



2021 Human Rights Report

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality



The Arab-Bedouin Communities of the Naqab

The Bedouin communities of the Negev-Naqab are an indigenous minority with a particular way of life. They are among the most marginalized groups in Israel today.

The Bedouin communities live in three different types of settlements: seven government-planned townships, 11 recognized villages and 35 villages that the State refuses to recognize. This population of approximately 290,000 people, continuously experiences the effects of the State's eviction policy and forced displacement.

Photo: Township of Al-Laghiyyih, by Elianne Kreme, February, 2021



Right to life, liberty & security of person

Unrecognized Villages

Bedouin communities in the Naqab-Negev bear the unequal consequences of a historic land conflict with the state. Though many villages predate the state of Israel, they do not exist on state maps, and remain unaccounted for in regional development plans.

All 35 villages date at least to the 1950s. Yet, their history has been erased from public consciousness, and their residents considered illegal trespassers on state land. This population of approximately 120,000 people is denied every kind of basic service, including:

- ❖ electricity
- ❖ sewage treatment
- ❖ running water
- ❖ internet connection
- ❖ access to health clinics, daycare centers, educational institutions
- ❖ roads and bus stops

Due to these conditions, Bedouin communities of the Naqab-Negev experience profound economic and socio-political marginalization. 80% of residents in the unrecognized villages live below the poverty line. Villagers are denied access to building permits and planning resources, while offered no opportunity for legal and sustainable development.

*Photo: Village of Khasim Zammih,
by Elianne Kremer June 24, 2021*



Recognition

11 villages have been officially recognized by the state, but have not gained access to clinics, schools, or basic service (electricity, water, sewage). Their residents live in essentially the same conditions as unrecognized villages, victim to the same discriminatory housing policies.

Thus far, recognition has failed to provide for the basic civil rights of these communities. Yet recognition remains crucial for the very prospect of gaining such rights.

On November 3rd, 2021 the Cabinet approved a decision to recognize three villages— Khaṣim Zannih, Rakhamah and 'Abdih— but under the condition that at least 70% of the residents move to a territory whose borders have not yet been defined.

NCF supports the recognition of Bedouin villages, a type of recognition that is based on full participation of the Bedouin communities and respect for their indigenous lifestyle. Currently for the three villages, recognition is only a declaration. Processes of legalization and resettlement have yet to begin.

*Photo: Village of As-Sirrah,
by Tasmin al-Amour, June 24, 2021*



Right to civil services & representation

Statistical Gaps

There is no accurate data about the actual number of people living in the unrecognized villages. The Israel Central Bureau of Statistics refrains from carrying out a proper Census in the unrecognized villages. See NCF's position paper on this topic: <https://bit.ly/3xShggd>

Residents of unrecognized villages are registered with the name of their tribe, a fictional category with no political representation, and are unable to vote in municipal elections. With such significant statistical gaps, even recognized Bedouin localities struggle to gain adequate funding for health, education and welfare services

*Photo: Village of al-Furah,
Anonymous, February 21, 2021*



Right to Security of Person

Demonstrations and Police Violence

On February 22nd, a state operation plowed 2,800 dunams of land actively cultivated by the Bedouin, and cut off a pipe providing water for three villages, al-Garrah, Al-Ru'ays and Sa'wah. Residents of nearby villages and supporters participated in a demonstration against the operation, calling for recognition of their villages, and requesting the State to stop demolitions. 15 people were detained by police.

The 15 detainees were locked into one police vehicle from the morning until the evening hours and afterwards interrogated at length without access to water or food. They were not given their basic right to consult with a lawyer. NCF objects to the excessive use of force in this incident and in others, in which police have responded violently to Bedouin-Israeli citizens exercising their right to free speech.

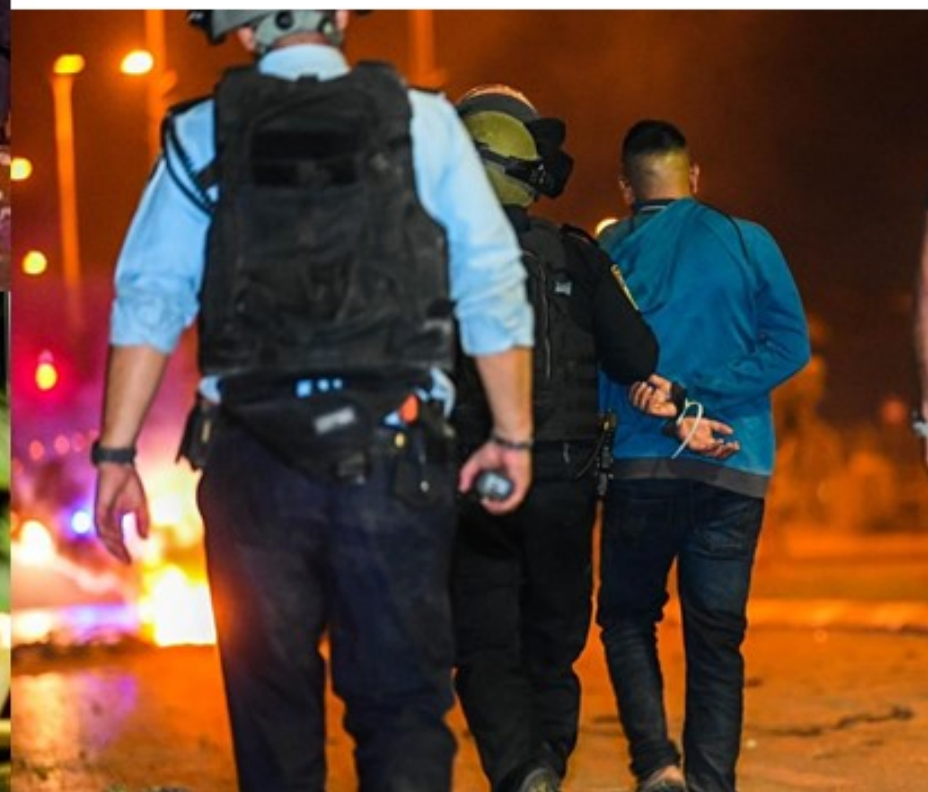
Photo: Weekly protest in al-'Arāgīb, anonymous, November 2021



