

Ongoing harassment of unrecognised Bedouin villages in the Negev

Jews for Justice for Palestinians



The darkened ground is “re-plowed”. To destroy the crops of the Bedouin.

Blows, Arrests, Home Demolitions and Crop Destruction in the Unrecognized Bedouin Villages in the Negev

An appeal from Yeela Raanan, Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev –RCUV

On Tuesday this week **the Government of Israel destroyed crops in the Bedouin village of Al-Mazraa.** “Crops” hardly defines the one inch high wheat that the community has managed to grow in the desert land. The Bedouin farmers do not have water allocations like their Jewish counterparts, and are dependent on rain. The annual average is 2 inches of rain.. This year was a better year, but even on a good year the wheat does not grow tall enough to be harvested and is used as grazing for the sheep of the residents of this village – one of the poorest communities in Israel. But the government officials were not pleased that this year was blessed with rain – and re-plowed the land to make sure the meager crop will be destroyed. The excuse – the land is not owned by the residents of the village (the land is disputed land – historically belonging to the Bedouin, but the government claims it belongs to the state). But the real reason is – they are Arabs. As Arabs – even though they are citizens of Israel – they are seen as our enemies.

The police again is harassing the residents of the village of Amra-Trabin.

Two young men were arrested on Monday, two more on Wednesday. A police barricade is set up in the entrance to the village.

On Sunday the harassment started again. It seems the mayor of the neighboring affluent town of Omer is stressing over his promise to build a neighborhood for army officers – on the existing Bedouin village.

On Sunday a number of police cars entered the village and drove dangerously fast in the village. On Monday they returned – entering the yards of homes with their car – which is also against the cultural codes of staying out of women's space, scaring the children. A young man requested the police to leave his mother's home. This "angered" the police, so two held the young man by the arms, while a third – a policewoman – hit him. They succeeded... he lost his temper and pushed the policewoman – and was arrested for assaulting an officer. His older brother came from his home to see what was going on – and was also arrested for assaulting an officer.

Later that day I joined family members at the police station. Very meekly the uncle tried to find out what was happening to his nephews. The officer talking to him was young, short, well built. He was one of the policepeople that had been in the village that morning. The scene at the police station was unnerving, full of tension, threat. The young man looked into the eyes of the uncle – as if his friend. He held the uncle's arm forcefully, as if his friend. He let go of the uncle's arm, and started punching one hand into the other, standing in a threatening position over the uncle. And the uncle, cowering, listening, answered meekly, hoping that they will treat his nephews with mercy (he knows that justice is not an option). Later they called the uncle into a room, and said "only for you... only because we like you... only because you are a 'good guy'... we will release your nephews. But – you will be liable for them, and when we want them we will call you!" The young men were released, but are still facing charges of assaulting an officer.

The next day the chief of staff came to set the corner stone in the new neighborhood in Omer for his officers. A path was paved, a stage was

built, right above the village huts. The villagers were put under curfew in their village, so they would not bother the celebration. The chief of staff was told "Don't worry, soon the village will be eliminated, and we will build a wonderful neighborhood for the officers!"

The harassment is continuing. Two more young men were arrested on Wednesday, and a police barricade is set on the dirt path in the entrance to the village, checking every vehicle of the villagers as they exit and enter their village – checking and re-checking the tires, headlights, engine...

The Green Patrol beat a young Bedouin woman – until she fainted.

About a month ago a green patrol officer arrived at a tent in the unrecognized village of Rahama, where three women live – a very old woman of about 95, her daughter, aged 70, and a young woman of the family who is 25. The tent had been in its current location for years. The officer requested that the women move their tent to a different location, not far, which he pointed to. They did. He returned a week later and fumed "How dare you move their tent around, what are you trying to do? Control all the land around?!" He returned again a few days later (last week) with another 10 Green Patrol officers and demanded that they relocate their tent into the center of the village. The Green Patrol officers did not have a decree that demanded that the women do this, and they refused. The young woman was beaten by them – until she fainted and was taken to hospital. They then attached the tent to one of their vehicles and pulled – disregarding the old woman still in her tent. The tent pole fell on her – hitting her head. Her daughter (70 years old) went to file a complaint at the police station. She was detained for seven hours!

Home Demolitions from the last three months

Since the last report by the RCUV.

The village of Twail Abu-Jarwal was destroyed completely three times. On October 26th, January 6th and again on January 21st.

In the village of El-Araqib homes have been demolished four times! On October 29th – two tents, on December 7th – 7 huts, on January 6th and 21st two huts each time.

The Negev Coexistence Forum is inviting everyone to show solidarity with the village people this Saturday, February 6th: planting olive trees at 10:30. For more information call Yaakov Manor at 050 5733278.

In addition the Government of Israel demolished:

October 29th: two homes in the village of A-Sir

A house in the village of Al-Matbakh.

On November 5th: a house in the village of Tla-Al-Rashid.

A house in the village of A-Sawa

A house in the village of Al-Baht.

A house in the village of Zaarura.

On December 7th: A house in the village of Um-El-Mileh.

A house in the recognized village of Um-Mitnan.

On January 6th: A house in El-Batal

A house in Hirbat A-Zbala

On February 2nd: three shepherds' shacks in the village of Al-Mazraa

A house in the recognized village of al-Foraa.

In each one of these homes a family lived, each family with a mom and children. And they still live in the same place, but their re-built shacks are shabbier, the life more miserable, and with a lot more resentment in their hearts...

And what can YOU do?

Write to your representatives! Tell them that the treatment of the indigenous Bedouin minority violate human rights, and it is their duty to protest it.

Write to the Israeli Ambassador in your country. Ask them to explain the actions of the Israeli Government and its officials.

Write to your embassy in Israel. Tell them of the treatment of the Bedouin minority by the Government. Suggest strongly that they become knowledgeable in this issue and ask Israel difficult questions.

Donate! Twail Abu-Jarwal still needs tents. The village committee of El-Araqib needs financial support in its legal battle over their lands. (reply to this email and we will tell you of all the ways you can donate.)

Spread the word! Tell anyone and everyone who is willing to listen.

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