



The Palestinian Arab Bedouin of the Naqab-Negev

(March 2018)

The Naqab: A Land Without a People?

Contrary to common references to historical Palestine as a “land without a people for a people without a land,” in 1947, a year before the establishment of the state of Israel, well over one million Palestinians lived in what was then referred to as Mandatory Palestine. From 1920 ‘Mandatory Palestine’ – or ‘British Mandate Palestine’ – was a geopolitical entity under British administration. In 1947, between 65,000 and 95,000 Palestinians lived in the Negev, or the Naqab, as referred to by its indigenous Arab inhabitants. Bedouin Arabs have lived in the Naqab for centuries. According to historians, Bedouin tribes lived in the region as early as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and most present-day Bedouin tribes arrived between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries.¹ Others trace their history in the region as far back as the fifth century.² Although the term “Bedouin” often brings to mind nomadism and a lack of attachment to place, by the Ottoman period most Bedouins in the Naqab had already adopted a semi-nomadic lifestyle. This lifestyle involved tribal territorial delineation (including official demarcation by the Ottoman government), permanent settlement (including the construction of homes and communal buildings), and agricultural cultivation of the land. In fact, prior to 1948, the Bedouin community had cultivated approximately 500,000 acres of land in the Naqab. A survey conducted in 1942 indeed demonstrates that the Bedouins had cultivated the entirety of the northern part of the region, where most of the remaining Naqab Bedouin still live today.³

Despite their unmistakable inhabitation and cultivation of the land, the Ottoman Empire and British Mandate government only tacitly recognized the rights of the Bedouin community to the land. Marking the boundaries of Bedouin tribal territories, purchasing land from Bedouin tribes, and generally engaging a policy of non-interference with the community, saw the Ottoman and British authorities informally acknowledged the right of Bedouin to their land. However, out of a mistrust of occupying authorities and from a desire to avoid paying taxes to them, the Bedouin generally chose not to register their land. This was not out of the ordinary for the entirety of Palestine where, due to political and economic circumstances, only five percent of the land had been registered by the end of the Ottoman Empire. Despite increasing attempts on the part of the British authorities to encourage registration, “fear of taxation, as well as an interest in protecting their customary systems, led to relatively little registration of land under British rule”.⁴ This was partly due to the registration

¹ Bailey, C. (1985), “Dating the Arrival of the Bedouin Tribes in Sinai and the Negev” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 28, no. 1

² Abu-Saad, I. and Creamer, C. (2012), “Current Conditions of the Naqab Bedouin Arabs” In A. Amara, I. Abu-Saad, and O. Yiftachel (eds.), *Indigenous (In)justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs in the Naqab/Negev*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

³ Maddrell, P. (1990). *The Bedouin of the Negev*, Report No. 81, London: Minority Rights Group

⁴ Amara, A. and Miller, Z., (2012), “Unsettling Settlements: Law, Land, and Planning in the Naqab” in A. Amara, I. Abu-Saad, and O. Yiftachel (eds.), *Indigenous (In)justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs*

process beginning in the north of the country and not reaching the Naqab before 1948. Even with the low turnout for registration, the Mandate did continue to tacitly recognize the right of the Bedouins to their land. In a response to Ben Gurion's request for Jewish settlement in the Naqab, for example, "the Mandate authorities declared that '[t]he cultivable land in the Beersheba sub-district [the Naqab] is regarded as belonging to the Bedouin tribes by virtue of possession from time immemorial.'"⁵ During the Mandate period, even the leading Zionist groups recognized the rights of the Bedouins to their land, with the Jewish National Fund purchasing land from Bedouin Arabs in the 1920s and 1930s.⁶ Although, as the following sections will demonstrate, the lack of formal recognition of Bedouin land ownership on the part of the Ottoman and British states would render the Bedouin community in the Naqab particularly vulnerable to land expropriation at the hands of the succeeding Israeli state.

