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Ongoing Ethnic Cleansing: Judaizing the Naqab

**Salman Abu Sitta
Rebecca Manski
Jonathan Cook
Yeela Ranaan
Irène Steinert
Gadi Algazi
Max Blumenthal**

**With Ismail Zayid, Bruce Katz, Hisham Yousef,
Ron Saba, Mortaza Sahibzada & Uri Davis**

**Contributions from Negev Coexistence Forum
& Regional Council for Unrecognized Villages**

Editors

**Faisal Sawalha, Jesse Benjamin
& Mortaza Sahibzada**



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Defence of Human Rights in Israel
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AL-BEIT: Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Israel
PO Box 650, 'Ar'ara 30026, Israel
C/o uridavis@actcom.co.il

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1. Al-Araqib – All of Palestine

by Salman Abu Sitta

In the past few months, we have heard the news about the destruction of Al-Araqib village in the district of Beer Sheba in the Naqab by hundreds of Israeli patrolmen and their weapons of destruction (see Chapters 6 & 7). The monstrosity of the destruction and the arrogance of the Zionist invader are likely what propelled this piece of news to the front pages, although the process of destruction and expulsion of the indigenous Palestinians of Beer Sheba has been ongoing during the past few decades.

This news coincided with the case that was published in Israeli newspapers, which is the lawsuit filed by Nouri Al-Uqbi (Nuri el Okbi), 68 years of age, the head of the Association for the Protection of Bedouins' Rights in Beer Sheba, before the Beer Sheba court to recover his land that was plundered by the Zionist invader.

This case however has not adequately grabbed the attention of Palestinian and Arab officials, even though the lands seized by Israel in the district of Beer Sheba exceed the area of the entire West Bank, and despite the fact that the expulsion of people from their homes and the destruction thereof, along with killing their livestock and spraying their farms with deadly pesticides, all mean that the Nakba of 1948 is still present and implemented in Beer Sheba for all to witness until this day.

The pretext put forth by Israel to the courts is extremely racist. It states that these lands have no owner, and are therefore lands of desolate barren wilderness (*"mewat land"*), and that there possibly could have been some shepherds who came from Saudi Arabia to graze their sheep and then returned.

The concept of the land being a wasteland void of an owner (also known as *"Terra nullius"*) is a longstanding colonial principle which was implemented by the English in North America, Australia and several parts of Africa. This principle is now discredited and has been withdrawn from circulation after two to three centuries of colonialism, in a shy acknowledgement of the crimes of the West in those regions.

The insolence of the Zionist organization reached such a point that in the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, it presented a map of Palestine – to justify approval of the Balfour Declaration – and had added hatched lines onto the map covering areas with the text "Grazing Land for Nomads", thereby expunging approximately 1000 Palestinian towns and villages, most of which are two thousand years old or more. Yet this forgery paid off, as the League of Nations agreed to grant a mandate over Palestine to Britain, inclusive of the Balfour Declaration.

So is the land of Palestine a deserted wilderness with no owner? Can Israel consider any piece of land within Palestine a barren wasteland (*mewat*) if there is no title deed or registration for this piece of land in the Lands Department? In other words, does the Israeli rule apply, which states that all of the land is barren unless definitely proven owned and registered otherwise? Israel has implemented this rule, not only on the lands of Beer Sheba, which Britain did not register because of its hurried departure without implementing its responsibilities on Palestine, but also on many lands in the Galilee region and the area known as The Triangle in lands lying between

the villages such as rugged terrain and the lands of Al-Hima. It still applies this rule extensively throughout the Occupied West Bank which it considers as lands of the state and implants settlements therein.

If we were in Palestine prior to the Balfour Declaration, or if we were in Jordan, Syria or Lebanon, we would not need proof that the land is Arab land owned by its inhabitants because of their long term usage of it and their customary convention, whether or not the land was registered and whether it was individually owned or owned collectively by the entire village.

Yet, in Palestine, we are required to resort to law and history to prove this obvious right of ownership of our land, denied by those who greedily desire to grab it (1).

So what are the aspects involved in the Palestinians' right to their land, and particularly those lands which Britain did not fully register in the Lands Department?

1.1 Ottoman Era

In Islamic law, the land is owned by the nation to benefit from it. Yet it remains the possession of the nation collectively, and the guardian thereof is the caliph or sultan. Therefore, the symbolic ownership is for the caliph or sultan, but the disposition and benefit is for the individuals. So if these individuals cultivate the land and benefit from it, they pay its rent or tax. In actuality, there was no need to register the land, unless there was a case of sale and purchase or inheritance. In such instance the real estate would need to be identified, with this typically being done in a descriptive manner, through the determination of a neighbour's boundaries or a landmark.

After a few years of Ottoman sovereignty over the Levant and Egypt, the state imposed taxes on lands. We have a rare document called "*Dafteri-Mufassel*" (2), which is a ledger for Ottoman taxes that was issued in 1569. In this journal, we find that the lands which Israel claims in the Beer Sheba court to be wilderness, without an owner, are actually cultivated by their inhabitants who are paying taxes on them. We mention for example Khirbet Al-Je'ethni, which was the land of Bani Uqba during the mandate, and was inhabited in the sixteenth century by 43 families who paid a wheat tax worth 6,250 oegas (an 'ocga' was an Ottoman silver coin), a barley tax worth 2,940 oegas and a summer crops tax worth 2,184 oegas.

In 1858, the Ottoman Land Law was issued which categorized lands and determined rights therein, as part of a modernization movement introduced by the Ottoman government in the nineteenth century. What is important to us in this domain is the material used by Israel to rob Palestinian lands, which is Article 103 that describes "*mewat*" land as follows:

"Vacant land such as hilly areas, fossilized land and pastures, which are not at the disposal of anyone per a title deed and not assigned *ab antiquo* to the use of the inhabitants of the towns or villages and remote from the towns and villages such that a clear loud cry of someone would not be heard from the edge of habitation. This is defined as *mewat* land."

Land experts have estimated that the wasteland (*mewat*) not populated by anyone is at a distance of no less than 2.5 kilometers from any inhabited area, or a distance traversed by a horse for a period of 45 minutes.

The Ottoman Lands Law stipulated that whoever cultivates this wilderness after obtaining a license, which means plowing it and planting in it, then such person shall be entitled to register that land under his name in the title deed without having to pay anything. However, if the person cultivates the land without obtaining a license, then the person is entitled to register the land under his name by paying an “equivalent price” (*badal mithl*). If someone obtained a license to cultivate land, and did nothing with that land to improve it for a period of 3 years without an acceptable excuse, then that land is withdrawn from said person.

The rationale behind this is clear; the state encourages cultivation of wilderness in order to benefit peoples’ livelihoods and increase the income to the treasury.

It is clear from the Ottoman tax ledgers that the lands of Beer Sheba were not considered “*mewat*”. All of these lands were cultivated, particularly these lands which enjoyed rainfalls of 100 mm per year, which was sufficient for the cultivation of barley, or rainfalls of 200 mm per year, and which sufficed for the cultivation of wheat. This wide area was populated by 95% of the Beer Sheba inhabitants. Its northern and eastern borders were the Gaza coastal villages, while its southern borders were a latitudinal line connecting Al Awja Al-Hafir and the Dead Sea.

Since the Ottoman authorities desired to affirm the right of the inhabitants to their lands, in addition to the ownership thereof based on convention and tradition (Customary Law), the authorities sent a military mission on 4/5/1891 to identify the lands of “Al-Urban” (i.e. the Arabs). The mission was military because Jerusalem and the south of Palestine were directly subordinate to the Ministry of Interior in Istanbul.

The following was stated in the report of the military mission (3):

“The mission has surveyed the Beer Sheba lands with the assistance of five notables to delimit the lands of each tribe with the knowledge of the officials in the Jerusalem *Mutasarifiyyat* (i.e province). 5 million dunums were demarcated – out of lands exceeding 10 million dunums in the district – among the names of its ancient holders after obtaining the approval of the Special Military Committee and the sheikhs in this regard.”

The recognition of land ownership in Beer Sheba continued according to tradition and custom, in an organized manner until Allenby’s occupation of Palestine. We find evidence to this in the archive of the Religious (*Sharia*) Court of Jerusalem during the years 1906-1908. Examples include several powers of attorney issued by the court for the lawyer Salim Bin Issa Al-Batarseh as an agent on behalf of Sheikh Ismail Abu Mahfouz to request ownership of land in Khirbet Abu Sedr against the lawsuit filed by Sheikh Hamad Al-Soufi, and similarly, Sheikh Ismail requested ownership for land in Khirbet Mleih. These lands are in the district of Beer Sheba, and the litigants are inhabitants of the district as well.

1.2 Era of the Mandate

Herbert Samuel who was appointed as the first British High Commissioner, played the role of British tutelage for the mandate over Palestine, yet in reality was a Zionist official to hand over Palestine to the Jews. During his tenure (from 1920-1925), the legal basis was established for the erection of the state of Israel, by considering Hebrew an official language and through the recognition of independent parliamentary representation for Jews (the Jewish Agency), along with an independent educational system, a banking system especially for them, the nucleus of the ministries for works, energy and water, and the nucleus of the Haganah army. Among the most dangerous actions undertaken by Samuel was the issuance of more than one hundred laws, most of which were to facilitate the transfer of lands to Jews.

The gravest of these laws violated Article 103 of the Ottoman Lands Law. This law would encourage the cultivation of lands and provide incentives for doing so, while Samuel issued a law criminalizing anyone who would revive *mewat* land.

At the same time, Samuel played the role of Sultan and took on the part of leader of the Islamic nation and controlling its land, not for the benefit of this nation, but rather for the interest of the Zionist immigrants. Accordingly, he issued the *Mewat* Land Ordinance of 1921, which stipulates that anyone who revives *mewat* land will not have its ownership registered under his name, but rather will be punished for doing so as a trespasser on this land. As for those who had already cultivated the land from long ago, then those persons were required to register the land -within two months after the issuance of the Ordinance- at the Land Department and request a title deed to prove ownership. This means that registration needed to take place prior to 18/4/1921.

Since nobody knew that their lands which they lived on for hundreds of years had to be registered with the Mandate government in a very short period of time and at the risk of losing such land otherwise, and since those who did know did not care about the instructions of this foreign government, nobody registered their lands according to this law.

Yet what aggravated Samuel and his Zionist legal secretary Norman Bentwich was that Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies, visited Palestine and met with the sheikhs of Beer Sheba, and told them that Britain recognizes their rights and customs and encouraged them to register their lands without fees.

In reality, during the entire period of the Mandate, Britain did not implement Samuel's ordinance in which he amended Article 103 of the Ottoman law, and no land was withdrawn from its owner per this code.

1.3 Israeli Era

Israeli practices of seizing Palestinian lands, and particularly in the district of Beer Sheba, can be summarized in the case of Al-Araqib, whose homes Israel had demolished for the sixth time in mid-September 2010. Its inhabitants had rebuilt their homes five times prior to that. The case of Al-Araqib itself is represented in the lawsuit of Nouri Al-Uqbi against the state of Israel demanding the recovery of his land.

Before getting into the details of this case, it is worth noting that Zionism interpreted the Balfour Declaration as the hand-over of Palestine to the Jews. Therefore, Weizmann approached the British government in 1918 while Allenby was still fighting the Turks to occupy what remained of the Levant, requesting that Britain conduct a complete survey for lands in Palestine and verify the existence of irrefutable legal documents for ownership “of every dunum in Palestine”. Since the vast majority of the lands were owned and cultivated due to custom, tradition and inheritance from one generation to the next, this meant that the Mandate Government could classify most lands as *mewat*, and therefore the government could acquire these and hand them over to the Jews, for purposes of “*close settlement*” stipulated in Article 6 of the Mandate’s document.

Indeed, after one month from arriving in Palestine, Herbert Samuel formed the “Land Commission” for the examination of lands. Its chairman was English and his name was Abramson. One of its members was Faidi Al-Alami. He was an Arab land owner and also a member of *Al-Mab’uthan* Council (Al-Mab’uthan was basically the Ottoman Parliament – Al-Alami was the appointed representative for his region). The Jewish member of the commission was Haim Kalvarisky, who was the head of a Zionist colonisation company, the mastermind of the commission and the real author of its report (as Faidi Al-Alami did not understand English).

The Land Commission’s report was issued in May 1921 (4). The report stated that 60% of Palestine was *mewat* land, meaning it had no owner, despite the fact that Samuel had informed London that the Commission could not accurately estimate the area of *mewat* land. The Commission made numerous simple mistakes, including estimating the land of Palestine to be 22,000 square kilometres, and that only 20% of Palestine was cultivated.

In its report, the commission also recommended that owners sell their lands and allocate a certain area for cultivation and selling the remainder, because “the peasant is active and a good farmer” and can live off of the planting of a small piece of land.

Based on Weizmann’s insistence on a comprehensive survey for the lands of Palestine, Britain summoned the (English) head of the Egyptian Survey Department, who formed the “Palestine Survey Department”. This survey allowed for the creation of topographical maps and at the same time divided lands into blocks and consequently divided these blocks into parcels, while determining the owners thereof. The survey team was accompanied by Lands Department officials to resolve ownership disputes on location. This system started in 1928 in accordance with the law issued that year.

The primary concern of the Survey Department was the affirmation of existing (though little) Jewish ownership of lands and their surroundings, in order to allow Jews to expand their domain when necessary. When the British left Palestine, the Survey Department had not completed more than 20% of the area of Palestine (5,243,042 dunums) in regards to establishing ownership, or what was called “Land Settlement”.

It is noteworthy that the one-fifth of Palestine that was surveyed lies in its entirety in the regions where there was Jewish concentration, along the coastal plain and the area known as Marj Ibn Amer, along with the area west of the Jordan River near Tiberias and Al-Houla. These are the regions that were designated in the Partition Plan of 1947

to the Jewish state, in addition to all of southern Palestine, which was completely Arab.

Land settlement, meaning the recognition of its ownership, did not reach the upper middle Galilee area or eastern Palestine (the West Bank) or the southern part of it (the district of Beer Sheba and the entire southern Jerusalem region). In this regard, Israel manipulates various laws to seize these lands.

Shortly after the Nakba (i.e. the “Palestinian Catastrophe”), on 14/3/1950, Israel issued the “Absentees Property Law”. What is meant by ‘absentees’ here is the inhabitants of 675 towns, villages and hamlets expelled by Israel from their homes and prevented from returning. Israel placed their properties under Custodianship. Through deliberate legal manoeuvring and ploys, most of these properties were transferred through another law to the Development Authority, whose openly stated goal was merely benefiting from these confiscated properties until a peace agreement was reached. Yet in reality what took place was different. A sham deal was reached between Ben-Gurion and the Jewish National Fund (JNF) for the purchase of 2,500,000 dunums of refugee lands in Beer Sheba and along the borders of the Armistice Lines and the Lebanon borders so that Ben-Gurion could claim – when confronted with UN resolution 194 for the return of refugees to their homes – that these properties were beyond his control and were the property of an international charitable institution.

A dispute took place between the JNF and the State of Israel as to who the beneficiary of these lands is and who is responsible for them. An agreement was reached in 1960 to create the Israel Land Administration, to manage all of these lands in Israel including seized Palestinian lands and the lands of the JNF that were acquired during the Mandate (936,000 dunums) such that these are not rented out or exploited or sold to any person or entity that is not Jewish, even if that person has Israeli citizenship (5).

Thus Israel eventually had a free hand in all of the lands, whether these were registered under the names of their refugee owners or were not registered during the Mandate. In regards to the latter, Israel arbitrarily classified these lands as *mawat*, and considered them the property of the state. As for the owners of these lands who stayed and became Israeli citizens, they were expelled by the state to a different location. When they demanded to return to their properties, it considered them “invaders” who are transgressing on the properties of the state.

In November 1948, two weeks after the fall of Beer Sheba into the hands of Zionists, the Beer Sheba military governor gathered the sheikhs who remained on their land in Israel – representing the remaining 15% of a total of 110,000 Palestinians who used to live in the Beer Sheba district in 1948 (6) – and affirmed to them that the government of Israel will preserve their rights and customs as long as they declare their loyalty to the government, and so they did.

However, within a few months, Israel began to drive out the inhabitants to a region north of Beer Sheba called *Al-Siyaj*, which had an area of 900,000 dunums. They were told that this was a temporary security procedure and that they would return to their homes within a period of two weeks to six months (7). This never happened of course.

In 1953, Israel issued the “Land Acquisition” Law, which gave it the right to register the land that was previously expropriated if certain conditions exist, in the name of the state. Among these conditions is that the lands were not in the possession of (held by) the owner (meaning still residing on the lands) as of April 1, 1952. Since the owner was driven out of his land to Al-Siyaj prior to this date, then the owner was no longer considered to have the right to demand his land and Israel registered these as properties of the state.

After the end of the military governance over Arabs in Israel in 1966, two laws were issued to complete the takeover of the Beer Sheba lands. The first was the “Settlement Rights” Law of 1969 which gives Israel the right to register any land it considers *mawat* in the name of the state. The second is the 1980 Naqab Land Acquisition (and Peace Treaty with Egypt) Law which authorizes the government to seize the lands of a certain region for military reasons and registering these in the name of the state without the right to appeal this procedure.

At the end of the military governance, a large number of inhabitants filed cases to recover their lands which Israel promised them they could return to “after a few weeks”. Israel never finally resolved these claims and tried with limited success to reach an agreement with the owners outside the court and without recognizing their ownership, by compensating them with a small amount or granting them an alternative via a smaller area of land and a distance further from their homes.

Yet many insisted on the reacquisition of their lands. Among these people was Nouri Al-Uqbi in Al-Araqib, who remained on his land (see Figure 5.1). When they destroyed his home, he rebuilt it and the police came to arrest him. When he emerged from prison, he went back and rebuilt his home, and they destroyed it. In mid-September, Al-Araqib village had been destroyed six times.

Therefore, the case of Nouri Al-Uqbi remains a symbol for the inhabitants of Al-Araqib, and Al-Araqib remains a symbol for the rest of Palestine.

1.4 The Case of Nouri Al-Uqbi

The Government of Israel mobilized 6 lawyers and an expert from Hebrew University, Professor Ruth Kark, and she had accessible the government’s records and the documents of the Hebrew University that Israel had stolen from Palestinian libraries and institutions. On the other hand, Nouri Al-Uqbi stood with two lawyers from the Adalah Legal Center and an expert from Beer Sheba University, Professor Oren Yiftachel. Yiftachel had brought his private research to bear and utilized the assistance of specialists in this field: Professor Ghazi Falah and Professor Michael Fischbach, both in the USA, and this author.

Nouri’s lawsuit was based on the fact that this was his land and the land of his forefathers from long ago, and it contained his clan’s cemetery, their water well and ruins, and that he has paid taxes to the government of Palestine and has receipts dating back to 22/9/1937, adding that he continued to pay taxes to the government of Israel in October 1950.

The claim of Israel as stated by the expert Kark, is that all of this real estate, as with most of Palestine, was barren land owned by nobody. “There are no Palestinians or

anyone else here. There were shepherds who brought their sheep from Saudi Arabia, and then returned.” The expert presented books of travellers such as Musil, Thompson, Guerin, Hull and Seetzen, and quoted lines from these books indicating that they did not see people or cultivation among those lands. Yiftachel responded that those travellers came not to study the inhabitants and the way they live, but rather to search for ruins that validate the Holy Book. He added that they had no interest in the inhabitants, and if there was any interest then it was primarily negative because they were hostile towards the Muslim populace.

Further, Yiftachel argued that Kark, in quoting these travellers, was biased and deceptive which is not befitting of a university professor. She quotes extensively from Thompson in his book “The Land and the Book”, yet ignores three final lines that completely change the meaning, as Thompson says: “This land has been cultivated for thousands of years, as it is today.”

In 1883, a geological mission headed by Edward Hull arrived in southern Palestine and passed through these areas. The mission’s report stated that these regions were similar to southern Italy and France, and they produce crops that exceeded the needs of the inhabitants which were exported from the ports of Gaza and Jaffa. Kark did not mention these details and omitted them from her quotes. Yiftachel was closely monitoring this Zionist expert who was well-practiced in falsification. He reminded her that she herself wrote in the seventies that large regions in Beer Sheva were being cultivated constantly. She responded that she was mistaken, and when she studied the matter more extensively she arrived at a different conclusion.

Kark relied on the Czech scholar of Eastern studies, Professor Alois Musil, who used to work for the Austrian Habsburg Empire in order to study the situation in Arab provinces within the Ottoman state in anticipation of their division among the European states. She stated that he visited Zuheilqa (another region among the Bani Uqba lands) and he found nothing. Actually, the page that she quoted from stated that he met Bani Uqba there.

Further, Kark did not mention the German traveller, Seetzen, who arrived at the start of the nineteenth century at the lodging grounds of Bani Uqba in Al-Araqib and found 70 families living there. This is how the case was transformed into a scholarly quarrel of evidences and arguments. This author would photocopy the pages of these references, and comparative historical maps, and send them on a daily basis to Yiftachel in order to benefit from them.

What is strange is that Kark demanded proof that Palestinians lived on those lands two centuries ago, meaning before the Ottoman Lands Law of 1858, in order to refute her argument that their land is *mewat*.

We went further back in history. We presented to Nouri’s expert passages from the Ottoman tax ledger of 1596 for all of Palestine – which was previously mentioned – and showed within it the names of the localities of Bani Uqba. The government’s expert did not object to the ledger, because it was part of a PhD thesis granted by the German Erlangen University, yet she objected to the names of those regions and claimed that they do not exist. Luckily we had maps of the Mandate area of Palestine which had the same names of these localities. We presented these to the court showing the aforementioned names.

On her part, the state expert provided maps of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) mission, which conducted a comprehensive survey of Palestine starting from 1871 with 26 maps and 10 volumes. She showed that in these maps there was nothing about Al-Araqib and Zuheilqa.

That was another fabrication, because the mission did not complete the exploration of the Beer Sheba district, but stopped at the northern part of it. We provided the Mandatory maps on the area of Palestine, that were used in the “Atlas of Palestine” and which we drew using the Geographical Information System (GIS) and compared these with the PEF maps. From this it became clear that the PEF maps only recorded a few landmarks, while the Palestine area maps registered more than twice the number of landmarks. The expert Yiftachel conducted a survey on location as well and found the cemetery, the well and other landmarks that match the Palestine Survey map.

The government’s expert paid no attention to the aforementioned documents we presented, which included the identification of lands conducted by the Turkish military mission in 1891 and the purchase and sale transactions that had powers of attorney registered for them in the Jerusalem Religious (*Sharia*) court in the first decade of the twentieth century. She said – in a racist manner – that the Turks were negligent in their duties and their documents cannot be relied on, whereas the Zionists are more accurate and organized.

Upon discussion of the Mandate era and the era of Balfour and his ilk, the expert thought that Samuel’s law – which was set to expand the meaning of *mewat* land – can be completely relied upon, thereby not recognizing the cultivation of the land from long ago unless the land was registered with the Mandate Government within two months from the issuance of the law; a process which nobody cared for.

Yet we presented a document proving that Churchill emphasized to a delegation of Beer Sheba sheikhs that the British Mandate Government recognized their rights and customs at the same time this law was issued (8) – see Figure 1.1.

The document was a surprise to the court which was largely sympathetic to the Zionist narrative, and was also a shock to the government’s expert, the Hebrew University professor. This surprise led to the publication of the news of the lawsuit in several Israeli newspapers under the title “Churchill in the Court of Beer Sheba”.

After the expert was able to collect herself, she stated that the Mandate Government did not implement this British pledge and relied on Samuel’s law which criminalized anyone who revived wasteland or did not register a land that he had revived from long ago.

However on our part, we presented papers to Nouri’s expert which showed that the Supreme Court of Jerusalem – in the case of lands (appeal) no. 89 for the year 1929 – ruled on a case presented before it, stating that the decision issued by Churchill in 1921 must be invoked and is therefore an active law that was applied.

We presented a British document that showed Ben-Gurion had requested exploiting vast lands in the Beer Sheba district because they were “not owned by anyone”, and that the Mandate Government had responded that “these lands are owned and cultivated from long ago” (9).

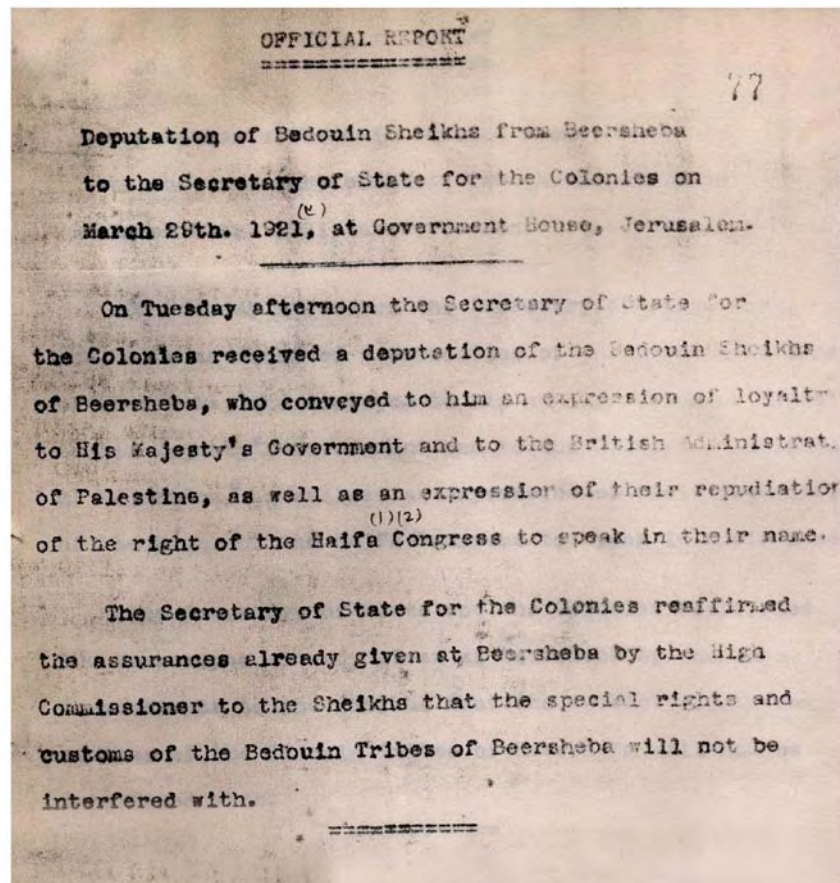


Figure 1.1: The decision of Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to recognize the rights and customs of the Beer Sheba inhabitants, 1921
(Source: Palestine Land Society, London)

We provided passages from the reports of the Southern District Commissioner (district of Gaza – Beer Sheba) which were sent on a fortnightly basis to the High Commissioner from 1920 till 1948. Every report explains the essential items: rainfall (drought and abundance), the start of the farmers plowing their lands, quality of crops or lack thereof, the amount of taxes collected, assistance provided by the government in the form of wheat and feed (in the years of drought), tractors to plow the land, agricultural consultations for improving crops and combating pests such as worms (10). There were also reports on cases where courts would rule regarding disputes over land ownership. There was a report that mentions in particular Jewish fraud in regards to plowing land they do not own in Asluj in the district of Beer Sheba, according to the Land Transfer Law of 1940. When these Jews were summoned to attend, they presented a pledge not to transgress on this land, possibly due to fear of punishment, or maybe because they knew they would take this land for free in a war they were preparing for against an unarmed population (11).

Of course, no rational person can view the reports of the Southern District Commissioner referred to above – who was subordinate to the British government that was colluding with Zionism – as pointing out to “wilderness with no owner and not frequented from time to time with the exception of shepherds who came from Saudi Arabia and then returned”, as the Zionist expert Ruth Kark claims.

The matter is so clear that it is very strange – had it not been for the claims of Zionism – that we have to resort to proving it, just like proving that the sun rises from the east. Therefore, we sent to Nouri's expert the map of the Land Transfer Law for the year 1940 (see Figure 1.2), which identifies 3 Zones: purely Arab lands where Jews are prohibited from ownership, the Jewish lands where Jews are permitted to own, and the transfer of lands in between the two provided a permission is obtained directly from the High Commissioner. So Zone A has an area of 16,680 square kilometres, and is purely Arab land where Jews are prohibited from ownership. It covers the area of Beer Sheba and other areas.

Although Israel seized all these lands after the Zionist invasion of 1948 and registered them as "State Land", Britain however did not register Beer Sheba as state lands. If Beer Sheba was a barren wasteland, as Israel has claimed, Britain would have registered it as such. Accordingly, we presented a Mandate map to Nouri's expert (Figure 1.3) which shows lands of the state (State Domain), and in the entire south there are no lands of the state except for sand dunes at the Khan Yunis coast and Rafah and a phosphate concession in the northeast corner of the Dead Sea.

