



#### منتدى التعايش السلمي في النقب من أجل ألمساواه ألمدنية פורום דו קיום בנגב לשוויון אזרחי Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

We dedicate this activities' report towards the memory of our friend Saeed Alkharumi a great friend, member of the Knesset and brave community leader may his devotion for the rights of all of us here in the Naqab-Negev light our way.



Be'er Sheva - Bir as-Saba, December 2021

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#### Dear friends and supporters,

This time it is two of us writing you. Six months ago, Hanan began to co-direct the organization and lead it towards achieving our goal of justice and coexistence based on equality and equal opportunities under the law.

For many years we have been challenging ourselves to open our doors for talented leadership from the Bedouin community and we are all thrilled to be able to finally do so. For years, it was economic circumstances that led us to postpone that dream of codirectory that is so crucial for the type of organization we are striving to be.

Now that we are two, we believe it will be easier to answer to the great challenges at hand.

This year, just like the one before, brought many hardships. We were forced to evacuate the Multaqa-Mifgash that was home to the organization for 15 years. We moved to a smaller office but intending to re-open our doors for coexistence activities and meetings soon after the pandemic.

The communities we work with were deeply hurt by the pandemic but this is not an act of destiny but of policy. The state representatives continued to demolish houses, to plow fields and dispossess the communities from their villages, all those increased the mistrust between the Bedouin communities and the State.

This year gave us hope as we have witnessed more and more Bedouin women participate in the public sphere, leading change and taking active roles in the lead of their communities as well.

We are well certain that this year to come will bring great changes and even some challenges, but we are ready for it, and optimistic to be able to foster hope and unity in the Negev-Naqab, together.



In solidarity and hope Haia Noach Hanan Alsanah The past year was a year of hope and struggle. We continued to walk together with the Arab-Bedouin indigenous communities, asking for a long-term solution in the form of recognition, as well assuring their civil rights to receive equal state services and infrastructure.

We **answered** quickly to the many needs raised by the communities daily to confront the Covid-19 regulations and the following economic crisis.

We **demanded justice** alongside brave activists in countless demonstrations and vigils, in courts, in late-night phone calls and security evaluations, in days of home demolitions.

We **advocated** for the government to provide all residents of the Negev-Naqab with equal opportunities for education, employment, internet access, health, and security.

We facilitated opportunities for members of the communities to raise their voices to power.

We **developed** a digital literacy initiative that will support women's access to the internet and the state services now only active through it.

We **documented** the life of the villages facing erasure and dispossession as well as traditions of communities demanding recognition as indigenous.

We **investigated** the ongoing denial of rights by the state and put that knowledge to suggest community-and evidence-based policies.

Our community **supported** us with 100,000 NIS raised for coexistence activities in Multaga-Mifgash.

We are still a devoted group of Arab-Bedouin and Jewish women who work together to **mobilize action** for a just and equal Negev-Naqab.

# Spotlight Issue: Women's Employment

Photo by Maryam Alamour, as-Sirrah, 12.8.21



The many years of working alongside Bedouin women in rural communities have shown us the grand change an opportunity for employment can foster in a women's independence and freedom as well the economy of her family. Equal opportunity for employment for women can pave a family's path out of poverty, yet oftentimes the barriers set by state neglect and intended denial of services are just too high. Our partners are constantly voicing their demand for a chance, yet it seems that even government development plans that include the goal to promote women's employment do not contextualize the barriers and provide for a real change. The government budget allocation, as we've seen in recent year, are vastly misused - this for failure to offer specific solutions designed for the specific communities at hand. Even more so, with Covid in mind. Bedouin women speak of the lack of public transport that is accessible from their communities to the very distant industrial zones; they speak of their inaccessibility to equal and good educational opportunities to be able to study profession; they speak of discrimination in state daycare sponsorship for children and insufficient kindergartens for their children; they speak of lack of employment offices close to their home and of language barriers; they speak of

lack of internet connection that prevents them from remote job, job searching, and for children's education; they speak of employer bias and of widespread discrimination.

This year, we continued to work alongside brave and independent Bedouin women to map the topic and work alongside partners on the ground in finding solutions.

