learning, and more than half said they were likely or very likely to drop out as a result. Only 53% reported having a computer available for their learning, and 64% said they have a smart phone for use as the main tool for their learning. The study also found that the digital gap is larger among those with a lower income and when the level of language competency is lower, causing the gap to deepen for those respondents residing in an unrecognized village.

The Education Ministry seems to be unprepared to face the challenges of the pandemic in providing sufficient infrastructure to ensure the continuation of education, even in a remote learning mode.

Regarding education, both in recognized and unrecognized villages there are problems related to infrastructure. Apparently, there will be a very significant drop out among Arab Bedouin students in the Naqab – 52% of Arab students are thinking of dropping their studies because the online learning is almost impossible to maintain for them and the university fees are too high for them to afford at the moment<sup>39</sup>.

The approximate number of Bedouin students studying in institutions of higher education in Israel in general and in the Naqab in particular, is between 2,500-3,000 people enrolled<sup>40</sup>. Still, the rate of Bedouin students in higher education is low compared with the Jewish population. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, only 14% of Bedouin, compared with 46% of Jews, have enrolled in higher education in the decade following their graduation from high school<sup>41</sup>.

It is still not clear how many Bedouin students are dropping out, or how the transition to remote learning will affect registration for the coming year but the outlook is not very promising.



Children in winter, on their way to school. Photograph by Rimāl, Umm al-Hīrān, 2017

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<sup>38</sup>Abu-Kishk, H. and Mendels, Y., 2020. Digital Divide and Distance learning among Bedouin students during the Covid-19 crisis.

<sup>39</sup>[www.calcalist.co.il](http://www.calcalist.co.il). 2020. Survey: Half Of The Students Fear That They Will Not Find A Job After Graduation. (Hebrew)

<sup>40</sup>Levi, D. and Cohen, P., 2020. [online] [Brookdale.jdc.org.il](http://Brookdale.jdc.org.il). (Hebrew)

<sup>41</sup>Kadari-Ovadia, S., 2020. For Bedouin Israeli University Students, Remote Learning Is An Obstacle Course. [online] [haaretz.com](http://haaretz.com).

## **7. Right to Work | Obstacles to Employment of Arab Bedouin Women**

*The right to work is enshrined as a basic human right in Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>42</sup> and is recognized in the ICESCR, where the right to work emphasizes economic, social and cultural development. It encompasses the rights to choose your employment, to receive just and favorable conditions of work, protection against unemployment, equal pay, fair wages and forming of trade unions. In addition, the covenants recognize the State's obligation to take measures that will promote full employment to its entire population.<sup>43</sup>*

Unemployment in Bedouin communities is high, governmental sources show that the employment rate for Arab Bedouin men is 60% and for Arab Bedouin women is 22% (10% lower than all Arab women in Israel)<sup>44</sup>. Moreover, the five-year governmental Plan to increase employment among Bedouin women in the Naqab excludes nearly all citizens living in the unrecognized Bedouin villages, especially women. These women are regularly denied access to basic State services, which makes it almost impossible for them to take a significant part in the labour force. The short supply of job opportunities in Bedouin communities, the severe shortage of local commerce, craft and industrial parks, low quality education and high dropout rates, and lack of day-care facilities are all major barriers to the integration of Bedouin women in the labour market.

For those who are employed, working conditions are dire since their salary is very low relative to the average for the Jewish population, and in addition, they receive no social rights whatsoever. The point is that they do not have better options. During Covid-19 many people were dismissed from their jobs. In Rahat, according to information provided by the Mayor, the unemployment rate has increased to 35% as a result of COVID-19<sup>45</sup>.

Professionals working with preschool children believe that the State of Israel must bring about a profound change that will reflect the emphasis on early childhood as a critical stage in the development of children, which does not fall short of the importance of later stages of education and even surpasses them. Changing early childhood education policy may reduce the gaps, which begin in infancy and widen over the years, and make a crucial contribution to the pursuit of substantive equality of opportunity, gender equality and a balance between professional fulfillment and parenting and family.

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<sup>42</sup>See supra note 5, art 23.

<sup>43</sup>See supra note 4, art 6-7.

<sup>44</sup>Brookdale JDC, 2017. MJB Data Snapshot: The Bedouin in the Negev.

