

URGENT ACTION

VILLAGE DESTROYED FOR EIGHTH TIME

The Bedouin village of al-'Araqib in the Negev in southern Israel has been demolished for the eighth time, affecting around 50 people, over half of them children. The residents, citizens of Israel, are determined to rebuild their homes as the weather deteriorates.

This morning officials of the Israel Land Administration and the Green Patrol (under the authority of the Israeli Nature and Parks Authority) arrived at the village, equipped with at least two bulldozers, and accompanied by dozens of police officers travelling in at least 20 police vans. The authorities quickly destroyed around 30 makeshift tents which the inhabitants had resurrected after the last demolition on 22 November. The villagers and their supporters from the Negev Coexistence Forum (NCF) managed to rescue some of the plastic used to cover their tents as well as some of the metal frames. The authorities also destroyed the home of a family who had moved into an orchard some 2km from the main village. In addition, a water tank, along with a lorry used to carry the tank to collect water from local supplies, was confiscated.

The persistent recent demolitions in al-'Araqib have also included animal pens, which the villagers used for their goats, sheep and hens. Livestock now inhabit either the nearby cemetery or roam around the village without shelter. Some villagers who lost their homes in previous demolitions now camp in tents in the cemetery outside the village.

This is the eighth time that al-'Araqib village, one of the more than 40 "unrecognized" villages in Israel whose residents lack security of tenure and government services, has been destroyed since July. The inhabitants of al-'Araqib remain determined to stay in their village and rebuild their homes. Around 50 people were directly affected by today's demolition, and are now rebuilding with the assistance of their supporters in the NCF and other groups.

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

- Condemning the persistent destruction of al-'Araqib village and urging the Israeli authorities to stop the policy of home demolitions inside Israel, as well as in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem;
- Urging the Israeli authorities to respect the Bedouin population's right to their ancestral land by allowing them to rebuild their homes, 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 implement 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 2 FEBRUARY 2011:

Director-General of the Israel Land
Administration

Yaron Bibi
Israel Land Administration
6 Shamai Street
PO 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, PO Box 187
Kiryat Ben-Gurion,
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 second update of UA 236/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE15/027/2010/en> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/mde15/028/2010/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The village of al-'Araqib is one of more than 40 Palestinian villages in Israel not recognized by the Israeli authorities, despite the residents' Israeli citizenship and long-established claims to their lands. Residents of these "unrecognized" villages, many of which are located in Israel's Negev desert, lack security of tenure and services including water and electricity.

Al-'Araqib village was first demolished by the authorities on 27 July 2010, when residents were evicted by a force consisting of over 1,000 riot police officers, and at least 46 homes and other structures, including animal pens and water tanks, were destroyed. Thousands of olive and other trees were uprooted, destroying the villagers' livelihood, and the villagers' 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 again. Then on 17 August, the authorities recommenced demolitions at dawn; this was 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 demolition was on 13 October, when the entire village was again razed to the ground, and the director of the NCF was arrested by police and banned from entering al-'Araqib for 10 days. The seventh demolition was on 22 November, when approximately 30 structures were demolished in the village and some 1,600 olive trees located 2km away from the village and belonging to relatives of al-'Araqib residents were uprooted by the Israeli authorities.

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 Land 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.

In addition to the demolitions in al-'Araqib and other Palestinian communities inside Israel, the Israeli authorities have recently intensified demolitions of Palestinian homes located in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. On 21 December, for example, a home belonging to a family of six, including three children, was destroyed in Sur Baher in East Jerusalem. The same day, a Palestinian home belonging to a family of five, including three children, was destroyed in Nu'man village in East Jerusalem. On 19 December, four tents serving as family homes and four animal pens were demolished in al-Haswa, near Bethlehem, affecting 24 people, including 16 children.

Further information on UA: 236/10 Index: MDE 15/030/2010 Date: 23 December 2010

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