THE MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP

is an international research and information unit registered in Britain as an educational charity under the Charities Act of 1960. Its principal aims are —

• To secure justice for minority or majority groups suffering discrimination, by investigating their situation and publicising the facts as widely as possible, to educate and alert public opinion throughout the world.

• To help prevent, through publicity about violations of human rights, such problems from developing into dangerous and destructive conflicts which, when polarised, are very difficult to resolve; and

• To foster, by its research findings, international understanding of the factors which create prejudiced treatment and group tensions, thus helping to promote the growth of a world conscience regarding human rights.

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MRG acknowledges, with grateful thanks, those organizations and individuals who assisted this report financially and otherwise.

The report that follows has been commissioned, and is published, by the Minority Rights Group as a contribution to public understanding of the problem which forms its subject. It does not necessarily represent, in every detail and in all its aspects, the collective view of the Group.

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The cover photo shows a Negev Bedouin schoolboy minding the family sheep after school. (Penny Maddrell, 1988)
WHEREAS recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

WHEREAS disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from any fear or want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

WHEREAS it is essential, if a man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by law,

WHEREAS it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

WHEREAS the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

WHEREAS Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

WHEREAS a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore,

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

proclaims

THE UNITED NATIONS

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 16. (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17. (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21. (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Everyone has the right of access to public service in his country.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22. Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23. (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interest.

Article 24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25. (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 26. (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Article 27. (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28. Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29. (1) Everyone is entitled to have access to his own medical and other personal files.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(3) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(4) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.
Preface

Despite the worldwide attention given to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict little concern is expressed on the situation of the beduin Arabs in Israel. They are looked down upon by Jewish Israelis and other Palestinians alike as primitive. They are encouraged to join the army by Israel; some do, yet they are regarded by Jewish Israelis as Arabs and are therefore suspect. Conversely, many Palestinians outside Israel believe that the whole beduin community in Israel fully supports Israel. In the highly charged arena of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict it is difficult for some to believe that an acceptance of Israeli citizenship could exist alongside a self-identification as Palestinians (with a Palestinian Israeli ambition of the creation of a Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories).

The Minority Rights Group invited Penny Maddrell to write this new report on the beduin of the Negev to help advance understanding of a minority on which there are few international publications. Penny Maddrell has worked for two years with beduin Arabs in the Negev. Yunis al-Grinawi assisted in researching the report and, with the help of comments and advice from a series of well informed readers, a report has emerged that is authoritative and critical but also one that draws on her analysis to make constructive proposals for the future.

The report goes well beyond describing misunderstandings and prejudiced opinions. It provides a wealth of evidence that clearly describes the condition of the beduin of the Negev; it shows them to be a minority in Israel excluded from many of the state’s provisions, facing immense threats while also being a minority within the Arab community in Israel. The beduin of the Negev are truly a minority twice over.

Many Arab countries of the Middle East have beduin populations — tribal groups whose traditional lifestyle is nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralism. These groups are often marginalized and regarded as a nuisance — an anachronistic people whose way of life is incompatible with the workings of a modern state. A study of the situation of nomadic and ex-nomadic beduin-groups in these states would be valuable as a series of reports looking at the social, economic and political environment in each state. This report focusses on the beduin Arab community in Israel — whose position as a formerly nomadic group is complicated and, the report shows, is outweighed in significance by their position as part of the Arab minority in Israel.

Most of the literature on beduin Arabs in Israel since 1948 has, not surprisingly, been the work of Jewish Israeli researchers, mainly anthropologists. They have generally emphasized the context of nomadism in modern states and neglected the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This approach has tended to present the problems of beduin Arabs in Israel as those of rapid social change from a nomadic to a settled existence. Similarly, the situation facing the Israeli government has been described as the practical problem of dealing with a nomadic minority in a modern industrial state. Such an interpretation is misleading since the nomadic tradition of the beduin Arabs of Palestine had all but disappeared by the time Israel was established in 1948. The problem the state saw in its beduin citizens was not their vestigial wanderings but their very presence as Arabs in the Jewish state, and their traditional ownership of large tracts of land. And from the beduin point of view, the problems have been the same as those encountered by other Arab communities in Israel. The similarities far outweigh those differences arising from their diverging economic and social traditions.

The report shows the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to be the relevant context. The beduin Arab Israelis see the issues through this perspective and this report seeks to describe their perspective as part of the Arab minority within Israel.

The Minority Rights Group has published several reports on The Palestinians. The last edition published in 1987 provided an in-depth study of the situation of Palestinians which is not repeated here; however, The Palestinians, MRG Report No 24, may be usefully read in conjunction with this report. For similar reasons no attempt is made in this report, to cover those beduin from Palestine who, with other Palestinian Arabs, became refugees in 1948 and are now in the Arab states or the Occupied Territories. Although they are the vast majority of the pre-1948 beduin population in Palestine their situation is now the same as that of all Palestinian refugees.

Land is an issue of immense importance to minorities throughout the world where access to land, the ability to be self-sufficient and the recognition of a group’s identity and heritage are crucial. This is also true of the beduin who have persistently returned to their lands, at times facing violence. Beduin say that land means honour and freedom, that it is not merely wealth. “Land is holy” and the landless are pitied.

Conflict and great hardship is frequently caused to minorities and indigenous peoples by the unilateral imposition of a ‘modern’ legal framework often demanding documentation that previously had been unnecessary and therefore non-existent. The legal frameworks, sometimes by accident, often by design, frequently ignore the traditional and historic rights of the people living, or grazing their animals on that land. These rights have often been continued and respected for generation after generation. The military power to impose a legal framework that lacks consensus is often much more important than the moral rights enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, the spectre of forced migrations of minorities has haunted Europe in the 20th century. At the time that they occurred they seemed the convenient ‘security’ solution to the state, but it has provided no solution in the long run and many states and minorities are still paying the price today, generations later.

Throughout this report the ownership of and access to land is a recurring theme that is ignored at great peril, yet the report makes constructive suggestions on how this issue may be tackled. While reading this report, we suggest you remember the words of a beduin Israeli citizen from Laggiya in the Negev, when the authorities uprooted two thousand of his olive trees:

“We don’t live in this country.
We live in the air, somewhere between the land and the sky.
There is no room for us on the land.”

