



A serious security situation? A police unit was shut down because of a pigeons' nest

Armed policemen arrived at the home of Salima Sajira in the village of Rakhamah, to demand the removal of the impromptu bird house that his son had built. After the nest was removed, they were turned their attention to a pile of twigs, and then demanded that her sick husband come for interrogation. "Apparently our pigeons are threatening governance in the Negev."

By: Haia Noach 12.4.2022



The police are busy with pigeons and twigs. A mural in the school yard in Kfar Rakhamah (Photo: Haia Noach)

The security situation is not simple. But it apparently is not severe enough to prevent expending the time of the Yoav police unit, which assists in demolishing Bedouin houses, because of a pigeon nest. It turns out that even Bedouin pigeon nests are a concern of the renowned patrol unit.

Salima Sajira lives in the village of Rakhamah, near Yeruham. She is known to all as a laid-back woman, who runs a hospitality tent which many travelers frequent. But she did not expect these guests: three armed policemen, accompanied by two soldiers, who were also armed.



And what was the state of emergency that brought them to Salima's home? Her son, a 14-year-old boy, planted four wooden poles near the house, and attached empty plastic buckets to them, so that pigeons would nest in the buckets, lay their eggs in them and raise chicks. A kind of impromptu version of a bird house. The boy even went out of his way to buy pigeons, which roamed the yard and built their lives in the buckets. Indeed, a true emergency.

The three officers from the unit arrived at her home and insisted that the dangerous structure be removed immediately. It is not clear under what authority they made the demand, but it appears that for some reason they saw the construction of the nest as an illegal construction. They emphatically demanded from Mr. Sajira to demolish the nest. So as not to quarrel with the squad of policemen, he hurried to do so. Salima explained sadly: "We do not know what they are allowed and what they are not allowed to do, and do not want to have anything to do with them."

After the nest was destroyed, the police turned their attention to a pile of dry twigs, which are used for heating. The pile stood near Salima's house, and the police demanded that it either be removed or be placed adjacent to the house. Salima did not want to bring the twigs closer to the house, as they are flammable and therefore dangerous. The policemen insisted that it was a landfill. Salima no choice but to succumb, and removed the twigs.



A structure in the Kfar Rakhmah, 2015 (Photo: Haia Noach)



But the armed squad had not had enough, and they also demanded that Mr. Sajira come for questioning. Again, it is not clear why and under what meager authority they were acting, and why there was such a great urgency concerning the pigeon nests and the pile of twigs, especially in the midst of the Ramadan fast. But the police insisted. Mr. Sajira was ill and could not go to the police station, so Salima went in his place.

Salima determinedly recruited a family friend from Yeruham, who drove her to the police station in Be'er Sheva, where she was interrogated by an interrogator, who explained to Salima that she and her family were suspected of intruding into territory that was not theirs. Salima reacted in amazement, mentioning that it was a nest of pigeons and twigs for heating. At the end of the investigation, she was asked to sign a form written in Hebrew. Salima asked that the text to be read to her. The interrogator read it, and Salima signed.

"It's very strange that the police are dealing with this," says Salima. "I do not understand what they want. But apparently our pigeons are threatening governance in the Negev. Soldiers are doing navigation training exercises in the village, and they are our guests. It seems strange to me that they would come to disturb us because of such a thing in the middle of Ramadan fast."

And another twist to this strange story: On the way to the police interrogation, Salima and her escort called the Bedouin Authority official who is in charge of negotiations that are being held with the villagers concerning building plans. The man told the escort: "Tell Salima to cooperate with the team that is planning the village, and then I will help her with the police." The astonished Salima wondered if the whole story was an attempt to influence her.

We asked the police for a response. It will be published if and when it is received.

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