<sup>45</sup>Protocol No. 2 from the meeting of the State Audit Committee for the matters of the Negev, October 2020



Women do laundry by hand in winter because of the lack of electricity.  
 Photograph by Hadil, 'Atir, 2015

However, in the Bedouin communities in the Negev, such a turnaround is far from being realized. Despite the government's recommendations in committees and governmental decisions, the number of day-care centers in the Arab communities in the Negev is still small. Only 12 day-care centers are active in seven of the Bedouin localities in the Negev and according to NCFs assessments, services are provided only to 750 children, about 2.5% of the children. In addition, there are 7 day-care centers whose construction has been completed but they are inactive and stand empty due to various issues that delay their opening and occupancy. Despite some improvement in the coverage rate of day-care center services, as mentioned, it is still extremely insufficient relative to the average in the general population.

In dozens of Bedouin villages, three and four-year-old children have no preschool frameworks, in violation of Israel's Compulsory Education Law – 1949.<sup>46</sup> According to the Knesset, 4,843 Bedouin children in the 3-5 year age bracket had no access to preschool education in the 2016/2017 academic year, which equates to 21% of all Bedouin children of that age in the Naqab; 70% of these children live in unrecognized villages.<sup>47</sup> The denial of preschool education is likely to have lifelong detrimental effects on the children, and the State's failure to implement the Compulsory Education Law perpetuates inequality of opportunity for Bedouin children. As a result of the structural discrimination that disadvantages Bedouin education from daycare to high school, the dropout rate among Bedouin children is a critical concern. At age 17 the Bedouin dropout rate in 2015 was 30%, compared to 13% among all Arab children and 5% among all pupils in Israel in this age group.<sup>48</sup> In the 2015-2016 academic year, 11% of all Bedouin children aged 3-17 in the Naqab were not in any of the Ministry of Education (MoE) schools.<sup>49</sup> This is an alarmingly high

<sup>46</sup> Compulsory Education Law – 1949 (in Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/y32dezyz>

<sup>47</sup> Knesset Research and Information Center, "Report on Bedouin Education in the Negev," 30 October 2017, p. 17 (in Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/yxtk4mkq>.

<sup>48</sup> Knesset Research and Information Center, "The Bedouin education in the Negev 2018: Chosen figures", 18 December 2018, p.15 (in Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/y9pw2uyy>

<sup>49</sup> Knesset Research and Information Center, "The Bedouin education in the Negev 2018: Chosen figures", 18 December 2018, p.30 (in Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/y9pw2uyy>

figure which shows the ineffectiveness of the State's efforts to improve education for Bedouin citizens. Despite the severity and disproportionality of the problem in Bedouin communities, only 25 out of 679 attendance officers in charge of preventing dropout, operate in Bedouin localities.<sup>50</sup>

According to the 2016 State Comptroller's report, the Division for Day-care and Nurseries failed dreadfully in promoting the construction of the centers in the Arab localities and their population over the years. A new budgeting and construction procedure, which was introduced in 2014, did not overcome the failures and was not adapted to the needs of the Arab localities, especially the Bedouin localities in the Negev. Assistance provided for the planning and construction processes was not adequately accessible. As far as is known, no up-to-date mapping of the needs and preferences of the residents of the Bedouin localities has been conducted. In addition, no significant organizational effort was made to provide information and training to the Bedouin localities, and not even one administrator has been appointed to facilitate resolving the problematic issues.

In view of the discrepancies between the number of early childhood frameworks in the Bedouin localities in the Negev and the overall number in Israel, the Ministry of Labour and Welfare must change its policy and adopt a policy of consistent preference for the Bedouin community at all levels: not only in allocating budgets for construction of new centers but also to the extent of subsidizing the children's stay in the day-care centers.

Decades of lack of State investment in Bedouin education has taken a heavy toll. Despite lower levels of educational achievement among Arab students at all stages of education – Israel has the largest gaps in educational achievement of all OECD countries, with Arab children scoring on average 133 fewer points than Jewish students in the 2012 PISA tests. These gaps are even more pronounced in the case of Bedouin school children, though the State does not consistently publish disaggregated data about this population.



Roasted coffee beans. Photograph by 'Amal 'Abū al-Qi'ān, 'Atīr, 2015.

<sup>50</sup>State of Israel report to the Committee, p. 27, para. 245.



