



# ON THE BRINK

The Forced Displacement Crisis Facing  
Bedouin Communities in the Naqab

MARCH 2026



Photo by Flash90



**We must replicate the settlement revolution that I carry out in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] in recent years also to the Negev [Naqab]. [...] We understand that the key to security is settlement, as has been done in Judea and Samaria. Today, the government has established five new Jewish communities in the Negev, with six more to follow.”**

*Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich,  
February 2026*

# ***An Unprecedented*** **Forced Displacement Crisis**

Today, Palestinian Bedouin citizens of Israel living in the Naqab (Negev, southern Israel) are facing an unprecedented crisis of forced displacement, mass evictions and home demolitions at the hands of the State of Israel. Under the current far-right government, long-standing displacement policies have accelerated sharply. Entire villages have been erased within a matter of days, while the government establishes exclusively Israeli Jewish towns, often on the land and ruins of Bedouin villages. Demolitions have reached record levels, with [more than 14,000 structures demolished](#) since 2023 (Ministry of National Security, 2025). This staggering figure includes thousands of homes, as well as essential infrastructure in recognized and unrecognized villages and smaller communities. Many families are forced to live in makeshift tents amongst the ruins of their former homes.

While the displacement of Bedouin communities is rooted in decades of state policy, the current escalation represents a turning point, with the state now moving to complete this long-standing project through a systematic and violent agenda.

This paper examines the recent demolition of multiple communities and includes a new, comprehensive data table of Bedouin villages that are under imminent threat. It documents ten unrecognized villages, home to over 15,000 residents, with significant portions—and in some cases the entire village—slated for demolition through state-initiated evacuation lawsuits intended to facilitate military expansion, industrial zones, and new Jewish-only towns. Adalah is representing residents in three of these villages - Ras Jrabah, Al-Bqea'ah, and Umm Badoun - challenging these discriminatory policies in ongoing legal proceedings.

## **Decades of Displacement and Forced Concentration**

Since the military rule period (1948–1966), successive Israeli governments have sought to concentrate the Bedouins in the confined “Siyag” (“fence”) zone in the northeastern Naqab, displacing many communities from their ancestral land to seven impoverished, government-planned townships. Bedouin villages recognized by the state since 1999 remain largely unplanned and lack basic infrastructure and services. Today more than 90,000 people—30% of the Naqab’s Bedouin population—live in 37 “unrecognized villages,” systematically excluded from state planning and denied essential services such as water, electricity, paved roads, and sanitation while living under the constant threat of demolition.

## Expanding Jewish Towns in the Naqab

The current, imminent displacement crisis is driven by an explicit state policy of “Judaization,” with the state’s planning to establish over a dozen new Jewish towns. Many new towns are set to be located on or close to the land of Bedouin villages in order to bring about their destruction or permanently block their development. The current far-right government has [explicitly committed](#) to “strengthen” the Jewish presence in “the Negev and [...] Biq’at ‘Arad (Arad Valley).” Senior officials describe this agenda as demographic and geographic engineering to reshape the region. While [Finance Minister Smotrich](#) has called for a “settlement revolution” in the Naqab, modeled on the state’s strategies in the West Bank, Minister of Settlements and National Missions [Orit Strock](#) defined the goal as “maintaining settlement continuity,” a strategy that fragments and isolates Bedouin communities with strategically-placed Jewish-only towns.

In March 2022, the previous government adopted [Resolution No. 1325](#), approving the establishment of five new “community towns” in the Arad area: four Jewish towns—Shalhevet, Irit, Tzabar, and Chavatzelet HaNegev—and one town—Marva—designated for Bedouins. These towns’ establishment is being [financially supported](#) by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), with the World Zionist Organization (WZO) also playing a significant role in their establishment. According to its [2026 work plan](#), the WZO is currently identifying suitable “[settlement nuclei](#)” to populate these areas. These nuclei (also referred to as “seeds”) are organized, often ideologically driven, groups that seek to establish Jewish communities at strategically significant locations. In allocating land to these groups, the state is advancing its agenda of segregated, Jewish-only towns. Once established, the residents of these towns are expected to be vetted by exclusionary [admissions committees](#), which use the vague legal criterion of “social suitability” to filter out Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI) and maintain these as Jewish-only towns. Furthermore, under [Resolution No. 3811](#) (January 2026), the government approved the establishment of five additional Jewish towns in the Naqab—Nevatim South, Gva’ot Adarim, Telem Talma, Talia, and Diya—with the WZO’s Settlement Division

## Replacement and Segregation

Many of the new Jewish towns are intended to facilitate the depopulation and destruction of existing Bedouin villages and to institutionalize a segregationist planning regime. Key examples of these villages include:



**Ras Jrabah** is a stark illustration of racial segregation, as the state seeks to evict its 500+ Bedouin residents to facilitate the expansion of the Jewish city of Dimona. The state has consistently rejected the [residents' pleas](#) to be incorporated into the expanded Dimona, instead maintaining separate and unequal living areas.



