



Human Rights Report 2025

Human Rights in the Negev: Challenges and Pathways to Equality for the Bedouin Minority



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1. Introduction

International Human Rights Day encourages us to reflect on the universal principles enshrined in the State of Israel's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified in 1948. In the Negev/Naqab region of southern Israel, over 300,000 Arab Bedouin citizens continue to experience widespread human rights violations, especially related to housing, education, health, gender equality, and basic civil infrastructure.

The Bedouin are a national minority within the State of Israel. They are citizens of the State but are systematically denied equal access to services, recognition, and representation. Their struggles highlight broader questions of minority rights, equality, and social cohesion in Israel. This report outlines key human rights challenges, the impact on social cohesion and intercommunal trust, and proposes constructive policy solutions grounded in international human rights law, Israeli constitutional principles, and the values of partnership and reconciliation.

2. Key Human Rights Challenges in the Negev

a. Forced Displacement and Home Demolitions

Home demolitions have continued to intensify sharply in 2025, continuing a trend over the last several years that disproportionately targets Bedouin citizens. According to official data, demolition enforcement in the southern region reached new records in 2024 with 5,231 structures demolished—an increase of 58% compared to 2023—and over 2,431 demolition orders executed on the ground. In the first half of 2025 alone, demolition orders increased by a further 43.7%, signaling an aggressive acceleration of this policy¹.

Entire communities continue to live under the threat of displacement. The village of **as-Sirr** was partially demolished in May 2025 and almost entirely in September, despite community resistance

¹ https://www.gov.il/he/pages/17_8_25 (Hebrew)

and appeals, leaving families living in tents. Other villages, including **Ghazal-Aba**, have received evacuation and demolition orders, which are expected to be carried out within 90 days (or by a specific date).

Despite temporary halts in demolition enforcement during the October 2023 war, the Ministry of National Security praised the record number of enforced demolitions in 2024 and 2025. However, these demolitions routinely target citizens who have no access to legal planning frameworks. Many homes are “self-demolished” by their owners to avoid harsh fines and police violence, resulting in traumatic displacement without support.

This pattern violates **Article 11(1)** of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which guarantees the right to adequate housing. It breaches **international standards against forced eviction** and collective punishment.

b. Planning Discrimination and Lack of Recognition

The root cause of the demolition crisis lies in systemic planning discrimination. Thirty-five Bedouin villages remain “unrecognized” and are excluded from national and regional master plans, including **TAMA 35**². Residents cannot obtain permits or access planning services, effectively criminalizing their presence on ancestral lands.

Even recognized towns suffer from severe neglect in planning. Towns such as **Lakiya**, **Hura**, and **Tel Sheva** face overcrowding, poor infrastructure, and slow approval of new neighborhoods. Planning mechanisms prioritize Jewish settlements, often placing industrial zones, waste facilities, or new police stations near Bedouin towns, compounding environmental and psychological stress³.

Despite years of advocacy, there is no transparent, accessible pathway for recognition or fair planning. Proposals for “regulation” often require residents to abandon their land rights and relocate to unsustainable urban centers. This violates **Article 2(2)** of the ICESCR (right to non-discrimination) and **Article 5(e)(iii)** of the ICERD (housing rights without discrimination).

c. Lack of Civil Protection During Armed Conflict

During the armed conflict with Iran in 2025 and repeated escalations in Gaza, Bedouin towns and villages remained largely unprotected. Most have no bomb shelters, safe rooms, or warning sirens⁴.

² <https://www.english.acri.org.il/negev-bedouins-and-unrecognized-vil>

³ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/23996544251362608>

⁴ [Civilian Protection in the Negev: Unequal Access to Shelters, NCF 2025](#)

This failure to provide civil protection disproportionately affects Arab citizens. It violates Israel's obligations under **international humanitarian law**, including the **Geneva Conventions**, as well as the constitutional principle of equality before the law.

d. Poverty and Social Inequality

The Negev's Bedouin population continues to face deep structural inequalities. According to the latest socio-economic study, Bedouin localities remain among Israel's lowest-income clusters, with widespread deficiencies in infrastructure, public services, housing quality, employment, and access to social welfare⁵.

- A 2021 audit by the State Comptroller documented severe infrastructure deficits - including inadequate water and sewage services, poor roads, and limited public transportation - that affect both "recognized" townships and unrecognized villages alike⁶. Improvements have been scarce.
- Data collected by the Nagabiya Research Hub in 2024 reinforces these findings, noting high rates of female unemployment, food insecurity, and limited civil-protection infrastructure in many Bedouin communities⁷.
- These persistent disparities are not simply a matter of economic status, but of systemic neglect — reflecting long-standing planning discrimination, exclusion from state investment, and structural marginalization.