*Photos: Police
crackdown of
protests in Šgīb as-
Salām, by Walid
Eloubra, May 2021*

Right to Security of Person

*Demonstrations and
Police Violence*





Right to Security of Person

Shelter from Air Missiles

The Iron Dome does not provide coverage for the unrecognized villages, which are classified as “open spaces.”

Yet over a 100,000 people live in these “open spaces,” many also lacking bomb shelters.

During last escalation, rockets fell in two Bedouin villages, Abu Grīnāt and Awajān, injuring the residents. The residents were not even alarmed.

In the government-planned townships, most homes do not have safe rooms.

*Photo: Children from an unrecognized village seeking protection under a car during wartime,
Anonymous, May 2021*



Right to Adequate Housing

Demolitions

Tens of thousands of people live in homes under demolition orders, usually because they are not granted building permits.

Although the Ministry of Justice committed to halt residential home demolitions during the pandemic, authorities continued to distribute demolition warrants and carry out demolitions.

Every year, the State demolishes an average of 2,500 structures in the Naqab. In eight years, between 2013-2020, 13,265 were demolished in the Naqab.

Photo: Demolition of Az-Zarnug, by Amal Abu Qidir, September 2021



Right to Physical Health

Unequal Access to Care

Residents of unrecognized villages do not have proper access to clinics and medical facilities, which are often remote and inaccessible. Emergency services are unable to access many of the villages without paved roads. Sanitation conditions are dire, particularly without running water or sewage systems.

According to the Israeli Ministry of Health, 40% of the Israeli population has been vaccinated with the third dose, while only 4% of approximately 170,000 Bedouin residents from recognized villages and townships were immunized with the third dose, by October 2021. Regarding the remaining approximate 120,000 residents from unrecognized villages, there is no available information about their immunization.

*Photo: Village of as-Sirrah,
by Tasnim al-Amour, February 10.6.2021*



Right to mental health

Women and children from the Bedouin communities of the Naqab need access to social workers and mental health care, for the almost irreversible consequences of home demolitions on child development and mental health. For more information, see NCF's 2021 home demolitions report <https://bit.ly/3IkjN7G>

To properly approach the problem of housing among the Bedouin population in the Naqab, the State must change its policies. Forced evictions, demolitions and top-down decisions that exclude specific populations not only have dire impacts on the mental health of women and children, but also aggravate the national problem of housing.

*Photo: Village of As-Sirrah
by Tasmin al-Amour, October 2021*



The Rights of the Child

Freedom from Fear

1,000 children per year are being forcibly displaced by the State of their birth. This means the State is actively contributing not only to their personal experiences of trauma but also to the enlargement of the cycles of poverty.

There is a growing need for childcare facilities, both as a means for early childhood education and women's employment.

See NCF's report on Daycare Centers in the Bedouin communities <https://bit.ly/3ppR60E>

Photo: Children's workshop in Umm al-Hiran, by Mirna, June, 2021



Right to Education

The Digital Divide

The adoption of technological solutions for distance learning amid Covid-19 lockdowns has furthered a 'digital divide' between different student groups.

Arab-Bedouin pupils were vastly marginalized from the distance learning. Already the poorest population in Israel, of the 24,000 kindergartners and 96,300 schoolchildren, 79.6% live under the poverty line.

Different strategies taken by the Israeli Ministry of Education, such as distribution of computers were designed to overcome the digital divide, but reached only 13% of the Bedouin student populations. This may be attributed to lack of internet as well as the lack of digital literacy among teachers and pupils.

See NCF's position paper on education and digital gaps
<https://tinyurl.com/2p86uwk4>

*Photo: Village of Az-Zarnug,
by Elianne Kremer, May 2021*



Right to a Clean, Healthy & Sustainable Environment

Sde Barir Phosphate Mine

A mining operation planned adjacent to the village of al-Fur'ah, requires the demolition of 1,426 homes in the village, and poses serious health risks to the population.

Several human rights organizations along with al-Fu'rah's residents filed a petition to the Supreme Court to stop construction on behalf of severe health concerns. On October, 2021, the Supreme Court ruled for the continuation of construction, requiring a public health analysis.

The Minister of Environmental Protection, Tamar Zandberg filed an appeal against the decision of the Ministerial Committee on Internal Affairs, Services and Local Government to approve the plan..

*Photo: Protest in Abu Thil aš-Šahbī ,
by Haia Noach, December 2nd, 2021*



Right to a Clean, Healthy & Sustainable Environment

Dimona Sewage Reservoirs

A failure to fence sewage reservoirs in the city of Dimona posed serious public health hazards to the Bedouin village of Gašir as-Sirr. These pools were constructed directly adjacent to that village. NCF together with other civil society organizations (RCUV, ACRI, Bimkon, Shatil), and the residents sent a letter to the Mayor of Dimona, the CEO of the Negev Wastewater Company and the CEO of the Government Authority for Water and Sewage, demanding for the construction of fences due to sanitation and public health concerns. Soon afterward, fences were constructed around the pools.

*Photo: Village of As-Sirrah,
by Jenan al-Amour, August 12, 2021*