**Yatir's** development was approved in February 2023, in connection with a Chabad "settlement nucleus." [Resolution No. 1854](#) (June 2024) formally outlines the plans for this Jewish town, a model of state-sponsored religious and racial exclusion.



**Umm al-Hiran** was entirely razed in [November 2024](#) to clear the ground for the Jewish town of Dror, which is currently being built on its ruins.

*Photo by Flash90.*



**Umm Ratam:** Authorities are pursuing the total evacuation of the Bedouin village to establish the Jewish settlement of Talia on its land.

In parallel, the state is also advancing massive urban settlement projects for the benefit of the Jewish-Israeli population across the Naqab. In mid-February 2026, the Ministry of Construction and Housing announced the [public deposition](#) of the plan for Kasif Menora, a Jewish religious city. Furthermore, according to government [Resolution No. 1939](#) (June 2024), the state is advancing the establishment of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish city of Tila, with an expected 50,000 housing units.

Another instrument for maintaining Israeli Jewish control over the land is the establishment of “individual farms”. These individual farms are often allocated to a single family that is granted exclusive control over thousands of dunams. While many of these farms were initially established without permits, they were subsequently retroactively legalized and connected to full state infrastructure. Adalah [challenged](#) this policy in the past, with the Supreme Court failing to intervene. The Knesset is now [moving](#) to pass a legislative amendment that will extend a “planning grace period” that protects these “farms” from demolition for up to 17 years while the state formalizes their status. This position stands in stark contrast to the state’s simultaneous acceleration of demolitions targeting long-established Bedouin villages.

In addition to new Jewish villages and towns, eviction lawsuits are often tied to state “development” projects, including highways, railways, and other infrastructure initiatives that are deliberately routed through Bedouin land (see, for instance, the villages of Al-Sirr and Wadi al-Khalil in the table below). These projects often exclusively serve Jewish Israeli citizens.

## **Hardline Enforcement Under National Security Minister Ben-Gvir**

The recent surge in home demolitions—targeting both recognized and unrecognized villages—is also linked to institutional changes undertaken by the current far-right government. In July 2024, the Knesset [transferred](#) the National Unit for Enforcing Planning and Construction Laws, the main authority responsible for executing demolitions, to right-wing extremist National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir. In early 2025 he [reportedly instructed](#) police to prioritize the demolition of inhabited family homes over other structures, despite lacking the legal authority to determine such policies.

Under the current government, demolitions have reached record levels. The Ministry of National Security [reported](#) 5,231 demolitions in 2024, of which 2,903 were self-demolitions, carried out by residents on their own homes to avoid hefty punitive fines and violent police operations. 736 of these structures were homes. [Official statistics](#) further indicate that 5,742 structures were demolished in 2025, including 1,106 homes or places of residence. [Entire villages](#) have been erased within days, with no adequate housing alternatives provided. Families were left homeless, with many people still living in makeshift tents amongst the ruins of their homes.

Beyond the scale of these demolitions, the manner of their execution reveals a calculated brutality and a complete disregard for life and safety. In Wadi Al-Khalil, for example, authorities demolished homes in May 2024 and forced families into tents under the scorching sun. Israeli forces later returned to uproot the trees that provided the only available shade and dismantled the tents, stripping displaced residents of this minimal protection.

# Demolitions at *Record Highs*

under the current government.

2024

2025

5,231

DEMOLITIONS  
IN 2024

5,742

DEMOLITIONS  
IN 2025

2,903

WERE SELF-DEMOLITIONS



736

STRUCTURES  
WERE HOMES.

1,106

HOMES OR PLACES  
OF RESIDENCE.