The Nakba

As mentioned, before the establishment of Israel, between 65,000 and 95,000 Bedouin Arabs lived in the Naqab (compared to 475 Jewish residents).⁷ During the Nakba ('catastrophe') and the 1948 war, 80 to 85% of the entire Bedouin population in the Naqab fled or were expelled to Gaza, the Sinai, and Jordan.⁸ Only approximately 11,000 Bedouin Arabs remained in the area after 1948.⁹ From ninety-five villages, the Nakba left only nineteen with "sufficient numbers to receive official recognition from the new Israeli government."¹⁰

Military Rule and Forced Concentration

Between 1948 and 1966, by means of military rule and the manipulation of Ottoman and British regulations (or lack thereof) the Israeli government concentrated the remaining Naqab Bedouins in a 'Restricted Area' - commonly referred to as the Siyag - in the northern Naqab. Thus, by historically classifying Bedouin land as uncultivated or "absentee," the state forcibly displaced and resettled twelve Bedouin tribes to an area that amounted to just ten percent of the land controlled by the population prior to 1948.¹¹ The 1953 Land Acquisition Law, for example, formally condoned the expropriation of Palestinian land in 1948 and allowed the state to confiscate any land that was not inhabited on April 1, 1952. Since the military regulations limited movement outside (in addition to within) the Siyag, many Bedouin could not claim their property and thus lost the official right to ownership.¹² Those who managed even to attempt to claim their property met obstacles under the Israeli administration. The state required Bedouin land claimants prove that they had possessed and cultivated the land in question for ten years and would only accept official documentation as proof. This was, of course, a major challenge given the lack of regulation during the Ottoman and Mandate eras. The state's deliberate obstructionism rendered reclaiming Bedouin property nearly impossible.

⁵ *ibid.*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

⁶ Kram, N. (2012), "The Naqab Bedouins: Legal Struggles for Land Ownership Rights in Israel" in A. Amara, I. Abu-Saad, and O. Yiftachel (eds.), *Indigenous (In)justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs in the Naqab/Negev*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

⁷ Abu-Saad, I. and Creamer, C. (2012). "Socio-Political Upheaval and Current Conditions of the Naqab Bedouin Arabs" in A. Amara, I. Abu-Saad, and O. Yiftachel (eds.), *Indigenous (In)justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs in the Naqab/Negev*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

⁸ The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, (2006), "The Indigenous Bedouins of the Naqab-Negev Desert in Israel"

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Abu-Saad, I. and Creamer, C., (2012), "Socio-Political Upheaval and Current Conditions of the Naqab Bedouin Arabs" in A. Amara, I. Abu-Saad, and O. Yiftachel (eds.), *Indigenous (In)justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs in the Naqab/Negev*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

¹¹ "Absentee" property refers to "unoccupied" property. Throughout Israel, the state administration used this categorization of property to expropriate land that belonged to those who had fled during the 1948 war. As a result of this law, many Palestinian refugees returned to their homes to find them inhabited by Jewish settlers. "Ninety-five percent of Jewish settlements established 1948-1953 were established on absentee property" and "[i]n 1954 more than one-third of Israel's Jewish population lived on absentee property" (Peretz, D. (1958), *Israel and the Palestine Arabs*, Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute)

¹² Abu-Saad, I. and Creamer, C. (2012), "Socio-Political Upheaval and Current Conditions of the Naqab Bedouin Arabs." In A. Amara, I. Abu-Saad, and O. Yiftachel (eds.), *Indigenous (In)justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs in the Naqab/Negev*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

According to Professor Oren Yiftachel from the Department of Geography and Environmental Development of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Palestinians “have since submitted 3,200 legal claims to their expropriated lands, based on the traditional Ottoman or British records that attest to their past holdings. To date, however, not even one Arab claimant has been awarded full ownership rights... Ninety-five percent of Arab claims to land have not been settled, covering approximately 800,000 dunams (Mana Commission 1997)”.¹³ As a result of such judicial and legislative moves, the Bedouin population lost about 90% of its pre-1948 land.¹⁴

In May 2015, the Israeli Supreme Court’s ‘al-Uqbi verdict’ marked a significant precedent for the state to approve the expropriation of Palestinian land specifically within Israel. The verdict centered on the court’s rejection of a five-year old petition that had been filed by the al-Uqbi family to recognize its historic ownership of a large plot of land located in the Naqab: this land also included the unrecognized village of al-Araqib. The case exemplified the collision of cultural practices and the bias for Western notions of human settlement and hegemony of the state power. As outlined by the al-Uqbi family’s lawyer, the case did not dispute the family’s habitation of the area for centuries; the ruling chose not to recognize the family’s ownership of the land because Bedouin habitation and terms of ownership do not cohere with the officially sanctioned terms of the state.¹⁵ The Bedouin traditionally lived in tent structures with terms of ownership bestowed verbally: because such traditions do not cohere with the state definitions outlining a need for stone houses and written deeds as proof of ownership, the court ruled that the state had no obligation to recognize ownership. As journalist Mairav Zonszein outlines, in addition to failing to acknowledge the distinct centuries-old historical and cultural heritage of the Bedouin community, the ruling presents an ignored contradiction. Indeed, whilst the property rights of the Bedouin community are not recognized, the Zionist purchase of land from the Bedouin before the state of Israel was established is recognized.¹⁶

