

פורום דו-קיום בנגב לשוויון אזרחי
منتدى التعايش السلمي في النقب من أجل المساواة المدنية
Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality



Localizing the Right to Adequate Housing: *The Experience of Bedouin Communities in the Negev*

NCF Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur
on the Right to Adequate Housing | 2026

**Localizing the Right to Adequate Housing
in the Context of Non-Recognition:
The Experience of Bedouin Communities
in the Negev**

I. Introduction

The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Special Rapporteur's first thematic report on localizing the right to adequate housing. For more than twenty-five years, NCF has worked alongside Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab to advance equality and economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to adequate housing. Through community partnerships, field documentation, advocacy and engagement with local, national and international stakeholders, NCF has accompanied communities facing long-standing housing challenges and rapid policy changes affecting their future.

The experience of Bedouin communities in the Negev offers an important perspective on localizing the right to adequate housing. Across the region, residents have invested collectively in their villages, developing local infrastructure, community initiatives and economic opportunities. These experiences demonstrate that communities need not be merely beneficiaries of housing policies, but rather can be active partners in shaping and sustaining their living environments. At the same time, community initiative alone cannot secure the right to adequate housing: local efforts require an enabling legal and institutional framework, meaningful participation in planning, security of tenure and constructive cooperation with public authorities.

Drawing on NCF's long-standing collaboration with Bedouin communities, this submission examines community-led initiatives alongside the structural factors that enable or undermine them. It argues that localization requires more than devolving responsibilities to communities or local authorities: it requires creating the conditions for locally developed solutions to flourish, and ensuring that national policies strengthen, rather than constrain, local efforts to realize the right to adequate housing.

I. Community-Led Initiatives Consolidate Communities as Partners in the Realization of the Right to Adequate Housing

Across both recognized and unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev, communities have played an active role in improving their living conditions through locally driven initiatives. Residents have invested in essential infrastructure, community institutions, planning and legal advocacy, and locally managed economic initiatives. These efforts contribute in a variety of ways to adequate housing, including access to services, cultural viability, sustainability, and participation, demonstrating that communities need not be merely beneficiaries of housing policies but can be important partners in their realization.¹

¹ NCF field documentation; previous NCF submissions to UN human rights mechanisms (CERD, CEDAW and Special Procedures); CESCR, General Comment No. 4.

The village of **as-Sirrah** provides a particularly illustrative example. Despite years of legal uncertainty, residents invested in water access, solar energy, internet connectivity, and community facilities, and developed the **as-Sirrah Khan**, a locally managed tourism initiative welcoming visitors from Israel and abroad. Together, these efforts reflect a long-term vision of the village and the communities' capacity to improve living conditions through locally led action despite limited institutional support.²

Al-Araqib illustrates another aspect of community-led action. After repeated demolitions over many years, residents have rebuilt homes and communal spaces while preserving the village's social fabric. Although reconstruction cannot substitute for legal recognition or security of tenure, it reflects efforts to maintain connections to land, family and community networks, and the social conditions necessary for adequate housing.³

These experiences also highlight the importance of participation. Bedouin communities have engaged with civil society organizations, legal advocates and professionals and sought greater involvement in planning processes affecting their future. Community knowledge and locally developed solutions should therefore be recognized as important contributions to housing policy, rather than as substitutes for public responsibility.⁴ Effective localization requires legal and institutional frameworks that enable communities to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their homes, lands and future.⁵

II. Governance and Institutional Context

The realization of the right to adequate housing for Bedouin communities in the Negev is shaped and limited by a governance structure in which national institutions determine many key decisions—including land allocation, statutory planning, recognition of communities, and enforcement. As a result, while municipalities and regional councils provide important local services, their ability to address housing needs depends closely on national-level decisions.⁶

These constraints are particularly pronounced in unrecognized villages, which lack many of the municipal and planning mechanisms available to recognized localities. Consequently, local communities, village committees and civil society organizations have worked with planners, legal advocates and other professionals to document housing needs, advocate for

² Testimony of Khalil Alamor (resident of as-Sirrah and Board Member, Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality), July 2026; NCF field documentation on as-Sirrah.

³ NCF monitoring and documentation of Al-Araqib; village committee documentation; NCF reports and public communications on repeated demolitions and reconstruction

⁴ CESCR, *General Comment No. 4*; Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, *Responsibilities of Local and Other Subnational Governments in Relation to the Right to Adequate Housing*, A/HRC/28/62 (2015).

⁵ NCF field documentation and community consultations; village committee documentation; previous NCF submissions concerning planning and participation.