JP, 30/10/87

The Land and the People

Beduin Arabs in the state of Israel today are, like the rest of the Arab minority there, Israeli citizens. Palestinian Arabs make up about 18% of Israel’s population within its 1967 borders and of these Arab Israelis about 15% are beduin. The beduin population divides into two main communities. Both are descended from originally nomadic groups which settled in Palestine over several centuries. The northern group in the Galilee is descended from tribes which came from Syria to the north-east, and the larger community of the Negev desert in the south originates in tribes which came north from the Sinai and the Arabian peninsula. The Galilee
and the Negev differ considerably, and the differences have affected the history of the two beduin groups.

The semi-arid Negev is the triangular, southern part of Israel and comprises two thirds of the state's land area in its pre-1967 borders. The meagre rainfall is irregular, with many dry years. Parts of the southern Negev, where no beduin have lived since the establishment of the Israeli state, have a spectacular desert landscape of ochre *wadis* (dry river valleys) and rugged hills. The northwestern part includes the Negev's most fertile areas and is flatter, with low hills and plains.

The beduin Arab population of the Negev now numbers up to 90,000. Of these less than half live in five villages planned and set up by the government which vary in size between 1000 and 20,000 inhabitants. The remainder live in two large, unplanned villages for which the government has promised infrastructure and legal status, and in a large number of smaller, illegal hamlets. Government policy aims eventually to transfer the population of the latter into planned towns. Before 1948, the beduin of the Negev were practically that area's only population. Their only neighbours were a few Jewish settlements in the northernmost part of the area, and the mainly non-beduin Arab merchant families of the town of Beersheba. Today the beduin are a minority in the Negev at about 28% of the area population. They are an overwhelmingly young community – 54% of the Negev beduin are under the age of 14.

The Galilee beduin, by contrast, were never the only Arabs in the area. Other Arab communities – Druze, Muslim and Christian – shared the fertile northern hills and plains with them, as well as various kinds of Jewish settlements. Today, the beduin Arabs in the Galilee probably number about 40,000. They live in six planned settlements, ten villages which were unplanned but later legalized, and numerous other illegal settlements slated for eventual removal. There are also beduin neighbourhoods in other Arab villages in the Galilee, as well as in the mixed Arab and Jewish towns of Lod and Ramleh near Tel Aviv in the coastal plain.

The beduin of the Galilee and the Negev have different origins, are not related, and have very little contact with each other. The Negev beduin are geographically very isolated from the other Arab communities inside the state of Israel. Since the 1967 war they have had more contact with those parts of their tribes living since 1948 as refugees in the West Bank, Gaza and Jordan, than with the beduin of the north. The Negev and Galilee beduin dialects of Arabic, although both identifiable by others as beduin, differ clearly from each other. Furthermore, although both groups are descended from originally nomadic desert tribes, the Galilee beduin, influenced by the settled agricultural communities around them and the greater feasibility of agriculture in the relatively fertile north, moved towards a mixed pastoral and agricultural economy earlier than the more isolated tribes in the semi-arid Negev.

One thing that the two groups do have in common, apart from a shared position as part of Israel's Arab minority, is a common cultural legacy among the nomadic tribes of the Middle East. Both communities are tribally organized into common descent groups of widely varying size. The traditional leaders of tribes, sub-tribes and extended families are known as *sheikhs*. Some of them once controlled groups of thousands of individuals, others less than one hundred. Today in the context of the modern state, their power has diminished and the tribal structure is likewise of a steadily decreasing importance.

Among Arab Israelis, beduin from the two groups are further bound together by the existence of a specific set of government attitudes and policies relating to them as beduin. The guiding aim with regard to both the beduin and Druze Arab communities has been to separate them from other Arabs in Israel. Druze Arabs have mostly served in the Israeli army since the early years of the state, and the authorities intend that the beduin should also be drawn into a position of overt loyalty to the state with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Another major aim is to relocate beduin Arabs still living in numerous unauthorized hamlets and villages into larger, planned settlements. Many beduin in both the Galilee and the Negev have steadfastly resisted cooperation with this policy because, for many families, moving into a government settlement means abandoning their traditional lands.

### The Ottoman Empire

Beduin tribes are first recorded as entering Palestine in the 5th century AD when some tribes penetrated from the south. Little is known about beduin in Palestine in the following centuries, but certainly during the Ottoman period (16th – 19th centuries), beduin tribes controlled the Negev and were also established in the Galilee.

Until the 19th century the beduin were an important factor in Palestine, where they lived by breeding camels, goats and sheep and raiding settled villages. They also charged travellers for passage across the lands they controlled. In 1870 the British explorer C.R. Conder recorded that 'the plain was black with Arab "houses of hair" (tents) in the 'Emek Yizro'el in the north. According to the usual, though recently challenged, view of this period, the Ottoman authorities pacified the beduin tribes of Palestine in the mid-19th century, hanging sheikhs involved in intertribal feuds and putting a stop to beduin raids on peasant villagers. However in the Negev tribal life continued, with "battles ... being fought within a few miles of [Beersheba], quite unnoticed by the Turkish governor." That lands were regarded as belonging to specific tribes, who were prepared to go to war over them, contradicts the frequent assumption that beduin had, and have, no strong attachment to particular pieces of land.

After the tribal war of 1890 in the Negev, tribal land boundaries remained fixed until the 1948 war. The Ottoman halt on beduin raids on settled villages further north probably hastened the process of sedentarization which had already begun. During the second half of the 19th century, the traditional, entirely pastoral beduin economy had become a mixed pastoral and agricultural economy. By the 1900s wage labour was also a factor in the Negev economy, for example when the Ottomans began building a railway to Suez. Meanwhile, although the beduin paid some taxes, they did not serve in the Ottomans' army and, with few exceptions, those in the Negev did not register their lands in accordance with the law. In this way they avoided paying land taxes. Hence most of the land in the Negev, though traditionally occupied and used by the beduin, was legally characterized as *mawat* or dead – wastelands used by no-one and with no defined ownership.

Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1914 the Turkish authorities estimated the beduin population of the Negev to be 55,000. But Ottoman figures were for tax-gathering and similar purposes and were not designed for demographic accuracy. The beduin population of the Galilee was considerably smaller than that of the Negev.
Under the British authorities who ruled Palestine from 1917 to 1948 (from 1922 under a League of Nations Mandate), the registration of land ownership was continued. By 1948 the process was virtually complete everywhere except in the Negev. There the beduin’s failure to register their lands facilitated their later loss of them under the state of Israel.

Only the lands in and immediately adjacent to Beersheba were registered in the names of their owners. ‘Arif al-‘Arif, an eminent Palestinian historian and official in the mandatory administration, records that most sheikhs were reluctant to cooperate in the registration. When told it was to protect their title to the land, ‘they pointed to their swords and rifles and said, “Here are our titles” ’. They did not fear for their lands, for as the British authorities recorded, ‘the cultivable land in the Beersheba sub-district [was] regarded as belonging to the beduin tribes by virtue of possession from time immemorial’. The Turkish authorities, too, had implicitly recognized beduin ownership rights when they bought 2000 dunams (approximately 500 acres) of land from the al-Azzam tribe in 1900, in order to build the town of Beersheba.

By the end of the Mandate beduin agriculture in Palestine formed the major part of the tribes’ livelihood, even in the dry Negev. The 1931 census showed that 89.3% of the beduin in the Negev were dependent on agriculture, while only 10.7% lived from livestock. Their lifestyle had therefore changed considerably from the traditional nomadic pastoralism of their ancestors in the Arabian peninsula. A British colonial official wrote in 1937: ‘Too much weight must not be attached to the romantic associations of the word “beduin” and the sentimental emotions aroused by the conception of “the noble nomad”. The beduin of the Beersheba area are semi-pastoral and semi-agricultural. They dwell in tents but are not true wanderers of the desert and otherwise differ little from many fallahin (peasants) who live in stone houses but are seasonal migrants.

Not all the beduin in the Negev lived in the traditional black tents of woven goat hair. The ‘Tent Survey’ undertaken by aerial photography as part of the census of Beersheba beduin in 1946 showed that 14% of households lived in permanent buildings. Furthermore, some beduin sheikhs and elders had stone houses in the town of Beersheba, built by the Ottoman authorities in the 1900s in an attempt to increase their control in the Negev. By 1948 several hundred beduin lived in the town. In the more fertile Galilee, where settled fallah communities surrounded the beduin, the proportion of permanent buildings to tents was doubtless even higher.

Agriculture not only formed the main source of beduin livelihood in Palestine by the 1930s, but used large areas of land, particularly in the Negev. In the Galilee the extent of Arab agricultural land use during the mandate is little disputed. In the Negev, on the other hand, the impression is often given that the land was neither used nor owned. Yet the map of the Beersheba area by the Survey of Palestine in 1942 marks the whole northern Negev as either ‘cultivated’ or ‘cultivated in patches’. British records for 1937 state that ‘the total area of the sub-district is approximately 12,577,000 dunams, of which about 1,640,000 dunams are estimated to be cultivable. The whole of this latter area is believed to be cultivated by the beduin in favourable seasons, and it is reported that even in a good year there is a shortage of cultivable land’. In 1934-5 the government’s Department of Agriculture and Fisheries estimated cultivated lands at the somewhat higher figure of 2,109,234 dunams. But when, in 1930, the Jewish Agency requested an area of 75,000-100,000 dunams the government ‘doubted if [in all the 12.5 million dunams available] it could obtain such an amount of unsettled state land that would be suitable for cultivation’.

Yet despite clear evidence of widespread cultivation, almost all of this land was legally still unceded ‘dead land’ – with no defined ownership. Only 15.39% of the Negev was registered as owned by Arabs in 1945, 0.52% by Jews and 0.02% as public land. The Negev beduin’s failure to register their tribal land holdings must be seen in the context of the absence of any challenges to their rights at that time. The tribes themselves recognized each other’s lands and within each, the leaders divided individual plots among families. According to ‘Arif al-‘Arif, there were fewer disputes over boundaries in Beersheba (district) than in the towns and villages.

As extensively as cultivation was practised in the Negev, it did not prevent extreme poverty. The decline in the camel trade with the advent of cars and a railway, and the British prohibition on collecting and selling salt from the Sodom area aggravated the situation. The British recorded that the Negev beduin were so poor that they could not pay any school fees and seldom paid their taxes or repaid government loans. A 1937 memo states that the beduin’s ‘principal claim to the consideration of Government is neither their alleged nomad status, nor their alleged prowess in war, but their extreme poverty’. Hence wage labour began to play an increasing role in the beduin economy, both in the Negev and in the north, with beduin from the Negev also working in the north. There was a demand for labour in army camps and public works during the British period and employment was also found in Jewish agricultural settlements in the north and centre of the country.

Changes in traditional beduin life occurred more rapidly in the Galilee. Many Galilee tribes were splinters of originally larger groups, in contrast to the large Negev tribes. Living as small groups among larger peasant communities probably hastened acculturation to them, and the consequent swing away from traditional beduin occupations.

Furthermore the British administration hastened the slow process of sedentarization in northern Palestine more than in the Negev. In both north and south seasonal movements in search of pasture were restricted by the imposition of frontiers between the separate states created by the western powers. But in the north the British authorities reduced the lands of many beduin tribes by registering land ownership and creating forest reserves in areas to which nobody could prove title. Since the beduin often owned their lands by common recognition and tradition, they lost large areas. Later the Beduin Control Ordinance of 1942, which had the explicit aim of encouraging beduin to give up semi-nomadic pastoralism for agriculture alone, was used extensively in the north.

During the Mandate the beduin population had the reputation of being more conciliatory and loyal to the authorities than the other Arab communities – a perception which has continued. In fact, they shared the same central concerns and demands as the rest of the Arab population. In 1937 ‘Izzat al-Atawneh, a Negev beduin Arab, submitted a list of demands to the Palestine Royal Commission on behalf of the Beersheba beduin including:

9. Land sales to Jews should be prohibited, Jewish immigration should be stopped and a legislative council in which beduin should be properly represented should be established.

5
These were the demands being made by Arab communities all over Palestine, frightened by the implications of the Zionist organizations’ aspirations in Palestine.