Between the Zionist Orientalist concept and Palestinian reality ongoing since ancient time, there are paradoxes that are almost comical had their consequences not been so serious.

The Zionist expert presented a copy of the record from the Supreme Court of Jerusalem, which was record no. 59 of 1944 dated 20/5/1944. In this record, a sheikh from Al-Sane' clan (which is from Al-Tiyaha tribe, namely the same tribe as Nouri Al-Uqbi) testifies that they are *Arab nomads*, and does so in a case filed by Fayez Darwish Al-Wahidi who is from the Al-Wahidat (Tarabin) Arabs and denies they are Arab nomads because they *wear suits and fezzes* and live in the city. The Zionist expert eagerly attempted to exploit this statement to prove that someone on the side of the plaintiff is testifying before the Mandate court that they were *Arab nomads* and therefore have no existence in those lands.

When we re-examined these papers which were sent to us by Nouri's expert in order to clarify the matter, the truth became apparent, and it is one of many facts that Israel tries to obscure through deceit, forgery and lies.

The real story goes like this: near the end of the era of the Turkish government, the government resorted to calming the conditions between the tribes in relation to local wars, fights and disputes regarding land and livestock. It did so through reconciliations with them and presentation of gifts and certain articles of clothing, due to fears of British threats to its lands, which came to fruition by Allenby's invasion of Palestine, along with the help of "Lawrence of Arabia" in East Jordan. When things settled down for Britain in both countries, the Turkish government continued with this process and set rules for "controlling the activity of tribes" which would take effect from Ma'an in Jordan to Beer Sheba in Palestine to Al-Arish in the Sinai. All of these locations were under British protection. These rules were implemented in the thirties of the last century. Accordingly, courts for the clans were held for reconciliation amongst them in East Jordan, the Sinai and Palestine. A law was issued for this purpose in 1942. Unfortunately for the Zionist expert, this law was called "Bedouin Control Law, 1942 (Nomad)", in English, and so she thought that she could utilize this to prove her mythical claim by relying on the word "Nomad".

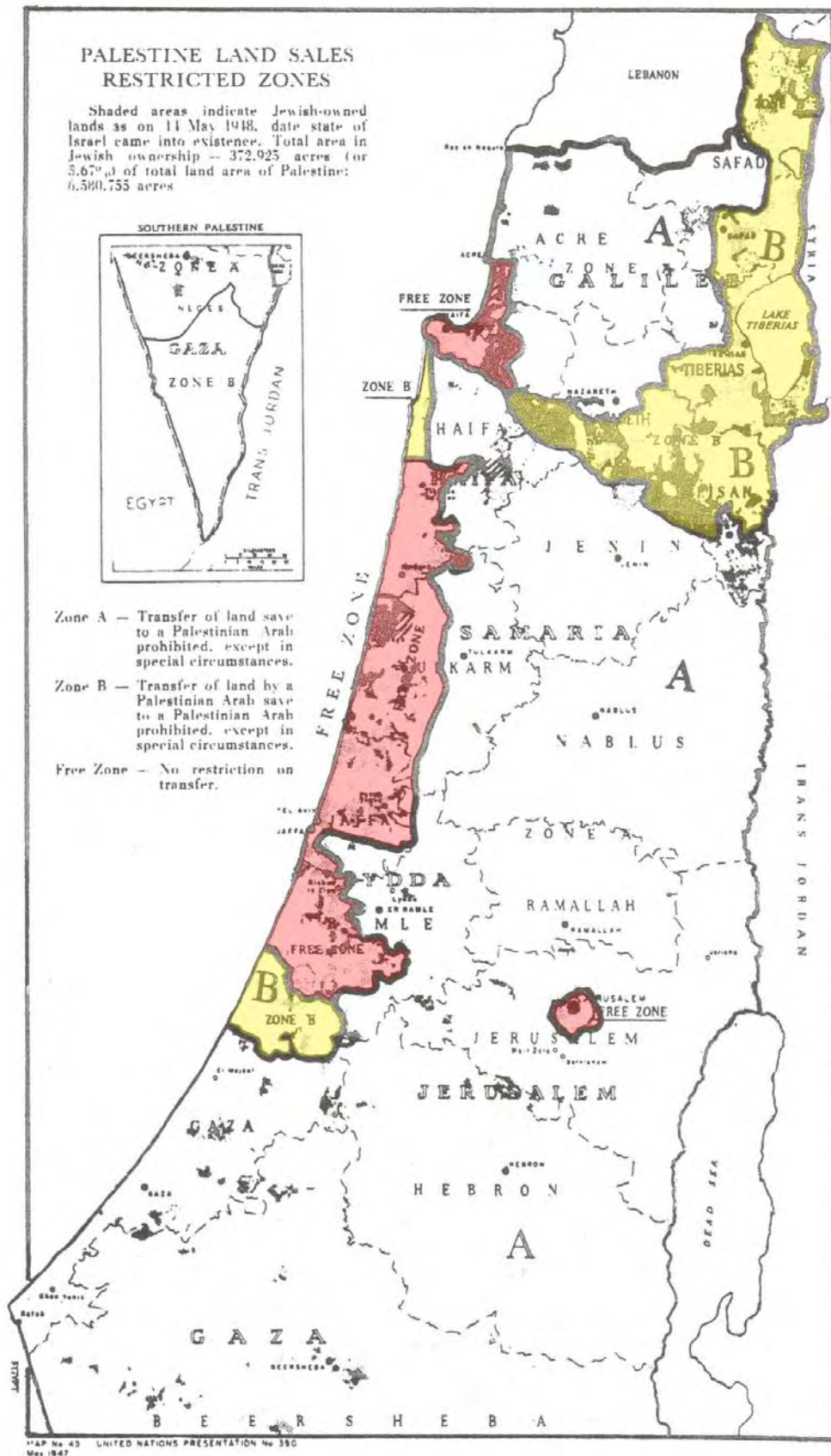


Figure 1.2: Map of the Land Transfer Law of 1940 prohibiting Jews from ownership of land in Zone A, which includes the Beer Sheba district
(Source: Atlas of Palestine, 1917-1966, Palestine Land Society)

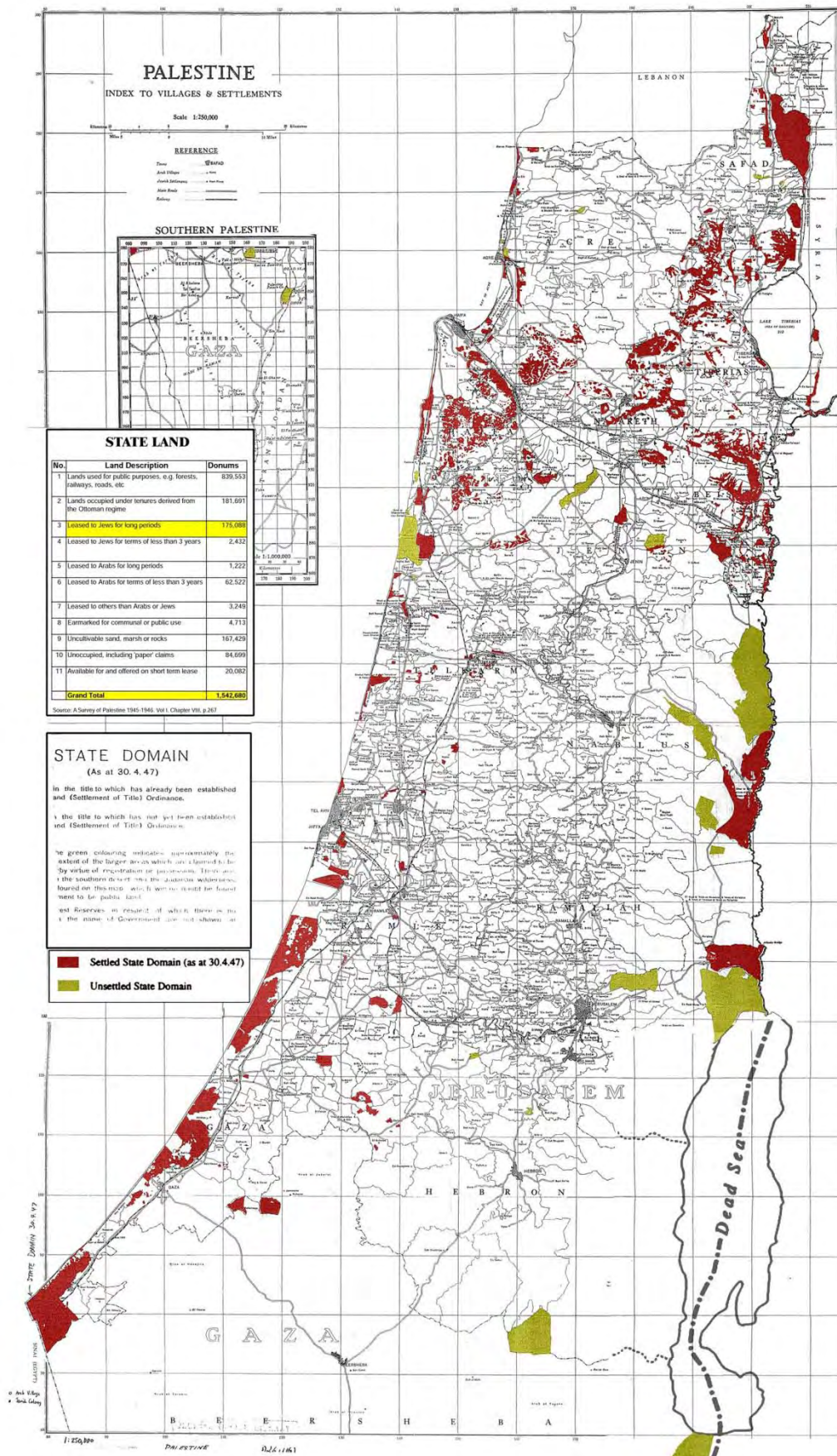


Figure 1.3: Map of the British Mandate “State Domain” of 1947
(Source: Atlas of Palestine, 1917-1966, Palestine Land Society)

What happened was that someone from Wahidat Al-Trabin killed somebody from another clan, and the killer resorted for refuge to the house of Abu Mu'ailiq where the women had gathered. So the sheikh judges issued a ruling that Al-Wahidat family leave the area to avoid the occurrence of another crime during what is known as a "temper flare-up" between people. Their departure was to continue until conciliation or some type of agreement could be reached between the two parties. The District Commissioner ratified this decision for the family's departure. Here the killer's family refused the decision and challenged the ruling before the Jerusalem Court. The issue presented was: Shall Al-Wahidat be subject to the Bedouin law that orders them to leave, or are they not Bedouins (i.e. *they wear fezzes*)? The Jerusalem Court ruled that they are not Bedouins based on the testimony of the Al-Sane' sheikh, who innocently testified that they indeed *wear fezzes*.

The whole affair, which is comical at times, is not related to land ownership nor cultivation nor the living of the inhabitants on the lands of Beer Sheba, but rather is related to a popular custom in what is known as the "cases of blood" which drive the killer to leave the region until conciliation takes place. The Zionist expert fell prey to her Orientalist ignorance regarding the meaning of 'Nomad' and what is really meant by it.

We sent Nouri's expert this information, along with copies of the letters from the District Commissioner in which he explains this subject as mentioned above. We called the grandson of the plaintiff at the time at the Jerusalem Court in the Gaza Strip, and he affirmed the entire story. However Nouri's expert unfortunately did not find the occasion to present this information. This was sufficient to expose the ignorance of this Zionist expert or rather her fabrication of facts. This is of course not surprising since the state expert immigrated, she or her parents, from Poland to claim the land of Palestine.

Yet Nouri's expert – with his accurate research and constant perseverance in order to prove that Nouri Al-Uqbi has a right to his land as an Israeli citizen equal to the rights of Jewish Israelis – found a map of the lodging grounds of Palestinian tribes in the district of Beer Sheba (see Figure 1.4). They were so intensive that it cannot be rationally acceptable to state that this land is barren without any owner(s).

What is noticeable on this map is that the population density of the Beer Sheba district corresponds to the percentage of rainfalls, as these reach their peak in the north and west part of the district and then diminish elsewhere. This is logical and matches the reality on the ground.

At the end of the Mandate period, the Mandate Government presented a final report on Palestine to the Anglo-American Committee in 1947. The report stated that it had not been proven that the Beer Sheba district was necessarily *mewat* land as follows (12):

"It is frequently difficult to assume that there was in the past no grant, and consequently it is not safe to assume that all the empty lands south of Beersheba or east of Hebron, for instance, are *mewat* [page 77]... It is possible that there may be private claims to over 2000 square kilometers which are not cultivated from time to time. The remainder may be considered to be either *mewat* or empty *miri* [page 82]."

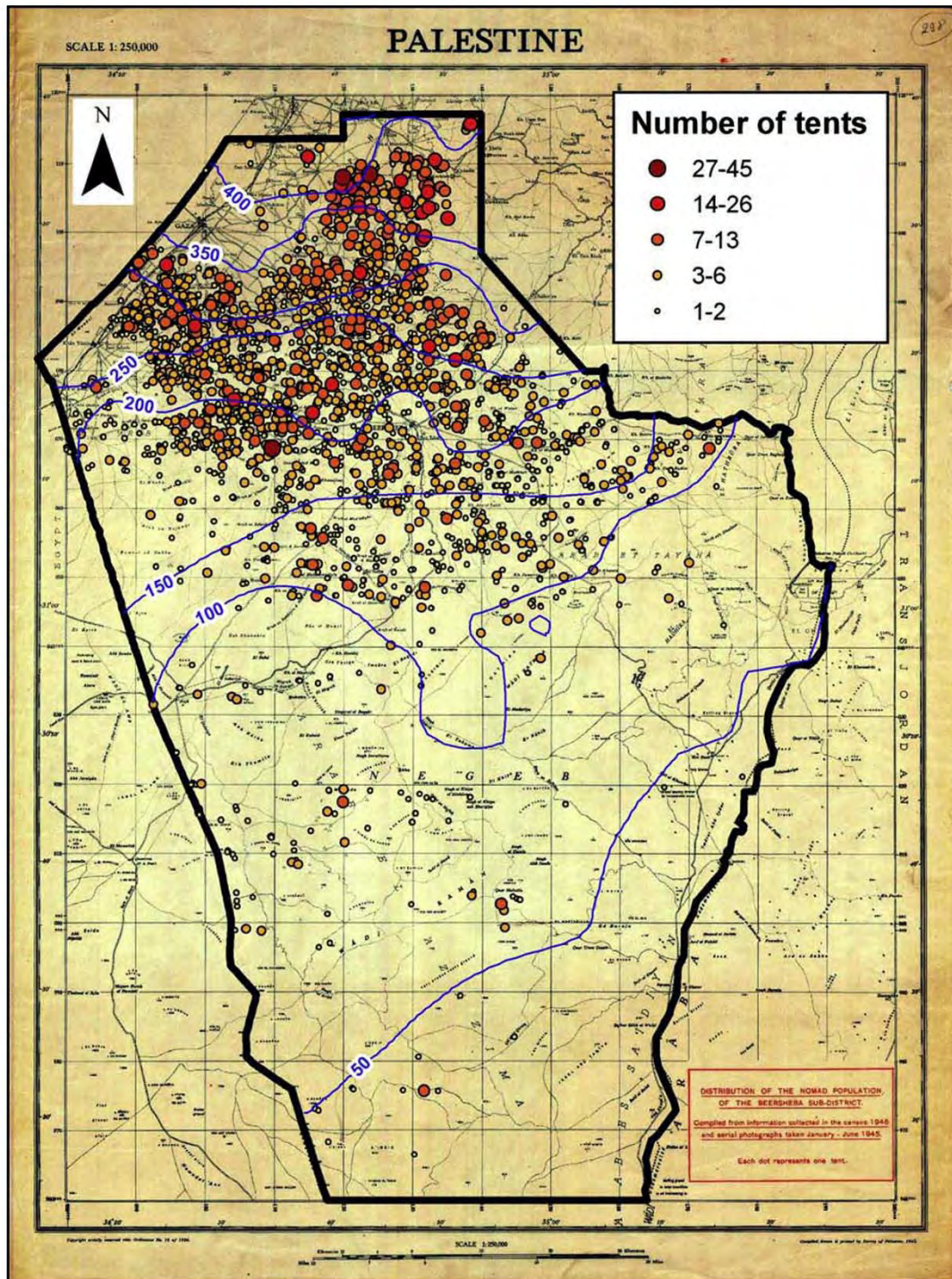


Figure 1.4: The lodging grounds of Arab tribes in the Beer Sheba district in 1947
(Source: N. Levin et al., Journal of Historical Geography, 2009)

The JNF Director had a field day in Beer Sheba court. Being the primary beneficiary of land confiscation, the JNF Director confirmed the land had no owner. He omitted to mention that, during the Mandate, the JNF failed to purchase land in Beer Sheba except for a tiny portion, less than 1% of the district. Obviously this purchase was made and the seller was a Palestinian who owned the land and now the remainder of his land is confiscated for free. The JNF has plans to give Jews large plots to build

ranches of several thousand dunums, while its Palestinian owners are required to move to dormitory villages and work as cheap labour for European and North American settlers.

1.5 The Puzzle of Mewat Land

In its usurpation of the Beer Sheba lands, the government of Israel totally relied on these being “*mewat*” land and therefore becoming “State Land”. Israel did not mention that this land was usurped with armed force in 1948 and did not mention that it forcefully expelled its inhabitants and they became refugees, or that it expelled the remaining inhabitants three years later to a different region – even though they were now citizens – with the promise to return after a few weeks. It also did not mention that most of Al-Araqib lands and all of the land east of it including the town of Beer Sheba itself, are outside the borders of the presumed Jewish state and therefore lie within an Arab state according to the Partition Plan of 1947, and therefore are a part of the quarter of Palestine occupied by Israel over and above what the Partition Plan called for.

Israeli researchers, including Shamir (13) and Kedar (14), have refuted the statement that Beer Sheba was *mewat* land and rebutted the definition of “*mewat*”, as per Article 103 of the Ottoman Lands Law, which was expanded by the courts of Israel to apply to the largest area possible in order to dismiss most lawsuits that the land was cultivated and with an owner. In the definition of Israeli courts, the following impossible criteria were listed:

- 1- It is not permissible to use the condition of the extent of hearing a “loud cry” to determine the distance related to *mewat* land. This must be replaced with a modern scientific measure.
- 2- The distance from habitation to *mewat* land must be more than 2.5 km.
- 3- Distance shall be measured from a village or city (only).
- 4- Distance shall not be measured from cultivated *miri* land.
- 5- Measurement shall not take place from unfixed dwellings such as tents, even if they are inhabited and those persons cultivated their land.
- 6- Measurement shall not take place from buildings or landmarks that are far apart, such as rural homes, buildings around a railway station, a police station or an isolated stone house, even if these places are inhabited.
- 7- To prove that land is the property of a clan, the clan must prove that it was cultivating the land prior to 1858, the date of the issuance of the Ottoman Lands Law.
- 8- To prove that the land is not *mewat*, it must be proven that the cultivated area represents more than 50% of the total land’s area.
- 9- Certificates for payment of taxes on the land do not prove land ownership.

- 10- A contract for the purchase by Jews of several lands from Arabs prior to 1948 and their acknowledgement at the time that the Arab owner had owned the land, does not mean he is the owner of the land that he sold a portion of. (This applies in a different manner to Al-Azazmeh tribe which sold land to the Turkish government to build the city of Beer Sheba upon, and also applies to the Beer Sheba municipality which granted 8.5 dunums of land to Britain to establish a cemetery for its soldiers in World War 1.)
- 11- Aerial photographic evidence taken by the British air force in 1945 may be accepted, with the following conditions:
 - A- Cultivated land covers more than 50% of the land being requested.
 - B- That the person claiming ownership of the land has cultivated it for 20 consecutive years. Since the photographs were taken by the air force in 1945, then this means that it must be proven that the land was cultivated till 1965 at least. However, the inhabitants were expelled from their homes in 1952, and therefore none of them can prove that they cultivated their land based on aerial photographs.
- 12- The main requirement is that the burden of proof lies on the landowner him/herself, and not on the state. Since the state possesses all of the current documents which it stole from the Mandate Government and Palestinian institutions and inhabitants in 1948, and since the land owner has merely a few papers and extensive memory only, then the burden of proof on the land owner means his/her inability to convince the courts of Israel.

What is truly amazing is that, had it not been for the crime of ethnic cleansing of 1948 – namely the expulsion of the indigenous population – then even if those lands had come under the rule of Israel, Israel's entire argument that the Beer Sheba lands are *mewat* is without merit, based on the following simple facts.

The number of Beer Sheba's population prior to the Nakba was 100,000 inhabitants distributed among 77 clans in 88 land locations. So the average number of people for every clan/village was 1250. All serious estimates indicate that they cultivated an area of about 3,750,000 dunums, but no less than 2,500,000 dunums in the years of drought. In the first case, the area of the clan's land is approximately 43 square kilometers with a radius of 3.6 km. In the second case, the area of the clan's land is 28 square kilometers with a radius of less than 3.0 km, which is close to the maximum limit determined by Article 103 for specifying the distance of *mewat* land from habitation. Since the clans' villages were in the north-western part of the district, which had heavy rainfalls, then by subtracting the valleys and hills from this area, the distances of habitation between one clan and the next are closer than the aforementioned criteria.

More significantly, if the inhabitants were not kicked out of their homes, the district's population (in mid-2008) would have been 750,000, and so the distance between one clan/village and the next would have become 3 km (with a radius of only 1.5 km). This means that the villages and clans of Beer Sheba would be adjacent to one another starting from the habitation recognized in the Gaza villages to the south, east and west of Beer Sheba city. Therefore, their lands could never be "*mewat*".

This of course is the goal behind displacing the Palestinians from their homes and claiming that their lands were wilderness with no owner.

It is worth noting that considering land as *mewat* is a major issue not only in the Beer Sheba district. Israel considers many regions in the Galilee area such as forestry, rugged terrain and mountainous areas to be *mewat* lands that it classifies as State Land. This matter also applies to the West Bank, where settlements are implanted and Israel declares that it has not expropriated anyone's property. (Even according to the Israeli definition, the B'Tselem organization has finally proven that 40% of the lands that have settlements erected on them are owned by individuals.)

1.6 Role of the Law

There are two relevant fields of law, Israeli law and international law. As for Israeli law, there is a slim chance for the reacquisition of rights according to customary law (Murphy's Law No. 3) which states: "According to the law of thieves, stolen goods cannot be recovered".

Despite the great efforts by Nouri's expert, he feels there is little hope that the Zionist court will rule for the return of the land to its owner. Despite this, the Adalah Center inside Palestine 1948 is doing a wonderful job in presenting claims and lawsuits to the Supreme Court of Israel, by providing a different interpretation of Israeli law (15). This means recognition of these laws, but interpreting them for the interest of the land owner.

With regard to international laws, they undoubtedly prohibit the seizure of lands in this fashion. David Kretzmer (16) pointed out that UN resolutions, and in particular resolution A/RES/52/62 issued on 10/12/1997, mean that "Zionism has succeeded in extending its sovereignty over 78% of the area of Palestine but has not obtained the title deed of these lands." This UN resolution stipulates:

"It is requested that the Secretary-General take all appropriate steps, in consultation with the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, for the protection of Arab property, assets and property rights in Israel and to preserve and modernize the existing records... This resolution calls upon all the parties concerned to provide the Secretary-General with any pertinent information in their possession concerning Arab property, assets and property rights in Israel that would assist him in the implementation of the present resolution."

This resolution was not properly put into action. Similarly, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice issued in July 2004 on the apartheid wall, which includes some of the most significant material since the Balfour Declaration in support of the Palestinian cause.

Grassroots work is ongoing and plays a major role today, enabled by expedient means of communication such as the internet and satellite channels, which transfer information in real time in sight and sound. This is what happened in the process of destroying Al-Araqib village and the theft of its land.

In conclusion:

- 1- Material support (firstly) and moral support must be provided to people in the region of Beer Sheba, so that they can hold steadfastly to their land, rebuild their homes, access means of livelihood, strengthen their capacity to defend themselves and mobilize the Palestinians' forces within Palestine to stand with them.
- 2- Human rights associations and associations for defending justice must be activated, and participation in their efforts must take place worldwide. This of course includes Palestinian, Arab and Islamic associations.
- 3- Participation in the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign, which is growing in the West, must take place.
- 4- There must be participation in all UN forums, whether the General Assembly or its various committees, to demand Arab rights in Palestine, in a realistic and direct manner.
- 5- It would be very beneficial to send delegations of Beer Sheba inhabitants abroad, including men, women and children, to explain their case personally. This will have a profound impact on the West.
- 6- Likewise, high-profile delegations can be received in Beer Sheba so they can see firsthand what people there suffer from. This can easily be arranged, since this visit can be added to the agenda of the Ramallah visitors, who are many, and those standing in solidarity with the Palestinians on the issue of the apartheid wall.

So the truth is clear and the work required is modest. Justice will ultimately prevail.

Salman Abu Sitta is Founder and President of the Palestine Land Society, London. This chapter is taken from the current edition of *Majallat ad Dirasat al Filistiniya* (No. 85, Winter 2011). Translated to English by Rifat Audeh.

(1) See detailed report presented to the international fact-finding mission on Beer Sheba lands (<http://www.plands.org/store/pdf/BS%20Cte%20Paper.pdf>)

(2) W.D. Hutteroth, K. Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine, Transjordan and Southern Syria in the Late 16th Century*, Erlangen: Erlanger Geographische Arbeiten, 1977

(3) Report of the Turkish Military Mission, Ottoman Archives, Document No. IMUS 122/5229, dated 4/5/1891

(4) Letter of appointment of Major Abramson as the Chairman of the Commission signed by N. Bentwich, Legal Secretary, August 19, 1920, and the Commission's report dated May 31, 1921, PRO CO 733/18, 174761

(5) For more details on development of Israeli law to seize Palestinian properties, see <http://www.plands.org/store/pdf/Selling%20Refugees%20Land.pdf>

(6) See Salman Abu Sitta's study "The Forgotten Half of Palestine – the District of Beer Sheba, where the Nakba is still ongoing", *Palestinian Studies magazine*, Beirut, Issue # 73,

Winter 2008, pages 37-50 (http://www.palestine-studies.org/ar_journals.aspx?id=9929&jid=3&href=abstract)

(7) This topic has been studied by many researchers. See: By All Means Possible: A Report on the Destruction by the State of Crops of Bedouin Citizens in the Naqab by Aerial Spraying with Chemicals. Nazareth: Arab Association of Human Rights, July 2004, website: www.arabhra.org/NaqabReport_English.pdf; Off the Map: Land and Housing Rights Violations in Israel's Unrecognized Bedouin Villages, Human Rights Watch March 2008, Vol. 20, No. 5 (E)

(8) Public Records Office CO 733/2/21698/folio 77, March 29, 1921; McDonnell, Law Reports of Palestine, 1920-1923, p. 458

(9) See the response to the request of the Jewish Agency: CO 733/345/11-009630 page 3, and the report of the agricultural expert Douglas Harris dated 14/1/1947, file Co 70371/61868.

(10) Fortnightly reports of Gaza District Commissioner dated December 4, 1941 and September 9, 1947 (particularly the latter) in: Jarman, R.L., Political Diaries of the Arab World: Palestine and Jordan, Reading: Archive Editions, 2001. The British Mandate government provided tractors and fodder to Palestinian farmers in addition to agricultural inspectors in order to improve their production and help them in drought years in recognition of their ownership of Beer Sheba land.

(11) *Political Diaries of the Arab World – Palestine and Jordan, 1945-1946*, Vol. 8, Archive Editions, Reading, UK, 2001, p. 228.

(12) *Survey of Palestine*, Vol. I, Chapter VIII, para 77, 82, pp. 256-257

(13) Ronen Shamir, "Suspended in Space: Bedouins under the Law of Israel", *Law and Society Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1996), pp. 231-257

(14) Alexandre (Sandy) Kedar, "The Legal Transformation of Ethnic Geography: Israel; Law and the Palestinian Landholder 1948, 1967", *International Law and Politics*, Vol. 33, pp. 923-1000.

(15) http://www.adalah.org/eng/pressreleases/pr.php?file=09_06_22;
<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/insidestory/2009/06/2009623142649311>

(16) David Kretzmer, *The Legal Status of the Arabs in Israel*, Jerusalem: The Institute of Israeli-Arab Studies, 2002 (in Arabic).

