

URGENT ACTION

BEDOUIN VILLAGE DEMOLISHED

On 22 November, Israeli authorities demolished approximately 30 structures in the Bedouin village of al-'Araqib in the Negev in southern Israel for the seventh time since July. The residents – citizens of Israel with a long-established claim to the area – are trying to rebuild their homes yet again but face increasing hardship as winter approaches.

At around 7am, Israel Lands Administration officials with bulldozers, accompanied by dozens of police officers equipped with riot gear, arrived at al-'Araqib village and quickly destroyed the shacks, tents and other structures that villagers had managed to erect following the previous demolition on 13 October. As in previous demolitions, no eviction or demolition order was presented to the inhabitants.

Some 30 structures were destroyed, including tents and shacks where the residents slept and cooked, and makeshift toilets and chicken pens. In addition, approximately 1,600 olive trees located some 2km from the village and belonging to relatives of al-'Araqib residents were uprooted by the Israeli authorities. The villagers have already started rebuilding some of the tents and shacks so that they have some protection, as the Negev desert gets very cold at night during the winter months.

This is the seventh time that al-'Araqib, one of the more than 40 "unrecognized" villages in Israel whose residents lack security of tenure and government services, has been destroyed since July. Some of al-'Araqib's 250 residents are camping out in makeshift shacks and tents in the village cemetery, while others are temporarily staying with relatives in the nearby town of Rahat or in Kafr Qassem, near Tel Aviv. However, at least 50 people, including at least 30 children, decided to rebuild their homes in the village in order to remain on their land, and are living in the remains of structures that were demolished.

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

- Condemning the latest destruction of al-'Araqib and urging the Israeli authorities to allow the villagers to rebuild their homes;
- Urging the Israeli authorities to respect the Bedouin population's right to their ancestral land by ending 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 05 JANUARY 2011 TO:

Director-General of the Israel Lands Administration

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

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
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 236/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE15/027/2010/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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 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.

In its concluding observations in July 2010, the UN Human Rights Committee 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 Committee 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.

Further information on UA: 236/10 Index: MDE 15/028/2010 Date: 24 November 2010

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