By 1944 beduin constituted 5.4% of the Arab population in Mandatory Palestine. But in the Beersheba sub-district they constituted 89.6% of the almost exclusively Arab population, the remainder being Arab merchants from the Gaza and Hebron regions living in Beersheba town. By 1946 there were 65,000 to 95,000 beduin in the Negev and something over 20,000 in the Galilee, numbers which were soon to fall dramatically.

The Israeli Military Government 1948-1966

During the 1948 Arab-Israeli war about 80% of the Arab population of Palestine fled or were expelled. The 65,000-95,000 beduin of the Negev were reduced to fewer than 13,000 by 1951, and the structure of tribes and tribal confederations was severely disrupted. The Galilee beduin, already a much smaller community, were similarly reduced.

Beduin were to some extent involved in the fighting. According to Sasson Bar Zvi, the then Israeli deputy military commander of the Negev, the majority of beduin there fought, although they mostly did so independently and not as part of the Egyptian army (which occupied the Negev after the British withdrawal in May 1948). According to this account it was as the Egyptian army was pushed out of the Negev by the advancing Jewish forces that the beduin fled. Most ended up outside the country as refugees in Jordan and the areas of Palestine still held by Arab forces (the West Bank and Gaza), and in Egypt. Others took refuge in the Negev hills.

However, not all fled immediately. Thousands of beduin were also forcibly expelled during 1948-9 and for several years afterwards. In November 1949 some 500 families were pushed across the border into the West Bank south of Hebron.24 Since Negev beduin did not receive Israeli identity cards until 1952, it was particularly easy to expel them before that time. As late as 1953 a UN report documented the expulsion of 7000 beduin.25 Other methods were also used to reduce the number of Arabs remaining. For example: 'in the Negev ... the prevention by fire and sword of Arab harvesting was one direct cause of the Palestinian exodus'.26

Anthropologist Emmanuel Marx remembers:

'the policy was to move them out of the Negev, but nobody knew where they were supposed to go.'27

On 21 October 1948 the town of Beersheba was taken by the Jewish armed forces, and, contrary to orders, looted. Its population of 6500 Arabs fled. A minority of them were beduin notables from the Negev who had built houses in the town. Beersheba's schools and its two mosques were lost to the beduin population. In the following years Bi'r as-Saba'a became known by its biblical Hebrew name, Be'er-Sheva' and was repopulated with new Jewish immigrants to Israel. Its Arab population remained either in refugee camps in Gaza, the West Bank and elsewhere, or among the Negev tribes. The beduin were prevented from entering the town until 1954, by which time the new population was established in Beersheba. It has been claimed in retrospect by some Israelis that Beersheba was created as a new town in 1948, in spite of the many buildings surviving from the Ottoman and British periods.28

With regard to northern and central Palestine, it is widely recognized that the Arabs who fled in 1948-9 were driven by fear of massacres such as that at Deir Yassin. Little is generally known of the situation in the Negev. Yet the same pattern appears to obtain there. The Shahak papers of the Israeli League of Human and Civil Rights record a: 'massacre of [al- 'Azazmeh tribe] women and children carried out by the notorious “Unit 101” of the Israeli army'.29

[Map of Beduin settlements in Israel]
A sheikh of Tarabin al-Sani' tribe described the period to a journalist:

‘Those were the days of military government and do you know what that means? It meant that they could kill people as if they were stray dogs out there in the desert with no witness to record their atrocities.’

These events are rarely talked about. One old man explained:

“They’re afraid. Can a hand stop an arrow? The army killed people then, in the Negev, and if you ask even the son of someone who was killed, he will not tell you because he is afraid.”

Until 1966, the whole Arab population of Israel lived under military rule. This period of eighteen years and the systems of control of the Arab communities which were developed, are of great importance in understanding the political quiescence of the Arab community even after the lifting of military government. Particularly in the case of the Negev beduin, the relative lack of resistance has appeared as inexplicable apathy to some observers. These attitudes are rooted in the period of military rule. The military authorities were experienced as all-powerful, and the feeling of helplessness this engendered has survived military rule by many years. A Negev beduin teacher told the author:

‘the mentality of the people here is still as it was under military government. Older people think the law is like it was then. They refer to the police, or to identity cards, by the words they used then.’

The beduin who remained were confined to various closed military areas. In the Galilee there were many small military areas enclosing the various Arab populated areas and the beduin were confined to their residential areas, together with other Arab communities. In the Negev, however, the whole Arab population, the beduin community, was concentrated by 1952 into one 'reservation' east of Beersheba. Eleven of the nineteen remaining tribes or parts of tribes were forcibly removed from their lands. They were told, and in some cases assured in written documents, that they would be allowed to return to their lands later. This promise was not kept, and many families still live on the spot where they were put nearly 40 years ago.

A typical story is that told by a sheikh's son, Nuri al-'Uqbi:

‘In 1948 my family was living in Beersheba, but had land in 'Araqib, [c. 20km northwest of Beersheba]. I was six. My family was afraid to stay in the town so they went to 'Araqib before the army came, leaving most of their possessions behind them. Then one day in 1951 some soldiers came early in the morning. They shot in the air and killed some dogs to frighten us, and told my father, you have got to leave and go to another place in the northern Negev. It is very good for agriculture. He was not able to get a lawyer or even a journalist, because the military government had made a closed area. In November 1951 they put us in Hora. There was no water supply, and no road until 1967 when a road was built to the development town of Arad, and a water line laid. So until then water was brought by donkey each day. People would leave before dawn sometimes and not get back until the early afternoon. It was a round journey of about 20km to a well, Bir al-Imshash. The representatives of the military government gave my father a paper to say that we could come back to our lands after six months. The area was needed until then by the army. The paper did have a stamp on it. But after six months my father was told he was no longer a sheikh and we could not return.’

The Arabs of the Negev suffered the harshest rule under the military government. Possibly this was because the new Israeli authorities were especially anxious to populate the Negev with Jews. Although conquered in 1948, it was included in the areas allotted to 'the Arab state in Palestine' provided for by the UN 1947 Partition Plan. As well as being more harshly treated, the Negev beduin were less able to defend themselves against the authorities. They were mostly illiterate and lived in scattered hamlets isolated from each other and from other communities. One old man remembers that under military rule:

‘our contact with the Jordanian-controlled West Bank through infiltrators was much more possible than our contact with the Palestinian population in the Galilee and the Triangle.’