Through the year we worked with women in the unrecognized village of Rakhamah in lobby and advocacy training, and together we asked the Ministry of Economy and Regional Council of Al Qasum to sponsor a vocational training program for artisans in the village despite its unrecognized status. The authorities have agreed.

We worked with Members of Knesset from three parties in helping to reduce barriers. We spoke in the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and of the Rights of the Child highlighting the issue of daycare accessibility. In December, we took the Knesset Committee for the Status of Women on a tour in the Negev, where they met with women and employers from the Negev-Naqab.

Through the collaboration with courageous women on the ground, we were able to publish an updated report on the Childcare framework and daycare services in the Bedouin Negev-Naqab. When the report was published, it got mentioned in articles and news reports in seven Arab-speaking media outlets and The Marker Haaretz.

#### Spotlight Issue: Home demolitions



Photo by Ismael Abu Jūdah, az-Za'arūrah, 12.9.21

Even in the days when we are all instructed to stay home, even in a mass economic crisis, even in the extreme weather, the state's policy of home demolitions continues. Specializing in countering illegal construction in the Arab-Bedouin villages in the Negev-Naqab, the Yoav Police Unit is often there to oppress a community in search of adequate living conditions. The Israeli law and planning and construction legislation is a means to criminalize an entire public, one historically repressed and that is living in severe poverty. Often people are left without choices - risk building or stay without a roof. They often auto demolish when encountered with demolition warrants.

2020 saw a peak of home demolitions and news on the ground recognize the continuance of this trend through 2021.

This year, we documented testimonies on the ground, followed up on the trends, and as well on the families impacted. While this widespread policy is an intentional mechanism of oppression, oftentimes the stories of families and villages impacted remain unheard. Through our documenting initiatives, we photographed and recorded the lives touched. We were able to share some of the stories lived in our report, in Knesset discussion, on social media and with journalists.

We published our annual report with trends of home demolitions in May, exposing data from 2020. We spoke about it with Members of Knesset and used it to base the demand to stop home demolitions in the coalition agreements for the new government. Data from the report was shared widely through the media, provoking outages.

In November, alongside our partners from Sidreh, we organized a unique conference in Ben Gurion University on home demolitions focusing on their impact on women and children. Onstage we had people living their experience speaking of it, as well as researchers and community leaders.

"When the house is destroyed, all the children's childhood, the mother's soul, the dreams, the family, the future is destroyed. We need a lot of effort so we can stand again. Who had their house destroyed 195 times? What country destroyed a house 195 times? Unfortunately, it is the State of Israel" Sabah Abu Medighm, participant of our documentation and photography project

# Spotlight Issue: Roots and Recognition

While the State continues with policies of cultural erasure, intentional impoverishment, and discrimination on almost all fronts, the Bedouin communities are strong in their steadfast call for recognition: Recognition of their villages, and recognition of their human, cultural and indigenous rights.

In 2021 we strived alongside courageous men and women to give voice to their narratives erased and to start promoting the just Negev-Naqab that considers its cultural diversity an asset.

With hundreds of thousands of citizens living in villages that the State refuses to give services to, or even provide with protection in cases of war they stand in the line of fire. Hundreds of thousands were denied their right to vote in regional elections and denied electricity, water, sewage, and garbage disposal. Recognition is a crucial humanitarian issue and a symbolic historic matter.

This year, in preparation for the coalition agreement and the importance of the Bedouin recognition, was to take on that, we worked with Members of Knesset from various parties to include recognition on the table. And indeed, the coalition agreements between the Joint Arab List Ra'am and the Lapid Bennet government included the recognition of the villages 'Abdih, Rakhamah, and Khašim Zannih. Unfortunately, the recognition plans that passed in a government decision included substantial requirements that not only meant to dispossess of the villages of their lands by recognizing only a small part, but also required that residents comply with requirements that are far from possible.