**Entire villages** have been erased within days,  
with no adequate housing alternatives provided.  
**Families were left homeless**

*According to official statistics  
from the Ministry of National Security*

## State-Sanctioned Incitement

The demolitions take place within a broader political campaign that portrays the destruction of Bedouin homes as the [restoration of state sovereignty and governance](#) in the Naqab. This rhetoric casts Bedouin citizens as “enemies within” to justify militarized policing and mass dispossession. Government figures have explicitly linked land enforcement to a nationalist struggle for control. In reference to demolitions in Wadi Al-Khalil, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir [declared](#), “the Israel Police will wage an **all-out war** against anyone who seizes land and attempts to establish a different reality on the ground.” On 7 January 2026, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [described](#) the Naqab as “out of control” and “running wild” during a high-profile tour of the area. He then declared the state’s intent to “return the Negev to the State of Israel,” through Jewish settlement on an unprecedented scale. However, this narrative of Bedouin residents as “trespassers” fundamentally distorts the historical and legal reality. It suppresses the fact that many targeted communities are historical villages predating the establishment of the state in 1948, or consist of families whom the military forcibly relocated to these specific areas in the 1950s. By categorically delegitimizing documented land claims—many of which were recognized under Ottoman and British rule—the state rebrands indigenous residents as “criminals” to provide a legal veneer for their forced displacement.

## Displacement Camps for the Homeless

The government has recently approved a plan to set up trailer parks in existing Bedouin towns as temporary, inadequate housing “solutions” for displaced Bedouin citizens. The plan includes 1,200 temporary housing units and substandard infrastructure not intended for long-term habitation. However, these sites risk becoming long-term “displacement camps” in the absence of permanent solutions, and a means of facilitating the mass dispossession of the Bedouins. Adalah, together with dozens of local committees of unrecognized Bedouin villages, the Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev (RCUV) and the NGO Bimkom, is [challenging](#) the plan before the Israeli Supreme Court.



A Bedouin family left homeless after being forced to demolish their own home near Ar'arat an-Naqab. Photo via the Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev



MK Itamar Ben Gvir plants a tree outside the Bedouin village of Al-Atrash (Sa'wah), January 12, 2022. Photo by Flash 90.

## Bedouin Villages and Communities Erased

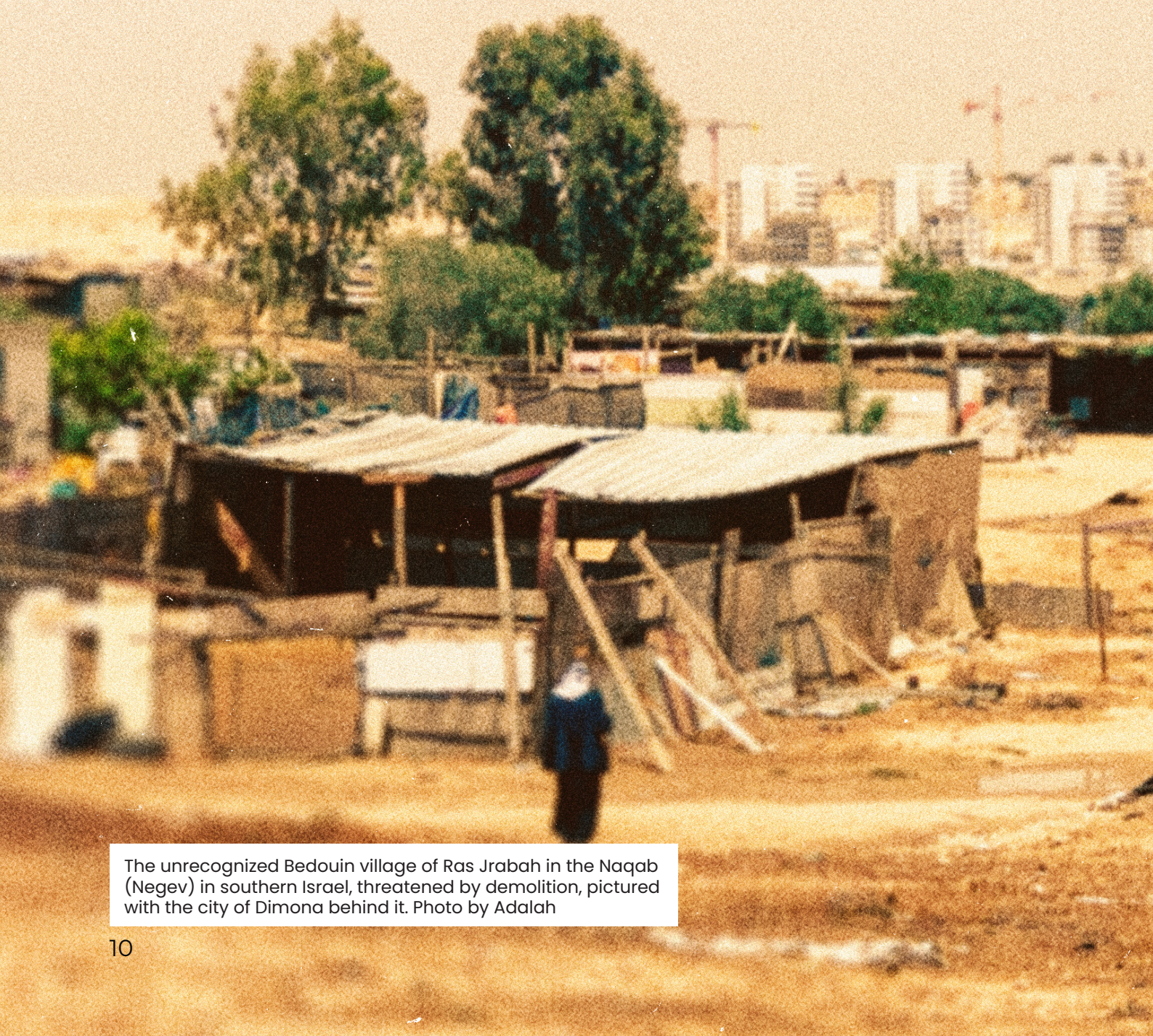
Since the current government took office, several entire Bedouin villages and communities have been completely razed. In May 2024, Israeli forces demolished the entire unrecognized village of Wadi al-Khalil (home to approximately 350 residents) to clear the route for the southward expansion of Highway 6. This mass demolition was greenlit by the judiciary: the Be'er Sheva District Court authorized the demolitions in 2022, and in late 2023, the Supreme Court upheld the state's plan to forcibly relocate residents to the government-planned township of Umm Batin, despite the community presenting evidence of the serious safety risks such relocation would entail. This demolition was followed in July 2024 by the demolition of the al-Ghul community near Ar'arat an-Naqab, after the Be'er Sheva Magistrate's Court authorized the eviction of 50 residents by approving demolition orders based on state claims of "illegal construction".