## **8. Right to Health | Health negligence during the Pandemics**

*The right to health was first recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>51</sup> It was later incorporated into the ICESCR, which states that all persons are entitled to the highest attainable standard of health, both physical and mental.<sup>52</sup> The right to health is also a fundamental part of the right to dignity and is an inclusive as it is associated with other rights such as: safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, safe food, adequate nutrition, healthy working environment and conditions, gender equality and more.<sup>53</sup>*

Decades of neglect, discrimination, and the denial of Bedouin civil rights have reached a peak with the spread of COVID-19 in Israel. Medical services in unrecognized villages are gravely lacking, and for most of the population, the clinics are remote and inaccessible. MDA emergency services have no way of reaching large parts of the unrecognized villages (as there are no paved roads), and in the absence of public transportation, distance is a major obstacle to receiving medical treatment. Overall, mortality rates in these villages are high and life expectancy is lower than the average in Israel, the life expectancy at birth for Israeli Jews being 81 for men and 85 for women, while that of the Israeli Arabs it is 77 for men and 81 for women<sup>54</sup>. The IMR (infant mortality rate) among the Bedouins was reported to be higher as compared to the Jews in Israel. The IMR is highest in the Naqab, which is around 11 per 1,000 live births<sup>55</sup>. Sanitary conditions are dire, particularly due to the lack of running water and lack of sewage systems. The physical conditions of dwellings in the villages do not allow for real isolation. For Arab Bedouin women, this is even more difficult, as currently there are no appropriate isolation facilities that are culture-sensitive and cater to their needs.

One of the basic conditions for minimizing inequality in health is promoting cultural-specific accessibility to information for diverse population groups and communities. The commitment to cultural-specific accessibility was raised by the 2011 Ministry of Health Director General circular, "Cultural and linguistic adjustment and accessibility in the healthcare system" (July 2011), which established standards for cultural accessibility for health organizations." In spite of that commitment, during the pandemic caused by a virus without a vaccine or recognized medical treatment, and while the primary national tool for fighting the pandemic is based on active participation and awareness of the population about the risk of infection, critical information was not made sufficiently accessible. Data obtained by PHRI (Physicians for Human Rights in Israel) in the early weeks of the COVID-19 crisis exposed the Ministry of Health's lack of readiness to convey organized messaging in Arabic. The budget allocated by the Ministry of Health for Arabic language campaigns was only 4.1 million NIS, some 10% of the budget, while the Arabic-speaking sector comprises approximately 20% of Israel's entire population<sup>56</sup>. The budget allocated from the Government to municipalities was of a total of 2.8 milliard NIS while the sum transferred to Arab municipalities was less than 2%<sup>57</sup>. Moreover, NCF received reports of a shortage of Arabic-

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<sup>51</sup>See supra note 5, art 25.

<sup>52</sup>See supra note 4, art 12.

<sup>53</sup> The Right to Health, Fact Sheet No. 31, pp.3-4: <https://tinyurl.com/y5wzkc8q>

<sup>54</sup>Chernichovsky, D., Bisharat, B., Bowers, L., Brill, A., & Sharony, C. (2017). The health of the Arab Israeli population. State of the nation report, 325.

<sup>55</sup>2019. Israeli Ministry of Health. Inequality in health and ways of coping (Hebrew)

<sup>56</sup>Rosner, Y., Ziv, H., Litvin, A., Gutzeit, Z. and Majadle, G. (2020). The First 100 Days Of COVID-19 In Israel's Healthcare System. [online] Physicians for Human Rights.

<sup>57</sup>Globes. 2020. How Much Compensation Did The Arab Authorities Affected By The Covid-19 Receive? (Hebrew)

language telephone representatives on MDA hotlines, which further limited access for Arabic-speakers to healthcare services during the pandemic<sup>58</sup>.

Regarding appropriate isolation facilities for Arab Bedouin women, the government has not found any appropriate and satisfactory isolation solutions for Arab Bedouin living in the Naqab villages. Women from these villages live in homes that offer no real isolation. As of the end of September 2020, no isolation facilities were established in the Bedouin townships, and the offered solutions were unsuitable for Muslim Bedouin women from the Naqab.

According to Israel's Traffic light Plan<sup>59</sup> during the first wave, the following locations were marked as 'red zones': 'Ar'arah an-Naqab, Ksifih and Hūrah. Between the first and second wave, al-Lagiyyih and Rahat were red. During the second wave the situation changed, with al-Lagiyyih and specific neighborhoods in Rahaṭ marked as 'red zones'. After two weeks of strict regulation, the numbers decreased significantly. Today, all the Arab Bedouin villages are identified as 'green zones' and the number of ill people is less than 15 per village. Still, the percentage of tests carried out in Bedouin localities is very low.



As there are no garbage cans or garbage collection systems, residents from the Bedouin villages burn the waste, which causes severe air pollution.

Photograph by Hudā 'Abū al-Qi'ān, 'Atīr, 2017

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<sup>58</sup>"Model for developing local emergency response in Arab local authorities to address the challenges of the coronavirus", Sikkuy, April 22, 2020 [Hebrew].

<sup>59</sup>Reducing morbidity by activating a differential tool for managing the spreading of COVID-19, based on updated data indices (Ministry of Health, 2020).