The State Administration and the Naqab

Various branches of the Israeli state mechanism interact with the Bedouin community. From 2012 the central government agency coordinating the various enforcement authorities that carry out demolitions in the Naqab has been the Southern Directorate. The agency only works in the Naqab and coordinates the activities of the National Unit for Building Inspection, the Unit for Enforcement in Open Spaces and the Israel Land Authority’s (ILA) Division for Land Security, responsible for 52%, 37% and 8% of demolitions in the area respectively.¹⁷ It is important to acknowledge that the Southern Division works in collaboration with the Israeli Police, often responsible for escorting inspectors as well as demolition authorities when they carry out scouting operations, demolitions, the destruction of land, and the distribution of demolition orders. It is striking that the state presence in the area is articulated via policing and security, ensuring a threatening and often traumatizing atmosphere for residents.

This climate of enforcement and surveillance is extended via the main administrative body of the Bedouin community, the Authority for the Development and Settlement of the Bedouin in the Negev, which also works in cooperation with the Southern Directorate and uses enforcement as a means to promote its policy of ‘regularization’. As Michal Rotem and Ben Fargeoun from the Negev Coexistence Forum For Civil Equality explain, enforcement activity against new construction is deployed alongside two other strategies. The first is known as ‘enforcement promoting regularization’ that employs threats of demolition alongside

¹³ Yiftachel, O. (2003), “Bedouin-Arabs and the Israeli settler state: Land policies and indigenous resistance” in D. Champagne and I. Abu-Saad (eds.), *The Future of Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Survival and Development*. Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, UCLA

¹⁴ Falah, G. (1989), “Israel state policy towards Bedouin sedentarization in the Negev.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 18, no. 2

¹⁵ Zonszein, M, ‘Israel Supreme Court: Bedouin have no indigenous rights’, in +972, May 29, 2015

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ From Negev Coexistence Forum For Civil Equality, Rotem, M. and Fargeon, B., “Negotiation” Under Fire House Demolitions as a central tool of dispossession and concentration of the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab, August 2017

filing lawsuits, as well as actual demolition, to force into negotiation those from the Bedouin community who resist the Authority's demands. The second strategy is known as 'regularization promoting enforcement' as a way to implement the 'regularization' of individual residents and communities before employing enforcement tactics. From 2017, further investment will be made into this dual-mechanism of coercion and punishment with Government Resolution 2397, Socio- Economic Development Plan for Negev Bedouin 2017 - 2021.¹⁸

Bedouin Townships in the Naqab

Since 1948, the State of Israel has established "close to 1,100 Jewish settlements between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea."¹⁹ In the same period of time it has destroyed over 400 Arab villages.²⁰ The state has not established a single locality for its Arab Palestinian citizens aside from seven localities that it created on confiscated Bedouin land in the Naqab in the 1970s and 1980s. These designated localities have been used to spatially concentrate the Bedouin population. A plan to urbanize the Bedouin community was in discussion by the state administration in Israel from as early as the late 1950s: the process began after the military administration ended in 1966.

The localities are Tel Sheva, Rahat, Segev-Shalom, Kuseifa, Ar'ara, Houra, and Laqiya.²¹ The state promised an improved lifestyle for the impoverished Bedouin community in exchange for settlement in these designated localities. In reality, however, it did nothing and continues to do little to ensure that Bedouin townships operate as modern localities (i.e. with basic services such as adequate transportation infrastructure, schools, health clinics, electricity, sewage systems, etc.). On the contrary, this thinly veiled attempt to "Judaize" the Naqab has alienated the Bedouin population both socially and economically by abruptly destroying their traditional ways of life – based on agriculture and rural community - without so much as providing adequate compensation.