"The three Bedouin villages in the Negev [...] its' goal is to concentrate the Bedouin settlements, for instance if we take Khasim Zinnih, from 13,000 dunam to 2,500 dunam, is a decision that is very important for the State of Israel and I am very hopeful that we will be able to execute it" MK Shaked,

Our documenting initiatives helped document the life in danger and struggle, stories of human rights violations but historic communal spirits. Children living in those realities spoke of their voices and practices substantiality practices that take into consideration both the climatic change and the call for recognition, they were able to find beauty in most of the everyday.

The photo exhibition "A Tree Sister of a Tree" of Bedouin women gave voice to the tree, the symbol of Sumud and hold of the land.

This year we continued to visualize recognition and collect evidence and testimonies for a visuospatial archive. "On the Map" still is a vital resource that for the first time pins the locations that state wishes to ignore, on a map, as part of a geography.

# Our Projects and Activities

#### Through a Child's Lens

68 photographers >> 6 communities

Through a Child's Lens is our initiative to provide Bedouin children with opportunities to tell their stories, document their lives, seek a

sustainable future, and advocate for their needs. As already nearly a majority of the residents in the Bedouin localities, children and teens should be given a special focus. Children often are witnesses to violations of human rights but lack the tools and maturity to frame it, hence leaving them more vulnerable. Poverty impacts them differently, and so is the denial of the right to education.

This year, we trained 68 children from 6 villages in various documentation and sustainability techniques. They taught us of their lives, dreams, and struggles to impact them.

Children participating in the project have been facing big life changes, for instance, a move of their friends to Ḥūrah in the case of children from the unrecognized village of Umm al-Ḥīrān, and witnessed home demolitions in other villages. Most of the photographs taken through the project were of the immediate environment of the child, of the near village and animals, and so they learned a new point of view to their lives lived.

For our project participants, one of the biggest challenges of the time was boredom. Lack of schooling because the shift to online teaching for the pandemic did not include the distribution of computers and internet connection in their houses, and lack of resources for afternoon activities, lack of educational frameworks other than the house. While oncampus schooling did return in September, most returned only very partially.

We advocated with their voices and on their behalf, highlighting issues relevant to children. In November we published a position paper on the digital gaps in education and spoke to various representatives and investigators on how to counter such gaps. We focused our home demolitions report on the state of children as we learned from the experts - the participants - of their life stories.

### Video Photography

26 filmmakers >> 8 communities

Recognized, our Video filmmaking initiative inspired us to learn and visualize the purposely-occulted narratives of members of the Bedouin communities. Through the video camera, more than ever before,

we were drawn to envision other realities, to see beauty and life in the resistance to state dispossession and vivid denial of rights.

A video by Sabah Abu Mdighim about her village al- Arāgīb reached more than 50,000 views. It advocated efficiently to end the demolition of the village, using her unique voice.

She is now working on a film about intergenerational relations in hazardous conditions. She is documenting her granddaughter, who is growing up in what is left of the unrecognized village, playing between the graves and helping her grandmother to arrange the water containers.

The women participating in the project are advocates for their communities and help share the message. In 2021, we worked with 26 participants in 8 communities. The participants came from diverse backgrounds and ages, and for some, as per hearing impairment, the world of visual expression opened a new source of communication.

This year, one of our project participants was confirmed to receive next year a special grant to work on her film, documenting the life after the eviction from the unrecognized village of Umm al-Ḥīrān.

#### Yusawiruna

44 photographers >> 10 groups

One of our key initiatives was Yusawiruna: Photographing for Human Rights, a truly inspiring network of Bedouin women from rural communities who creatively document their lives, narratives, and

their testimonies of abuse of rights. Together they learn and contemporize human rights in political discourse, speak of their lives and their challenges, and learn different ways to empower themselves while promoting the rights of their communities. With their photos and astonishing points of view, they open their villages to the world to see.

This year, continuing through Covid, the photographers spoke and documented a wide array of social causes. 44 participants from 10 different groups took the time to document, act, and be ambassadors for their villages. For some, for the first time.

Coming from diverse backgrounds and ages, each participant had the chance to develop her unique point of view. For some, the photography training was vocational training, and 2 women from our projects were able to make a living in 2021 using the cameras and training they learned.

