

URGENT ACTION

ISRAEL: DEMOLITION OF BEDOUIN VILLAGE IMMINENT

Around 250 residents, one third of them children, of the Bedouin village al-'Araqib in southern Israel are facing forcible eviction from their land and the destruction of their property for the seventh time since July. Although residents have a long-established claim to the area and are Israeli citizens, the Israeli government does not recognize their rights to the land.

Since July, al-'Araqib village has been destroyed by the Israeli authorities at least once a month and the villagers anticipate further destruction within the next week. Earlier this week, Israeli authorities demolished a mosque in the nearby Bedouin town of Rahat, and the neighbouring local council refused to continue selling water to residents of al-'Araqib. Persistent attempts by the villagers and their supporters to rebuild their homes have been met by further destruction, and the entire village is threatened. Residents are currently camping out in makeshift shacks and tents.

On 27 July, at least 46 homes and other structures in al-'Araqib, including animal pens and water tanks, were destroyed by officials of the Israel Lands Administration (ILA) accompanied by over 1,000 police officers. The entire village was razed by bulldozers, and thousands of olive and other trees were uprooted, destroying the villagers' livelihood. Possessions including electricity generators, refrigerators and vehicles were confiscated by the police.

On 4 and 10 August, makeshift shelters that the villagers had built were demolished and buried by bulldozers, supported by a large police force in riot gear equipped with a water cannon. Building materials and water tanks were seized; seven residents were arrested but later released, four on condition that they not enter al-'Araqib. Then on 17 August, the authorities recommenced demolitions at dawn during Ramadan, while the villagers were fasting. On 12 September at dawn, dozens of police arrived again at al-'Araqib with bulldozers and destroyed newly erected tents and other structures. The sixth and latest demolition was on 13 October, when the entire village was razed to the ground, and the director of the Negev Coexistence Forum, a group supporting the villagers, was arrested by police and banned from entering al-'Araqib for 10 days.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Hebrew, English or your own language:

- Urging the Israeli authorities not to destroy al-'Araqib again, and to allow the villagers to rebuild their homes;
- Urging the Israeli authorities to immediately end the policy of home demolitions in al-'Araqib and other "unrecognized" villages in Israel, and to take steps to officially recognize al-'Araqib and other "unrecognized" villages so as to allow residents security of tenure and the possibility of developing their villages without threat to their homes and livelihoods;
- Urging the Israeli authorities to take immediate steps in line with the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendations of July 2010 to guarantee access to health structures, education, water and electricity for residents of these villages.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 DECEMBER 2010 TO:

Director-General of the ILA

Yaron Bibi
Israel Lands Administration
6 Shamai Street
P.O. Box 2600
Jerusalem 94631, Israel
Fax: +972 2 620 8427
Email: natalil@mami.gov.il

**Salutation: Dear Director-General,
ILA**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior

Eliyahu Yishai
2 Kaplan Street
PO Box 6158
Kiryat Ben Gurion
Jerusalem 91061, Israel
Fax: +972 2 666 2909
Email: sar@moin.gov.il

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Prime Minister
Benjamin Netanyahu
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street
Kiryat Ben-Gurion, Hakiryat
PO Box 187, Jerusalem, Israel
Fax: + 972 2 566 4838
Email: pm_eng@pmo.gov.il

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

These demolitions come in the context of ongoing Israeli government actions against residents of "unrecognized" villages like al-'Araqib. Dozens of Bedouin villages in southern Israel and other parts of the country are not formally recognized by the state authorities, even though their tens of thousands of residents are Israeli citizens. They lack basic services and live under constant threat of destruction of their homes and eviction from the land. This year has seen a marked increase in the demolition of Bedouin homes in the Negev (or Naqab) area of southern Israel. The Israel Lands Administration classifies al-'Araqib and other "unrecognized" villages as state land and claims that the Bedouin citizens of Israel "invaded" these areas. Yet, the Bedouin have a well-established historical claim to live there and international human rights law supports the view that they should be free from threats of home demolition or forced evictions.

In its concluding observations in July 2010, the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) stated its concern about "allegations of forced evictions of the Bedouin population based on the Public Land Law (Expulsion of Invaders) of 1981 as amended in 2005" and about what it described as the Israeli authorities "inadequate consideration" of the agricultural and other traditional needs of the Bedouin population of the Negev and the difficulties that the Bedouin face in accessing "health structures, education, water and electricity" due to Israeli policies. The HRC called for the Israeli authorities to "respect the Bedouin population's right to their ancestral land and their traditional livelihood based on agriculture" and to "guarantee the Bedouin population's access to health structures, education, water and electricity, irrespective of their whereabouts" in Israel. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has also expressed concern about Israel's relocation of Bedouin residents of "unrecognized" villages to towns and called for their villages to be officially recognized, and for Israel to "enhance its efforts to consult" the villagers and seek their agreement or consent in advance of any process of relocation.

Despite an apparent governmental plan to regularize the status of some of the "unrecognized" villages, it was reported in the Israeli media in early 2010 that the Interior Ministry, the Israel Lands Administration and the police had decided to triple the demolition rate of Bedouin construction in the Negev, and the marked increase in the number of demolitions and demolition orders this year accords with such reports.

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