Women's unemployment exceeds 75% in some areas, while social services remain understaffed and underfunded. Discriminatory development policies continue to widen the gap between Jewish and Bedouin communities, creating a cycle of deprivation.

e. Criminalization and Shrinking Civic Space

The Bedouin community is increasingly portrayed in public discourse and government narratives as a security threat or demographic burden. Government statements emphasize "reclaiming the Negev" and equate unrecognized villages with criminality or lawlessness.

Enforcement agencies, including **the Yoav Unit**, now play a growing role in **civil matters—contradicting** community policing principles and escalating confrontations. This securitized approach stifles community development, silences activism, and undermines civic trust.

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<https://brookdale.jdc.org.il/en/publication/the-socio-economic-development-plan-for-the-bedouin-population-in-the-negev-2017-2021-government-resolution-2397-a-comprehensive-evaluation-interim-report/>

⁶ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/comptroller-finds-state-failing-on-bedouin-and-israelis-of-ethiopian-origin/>

⁷ [Nagabiya Yearly book](#) (NCF's research center) 2024 (Hebrew)

f. Food Insecurity and Economic Marginalization

Food insecurity is on the rise across Israel, but Bedouin families—already marginalized and economically vulnerable—face the most severe impact. According to recent research by civil society, many families in unrecognized villages rely on subsistence agriculture or food donations. Rising food prices, lack of refrigeration due to electricity scarcity, and limited access to grocery stores further worsen their situation.

The lack of targeted State support for food access and nutrition programs exacerbates inequality. While social security programs exist, they do not address the specific needs of dispersed rural communities. This violates the **right to an adequate standard of living**, including food, recognized under **Article 11(1) of the ICESCR**.

3. Social Impact: Fragmentation and Distrust

The State's policies toward Bedouin communities foster fragmentation and mistrust not only between Bedouin citizens and the government, but also between Jewish and Arab residents of the Negev. Systemic discrimination, public incitement, and exclusion undermine coexistence and shared society. Many Bedouin youth feel alienated by the government and from Israeli society, and women face structural barriers to empowerment. The lack of meaningful dialogue, combined with repeated demolitions and unaddressed humanitarian needs, erodes any sense of equal citizenship.

This sense of alienation deepens social divides and fuels growing resentment, particularly among younger generations who find few opportunities for advancement or a sense of belonging. At the same time, the lack of inclusive regional planning and equitable investment creates two parallel systems of development—one for Jewish communities and another for Bedouin towns and villages. This circumstance entrenches inequality as a fundamental aspect of daily life.

4. Recommendations: Rights-Based Solutions for Social Cohesion

a. Recognition and Equal Planning

- Immediate recognition of unrecognized villages with long-standing land claims. Equitable inclusion of Bedouin communities in national and regional planning processes.
- Moratorium on demolitions until inclusive planning alternatives are in place.

b. Adequate Housing and Infrastructure

- Implement the right to adequate housing for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity or location.
- Ensure infrastructure development in Bedouin towns and villages: water, electricity, roads, sewage, schools, and clinics.
- Provide bomb shelters and civil protection infrastructure during times of conflict.

c. End Incitement, Promote Dialogue

- End the public portrayal of Bedouins as threats or burdens.
- Establish inclusive dialogue mechanisms at the regional and national levels.
- Train local and national officials in minority rights and intercultural dialogue.

d. Support Minority Rights

- Acknowledge the Bedouin as an Indigenous population in accordance with UN declarations.
- Support their cultural and historical connection to the land.
- Promote Indigenous land rights and collective participation in governance.

e. Address Food Insecurity

- Conduct an urgent assessment of food insecurity in Bedouin towns and villages.
- Develop targeted food support programs and community agriculture initiatives.
- Ensure all citizens, including those in unrecognized villages, have access to affordable, nutritious food.

5. Conclusion

The Bedouin citizens of the Negev deserve full civil, social, and economic equality. They are not enemies of the State, but partners in building a democratic society. Only by shifting away from enforcement and exclusion, and embracing recognition, dialogue, and rights-based development, can we create the conditions for genuine social cohesion.

On this International Human Rights Day, we call upon the State of Israel to fulfill its legal and moral obligations to all citizens equally. The Bedouin struggle for equality is not a sectoral issue—it is a test of democracy itself.