The displacement of the Bedouin people to recognized localities doesn't ensure an end to home demolitions and the denial of basic services. As a result of inadequate city planning on the part of the state, in addition to a lack of construction permits and overcrowding (the average Bedouin township population density is 2.5 times greater than that of the average Jewish locality), many inhabitants of official Bedouin localities have no choice but to inhabit and construct homes illegally. Thus, like their counterparts in unrecognized villages, they are also under constant threat of evacuations, home demolitions, arrests, and heavy fines.²² Moreover, despite their status as "recognized," they also often lack entirely or have significantly inadequate infrastructure and public services. In fact, not a single Bedouin town has a comprehensive sewage system.²³ The government has also failed to provide adequate sources of employment in these localities. In the case of Rahat, the industrial area directly adjacent to the locality remains relatively undeveloped in comparison to well-established industrial infrastructure next to the Jewish localities of Lehavim and Kibbutz Mishmar HaNegev. Furthermore, through spatial and political organization which has excluded the Arab Bedouin population from the region's economic and political centers, the state has marginalized Arab Bedouin localities further.²⁴

¹⁸ See in particular Clause 13

¹⁹ Yiftachel, O. (2012), "Naqab/Negev Bedouins and the (Internal) Colonial Paradigm" in A. Amara, I. Abu-Saad, and O. Yiftachel (eds.), *Indigenous (In)justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs in the Naqab/Negev*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Negev Bedouin. n.d. in *The Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues*. Retrieved March 8, 2018, from <http://www.iataskforce.org/issues/view/2>

²² The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, (2006), "The Indigenous Bedouins of the Naqab-Negev Desert in Israel"

²³ Abu-Saad, I. and Creamer, C. (2012), "Socio-Political Upheaval and Current Conditions of the Naqab Bedouin Arabs." In A. Amara, I. Abu-Saad, and O. Yiftachel (eds.), *Indigenous (In)justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs in the Naqab/Negev*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

²⁴ Yiftachel, O. (2012) "Naqab/Negev Bedouins and the (Internal) Colonial Paradigm", In A. Amara, I. Abu-Saad, and O. Yiftachel (eds), *Indigenous (In)justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs in the Naqab/Negev*. Cambridge:

As a result, in the last decade, all of the official Bedouin localities in the Naqab have fallen under Israel's two lowest socio-economic classifications.²⁵

According to the Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues, "Negev Bedouin are by far Israel's most disadvantaged community in terms of per capita income, unemployment, and poverty rates, levels of education and nonexistent or substandard public infrastructure."²⁶ Of the Arab Bedouin localities, Ar'arat an-Naqab boasts the highest average monthly salary of about NIS 5,618, about \$1,500. This, however, is approximately 40% less than the average national monthly salary.²⁷ Rahat, which is the largest Arab Bedouin locality in the world, has the lowest average monthly salary at NIS 4,543, about 50% less than the national average.²⁸

Access to education is also extremely low in Bedouin localities. While 20.8% of those living in Israel have attended 16 years or more of school, only 4.9% of those living in recognized Arab Bedouin townships have attended the same amount of school. While 10.3% of all Israeli residents have experienced eight years or less of formal education, 35% of Bedouins living in official townships in the Naqab have received less than nine years of schooling. Although data is scarce, the situation of those living in "unrecognized" villages in the Naqab is undoubtedly worse. Before 1948, 90% of the Bedouin population in the Naqab lived as subsistence farmers. This figure has since reversed, with some scholars reasonably arguing that this was a deliberate state policy; that the Bedouin in the Naqab "were not given sufficient resources for independent development because Israeli governmental policy toward the indigenous Palestinian minority has consistently aimed at maintaining their dependence on the Jewish economic power structures in order to maximize the state's control over them."²⁹ The words of the then Minister of Agriculture, Moshe Dayan, substantiate this argument. According to a 1963 Haaretz article, he himself said "We should transform the Bedouins into an urban proletariat... Without coercion but with governmental direction... this phenomenon of the Bedouins will disappear."³⁰ That this would be state policy makes sense when we consider the amount of economic growth in Israel at the time, which "required growing numbers of workers," and, particularly, "low-wage workers in the industrial and economic development of Jewish towns in the Naqab".³¹