2. Bluing the Desert

by Rebecca Manski

2.1 JNF's Blueprint Negev

Picking up a passenger by the hot, treeless roadside, Bedouin advocate Ali Abu Subayh wheels his Fiat around onto a path, spitting rocks and coating the windows with dust, headed toward an “unrecognized village” in southern Israel. Between the 1950s and 1970s, the Israeli government displaced the Bedouin of the Naqab desert into a sliver of land less than 2 percent the size of their former range. The government built seven townships for the Bedouin, and simultaneously declared all existing Naqab Bedouin villages to be illegal. Today, Abu Subayh and 80,000 other Bedouin citizens of Israel born in one of these 45 “unrecognized” villages are threatened with further displacement. More than once, Abu Subayh, a field worker with the Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages, has himself returned home to his village of Al-Batt to find a piece of paper flapping on the post at the entrance to the goat pen – a demolition order.

Al-Araqib is unique among these villages. Like many other unrecognized villages, it was demolished in 1951, and its residents were “temporarily” relocated. Unlike others, however, Al-Araqib’s old stone ruins remained in place over the decades. Over the years, the original residents returned to work the land and maintain its productivity. And in the 1990s, the residents returned to Al-Araqib family by family, and reestablished the village. But in late July 2010, Al-Araqib was destroyed again by the Israeli government to make way for future expansion of the Jewish settlement Givot Bar – its perimeter already demarcated by a new Jewish National Fund (JNF) tree plantation.

The JNF, a non-profit corporation with quasi-state powers, was not directly involved in the removal of Al-Araqib; that is the domain of the Israel Land Authority (ILA), the government agency responsible for managing 93% of the land of Israel. However, since by law the JNF nominates ten of the ILA’s twenty-two directors, when the ILA opts to destroy an “unrecognised village”, the JNF is deeply involved. So too are its main funders, centered in the American JNF branch, fundraising through the auspices of at least twenty-eight offices throughout the country, governed by over eighteen Vice Presidents and ten Assistant Vice Presidents. Thus, when the American wing of the JNF raises money for a forest to replace the village of Al-Araqib, the line between demolition, and greening, is blurred.

Due to funding shortages and international pressure, government threats to remove unrecognized Bedouin villages have generally been carried out home by home, rather than village by village. In the absence of money for all-out Jewish settlement, the government has found it difficult to follow through with the planned removal of entire Bedouin villages, when only rubble will be left behind. But it has been easier to justify replacing tin shacks with trees.

The destruction of an entire village of 500 people, all at once – as the first seeds of a JNF forest are planted – therefore sets an important precedent for twenty-first century Israeli policy toward the Bedouin.

The JNF is Israel's oldest propagandist, promoting Israel as a "green" and progressive nation since 1901; its parks have long been Israel's most tangible propaganda maneuver. The JNF has been instrumental in promoting what critical theorist Radhika Mohanram describes as "one of the functions of nationalism ... to intensify feelings for the landscape."¹ In the landscape of JNF parklands, the bodies of Jewish ancestors merge with more recently blood-soaked battlegrounds, erasing all that came between.

2.2 Making the Desert Blue (and Green)

The Jewish National Fund forest to be planted near the new ruins of Al-Araqib is part of a larger effort to green the image of the Naqab, in order to encourage more Jewish immigration to the south of the country.

The Naqab is not the first place the average Israeli dreams of when she or he contemplates the prospects for a better life. Long treated as a lawless "dumping ground,"² the Naqab hosts dozens of chemical factories, multiple mining operations, Tel Aviv's excess waste, the largest toxic waste facility in the region, and the nation's principal nuclear facility at Dimona. Along with the pollution of the desert, a lack of government investment in either Jewish or Bedouin towns has undermined lingering romantic notions about living in Israel's "last wilderness." But the American fundraising arm of the JNF, centered in New York, insists that it can transform the image of the desert and boost its desirability through its Blueprint Negev campaign.

Introduced in 2005, around the time of the removal of Gaza's Jewish settlements, Blueprint Negev aimed to establish a beachhead of twenty-five towns on Israel's southern tip and become a symbol of national renewal, under the slogan, "It's not a mirage, it's a dream becoming a reality." Via Blueprint Negev, the JNF intends to attract new immigrants to the desert with the promise of water, bluing it with rivers, lakes and swimming pools, then greening it with golf courses and lawns.

But in this perennial Middle East hot spot, such dreams have a tendency to vaporize. Just as the government effort to concentrate the Bedouin population in the townships has been put on hold due to persistent budget shortfalls, so too the plan to build settlements for Jews in the region has been deferred. Within a year and a half of the virtual launch of Blueprint Negev, world Zionist resources were directed to the Lebanon war and more attention went to securing Israel's borders than to expanding Jewish development in a desert region with a tenuous Jewish majority. Days after the first Katyusha rockets blasted kibbutz orchards near the Lebanese border and Israeli warplanes commenced relentless bombardments which ultimately killed close to 3,000 Lebanese, the JNF had focused its energies upon the north of the country, launching Operation Northern Renewal, planting trees along the Lebanese border.

Not much later, in 2008, attention shifted south again as the Israeli army invaded Gaza in response to the Qassam rockets launched into the Naqab, and the JNF introduced Operation Security Blanket. Instead of building up new Blueprint Negev settlements, the JNF allocated millions for a rocket-proof indoor playground replete with a jungle gym, video game arcade, disco, merry-go-round, swing sets, therapy

rooms, barbecue pit, and, according to the JNF, “rooms that double as bomb shelters.”³

As publicity and funding was diverted from north to south again, the JNF relied upon a settler group, the OR Movement, to push Blueprint Negev forward on the grassroots level. The JNF aimed to build twenty-five settlements by 2010, but by 2009, only seven small ones had been established, three of them by OR's Negev branch prior to joining forces with the JNF. Neither the JNF nor the OR Movement is directly involved in the removal of any Bedouin village. Their role in the settlement of Israel has been to create models for Jewish habitation, to replace.

2.3 Enticing the “Anglo Jew”: From Barren Wasteland to Luxurious Suburbia

The publicity push for Blueprint Negev intensified in early 2006,⁴ when Israeli President Shimon Peres lauded its first planned development town as a new beacon for Americans “who want to make *aliyah* and live in style.”⁵ Soon, he told the Israeli public, there would be a haven for wealthy young Americans in Israel's Negev Desert. There would be homes with central air conditioning and other Western amenities, a lavish community center with gym facilities and an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

American Jewish leaders continue to promote Peres' Negev mirage. It will be “pure Zionism,” says Daniel Mattio, the chairman of the Chicago Israel Philanthropic Fund, which was created in 2008 to speed the rate of Jewish settlement in the Naqab. It will be “a fresh new community with fresh new attitudes,” “a type of utopia,” “pluralistic and diverse,” dedicated to “sustainable living,” says Rabbi Asher Lopatin, who leads the Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation in Chicago (where he was Rabbi of former White House Chief of Staff, Rahm Emmanuel) and co-founded the Fund.⁶ There will be an organic farm, a bed-and-breakfast and an art gallery, says the JNF. There will be shops, synagogues and a think tank devoted to religious diversity. There will be eco-tourism. Planners say the community will retain an American sensibility even after the Americans have been outnumbered.

The place they have in mind is Carmit, one of 14 new settlements planned by the JNF as part of the revised Blueprint Negev. Today Carmit is little more than an access road, earth-moving machines and a few mounds of pebbles surrounded by Bedouin villages in all directions.

Mattio and Lopatin originally planned to move to the desert outpost in the summer of 2010, when the first houses were scheduled to be completed. They were prepared to bring with them 100 American families, who would be followed by 100 Israeli families, and eventually be joined by 2,400 more. The idea was to inspire hundreds of thousands of “Anglo-Jews” and Israelis to make their way to new desert developments like Carmit. A former JNF America president, Estée Lauder scion Ronald Lauder, billed Blueprint Negev as an opportunity for Americans to “make *aliyah* the pioneering way.”⁷ But several years after Peres promoted Carmit as an affluent haven for Anglo Jews in the desert, the first houses have yet to be constructed.

In fact, Blueprint Negev is less a concrete development plan than a public relations and fundraising campaign seeking to inspire American Jewish investment towards

Jewish settlement of the Naqab. It appeals to American Jewish romance surrounding the re-rooting of the Jewish people in its desert origins, and deep nostalgia for Israel's halcyon days, the blooming of a modern Jewish state in a supposedly wild terrain.

Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, alloyed the JNF and the settlers with such sentiments when he laid out his vision for the modernization of the young country before an assembly of Zionist pioneers in 1954. "For those who make the desert bloom," he said, "there is room for hundreds, thousands and even millions."⁸

2.4 The Negev Challenge: Securing the Demographic Sustainability of the Zionist Project

"Since 1901, the JNF has helped build a country, out of nothing," a 2008 JNF-UK promotional video reminds its audience. As a golden sunrise over desert mountains merges with the *or* (orb of light) of a Shabbat candle, illuminating several generations around an elegant dinner table, the narrator informs us, "but sixty percent of Israel still remains ... desert."⁹ Ben-Gurion determined that "The Negev will be the test of the creative ability and pioneering valor of Israel."¹⁰ However, in most respects the Naqab has lingered on the periphery of the Zionist modernization process.¹¹

According to the JNF, only eight percent of Israel's population lives in the Naqab, which is sixty percent of the country's landmass.¹² JNF PR does not mention that, with eighty-five percent of the Naqab designated off-limits to civilian uses, the portion of the Naqab available for civilian uses is more densely populated than the center of the country.¹³ Instead, the Blueprint Negev's latest promotional material on the Bedouin emphasizes that the Bedouin birth rate is the highest in the world.¹⁴ And yet, despite its best intentions to bolster the tenuous Jewish majority in the desert, at the time of the Blueprint Negev PR launch, the government had not been interested in developing the Naqab in over twenty years.¹⁵

Government talk of developing the Naqab resumed around the start of the Second Intifada and intensified under the tenure of former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The plans aimed at tipping "the Arab-Jewish demographic balance in the Negev and Galilee regions – where there are heavy concentrations of Israeli Arabs – more solidly in favor of Jews."¹⁶ However, due to a succession of budget crises in 2003 and 2005, the government was yet again unable to execute its latest plans to develop the Naqab.

If the Negev Desert is a metaphor for the Zionist rhetoric of Israel as an "empty land" out of which a country was constructed from "nothing", then the stagnation of desert development lends the Zionist project as a whole an aura of incompleteness and neglect. In turn it challenges Zionist institutions in Israel and abroad to prove that Ben-Gurion's vision of a desert in bloom does not risk remaining a mirage. Thus, with the failure of Sharon's state-funded Development Plan for the Negev, the JNF suggested a "re-start" in the Naqab.¹⁷ A year after the revelation of the Blueprint in 2005, the desert started to see a kind of 'privatization' of Ben-Gurion's vision for the Naqab's development, with heavy American influence.¹⁸

2.5 A Clean Slate

Still, over Israel's sixty years of existence, not only had all of its Naqab development schemes failed, its efforts to “modernize” an ancient wilderness, or bloom a desert “wasteland”, had instead produced an image of the Naqab as a contaminated dumpyard – tainting the image of the Zionist project as a whole.

To counteract this picture of contamination, JNF PR seeks to restore its image as a pristine desert wilderness, a *tabula rasa*: “In southern Israel, far from the strip malls of Tel Aviv’s suburbs, the Negev is the closest thing to the clean slate many of Israel’s pre-state pioneers found when they first came to the Holy Land,” wrote Uriel Heilman in an article about the Blueprint Negev in *B’nai B’rith* Magazine.¹⁹ As Blueprint Negev propaganda offers American Jews an opportunity “to be 21st century pioneers and to once again be part of a nation under creation,”²⁰ it offers Israelis the opportunity to go back to the beginning of the pioneering process, to the time before Israel became the second most densely populated developed country on the planet.²¹

American investment in the desert frontier affords Israelis the opportunity to escape from the urban frontiers which emerged as Israel became a consumer society, paved in concrete. As political scientist Eyal Chowers has noted, cement was early on viewed as Israel’s “indigenous” building material, the substance of the modern State of Israel.²² With the realization of the Zionist dream of return to the desert origins of the Jewish people, what began in the nineteenth century with rhetoric of greening a wasteland, transformed into a twentieth century vision of paving the desert. Over time, the notion of literally cementing a Jewish homeland into the soil of Israel/Palestine has lost its more benign connotations amongst Zionists.²³

During a rest at one of the single-family homesteads that have cropped up along Naqab roads in recent years, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres commented to JNF-Israel: “Our problem is overcrowding. The solution to the problem is seclusion.”²⁴ Since land is very limited and costly, for the past forty years or so the vast majority of Israelis have lived in apartment buildings; most can only afford individual houses when the government subsidizes their move to frontier settlement regions. Thus the Blueprint Negev continues to link the JNF’s rhetoric of “blooming the desert” with Or Negev’s rhetoric of “paving the way for hundreds of thousands more”²⁵ – but rather than suggesting high-density urban-style apartment complexes, the Blueprint Negev promises enclaves of suburban single-family homes linked by paved driveways.²⁶

But it was not “just the lifestyle” that drew two North American Israelis, “Elli, the eldest son of Canadian immigrants, and Dalia, the daughter of an Israeli father and a Brooklyn-born mother, to the rural Negev,” Heilman tells us, “It was Zionism.” In a promotional video, one Blueprint Negev settler advocates going to “faraway places” in order to shape Israel’s bounds, as well as the bounds of Zionist belonging: “You don’t have communities like ourselves inside Tel Aviv, inside Jerusalem. You build communities like ours in faraway places. Pioneering Zionism might sound old fashioned, but I think going away from the center makes people realize, this is where the present, and the future are. This is where there’s quality of life, space, and community. We’re even shaping the future borders of the state of Israel.”²⁷

2.6 Lakes in a Desert

Nevertheless Russell Robinson, JNF's chief executive officer, says, "We know that what draws most people to the desert is not going to be Zionist ideology, it's going to be jobs and homes, which depend upon water and all the amenities related to it. So we became the lobbyists for water."²⁸ Aside from catalyzing government investment in Negev development, above all, the Blueprint Negev aims to change the image of the Naqab – by bringing water to the desert. On the Blueprint Negev website, talk of rivers and lakes abounds, featuring recreational lakes aimed at Israelis from the overpopulated northern region, golf courses to lure Jewish American entrepreneurs pioneering a perilous desert economy, and a proposed Beer Sheva "River Walk" modeled after an Arizona project of the same name.

Themes of sustainability and diversity weave into the presentation of the new recreational parks. Several water treatment plants will feed the new parks at the heart of the Blueprint Negev's efforts to change the image of the desert. The public relations rhetoric around these parks – at Lake Yeruham and Beer Sheva River, two bodies of water that degraded into environmental hazards over the years – emphasizes that these greenspaces will be inclusive of all citizens of the Naqab, Arab as well as Jewish.

Meanwhile, plans for preservation of water resources or production of potable water for the Naqab's existing or future residents, are absent from Blueprint Negev promotional literature.²⁹ Indeed, at a JNF environmental benefit for Israel in New York City's Central Park, JNF-America CEO Russell Robinson referenced water-intensive development projects in Arizona and Las Vegas.³⁰ After a 2009 presentation to New York's JNFuture membership, entitled, "It's Not a Mirage, It's Our Vision", one member of the JNF water committee, Ilan Palgi, argued that by generating migration and fostering a local economy, the recreational value of the lakes was greater than the potential value of drinking water. By attracting new settlers, Palgi said, the Blueprint Negev will inherently inspire Israel's modern-day pioneers to invent new technologies to respond to the apparent limits of the Zionist project. When confronted with the JNF's own water statistics – that Israel has over-consumed its water resources by 25%³¹ – Palgi cited a study which argued that the water crisis is overstated, and referred to the long-term possibilities of Israeli desalinization technologies.³²

In Robinson's view, "the worst environmental damage will be when the desert takes over the land," and infusion of new Jewish immigrants into the desert is essential to combating desertification.³³ Intermingling images of fresh water and new families, potent symbols of life, linking immigration flows with the flow of water to the desert, JNF propaganda suggests the Blueprint Negev will birth the nation's succeeding generations and thereby secure the identity of the Jewish homeland as a State with a Jewish majority. Blueprint propaganda floods images of building the nation and finding home in modernity, with subliminal symbols of fertility. A JNF-Or promotional video relates a sense of belonging and security with easily recognizable fertility symbols such as the image of a hose, with its phallic connotations, and the form of the vessel, a biblical symbol of femininity. A little girl, a flower in her long hair, pours from a watering can, and the words "Our nation" layer under a boy running at the viewer with a spraying hose.

Linking irrigation engineering with economic and demographic expansion, Blueprint Negev propaganda echoes, in twenty-first-century terms, early twentieth-century JNF-America interest in what Troen calls a racially-hued vision of routing irrigation as a means of social and national engineering.

2.7 Channeling Water, and Population, to the Frontier

“The real founder of the new-old country were the hydraulic engineers,”³⁴ wrote Theodor Herzl, over forty years before the creation of the State of Israel. Planners, experts, and administrators from abroad, particularly technocrats, engineers, hydraulic mechanics, botanists, and agronomists, “became permanent fixtures of Zionist colonization” and state planning from the 1870s.³⁵

So too, historian Ilan Troen tells us, the respective heads of the British, Israeli and American JNFs – British chemist Chaim Weizmann, Yishuvi agriculturalist Aaron Aaronsohn and former justice of the American Supreme Court Louis D. Brandeis – emphasized the importance of global water control in the state building process, defining economic security in terms of access to water resources. First and foremost, lone homesteaders in the desert would need to trust that Zionist institutions could provide them with water. From the turn of the century JNF-America worked in close cooperation with international irrigation experts, to strategically channel water to outposts in all regions of the country – as a first step towards channeling Jewish immigrants to frontier outposts.

In 1928, Weizman and Brandeis commissioned a team of irrigation and horticulture experts, headed by an American New Deal irrigation expert, Elmwood Mead. At the time, Mead was Commissioner of *Reclamation* (emphasis added) at the U.S. Department of the Interior.³⁶ Mead, himself raised on a family farm in the Midwest, sought “to bring homesteading from the Middle West to the Middle East.”³⁷ “The Report of Experts” investigated capitalist alternatives to the kibbutz’ socialist conception of colonization.³⁸

Notably, Troen explains, Mead’s work with the progressive republican farmstead movement in the American West constituted part of a “new order of engineers and social planners (who) saw state colonization as the idea that would save America, and in some cases the Anglo-Saxon race, from decline and eclipse.”³⁹ The Report of Experts drew upon Californian, Australian and German models of private land ownership, in combination with scientific rationale, to argue that a homesteading model would save Zionist colonies from developing “a character not in keeping with ideals and aspirations of the Jewish race,” through undue Communist influence.⁴⁰ The “racially-appropriate” answer to the deprivation of Eastern European Jews of land ownership rights was not collective agriculture;⁴¹ it was a Jewish homeland of “independent farms owned by inherently bourgeoisie Jews.”⁴²

2.8 Twenty-First Century Pioneers: The Or Movement

At the turn of the twentieth century, many influential American Jews – Brandeis chief among them – voiced opposition to the socialist orientation of the kibbutz and sought to export an American homesteading model based on private land ownership. Throughout its inception and development, the JNF’s most influential centers in

England, Jerusalem and the United States disagreed over the extent to which the JNF should focus on legally acquiring and preparing land through public modernization projects, or devote resources to promoting individual settlement in the Naqab via direct support to settlers motivated to build facts-on-the-ground.⁴³

One such modern-day settlement of settlers motivated to build facts-on-the-ground is Sansana. Erected right on the Green Line, Sansana was once an isolated outpost. Today it looks out over one of the only fully forested regions in the Naqab, planted by the JNF, and survives the difficult desert conditions through complete access to water and other manifestations of state support.

In late 2009, Israeli Minister of Defense Ehud Barak approved expansion of the illegal outpost into a state-sanctioned settlement, and ordered construction of 440 housing units on the Israeli side of the separation barrier. Pending that construction, Sansana retains a frontier feel, replete with hilltop caravans and lookout towers. Its early settlers have taken on the personae of pioneers in a pristine and empty wilderness.

In 2000, as the second *intifada* exploded, a cadre of five childhood friends who had just finished their military service mobilized fifteen families to move to the then-failing settlement of Sansana. Two years later, having successfully reestablished a Jewish presence in the settlement, they founded the OR Movement to settle the Naqab and the Galilee; from 2002 on, they established five communities in the Naqab and are currently initiating four more, including Carmit. In 2005, OR Negev helped the settlers who had been evacuated from Gaza to relocate to these new colonies.⁴⁴

That same year, JNF-America head Russell Robinson was meeting with potential Blueprint Negev partners at the King David Hotel, entertaining their proposals for securing Israel's demographic-territorial claim to the Naqab. "I can't begin to tell you about all the strange ideas people had," he said. "One man was certain it was all about windmills."

Two young men in sandals, cutoffs and T-shirts," walked in, Robinson recalled. "They looked like something that had come out of a kibbutz hall meeting." These were the representatives of the OR Movement. "They had chutzpah. They didn't know how to take no for an answer. All day, people had been telling me, 'You can't do this, you can't do that.' These men said, 'We can.'"

Though run by Israelis, OR Negev employs American homesteading rhetoric, drawing on the romantic imagery of a lawless frontier and taking up the mantle of manifest destiny. The choice catchphrase of its chief executive officer, Roni Flamer, is: "Go south, young man!" In 2009, the OR Movement was the third largest recipient of JNF-USA funds. Today the settlements established through the southern wing of the movement, OR Negev, are the basis of Blueprint Negev. The group recruits settlers through what it calls "the only comprehensive population information center in Israel."

OR says it seeks to reinforce the eternal bond between the People of Israel and their land. Progressive planning scholars such as American-Israeli Daniel Orenstein – a former JNF-America board member – have called OR a settlement movement dedicated to staking out lands for Jews in order to offset the presence of Arabs on Israeli lands.⁴⁵

In turn, Noam Dolgin of the Green Zionist Alliance positions himself as neutral: “We support many organizations that engage in projects linking the sustainable to the strategic ... I support [OR’s] right to have an opinion that we need to expand into the Negev. I don’t necessarily agree with their approach. There’s a process in place and there would be less controversy if organizations of all kinds, including OR, would adhere to it.”⁴⁶

But while OR Negev once operated on the fringes of the formal planning process – in violation of official Negev development plans that prohibited sprawl into the desert’s last open spaces – today it operates under the sponsorship (and overt political protection) of the JNF. Thanks to OR Negev’s extra-legal settlement activity, a scattering of new settlements now form a triangle in the region around the Naqab’s urban center, Beer Sheva.

2.9 Retroactive Approval

OR Negev’s success at seeing its once illegal settlements retroactively legalized is best understood by going back to the roots of JNF-America settlement ideology.

The American Zionist settlement movement – like the homestead movement in North America – has long pointed to its physical and financial investment in the land in order to plant evidence of ownership.⁴⁷ According to the American homesteading principle of “sweat equity”, settlers could expropriate territory through their sustained presence and labour.

JNF-America advocated the homestead as a capitalist alternative to the kibbutz, merging the *baalebat* (bourgeoisie) and *chalutz* (pioneer) to form a modern settler-entrepreneur who would test himself physically and economically in the harsh elements.⁴⁸ Most Zionist thinkers envisioned the entirety of Palestine prior to Jewish immigration and investment as an empty, scorched land – and, more than any other region of Palestine, the Naqab was seen as a wasteland awaiting Zionist modernization.

From its inception in 1948, the state classified all lands lacking a legal title, as “waste lands” or *mawat*, an Arabic term according to which the Ottomans classified “waste lands” as state property. Israel appropriated this classification, aware that hardly a single Bedouin village had legally registered its lands under the Ottomans. Thereafter, hardly a single indigenous Bedouin citizen received government approval to initiate any significant agricultural enterprise of his own. A criminal stigma began to pervade Bedouin subsistence efforts, now considered an “invasion” of national domain.

As Bedouin agricultural lands were retroactively deemed illegal, successful Jewish homesteads were retroactively recognized. The government tacitly and extra-legally encouraged Jewish settlers – just like those in the OR Movement today – to construct private homes and out-buildings on state land, and offered them annual subsidies to engage in cultivation.

2.10 Manifest Responsibility

Brandeis, the first director of JNF-America, the organization's funding capital, referred to Zionists as "Jewish Pilgrim Fathers." He believed Jews in America could play a decisive role in the restoration of the fallen biblical kingdom. The pilgrims and their descendants had referred to New England as "New Israel" and presumed that the ten lost tribes of Israel were to be found among the native peoples of North America. Centuries after the Puritans, JNF-America drew on their rhetoric to justify what it viewed as the return of the natives of the Land of Israel – operating out of a conceit that cast biblical legitimacy over the conquest of the New World.⁴⁹

"The United States had its manifest destiny in the West," Lauder wrote in 2004. "Russia looked to its frozen tundra to the East. Many countries have had vast areas of what many considered to be uninhabitable land at one time, which eventually became some of the most important parts of their developed societies. For Israel, that land is the Negev." In turn, asked if the JNF and OR use the phrase "manifest destiny" as part of an overarching strategy, Robinson said: "Words are sometimes used in different ways for different people, and we're talking to Americans. You try to bring them to you with vision and with romance: Here God is, allowing you to participate in the creation process. I think that manifest destiny is part of our responsibility. Call it manifest responsibility."

Today, several Blueprint Negev settlements run micro-tourism enterprises on the frontier, one of which calls upon the JNF to excavate "ancient Jewish settlement sites" and consider their projects a means of consolidating "the historic renewal of settlement in the vast desert expanse".⁵⁰ Such homesteads stake out a Jewish presence as they invite Zionist devotees from all over the world – potential immigrants – to lay claim to the status of both the "native" and the "pioneer." The JNF eases the tension these "native tourists" experience as they make a home in the "wilderness." Tourists hike into the desert wild, hearkening back to their ancestral roots as nomads, and come home to the security of camps like those who first pioneered the Jewish nation-state. They are seduced by visions of the unfamiliar and exotic spaces remaining within their ancestral homeland, while assured that this exoticism will be a managed experience.

In recent years the JNF has recruited American students to journey to Negev Jewish communities for an "alternative" spring break, where they volunteer on an agricultural settlement, visit Blueprint Negev projects and even listen to Bedouin storytelling. In addition to paying their own way, participants are required to raise \$975 for Blueprint Negev. At one tourist village run by Blueprint Negev settlers,⁵¹ visitors can view themselves as pioneers as they sleep in teepee structures like the conical tents used by both the early Zionist pioneers in temporary camps along the frontier, and the early Israeli boy scouts who wore desert *kaffiyas* with their uniform. Alternately, visitors can play the role of the Indian, as Jewish settlers lead them through Indian ceremonies and offer them "wigwams" at the end of the night.

2.11 "The Wild South"

A man sits astride a weary horse with gentle eyes; in his right hand, he holds a lasso, in his left, the reins. "Yes, there are cowboys in Israel," the Israeli Tourism Ministry

advertised in a 2007 edition of the *New York Times Magazine*. Like an American cowboy, the Israeli's hat is worn and floppy, his red plaid shirt is rolled up informally at the sleeves, he has a full beard and his eyes squint in the sun. The bottom of the page reads, in capital-lettered fine print: "NO ONE BELONGS HERE MORE THAN YOU."

"This land is ours," said Robinson. "There is no controversy, no argument, no discussion. But if we don't take care of it, it can become desert; it can be taken from us." JNF-America's president sees the "reclamation" of the Naqab as fundamental to ensuring the state's survival. Meanwhile, the Or Movement defines "taking care of" the land in terms of staking Jewish belonging and ownership.

The relationship between Bedouin and Jews in the Naqab has never been more tense. In recent years, the "last frontier" has come to be referred to as the "wild South", as Jewish squatters on state lands have used vigilante tactics in response to what they call Bedouin trespassing. The flashpoint in this twenty-first century conflict came in early February 2007, when Shai Dromi, a Jewish rancher developing an illegal settlement on the Green Line (the boundary between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories) in the Naqab, killed Khalid al-Atrash, a Bedouin man attempting to steal his sheep. Within a few weeks of the killing, amidst a flurry of pro-Dromi protests spreading all the way from the desert to Jerusalem, the incident reached the Knesset, where a "self-defense bill" to legalize Dromi's actions – inspired by Texas law – passed all of its readings and became law. "What happened to Dromi could have happened to us," a settler told a local newspaper. "If we have to go to war, we'll go to war." Another area farmer offered his preferred solution: "Every person wakes up in the morning, goes and shoots a Bedouin. There are 100,000 people shooting Bedouins. What are you going to do, punish them all?" Small Jewish militias sprout in the Naqab each day, he said.

For such settlers the Zionist mantra of "making the desert bloom" does not only mean seeding the Land of Israel with Jewish development. It does not even mean combating desertification, realizing the potential of a land supposedly laid to waste by its non-Jewish inhabitants. It means eradicating Bedouin invaders on their terrain.

