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## **Israel: Demolitions of Bedouin homes in the Negev desert must end immediately**

Israel must immediately halt all demolitions of Arab Bedouin homes in communities in the Negev/Naqab desert which the government has refused to officially recognize, Amnesty International said, following news that the village of al-'Araqib was once again razed by land authorities.

“The Israeli authorities must halt demolitions in these communities and change course completely to guarantee all citizens’ right to adequate housing,” said Philip Luther, Director of Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Programme.

“The Israeli government’s Praver-Begin plan would lead to the forced eviction of tens of thousands of Arab Bedouin citizens of Israel. The plan is inherently discriminatory, flies in the face of Israel’s international obligations and cannot be accepted in any circumstances.”

Bulldozers from the Israel Land Administration, accompanied by a large and heavily-armed police force in more than 60 vehicles, arrived in al-‘Araqib early on Tuesday morning and began to destroy 15 shacks, effectively flattening the village and displacing 22 families.

The village, which has never been officially recognized by the Israeli authorities despite the residents’ longstanding claims to their lands, has been demolished more than 50 times in the past three years. Each time, residents have tried to rebuild their homes, constructing makeshift shelters on the same land.

“We have the right to remain here; our struggle has continued for generations and we will persevere,” said Aziz al-Turi, a resident from the village. “Our grandfathers are buried on this land. We will continue to rebuild and demonstrate to defend our right to live here.”

The latest demolition came a day after mass protests were staged across Israel, the occupied West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, against the proposed “Law for Regularizing Bedouin Habitation in the Negev”. This law would provide for the forced eviction of more than 30,000 residents from 35 “unrecognized” Bedouin villages in the Negev desert. In some areas, including Be’er Sheva and Sakhnin, Israeli police used excessive force against peaceful demonstrators opposing the plan.

All construction in these villages is considered illegal by the Israeli authorities, and their 70,000 residents lack basic services, including water and electricity.

Amnesty International is urging the Israeli authorities to scrap the draft law, which is expected to lead to a massive increase in home demolitions in these communities. Although the draft has only passed its first reading in the Knesset (parliament), the Israel Land Administration regularly demolishes homes and other structures in these villages unhindered. More than 120 homes and other structures in these villages have been demolished over the last five months.

“The repeated demolitions in al-'Araqib and other villages show that the Praver-Begin plan is being implemented on the ground, despite the fact that the bill is still pending in the Knesset and that the communities which will be affected still have not been genuinely consulted,” said Philip Luther.

“The Praver-Begin plan discriminates against Arab Bedouin by providing less protection for their land and housing rights compared to other Israeli citizens. The international community must pressure the Israeli government to respect its human rights obligations within its borders, as well as in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.”

### **Further information:**

#### **Protests on 15 July and responses of the authorities**

- Protests against the Praver-Begin plan and the draft Israeli law took place on 15 July in Palestinian communities throughout Israel, as well as in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel also called for a general strike.
- Israeli security forces and police used excessive force against demonstrators in Be'er Sheva and Sakhnin, while the Hamas de facto administration prevented a demonstration by youth activists in Gaza City and the Palestinian Authority prevented protesters from marching from Ramallah towards the illegal Israeli settlement of Beit El.
- In Be'er Sheva, the largest city in Israel's southern Negev region, Israeli police and special police forces arrested 14 demonstrators, including two women and two children. Delegates from Amnesty International Israel observed the protest. Demonstrators were peaceful, but Israeli police charged into the crowds on horseback and used force during the arrests. The demonstrators have been charged with “assaulting a police officer.”
- In Sakhnin, in the north of Israel, Israeli forces arrested some 14 demonstrators, including three women and a child. One of the women arrested was Fathiya Hussein, a human rights activist who works at Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. Israeli police forces charged into the demonstrators on horseback and fired tear gas and sponge-tipped bullets at demonstrators.
- In occupied East Jerusalem, Israeli forces arrested at least 10 protesters, some of whom were children. Approximately 12 protesters were injured when Israeli forces, including men in civilian clothing, attacked the demonstrators and bystanders.

**For further information on the “Law for Regularizing Bedouin Habitation in the Negev”, see:**

[Amnesty International, Israel: Knesset urged not to pass law that would forcibly evict tens of thousands of Negev/Naqab Bedouin \(Index: MDE 15/008/2013\), 20 April 2013](#)