In November 2024, after two decades of struggle against state efforts to replace their village with the Jewish-only town of Dror, including a [prolonged legal battle led by Adalah](#), the [remaining residents of Umm al-Hiran were expelled](#) from their homes. To avoid the trauma of a militarized police raid —especially considering the 2017 police raid and demolitions, during which Israeli police shot and killed village resident [Ya'akub Abu al-Qi'an](#)—and the threat of massive state-billed demolition costs, residents were forced to "self-demolish" their homes. Concurrently, in the 'unrecognized' village of Umm Matnan, the state demolished approximately 100 homes and structures belonging to around 350 residents in August 2023 and again in 2024 to clear the area for a new massive weapons-testing complex, Ramat Beka.

Most recently, between March and June 2025, the authorities effectively erased the entire community of Abu al-Misk, demolishing over 15 homes to allow for the expansion of the Mishor Rotem industrial zone and new phosphate mining operations.

# Villages Under *Imminent Threat* (2026)

Ten Bedouin villages in the Naqab, home to over 15,000 residents, are currently in a critical phase of forced displacement, with significant parts of some villages—or entire villages—under imminent threat. Many of these communities have been served with eviction lawsuits or demolition orders, with the state actively pursuing legal proceedings to facilitate the residents' removal. These villages are either historical villages that predate the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, or communities inhabited by residents who were forcibly relocated to their current sites by the Israeli military government in the 1950s following the Nakba.



The unrecognized Bedouin village of Ras Jrabah in the Naqab (Negev) in southern Israel, threatened by demolition, pictured with the city of Dimona behind it. Photo by Adalah

## Al-Bat Algharbi

APPROX. 500 RESIDENTS, UNRECOGNIZED

**Military zone:** Although the Israeli authorities relocated the residents to the area in 1978, it was declared a closed military training zone (Firing Zone 918) in the 1990s. In 2024, the state filed 25 eviction lawsuits citing this military designation to force the residents' relocation to Krayot Site, a temporary relocation site located near the recognized Bedouin village of Makhoul, which lacks permanent housing, basic services, and adequate infrastructure.