These settlers are not the first to interpret Ben-Gurion's vision as such. Indeed, after masses of Palestinians were expelled from their lands during the 1948 war, the head of the JNF, Josef Weitz, strongly objected that, unlike in the north of the country, not all Naqab Bedouin returnees following the war were evicted. As documented by New Israeli historian Benny Morris, Weitz lamented that their pastures were not universally "plowed over so that no trace of them remains," making way for Jewish farmers to cultivate ready-made fields.⁵²

In Sandy Kedar and Oren Yiftachel's view, coming respectively from a legal and political geography perspective, the JNF's ethnocratic policies set the precedent for the State of Israel's engagement in ethnocratic land practices.⁵³ The JNF was "formed to purchase land as the inalienable property of Jewish people in Palestine,"⁵⁴ and thereafter continuously described its acquisition of lands for Jews from the native Palestinian Arab population as "land reclamation".

Contemporary advocates such as Orenstein suggest that with the OR-JNF alliance, the JNF's environmental "land reclamation" efforts in the Naqab have in recent years begun to lose their distinction from the OR Movement's goal of "reclaiming land for

Jews.” Others, such as Devorah Brous, the founder of the Bedouin-Jewish environmental justice NGO, Bustan, argue that the JNF’s approach to “land reclamation” was always double-edged.⁵⁵

2.12 “Greenwashing” Negev Development

The JNF, after all, literally planted the borders of the Jewish state. As Hebrew University geographer Ilan Solomon explains, the JNF tree line follows the Green Line, demarcating the border so distinctly that it is visible from space. Anthropologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has shown that early Zionists developed tangible spectacles and engaged in tactical maneuvers which “projected statehood before the fact”.⁵⁶ The JNF was one of the main executors of such “tactical maneuvers”.

As one of the earliest organizations active in acquiring territory and marking the borders of the State of Israel, the JNF planted the roots of Israel’s “mono-crop” approach to national planning.⁵⁷ Historically the JNF planted a species of highly flammable, non-native pines unsuited to the climate, rather than indigenous species associated with Palestinian agriculture such as olive trees.⁵⁸ All over the country in the years following the 1948 war and the establishment of the state of Israel, the JNF planted pine forests on the sites of Arab villages whose inhabitants had left or were expelled from their homes.⁵⁹ For the Bedouin and their fellow Palestinians, JNF pines, especially the cypresses evocative of British colonial rule, have come to symbolize the encroachment of a colonial power into their ancestral lands. Today, as the JNF continues to advertise itself as “the caretaker of the land of Israel on behalf of its owners – Jewish people everywhere,” Palestinian-Bedouin citizens of Israel are seen as, at best, guests in the country’s national parks.

More recently, the JNF has planted forests expressly in order to limit Bedouin “incursion” into open spaces and restrict Bedouin herding.⁶⁰ To that end, after the “disengagement” from Gaza in 2005, the JNF set settlers from Gaza to work planting 500 acres of olive trees in a ring around the affluent Jewish suburb of Omer. With a planned golf course and hotel, accompanied by another 2,000 acres of olive trees, it will be one of the largest urban greenspaces in Israel. Omer Local Council chairman Pini Badash explained that the planting project aims “to assert control over the land within Omer’s municipal boundaries, to transform Omer into the greenest place in Israel, and to attract tourism.”⁶¹

After guiding a tour to the Bedouin village of Tarrabin, on the outskirts of lush Omer, Brous offered her own interpretation: “Planting as a means of demarcating Jewish versus Arab space is a tangible form of greenwashing. We have seen similar planting schemes throughout the country over the years, but this is the first time the JNF and planning authorities have asserted themselves so bluntly, without a more romantic spin to the public.”⁶²

Because the JNF is not the institution that directly slates Bedouin villages for demolition, and because of the JNF’s historical image as a treeplanting organization, it has managed to evade concerted scrutiny, until now. Today, the JNF is encountering criticism from within the JNF membership itself.

In the past, few Israeli environmentalists or civil rights advocates focused their energies specifically on the link between JNF-Israel projects and the uprooting of

Arabs. In the south of the country, Brous devoted fifteen years to exposing the greenwashing of Bedouin displacement in the Naqab, and she was perhaps the first to challenge the JNF's Blueprint Negev. Her analysis helped catalyze several initiatives, including a new online international campaign launched by the US-based Jewish Alliance for Change with the collaboration of nearly 40 organizations in Israel and the U.S. (see Section V).

2.13 A Greenwashed Blueprint

On a blustery winter day in 2009, members of JNFuture, the JNF youth outreach division, trickled through the arched entryway doors of the New York offices of the Jewish National Fund, to view the latest update on Blueprint Negev, a presentation entitled, "It's Not a Mirage, It's Our Vision."

They passed a staircase adorned with staid oil portraits of benefactors, doves, olive branches and the walls of the Old City in Jerusalem. Climbing the walls of the staircase, black-and-white snapshots of early twentieth century Jewish pioneers were interspersed with kodacolor images of grinning teens posing at Masada in Teva sandals and cargo pants. Their heels clicked as they walked into a mahogany hall where their peers mingled over crackers, sipping wine from settlement vineyards.

After at least four years of project development, pressure from a small cohort of Jewish community leaders had truly led the JNF to green its public relations priorities. The JNFuture powerpoint prominently featured discussion of a new goat milk marketing project in the Bedouin village of Hura, a park in cooperation with the Bedouin township of Segev Shalom, and cooperation with the Abu Basma Regional Council of legal Bedouin villages.⁶³

Several months earlier, in an email to her peers, Brous warned against "encouraging the JNF to present a more green 'image'" in the absence of any effort to address what she called the root issue, "discriminatory allocation of already scarce resources in the Negev."⁶⁴ Brous argued that the most well-intentioned advocacy efforts could have unintended consequences: "I won't mince words: In the absence of full transparency around Blueprint Negev, this amelioration (greenwashing) is dangerous." She later added, "the JNF's engagement in a campaign to fund symbolic projects in partnership with Bedouin, is nothing short of dangerous in the context of the JNF-KKL's political and strategic objectives."

2.14 Israel's First Propagandist

Greenwashing, by definition, is a form of propaganda. And the JNF is no stranger to propaganda. According to mainstream Zionist historians such as David Shapiro, prior to the creation of the State of Israel, the Zionist movement did not have a unitary organizational structure serviced by a central propaganda body.⁶⁵ In fact, if any body acted as Israel's propagandist, it was the JNF.

According to Yoram Bar-Gal, the JNF began as a propaganda body as well as a land acquisition and afforestation organization. In the interwar period before the term "propaganda" garnered associations with Nazism, the JNF viewed the term "propaganda" positively and used it prolifically.⁶⁶ Like many other propaganda

organizations, after World War Two, the JNF distanced itself from the term “propaganda”.

In *Propaganda and Zionist Education: The Jewish National Fund 1924-1927*, Bar-Gal shows that the JNF’s merging of its propaganda and land “reclamation” operations received full sanction from the State. When the JNF transferred administration of its non-forested land holdings to the State, the JNF was given official mandate to continuously collect money for the operation of a propaganda information network directed at youth, in addition to money for its land “reclamation activities”.⁶⁷ Since its inception the American wing of the JNF has promoted the notion of purchasing belonging in the Zionist project.

2.15 Bourgeoisie Pioneering

Early on, the JNF used commercial marketing tactics to promote the notion of financial support for the JNF as the fulfillment of “civic” duty to the Jewish People. As a JNF propagandist wrote of the non-profit’s marketing goals, “Commercial propaganda essentially aspires to achieve the same goal we are trying to achieve: to cause the large Jewish multitudes to remember the JNF at all times.”⁶⁸ During a presentation in the 1920s, JNF propagandist Louis Lipsky placed the American financial foundation of Zionism at the center of the movement, with the JNF as its capital.⁶⁹ Lipsky implied that ideological devotion would not suffice. Only through tangible material support for the JNF could American Zionists connect with Zionist activities abroad, demonstrate a show of confidence in the activities of on-the-ground pioneers, and establish their central niche within the Zionist project.

From its inception, the various JNF branches fostered a notion of vicarious pioneering through philanthropy, skillfully merging the *baalebat* (bourgeoisie) and *chalutz* (pioneer) into the singular form of the modern entrepreneur, investor, and philanthropist testing himself against a barren and undeveloped terrain. For instance, as film historian Hillel Tryster describes it, the JNF-funded silent film *Palestine Awakening* (1923) – featuring the story of a Jewish tourist experiencing the Land of Israel as a *shomer* (Jewish settlement guard), dressed as a Bedouin, on horseback, and surrounded by teepees⁷⁰ – concluded with a stop-motion vignette depicting coins and banknotes folding themselves en route to an anthropomorphized Blue Box. In an unused script for the animation sequence, Tryster tells us that whenever full, the box showered the land with coins.⁷¹ The sequence, written by Julius Berger, the head of the JNF Jerusalem office at the time, depicted the Blue Box as adorably insatiable, crying out from his mouth “Give to the Keren Kayemeth!”, and laughing as it garners the wedding ring of a widow dressed in mourning, the coat off a laborer’s back, a few lira from a child,⁷² as if to show that whatever their situation, everyone can contribute to the Zionist project. Even where they could not directly pioneer the wildest frontiers, due to age, means, etc., they could play their part through supporting the philanthropic pioneering organization, the JNF. Indeed, in sending the message that even poverty was no excuse for failing to contribute, we can imagine that Berger may have intended to project these subjects as empowered via their obligations to the JNF and the Zionist project. Thus in this way, JNF propaganda melded aspects of the Israeli image of the *shomer* (settlement “watchman”), the farmer, and the modern Maccabee, with the international philanthropist or entrepreneur contributing to the JNF.

Under Brandeis, the JNF renovated the image of the American trailblazing entrepreneur and cowboy-frontiersman, reanimating him as a less rugged, bourgeoisie pioneer.⁷³ The bourgeoisie pioneer would further the modernization of Israeli society through philanthropic support for pioneering the frontier periphery. Brandeis recruited small businessmen to immigrate to Palestine to inject their enthusiasm, efficiency and experience and capital into the Zionist project. However, as journalist Donald Neff tells us, overall “Brandeis’ was an ethnic philanthropic vision, a desire to help needy Jews, to set down a kind of New England town in the Middle East – but with no intention of going to Palestine to live among them”.⁷⁴

According to Bar-Gal, American Zionists demonstrated ambivalence regarding the “negation of the diaspora”⁷⁵ as a prerequisite to the Zionist imperative of *hagshamah azmit* (self-realization and transcendence of the self through contribution to the Zionist cause),⁷⁶ and compensated for resistance to physically pioneering, by engaging in philanthropy. Bar-Gal tells us about a puzzle game produced jointly by the JNF’s Propaganda and Youth Departments,⁷⁷ for instance, which involved children directly in collecting funds for the JNF. The puzzle, called “Be a Halutz,” seemed to establish an equivalence between purchasing plots of land and pioneering. Piece by piece, plot by plot, a picture emerged of a “new-born Jewish landscape of Eretz Israel on a board showing a desolate, abandoned scene”. Once the child had completed the game s/he had earned enough to purchase thirty-five square yards of Eretz Israel.⁷⁸ In this way, JNF-America offered each Zionist American his or her means towards literally buying a piece of the Zionist project, from childhood onward. If the American Jew could not purchase his/her private piece of the Zionist project by buying a homestead, s/he could find belonging by playing a part in the collective effort to acquire land for the Jewish People as a whole, supporting an institution “formed to purchase land as the inalienable property of Jewish people in Palestine.”⁷⁹

Then and now, JNF-America propaganda has catered to the need of Diaspora Jews to feel a sense of direct participation in the Zionist project. Then and now, American contributors to the JNF (with or without Israeli citizenship) enjoy remarkable power to shape the future of development in the Naqab and other parts of the country. The JNF is not a democratic institution. However, like most foundations, its project priorities are driven by the interests of its contributors; as such, JNF members vote with their contributions in lieu of civic participation in the local planning process.

2.16 The JNF Propaganda Buffer

The Naqab is “a place where pioneers can establish new settlements untainted by the politicized conflict with the Palestinians ...” if one is to believe what Uriel Heilman of B’nai B’rith tells us. Or, if one is to believe JNF-America spokesperson Molly Golden, the JNF is an apolitical organization, and the Blueprint Negev is an “apolitical” project, a mere catalyst for implementation of existing government development plans.⁸⁰ Acting as a middleman between the swift actions of the Or Movement and the slow maneuvers of the State, between the American and Israeli publics and the Israeli government, the JNF propaganda machine allows donors to the Blueprint Negev to find a sense of intimacy and belonging in the Jewish homeland while remaining distant from displacement of the Bedouin.

On JNF-America’s six-day “environmental mission” to Israel in May, the itinerary featured a visit to an OR Negev settlement to “learn what life is like as a true modern-

day pioneer.” OR Negev settlers established the Jewish outpost of Givot Bar on the lands claimed by Al-Araqib residents in 2004. Just a few years later the JNF replaced Givot Bar’s caravans with permanent houses and heralded the budding Forman-Axelband Family Forest project, planned for the remaining area.

Had the Americans on the “environmental mission” meandered a bit off the beaten track, they would have been shocked to see another sign heralding a planned “God-TV Forest”, funded by Evangelical Christians, just one of the more bizarre tree plantations that Israel has rooted for decades with donations from sympathizers of the Zionist project around the world.⁸¹

While the American Jewish delegates were speaking with OR Negev settlers, Nouri Al-Uqbi received visitors of his own in Al-Araqib. Al-Uqbi, perhaps the most tenacious Bedouin advocate anywhere, has been non-violently resisting removal since 2006, awaiting the monthly demolition of his makeshift dwelling, and continually re-pitching a protest tent next to the stone foundations upon which he was born.

And had the American visitors come just three months later, they might have noticed an unusually large number of police in the area. They might have spotted a few dozen Bedouin and Israeli protesters camped near the sign marking the future God-TV Forest. More likely, the itinerary would have been changed well in advance of the moment when bulldozers rolled in to demolish the village of Al-Araqib.

Rebecca Manski is a writer, researcher and communications consultant based in Brooklyn, NY. She worked as a communications consultant for NGOs in Israel/Palestine between 2003-2008. A shorter version of this chapter was published in *Middle East Report*, Fall, 2010.

1 Radhika Mohanram. *Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space*, University of Minnesota Press (1999) p.5

For instance, during a JNF-Australia treeplanting in the Negev in 2009, a rabbi suggested that through JNF treeplanting, members of the Jewish Diaspora feel a visceral sense of rooting in the Land of Israel: “It’s very exciting that we are standing on the soil of the Negev surrounded by green trees and throngs of children. All of us are happy to be planting these trees with our own hands and to get our hands and our clothes soiled with the earth of the Land of Israel. We will grow and become strong just like the trees we planted today.”{“Making the Desert Green with Friends of KKL-JNF Australia”, *Jerusalem Post* (February 11, 2009)}

2 For instance, the Negev settler organization, the Or Movement, referred to the Negev as such, in an early version of its website. {“About the Negev”, Or Movement (Retrieved: December 12, 2008) <http://eng.negev-net.org.il/HTMLs/article.aspx?C2004=12547&BSP=12316&BSS333=12547>}

Indeed, the majority of Israel’s hazardous industries – including 22 petrochemical factories – are centered on the grounds of the Ramat Hovav toxic waste facility. One former environmental monitor at Chernobyl, currently a public health specialist at Ben-Gurion University attested that Ramat Hovav’s regulation standards were inferior to that at Chernobyl.(Interview: Batya Sarov. Ben-Gurion University {March 2005})

3 “Operation Security Blanket”, Jewish National Fund: <http://www.jnf.org/work-we-do/our-projects/security/operation-security-blanket.html> (Retrieved: December 24, 2010)

4 The project was timed with the JNF’s signing of a 49-year lease with the State of Israel in 2006, which gave the JNF control over 30,000 hectares of the Negev for the development of forests.(Alon Tal. "National Report of Israel {2003-2005} to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification {UNCCD}", State of Israel {July 2006})

5 Zvi Alush. “New town for rich US immigrants”, YNet: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3246513,00.html> (February 5, 2006)

6 Uriel Heilman. “The Negev’s 21st century pioneers”, B’nai B’rith Magazine: <http://www.urielheilman.com/0101negev.html> (Winter 2008-2009)

- 7 "A Message from Ronald S. Lauder: # 1 in a Series", Jewish National Fund website: <http://support.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=advertorial> (Retrieved December 24, 2010)
- 8 Kevin Peraino. "The Myth of Water"; Newsweek, June 28, 2008
- 9 "Help us Bring Life to the Desert: The Negev Challenge", JNF-UK promotional video (c2008)
The camera zooms out to reveal a family in an intimate dining room surrounded by an alarmingly stark wilderness. The voice-over wraps it up: "*We're transforming the desert into homes. Make a donation.*" As Jewish families in the diaspora remain secure in the sanctity of home, the JNF assures them that they can bring modern comforts to fellow Jewish families making a home in Israel's wilderness, via financial contributions to the Blueprint Negev.
- 10 "Together Let's Change the Way we See the Negev", Jewish National Fund website: <http://support.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=negevindex> (Retrieved: December 24, 2010)
- 11 Early on, planners focused upon the Negev as a region of strategic importance to be staked out with development towns for new immigrants. First, starting in the 1950s, the government established Jewish "development towns" on the Negev frontier, settling new Jewish Middle Eastern and North African refugees and immigrants in remote desert outposts such as Yeruham and Ofakim. Then, in the 1970s, the government built seven urban Bedouin townships, designed to centralize the Bedouin population and free up the southern half of the country for planned waves of Jewish settlement. Finally, in the 1980s, the government sent new Russian and Ethiopian immigrants to the frontier to increase the population of towns such as Beer Sheva and Dimona, whose populations were on the decline. Around the same time as the last major Israeli government construction projects for Russian immigrants, Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF, the Israeli JNF) shifted emphasis to strengthening "peripheral areas", especially the Negev. In the mid-1990s the KKL-JNF launched 'Action Plan Negev', which placed the Negev on the JNF agenda "in light of the geopolitical, social and demographic situation and the national needs of people and state." ("KKL- JNF in The Land of The Negev", KKL-JNF, Retrieved: June 2008, http://www.kkl.org.il/kkl/english/main_subject/majoractivities/negevprojects/negev8.x Modified=00C28D773B3EC70107) As planning experts Daniel Orenstein and Steven Hamburg explain, "The preferred form of settlement to meet the goal of control over land is scattered, low-density communities that maximize a physical presence of the dominant ethnic group on the land. Alternatively, for the ethnic minority, the spatial extent of development is restricted and intensification results". {Daniel Orenstein and Steven Hamburg. "To populate or preserve? Evolving political-demographic and environmental paradigms in Israeli land-use policy," Land Use Policy (2009) p.1 }
- None of these projects was successful. Within a decade of the establishment of the first Jewish towns in the Negev, it became clear that the towns had turned into desert islands of poverty - job opportunities were nonexistent or limited to low-wage unskilled jobs, leading to dependence on government services and a high rate of population turnover. As a result of the departure of upwardly mobile inhabitants, anthropologist Yoram Bilu argues, these towns became known as "sinks" or "residual communities" for "less successful" immigrants. {Yoram Bilu. "Moroccan Jews, Shaping Israel's Geography", in, Deborah Dash Moore and Ilan S. Troen, *Divergent Jewish Cultures: Israel and America*, (Yale, 2001) p.82} Ilan Troen explains that "although [Israeli planners] lived in a developing country, their frame of reference was the experience of modern, industrializing countries" and thus the grand designs for development towns in the periphery anticipated "the excesses and problems of a society and economic order that did not yet exist in Israel." {Troen, Op.Cit., (2003) p.189}
- Furthermore, economic tensions between Bedouin towns and adjacent lush Jewish towns significantly impact the quality of life for both Jewish and Bedouin residents. As Harvey Lithwick of the Negev Center for Regional Development noted, in 2004 the Bedouin urban township of Tel Sheva ranked the third lowest in the government's official ranking of the socio-economic status of towns in Israel. In contrast, the predominantly Jewish town of Omer ranked the third wealthiest town in Israel. While the Bedouin township of Tel Sheva is filled with sun-baked, grass-less, gravel-filled lots, its affluent Jewish neighbor, Omer, is a suburban oasis replete with grassy lawns and gardens, air-conditioned shopping plazas, and swimming pools at the heart of a parched land. Though by all indications Omer should be among the most livable towns in Israel, Lithwick observed, it has the highest rate of car theft in the country. {Harvey Lithwick. "An Urban Development Strategy for the Negev's Bedouin Community," Negev Center for Regional Development and The Center for Bedouin Studies and Development (August 2000)} This directly undermined efforts to increase the Jewish demographic advantage in the southern half of the country. And
- 12 "The Negev Challenge", JNF-UK website (Retrieved: December 12, 2008)
<http://www.jnf.co.uk/campaigns/the-jnf-negev-challenge>
- 13 Sixty percent of Negev lands are officially zoned as 'military areas,' and the Israeli army has appropriated at least an additional twenty-five percent of the total State Lands designated as JNF park

space. No development for either Arabs or Jews can be conceived on these untouchable, unnegotiable army lands, leaving little space in the 'wide open' desert for agriculture, industry, or housing projects. {Interview: Negev Planner Rami Charuvi (Jerusalem, July 23, 2006)}

Interview: *Hebrew University Geographer* (Jerusalem, November 14, 2005)

14 "The Work We Do: Blueprint Negev, Working with Bedouin Communities", JNF-America (Retrieved: March 12, 2009) <http://www.jnf.org/work-we-do/blueprint-negev/working-with-bedouin.html>

15 Heilman, Op.Cit.

16 Uriel Heilman. "Israel's Final Frontier: Settling the Undeveloped Negev", *B'nai B'rith Magazine* (Winter 2008)

17 The Israeli JNF website notes: "After many years of a freeze in the settlement process, clear signs are again appearing of action on bare hill tops within the primordial desert landscape....working in a search for new ideals and from a need to give government a reason to put into effect the tens of their resolutions regarding expansion of settlement". {"KKL- JNF in The Land of The Negev: New Communities in The Negev and Arava", KKL-JNF (Retrieved: June 2008) http://www.kkl.org.il/kkl/english/main_subject/majoractivities/negevprojects/negev8.xModified=00C28D773B3EC70107

18 In 2006, the government once again allocated four billion dollars to Negev development, this time to private planning group Daroma Idan Hanegev, Ltd. (Southward: The Age of the Negev, Ltd.) and the American global management consulting firm, McKinsey and Co. The government's enlistment of a private foreign company to conduct planning on such a grand scale, was unprecedented. (Marilyn Blumer. "Negev Task Force", United Jewish Communities {Retrieved: January 12, 2009 <http://www.ujc.org/page.aspx?id=120064>)

Negev 2015/Plan Daroma, currently in the works, is two-tiered, involving removal of unrecognized Bedouin villages on the one hand, and incorporation and construction of new Jewish towns on the other.

19 Uriel Heilman. "Israel's Final Frontier: Settling the Undeveloped Negev", *B'nai B'rith Magazine* (Winter 2008)

20 "A Message from Ronald S. Lauder: # 1 in a Series", Jewish National Fund website: <http://support.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=advertorial> (Retrieved December 24, 2010)

21 Daniel Orenstein. "Population Growth and Environmental Impact: Ideology and Academic Discourse in Israel", *Population and Environment* Volume 26, Number 1 (September, 2004) citing: "Population Reference Bureau World Population Data Sheet, 2004, and CIA Factbook, 2004

22 Eyal Chowers. "The end of building: Zionism and the politics of the concrete", *The Review of Politics*, Vol.64, No 4 (2004)

For example, kibbutzniks on the way to the fields often sang Nathan Alterman's poem, Morning Song, "From the slopes of the Lebanon till the Dead Sea, we will worship you with plows. We will plant you and build you. We will make you very beautiful... we will cover you with a coat of concrete and cement."

23 For instance, in 2008, the curator of the Tel Aviv exhibit, "Song of Concrete", argued that once cement connoted protecting and honoring the land, and asserting an "indigenous" modern Israeli culture, but today it guards an enclave society, becoming "...a threatening and deterrent material. Concrete ties in with the separation fence, the border, the checkpoints, the air-raid shelters, the walls surrounding private estates and whole communities, and soon the entire country will be encased in concrete..." (Esther Zandberg. "Cementing a special relationship", Haaretz {December 25, 2008})

24 "Individual Farmsteads: Seclusion – The Solution to Overcrowding", JNF-KKL website: http://www.kkl.org.il/kkl/english/main_subject/majoractivities/negevprojects/negev2.x (Retrieved: December 24, 2010)

25 "JNF Blueprint/Or Promotional Video", JNF-America and Or Movement (c2007)

26 Currently, one set of government plans call for continued decentralization and settlement in the open spaces of the Negev, while another set of government plans insist upon high-density development in existing Jewish towns. Both National outline plan no. 31 (TAMA 31) authorized in 1991, and district outline plane no. 4/14, authorized in 2000, "explicitly determine that no new towns and villages should be built in the Negev district area, an expression of planners' concerns with protecting the fragile, unique environment of the semiarid Negev, as well as avoiding the weakening of the Negev's central city, Beer-Sheva, which faces the emigration of inhabitants towards its affluent suburbs."(Alfasi, Op.Cit. p.560)

27 "Blueprint Negev promotional video," JNF-America (2005)

28 Interview: Russell Robinson, CEO, Jewish National Fund (New York, 2009)}

29 Meanwhile, in 2009 an Israeli paper announced that the Israeli government had invested fifty million New Israeli Shekels in the development of a sewage treatment plant to benefit Negev

communities. With the exception of the Blueprint Negev settlement of Carmit, which has not yet been established, the wastewater would originate exclusively from Bedouin townships. In turn, the treated water would be transported for agricultural use in Jewish towns. The first destination was to be the Blueprint Negev settlement known as Kibbutz Shomriya {Ken Lemoshav. "Letovet Ha Chaklaim" (March 26, 2009)}, offered to Jewish settlers evacuated from Gaza in 2006. {Jodi Bodner. "JNF Works to Make New Homes for Gaza Evacuees", JNF website (February 27, 2006)} In reaction, Yaeela Livnat of the Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages expressed concern that since in Israel citizens pay municipal taxes on reclamation of their sewage water, the Bedouin would be taxed for services to which they will have no access. Livnat commented, "when asked several years ago, why the handful of Bedouins who have access to land do not receive also restored water, the answer was that there was no restored water in the area. And now?" Yaeela Livnat. "[RCUV] Preventing Bedouin Access to Land in the Negev: destruction of crops and deprivation of resources", *Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages* (April 6, 2009)

30 Sharon Udasin. "Shabbat In The Park, To Aid The Negev", *New York Jewish Week* (07/09/2008)

31 "Israel Water Crisis Facts and Figures", JNF website (2009) {Retrieved: November 1. 2010, http://support.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Water_facts}

32 Asaf Palgi, Discussion at JNFfuture presentation, "It's Not a Mirage, It's Our Vision" 2009, New York City

33 Sharon Udasin. "Shabbat In The Park, To Aid The Negev", *New York Jewish Week* (07/09/2008)

In suit he styles the definition of the southern half of Israel as a Jewish "home" in the image of American desert suburbs, suggesting that English-speaking Jews possess an intrinsic capacity to change the image and quality of life in failed development towns. Lauder observed that the Blueprint aimed to "allow the Diaspora Jew to change the quality of life and image of the Negev," {Lauder, Op. Cit. (2006)} In particular, Blueprint Negev promoters speak of "allowing" the Diaspora Jew to play a role in redressing the alienation of what the JNF calls Israel's "forgotten" communities" (i.e. marginalized Mizrahi, Ethiopian and Russian development towns). The terminology "forgotten communities" is a clear reference to Sephardi rhetoric around the Jewish "forgotten refugees" of the Middle East. The term "forgotten refugees" is employed by Zionist groups advocating an equivalence between the problem of Jewish exile from Middle Eastern countries, and the Palestinian refugee problem. A bill calling for such an equivalence was introduced in the U.S. congress in 2007, and is linked with an push for a property and refugee exchange between Iraqi Jews and Palestinians. {Senate Resolution 85, 110th Congress First Session (February 16, 2007)}

34 "Hydropolitics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", PASSIA (December 1999)

35 Ilan Troen. *Imagining Zion*, Yale University Press (2003) p. 19

36 S. Ilan Troen. "Frontier Myths and Their Applications in America and Israel" in, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 86, No. 3, Organization of American Historians (December 1999) p.1217

37 Troen. Op.Cit. (2003) p.31

38 Ibid.

However in the time leading up to the creation of the state and into the 1960s, Eastern European socialist models of settlement and development caught hold. (Ibid., p.189)

39 Mead had headed state-sponsored projects to establish a republican model for land ownership where private enterprise had failed. He led the establishment of a State Demonstration Colony in California as a response to the perceived link between the social instability and racial and ethnic pluralism accompanying urbanization and industrialization {Troen. Op.Cit. (1999) p.1219} The tenant farmer classes of Asians and Latinos were depicted as wandering about unattached, "unassimilable," and difficult to control. The Durham Colony was part of a racially homogeneous utopian experiment in "answer to threatening social trends, their hope for legitimacy, their bid for control of resources." (Ibid., p.7) According to biographer James Kluger, Mead considered irrigation engineering a disciplining mechanism towards the creation of a socially stable republican society of small farmers and freeholders. {Needham. Op.Cit., p.5}

40 The implication was that Jews were racially predisposed to capitalism and that the idealism of socialism detracted from their natural pragmatism. Mead claimed that the ideologically socialist spirit of many Zionist pioneers, and particularly the Jewish Federation of Labor, would impede frontier settlement, arguing that while farming necessitated "practical experience and balanced judgment," and successful pioneering required a free enterprise ethos, such men were pre-disposed to "try experiments". (Troen. "Frontier Myths and Their Applications in America and Israel," (1999) pp.1218-19)

41 Ibid., p.1218

Conversely, Lithuanian Zionist agricultural expert Yitchak Elezari-Volcani, like Lewis Mumford in the U.S., hearkened to the early Puritan communitarian model of “Yankee communists” (as well as to the medieval European city), which they argued provided a better model for securing rural land tenure and staving off the emergence of urban frontiers.(Ibid. p.1223)

42 Ibid. p.1219

According to Troen, throughout Israel's founding period these theories were utterly ill-suited to local conditions in the Negev,(Ibid. p.1220) however their influence on early JNF efforts in the Negev lend weight to Ruth Kark's observation that these types of settlement activities in the Negev played a role in inducing “a departure in the Russian (socialist) attitude” after the founding of the state.(Kark, Op.Cit., p.351)

43 At the 1920 World Zionist Organization (WZO) conference in London, representatives of American Jewry proposed that “preference should be given to private enterprise,” and when this view lost muster, Brandeis resigned in protest. (Note: at the time, the JNF was one of the WZO's central institutions, and was controlled by the WZO.{Donald Neff. “Justice Brandeis Was the Savior of Zionism in America”, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs (August/September 1996) p. 38} Brandeis' platform was predicated on the assumption that the WZO should shift all its energies towards on-the-ground, private homesteading in Palestine.{Joseph B. Glass. *From New Zion to Old Zion*, Wayne University Press (2002) p.45} For a decade after Brandeis' resignation, the London JNF became the center of JNF authority, focusing its efforts on collective modernization projects rather than private enterprise.{Troen, Op.Cit. (2003) p.5}

44 “Displaced Gaza Jewish Settlers Create New Homes with JNF-USA in Israel's Negev Desert”, Jewish National Fund Promotional video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyyCtAXPsfc> (Retrieved: January 12, 2011)

45 Orenstein in some venues has defended the JNF - but not when it comes to the Blueprint Negev or the JNF's support for the Or Movement. Referring to OR Negev's role in the Blueprint Negev, Orenstein comments, “In their original literature they cited a demographic-spatial takeover by Bedouin as a compelling reason to settle the Negev (by Jews). They've since become more savvy in their PR, but I don't think they've changed their tune. They are very central in promoting the relatively new discourse in Israel that paints the Bedouin as an emerging fifth column....Tnuat Or was the third biggest recipient of JNF-USA funding....There is a reason why JNF sent Or 2 million dollars in 2007. They approve of Or's program.”(Email Correspondence: Daniel Orenstein. Subject heading: “lack of progress with the JNF” {October 7. 2008 1:45 PM})

46 Interview: Noam Dolgin. Director, Green Zionist Alliance (2010)

47 Early Zionist pioneers in Israel promoted a “rural ideal” based on a rejection of the urban and capitalist occupations through which international Jewry had been associated with usury and greed. Zionists emphasized the power of labor to connect the Jewish People with their homeland and transform them from “degenerate” and “abnormal” people into a “healthy” modern nation. Parallel with the development of *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* (respectively socialist and capitalist agricultural settlements), JNF projects provided a physical outlet through which Jews could regenerate and root in their homeland, mixing their blood and sweat with the soil through their labor.