(The Triangle is an area south of the Galilee heavily populated by Arabs, part of which became included in Israel.) Another handicap was the fact that the Communist Party, which was very active in the north, only began to work in the Negev long after the end of the military government.

Officially the purpose of the closed areas was security. But even some Jewish Israelis openly argued that this was not the real reason. To start with, the areas were not really closed. For example Negev beduin found without a permit looking for work in the north or in Beersheba, were punished, but shepherds looking for pasture outside the area were tolerated. In the drought years of 1957-63 almost all sheep owners left the Negev in search of pasture. The al-Sani' tribe, evacuated to a waterless spot in the reservation, grazed their sheep and fetched water from an abandoned Arab village outside the closed area, together with shepherds from the Jordanian controlled West Bank nearby.

The real reasons for maintaining the closed areas were different. Firstly it served crucially to prevent internal refugees from returning to their homes while these were being taken over by the new immigrants. In 1954, one third of Jewish Israelis lived on 'absentee property', and part of it was the property of 'present absentee' - Arab Israelis. Secondly, controlling the movements of the Arab population protected the labour market for Jewish immigrants. In the first years of the state, employment was scarce and large numbers of Jewish immigrants were entering, survivors of the Holocaust in Europe, and others from Middle Eastern countries. Over 684,000 came between May 1948 and December 1951 - nearly as many as the Palestine Arab refugees who left. In order to give the immigrants work, the government made the beduin and other Arabs dispensable. They had to obtain permits to leave their areas, and when their jobs were needed for Jewish citizens, their permits were not renewed.

A third aim served by the period of military confinement was the expropriation of Arab lands by the state. Various laws were used to effect this, culminating in the catch-all 1953 law which gave the state the power to expropriate any land it wanted if it was not in the possession of its owners on 1 April 1952. For example, the eleven tribes transferred into the Negev reservation in 1951-2 lost their lands under this law. That the owners' absence was due to their earlier forced removal by the state which hence acquired the lands, did not prevent the application of the law.

Lastly, the military government constituted 'a system designed to prevent the formation of undesirable political organisations', according to one Jewish Israeli critic. Under military rule, the traditional Arab village or tribal leaders were used as a method of indirect control by the authorities. Any permits and benefits were distributed via the sheikhs, and they were responsible for the whole clan's behaviour. The welfare of a whole clan could depend on the quiescence of all its members, and so any individual favouring resistance found himself forced to support the whole weight of the extended family against them. In a similar tactic different tribes or clans could be made to compete against each other in conforming to the military government's wishes, in order to gain material benefits. The beduin communities' tribal structure lent itself admirably to such methods of control. Hence the community could be divided against itself, preventing effective opposition, and a tribe could be made to control itself using its own structure of
conveniently hierarchical dependency. The same methods of control are used today, though their effectiveness is weakening, partly because the social structure they support is weaker and partly because of the rise of a new generation which does not remember the days of military rule, when it was not possible to use the law as a means of resistance.

**The 'Land Settlement'**

The Arab population of the closed military areas had few opportunities to find out what had been decreed about their lands outside the closed areas and even fewer opportunities to take legal action to protect their rights as land could not formally be claimed until military government was lifted in 1966. It was then that those beduin who had been moved off their lands found that they could not, after all, return to their lands, and that much of the land had already been registered in the name of the state. By 1959 the state had expropriated 250,000 dunams from beduin Arabs in the Negev.\(^\text{38}\) In addition the community had lost all the lands belonging to the Negev refugees – 1,200,000 dunams in total.\(^\text{39}\) This mass expropriation was not due to the non-registration of beduin lands. The tribes moved in 1948-52 lost their lands because the state had moved them off them and then used the fact of their absence, or non-cultivation of the land, to take them over. Hence, although Arab lands in the Galilee, including beduin, were mostly properly registered, this did not prevent mass land expropriation.

After 1966 came government promises of a Land Settlement for the Negev, in which owners would claim their land, and the claims would be finally settled. Throughout the 1970s beduin filed land claims with the Settlement Officer of the 'Compromise Committee' which sat in Beersheba. According to Rami Yovel, a Jewish Israeli lawyer with many beduin clients, the Settlement Officer has not settled one claim:

'And he will not settle a claim. The beduin need money, and they know they can sell their claims to their lands and the Israeli government will pay for land claims, so they sell them. And then the state cannot be accused of taking the land.'\(^\text{40}\)

Proving land ownership for the purpose of getting compensation (as opposed to title to the land) is relatively easy. Land Registry documents are sufficient but not necessary. Other forms of evidence are admitted if they show that the owners at least worked the land throughout the 1940s. But when the owners want to keep the land, such forms of evidence, e.g. pre-state deeds of purchase from other Arab owners, tax receipts from the Ottoman or British authorities etc. are not admitted as proof of ownership in court. An Interior Ministry representative stated in 1978 that, 'the government will never recognize the beduin's claims to ownership rights in the Negev because they lack sufficient proof that the land belongs to them.'\(^\text{41}\) An Israeli law lecturer, David Kretzmer, has stated it is impossible for a beduin to prove land ownership in court in the present legal situation.\(^\text{42}\) Thus when the conflict does come to court, the results are predictable, and even if the promised Land Settlement were effected in the courts, the state would clearly emerge the winner. But the same result is slowly being achieved, out of court and with no publicity, by the simple waiting game described above by Rami Yovel:

'Claims are not settled and will not be until they are dead: until evidence dies, witnesses die, politics change, new laws come.'\(^\text{43}\)

Meanwhile beduin claims are steadily withdrawn in return for compensation. Most of it is in money, not alternative lands. Hence beduin lands are steadily transferred to the government's ownership. For the beduin, given the lack of agricultural and industrial development directed to Arab localities in Israel, the lump sum represents a one off cash bonus which is very hard to convert into an income-producing asset.