## **9. Right to a Nationality and Statelessness| Denial of citizenship to Arab Bedouin residents of the Naqab**

*The right to a nationality is recognized in a number of international instruments such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These conventions present the idea that everyone has the right to a nationality and no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.”<sup>60</sup> The right to retain a nationality corresponds to the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of nationality. Arbitrary deprivation of nationality, therefore, effectively places the affected persons in a more disadvantaged situation concerning the enjoyment of their human rights because some of these rights may be subjected to lawful limitations that otherwise would not apply, but also because these persons are placed in a situation of increased vulnerability to human rights violations. The abovementioned instruments recognize that many of the world’s stateless persons are also victims of forced displacement, have been uprooted from their homes thus are particularly vulnerable to statelessness, especially when their displacement is accompanied or followed by a redrawing of territorial boundaries.<sup>61</sup>*

Israel is acting to arbitrarily revoke the citizenship of thousands of Bedouin citizens in the Naqab, leaving them stateless. When Bedouin in the Negev go to the Interior Ministry to take care of routine matters such as obtaining a passport, obtaining a birth certificate, registering a name, and so on, their status, and that of their parents and grandparents, is checked against the population registry, reaching as far back as the 1948 founding of the State. In certain cases, the ministry informs them that they received their citizenship by mistake, and then changes their status on the population registry from citizen to permanent resident.

Those people whose citizenship is revoked are given no explanation as to why, nor are they granted the option to appeal. Instead, the ministry staff suggests that they submit a request to begin the normal naturalization process to obtain citizenship, but in fact they are carrying out unlawful processes since only the Interior Minister is allowed to revoke citizenship. Furthermore, many of the requests to obtain citizenship are rejected because documents are missing, because the applicant has a criminal record — which is not a recognized legal ground for the denial of citizenship — or even for being unable to speak Hebrew<sup>62</sup>.

The Interior Ministry appeared to confirm the existence of this policy and even stated that it could affect up to 2,600 Bedouin citizens<sup>63</sup>. According to the Population and Immigration Authority<sup>64</sup>, their citizenship may be revoked as a result of earlier Interior Ministry registration errors likely made in the first few years after the establishment of the state between 1949 and 1952 when Palestinians who remained in the country were required to register with the new Israeli Population Registrar. However, the source of the errors has never been verified. MK Touma-Suleiman has collected dozens of testimonies from Bedouin citizens whose citizenship was revoked on the spot by Interior Ministry clerks based of supposed past errors in citizenship registration<sup>65</sup>. The ministry clerks advise the concerned individuals to file new citizenship requests.

These citizenship revocations are illegal: they are being conducted without any authorization as no Israeli law exists that allows the Interior Ministry to revoke an individual's citizenship due to

<sup>60</sup>Un.org. 2020. Universal Declaration Of Human Rights

<sup>61</sup>Un.org. 2020. Nationality And Statelessness A Handbook For Parliamentarians.

<sup>62</sup>Zaken, D., 2020. Several Israeli-Bedouin See Their Citizenship Revoked. Al-Monitor.

<sup>63</sup>Protocol of the Parliamentary Committee of Interior and Environment Protection (Hebrew), 11.8.2020, <https://tinyurl.com/vyabru45>

<sup>64</sup>Ibid

<sup>65</sup>Ibid

error. The arbitrary revocation of citizenship from Bedouin citizens in the Negev violates international laws to which Israel has committed.

This is a complete and serious violation of the right to equality. Application of this policy is, in practice, the result of wrongful discrimination based on ethnic background. Transcripts of the Knesset Interior Committee session in December 2015<sup>66</sup> reveal that the policy is directed exclusively at Bedouin in the Negev and that there are no cases of Jews whose citizenship has been revoked as a result of error in the registration of parents or grandparents under the Law of Return. This policy results in unlawful discrimination based on national background and it is therefore illegal.

Individuals who have been citizens for 20, 30 or even 40 years, some of whom served in the army, who voted and paid their taxes, had clerks cancel their status with the push of a button<sup>67</sup>. As permanent residents, they can vote in local elections but cannot run for office, vote in national elections or run for the Knesset. They receive social benefits such as medical insurance and national insurance payments but cannot receive Israeli passports. If they are out of the country for prolonged periods of time, they can also lose their permanent residency, and unlike citizens, they cannot automatically transfer their status to their children<sup>68</sup>. Among those who remain without Israeli citizenship are people born in Israel to parents who are Israeli citizens. There are families in which one child is a citizen while another is a permanent resident. Some of those affected were deprived their citizenship when they tried to renew their passports to go on the pilgrimage in Mecca, a mandatory tenet of Islam and something they now cannot do.