48 In Israel, as in other settlement societies, 'becoming native' historically relied upon securing “pioneering credentials.” A process of reinvention accompanied the transition of nearly every new citizen of Israel towards 'native' status, since nearly all Israelis hailed from disparate origins and few shared the same definitions of home, identity and belonging. In order to feel fully at home in the nascent Jewish State, Jews arriving in Israel asserted their nativeness through self-sacrificial pioneering of one or more of Israel's scientific, economic, or geographic, frontiers. This assertion of nativeness through pioneering became a Zionist “tradition” differentiating the true native Israeli from the recent immigrant.{Oren Yiftachel and Alexandre (Sandy) Kedar. “Land Regime and Social Relations in Israel”, in: ed.s, Hernando de Soto & Francis Cheneval, *Swiss Human Rights Book Vol. 1*, Ruffer & Rub (2006) p.130} In turn, sociologists Gershon Shafir and Ilan Peled, citing fellow Israeli sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt, explain the difference between founders and immigrants thus: “Chalutzim [pioneers] were the trailblazers while olim [“ascendants”]... were ideologically motivated settlers, whose physical migration was preceded by a cultural and spiritual transformation, a conscious break with traditional Jewish values.... ‘Immigrants,’ on the other hand, were refugees fleeing their home countries without any cultural or spiritual preparation.”{Gershon Shafir & Ilan Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge University Press, 2002) p.76}}

Starting in the 1950s, new immigrants and refugees asserted nativeness through extending the reach of the State into Israel's peripheries, settling in frontier development towns based on the British model of the Garden City. Due to their strategic value as frontier outposts, the government continued to

build development towns even as they collapsed economically and failed to serve the needs of their hastily-placed residents. (Michael Feige, "Identity, Ritual and Pilgrimage", in: Troen and Dash-Moore, Op.Cit. (2001) p.94)} In particular, these included marginalized populations of Mizrahim (Middle Eastern Jews), Ethiopians, and Russians, lower-status "reluctant pioneers", viewed as having staked out the frontiers of the country by default. {Troen, Op.Cit. (2003) p.189} However, starting in the mid 1980s, as the Israeli economy transitioned towards capitalism, Israeli citizens "at home" and "abroad" could stake their pioneering credentials through demonstrating an entrepreneurial spirit in the realms of agri-business and high-technology development. These, the JNF hoped, would include English-speaking ideological immigrants, sharing of their education and wealth with fellow Jews in need.

49 Richard Slotkin. *Regeneration Through Violence*, Wesleyan University Press (1973) p.361

50 "Individual Farmsteads in the Negev: Seclusion – The Solution to Overcrowding", JNF-Israel (KKL-JNF) website (c2007) (Retrieved: http://www.kkl.org.il/KKL/advanced_template.aspx?id=18282 January 11, 2011)

51 The wigwam structures appear to be replicas of conical tents utilized by colonists worldwide and employed by early Zionist pioneers as they first set up temporary camp in frontier regions. Starting in the 1920s, Zionist boy scouts also camped out in such conical wigwams, playing the role of the "Hebrew Bedouin", clad in keffiyehs along with their uniform. {Vivienne Silver-Brody. Documenters of the Dream: Pioneer Jewish photographers in the land of Israel 1890-1933; Magnes Press of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1998)}

52 Benny Morris. "Yosef Weitz and the Transfer Committees, 1948-49," Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 22, No. 4 (October, 1986) pp.525-549

53 Oren Yiftachel and Sandy Kedar argue that "Israel adopted the long-term policy of the JNF" when it "declared that all state lands will never be sold, thereby ensuring the perpetual ownership of state and Jewish organizations over all lands accumulated in the hands of the state and Jewish organizations." (Section 1 of Basic Law: Israel Lands (1960).) {Oren Yiftachel and Alexandre (Sandy) Kedar. "Land Regime and Social Relations in Israel", in: ed.s, Hernando de Soto & Francis Cheneval, Swiss Human Rights Book Vol. 1, Ruffer & Rub (2006) pp.141-142}

54 Louis Brandeis. "Palestine and the Jewish Democracy", in ed., Alfred Emanuel Smith: New Outlook (January 15, 1917) p.39

55 Devorah Brous. "Uprooting Weeds"; Unpublished Masters Thesis, Hebrew University, (2006)

56 Ibid., pp.109-115

57 Brous. Op.Cit. (2006)

58 Deborah Sontag. "Arboreal Scandal in Israel: Not All of the Trees Planted There Stay Planted", *New York Times* (July 3, 2000)

59 Susan Nathan. *The Other Side of Israel: My Journey Across the Jewish/Arab Divide*, Nan A. Talese (2005)

60 Zafir Rinat. 'JNF using trees to thwart Bedouin growth in Negev', Haaretz (December 11, 2008)

61 Yanir Yagna. "Upscale Negev suburb hopes to drive away Bedouin by planting trees", Haaretz (March 26, 2009)

62 Devorah Brous. Unplugged Tours Presentation (March 2005)

63 "It's Not a Mirage, It's Our Vision Presentation to JNF future membership (March 3, 2009)

64 Email Correspondence: Devorah Brous. Subject heading: "lack of progress with the JNF" {October 7, 2008 2:14 PM}

Parties to the email included environmental planning expert and former JNF Board Member Daniel Orenstein, David Lehrer of the JNF-funded Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, Yaela Livnat of the Council for Unrecognized Villages, Rabbi David Seidenburg, Brous, and various Jewish environmental advocates in the United States.

65 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. "Performing the State", in: *The art of being Jewish in modern times*, ed.s, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Jonathan Karp, University of Pennsylvania Press (2008) p.114

66 Yoram Bar-Gal. *Propaganda and Zionist Education: The Jewish National Fund 1924-1927*, University of Rochester Press (2003) p.177

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid. p.12 (in: "The Blue Box Work." *Karnenu*, Year 1 (1924), No.2, p.5)

69 Ibid., p.101

70 Hillel Tryster. *Israel Before Israel*, Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive (1995), p.79

71 Ibid., p.78

72 Ibid.

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- 73 Joseph B. Glass. *From New Zion to Old Zion*, Wayne University Press (2002) p.54
 Brandeis recommended that, along with a document informing potential American settlers of the conditions of life they might expect, "it might be wise to send...some one of the published descriptions of life on the small plantations with its worthy social joys, so that the middle class Jews may realize that they are not being relegated to the dreary, barren life common on isolated, small American farms." {Louis Dembitz Brandeis, Melvin I. Urofsky, and David W. Levy. *Letters of Louis D. Brandeis*, State University of New York Press (1978) p.488}
- 74 Donald Neff. "Fallen Pillars: U.S. Policy Towards Palestine and Israel since 1945", Institute for Palestine Studies (1995)
 This was a version of what European Zionists called "Zionism without Zion." {The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy, Simon and Schuster (1987) p.19}
- 75 Prior to the Holocaust, most American Jews were non-Zionist and argued that they had found their promised land in the United States, rallying to the cry, "America is our Zion." {Michael Feldberg. "Louis D. Brandeis and American Zionism", United Jewish Communities (Retrieved March 2, 2009) <http://www.ujc.org/page.aspx?id=53583>}
- 76 Mark A. Raider. *The Emergence of American Zionism*, New York University Press (1998) p.76
- 77 In the 1920s, there was no real separation between Propaganda staff and Youth Department staff, who co-produced the material distributed to all ages. (Bar-Gal, Op.Cit., p.15)
- 78 Ibid., p.161
- 79 Raider, Op.Cit., p.78-92
- 80 Molly Golden. "It's Not a Mirage, It's Our Vision", Presentation to JNFuture membership (March 3, 2009)
 For the JNF, to be "apolitical" does not mean to play no role in the conflict between Jews and Arabs over land and resources, so much as to render it invisible. In failing to mention the Bedouin save as an afterthought, the Blueprint Negev strips the Bedouin of visibility, in effectively denying their significant presence in the Negev and their right to impact the planning and implementation of the Blueprint Negev. Discussion of the Bedouin in particular, is inherently politicized. From the state perspective, Bedouin births are considered a "demographic bomb," and large Arab Palestinian families are viewed as a security threat. On February 3, 2003 a headline in Israel's largest daily, *Ma'ariv*, read: "Special Report: Polygamy is a Security Threat." The article detailed a report published by Herzl Gadge, Director of the Population Administration Department, which described polygamy in the Bedouin sector a "security threat" and advocated means of reducing the birth rate in the Arab sector. (Birthrates alarm Israel;" Chicago Tribune (April 21 2002)}
- 81 Neve Gordon. "'GOD-TV' evangelical Christian channel funds Israeli ethnic cleansing"; The Nation (December 8 2010)
 According to Gordon, "Right next to the demolished homes, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) put up a big sign that reads: "GOD-TV FOREST, A generous donation by God-TV made 1,000,000 tree saplings available to be planted in the land of Israel and also provided for the creation of water projects throughout the Negev." Gordon notes that God-TV features evangelical leaders such as Joyce Meyer, Creflo Dollar, Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland and John Hagee, some of whom believe all Jews must convert to Christianity before the "Second Coming".

3. JNF-Christian Evangelical Forest

by Jonathan Cook

Half a million trees planted over the past 18 months on the ancestral lands of Bedouin tribes in Israel's Negev (Naqab) region were bought by a controversial Christian evangelical television channel that calls itself God-TV.

A sign posted a few kilometers north of Beersheba, the Naqab's main city, announces plans to plant a total of a million trees over a large area of desert that has already been designated "God-TV Forest."

The Jewish National Fund (JNF), an international non-profit organization in charge of forestation and developing Jewish settlements in Israel, received \$500,000 from God-TV to plant some of the trees, according to the channel's filings to US tax authorities last year.

A coalition of Jewish and Bedouin human rights groups have denounced the project, accusing God-TV and the JNF of teaming up to force the Bedouin out of the area to make way for Jewish-only communities.

No one from God-TV was available for comment, but in a video posted on its website, Rory Alec, the channel's co-founder, said he had begun fundraising for the forest after receiving "an instruction from God" a few years ago. He said God had told him: "Prepare the land for the return of my Son."

Standing next to the "God-TV Forest" sign, Alec thanked thousands of viewers for making donations to "sow a seed for God," adding: "I tell you Jesus is coming back soon!"

Part of the forest has been planted on land claimed by the Aturi tribe, whose village, Al-Araqib, is nearby.

Al-Araqib has been demolished eight times in recent months by the Israeli police as officials increase the pressure on the 350 inhabitants to move to Rahat, an under-funded, government-planned township nearby.

Earlier this year, Joe Stork, the deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division, criticized the repeated attempts by Israeli authorities to eradicate the village and displace its residents.

"Tearing down an entire village and leaving its inhabitants homeless without exhausting all other options for settling long-standing land claims is outrageous," he said.

Human Rights Watch and other international human rights groups have criticized Israel for harsh measures taken against the people of Al-Araqib and the other 90,000 Bedouin who live in Naqab villages that Israel refuses to recognize. They accuse the government of trying to pre-empt a court case moving through Israeli courts aimed at settling the Bedouin ownership claims.

God-TV's involvement in the dispute has prompted fresh concern. Neve Gordon, a politics professor at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba, said the JNF, which has semi-governmental status in Israel, had set a "dangerous precedent" in accepting money from God-TV.

"The Israeli authorities are playing with fire," he said. "This dispute between the Israeli government and the Bedouin is a long one that until now focused on the question of land rights. But the involvement of extremist Christian groups like God-TV is likely to turn this into a religious confrontation, and that will be much harder to resolve."

The JNF did not respond to questions about its involvement with God-TV or the Naqab forest.

Gordon said it was particularly worrying that Alec was using the language of Biblical prophecy in justifying his decision to finance the forest.

The channel, which has become one of the most popular global evangelical stations since its founding in Britain 15 years ago, claims a potential audience of up to a half-billion viewers, including 20 million in the United States.

Stephen Sizer, a British vicar and prominent critic of Christian Zionist groups, described God-TV as part of an evangelical movement that believes Israel's establishment and expansion are bringing nearer the "end times" – or the moment when, according to Christians, Jesus will return for the second time.

Its followers, he added, believed that, by dispossessing Palestinians of their land and replacing them with Jews, Jesus' return could be expedited.

"Funding aliyah [Jewish immigration] and planting trees in the desert may look innocuous but it's actually their way to side with the Israeli right's hardline policies towards the Palestinian population."

Sizer said there was increasing co-operation between Israeli institutions and Christian evangelical groups, which have begun basing their operations in Israel.

God-TV has proclaimed itself the only television channel to broadcast globally from Jerusalem, following its relocation there from the UK in 2007.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, the head of the Union of Reform Judaism in the US, has repeatedly called on Israel to sever contacts with Christian Zionist and evangelical groups, describing them as opposed to "territorial compromise under any and all circumstances".

God-TV has close ties to Christians United for Israel (CUFI), an umbrella group founded in 2006 by John Hagee, a Texan pastor, who lobbies on behalf of Israel in Congress.

Hagee, a frequent preacher on the TV channel, has regularly courted controversy with comments seen as anti-Semitic. Most notoriously, in a sermon in the late 1990s, he called Adolf Hitler "a hunter" who carried out God's plan for the Jews to return to Israel by leaving them "no place to hide" in Europe.

CUFI and the other evangelical groups have lobbied strenuously in Washington on behalf of the illegal settlements in the West Bank and for Israeli control over the holy sites in East Jerusalem, said Sizer.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, has been especially keen to seek out support from Christian evangelical groups, according to Shalom Goldman, a professor at Atlanta's Emory University, who recently published a book on the Christian Zionist movement.

Last year CUFI announced a \$38 million marketing drive to bring more Christian tourists to Israel, including the establishment of a "task force on global Christian relations" jointly overseen by Hagee and Netanyahu.

Haia Noach, the director of the Negev Coexistence Forum, which campaigns for Bedouin rights, said her organization feared more of God-TV's trees would be planted on Bedouin lands in the coming weeks. A depot has recently been established close to Al-Araqib to store four bulldozers.

"The villagers refuse to abandon Al-Araqib, even though it has been destroyed many times. But once a forest is planted there, there will be no chance to go back," she said.

She said she feared the goal was to build Jewish communities on Bedouin land. She cited the case of Givat Bar, which was secretly established by the government on part of Al-Araqib's lands in 2003.

Repeated letters to the JNF for information about their forestation program had gone unanswered, she said.

Awad Abu Freih, a community leader at Al-Araqib, said the house demolitions and forest-planting were only the latest measures by the government to remove the villagers.

Repeated destruction of Al-Araqib's crops by spraying them with herbicides was ruled illegal by Israel's Supreme Court in 2004.

Efforts to move 90,000 Bedouin off their lands close to Beersheba have been intensifying since 2003, when the Israeli government announced plans to move them into a handful of townships.

The Bedouin have resisted, complaining that the official communities are little more than urban reservations that languish at the bottom of the country's social and economic tables.

Jonathan Cook is a writer and journalist based in Nazareth, Israel. His latest books are *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East* (Pluto Press) and *Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair* (Zed Books). His website is www.jkcook.net. This chapter was first published by *Electronic Intifada* (28 Dec) and *Counterpunch* (29 Dec 2010).

4. Twail Abu Jarwal...

The little hatchlings, why did they bury them alive?

by Yeela Ranaan

On 8 May 2007, the Government of Israel once more demolished the entire village of Twail Abu-Jarwal in the Negev (Naqab) – including 30 tents and huts.

Sunset, the stifling heat of the day had lifted, we sat as the villagers related the destruction that occurred in the morning. They arrived at 9:30am, two bulldozers accompanied by scores of armed police-people and a handful of youth from the West Bank settlements – “workers” – to demolish the entire village.

“I was at work, I didn’t know that my home was demolished until I came ‘home’,” one related. “They buried alive the doves’ hatchlings,” said Yunis sadly. “Many of the village people are in Jordan for a wedding, they must have known that, they have informers everywhere, even at the border crossing,” thought another. The bulldozer driver took his time, he worked slowly and thoroughly, he left nothing standing, nothing.”

“On the other side of the village they ruined the water containers. They even destroyed the broken-down van that the old man used as a shelter.”

“And the other old guy, Muhammad, didn’t want to leave his house, so they picked him up and forcefully took him out,” related Ibrahim, “and then, when his son Yaser wanted to make shade for him and picked the fabric off the ground, and took the tent pole in his other hand, he was arrested by the police, who claimed that he was about to hit him.”

“This is the eighth time in the last two years they have come to demolish. It is the fourth time that they have flattened it out completely.”

Aqil el-Talalqa, the village council head, sat many times with representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the Authority for the “Advancement” of the Bedouins, and the Israeli Land Authority. They suggested that he and the village move to another temporary location, while the government contemplates what to do with the people. But Aqil is refusing; he has had enough with temporary solutions.

His people were moved ‘temporarily’ in 1952, and have been pushed around ever since. All 500 members of the village are still living in crowded temporary homes on the outskirts of Laqia without a possibility of receiving building permits; their homes in their ancestral village are demolished every month, they are still waiting for the plots they bought in the town on Laqia in 1978. Is it not time for a solution? The village people have presented their case to the Israeli courts, but they have yet to be heard. In the meantime their homes are being demolished.

We sat quietly, staring at the ruins of the homes, listening to the sheep as they strolled home. Yunis broke the silence, “But the little hatchlings, why did they have to bury them alive?”



Figure 4.1



Figure 4.2

Yeela Ranaan is a member of the Regional Council for Unrecognized Villages. This chapter was first published in May 2007.

5. Bedouin Land Rights

by Irène Steinert

5.1 Introduction

Bedouin family houses and villages have been destroyed by Israeli forces since the early 1950s, soon after the establishment of the state. Under the authority of the Israel Land Administration (ILA, established in 1960) – on the board of which the JNF holds a number of seats – Bedouin villages in the Naqab region of Israel continue to be razed to the ground. For decades now, the 45 unrecognized villages of the Bedouin in the Naqab have been threatened with demolition, of which Twail Abu-Jarwal and Al-Araqib have become the most prominent symbols.

Since 2005, there has been an escalation in the number of house demolitions taking place. In May 2007, Israeli forces razed 30 shelters in the village of Twail Abu-Jarwal. 500 displaced members of this community currently live in temporary housing near Laqia (1). In February 2010, the ILA, along with the Ministry of Interior and the Israel Police (Southern District) jointly planned to demolish 700 Bedouin homes during the course of the year (see the list of demolitions in Appendix 3).

On 27 July 2010, 1500 police devastated houses, tents, cattle enclosures, orchards and the olive trees of the 500 Bedouins living in the village of Al-Araqib between Beer-Sheva and Rahat. Subsequently, the families tried to repair their possessions as far as possible. On 10 August at 5.30 am they woke up to find 100 police had returned to raze what had been rebuilt (see Chapter 1).

The Israeli state deprives the 45 unrecognized villages of water and electricity. Health care and schools are underfunded. This is part of an ongoing programme since the 1950s, whereby the Bedouin territories have been appropriated by the state in order to accommodate Jewish farmers and kibbutzim. The JNF plants forests such as Yattir to prevent the Bedouin from returning to their lands. JNF statutes debar non-Jewish citizens from owning property; non-Jewish citizens are permitted to lease ground for only one season.

This article concerns how the Bedouin became victims of a conspiracy between the JNF and the Israeli regime of Palestinian land acquisition.

5.2 Dispossession and Concentration

The Bedouin history in Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Egypt dates back several millennia. Bedouins were and still are semi-nomads. Traditionally living in a tribal context, their livelihood has been based on the products of agriculture – fruit-trees and the grazing of sheep, goats and camels in the extended desert. They made their tents from black goat hair, and tapestries from camel hair and sheep wool.

Property rights, the cultivation of agricultural grounds, and common use of grazing land were regulated by their own juridical system, which was mostly oral. From 1858, during the Ottoman Empire, and then from 1923, during the British Mandate, the

Bedouins were required to register their lands. Many tribes refused to do so, not willing to pay taxes to foreign colonial authorities. They did not consider that land registration was necessary to regulate the use of their own territories.

Some tribes did register their land with the pre-Israel colonial authorities. For example, in 1926, Suleiman Al-Turi Abu-Mudaighem, tribal chief of the Al-Turi tribe purchased 1,000 dunams (1,000,000 m², 1 sq-km) from Sheikh Haj Ibrahim Al-Uqbi in the surroundings of the village of Al-Araqib. This was in addition to the 150 dunams that the Al-Turi possessed since 1904. They paid taxes on their properties to the authorities of both the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate and their property rights were officially recognized. However, the Israeli state has refused to recognize their ownership. The Al-Turi are judged as trespassers on their own land (2). On 10 July 2010 their houses were destroyed to make way for a JNF forest.

In 1947, 90,000 Bedouins were living in the Naqab, forming 99% of the population, being in charge of 99% of their territories. In the 1948 Nakba, most of them fled to Egypt and Jordan. The UN made mention in 1951 of the deportation of another 7000 Bedouins to Jordan, the Sinai and Gaza, of whom a great number returned by circuitous routes. By 1951, only 11,000 Bedouin remained on their lands and in that year the Israeli state expropriated their lands, of course without consulting the proprietors. Many Bedouins resisted forced displacement from their villages and lands.

Many Bedouins were rounded-up and expelled from their villages to a reservation in Mantiqat Al-Siyag in the north-east of the Naqab, comprising only 10% of its land area. They were placed under military rule, essentially interned without freedom of movement. The more fertile ground in the west of the Naqab was reserved for Jewish farmers; water and irrigation systems were installed and this region became the granary of Israel. Bedouins looked for work on the Jewish farms, established on their ground, but they were not allowed to bring their families as a condition of employment.

The process of concentrating the Bedouin continued in subsequent years. Since the late sixties, in what was referred to as a policy of urbanisation, the Israeli state transferred the Bedouin to seven “concentration towns” – Rahat, Ar’arat an-Naqab, Hura, Kuseife, Laqia, Shaqibal-Salam and Telas-Sabi. Of these, Rahat, founded in 1972, became the first Bedouin city in Israel, receiving city-status in 1994 with about 50,000 inhabitants.

Despite the fact that these seven towns are places of legal residence for Bedouins, even so they remain neglected by the state. According to the Naqab Centre for Regional Development (3) these towns suffer from a lack of economic activity that would provide employment opportunities. Public services and infrastructure such as transport are barely funded. The residents are not able to make a living from their original livelihoods (agriculture and livestock) being cut off from their land. Approximately half of families live under the poverty line (4).

5.3 The Israel Land Authority and the Jewish National Fund

Soon after the founding of the state, policies and legislation were instituted to control and administer land. In 1949 the Arab names of towns and villages were substituted with Hebrew names. So the Naqab was changed to Negev. Ben-Gurion argued:

“We are obliged to remove the Arabic names for reason of state. Just as we do not recognize the Arab’s political proprietorship of the land so also we do not recognize their spiritual proprietorship and their names.”

The Absentees Property Law of 1950 bequeathed to the Israeli Development Authority the land and properties of persons who had fled or who had been expelled during the 1948 Nakba. This law also applied to the 80,000 Bedouins expelled during the ethnic cleansing of the Naqab and the 11,000 deported to Mantiqat al-Siyag. This was reinforced by the Black Goat Law of 1950, which prohibited the grazing and tending of goats and sheep outside of Siyag. The argument was that the black goats would graze all the plants, causing desertification. So Bedouins were deprived of a means of existence and the material to make their tents.

In 1953, the Jewish National Fund Law was passed and the JNF became an Israeli private company, acting for the benefit of Jews-only, implementing Israeli government land policies. According to Article 3a of the Memorandum of Association of the JNF Ltd:

“Land is to be acquired as Jewish property and ... in the name of the JNF to the end that the same shall be held the alienable property of the Jewish people. The [Jewish] Agency shall promote agricultural colonization based on Jewish Labour.”

The Acquisition of Land Law of the same year authorized the transfer of expropriated land to the “ownership” of Jewish “national institutions” such as the JNF on behalf of Jewish citizens and Jewish immigrants (5).

The 1960 Israel Lands Administration Law established (as it became known later) the Israel Lands Authority (ILA) and placed it in charge of 93% of land – predominantly expropriated – within the green line, including JNF and Development Authority lands. The JNF could appoint 6 of the 13 members of the council of the ILA. In 2007 an overtly racist amendment to the 1960 law, denying land rights to non-Jews, was passed in the Knesset by four to one. It declared that the “leasing of JNF lands for the purpose of settling Jews will not be seen as unacceptable discrimination” (6). Further amendments were made to the Israel Lands Administration Law in 2009 (7).

In 1980 the Naqab Land Acquisition Law decreed that further Arab Bedouin ground could be expropriated to construct a military airport.

