



16.5.2021

Mr. Benny Gantz - Defense Minister

Major General Uri Gordin - Head of Home Front Command

Colonel Sagi Baruch - GOC Southern Command

Urgent!

Dear Sirs,

Subject: Shielding the unrecognized villages in the Negev with iron dome and mobile shelters

On behalf of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Bimkom Association, The Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev, Sikui - The Association for Promoting Civil Equality, Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality and Shatil, we demand placing iron dome in the area for the protection of the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev, and placing mobile or temporary shelters in all the Bedouin villages in the Negev, recognized and unrecognized.

In recent days a number of missiles landed in the unrecognized villages in the Negev where tens of thousands of citizens live. These missiles were not intercepted by iron dome since the unrecognized villages do not appear in the official maps as populated areas but are rather defined as "open spaces". Also, in all Bedouin villages, recognized and unrecognized, there is a lack of safe structures such as shelters or mobile shelters.

The lack of protection of Bedouin residents of the Negev from missiles severely infringes on their basic rights to life, body integrity and equality. Following are some points:

1. About 270,000 Bedouin citizens live in the Negev, with about 100,000 of them in 35 unrecognized villages in the northern part of the Negev, some in permanent homes while others in temporary buildings such as shacks and tin structures.
2. The unrecognized villages lack any shielding measures although they are within the range of the missiles from Gaza. As you know, failure to provide protective measures to the villages was discussed in a petition filed by the Civil Rights Society to the Supreme Court demanding to provide immediate and permanent protective measures to the unrecognized villages in the Negev.
3. Among others, the petition demanded that protective measures against missiles including placing mobile shelters will be provided as well as publication of clear and equal guidelines for local authorities for the establishment of protected spaces and appropriate safeguards in the villages (Supreme Court 14/5019 Abu Apash v. Head of Home Front Command. Published 26.3. 2017).
4. Following the petition, the Home Front Command presented a plan to improve the protection of the Bedouin population. The plan included: improving the collective warning measures on mobile phones, distributing flyers and also some mobile shelters were placed in the recognized Bedouin villages. The Home Front Command also advised that “if necessary, the possibility of placing the iron dome system will be considered in a way that will also protect the settlements of the Bedouin diaspora”. As for the spread and allocation of shelters, the court ruled that “pulling the blanket to one area will expose another area” and therefore decided not to interfere with the considerations and assessment of the authorities. However, the Court noted: “We will also remember that we are - thank God - at a time of relative security calm, and it is on the professional factors in Home Front Command to update in future the measures of shielding in the Bedouin diaspora, a disadvantaged area, as the threat assessment changes, with the principle of equality guiding them”. No doubt that in light of today’s circumstances, the threat assessment has changed and requires different preparation in defending the Bedouin villages.
5. Surveillance we are conducting indicates that the lives of thousands of Bedouin residents are currently in real danger due to the lack of safe space where they can take cover. Lately a number of missiles have fallen in unrecognized villages that only by miracle did not cause body damage or loss of lives. For example, last week, missiles fell in the area of the village Wadi El Naam, one of them near the health clinic that serves the residents of the village. More missiles fell in the villages Ajuan, Kasr Elsar, Abu Karniat and more.
6. Given the extent of the danger to the lives and property of the residents of the Bedouin unrecognized villages, it is of utmost importance that you take immediate and meaningful measures for the protection of the residents. This, by placing mobile shelters in numbers fit for the number of residents in each village and arranging protected areas in schools in the recognized and unrecognized villages. Also by placing an iron dome system near these villages and defining them as populated areas and not as “open spaces”. In this way the iron dome will be able to intercept the missiles and save lives. In addition, in the light of the situation, it is very important to set up temporary shelters and add mobile

shelters also in the recognized Bedouin villages since there are not enough safe spaces there.

7. As part of the legal process, the authorities pledged to apply improvements in their ways of action to ensure measures of protection. Placing temporary or mobile shelters and placing the iron dome system in the area of the unrecognized villages is an inherent part of this commitment. The exclusion of the unrecognized villages in the iron dome defense system and the non placement of temporary or mobile shelters contradicts the aforementioned commitment and violates the right to equality, life and body integrity of the villages' residents.



Abir Joubran Dakwar - ACRI