Unrecognized Villages in the Naqab

Although the state administration transferred much of the Bedouin population to the land it currently inhabits, it refuses to recognize the right of the Bedouin community to the land. In the first decades of its existence, the Israeli state would not even allow Bedouins to construct stone or concrete buildings in the Restricted Area.³² With the passage of the 1965 Planning and Construction Law, the state of Israel officially declared the land where it concentrated the Bedouin Naqab population "non-residential" state property. This enacted a process of retroactively deeming illegal most of the homes found on the land. Most of the forty-six

Harvard University Press

²⁵ The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, (2017), 'Discrimination in Numbers: Collection of Statistical Data-The Bedouin Community in the Negev/Naqab'

²⁶ Negev Bedouin, n.d in *The Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues*. Retrieved April 4, 2017, from <http://www.iataskforce.org/issues/view/2>

²⁷ The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, (2017) 'Discrimination in Numbers: Collection of Statistical Data-The Bedouin Community in the Negev/Naqab'

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Abu-Saad, I. and Creamer, C. (2012), "Socio-Political Upheaval and Current Conditions of the Naqab Bedouin Arabs" in A. Amara, I. Abu-Saad, and O. Yiftachel (eds), *Indigenous (In)justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs in the Naqab/Negev*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

³⁰ Extract from *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Yiftachel, O. (2003), "Bedouin-Arabs and the Israeli settler state: Land policies and indigenous resistance" in D. Champagne and I. Abu-Saad (eds.), *The Future of Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Survival and Development*, Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, UCLA

remaining Bedouin villages in the Naqab remain under this category today; that is, they remain unrecognized by the state. The majority of Bedouins living in unrecognized villages live in historical villages: in other words, villages that predate the establishment of the State of Israel, sometimes by centuries. The rest of the Bedouin community in unrecognized villages lives in ‘displaced’ villages: areas where Bedouin communities were forced to move during the government’s forcible concentration of the population in the 1950s and 1960s. Although modest estimates suggest that nearly 70,000 Bedouins with Israeli citizenship live in unrecognized villages, the state refuses to so much as recognize their existence on a map or on official identification cards. According to the state administration, the structures and homes within unrecognized villages are “illegal” and those who construct and inhabit them are “criminals.” By branding them “illegal”, it is impossible for residents to acquire building permits for any new construction or repair any existing building, leaving residents in constant precarity, facing demolition and homelessness at any point. With this legal classification, the state justifies tormenting the residents of unrecognized villages: not only demolishing their homes but communal buildings, and places of worship; destroying their fields; killing their livestock; confiscating their belongings; charging them heavy fines; and, in some cases, arresting them.³³

The living conditions in unrecognized villages in the Naqab are considered the worst in all of Israel, in part as a result of state harassment, but also as a result of state neglect. The state of Israel refuses to provide services in unrecognized villages. Thus, residents lack basic refuse disposal services, connection to electricity grids, transportation and road infrastructure, free and safe water, sanitary sewage systems, and health clinics. They also lack the services that are crucial to economic and social welfare, including accessible schools, facilities for the elderly and those with disabilities, mental health facilities, and daycare centers. Often, communities develop their own electric and water infrastructures - an expensive, not to mention dangerous - accomplishment that the authorities can destroy at any given moment. The state’s refusal to provide these services, in addition to its harsh treatment, serves as part of its strategy to coerce the Naqab Bedouins to surrender their lands and traditional ways of life for life in recognized Arab localities.

Recognized villages in the Naqab

Marking a brief shift in policy under the administration of Prime Minister Ehud Barak, the Israeli state recognized eleven of the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Naqab.³⁴ Thirty-five Bedouin villages in the Naqab remain unrecognized. It is important to note that despite such recognition, there is no notable difference between the conditions and overall infrastructure of these recognized villages with their unrecognized counterparts. The lack of planning in recognized villages continues to prevent residents from obtaining valid building permits for new construction. House demolitions are still enforced upon communities as well as the same absence of adequate water, electricity and sewage infrastructure found at unrecognized villages. In many cases, roads are not repaired or are totally missing.³⁵ Indeed, whilst localities gain recognition they continue to be ignored.

The state’s crackdown on unrecognized villages also threatens the lifestyles of those in recognized villages since recognition forces villages to absorb the displaced, imposing urbanization and overcrowding. Government officials justify the state’s policies towards the Bedouin in the Naqab with claims of the technical difficulties and expenses associated with providing services to so many “small” villages. Messaging also focuses on the benefits of leaving behind villages in favour of urbanization and modernization elsewhere; aims that completely disavow the agricultural history of the Bedouin community and way of life.³⁶ This is in

³³ In some cases, the state even forces Bedouin Arabs to destroy their own homes through threat of fines.