**Current Status:** Ongoing legal proceedings are pending before a Magistrates' Court.

## Al-Bqea'ah

APPROX. 500 RESIDENTS, UNRECOGNIZED

Expulsion without stated purpose: Despite the village being established through state-ordered relocation in the 1950s, the Israel Land Authority (ILA) filed eviction lawsuits against all the residents of the village in 2022, without stating a public purpose. In 2024, the Be'er Sheva Magistrates' Court [upheld the eviction orders](#), requiring the residents to evacuate by 30 June 2026 and to pay NIS 25,000 in legal costs.

**Current Status:** Ongoing legal proceedings

The community, represented by Adalah and Al-Meezan Organization for Human Rights (Nazareth), [has appealed the decision](#) to the District Court.

## Al-Sirr

APPROX. 2,800 RESIDENTS, UNRECOGNIZED

Infrastructure and Planned Development: In 2020, the ILA filed 69 eviction lawsuits, placing all 280 buildings in the village at risk of demolition due to planned development in the government-planned Bedouin township Shaqib al-Salam (Segev Shalom), a high-voltage power line project, and open-space conservation. The Be'er Sheva Magistrates' Court initially approved the motions, issuing rulings in absentia. Residents later reached a settlement with the ILA that paused the proceedings for about two years to allow negotiations. After negotiations failed, the residents filed a motion to delay the demolitions, which the court rejected. A request for an interim injunction to prevent the demolitions was also rejected by the District Court in May 2025.

**Current Status:** Active destruction

In May 2025, residents began demolishing their own homes to avoid violent state-executed demolitions and [fines of up to NIS 3 million](#). In September 2025, authorities raided the village and [demolished 40 homes and other structures](#). Many families now live in makeshift tents without alternative housing. The state plans to relocate residents to a neighborhood in Shaqib al-Salam that will not be ready for several years. Around half the village's homes have been demolished; legal proceedings concerning the remaining eviction lawsuits are ongoing.

## Bir Haddaj

OVER 6,000 RESIDENTS, RECOGNIZED

While the village is recognized, the state never implemented a 2006 agreement to extend the village's boundaries to provide sufficient land for farming or grazing, forcing many families to live outside the official boundary or in "illegal" homes. In 2017, the Bedouin Authority (the primary state body responsible for implementing state policies of relocation and displacement of Bedouin communities) called for stricter enforcement and demolitions. Dozens of families living outside the village's official boundaries face the risk of demolition, with legal proceedings already initiated against over 200 residents.

**Current Status: Ongoing legal proceedings** are pending before a Magistrates' Court.

## Dhayyih

OVER 500 RESIDENTS, UNRECOGNIZED

Agricultural areas: State authorities relied on the area's designation as an "agricultural area" to issue demolition orders in 2022 against the entire village, while rejecting residents' land ownership claims. The Be'er Sheva District Court upheld the eviction orders.

**Current Status: Imminent displacement**

The Court ruled that residents must be evicted by the end of October 2026.

## Karkour

660 RESIDENTS, UNRECOGNIZED

Development: Citing "regional development" and the conservation of "open spaces," the ILA filed eviction lawsuits against the villagers in 2023. The state seeks to relocate residents to urban neighborhoods in the government-planned township of Rahat, which are incompatible with their traditional rural lifestyle.

**Current Status: Ongoing legal proceedings** are pending before a magistrates' court.

## Ras Jrabah

**Expansion of Dimona:** In May 2019, the ILA filed eviction lawsuits against all the village's residents to facilitate the expansion of the Jewish city of Dimona. Residents' repeated requests to be integrated in Dimona's growing urban development were consistently ignored, with courts upholding segregation. On 12 November 2025, the Supreme Court [rejected](#) an appeal submitted by Adalah, despite the state offering no viable relocation plan; in January 2026, [Adalah filed](#) a motion to the Supreme Court for a second hearing.

**Current Status: Imminent displacement**

Following a motion filed by Adalah, the Supreme Court has granted a stay on the execution of the evacuation order until a final decision in the case is handed down.

## Tal Arad

2,200 RESIDENTS, UNRECOGNIZED

**New Jewish towns:** In March 2022, Israeli authorities issued eviction lawsuits against residents of the western section of Tal-Arad, 60% of the village. The state seeks to displace some residents to the eastern section of the village and others to the planned township of Mar'it, intended to accommodate displaced Bedouin communities, with the aim of concentrating them in a far smaller area of land. The authorities intend to build four new Jewish-Israeli 'community towns' on the ruins of Tal-Arad (see above).

