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## **Israel: Protect citizens' rights to protest peacefully against forced evictions**

The Israeli authorities must not use excessive force on demonstrators planning to protest against a plan to forcibly evict tens of thousands of Arab Bedouins from their homes in southern Israel, said Amnesty International.

Citizens across Israel are organizing demonstrations for a “Day of Rage” on Thursday 1 August, to oppose the Praver-Begin plan. The plan enables the forced eviction of more than 30,000 residents in the Negev desert. Peaceful protests against the proposal on 15 July were met with excessive force by Israeli riot police and border police forces. Amnesty International is calling on the government of Israel to scrap the proposal.

“The Praver-Begin plan is a blatant example of Israel’s discriminatory policies towards its Palestinian minority. It must be dropped immediately,” said Philip Luther, Director of Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Programme.

“The use of excessive force by the police during the 15 July marches sent a dangerous signal about how little Israel respects the rights of its Palestinian citizens. The Israeli authorities must ensure that peaceful demonstrators are able to express their opposition to the plan free from intimidation or violence.”

During the demonstrations on 15 July Israeli police forces attacked peaceful demonstrators and carried out violent arrests in Be’er Sheva, in the Negev, in Sakhnin, in the north of Israel, and in occupied East Jerusalem. Many demonstrators were injured and dozens of others – including women and children – were arrested.

The Praver-Begin bill passed its first reading in the Knesset (Israeli parliament) on 24 June but has not yet become law. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned the plan and warned against the legitimization of forced displacement of Bedouin communities in the Negev. Despite this, the Israel Land Administration has continued to carry out repeated demolitions of homes and livelihood structures in the Bedouin villages.

Since the beginning of 2013 more than 140 Bedouin homes have been demolished by the Israeli authorities in the Negev. Most recently the village of al-‘Araqib was razed on 16 July. The village had already been demolished more than 50 times in the past three years. Its residents say that they have lived on the land for decades and should have the right to remain in their homes.

For many Palestinian citizens the Praver-Begin plan evokes the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the late 1940s and early 1950s, in events referred to as the “Nakba”, or catastrophe.

“Rather than using excessive force against peaceful demonstrators calling for a discriminatory plan to be scrapped, Israel should listen to its citizens and respect its international human rights obligations.”