The participants were able to showcase their works to their communities in a mobile exhibition. This year the exhibition took place in the unrecognized villages of Tal ʿArād and ʿAtīr in public discussions in which the participants shared with their communities their documentation and points of view. This year's exhibition, named "Al-Sajarah 'Ukht Al-Sajarah" after a Darwish poem, was in our opinion a highlight of the project as a whole. The project participants documented in writing and photos the significant trees in their lives and communities, using them as illustrative figures to wider stories of their identities and struggle. Through the focus on trees, the participants told stories of their life, community, and steadfastness. In addition, project participants were able to share their work in a course in June Tel Aviv University, where curator and artist Dr. Rona Sela, held them the stage.







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# Protecting Human Rights Defenders

20+ struggles accompanied>>

In 2021 we continued to walk alongside the communities fighting for their rights and demanding recognition. Following their own leadership and initiative, we assisted more than 15 communities in

organizing demonstrations and legally accompanying protestors in the court. For Arab Bedouin citizens, asking for accountability from the State, defending their lands, and asking for basic civil rights - are all often risky, as democracy is not the same for the communities in the Negev-Naqab. This year we continued to witness the alarming double standard for Bedouin activists and the randomness of intimidation and State terror.

This year Sheikh Sayah Abu Medighim, a symbol of Bedouin identity and a brave defender of his village al-'Arāgīb, was released from incarceration only to face more trials and penalties holding for the defense of his land. Other community members, have been standing the trial as well with the State using monetary fees to try and stop their resilience. The village was demolished more than 12 times in 2021, a total of 196 since 2010. Almost every week we stood with them in the Sunday vigil at Lehavim junction.

We stood alongside activists from Sa'wah, who were arbitrarily arrested and beaten up by the police while protesting the plotting of their fields in February. 15 people were arrested that morning, some for protesting the action, some for being at the wrong place at the wrong time - passing by with their car. Similarly, In March, activists from Alawyin were arrested violently by the police for nonviolently demonstrating against the state plotting of their lands, five were arrested - two of which needed medical care. This year, we have also supported activists from Ziadna Nmīlah against the plotting of their lands and the KKL JNF bulldozers. In July they held a protest tent that the police tried to threaten, we supported them with advice as well as media action.

On September 9th we supported the Abu al-Qian family in organizing a demonstration in front of the Supreme Court in an appeal against the police, pleading to open again the case of the murder of Yaaqov on the day of home demolition of **Umm al-Ḥīrān.** 

In December, in a demonstration of the **Abu Sbileh** community against police brutality, we also helped coordinate legal assistance. In early December, did our best to support activists from Abu Sbileh who protested following a unique case of police brutality in their village and against the widespread media incitement against the Bedouin communities. As part of police raid on the village, policemen were jumping down from helicopters to cause distraction and arrest. A young girl was injured by the police and possibly others as well. We joined dozens of residents and activists in a protest and supported them by connecting to a lawyer paid for by Front Line defenders.

Finally, this year during the violent events in April and May, Arab Palestinians students in Ben Gurion University protested the violence. The police repressed their nonviolent protests and chased them into the dorms, arresting 7 for numerous days for arbitrary reasons. We continued to accompany them until this day.

## Public Engagement in Tours, Lectures and Workshops

370 participants in tours >> 508 in workshops

Even under the long shadow of Covid-19, we continued to believe in encounters, striving to create long change in society by bringing forward

voices from the Bedouin communities. By introducing different publics in the Israeli society to the realities of the Negev-Naqab, we know we are promoting the true and active change of hearts and opinions. This year the routine works of our human rights tours, lectures, and workshops did not regain full capacity as before of the pandemic. In particular, the lack of access for international visitors to the country for human rights work, as well as tourism, and the limitations on schools and after-school youth movement, impacted our reach. But even so, we were able to facilitate substantial opportunities for dialogue and learning this year.

370 individuals participated in our lectures and workshops. We predominantly spoke to students from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise about different aspects of the human rights situation of the Bedouin communities. Amongst the groups who participated were Hebrew language students from This is Not an Ulpan, with whom we spoke of activism and resistance; Social Work students from Ben Gurion University, who learned about the human rights situation and history of the Bedouin communities and brainstormed with us on how to work socially responsibly with the communities; MA students in Behavioral Science in the Hebrew University with whom we spoke of identity and history; and Arava Institute students joined us as part of their Negev-Naqab week exposure to the different communities in the Negev.