### **Current Status: Ongoing legal proceedings**

Several of the cases have already been decided, with courts upholding the evacuations, while others remain pending with ongoing legal proceedings.

## Umm Badoun

APPROX. 500 RESIDENTS, UNRECOGNIZED

Expulsion without stated purpose: In early 2024, the ILA filed over 29 eviction lawsuits against all the residents, providing no public interest-based justification for the displacement. [Adalah, representing the residents, filed defenses](#) and the cases are pending.

**Current Status: Ongoing legal proceedings** before the Be'er Sheva Magistrates' Court, with hearings set for May 2026.

## Umm Ratam

APPROX. 1,200 RESIDENTS, UNRECOGNIZED

**Highway construction and new Jewish town:** The village faces a significant risk of displacement, particularly around 500 members of the Al-Mahthi family, due to the proposed construction of highway Road 5. In 2023, the [RCUV](#) reported that 90 homes had received demolition orders. The state is also planning the total evacuation of Umm Ratam to facilitate the establishment of the Jewish-Israeli village of Talia directly on its land.

**Current Status: Ongoing legal proceedings** before a magistrates' court.

*Note on population data: The population of each village listed above is estimated by NGOs working extensively in the field. The State of Israel does not collect or publish official statistics on the unrecognized villages.*

## Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law

Forced displacement or eviction involves the “removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection” ([see Fact Sheet by OHCHR with UN-HABITAT](#)). As forced displacement’s core tenets, goals, and consequences are harmful, dangerous, and result in the removal of people from their land, it has long been illegal under international law and is considered a “gross violation of human rights,” including by [the UN Commission on Human Rights](#). This prohibition is grounded in the right to adequate housing, as enshrined in Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which Israel has ratified.

The systematic displacement of Bedouin communities in the Naqab without suitable or adequate housing solutions constitutes a violation of international law. Furthermore, forced displacement frequently triggers a cascade of other human rights violations. The resulting homelessness and vulnerability strips individuals of their safety and stability, frequently resulting in the violation of civil and political rights, including the rights to life, security of the person, and “non-interference with privacy, family and home” (see [UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(CESCR\) General Comment No. 7: The right to adequate housing](#)). By forcibly inducing displacement, the State of Israel is therefore failing to fulfil its obligation to protect the essential foundations of a dignified life for citizens.

Multiple international bodies have specifically condemned these policies, with the UN CESCR [recommending in 2019](#) that Israel “immediately stop the eviction of Bedouin people living in unrecognized villages from their homes and ancestral lands and recognize their villages [and] [i]mprove living conditions and infrastructure in all Bedouin residential localities in the Negev area.” Several UN Special Rapporteurs have similarly affirmed that the constant threat of forced displacement and unstable housing amounts to a breach of international law. In 2012, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing [noted that](#) “The Bedouins in the Negev... are the new frontiers of dispossession of the traditional inhabitants, and the implementation of a strategy of Judaization and control of the territory.” In a September 2018 [resolution](#), The European Parliament called for an immediate end to Israel’s policy of demolition and eviction pursued against Bedouin communities in both the Naqab and Area C of the West Bank. Recently, these concerns were explicitly noted by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem, and Israel, which stated in its [September 2025 report](#) that these land and housing policies mirror those in the West Bank, aimed at achieving a Jewish majority while deliberately obstructing Palestinian geographical contiguity.

## Conclusion

The forced displacement of Bedouin communities in the Naqab is not an incidental policy failure, but a deliberate, state-manufactured crisis. The current escalation is part of a broader ideological agenda that treats Palestinian presence as an existential territorial threat on both sides of the Green Line. Senior officials and government policy openly and unapologetically articulate this approach, as fundamental rights are systematically crushed to establish and tighten control over the maximum area of land while minimizing the number of Palestinians, with no regard for legal or moral obligations. Despite blatant violations of both international and domestic law—including the right to adequate housing—domestic courts have consistently failed to provide effective remedies.

Today, dozens of Bedouin communities stand on the brink of total erasure. Demolition operations have intensified to unprecedented levels, driving widespread homelessness, particularly under the current far-right government. Ten villages, home to over 15,000 residents, are now in a critical phase of forced displacement.