³⁴ See Cabinet Resolution No. 2562 [Arab/47], November 2000

³⁵ From Negev Coexistence Forum For Civil Equality, ‘The Arab-Bedouin Community in the Negev-Naqab – A Short Background’, Retrieved March 8, 2018, from <http://www.dukium.org/the-arab-bedouin-community-in-the-negev-nagab-a-short-background/>

³⁶ See examples in Sales, B, ‘In hardscrabble villages, Bedouin want recognition, not relocation’, The Times of Israel, December 18, 2013

stark contrast to the state continuing to provide services for Jewish agriculture with family farms and kibbutzim in the area. Even the Jewish localities on disputed land over the Green Line receive planning, infrastructure, and services.

The Praver Plan

On 24 June 2013, the Knesset in Israel approved the Praver-Begin Bill. The bill, passing with 43 votes for and 40 against, will aim for the mass expulsion of the Bedouin population of 70,000 in the Naqab and the destruction of 35 Bedouin villages “unrecognized” by the state of Israel. The plan was completed without consultation with the local community - who it will directly affect - and contravenes the rights of the Bedouin citizens to property, dignity, equality, and freedom to choose their own residence. Despite being widely condemned by the international community, the plan allowed for the demolition of 1000 homes in 2011, with civil society groups noting the same practices in 2012.³⁷ In March 2012, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination called on Israel to withdraw the implementation of the plan on the grounds that it was discriminatory. In July 2012, the European Parliament echoed this message, passing an historic resolution calling on Israel to stop the plan.

In December 2013, the plan was halted upon the recommendation of then-Minister Benny Begin, who confirmed that he had not presented any part of his plan to the Bedouin community.³⁸ Despite this halting, between 2013 and 2015 a total of 2752 Bedouin structures in the Naqab were demolished either by state authorities or property-owners.³⁹ Indeed, the Southern Directorate policy, along with part of Decision 3707 of 2011 that initially approved the Praver Plan, continues to operate goals and policy that focus on enforcing laws against the Bedouin community. The Directorate continues to hold weekly meetings of a permanent forum of representatives, and coordinates days for locating and demolishing targeted structures and ploughing fields to destroy crops.⁴⁰

In May 2015, the Supreme Court approved a government plan to evacuate the Umm El-Hiran village to make way for a new Jewish town, despite village leaders willing to discuss almost any option that would allow them to remain in the same location. Their including living alongside new Jewish neighbours in a newly-expanded community. The state refused this request as the town planned - and already under construction - will be exclusively Jewish.⁴¹ As of November 30 of the same year, some villagers agreed to move to the nearby Bedouin town of Hura, despite concerns regarding poor infrastructure, an unwillingness to accommodate to villager’s needs, and a low quality of life. These residents nonetheless began self-demolishing in order to avoid steep fines and to reuse often expensive building materials. It has been reported that the Southern Directorate has itself admitted to the increased efficacy of Israel’s house demolition policy, without providing any solution to the housing crisis of the expanding Bedouin community.⁴²

Clashes broke out on Wednesday January 18, 2017 as the village’s remaining inhabitants were forcibly evacuated. Tear gas and rubber bullets were used by Israeli police forces to evacuate residents. Two people were reportedly killed and another five were injured.

³⁷ Taken from Adalah, ‘Demolition and Eviction of Bedouin Citizens of Israel in the Naqab (Negev) – The Praver Plan

³⁸ Aderet, O and Lis, J, (December 2013), ‘Israeli Government Halts Controversial Plan to Resettle 30,000 Bedouin’, Haaretz

³⁹ Rotem, M (January 2017), ‘Discrimination in Numbers Collection of Statistical Data – The Bedouin Community in the Negev-Naqab’, Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

⁴⁰ Fargeon, B and Rotem, M, (June 2016), ‘Enforcing Distress: House Demolition Policy in the Bedouin Community in the Negev’, Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

⁴¹ Mossawa, (2017, January 18), ‘Clashes Break Out as Israeli Police Forcibly Evacuate Umm al-Hiran’

⁴² Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, (June 2016), Enforcing Distress: House Demolition Policy in the Bedouin Community in the Negev, pg. 7