Nationally and internationally, the JNF presents itself as an ecological organisation involved in water projects, planting recreational parks and forests, reversing desertification etc. Its promotional material does not mention that it is involved in “green washing” the destruction of Palestinian and Bedouin villages, including their agricultural land and orchards. It does not mention that, following the expulsion of the indigenous inhabitants and the expropriation of their land, its purpose is to settle thereupon “Jews-only” in accordance with its statutes (8).

The US office of the JNF presented its 'Blueprint Negev' to Israeli leaders in 2003 (9). This project was designed to develop the surroundings of Beer Sheva in the north east of the Naqab. According to Rebecca Manski, it is a US Zionist project to attract Anglo-Jewish families and Israeli Jews to develop the desert in line with the words of Ben-Gurion in 1954: "For those who make the desert bloom, there is room for hundreds, thousands and even millions." Manski notes: "This vision – linking water, population and desert development – is the basis of the JNF's oldest, and also its latest, efforts in a region comprising over half of the territory of Israel" (10).

Settlements established through the OR Movement (in Hebrew, T'nuat Or) form the basis of 'Blueprint Negev' and are funded through JNF offices in the US, UK etc. The OR Movement, dating from 2002, was founded by a group of young adults to develop housing, employment, education, culture etc for exclusively Jewish settlements in the Naqab and Galilee. The first Jewish settlement out of the six originally established was Sansana; there are further plans for 70 such settlements (11). In order to achieve this, the Or Movement openly advocates for the concentration of the indigenous inhabitants: "Rahat is one of the seven Naqab towns planned to concentrate the Bedouin population" (12).

In 2006, Shimon Peres, as Minister for the Development of the Naqab and Galilee, emphasized the strategic importance of 'Blueprint Negev' for the Israeli state, in order to create communities and employment for young Israeli Jews, including families evacuated from Gaza and immigrants from Russia and Ethiopia. The project was seen as providing a demographic buffer against the higher birth rate of the Bedouin inhabitants. The target was to have 250,000 Jewish inhabitants by 2013.

The 'Blueprint Negev' website (13) announces JNF-funded projects in the seven Bedouin townships to clean the water, modernize the towns, build schools etc. The JNF argues that 160,000 Bedouins should discontinue their semi-nomadic way of life, this being inappropriate to modern times. At the same time, the JNF bemoans the social conditions in the townships, such as their unemployment rate of 90%, their birth rate of 6.5% (which is given as one of the causes of their poverty), 90% exclusion from secondary education, and 10% exclusion of girls from any level of education.

Yeela Raanan of the Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages in the Naqab (RCUV) disputes the above figures. According to Raanan, 90,000 Bedouins are living in the non-recognized villages; 30% of men and 60% of women are unemployed; the birth rate is 5%; there is 30% exclusion from secondary education (14). The JNF statistics exaggerate the deprivation without addressing its causes, namely the displacement of Bedouins from (and non-recognition of) their home villages, the loss of their traditional livelihoods and lack of work in the townships, and the expropriation of their territories and properties (with which the JNF is complicit).

In 2008 the Goldberg Commission, under the chairmanship of Eleizer Goldberg, was set up to advise on the development of the Naqab. The commission heard that the ILA has treated the Bedouins "rudely" and that their depiction as nomads is a myth, inconsistent with their longstanding habitation of the land (15). The commission recommended that Bedouins be recognized as Arab citizens and not as trespassers on their own territories. The commission advised that non-recognized villages be recognized by the state, but that this procedure should fit within the existing

development policies for the Naqab. The government then set up the Prawer Committee to elaborate upon the recommendations. Its rulings are waiting for government approval (16).

The State of Israel and the JNF signed the Land Swap Agreement in 2009. The JNF was to transfer up to 60,000 dunams of developed land, mostly in towns, to the ILA in exchange for “open space” (17). 90% of the land the JNF received was in the Naqab and 10% in the Galilee. The Knesset approved this agreement (18). This transfer of state land to the JNF opened the way for Jewish settlements in the Naqab.

Adalah – the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (19) – and the Association for Civil Rights contested the Land Swap Agreement in a letter addressed to the Ministry of Justice. These organisations have been involved in defending the property rights of the Bedouins for several years and their lawyers have consistently argued that Israeli lands laws and JNF statutes violate the legal rights of Bedouins to their territories.

The Israeli Planning and Building Law (1965) was revised in 2010. It monitors and regulates all building and land use designations in Israel. The law established a hierarchy of planning bodies (national, regional and local) responsible for land-use planning, taking into consideration all potential impacts, including environmental impacts. Article 212 allows for homes deemed a public nuisance to be demolished. In practice, this means that the Bedouins have no legal way to build a house and return to their expropriated land. It is a criminal act to build a house on their own land.

5.4 The Bedouin Lands Case

The Yattir Forest and the Ambassador Forest are examples of JNF projects on the expropriated grounds of Al-Araqib, Twail Abu-Jarwal and Karkur, non-recognized villages from which families were ethnically cleansed in the early 1950s. They were interned to Siyag, with the false promise that they could return in six months. The Talalqa tribe, inhabitants of Twail Abu-Jarwal, were subsequently relocated to a location near Hura, and the inhabitants of Al-Araqib and Karakur to the township of Rahat.

Cut-off from their heritage and livelihoods, and being unemployed in the townships, the Abu Mudaighem and the Al-Uqbi families decided ten years ago to return to their lands, which had not been settled by Jewish farmers. They started to cultivate their land, being specialists in dry-farming techniques for the cultivation of grains, fruits and nuts. The Green Patrol, installed by Ariel Sharon as Minister of Agriculture in 1979, has regularly forced them off their land. Since 2002, their crops have been sprayed with herbicides, a practice deemed illegal by the Israeli Supreme Court in 2007 (20).

Nouri Al-Uqbi began proceedings at the Beer Sheva District Court in March 2010 to reclaim his family property of 820 dunams of land in Al-Araqib, confiscated by the Israeli state without compensation when his family were expelled in 1951. The Bedouin Lands Case, as it is referred to, involves the lawyers Michael Sfard and Professor Oren Yiftachel acting on behalf of the plaintiff, as well as the RCUV. Ruth Kark, a professor at the Hebrew University is the state’s expert witness. At the hearing of 23 March 2010, Kark claimed that no documents exist from the Ottoman

and British Mandate periods confirming the property rights of Bedouins. Sfard challenged her opinion. According to Sfard, the Ottoman Land Code (1858) clearly distinguishes between private property, the property of state, Waqf (land administered by Islamic religious authority) and Mawat (uncultivated public land).

Al-Uqbi holds documents relating to his family property dating back to 1900, when Beer Sheva became the administrative centre of the Naqab. Around this period a tribal court of Bedouin sheikhs was in existence. Bedouin registered their plots and land transactions by means of the 'sanad' (meaning transmission), including details of the exact place and size of a land allotment. The authorities of the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate recognized this customary-religious law relating to property. For example, in 1900 the Ottoman authorities purchased land from Bedouin tribes to found Beer Sheva. The JNF itself, as well as private Jewish citizens, purchased around 150,000 dunams of lands from Bedouin owners during the Mandate period. The Al-Uqbi family have always paid taxes on its land and holds relevant documents from 1937 and 1950.

Oren Yiftachel uncovered documents pertaining to Bedouin property rights dating from the British period. In 1935, Ben-Gurion asked the Mandate authorities to provide land in the Naqab to the Jewish Agency. Ben-Gurion claimed that it was Mawat land. However, the authorities found that the land around Beer Sheva was agricultural land and the property of the Bedouin tribes of Al-Araqib. Yiftachel also found accounts from travellers at the time, who wrote about fertile land in the Naqab and agricultural products being transported to Gaza and Jaffa (21).

At the 23 June 2010 hearing of the Bedouin Lands Case, Ruth Kark admitted that she was not an expert on Bedouin law and had no knowledge of important academic books and articles on the subject (22). Judge Sarah Dovrat, presiding, often asked questions of her own and made reference to a fundamental principle of jurisprudence: longstanding customs in a given society may eventually crystallize into binding legal practice.

To date, the state has offered to relinquish only 200,000 dunams, out of the 13,000,000 dunams of land in the Naqab (approx 1.5% of the area). Yiftachel points out that the Bedouins only claim a fraction of the Naqab land area, posing no threat to the Israeli state as the authorities sometimes claim (2). In his opinion, the legal battles of the Bedouins should be compared to those waged by other indigenous peoples in countries such as Australia, Canada, South-Africa, India and Brazil. Like them, they are fighting for recognition of their native rights.

Despite the pending Bedouin Lands Case, Israeli authorities continue violating their property rights, including the demolitions of Al-Araqib in July and August 2010 (likewise the village of Twail Abu Jarwal, which has been demolished some fifty times over the past four years). The JNF-USA similarly ignores the legal claims of the native inhabitants. At its recent annual conference (10-11 October 2010), it announced projects aiming to increase the Jewish population in the Naqab to 250,000 by 2013 to an audience that included the Israeli Minister of National Infrastructure and the mayors of Jerusalem and Beer Sheva. The JNF strategy includes intensive forestation to prevent Bedouin families from returning to their lands, such as the planting of Ambassadors Forest over the ruins of Al-Araqib.



Figure 5.1: Nouri Al-Uqbi by an acacia tree planted by the JNF – on his ancestral land in the village of Al-Araqib

Irène Steinert is a member of the French Jewish Union for Peace (UJFP), the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN) and Women in Black. The author thanks Yeela Raanan for critical contributions and Josephine de Lauwere for assistance with the text.

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6. The State of Israel vs Citizens of Israel:

A chapter in the war of attrition against the Bedouin

by Gadi Algazi

6.1 The Demolition of Al-Araqib

On 27 July 2010 an entire village was demolished in Israel – a non-recognized Bedouin village – Al-Araqib in the northern Naqab, a few miles north of Beer-Sheva, next to Highway 40.

Hundreds of police and Special Patrol Unit forces, bulldozers, and security personal participated in the operation. Thirty left-wing activists from different parts of the country managed to reach the site at the last moment in a sign of solidarity with the residents and to protest the destruction. But against such superior forces, crippling forces, there was not much of a chance.

The police created a buffer between the Bedouin residents and their homes; they formed a human wall between the activists and residents and the homes – and while doing so arrested several activists. Women and children were removed from their homes. Then, before the eyes of the people of Al-Araqib, bulldozers demolished their homes and fields.

There is nothing even similar to the demolition of a home. We know there is deprivation and discrimination; there is neglect and privatization – not only in Israel. Even in countries that Israeli politicians often dream they belong to, ‘white and well-ordered states’ – there is racism and discrimination and deprivation. But not every state wages war against its own citizens, including demolishing their homes.

When the authorities mobilize hundreds of security forces, Special Patrol Units, and police for an operation that is to begin with the first morning light; when you bring in bulldozers to demolish the homes of civilians; when you declare them to be a potential enemy and act pre-emptively to prevent an imagined risk using destruction and violence, this is war. Modern war, of course: a war whose arsenal includes not only tanks, but bulldozers; not only planes, but building permits and decisions of planning commissions. And the government of Israel, on behalf of the state, is waging an ongoing war against these citizens, against the poor and the disadvantaged. This government does not simply neglect these citizens; it dispossesses, it threatens, and it destroys.

We have to remember; it was the people of Al-Araqib who, in the past, saw their fields sprayed with pesticides from the air, their health impaired and their fields destroyed. In the Knesset, those who defended these actions argued about the exact dose of pesticides to be used. Were people really suffering from headaches and side effects, as alleged? Was it perhaps possible to use a more reasonable dose? It took several years until the Supreme Court finally decided that the spraying of these fields from the air is clearly an illegal act.



Figure 6.1: A resident of Al-Araqib and the Special Patrol Unit
(Photo by Silan Dalal, Activestills.org)



Figure 6.2: Special Patrol Units move in



Figure 6.3



Figure 6.4



Figure 6.5

6.2 The Enemy Within

So why bring upon the people of Al-Araqib this destruction? Just the day before the demolitions, the remarks of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu regarding the proposed Loyalty Law (1) provided an explanation:

“We are a nation state, which means that the overall sovereignty of the country is reserved for the Jewish people... Today, an international campaign is being waged against the definition of Israel as a Jewish state. I do not want to leave things as is [without a revised loyalty oath], because we are under attack on this matter. The significance of these attacks is that various elements are liable to demand their own national rights and the rights of a state within the state of Israel – in the Naqab, for example, if it becomes a region without a Jewish majority. This happened in the Balkans and constitutes a real threat.” (Netanyahu’s declaration appeared in the *Haaretz* Hebrew edition on 26 July 2010, but not in the English edition.)

The words are clear: the state belongs to the Jews, not to all its citizens. Full civil equality of its citizens – individual and collective – constitutes a threat. Then the mirror effect: imagined aggression (“under attack”, “real threat”) justifies actual aggression. The Bedouin in the Naqab are transformed into a “real threat”, because something might happen there; Netanyahu doesn’t say what but refers to the Balkans. There were several cases of ethnic cleansings in the Balkans. Proponents of ethnic cleansing often explain that they are merely defending themselves from a minority group, whose very existence is for them a threat.

What are the Bedouin accused of? How did their very existence become a “real threat”? The Naqab, says Netanyahu, might become a “region without a Jewish majority”. You can move from one region to the next throughout the country and discover that in a particular area within Israel, there isn’t a Jewish majority, for example between Kafr Qara’ and Umm al-Fahem, or between Sakhnin and ‘Arabe. Well, then don’t we have to do something against this threat? Yes, of course, and so we do! Think about the project of establishing the city of Harish in Wadi ‘Ara, not as a solution to the housing shortage with which the current residents of the area must contend, and not as part of development plans that will benefit all residents of the region, but rather as an attempt to use the housing shortage of the ultra-Orthodox (2) as a tool against the Arab resident of the area – while at the same time preventing Arab citizens from developing and expanding their own communities. Just like the lookouts that were established in the North to surround and divide, to combat the “threat” of Arab communities in the Galilee.

This is an ongoing war, a war of attrition against part of the citizenry of the country, a war whose arsenal includes prohibitions of construction and orders of demolition, and whose soldiers are building inspectors and the Green Patrol.

And while all of this is going on, demands are made upon Arab citizens to perform national service and to prove their loyalty to a state that is not loyal to them. Just a few weeks ago, near Shoket Junction in the Naqab, in the context of everyday home demolitions, a Bedouin Soldiers Club (3) was demolished. So what’s the message? Clearly, no service, whether military or civilian, will guarantee equal rights. Neither do the Druze of the Galilee, who perform military service, enjoy equality.

6.3 Evict, Move, Expel, Build, Evict...

Why do the people of Al-Araqib have to be evicted? Why are they being driven out? The residents of Al-Araqib are not ‘invaders’ of state land. Their village exists from before the founding of the state (4). Like thousands of other Arab Bedouin in the Naqab (5), they were expelled, evicted, and moved “temporarily”, with or without promises of being allowed to return, for a week or six months, but in fact for good – and then their lands were confiscated. The Naqab is full of Bedouin communities that were evicted and transferred to different locations. It’s easy for the state to believe that the Bedouin are landless, that they are simply nomads with no rights. It’s convenient fiction the state can recite to itself in order to justify their forced transfer from place to place. In actuality, it’s the state that has re-transformed the Bedouin back into what Hanna Hamdan has called “forced nomadism” (6).

People are told that the state is trying to make the Bedouin sedentary, make them “modern”. In fact, it’s the state that’s busy making them nomadic again, undermining their hold on their lands. In the towns where the state is attempting to fence them in, while ignoring their way of life, their traditions, their culture, their rights – there the Bedouin will not become tied to the land. They should become a source of cheap labour.

The Bedouin can be transferred from place to place for reasons of national security, like in the early 1950’s, and then again they can be transferred for reasons of peace, like in the late 1970’s, following Israel’s peace treaty with Egypt, so that new army bases could be built in the Naqab. They can be evacuated for environmental reasons, because they’ve taken hold of “open spaces” – and then these same thousands of acres can be allocated to “individual ranchers”, Jewish ranchers of course, who will “guard the national lands”, by taking hold of these very same “open spaces”.

Indeed, without the public’s having even noticed, on 17 July the Knesset passed one of the most important bits of recent legislation, a law that retroactively legalizes massive takeovers of land and resources, a law that grants the allocation of land to intruders – the Jewish “adventurers” who have established their own private ranches in the Naqab.



Figure 6.6: Cleansed land of Al-Araqib

6.4 Who are the intruders?

For whose benefit do the people of Al-Araqib have to be evicted? For the forestation campaign of the Jewish National Fund, no less. Evacuate people for trees that, as the JNF had to admit, are being planted with no master plan and for no environmental or agricultural rationale. These are not beneficial trees but, rather, intrusive trees – trees that are designed to ensure control (7).

Trees like these can be seen elsewhere. We've seen such trees next to settlements in the West Bank; hundreds and hundreds of saplings, sometimes simply planted in barrels, to ensure the control of fields by settlers, fields which Palestinian farmers are forbidden to enter. If you visit 'Ajami (in Jaffa) or Kfar Shalem (in southern Tel Aviv), you can also see such decorative woods: woods planted to ensure control, acre by acre, to ensure the rights of real estate sharks or simply limit the use of the land by local residents. And around Al-Araqib you really can see hundreds and hundreds of such trees: barren hills denuded of grass, on which stand erect, like soldiers in formation, hundreds of trees designed to prevent the people of Al-Araqib from working their land. These trees are a fence, a living fence.

Al-Araqib is but a single case: two additional non-recognized villages in the northern Naqab, Um-Hiran and 'Atir, where the residents have been living for more than fifty years (they were transferred here from their previous location by order of the military governor), are supposed to disappear (8) so that their place will be taken by a forest – the Hiran Forest. Today, you have look really hard to see a forest there, because there are currently no trees. The forest is a project, and the present residents of the location are simply an obstacle to its fruition. But hiding behind the virtual forest, a virtual community, a new community for Jews only – Hiran (9). This is how the Naqab is to be made Jewish.

The new development plans for the Naqab are plans of dispossession. Bedouin Arabs were inundated by a huge wave of dispossession during the early 1950's; they again paid the price for the peace treaty with Egypt, and were forced out of the little that remained for them, from the places to which in certain cases they had been transferred by the military government, to other often non-viable locations. And now we stand before the next big wave. It's important to note that this brutal wave – destroying any alternative regional development possibilities that could benefit all the Naqab's residents for the sake of Judaizing the region – is the result of a well-planned collaboration between private capital and corporations with the state.

The future plans for the Naqab (Blueprint Negev) were prepared by an American consulting firm, McKinsey & Company (the first private consulting firm whose services were used by the Israeli army); the initiative led by the Jewish National Fund of the United States (JNF-USA). This is a huge partnership between the State of Israel and private, foreign capital. And, yet, these are the ones who dare demand loyalty, when their own loyalty is to overseas interests! Is it really surprising to learn that Shimon Peres pushed the plan forward with such enthusiasm? The other partner can't be forgotten: the project is the "baby" of the JNF-USA's chairman's right-wing billionaire Ron Lauder (10). And the new settlement plans are being developed by the JNF in conjunction with "Or – National Missions", with the aim of Judaizing the Naqab and Galilee.

Those who witnessed the evacuation of Al-Araqib on 27 July can easily reach the wrong conclusion and believe that the Bedouin citizens of Israel are only up against the security forces. That is not the case. They are standing up for their elementary rights. But they are facing a powerful coalition that's working against them, composed of both state authorities and non-state players – the JNF and the security forces, private corporations and settlers. And we must stand together with them.

Behind all of this hides a basic premise that infuses every aspect of our lives here: problems are solved by dispossession and transfer, by bringing in “strong populations” in place of “weak populations”, Jews instead of Arabs (but only loyal Jews, of course!). Evacuation and construction, more evacuations and more construction, and so on, round and round it goes. This does not only mean dispossessing people of their assets and offering them to other people – to the “correct” people go the “right” places, open spaces, the land, the landscape – it also means destroying the social fabric of neighborhoods and communities by uprooting, disintegrating, and resettling. In this way they also want to dispossess the people of the non-recognized village, Dahmash (11), in the centre of the country, between Lod (Lydda) and Ramla. This is also what they're proposing to the residents of Ajami (in Jaffa): to be evacuated for the benefit of “strong populations.” Israeli governments believe in replacing people. We need to replace this system – not the people who live here.

From Haokets.org (27 July 2010) and Tarabut.info (28 July 2010).

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- (1) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1181530.html> [in Hebrew]
 - (2) <http://www.tarabut.info/he/articles/article/harish-katzir/> [in Hebrew]
 - (3) <http://www.mysay.co.il/articles/ShowArticle.aspx?articlePI=aaadme> [in Hebrew]
 - (4) <http://michaelarch.wordpress.com/2010/05/09/%d7%a1%d7%99%d7%91%d7%95%d7%91-%d7%91%d7%a9%d7%a8%d7%99%d7%93%d7%99-%d7%90%d7%9c%d7%a2%d7%a8%d7%90%d7%a7%d7%99%d7%91-%d7%9b%d7%a4%d7%a8-%d7%91%d7%93%d7%95%d7%90%d7%99-%d7%a9%d7%aa%d7%95%d7%a9%d7%91/> [in Hebrew]
 - (5) <http://tarabut.info/en/articles/article/Araqib/>
 - (6) <http://www.adalah.org/newsletter/heb/mar05/ar2.pdf> [in Hebrew]
 - (7) <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/jnf-using-trees-to-thwart-bedouin-growth-in-Naqab-1.259038>
 - (8) <http://www.adalah.org/features/land/um%20alhiran%20appeal.doc>
 - (9) <http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&prev=t&u=http://www.Naqab-net.org.il/HTMLs/article.aspx%3FC2004%3D14364%26BSP%3D12779>
 - (10) <http://support.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=advertorial>
 - (11) <http://tarabut.info/en/articles/article/planning-comittee-says-no/>

7. Summer Camp of Destruction:

Israeli High Schoolers in the Wasteland of Democracy

by Max Blumenthal

On July 26, 2010, Israeli police demolished 45 buildings in the unrecognized Bedouin village of Al-Araqib, razing the entire village to the ground to make way for a JNF forest (1,2).

The destruction was part of a larger project to force the Bedouin community of the Naqab away from their ancestral lands and into seven Indian reservation-style townships that the Israeli government has constructed for them. The land will then be open for Jewish settlers, including young couples in the army and those who may someday be evacuated from the West Bank after a peace treaty is signed.

For now, the Israeli government intends to uproot as many villages as possible and erase them from the map by establishing “facts on the ground” in the form of JNF forests.

One of the most troubling aspects of the destruction of Al-Araqib was a report by CNN (3) that the hundreds of Israeli riot police who stormed the village were accompanied by “busloads of cheering civilians.” Who were these civilians and why didn’t CNN or any outlet investigate further?

I travelled to Al-Araqib with a delegation from Ta’ayush (4), an Israeli group that promotes a joint Arab-Jewish struggle against the occupation. The activists spent the day preparing games and activities for the village’s traumatized children, helping the villagers replace their uprooted olive groves, and assisting in the reconstruction of their demolished homes.

In a massive makeshift tent where many of Al-Araqib’s residents now sleep, I interviewed village leaders about the identity of the cheering civilians. Each one confirmed the presence of young men, adolescents even, describing how they celebrated the demolitions. As I compiled the details, the story grew increasingly horrific.

Arab Negev News publisher Ata Abu Madyam supplied me with a series of photos he took of the civilians in question (see next page). They depicted Israeli high school students who appeared to have been employed by a local private security company. Prior to the demolitions, the youth were sent into the villagers’ homes to extract their furniture and belongings. A number of villagers including Abu Madyam told me the youth had smashed windows and mirrors in their homes and defaced family photographs with crude drawings. Then they lounged around on the villagers’ furniture in plain sight of the owners.

Finally, according to Abu Matyam, the youth celebrated as bulldozers destroyed the homes. “What we learned from the summer camp of destruction,” Abu Madyam remarked, “is that Israeli youth are not being educated on democracy, they are being raised on racism.”



Figure 7.1: Moments before the destruction of the village, Israeli youth lounge on furniture taken from a family's home



Figure 7.2: According to residents, the youth vandalized homes
(Photos by Ata Abu Madyam, *Arab Negev News*)



Figure 7.3: Picking through the belongings of a family



Figure 7.4: Lifting belongings as bulldozers move in
(Photos by Ata Abu Madyam, *Arab Negev News*)

It is not hard to imagine what lessons the high school students who participated in the levelling of Al-Araqib took from their experience, nor is it especially difficult to predict what sort of citizens they will become once they reach adulthood. Not only are they being indoctrinated to swear blind allegiance to the military, they are learning to treat the Arab outclass as less than human (5).

The students' behaviour toward Bedouins, who are citizens of Israel and serve loyally in Israeli army combat units (6) despite widespread racism, was strikingly reminiscent of the behaviour of settler youth in Hebron who pelt Palestinian shopkeepers in the old city with eggs, rocks and human waste.

The spectacle of Israeli youth helping destroy Al-Araqib helps explain why 56% of Jewish Israeli high school students do not believe Arabs should be allowed to serve in the Knesset (7) – why the next generation wants apartheid. Indeed, the widespread indoctrination of Israeli youth by the military apparatus is a central factor in Israel's authoritarian trend. It would be difficult for any adolescent boy to escape from an experience like Al-Araqib – where adults in heroic warrior garb encourage him to participate in and gloat over acts of massive destruction – with even a trace of democratic values.

As for the present condition of Israeli democracy, it is essential to consider the way in which the state enlists the Jewish majority as conquerors against its Arab others who, in the words of Zionism's founding father Chaim Weizmann, are "obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path" (8). Historically, only failing states have encouraged such corrosive dynamics to take hold. That is why the scenes from Al-Araqib, from the demolished homes to the uprooted gardens to the grinning teens who joined the mayhem, can be viewed as much more than the destruction of a village. They are snapshots of the phenomenon that is laying Israeli society as a whole to waste.

Based on Max Blumenthal's blog (maxblumenthal.com, 31 July 2010).

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- (1) Adam Horowitz, "The ethnic cleansing of Palestine", Mondoweiss Blog, 28 July 2010 (<http://mondoweiss.net/2010/07/the-ethnic-cleansing-of-palestine.html>)
 - (2) "Ethnic cleansing in the Israeli Negev", YouTube, 28 July 2010 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvD-2BsPAQU&feature=player_embedded)
 - (3) "Bedouins evicted from village in southern Israel", CNN, 27 July 2010 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/07/27/israel.bedouins.demolitions/index.html?hpt=T2#fbid=q58bfWpIYUQ&wom=true>)
 - (4) <http://www.taayush.org/>
 - (5) Stephen Lendman, "Indoctrinating Israeli Youths to Be Warriors", *Palestine Chronicle*, 9 Apr 2010 (http://palestinechronicle.com/view_article_details.php?id=15873)
 - (6) Yonat Atlas, "Bedouin soldiers: Israel shuns us", Ynet, 6 May 2008 (<http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3540418,00.html>)
 - (7) Or Kashti, "Poll: Half of Israeli high schoolers oppose equal rights for Arabs", *Haaretz*, 11 March 2010 (<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/poll-half-of-israeli-high-schoolers-oppose-equal-rights-for-arabs-1.264564>)
 - (8) <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-Zionist-Quotes/Story645.html>

I. The Distortion of History

Letter to *Western News* by Ismail Zayid in response to Irving Black

28 March 2008

The Editor
Western News,
University of Western Ontario,
London, Ontario

Dear Editor:

Irving Black's letter, "Davenport shows courage and integrity", 27 March, displays an extraordinary catalogue of distortion of history. The most outrageous part of his letter is the justification for the destruction of the three villages of Imwas, Yalu and Beit Nuba (my own home town), in June 1967, on the direct orders of Yitzhak Rabin, the then chief of staff of the Israeli army. He claims that the destruction of these villages, and the expulsion of their over 12, 000 inhabitants, was "because of military action."

These three villages were occupied without a single shot being fired, and no military action was encountered there, as confirmed by Israeli soldiers, including the Israeli thinker, Amos Kenan, who was one of the troops in Beit Nuba. This action is a war crime as affirmed by international law and Israeli prominent figures like former Member of Knesset, Uri Avnery. At the site of these three villages stands the infamy called "Canada Park", built with Canadian tax-deductible dollars by the Jewish National Fund.

