

## **Destruction of the Leviathan: A very brief observation in the demolition of Umm al-Hiran**

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“The bureaucracy is expanding to meet the needs of the expanding bureaucracy.” - Oscar Wilde<sup>1</sup>

The Bedouin people are Israeli citizens, yet every day they face discrimination by their government. These people make up 30 percent of the Negev population, but only live on 3.5 percent of the land. Additionally, 55 percent of the Bedouins live in unrecognized villages. These 120,000 Bedouin villages all lack basic infrastructure and the infant mortality rates are 5x higher than the national average. While the Bedouin lack the bare necessities of life, they also are deprived of their historic property rights.

The Bedouins were native to the Negev land long before the British Mandate and Ottoman Empire control. Some tribes have documentation from the British and Ottoman governments, proving they are the rightful land owners, but the Israeli government does not recognize these documents. Therefore, Bedouin homes are demolished on a regular basis for being unlicensed. However, even if they wanted to get a license, there is no authority that issues them. After these unrecognized villages are destroyed, the Israeli government settles Jewish citizens on the land of the Bedouin ruins.

In the 1950s, the Knesset (Israeli legislature) has drafted many plans to minimize the area of land inhabited by the Bedouins.<sup>2</sup> Israel has previously moved the Bedouins three times and are expelling them yet again. The government is trying to limit the Bedouins to a small number of reservation-like towns, in hopes to contain the Bedouin. Further, the Knesset has allocated resources to enforce the law onto the unrecognized villages and to develop Jewish settlements. This is evident by the new bills and proposed amendments to existing legislation; which is solely aimed at solving the unrecognized village problem and to encourage Jewish migration.<sup>3</sup>

The residents of the unrecognized Umm al-Hiran village were unfortunate to be placed on land that is now identified as having good potential for a Jewish settlement.<sup>4</sup> Before the demolition, most of Umm al-Hiran consisted of the Abu al-Qi'an tribe. There were roughly 500 residents and the majority of the village was in areas zoned for residential buildings, by Israel. However, all the Bedouin houses were marked for demolition so that Israel could build the Jewish settlement, also called Hiran.

The people of Umm al-Hiran had legally battled land planning authorities in the Israeli courts but their loss was sadly inevitable. These courts can be bias and Bedouins lack the legal resources compared to the state. Hence, the Bedouin and Palestinian lands will continue to be consumed by the leviathan, Israel. Unless the international community establishes strict demands with detrimental sanctions, the Israeli hegemony will devour the Bedouins and Palestinians. Until then the environmental injustices that

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/130452-the-bureaucracy-is-expanding-to-meet-the-needs-of-the>

<sup>2</sup> “Settling the Bedouin in the Negev,” a document from the Israeli Military archives [filed no. missing as only a small number of pages were permitted release]. See also Schlomo Swirsky and Yael Hasson, “Invisible Citizens,” p.5 (2006).

<sup>3</sup> Amendment No.1 of 2005 to the Public Land Law (Expulsion of Invaders of 1981. Amendment No. 4 of 2010 to the Negev Development Authority Law of 1991. Cabinet Decision No. 2425 of Aug. 4, 2002, concerning the increase of enforcement of the planning, building and land laws. Cabinet Decision No. 881 of Sept. 25, 2003 to develop recognized Bedouin villages.

<sup>4</sup> The Israel Land Administration (ILA), “Report of Status of New and Renewed Settlements,” Aug. 2001. The report discusses 68 new towns initiated by Israeli government bodies and private developers.

occur daily in Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories will be vast and unwavering. This is apparent in the concluding arguments of the Israeli State for an evacuation lawsuit,

“In any case, there is nothing wrong with planning a town to be built on land registered in the name of the state, and just as there are plans to build several towns to house the Bedouin ... so there are plans to establish future towns to house Jews.”<sup>5</sup>



Gun magazines at site



Destruction of an outpost, part of Umm al-Hiran



Fired-rounds at site (With Umm al-Hiran close-by, Israeli soldiers use the land as a firing range)

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<sup>5</sup> The state's closing arguments in CC 3326/04, *The State of Israel v. Ibrahim Farhoud Abu al-Qi'an*, decision dated July 30, 2009, p.8.



More destruction of a smaller village of Umm al-Hiran (recently destroyed village in background)



Landscape of Umm al-Hiran