On August 11, 2020, the Parliamentary Committee of Interior and Environment Protection<sup>69</sup> declared that even if there was a registration error of the State, that in itself does not allow for revoking citizenship, an action that only a court is authorized to take. The Committee requested from the Ministry of Justice to act and correct the registration error made by the Population and Immigration Authority. The committee also requested from the Population and Immigration Authority and the Ministry of Interior to deliver within two weeks, the procedure by which the Authority intends to work to promptly naturalize the Bedouin citizens in the Naqab in light of the mistakes in the State's registration in the past and the list of citizens that need to be regulated, from the Ministry of Justice.

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<sup>66</sup>Protocol of the Parliamentary Committee of the Interior (Hebrew), 08.12.2015, <https://tinyurl.com/y64355p8>

<sup>67</sup>Khoury, J., 2020. Israel Revokes Citizenship Of Hundreds Of Negev Bedouin, Leaving Them Stateless. [haaretz.com](https://www.haaretz.com).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup>Protocol of the Parliamentary Committee of Interior and Environment Protection (Hebrew), 11.8.2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y6sp79a>





Photograph by Salimah, Rakhamah, 2018

## **10. Conclusions**

At the heart of the ongoing conflict between the Arab Bedouin citizens in the Negev/Naqab desert and the State of Israel, added now to a humanitarian crisis with unimaginable impacts, is the State's ongoing denial of Bedouin ownership rights over their lands and the policy of dispossession.

As a result of this, since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and up to the present time, the pronounced inequality between members of the Bedouin community and other residents of the Negev/Naqab has been interminable: high rates of infant mortality, inefficient investment in education and employment, continuing home demolitions, denial of recognition of the Bedouin villages, denial of basic services; and the relentless attempt of the State of Israel to forcefully urbanize and dispossess the Bedouin people of their land. Moreover, under cover of either declared or covert claims that the Bedouin are unfit to manage their own lives and future, they have been persistently excluded from any significant participation in policy-making and implementation of programs that have very direct and immediate effects on them as individuals and as a community, thus adding the injustice of civil and political inequality to the aforementioned material inequality.

The various violations of rights presented in this report are contrary to and in violation of numerous human rights covenants and conventions that should be ensured for every human being, regardless of their color, religion, citizenship, ethnicity and gender. Instead of fulfilling its obligations to its own citizens, the State of Israel continues to violate the Bedouins' rights, pushing them to the margins of society. Even during a pandemic, when the State is expected to protect its citizens and ensure their wellbeing, the same policies that have undermined the Human Rights of

the Bedouin in the Negev/Naqab since 1948 and the palpable discrimination against them continue and have been effectively multiplied by ineffectual aid offered to them by the Government of the State of Israel.

Most of the State's plans for the development of the area have ignored the needs of the Bedouin population and violated their most basic rights, focusing on its attempts to concentrate them in urban and semi-urban townships and villages, on the least amount of land. The very slow pace of execution of the Five Year Plan, the lack of investment in education, and lack of provision of a sufficient infrastructure for digital literacy is quite disappointing and place this population in an even a more vulnerable situation.

Bedouin women are being particularly neglected due to denied access to basic State services which make it almost impossible for them to take significant part in the labor force. Low quality education and lack of day-care facilities are all major barriers for their integration, which, along with Covid-19, will increase their unemployment.

The Bedouin people of the Negev/Naqab are resilient in fighting for the respect of their human and civil rights through various non-violent means. As citizens of Israel and more importantly, as human beings, they are entitled to have these rights protected and respected.

On the occasion of the International Day of Human Rights, the Government of Israel and the various State authorities should reexamine their treatment of the Negev/Naqab Bedouin people. There is no doubt that ensuring the rights of all residents of the region, the provision of services, as well as the promotion of development for everyone in the area that focuses on those most in need, will reduce the profound inequality between the Bedouin and the Jewish people and contribute to a viable, equal and sustainable Negev/Naqab for all of its residents.

*"COVID-19 is a wake-up call for the revitalization of universal human rights principles which – together with trust in scientific knowledge must prevail over the spread of fake news, prejudice, discrimination, inequalities and violence."*

(retrieved from a letter from the Special Procedure mandate holders on COVID-19 to the Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, President of the Human Rights Council)



**A photographer from az-Zarnūg, 2016.**

*"I drew this picture in my kitchen. I like to draw. Since I don't have a dining table I chose to draw this picture. I hope to have a dining table in the future."*





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