⁶ Leilani Farha, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing: Local Government and the Right to Adequate Housing*, A/HRC/28/62 (2015); *Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Housing*, A/HRC/43/43.

recognition and secure tenure, and advance locally appropriate planning solutions.⁷ These efforts demonstrate the communities' desire to participate in decisions concerning their future, while also highlighting the institutional limits within which such participation takes place.⁸

Formal recognition, a much-sought objective for all unrecognized villages, does not necessarily resolve these challenges. Recognized Bedouin localities continue to face difficulties relating to housing expansion, planning procedures, infrastructure and access to land for future development. Recognition must therefore be accompanied by adequate planning capacity and meaningful community participation to translate into improved housing conditions.⁸

The Negev illustrates a broader challenge for localizing the right to adequate housing: local authorities and community-led initiatives can contribute effectively only when they have sufficient institutional capacity and meaningful influence over decisions affecting housing and land. Where key decisions remain highly centralized and opportunities for participation are limited, local actors' abilities to develop durable housing solutions are correspondingly constrained.⁹

III. National Policy Changes and Their Impact on Local Housing Initiatives

Recent policy changes affecting planning, land governance and enforcement have increased uncertainty for Bedouin communities in the Negev and constrained the conditions under which locally led housing initiatives can develop.¹⁰ Government policies increasingly emphasize concentrating Bedouin communities within designated, recognized localities, alongside draconian measures on land settlement, planning, and enforcement. The Authority for the Development and Settlement of the Bedouin in the Negev's 2026 work plan explicitly identifies concentrating residents of unrecognized villages and other dispersed communities into existing and new localities as a central objective.¹¹

This policy change has also been advanced by **Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli**, whose ministry oversees the Bedouin Authority. Government Decision No. 3101 of June 2025 introduced a new framework for resolving Bedouin land-ownership claims in five pilot localities, including time-limited incentives for settlements and the option to advance expropriation procedures when agreements are not reached. The framework, commonly

⁷ https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/press1725y.aspx?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁸ NCF reports and field monitoring concerning recognized and unrecognized Bedouin communities.

⁹ E.G: [NCF - Umm al-Hirān UN Emergency Report - Nov 2024](#)

¹⁰ Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, *Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Housing*, A/HRC/43/43 (2020); Human Rights Council Resolution 52/10 (2023).

¹¹ Authority for the Development and Settlement of the Bedouin in the Negev, *Main Points of the 2026 Work Plan (2026)*, objectives 1 and 3, identifying the concentration of the dispersed Bedouin population and its settlement in existing and new localities as policy objectives.

referred to by civil society organizations as the “Chikli Framework,” reinforces the role of national authorities in determining future planning and settlement frameworks and may limit opportunities for communities to advance locally developed solutions.¹²

Enforcement has also intensified considerably under the **Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir**. At a Knesset Interior and Environmental Protection Committee hearing in July 2026, the Ministry of National Security reported an **81 percent increase in building demolitions during the last three years compared to the preceding three-year period**. The Ministry also reported a sharp increase in executed judicial demolition orders, from 18 in 2022 to 403 in 2025, as well as increased land-clearance operations and the forced evacuation of groups of structures. Ben-Gvir has showcased this intensification as a deliberate shift toward more proactive enforcement.¹³ NCF's field monitoring indicates that the consequences of these policies increasingly extend beyond individual households and affect both recognized and unrecognized Bedouin communities.

Recent developments in **as-Sirrah** illustrate these dynamics. In July 2026, residents reported renewed, dramatic enforcement measures after more than a decade without any demolitions in the village. According to information NCF collected from community representatives, homes belonging to the Alamour and Al-Nsarra families received orders related to planned evacuation and demolition.¹⁴ The resulting uncertainty directly threatens residents' ability to plan for the future and sustain the community investments described above.

Such measures affect more than physical structures. The prospect of demolition or displacement undermines security of tenure and discourages long-term investment in housing, infrastructure, economic activity and community institutions. It also weakens the conditions necessary for meaningful participation in locally driven development. The Negev experience therefore demonstrates that community initiative cannot compensate for an unstable policy environment: local housing solutions require legal certainty, secure tenure and meaningful opportunities for communities to participate in decisions concerning their future.¹⁵

IV. Access to Information as a Prerequisite for the Localization of the Right to Adequate Housing

¹² ACRI: [Revoke the "Chikli Framework" for Land Ownership Claims in Negev Bedouin Communities](#) July 2025

¹³ Knesset: <https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/press8726t.aspx?utm> July 2026

¹⁴ Testimony of Khalil Alamour (resident of as-Sirrah and Board Member, Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality) July 2026

¹⁵ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (1991); Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Housing, A/HRC/43/43 (2020).