In 1976 the government offered the beduin a compromise. Of the lands they could prove they owned, they could keep 20%. They would receive 65% of the 'market value' of a further 30% of their land. The remaining 50% would be taken by the government without compensation. The offer was not accepted and the beduin have fought a losing battle in the courts since then. In 1984 a ten-year court battle ended with the beduin traditional owners losing thousands of dunams to the state. The local adviser to the government on Arab affairs, Nissim Kazaz, said:

'The decision has caused quite a stir among Negev beduin. Now they are sorry they did not accept our compromise proposal several months ago, by which they would have been able to settle in towns and receive very generous compensation.'\(^\text{44}\)

But even the central government's adviser on Arab affairs, in 1978, Moshe Sharon, commented on the government's basic compensation offer as 'aggravated robbery' in the eyes of the beduin.\(^\text{45}\)

**The Plans for Concentration**

A Jewish Israeli commentator observed in 1969, of the plan to transfer beduin to urban settlements:

'The transfer has a triple purpose: 1. to redress the ratio between Jews and Arabs in underpopulated areas; 2. to provide land for settlement and development programmes; 3. to release more beduin manpower for labour in the Jewish economy.'\(^\text{46}\)

Point 1 means that the government wished to see a comfortable majority of Jewish over Arab residents in both the Galilee and the Negev. Hence the long-held state policy of 'Judaization of the Galilee' or the one or two aborted initiatives to evict the beduin completely from the Negev.\(^\text{47}\)

Concentration would free more lands for the government's development schemes. The 1976 Master Plan for the Southern District described the Negev as 'vacant and clean desert'. The government's aim of concentrating the relatively low density population of beduin Arabs into a limited number of planned settlements is closely connected with the conflict over land ownership. The 'vacant and clean desert' desired can only be achieved if the lands are neither inhabited nor owned by beduin. Both the government and its beduin citizens see the two as connected – the beduin geographer, Ghazi Falah, says that 'sedentarization as a settlement policy is being used as an official tool for transforming beduin lands into lands belonging to the state.'\(^\text{48}\)

Beduin do not want to move into government settlements as they fear that they will lose their lands when they no longer live on them. Hence the first beduin to move have always been the landless families. The authorities, on the other hand, sometimes demand the beduin communities move off their lands before their claims to ownership are considered.\(^\text{49}\)

The government denies that this will affect land claims. It is illegal to demand that claimants give up their claim in order to be allowed to purchase a plot in a government settlement. Yet many beduin citizens are unaware of their rights and it is reported that such demands are indeed frequently made.\(^\text{50}\)

Point 3 would be achieved by concentration because it would take away the means of an agricultural livelihood.

The authorities, on the other hand, have consistently claimed other motives. The Prime Minister's adviser on Arab Affairs in 1978 declared:

'We want, as a democratic government, to give all citizens the modern services that a state should give its citizens. Of course the government cannot bring roads, water, electricity, schools to all [small beduin settlements]. So the government is trying to get those who want to voluntarily come and live in the townships.'\(^\text{51}\)
'Sedentarization'

The government's plan to concentrate its beduin citizens has been much publicized since its inception in the mid-1960s, as a plan for the 'sedentarization of nomads'. While beduin citizens are pressured to move off their traditional lands or the sites they were moved to after 1948, numerous newspaper articles proclaim with unintentional irony that: 'The government has been encouraging beduin tribes to give up their nomadic way of life and put down permanent roots.\(^5\)

The concentration plan is presented as a benevolent attempt to assist a backward community into the 20th century, but it coincides with the authorities' aim of minimizing the amount of land occupied by the beduin. The state also has a 'campaign against unlicensed buildings and illegal land use' involving the demolition of homes, evictions, the confiscation of flocks and the destruction of crops on 'state lands'. Court cases are initiated and won against beduin who have built on the lands they traditionally owned, but beduin lose the cases because they do not have Land Registry documents. Others, residing in the areas where they were relocated in 1952, do not claim to own the lands they have built on. But they had to build shelters for themselves when they were forced to move there. Today these buildings are illegal and liable to demolition. Buildings which have existed longer than the Israeli state have also been demolished for lacking a licence. This campaign against 'illegal' land use and building is presented as a different issue from the 'sedentarization of nomads' — as a simple question of enforcing the law which huge numbers of Arab citizens, especially beduin, persist in breaking.

In fact the two policies are one. The main tool of the 'sedentarization' or urbanization policy is the control over building licences. Building is not permitted anywhere except in the government settlements, so all young couples must either live in one parental room; build illegally and risk fines, demolition and even imprisonment; or move to a government settlement. Even if the builders own the land without challenge, building is illegal anywhere in Israel except in designated residential areas for which official zoning plans exist. And since it is the government's policy to concentrate its beduin population, it does not approve existing hamlets and villages as residential areas, even when new residential settlements for Jewish Israelis are being built in the immediate neighbourhood. For example, five homes in the Galilee beduin village of al-Khawalid were demolished in the winter of 1986, although beduin ownership of the land was not disputed. The authorities said the land was designated for agricultural and not residential purposes. Yet 150 metres from the beduin village a new Jewish residential settlement of over 170 houses was being constructed.\(^5\)

Many people move into government settlements because they want to be able to build a home legally, but many others move from their lands after their existing home has been demolished. The procedure begins when the owner is taken to court for building without a licence. The judge rules that the house must be demolished. The owner does not demolish the house, for he or she has no other. After a year or two, the owner is charged with contempt of court. Fines and sometimes imprisonment follow, unless on appeal the owner agrees to demolish the house in order not to go to prison. Some beduin choose prison. One who did, from the Galilee, explained:

>'In my case it was a choice of one man being locked up inside, or twelve people — me, my wife and children — being forced to live outdoors.'\(^5\)

If no agreement is reached, Israel Lands Administration (ILA) workers may demolish the house, accompanied and protected by the police, army, border police, Green Patrol, and military police. Costs are charged to the owner. After the demolition of five houses belonging to the al-Sayyid tribe in 1988, the author counted at least 55 vehicles including five bulldozers, one helicopter and two ambulances. The Jerusalem Post reported that four hundred men had taken part in the operation.\(^5\)

Not everyone whose home is destroyed goes to a government settlement — a process which involves buying a lease on a plot of land, building a house which can meet the requirements for planning permission, and paying municipal taxes. Many beduin cannot afford this. Thus the victims of demolitions are often absorbed into relatives' already overcrowded houses. Sometimes the authorities evict beduin living on 'state land' even if they are most likely to end up living, equally illegally, on the edge of a government settlement or on the sites of half-established government settlements.