Professor Black speaks of "Arab wars meant to destroy Israel." A series of wars, in blatant aggression, since 1948, have been wars planned and initiated by Israel, against its Arab neighbours, including the wars of 1956, 1967, 1978, 1982 and 2006. The 1967 war, which brought about the destruction of the three villages listed above, was a war planned and effected by Israel, contrary to the statement by Israeli propaganda, that President Nasser of Egypt was planning to attack Israel. This is confirmed by the statements made by Israeli leaders at the time:

Yitzhak Rabin, chief of staff of the Israeli army at the time, stated:

"I do not think Nasser wanted war. The two divisions he sent to the Sinai would not have been sufficient to launch an offensive war. He knew it and we knew it." – *Le Monde*, 28 Feb 1968

Prime Minister Levi Eshkol stated:

"The Egyptian layout in the Sinai and the general military build up there testified to a military defensive Egyptian set-up, south of Israel." – *Yediot Ahronot*, 18 Oct 1967

Modechai Bentov, an Israeli cabinet minister at the time, stated:

"All this story about the danger of extermination [of Israel in June 1967] has been a complete invention and has been blown up a posteriori to justify the annexation of Arab territory." – *Al HaMishmar*, 14 April 1972; *Le Monde*, 3 June 1972

Menachem Begin, a cabinet minister in June 1967, stated, while prime minister, addressing Israel's National Defence College, on 8 Aug 1982:

"In June 1967, we again had a choice. The Egyptian army concentrations in the Sinai did not prove Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him." – *New York Times*, 21 Aug 1982

As to "Syrian provocative attacks", that some refer to as a pretext for the attack on Syria, Moshe Dayan, Israel's Minister of Defence at the time, told us the facts, as reported by Serge Schmemmann:

"He [Dayan] said he regretted not having stuck to his initial opposition to storming the Golan Heights. There really was no pressing reason to do so, because many of the fire fights with the Syrians were deliberately provoked by Israel, and the kibbutz residents who pressed the Government to take the Golan Heights did so less for security than for the farmland...

"“I know how at least 80% of the clashes were started. We would send a tractor to plow some area, in the demilitarized area, and knew in advance that the Syrians would start to shoot. If they didn't shoot, we would tell the tractor to advance further, until in the end the Syrians would get annoyed and shoot, and then we would use artillery and later the air force also, and that is how it was.”" – Dayan quoted in *New York Times*, 11 May 1997

Professor Black makes the preposterous statement that the Arabs did not want to create a Palestinian state, using the pretext of their opposition to the UN Partition plan of 29 Nov 1947, as enunciated in UNGA Resolution #181. The Arabs opposed this resolution because it was unjust. The Palestinian Jews, at the time, mostly recent and illegal immigrants, constituted 31% of the population and owned 5.6% of the land in Palestine, yet this resolution apportioned to them 56% of the land and to the Palestinians only 42% of the land. Is it surprising that the Arabs opposed this resolution? Interestingly, Israel's leaders at the time also rejected the partition resolution.

Menachem Begin, leader of the Herut party at the time, stated, the day after the passing of this resolution:

"The partition of Palestine is illegal. It will never be recognised ... Eretz Israel will be restored to the people of Israel. All of it. And for ever."

Similarly, David Ben-Gurion expressed the same expansionist designs, stating:

"The acceptance of partition does not commit us to renounce Transjordan. One does not demand from anybody to give up his vision. We shall accept a state in the boundaries fixed today – but the boundaries of Zionist aspirations are the concerns of the Jewish people and no external factor will be able to limit them." – Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, 1987, p53

Since its creation in 1948, the state of Israel refuses to define its borders. It is the only country in the world that has no defined borders. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, stated on the declaration of the state on 14 May 1948: "We are creating a state in the western part of our country." He further stated in his diaries, as quoted in 1954 when Israel was in control of 78% of historic Palestine: "The status quo will not do. We have created a dynamic state bent upon expansion." And the expansionist programme continues to this day. Ehud Olmert is enforcing this expansionist programme and insists on annexing the illegal Jewish settlements, in the Jordan Valley and East Jerusalem, and still talks about a peace process.

Professor Black, like all Israel's apologists, makes no mention of the brutal illegal Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which has been allowed to stand for over

40 years, in defiance of international law and repeated Security Council resolutions. The Israeli practices, throughout this occupation, include extra-judicial assassination, detention of thousands of prisoners without charge or trial, torture, daily humiliation, demolition of thousands of homes and expropriation of Palestinian land for the creation of illegal Jewish colonies (settlements). All these actions are in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and are defined by international law as war crimes.

As to terrorism, the terrorist Zionist gangs – Irgun, Stern and Haganah – created terrorism in the Middle East, which was continued by Israeli state terrorism to this day. This terrorism was directed not only against Arabs, but included British and Americans as well as Jews, not to mention the horrible murder of the Swedish man of peace, count Folke Bernadotte, on 17 Sept 1948 by the Stern gang, led by Yitzhak Shamir, later a prime minister of Israel. The records of these terrorist attacks are well documented.

Israeli crimes and defiance of international law are colossal. The essential point to emphasise here is that Israel must be made to comply with international law so that peace and security will be assured for Israelis and Palestinians in this tortured land.

Sincerely,

Ismail Zayid, MD

<http://izayid.tripod.com>

[An abridged version of this letter was published by *Western News*, University of Western Ontario on 10 April 2008.]

II. Open Letter to Belinda Stronach

December 2, 2010

Ms. Stronach,

Recently you were honoured by the Jewish National Fund for helping to raise funds for the building of settlements in the Naqab*. Those settlements are being built on land stolen from the Bedouin who are being driven off their land as the Palestinians have been for the past sixty-two years.

I was recently in Israel and in the Palestinian territories and I would like to tell you about the Bedouin village of Al-Araqib which has now been destroyed for a seventh time in a period of four months. The Israelis come in, bulldoze the village, then the Bedouin come back and rebuild. This is what is happening in the Naqab by way of the Jewish National Fund, with your help.

That makes you an accomplice to ethnic-cleansing.

The Jewish National Fund is an Israeli land-agency which has been used to dispossess Palestinians, and now Bedouin, of their land. One of the stipulations for delivering the land is that its inhabitants must be Jewish. Recently, Benjamin Netanyahu stated that there must be a Jewish majority in the Naqab. That means expelling the Bedouin.

Could you tell me, Ms. Stronach, what difference you see in the expulsion of Palestinians from East Jerusalem, the expulsion of Bedouin from the Naqab, the collective incarceration and mass starvation of the residents of Gaza, and the expulsion of Jews from Germany and the incarceration and mass starvation of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto?

You stand for equality did you say, Ms. Stronach? I think not. Rather, you are an accomplice to ethnic cleansing by your support of the Jewish National Fund.

I am adding in this letter to you an account of ethnic cleansing sent to me by a Palestinian I met while in Ramallah**. It concerns the destruction of Palestinian villages (three villages) razed to the ground on which the Jewish National Fund and good Canadian individuals like yourself built Canada Park. Enjoy the read!

Bruce Katz
President, Palestinian and Jewish Unity (PAJU)
Montreal

P.S. My letter to you will be rendered public and as my reach is quite extensive you can rest assured that the letter will make the rounds.

* http://www.cjnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20376&Itemid=86

** The Story of Canada Park

I was born in 1956 in a small village called Imwas. Imwas lies midway between the cities of Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. Until the year 1967, it used to be under the Arab Jordanian Rule. Like other children of this world, we were living peacefully and leading happy lives. I used to play with my mates different games. I was part of the nature surrounding me. At that age, nothing bothered me. There were no big questions about life, economy and politics. We used to live simply and take every day as it is. I felt I was like the butterflies flying in the fields from one flower to another and from one tree branch to another. In short, life was smooth, pleasant and interesting.

Everything changed radically on the fifth of June 1967 when the six-day war broke out between Israel and the Arabs. In a very short period of time, Israel was able to occupy the Wes Bank and Gaza Strip (part of Palestine), the Golan Heights (part of Syria), Sinai (part of Egypt), and some parts of Jordan and Lebanon. I was one of the most unfortunate because immediately after the Israeli occupation, we were forced to leave our village, Imwas, and to wander aimlessly through neighbouring villages and towns. At that time I felt that the hammer of fate struck my head and awakened me as if this hammer wanted to tell me, "This is the real world with all its disasters and hardships. Wake up, son, and look around you!" For about two weeks, my family and many other families were living under trees with no food or drink sometimes or with very little at other times. My family tried to go back to Imwas during these two weeks. We managed to do that one time and stayed for two days, but the Israeli soldiers located us and forced us to evacuate. Then we settled down in a nearby village for a year. Since then and for a long time, we suffered from poverty, hunger and various kinds of deprivation. I myself underwent depression which I couldn't diagnose at that early age.

Most of the people of my village settled down in Amman, the capital of Jordan. During our one-year stay in the nearby village, my father with some other guys jeopardized their lives by going back to Imwas under the cover of night to find out something for their starving children like a chicken, a sheep, some fruits or some piece of furniture. They were about to get killed several times by the Israeli soldiers who used to chase any infiltrator into the village.

The Israeli army started to knock down the houses of my village nearly six days after the occupation. Within a short period of time, they demolished every building except a church, a monastery and a Muslim shrine.

After suffering for one year in that nearby village, we moved to live in the city of Ramallah. Ten members of my family lived in a one-room house for sixteen years. There was no water supply and no sufficient room. Even the bathroom was outside the house. We led a very poor life with all kinds of deprivation day after day for 16 years until we grew up and got our university education which enabled us to improve our lives.

A few years after the Israeli occupation, Israel started to clean up the debris of the demolished houses and plant old trees in place of the houses to prove that there was no village there. Then we were astonished to find out that our village was renamed Canada Park. We came to know that some Canadian Jews funded that project.

Nowadays, the people of my village are not allowed to visit their village. Imwas has become a park for the Israeli people and families to enjoy themselves at weekends at the expense of thousands of people and children, who are now dispersed in different towns and villages in Jordan, the West Bank and other parts of the world.

Hisham Yousef
Ramallah

III. Correspondence with Minister Klimchuk

Re: Alberta Government JV with Racist JNF and Unregistered JNF Fundraising

August 2, 2010

Heather Klimchuk
Minister of Service Alberta

In your e-mail of July 28, 2010 (below) you stated that in connection with the Jewish National Fund ("JNF"):

"I am able to advise that this organization is not registered as a charitable organization in Alberta under Service Alberta's Charitable Fund-raising Act. The purpose of this legislation is to ensure the public has sufficient information to make informed decisions when making contributions to a charitable organization; to protect the public from fraudulent, misleading or confusing solicitations; and to establish standards for charitable organizations."

However if you go to the website of JNF Alberta*, you will note that the JNF maintains an office in Alberta and in May of this year hosted a fundraising event in Alberta.

In addition, as stated on the website of the Alberta Government**, in 2005 The Government of Alberta and the JNF entered into a joint venture in which each contributed \$1 million:

"Dr. Lyle Oberg, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, announced that the Alberta government and the Jewish National Fund of Canada will each contribute \$1 million for research initiatives focusing on the innovative design, construction, or rehabilitation of water management or irrigation infrastructure. A specific project will be determined in the near future."

Are you aware of these facts and based on your comments of July 28, is the unregistered JNF violating Alberta law by raising funds in Alberta and by maintaining an office in Alberta and did the Government of Alberta violate its own laws and the Laws of Canada. including laws against promoting racist organizations, by entering into a Joint Venture with the JNF?

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Ron Saba

cc: Honourable Lindsay Blackett, Minister of Culture and Community Spirit

* http://alberta.jnf.ca/?page_id=21; http://alberta.jnf.ca/?page_id=23

** <http://www.gov.ab.ca/acn/200505/180214A482757-FCE2-4AA2-AC4FF957D252E2A6.html>

ORIGINAL MESSAGE FROM MINISTER HEATHER KLIMCHUK

JULY 28, 2010

SUBJECT: JNF COMPLAINT FILED WITH CHARITIES DIRECTORATE

Dear Mr. Saba:

Thank you for providing me with a copy of your recent correspondence addressed to the Charities Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency regarding the charitable status of the Jewish National Fund. I appreciate being made aware of your views.

I am able to advise that this organization is not registered as a charitable organization in Alberta under Service Alberta's Charitable Fund-raising Act. The purpose of this legislation is to ensure the public has sufficient information to make informed decisions when making contributions to a charitable organization; to protect the public from fraudulent, misleading or confusing solicitations; and to establish standards for charitable organizations.

I encourage you to continue to work with the federal government's Charities Directorate to revoke the charitable status of the Jewish National Fund of Canada.

I wish you all the best with the successful resolution of this matter.

Best Regards,

Heather Klimchuk
Minister of Service Alberta

cc: Honourable Lindsay Blackett
Minister of Culture and Community Spirit

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IV. Letters to David Cameron and Ed Miliband

4 July 2010

David Cameron
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

In relation to the JNF and National Security

We are writing to you in your capacity as chairperson of the newly established National Security Council (NSC). You have stated that the NSC is concerned with foreign organisations (for example, based in Afghanistan) that promote conflict and threaten British national security. We would draw your attention to an omission in your strategy, that is, organisations based in this country that promote conflict abroad and threaten the national security of another people. In an increasingly interdependent world, their activities should also be considered by the NSC as a potential threat to British national security.

We refer in particular to the JNF Charitable Trust, of which you are a patron. The JNF has a well-documented programme of expropriating land that belongs to Palestinian refugees, in violation of UN resolutions on the rights of refugees, who still have legal claim to their land under international law. Much of this ill-gotten land is provided to Jewish citizens and Jewish immigrants through preferential leasing arrangements. These arrangements are racially discriminatory against Arab citizens of Israel; moreover, the real owners of the land, living mostly in UN refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, have no access to their land and are denied the proceeds of JNF-leasing.

The JNF is complicit in violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention in relation to the destruction and razing to the ground of Palestinian villages. Funds raised from JNF charitable offices in this country, and other countries in Europe and North America, have been used to conceal these crimes through the development of parks upon the ruins of Palestinian villages. Needless to say, the displaced refugees from these villages have not been consulted on the recreational use of their land. A few of these refugees, who remain within the Green Line and are classified by the state as 'present absentees', may visit the parks and see what remains of their villages, but their land remains confiscated and under the control of the JNF according to Israeli law.

The JNF Charitable Trust continues to play a significant role in the ongoing displacement of the Arab and Bedouin residents in the Negev region. Funds raised from British donors, including reclaimed British taxes, are being used to establish exclusively Jewish settlements. In an effort to force Arab communities from their ancestral lands, their villages are classified as 'unrecognized' and under constant threat of demolition. The JNF works with Jewish settler groups and self-appointed local authorities that deny representation to the indigenous communities and limit the provision of social services, building permits and sanitation.

The displacement of the Palestinian people and the expropriation of their land are central to the grievance held by so many in the Arab and Muslim worlds towards Western foreign policy. The JNF is involved in these violations and it is precisely these violations that inflame anger and encourage acts of terrorism. In an increasingly interdependent world, we must apply a consistent standard towards the national security of another people as we apply to our own national security. By allowing the JNF to operate with impunity from this country, indeed with the support of the British Prime Minister, we clearly do not have a consistent standard.

We write to you as officers of various UK organisations involved in research and advocacy on Palestinian rights. We are available for consultation on the violations being committed by the JNF. We expect the NSC to seriously consider the impact of these violations on international relations, conflict and security.

Sincerely,

Mortaza Sahibzada (JNF eBook Series)
Abe Hayeem (Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine)
Mary Nazzal-Batayneh (Palestine Legal Aid Fund)
Mick Napier (Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign)
Michael Kalmanovitz (International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network)
Roland Rance (Jews Against Zionism)
Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi (Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods)
Ghada Karmi (University of Exeter)
Ilan Pappé (University of Exeter)
Jonathan Rosenhead (London School of Economics)
Haim Bresheeth (University of East London)
Les Levidow (Open University)
Jenny Tonge (House of Lords)

Cc (by email):

Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister
William Hague, Foreign Secretary
David Miliband, Shadow Foreign Secretary



From the Direct Communications Unit

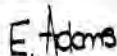
2 August 2010

Dear Mr Sahibzada

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you and your co-signatories for your recent letter.

Your letter is receiving attention and a reply will be sent as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Adams".

MRS E ADAMS

Mr Mortaza Sahibzada

30 September 2010

Ed Miliband MP
Leader of the Opposition
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Ed Miliband,

JNF's violations of human rights and international law

Congratulations on your election as Leader of the Labour Party. Among the many appeals you will inevitably receive as you settle into your new role, we anticipate that you will be invited to follow in the footsteps of your predecessors by becoming a Patron of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) Charitable Trust. This is a dubious "honour" that we strongly urge you to decline.

You wrote on the Labour Friends of Palestine website of "Peace through Human Rights and International Law". We explain below how endorsing the JNF entails putting your name to violations of human rights and international law. You would in effect be underwriting illegal occupation and settlement which are at the heart of the conflict and which render a just peace impossible.

The JNF has a well-documented programme of complicity with expropriating land that belongs to ethnically-cleansed Palestinian refugees, in violation of UN resolutions on the rights of refugees, who still have legal claim to their land under international law. Much of this ill-gotten land is provided exclusively to Jewish citizens and Jewish immigrants through preferential leasing arrangements. These arrangements are racist in that they discriminate against Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel on a national basis; moreover, the proper owners of the land, living mostly in UN refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, have no access to their land and are denied the proceeds of JNF-leasing.

The JNF is complicit in violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention in relation to the destruction and razing to the ground of Palestinian villages. Funds raised from JNF charitable offices in this country, and other countries in Europe and North America, have been used to conceal these crimes through the development of parks upon the ruins of Palestinian villages. Needless to say, the displaced refugees from these villages have not been consulted on the recreational use of their land. Some quarter-of-a-million of these Palestinian refugees, who remain within the Green Line as citizens of the State of Israel known as 'present absentees', may visit the parks and see what remains of their villages, but their land remains confiscated and under the control of the JNF according to Israeli law.

The JNF Charitable Trust continues to play a significant role in the ongoing displacement of the Arab and Bedouin residents in the Negev region. Funds raised from British donors, including reclaimed British taxes, are being used to establish settlements exclusively for "Jews only". In an effort to force Arab communities from their ancestral lands, their villages are classified as 'unrecognized' and under constant threat of demolition. The JNF works with Jewish settler groups and unelected local authorities that deny representation to the indigenous communities and limit the provision of social services, building permits and sanitation.

In 1998, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concluded that land in Israel is "chartered to benefit Jews exclusively" and, in respect of this, the JNF practises an "institutionalized form of discrimination." In 2005, Israel's Attorney General ruled that the Israel Land Authority (ILA) – which has been leasing JNF land to Jews on the JNF's behalf in accordance with the Covenant between the JNF and the Government of the

State of Israel of 1961 – should cut ties with the organization because it excludes Arab Israelis from leasing JNF property. The Attorney General considered the practice discriminatory.

In the light of the above we trust that you will agree that, should you be approached, it would be wise and appropriate for you to decline to become a patron of the JNF Charitable Trust. This organisation's activities have been extensively researched and publicised with the result that it has become increasingly controversial, attracting hostile comment and indeed demonstrations. We very much hope you will preserve your reputation for taking ethical stances by declining to become a Patron if you are invited to do so.

We look forward to hearing your response and would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the issues we have raised.

Yours sincerely,

Mortaza Sahibzada (JNF eBook Series)
Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi (Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods)
Selma James, Michael Kalmanovitz (International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network)
Mary Nazzal-Batayneh (Palestine Legal Aid Fund)
Jonathan Rosenhead (London School of Economics)
Les Levidow (Open University, Jews Against Zionism)
David E. Pegg (University of York)
Sue Blackwell (UCU National Executive Committee)
Angus Geddes (Portsmouth & South Downs Palestine Solidarity Campaign)
Terry Gallogy (York Palestine Solidarity Campaign)
Janet Green, Gill Kaffash (Camden Palestine Solidarity Campaign)
Andy Brown (Leeds Palestine Solidarity Campaign)
Daniel Russell, Clive Morris-Newman (Halifax Friends of Palestine)
Jenny Hardacre (Anglia Ruskin University)
Peter Shambrook (Durham Palestine Solidarity Campaign)
Heather Shroud (International Women's Peace Service)
Gill Swain, Pete Jones (no affiliations provided)

5 October 2010

Letters Editor,
The Guardian,
119 Farringdon Road,
London EC1R 3ER

Dear Sir or Madam:

We welcome the speech of Ed Miliband that Labour's foreign policy should be “based on values, not just alliances”. For too long Britain has blindly followed the United States in supporting the State of Israel, right or wrong.

There is one, immediate decision that Ed Miliband can make which will show that these are not empty words. Both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were Patrons of the Jewish National Fund Charitable Trust. We urge Ed Miliband to break from this tradition.

The JNF is actively complicit in the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. For example it established the Canada Park in the West Bank on the ruins of the villages of Imwas, Yalu and

Beit Nuba. Today in Israel's Naqab region it plays a major role in the establishment of exclusively Jewish settlements and the demolition of 'unrecognised' Arab villages.

The JNF was founded in 1901 with the aim of purchasing land '*for the purpose of settling Jews on such lands and properties.*' To this day it refuses to lease or rent land to anyone who is not Jewish. In 1953 and 1961 Israeli legislation made the JNF responsible for the land allocation policies of the State itself.

In 1995 the Israeli Supreme Court, in the Ka'adan case, ruled that the JNF's partner, the Israeli Lands Administration, could no longer discriminate against Israeli Arabs by refusing to lease or rent State lands to them. This was held to be equally applicable to the JNF. The response of the JNF was that Israel was first and foremost a Jewish State not a state of its own citizens.

Ed Miliband stood as the candidate of change in the Labour Party. Now is the time to show that these weren't just words of spin.

Yours faithfully,

Tony Greenstein, Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi, Moshe Machover, Michael Mansfield, Chris Burns Cox, David Pegg, Leon Rosselson, Sue Blackwell, Pete Firmin, Abe Hayeem, Myriam Salama-Carr, Romy Hasan, Roland Rance, Monica Wusterman, Deborah Fink, Jackie Alsaid, Ken Baker, Mona Baker, David Bangs, Judith Brown, Ruth Clark, Adam Darwish, James Dickins, Greg Dropkin, Jackie Fearnley, Alf Filer, Naomi Foyle, Kenny Fryde, Terry Gallogly, Anne Gray, Cliff Hanley, Rosamine Hayeem, Bob Jarrett, Ros Levy, Kevin Moore, Beryl Maizells, Zoe Mars, John Metson, Safiya O'Donnell, Nicola Ostreicher, Ernesto Paramo, Dinah Rahman, Roger Reeve, Dee Reynolds, Michael Sackin, Miriam Scharf, Michael Shanahan, Ruth Tenne, Yvette Vanson

[An edited version of this letter was published in the *Guardian*, 7 Oct 2010:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/oct/07/milibands-values-on-foreign-policy>.]

V. Open Letter to JNF Leadership / Rejoinder

(1) Open Letter to JNF Leadership

(2) Rejoinder – Uri Davis

(1) Open Letter to JNF Leadership

An Open Letter to Ronald Lauder, Stanley Chesley, Russell Robinson and the entire leadership of the Jewish National Fund.

Equal rights, sustainability, and development for Israel's Negev – not dispossession of the Bedouin!

As residents of the Negev, human rights activists, social organizations in Israel, Jewish and other allies in the United States and around the world, we issue this call to you, the leadership of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), as you assemble for JNF's Annual Conference in Atlanta, together with Israeli cabinet ministers, the mayor of Jerusalem, and others involved in various projects in the Negev, some involving JNF and others sponsored by it. No doubt, JNF presumes to be speaking for all the residents of the entire Negev during this conference. But the facts suggest otherwise.

In 2005, JNF-USA, together with JNF-Israel, the Or Movement, Ayalim and the government of Israel, launched a program for developing the Negev, announcing that it will be placing the Negev at the center of its activities in Israel. JNF has since become the major contributor to various development projects in the region. The program set an ambitious demographic target: between the years 2005-2010 the Jewish population of the Negev was to be increased to 500,000. When this goal was not met, a more modest target was set: to increase the Jewish population of the Negev to 250,000 by 2013. *But neither of the two targets were formulated in democratic consultation with the current residents of the Negev.*

To implement its plan, JNF is using two complementary strategies:

- Bringing Jews to the Negev in order to achieve demographic superiority over the Arab population.
- Intensive forestation measures which require massive dispossession of Arab Bedouin from their lands, in order to “open up space” for the Jewish population.

The first strategy has yielded few results; in fact, more Jews are migrating away from the Negev than to it. In contrast, the forestation efforts of the JNF have been more successful. *JNF is planting trees on thousands of acres of land – much of it not empty, but containing Bedouin villages, many with ongoing legal claims of Bedouin ownership.*

Two of the many examples that illustrate the systematic pattern of JNF action follow. First, the village of Twail Abu Jarwal, located in the heart of Giv'oth Goral (“Destiny Hills”), was destroyed some fifty times over the past four years to make room for a JNF forest.

Second, the village of Al-Arakib, north of Beer Sheba, which recently made headlines, is situated in the heart of the “Ambassadors Forest,” an area in which the JNF conducted massive forestation until mid-May 2010. Since the end of July 2010, the village has been destroyed five times – once during the month of the Ramadan fast.

In this case, too, JNF is cooperating with the government of Israel as it dispossesses the people of the Al-Touri tribe living there – the same Bedouin tribe originally expelled from the site during the 1950’s – completely afforesting the area so that they can no longer return to their lands. Following repeated home demolitions, hundreds of villagers, men, women and children, are currently living in makeshift open tents and huts, exposed to the extreme heat of the day, and the soon approaching winter.

JNF has completed all its work surrounding the village of Al-Arakib and is awaiting its final evacuation at the same time that Awjan, an area of small hamlets and agricultural farms in the southern part of Givoth Goral, has already been marked as the next target for dispossession and expulsion.

The JNF website showcases a number of projects for the Bedouin population, and invites people to make a contribution to them. But the facts suggest that these projects are little more than lip service by JNF, an attempt to whitewash its complicity in the dispossession, or to gain the confidence of some segments of the Bedouin community, the poorest and most neglected in Israel. Projects like Wadi Atir and Nahal Grar, or a few other small projects intended for the Bedouin population, are in no way proportional to the actual size of the Bedouin population of the Negev or to the huge sums and resources that the JNF is investing in the region.

The Bedouin, the indigenous inhabitants of the Negev, comprising nearly 30% of the region’s population, are being forced to pay the price of JNF activities in the Negev. That the JNF does not itself engage in the government’s demolition and expulsion activity is no defense. The JNF must not serve as an accomplice to the discriminatory policy of the Israel Land Administration (ILA) – the dispossession of the Bedouin from their land.

We call on you, the JNF leadership, to reconsider JNF’s development plans for the Negev and to commit, henceforth, to working toward truly sustainable development of the Negev for ALL its inhabitants, Jews and Arabs alike.

- JNF must stop forestation activities in areas of existing Bedouin villages as well as on lands for which Bedouin have made legal claims of ownership, pending final court decisions.
- JNF must no longer be complicit in the dispossession of the Bedouin, but rather recognize their contribution to the flourishing of the Negev – by funding projects that are proportional to the size of this population in the Negev, directly benefiting its people.
- JNF should join the call of human rights organizations in Israel to allow the Bedouin to live on their traditional lands, as they have for many generations.

Within the framework of true environmental planning, involving the Bedouin in determining their own future, Bedouin villages should be able to find their place in a Negev that also includes forests and tourist sites.

By insuring that all Israelis can feel confident that their basic rights and culture will be treated with respect by the society in which they live, the State of Israel can build a foundation for trust and partnership with its non-Jewish minorities.

Atlanta is the place to do real soul searching, not to take pride in acts of robbery and looting, green-washed by false notions of sustainability. True sustainability is not about one national or ethnic group living at the expense of another. It does not mean doing injustice to one for the benefit of another; nor does it involve the exploitation of the limited resources of indigenous peoples living in the State of Israel. Rather, sustainability is about sharing resources equitably; otherwise, it becomes a fig leaf for entrenching ethnic discrimination.

If you, the leaders of the JNF, fail to heed this call, you will bear responsibility for the betrayal of Israel's commitment to the values of equality and justice enshrined in its Declaration of Independence, to which the state is obligated by the international conventions it has signed.

If you fail to reevaluate the JNF's course, you risk embroiling the State of Israel in a war against its own citizens – the Arab population of the Negev – igniting a conflagration that may not easily be extinguished.

We call on you, the leadership of the JNF, to end your complicity in the destruction of Bedouin villages in the Negev and in the dispossession of Israel's Bedouin community.

Signed by 34 NGOs, human rights organizations and social movements from the Negev and Israel as a whole, and by several Jewish progressive organizations in the USA.