Meaningful participation in housing policy depends not only on consultation opportunities but also on access to accurate, timely, and disaggregated public information. Communities, local authorities, and civil society organizations can contribute effectively to planning processes, monitor the implementation of public policies, and propose evidence-based solutions only when reliable information is available. Transparency is therefore not simply a principle of good governance; it is an essential condition for realizing and localizing the right to adequate housing.

For many years, the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF) has relied on Israel's *Freedom of Information Law 1998*¹⁶, to obtain official information concerning demolition orders, enforcement measures, administrative fines, land-use enforcement, and other policies affecting Bedouin communities in the Negev. These requests have enabled NCF to document trends, support affected communities, engage constructively with Israeli authorities, contribute to United Nations human rights mechanisms, and develop evidence-based policy recommendations.¹⁷

The information obtained through these requests has also highlighted important structural limitations in the official data collected by State authorities. For example, available datasets generally do not include comprehensive information on the number of individuals or families displaced as a result of demolitions, do not systematically distinguish between State-executed demolitions and self-demolitions (demolitions carried out by the residents themselves, so as to avoid heavy fines demanded by the State and to save personal property that is often destroyed along with the homes when the demolitions are carried out by the State), and often provide only limited disaggregation regarding the types of structures affected or the communities concerned. These data gaps make it difficult to assess the full human impact of enforcement policies and evaluate their implications for realizing the right to adequate housing.

In addition to these long-standing limitations, NCF has observed a significant reduction in the accessibility and level of detail of official information since 2024. Freedom of Information responses increasingly provide less comprehensive data than in previous years, with important variables no longer consistently available or presented in a way that allows meaningful comparison over time.¹⁸ This has made it much harder to monitor trends, evaluate policy changes, and assess the cumulative impact of enforcement measures on Bedouin communities.

The consequences extend beyond civil society monitoring. Local authorities, community representatives, researchers and international human rights mechanisms all rely on reliable public information to understand housing conditions, identify emerging needs and develop effective responses. Where such information is incomplete or inaccessible, opportunities for informed participation and evidence-based policymaking are significantly reduced.

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/topics/freedom-of-information-s>

¹⁷ NCF Freedom of Information requests to the Land Enforcement Authority (2024–2025); NCF Master Document on Home Demolitions and Enforcement Measures in Bedouin Communities in the Negev.

¹⁸ https://www.gov.il/he/pages/17_8_25 Advancing a New Reality in the Negev – 2024 Year-End Summary (Hebrew)

The experience of the Negev shows that access to public information is itself an enabling condition for localizing the right to adequate housing. Governments should ensure that housing-related information -including planning decisions, demolition orders, enforcement measures, displacement data and other relevant indicators - is collected systematically, disaggregated appropriately and made publicly accessible. Such transparency strengthens accountability, supports meaningful participation and enables local actors to contribute more effectively to the realization of housing rights.¹⁹

V. Recommendations

The experience of Bedouin communities in the Negev shows that community-led initiatives can contribute to realizing the right to adequate housing only within an enabling legal and institutional framework. NCF recommends:

1. Strengthening meaningful participation in housing and planning processes

National and local authorities should ensure that affected communities can and do participate meaningfully in all stages of housing, land-use and planning processes. Participation should be continuous, informed, and able to influence decisions, rather than limited to formal consultation.

2. Creating an enabling environment for community-led housing initiatives

Governments should recognize and support community-led initiatives while ensuring legal certainty, security of tenure, access to infrastructure and long-term planning opportunities that respect communities' social, cultural and historical connections to place. Locally developed solutions should complement, rather than substitute for, governmental responsibility.

3. Improve transparency and access to information

States should systematically collect and publish timely, reliable, and appropriately disaggregated information on planning decisions, demolition and enforcement measures, displacement, and housing development. Such information is essential for meaningful participation, independent monitoring and evidence-based policymaking.

4. Strengthening local government capacity

¹⁹ *Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Housing (A/HRC/43/43); OHCHR, Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation (2012), emphasizing the importance of accessible and reliable data for monitoring the implementation of human rights.*

National governments should provide local authorities with the institutional, legal, and financial capacity needed to implement rights-based housing policies responsive to local needs, along with clear responsibilities and effective coordination among national authorities, local governments, and communities.

5. Promoting collaborative approaches to housing

Governments should encourage cooperation among public authorities, communities, civil society organizations, and independent professionals to develop locally appropriate and durable housing solutions. International organizations and UN human rights mechanisms should support community-led planning and local capacity-building and promote participation, transparency, and community engagement as integral components of housing policy.