As a result of government pressure there is a steady drift to the government settlements. It is doubtful how far the much advertised provision of services has affected this. The Likud mayor of Bosmat Tiv'on, one of the first government settlements in the Galilee, says that the inhabitants moved there against their will, forced by house demolitions.\(^6\)

If the law were enforced against all unlicensed Arab buildings in Israel, thousands of homes would be demolished, with considerable adverse publicity. There were 5944 illegal beduin houses in the Negev alone in 1986.\(^5\) These illegal buildings are only part of a country-wide problem; the refusal of the authorities to allow the natural expansion of existing Arab towns into surrounding lands traditionally belonging to them, or to legalize other villages which have not been recognized since 1948.

Since 1988 there has been a policy of destroying all new buildings outside the government settlements. The magistrate's court in Beersheba is very strict on this issue. The law allows, but does not oblige, the judge to order demolition of illegal buildings. In Beersheba demolition is almost always ordered.\(^8\) Rami Yovel states:

>'I tried many times to bring evidence and witnesses that will explain how a person who is generally an honest, law-abiding man comes to a situation where he has no choice but to ignore the decree of the court. But I was seldom allowed to bring such witnesses and evidence.'

The attitude of the court is demonstrated in judgements in cases of extreme need. Ibrahim Ashiba, 100% disabled according to the National Insurance criteria, was married to a woman with chronic kidney disease requiring regular dialysis. The doctor recommended better accommodation than their small tent. The husband built a small room. Having failed to demolish it by order of the court, he was sentenced to one month in prison and a 1000 shekel fine (nearly twice the minimum monthly wage). The judge, Zvi Segal, said that no personal circumstances whatever could justify failure to carry out the court's decree.\(^5\)

In order to encourage beduin to move to government settlements, services are denied to illegal hamlets and villages. The al-Tuntawi and Abu-Gardud families living near Sdeh Boqer research centre and settlement in the Negev are only a few kilometres from its water line. Yet they have to go to Mitzpeh Ramon, nearly 30km south, to buy tankloads of water, because they were not allowed to install a pipeline to Sdeh Boqer at their own expense.\(^6\) Most of the wells where these and other families used to get water are now out of bounds in military areas or, ironically, nature reserves. The only solution is abandoning their lands and going to a settlement, where at least drinking water is available.
Elementary schools are provided for some beduin Arabs living outside the government’s villages, but are not accessible to all, and schools outside the settlements are more inadequate than those within them. Illegal settlements — even when they are of viable size — have no local councils, no budgets and no infrastructure. There are no paved roads, no street lights and no telephone lines. There is no electricity unless families can afford to install and run generators and no piped water unless families pay for and install a pipe to the nearest carrier — if they are allowed to. There is no refuse collection even if the settlement is theoretically covered by a regional council.

In the Negev, demands for the legalization of existing settlements have always been denied except for two which the authorities wish to replace with planned settlements on the same sites. In the Galilee the policy has been to legalise as few as possible of the existing villages and relocate the rest of the community to them. On occasions services provided near unauthorized settlements have even been removed to encourage the population to leave. For example in the 1960s the government took away the status of Kamaneh in the Galilee as a recognized settlement, declared the land to be state land and closed the school. The population was expected to move to a government settlement. Similarly in 1984 the preparatory school of Laqiya in the Negev was closed and pupils required to travel to Tel Sheva 15km away, although the school in Laqiya served a village of over 6000. To date the various measures employed have persuaded about 85% of Galilee beduin and up to 45% of Negev beduin to move to government townships.

The ‘sedentarization’ policy is a constant pressure. But many have shown a determination to stay, fully matching the authorities’ determination to move them. The beduin Arab father of ten in the Galilee who went to prison rather than demolish their home told a reporter:

‘the government doesn’t give us electricity? So we installed a generator and everyone here has electricity. The local council won’t connect us to the water system? So we have our cisterns and we built water tanks and solar water heaters on the roof. The courts order our homes demolished? Okay, so we’ll live in tents. Because this is our home.’

Another father in the Negev, faced with demolition orders, is thinking about buying a mobile home to avoid future prosecutions. The ‘sedentarization’ policy has turned him into the nomad he never was.

The Green Patrol

In 1976 a special patrol was set up to ‘locate and rapidly evacuate’ people illegally using state lands in ‘open areas’, i.e. those outside the jurisdiction of local councils. Known as the ‘Green Patrol’, with the clear implication that it protects the environment from those who despoil it, this band of over 20 armed men is operated by the Nature Reserves Authority (NRA) in coordination with the Israel Lands Administration (ILA) and the Ministry of Agriculture. The Green Patrol deals almost exclusively with beduin.

Dov Coller of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel describes the Patrol in the Negev:

‘What they do in fact is to remove beduin families from the land of the Negev and direct them towards the six projected towns. The Green Patrol confiscates animals, beats up women and children, and destroys homes. It also puts pressure on Jews in adjacent areas to cooperate in removing beduin from their lands.’

Supposedly controlled by three authorities, the Green Patrol has nonetheless been described as ‘the private army of Alon Galili’ (its commander) by a senior official in the NRA. He said there was no supervision over the Patrol. ‘90% of what goes on is the result of the private will of Galili.’ It is therefore relevant to consider Galili’s views. He sees the beduin situation as ‘an extension of the wider Arab-Israeli struggle for the land’, and considers any beduin not yet concentrated into urban settlements as making a ‘reconquest of the land, which is being carried out with deliberate cunning.’

The State Comptroller’s Report of 1980 revealed that the Green Patrol enforced laws they were not authorized to apply, that they employed physical coercion to apply the law and were not authorized to do so, and that they did not keep proper records so that it was impossible to determine whether their actions were in accordance with the law. The Green Patrol confiscates sheep and goats grazing outside the permitted areas; they pull down and burn tents and evict the owners from the ‘state lands’ they have occupied; they plough over crops, uproot fruit and olive trees and demolish dams similarly on ‘state lands’. They have also taken flocks in spite of valid permits and shot dogs with valid licences. Evictions have frequently been carried out without the necessary court orders or while court cases about the land are still going on.