508 individuals joined our human rights tours of the Negev-Naqab. The tours were diverse and thorough, each adapted for the needs of the specific groups as well as the changing reality on the ground.

Amongst the group who toured with us were the Leo Beack School in Haifa students; Diplomats from Switzerland, the United States, Germany, France Ireland, the European Union, Denmark, and Poland; and engaged travelers and tour guides wishing to learn more and are active through Avshalom Institute.

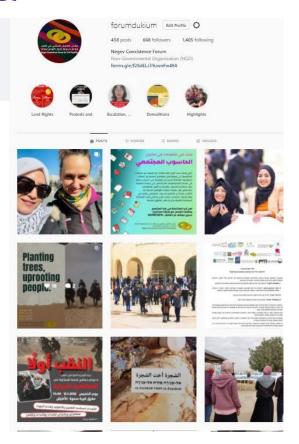
Many times, the tours, lectures, and workshops resulted in further actions. Participants share on social media, write term papers on the topic, organize additional visits and tours, or coordinate diplomatic advocacy.

#### Media

83 articles >> 8,306 Facebook followers >> 651 Instagramers >> 813 on Twitter

This year, right-wing groups dedicated substantial resources to smear the Bedouin communities' image in the media and to promote racist and inciting notions against them. Through the year, we have seen how the discrimination against the community and the reality of State abuse is being framed as tribalism, cultural preference, and criminality. More so, we have documented the way the Israeli media framed the dire issue of crime and criminality in the Arab society in the form of barbarism, tribalism, and danger to the Jewish citizens. We learned that behind media campaigns of "Wild Wild West" (or south, in our case) were highly paid publicists working for right-wing groups.

With all this in mind, we worked with brave journalists who wished to give the stage to voices from the communities, to research facts rather than incitement and hate.



We were featured and quoted in 83 articles in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, as well as French and Italian. We collaborated with journalists on the preparation of 14 other articles. The topics varied, as well as the mediums that hosted us. On social media, we have 8,306 followers on Facebook, 651 followers on Instagram and 813 on Twitter.



### Research

14 briefings >> 5 publications

The State Comptroller finally published a report validating what we have been saying for years: the policymakers are basing their decisions and plans on failed data. The report focused its' criticism on the

Central Bureau of Statistics and other State authorities who are, reportedly, basing their population census and data on the Bedouin public - on guesses and estimates that are not corroborated.

This shocking acknowledgment only puts more energy into our research and investigation work, where we strive to give voice to the realities in a form that would be able to pinpoint needed changes in policies, budgets and in the bylaws. We organized an inter-ministerial meeting together with the Hebrew University Minerva Center on the topic of the absence of a Census in the Bedouin communities, the Ministry of Justice and other governmental entities.

This year, we published 5 reports and position papers and contributed entries to 5 other collections on the state of human rights. Our reports were featured in the media and sent directly to policymakers to influence change and official acknowledgment of the human rights violations.

We shared with our partners in the diplomatic community 14 updates of expert analysis. Those routine updates are our analysis of the current events as their influence on the wider questions influencing the communities, such as recognition, crime, basic services and the question of governability.

## <u>Uncounted: Indigenous Bedouin Citizens Neglected by the Israeli</u> Central Bureau of Statistics

explored the State's denial of evidence-based policy and statistic transparency of the communities as well as its' direct influence on the rights such as the right to vote.

# No shelter in place: State Demolitions in the Naqab Arab Bedouin communities and its impact on children during the Covid-19 pandemic

is our annual home demolitions report, highlighting not only that the State of Israel continued to demolish houses during the biggest economic crisis that the Bedouin communities have suffered in recent years, during the pandemic, but that it even demolished more than usual, and against instructions from the State Attorney. This year's report included a section on the impact of home demolitions on children's mental health.