From Israel:

■ Al-Arakib Village Committee ■ Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality ■ Rabbis for Human Rights, Israel ■ The Regional Council of Unrecognized Bedouin Villages ■ Physicians for Human Rights – Israel ■ Mossawa Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel ■ The Association for Support and Defense of Bedouin Rights in Israel ■ Hit'habrut-Tarabut – Arab-Jewish Movement for Social and Political Change ■ AJEEC – Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development ■ The Local Committee – Alsira Village ■ Al-Arakib People's Committee ■ Women's Coalition for Peace ■ Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel ■ Sikkuy – The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality in Israel ■ Recognition Forum ■ Laqiya Womens' Association ■ Shatil – Leading Social Change, An Initiative of the New Israel Fund ■ Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity Campaign ■ Gush Shalom ■ Bimkom: Planners for Planning Rights ■ The Israeli Committee against House Demolition ■ Social TV ■ Alternative Information Center ■ Fighters for Peace ■ Public Committee Against Torture in Israel ■ New Profile – Movement for the Civil-ization of Israel Society ■ Yesh Gvul

From the US:

■ Jewish Alliance for Change ■ Rabbis for Human Rights – North America ■ Meretz USA ■ Shalom Center ■ Jewish Voice for Peace ■ Tikkun ■ Network of Spiritual Progressives

11 October 2010 – Alternative Information Centre

<http://www.alternativenews.org/english/index.php/topics/news/2914-open-letter-to-jnf-equal-rights-sustainable-development-for-negev-not-dispossession-of-bedouin> alternativenews.org

(2) Rejoinder – Uri Davis

As chairperson of AL-BEIT: Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Israel, which is the publisher of the current volume, I was utterly dismayed to have come across the text of an "Open Letter to Ronald Lauder, Stanley Chesley, Russell Robinson and the entire leadership of the Jewish National Fund" (above) signed by 27 NGOs, human rights organizations and social movements from the Negev and Israel and by 7 American Jewish organizations.

I find the said text to be a sad illustration of the ongoing weakness of such among "human rights activists, social organizations in Israel, Jewish and other allies in the United States and around the world" as fail to position at the center of their political programme and grass-root practice the demand for the implementation of the right of all 1948 Palestine refugees and their families to return and to the repossession of the titles to their properties inside Israel. Furthermore, the said text fails to recognize the extent of the JNF's complicity in the racist and apartheid policies of the State of Israel since its founding in 1948.

Allow me point out at the outset that the term "apartheid" is not synonymous with the terms "racism" and "xenophobia". The terms "racism" and "xenophobia" are not synonymous with the term "apartheid".

Racism is defined by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965 as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life". (Article 1) There is a certain degree of accuracy in the argument put forth by the Israeli Foreign Ministry (which is located in Jerusalem on land belonging to Palestinian refugees who were expelled from the city in the widespread ethnic cleansing perpetrated in Palestine in course of and in the wake of the 1948 war), and other representatives of the State of Israel around the world, that Israel should not be singled out from among other member states of the United Nations as a state uniquely afflicted by racism – not because Israel is not afflicted by racism, but because it is not greatly different from other member states of the UN, such as Indonesia and Canada, to name but two.

However, the State of Israel is not merely afflicted by racism. The core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict hinges upon access to land and to subsoil (minerals and, above all, water), and in respect of this core the State of Israel is anchored in a regime of apartheid. Apartheid is a political regime that imposes upon the population which is under its control racist preferences and choices by power of Acts of Parliament, and enforces the said racist preferences and choices upon the population which is under its control by means of the law enforcement instruments of the state, such as the judicial system, the security forces (police, army, secret services), the planning authorities, the municipal authorities, etc.

Whereas racism in the modern sense of the term is a rampant social affliction at one level or another in all of the member states of the UN (some more and some less), a regime of apartheid as defined above is less common and, to the best of my knowledge, with the dismantling of the apartheid regime in South Africa – a process that began with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990 and was completed with his election as President of the Republic in 1994 in the first democratic elections ever to be held in the history of South Africa – the State of Israel remains the only member state of the UN that is an apartheid state.

It is possible that my knowledge is insufficient; there may be additional member states of the UN which are apartheid states as defined above, but in any event they would be few and far between. An apartheid regime constitutes a blatant violation of the UN's founding charter, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and of the standards of international law.

Therefore, it is the duty of the international community to single out apartheid states, separately and collectively, including the State of Israel, for the same specific attention that was paid to the apartheid regime of the Republic of South Africa, i.e., a boycott of industrial and other products, academic, cultural and sport institutions (including research grants and international conferences), and international sanctions enforced by the UN. This is our duty, not because Israel claims to be "the Jewish state" (or any other name, for that matter), but in order to assist such states, in the same way as the international community assisted South Africa, to replace the apartheid regime with a democratic constitution.

In this regard it is important to note that, in the first democratic elections in the Republic of South Africa in 1994, Nelson Mandela was elected as President of the Republic by majorities of votes, not only among the "non-White" tribes and ethnic groups that comprise the social mosaic of the territory that comes under the authority of the Republic, but also among the "White" tribes and ethnic groups. This was after decades of political imprisonment and extensive and coordinated efforts on the part of the apartheid regime to remove him from sight and to defame him as a "terrorist".

93% of the entire territory of the State of Israel within the borders of 4 June 1967 are defined as "national lands" and are legally designated for "Jews only", more specifically, for those persons who are defined under the laws of the State of Israel as "Jews". Only some 7% or less of the entire territory of the State of Israel within the borders of 4 June 1967 are privately owned, approximately half of which are estimated to be privately owned by Arabs and half by Jews. The legal system of apartheid by which this blatant discrimination is maintained in the territories under Israeli sovereignty has resulted in a land tenure system worse than that of the Republic of South Africa at the height of the apartheid regime, where 87% of the territory of the Republic was legally designated in law for the use of "Whites only".

The strategic settler colonial apartheid legislation in the State of Israel is anchored, inter alia, on the following series of laws:

- Absentees' Property Law; Law of Return; Development Authority Law all of 1950
- World Zionist Organization [WZO]-Jewish Agency for the Land of Israel [JA] (Status) Law, 1952
- Jewish National Fund [JNF] Law; Lands Acquisition (Validation of Acts and Compensation) Law both of 1953
- Covenant between the Government of Israel and the Zionist Executive, also known as the Executive of the Jewish Agency for the Land of Israel, 1954
- Perscription Law, 1958
- Basic Law: Israel Lands; Israel Lands Law; Israel Lands Administration Law all of 1960
- The Covenant between the Government of Israel and the JNF, 1961
- Agricultural Settlement (Restriction on Use of Agricultural Land and Water) Law, 1967

It is beyond the limits of this contribution to elaborate further upon the apartheid laws that operate in the State of Israel. In order to properly appreciate the case, one must begin by examining the cornerstones of the aforementioned legislation, and first and foremost understand how the Israel Lands Administration operates; what is the status in Israel of the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund; and the modalities and the links that obtain among them.

Given the above, aren't the signatories to the above "Open Letter" aware of the articles of incorporation of the JNF company as registered in Israel such as were approved and signed in 1954 by the Justice Minister at the time, Pinhas Rosen? They read inter alia as follows:

To purchase, acquire on lease or in exchange, etc., ... in the prescribed region (which expression shall in this Memorandum mean the State of Israel in any area within the jurisdiction of the Government of Israel) or any part thereof, for the purpose of settling Jews on such lands and properties (Article 3a, Jewish National Fund, Association Limited in Liability and Without Capital Distributed to Shareholders, Memorandum of Association, Government Gazette No. 354, 10.6.1954).

Aren't the signatories to the said "Open Letter" aware of the JNF's complicity with the crime against humanity of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine under the cover of the 1948-49 war and their critical role in "greenwashing" the said crime by planting its forests, cultivating its parks and developing its recreational facilities over the ruins of many of the 500 odd ethnically cleansed Palestinian Arab villages inside pre-1967 Israel and over their lands?

How can the said 27 NGOs, human rights organizations and social movements from the Negev and Israel and 7 American Jewish organizations suggest that "If you, the leaders of the JNF, fail to heed this call, you will bear responsibility for the betrayal of Israel's commitment to the values of equality and justice enshrined in its Declaration of Independence"? It is the "greenwashing" by the JNF of the crime against humanity of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine that has significantly made possible for the apartheid State of Israel to conceal these crimes for several decades and project itself as the "only democracy in the Middle East".

How can the said 27 NGOs, human rights organizations and social movements from the Negev and Israel and 7 American Jewish organizations call upon the leadership of the JNF "to end your complicity in the destruction of Bedouin villages in the Negev and in the dispossession of Israel's Bedouin community", rather than call upon governments world-wide and western governments in particular to direct their Commissioners of Charities to strike the JNF off the list of charitable societies the charitable registration of the JNF, to nullify the JNF tax privileges in their respective states (as well as demand that the JNF reimburse their respective treasuries with all the monies fraudulently gained as tax-exemptions), and to declare the JNF an illegal organization under their respective liberal democratic constitutions.

Political Zionism is a form of apartheid and the appropriate penalties prescribed by the International Covenant on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid of 1973 should be applied to its institutions, notably the WZO, the JA and the JNF, and to the State of Israel, which has granted those institutions statutory status by power of parliamentary legislation.

It is the duty of civil society, including professional associations, trade unions, and religious organizations, as well as the responsibility of every concerned individual of conscience (notably, the 27 NGOs human rights organizations and social movements from the Negev and Israel and the 7 American Jewish organizations) to single out the State of Israel for the same specific attention that was paid to the apartheid regime of the Republic of South Africa, *inter alia* in the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid of 1973, not because racism in Israel as defined in international law is that different from racism in the UK or North America, but because apartheid in Israel (the regulation of racism through Acts of Parliament) is akin to apartheid in the former (pre-1994) South Africa.

It is the duty of civil society, including professional associations, trade unions, and religious organizations, as well as the responsibility of every concerned individual of conscience (notably, the 27 NGOs human rights organizations and social movements from the Negev and Israel and the 7 American Jewish organizations) to mobilize for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) and act to:

NULLIFY ISRAELI JNF LAW!

REVOKE THE CHARITABLE REGISTRATION OF THE JNF AND CANCEL ITS TAX EXEMPT STATUS IN THE UK AND BEYOND!

ANNUL THE NGO OBSERVER STANDING OF THE JNF IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND DECLARE THE JNF AN ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW!

About the contributor and publisher of Vol 3:

Professor Dr Uri Davis is a Palestinian Hebrew, citizen of the alleged constitutional monarchy of the U.K. and of the apartheid State of Israel, born in Jerusalem in 1943. He has been at the forefront of the defence of human rights in Israel, notably Palestinian rights, since 1965 and has pioneered critical research on Zionism and the State of Israel since the mid-1970. He has published extensively in these fields, including *Israel: An Apartheid State* (Zed Books, London 1987 & 1990; abridged edition, MRN, Laudium, 2001); (associate author with Walter Lehn, author), *The Jewish National Fund*. Kegan Paul International, London and New York, 1988; *Citizenship and the State: Comparative Study of Citizenship Legislation in Israel, Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon* (Ithaca Press, Reading, 1997); *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications* (co-ed) (Syracuse University Press, 2000) and most recently *Apartheid Israel: Possibilities for the Struggle Within* (Zed Books, London, 2003); *A Secular Anti-Zionist COMPANION of an Abridged Passover Haggadah* (with Ricky Romain, forthcoming).

Dr Davis is Associate Professor at AL-QUDS University, Institute of Regional Studies, Israel Studies Programme, Jerusalem/Abu Dis; member of the Middle East Regional Committee of the international Journal Citizenship Studies; Honorary Research Fellow at the Institute of Arab & Islamic Studies (IAIS), University of Exeter and Honorary Research Fellow at the Institute for Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies (IMEIS), University of Durham; Chairperson of AL-BEIT: Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Israel; member of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (FATH) Revolutionary Council; and Observer-Member of the Palestine National Council (PNC).

AL-BEIT: Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Israel was founded in March 1995 by a group of Arab and Hebrew veteran human rights activists as a not-for-profit organization with the view to address a largely neglected area of human rights abuse in Israel, namely, the violation of Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):

- (i) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state;
- (ii) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

The organization has been a small and innovative voluntary association aiming to contribute to the process expanding the choice of residence in the State of Israel for all citizens (UDHR Article (i), above); advance the implementation of the right of return for all 1948 Palestine refugee families (UDHR Article (ii), above); and promote the idea of open localities and mixed cooperative and other communities, Jewish-Arab/Arab-Jewish communities in the first instance on an equal footing. AL-BEIT is a signatory to the Call for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (Published by PACBI: Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel www.PACBI.org). All members of the AL-BEIT Management Committee volunteer their time and their skills.

VI. Report to the UN Human Rights Committee

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality with Association for Support and Defence of Bedouin Rights in Israel, Recognition Forum, and Physicians for Human Rights

12 June 2010

The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality wishes to take this opportunity to report on developments since the adoption of the list of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the third periodic report of Israel (CCPR/C/ISR/3). This supplementary report is in reply to issue no. 7 that appears on that list:

7. Please elaborate on the measures taken by the State party to respect and protect the rights of Arab Bedouins to their land and traditional way of life; to stop demolitions of their homes, and to provide them with adequate basic infrastructure and services, including electricity, water, education and health facilities.

Escalation in number of house demolitions

On 18 February 2010, it was reported that the Israeli Ministry of Interior (MOI), the Israel Lands Administration (ILA) and the southern district of the Israel Police had jointly resolved to triple the demolition rate of Bedouin constructions in the Negev. The decision was reportedly made at a meeting one month prior (1). As a result it is expected that in excess of 700 Bedouin homes will be destroyed over the course of 2010.

This decision seems to have been put into effect with a dramatic increase in the number of demolitions and the issuance of demolitions orders, particularly over the months of April and May 2010. The following events have been observed in unrecognized villages by the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality.

In April an estimated 50 homes of the Al-Gargawi family in Wadi Al-Na'am, an unrecognized village near the industrial zone and the toxic dump of Ramat-Hovav, was informed that demolition orders issued in 2004 and 2005 were renewed and will be executed if they do not move to the town of Seev-Shalom. No other alternative housing solutions were given to the families. At the time of writing, no demolitions have yet been carried out.

On April 13, officials from MOI together with the Green Patrol (special force) and ILA officials destroyed some tents and huts in the unrecognized Bedouin villages of Al-Araqib and Twayil Abu Jarwal as described below.

In Twyil Abu Jarwal, six tents and four shacks were demolished. This was the thirtieth demolition that the village has experienced since 2006. The police also drained all water containers in the village so that residents had no source of water. The village's large water tanks had already been destroyed in previous demolitions. Since this incident in April, demolitions have occurred on two other occasions. By way of background, the Talalka people who live in Twyil Abu Jarwal were forced to leave their village in 1951 together with other families and tribes.

In Al-Araqib, three homes were demolished. For one of the families this was the sixth demolition they had endured since 2002. Two of the previous demolitions had occurred in just the previous two months. In addition, the residents of more than ten houses received eviction orders and were given until May 10 to leave. However, they have requested an extension of time to June 10 and was thus still pending at the time of writing.

On May 3, two large demonstration tents that had been built in Al-Araqib were dismantled by the protestors and no licence, as promised by the police, was issued so that they could be legally rebuilt. These structures had been built on April 14 for the purpose of preventing the Jewish National Fund (JNF) to continue carrying out works on lands near the village that belongs to the families and over which the families have filed land claims during the 1970s. These claims are now being heard before the court. Further details about the activities of the JNF are provided below.

In Al-Zaiadnah, located north of the city of Rahat and outside the city municipality borders, dozens of families received demolition orders.

Along with demolition orders that were issued to the Al-Zaiadnah and reissued to Al-Gargawi families and others, more than 1,000 individuals are estimated to have been affected by these actions. In most of demolitions, the families' belongings were destroyed together with their house. In Tawil Abu Jarwal a number of belongings were also buried.

Crop Destruction

On February 10, the Green Patrol deep ploughed approximately 4,000 dunams (approx 1,000 acres) of a new barley crop adjacent to the Al-Araqib with tractors. According to governmental sources 7,400 dunams were ploughed this winter (2).

Jewish National Fund afforestation activities

There has also been an intensification of pressure on Bedouin communities to relocate through the activities of the Jewish National Fund (JNF). The JNF is a non-profit corporation established by the Zionist movement and has been granted quasi-government powers in Israel as part of the ILA. The JNF charter specifies reclamation of land for Jewish people as its primary purpose. In 2003, the JNF introduced its 'Blueprint Negev' initiative to revitalize Israel's southern desert region, increase the Jewish population and 'improve living conditions for all its inhabitants' (3). Pursuant to this initiative the JNF has planted tens of thousands of trees in the Negev and created numerous parks with neither the consent nor cooperation of the indigenous owners of the land in question.

It has become increasingly clear that the Israeli government sanctions JNF-funded activities to indirectly and arbitrarily take control of disputed land from the Bedouins through planting forests on land subject to pending ownership claims by Bedouins in court. The ILA actively encourages and supports the JNF to further the eviction of the Bedouins through tree planting projects on the ancestral lands of the Bedouins which are the subject of disputed ownership claims before the court. One such specific example of afforestation in which the Negev Coexistence Forum is heavily involved is the area around the village of Al-Araqib. In the summer of 2009, the JNF began cultivating El Okbi tribal land without any form of prior consultation and before a court ruling with regards to the ownership of the land. As a result of the JNF activities, residents of Al-Araqib have been forced off the land and can no longer use it for agricultural or grazing purposes. There have been a number of clashes between residents of Al-Araqib and the JNF workers.

In March 2010, a total of 40 indictments were been filled against Mr. Nouri Al-Uqbi, a leading figure in the Bedouin's struggle against dispossession while he has land claim continues in court against the State of Israel. Mr. Al-Okbi was born and grew up in Al-Araqib, however, in 1951 the Al-Okbi tribe was forcibly removed from their land which was later confiscated by the government. In 2006, Mr. Al-Okbi returned to live on the country that had been owned by his family for generations, however, he has been detained and beaten on several occasions and his tent destroyed by members of the JNF. In early March 2010, Mr. Al-Okbi was imprisoned again, however, on this occasion he was charged with dozens of offences dating from 2006 including trespassing and disrupting the work of the JNF when

they began to flatten his father's land. The treatment that Mr Al-Okbi has suffered is just another example of a broader policy of intimidation and police brutality to coerce the Bedouins to leave their land.

Extension of Route Six

The government's plans to extend the Trans-Israel Highway, also known as Route 6, south into the Negev will force more than 2,500 Bedouins citizens to relocate. The planned route does not take into consideration the location of Bedouin populations and will affect both recognized and unrecognized villages. It is estimated that 400 structures will be demolished to construct the highway and a further 200 located adjacent to the planned route will be adversely affected. Among the villages likely to be harmed by the planned highway are Al-Mas'adiya, Al-Garin, Khirbat al-Watan, Bir al-Hamam, Khashem Zana, Sawin, A-Shahabi, Wadi Al-Na'am, and Al-Mashash. A petition to the Supreme Court was filled in May 2010 (3459/10) (4).

Inadequate health facilities

In October 2009, three maternity care units were closed in the unrecognized villages of Abu-Tlul, Wadi Al-Na'am and Kassar Al-Sir on the grounds, the Ministry of Health claims, that there was a shortage of nurses. In December 2009 a petition to the Supreme Court was filled but as yet there has been no decision.

Connection to the electricity grid

In March 2010, the two schools in the unrecognized village of Abu-Tlul and Al-Amal school in Khirbat Al-Watan were connected to the main electricity grid following a petition to the Supreme Court (5475/09).

All other villages and schools remain with no connection to the power grid.

(1) Yanir Yagna, 'Israel to triple demolition rate for illegal Bedouin construction', Haaretz at 4 May 2010 (<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israel-to-triple-demolition-rate-for-illegal-bedouin-construction-1.263510>)

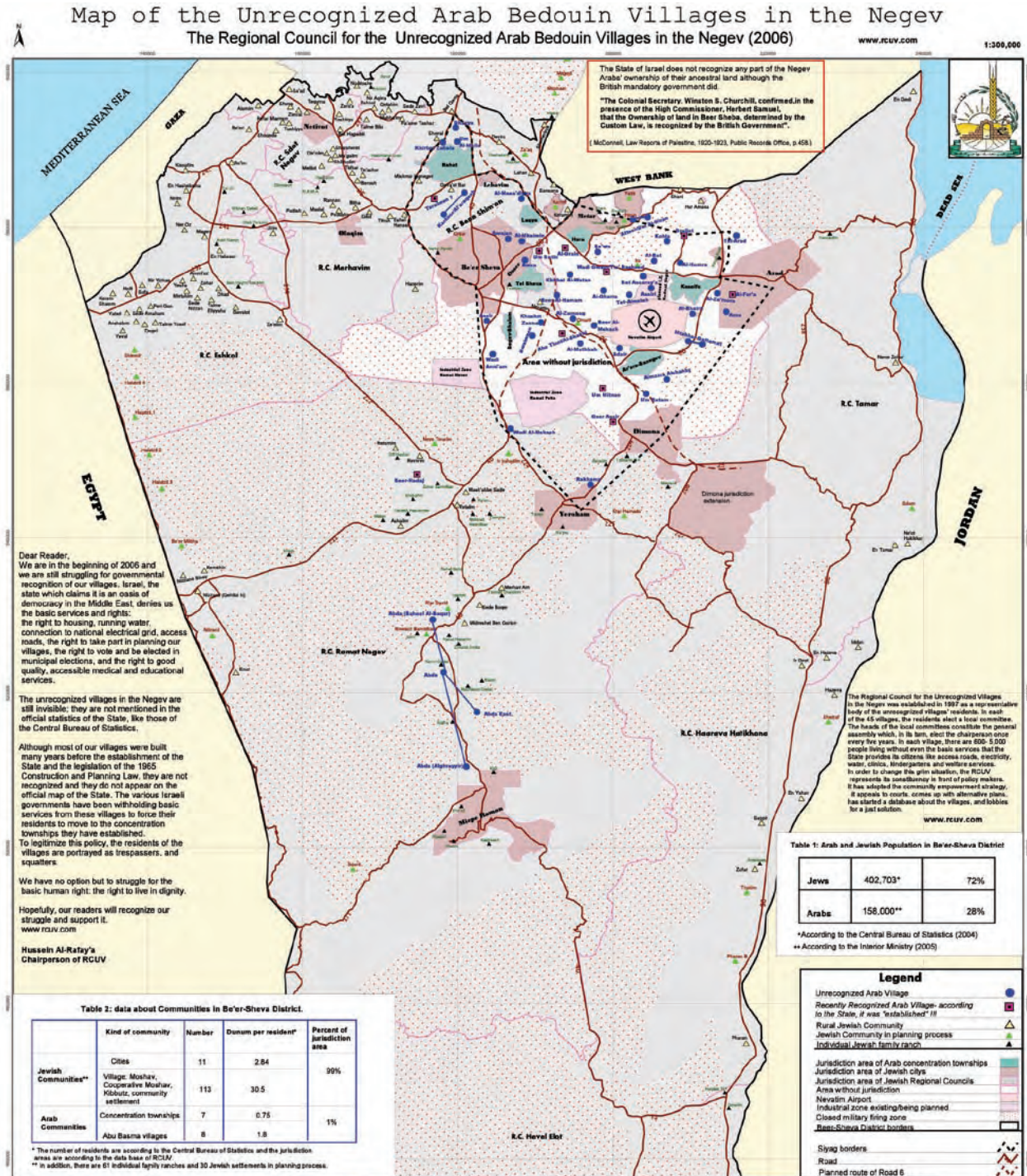
(2) Israel Land Administration website (in Hebrew) at 24/2/2010 (http://www.mmi.gov.il/HodaotmmiInt/show_h.asp?key=916&CodeMaarecet=1)

(3) Jewish National Fund website, 'Blueprint Negev', at 17 March 2010 (<http://www.jnf.org/work-we-do/blueprint-negev/>)

(4) The Association for Civil Rights in Israel website (in Hebrew), Press release, 5 May 2010 (<http://www.acri.org.il/Story.aspx?id=2477>)

VII. Map of the Naqab

Regional Council for Unrecognized Villages



Announcement

Call for the Submission of Papers to JNF eBook Volume 4

As part of a series of E-Books [<http://www.jnfebook.net/>], IJAN [International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network] is accepting contributions for a 4th Volume in this series which it will be editing, dedicated to the theme of the Jewish National Fund and Environmental Racism. The JNF operates as an arm of the Zionist state in Israel and, working under the guise of promoting the environment, in fact actively contributes to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land in Israel. We seek contributions of any length and style, that explore or document JNF practices, connect JNF methods with those occurring elsewhere, explore JNF and Zionist Green-washing practices, or build connections between indigenous struggles for land, livelihood and security in Israel/Palestine with those occurring in the rest of the world. For more information, or to submit work for consideration, please contact issue editor, Jesse Benjamin at: jbenjamin@kennesaw.edu. Rolling deadline is the first week of March, 2011.

Jesse Benjamin is a sociologist, and Coordinator of African and African Diaspora Studies at Kennesaw State University in Atlanta. He is a member of IJAN, a citizen of Israel, the US and Canada, and has worked with Bedouin communities resisting JNF incursions since 1987.

Appeal for assistance to challenge the JNF-KKL (Jewish National Fund)

Testimonies of Palestinians whose land is/has been under JNF control.

INTERNATIONAL Campaign to Stop the JNF is building a dossier of personal testimonies by families whose stolen land is/has been held by the JNF. This dossier will be used against the JNF around the world.

Our goal is to take the fight against the JNF into democratic spaces available in countries around the world, using the personal testimonies of Palestinians who have been materially harmed by the actions and activities of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and who suffer some or all of the following:

- loss of land
- lack of access to resources
- denial of access to essential services and facilities
- the violation of their human and national rights

The testimonies should include documents, photographs and recordings. We also aim to build a pool of speakers prepared to give evidence in person concerning the crimes of the JNF and the cost to themselves personally and their families.

Testimonies of Palestinians whose land is/has been under JNF control

How you can help to fight the JNF:

- ❖ Provide a named person from your organisation who can be the point of contact with the International Stop the JNF Campaign
- ❖ Use the attached questionnaire to gather suitable testimonies together with photographs, documentation and video where possible
- ❖ Distribute this appeal to partner organisations or individuals who may be able to help

The JNF and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine

The Palestinian 'catastrophe' continues to the present day. The ongoing Israeli ethnic cleansing of Palestine relies on the Jewish National Fund (JNF) inside and outside '48. The JNF:

- hold 13% of all the land and property looted and plundered from Palestinians in 1948 and since and reserved for the benefit of Jews only
- a fundamental pillar of Israeli apartheid inside and outside '48
- involved in current projects to dispossess Palestinians
- Financially and politically supported by Western governments

/PTO

Today in the eyes of public opinion worldwide, Israel is a pariah state. Organised campaigners against Israel's crimes have achieved, for example, some dramatic victories in British courts. Despite enjoying elite support the JNF is vulnerable to political/legal attacks.

To take on and defeat the JNF politically and in court rooms around the world, working partnerships between Palestinian and Western civil society are essential.

The International Stop the JNF Campaign seek Palestinian and other partners – individuals, NGOs, political groups, university researchers – to take this key project forward.

Summary of what is required

Testimonies from individuals who can:

- work with others to fight the JNF
- travel abroad to deliver their testimonies
- testify to Zionist violence and forced expulsion of their family members
- produce title deeds or evidence of ownership of their properties
- locate photos of their property/village/home/urban area

Time periods:

- Pre-1948
- 1948
- 1967
- Ongoing

Geographical range: testimonies from people living in...

- Gaza
- West Bank
- '48-'67 Israel
- Camps in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria
- Diaspora

Issues to highlight... the JNF and...

- Occupation
- Apartheid
- Ethnic cleansing
- Colonisation

Please find a draft questionnaire attached.

Further info – info@badil.org.

DRAFT QUESTIONNAIRE (Testimonies of Palestinians whose land is/has been under JNF control.) Return to info@badil.org.

Name of person conducting the interview
Email of person conducting the interview
Telephone number of person conducting the interview
Date of interview
Full name of interviewee
Current place of residence
Name of village / district
Date of expulsion / displacement from home village
Number of family members also expelled / displaced
Number of village community also expelled / displaced
What happened in the days before your family had to leave?

What happened on the day your family left?

Did anyone stay behind? Did anyone try to get back to their homes?

How did you make your way to a place of safety?

How many deaths occurred during the ethnic cleansing of your village / district?
- Who where they?

Was any other property looted by Zionists militias at the time?

Do you know which Zionist militia units carried out the ethnic cleansing of your village?

Where are various members of your family living now?

Who is/are the current holder(s) of the property rights to your family's land / property currently under JNF control?

Have you been able to gain access to the village / district since expulsion / displacement?

What do you remember about that visit?

Did you have any documents relating to ownership of land / property?

Do you have any documents relating to ownership of land / property?

Do you have any photographs of your property

- At the time of your expulsion / displacement? _____
- Any time before? _____
- As it is now? _____

Do you have any items taken from the property at the time of your expulsion / displacement?

What use is your land / property being put to today by the JNF?

Are any other members of your family prepared to provide testimony as to the rightful ownership of this property?

What are your hopes for the future?

Attachments:

- Photographs
- Copy of ownership documents