Without immediate, decisive international intervention, the state will cement these practices into a regular, systematic policy of erasure, affecting these communities and dozens of others. The international community must bring to bear its full political and diplomatic weight to demand an immediate halt to all home demolitions and forced displacement, and formal recognition of Bedouin villages in the Naqab. The survival of these communities cannot be entrusted to a state that is determined to erase them.



Children from Al-Bqea'ah look over their family's belongings after the demolition of their home by Israeli authorities, February 2022. Photo by Waleed Al-Obra.



## Adalah

Adalah has been a leading actor in the most hotly-debated legal battles defending the human rights of Palestinians in Israeli courts. This critical work depends on you fighting with us.

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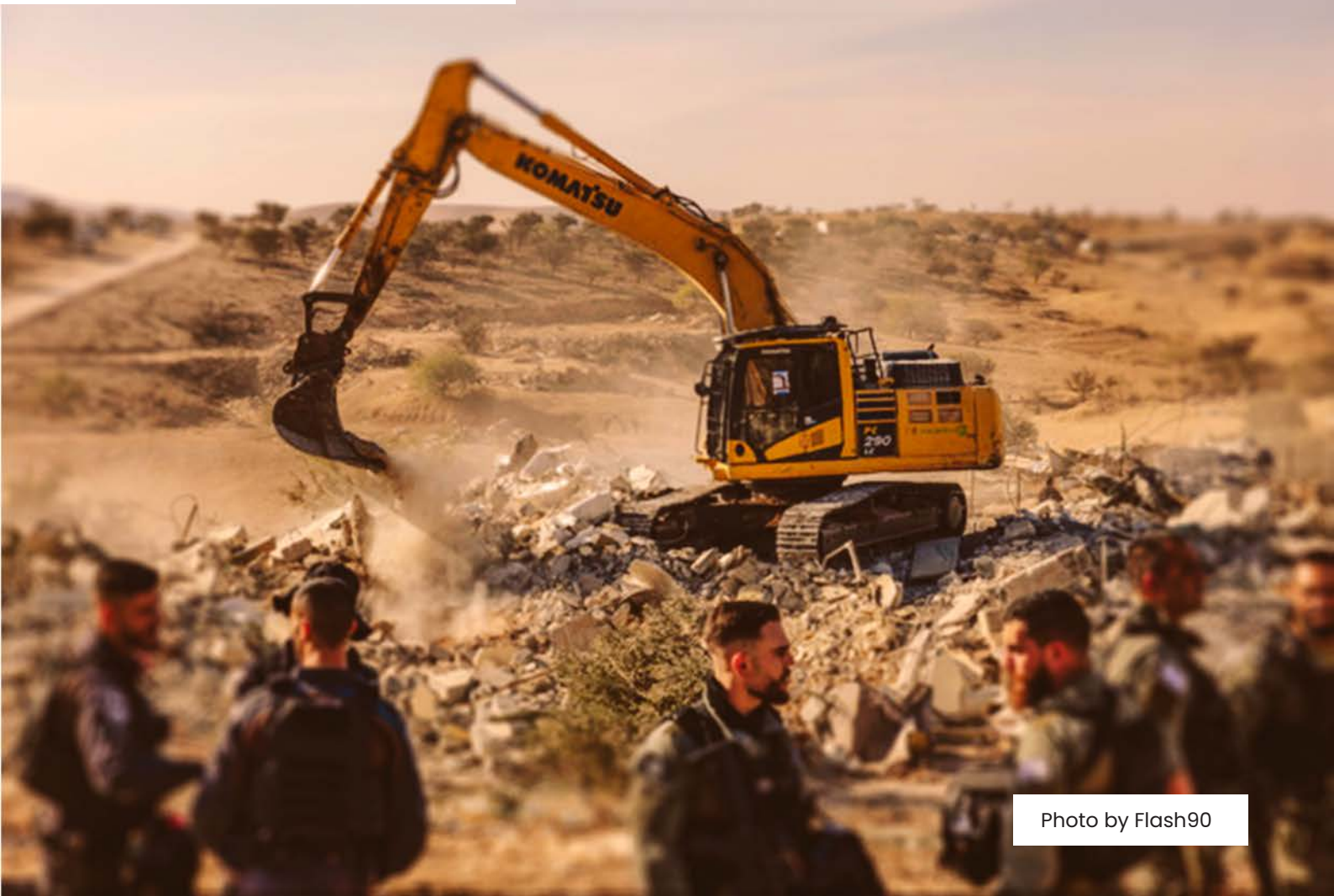


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