#### <u>Early childhood frameworks as leverage to reduce gaps - Daycares in</u> the Bedouin community

research on the discrimination in allocation of funds for the sponsorship of daycare

solutions for Bedouin families, and the way that this neglect stands as a substantial barrier, preventing women from seeking work and hence enhancing poverty.

## Internet accessibility solutions for Bedouin students as an integral part of exercising their right to education

was published with the Legal Clinic of the Hebrew University, Israeli Internet Association, and Sidreh-Lakiya. The report critically regards the move to online education, a restriction taken by the Ministry of Education in light of the pandemic, as a violation of the right to education of Bedouin children.

And Finally, we published a thorough report that offers a cross view of the Human rights violations of the communities. The <u>report for Human Rights Day 2021</u> details the state of affairs within the Bedouin community during the pandemic, and reviews various aspects of the allocation of State services and infrastructures. It specifically highlights the Israeli government's continued demolition of Bedouin houses, amidst a global pandemic and state policy mandating that people and children work, study, or simply stay at home, both for their safety and the safety of the broader community. The report additionally discusses the problem of institutional erasure of census data for Bedouin. Such erasure both denies the community access to much-needed resources and prevents them from any chance at political representation.

# Local Lobby

25+ policy makers and leaders >>

This year we strived to utilize and perfected strategies for the promotion of initiatives, ideas, and voices that can benefit the Bedouin communities and combat some of the long-term

discrimination against them. We worked to facilitate encounters and opportunities for policymakers and duty bearers, from all ranks of governance, to hear firsthand from Bedouins of their needs and realities.

We collaborated with members of The Joint Arab List and Meretz in providing information to use in the coalition agreements with the Lapid-Bennet Government, such as data on home demolitions. Deceased member of Knesset and defender of rights, MK Saeed Alkharumi, has been a true leader of that issue and for the inclusion of questions of recognition in the agreements. Journalist Ravid Druker quoted the data in his reporting of the agreement.

We worked alongside Members of Knesset Aida Touma-Souliman on issues regarding women's employment, and spoke in the committee she leads for the Status of Women. We also met with 13 other members of Knesset to see ways to work on the issue, and spoke in front of the Committee for the Rights of the Child on the issue of Daycare allocation in the Bedouin localities.

Our team member, Huda Abu-Obeid was present at the conference of the Arab Taskforce and in the youth leadership of the Arab Youth in the coordination of May events.

We met with officers and Mayors from the municipalities of the Negev-Naqab to seek local collaboration and to hear their challenges and acted to pressure the use and allocation of funding as well to the benefit of the residents of the unrecognized villages. In particular, we spoke of daycare allocation and women's employment.



The Knesset Committee on the Status of Women tour of the Negev-Naqab, November 21st.

# International Lobby

Last but not least, we motivated international action and dialogue of international actors with the Israeli government. This, for knowing very well that diplomatic pressure and interference often gives voice and support for the cry for human rights of communities marginalized from centers of power. Knowing that human and indigenous rights are a global issue in the age of global interest and economy, we kept the world at an ear's reach.

We aimed to use our status as a counseling organization for the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations was utilized as a voice for the Bedouin communities. We contributed to the Commission on the Status of Women and presented background on the challenges facing the communities in the UN Indigenous Forum. We gave expert analysis with the Special Rapporteurs on Minorities issues (who published a communication) and Adequate Housing and met with representatives of UN Peacebuilding and the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

We collaborated with diplomatic delegations and embassies of the United State, Germany, the UK, Canada, Ireland, Poland, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, Switzerland,

France, Spain, and the Netherland. We also sent expert analysis to 160 people from different diplomatic missions on a monthly basis.

We contributed to the Human Rights Report of the US Department of State, published in March, as well as to the displaced report of the Norwegian Refugee Council and Indigenous World Book.



Tour with EU diplomats and international HR organizations organized by NCF, Adalah and the RCUV, 29.9.21

#### 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):

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**CCP Japan** 

Lush Charity Pot

Mazon - A Jewish Response to Hunger

New Israel Fund

Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

British Shalom-Salaam Trust

Front Line Defenders

**Humanitarian Funds** 

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