In 1983 the High Court of Justice ruled against the Green Patrol for disregarding a magistrate’s court injunction. In one documented case, eight cinderblock and twelve wooden and metal houses and 25 tents were bulldozed with the occupants’ belongings inside. Dozens of families were made homeless, and those present were guarded at gunpoint to prevent resistance. Mattresses, clothing and jewellery were dumped in a beduin cemetery. Beduin Arab eyewitnesses reported that shots were fired in the air to get them out of their houses and smoke bombs were thrown. On other occasions herds have been deliberately scattered, necessitating day-long searches.

Allegations of brutality have been frequent over the years. Shmuel Toledano, once Prime Minister’s adviser for Arab Affairs, recalled hearing ‘tens of horror stories recorded on tape’ from beduin who had been beaten and humiliated. A young mother was shot dead by a soldier during a Green Patrol evacuation attempt described by local people as ‘routine harassment’. The soldier who killed her was imprisoned for 38 days and demoted from sergeant to corporal. A baby died after a two hour jeep ride and a night of exposure following another eviction. A man of eighty was slapped in the face, transported 50km and left. Children have been held at gunpoint and asked for information.

Often the Patrol men are known by name to the beduin they visit. They are familiar figures, provoking fear but invited to hospitality. The beduin feel their only resistance is in themselves.

Despite overwhelming evidence of brutality as a norm of Green Patrol behaviour, charges are not upheld in court.
Yitzhak Bailey, an anthropologist, points out that Bedouin are disadvantaged in court due to lack of awareness of their rights, the fact that court translators are Jewish Israelis from other prejudices among civil servants. Moshe Sharon stated, while cultural misunderstandings. 73 There is also considerable prejudice among Bedouin the government's adviser on Arab Affairs: '... you know, even lie detectors don't work on Bedouin.' Prejudice was doubtless increased by the propaganda campaign which coincided with the first few years of the Green Patrol. The media frequently presented the Bedouin as, 'ruining the desert, cutting down trees and hunting deer; breaking water pipes and wasting water; defrauding the National Insurance ... and endangering public health; taking possession of the land and "encircling cities".' 74 Outside the Bedouin community protest against the Green Patrol's brutality has been marginal, and its activities continue.

Tal-al-Malah – the 'Bedouin Law'

In spring 1979, Prime Minister Begin proposed a law to 'enable the speedy expropriation of the beduin-occupied lands required for the Tel-Malhata airfield'. This was one of three new military air bases built in the Negev to replace others lost due to Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai which it had occupied since the 1967 war and agreed to evacuate in the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt in 1978. For two of the airfields new locations were found which were no longer inhabited by Bedouin. For the last, however, it seemed that no alternative location could be found to the eastern Beersheba plain in the middle of the former Bedouin 'reservation' where most of the Negev Bedouin still lived. The Negev Land Acquisition (Peace Treaty with Egypt) Bill, which became law in July 1980, did not mention Bedouin at all, yet it became known as the 'Bedouin Law' because it applied to lands inhabited exclusively by Bedouin. The law provided that there could be no appeal against the expropriation, supposedly because the normal procedure for land expropriation took too long and would make it impossible to build the airport in time for the army's removal from Sinai.

The plan was generally presented as an unforeseeable necessity, unfortunate for the Bedouin, arising out of the peace treaty with Egypt. However, the Master Plan for the Negev of 1976, two years before Camp David, already specified: 'an airport is to be located between Arad and Beersheba in an area heavily populated with Bedouin tribes'. About 8000 Bedouin would have to leave their lands, but then their '... claim to ownership of vast areas was and is considered by the government as inimical to the present and future development of land resources'. 75 The government originally wanted to expropriate 160,000 dunams — nearly a quarter of the total area claimed by the Negev Bedouin (they do not claim the land of the part of the community which fled in 1948). The compulsory relocation of so many Bedouin into townships would be a significant move in the long-standing policy of urbanization, and particularly valuable since those to be moved were of the minority still living on their own lands.

From 1976 when the evacuation of the Tal-al-Malah Bedouin was foreseen, no negotiations were held with them, nor after the Camp David Accords. In 1979 it was argued that there was no time to consider alternatives. The Bedouin were unofficially told they would have to leave the area but Justice Minister Tamir refused to discuss the land issue with a Bedouin delegation. 76 Army tractors and bulldozers had started clearing the area, damaging Bedouin property, even before the bill's first reading in the Knesset (Parliament). 77

The then Prime Minister's adviser on Arab Affairs, Benjamin Gur-Aryeh, said in 1979 that the government was generous in providing compensation to the relocated Bedouin Arabs. 76 But Bedouin leaders described the plan as 'highway robbery'. They demanded negotiations similar to those taking place with the Jewish Israeli settlers in occupied Sinai who also had to move as a result of the peace treaty. 78 The Tal-al-Malah Bedouin had been living (by now mainly in permanent buildings) and farming on the same land for over 130 years, and 80% of the expropriated area was under cultivation by some 750 families. Three cemeteries testified to the families' history on the site. 79 Although the Sinai settlers had only been in their settlements for at most 13 years by 1980 they were compensated on far more generous terms. Repeated requests for negotiations from Bedouin went unanswered by Prime Minister Begin. 76

The Bedouin affected by the law demanded relocation in moshavim (cooperative agricultural villages) instead of the planned urban settlements. Anthropologist Emmanuel Marx, who was involved in preparing the plan, told the author that the Bedouin were offered moshavim but on leased land and not freehold, which they rejected. In his view they were justified, for they would have had no security. 79 Indeed many in authority are against the idea. The chief planner for the Negev told a conference, 'the bedouin can't have moshavim — we need them to work in our new industries in the Negev'. And a senior government official explained to a journalist (on condition he was not identified), 'I'm not giving good Jewish land and water to Arabs'. 80

Some Jewish Israelis also objected to the law as 'an unprecedented attempt to take judicial powers into the government's hands' (by precluding appeal) and as likely to alienate a minority generally thought to be sympathetic to the state. 81 A few saw the law as racist in victimizing a powerless minority. Indeed it was not Bedouin resistance but pressure from the Labour Party which was able to reduce the amount of land affected by the bill by half. That this amount of land was adequate lends support to the thesis that the main aim was the expropriation of land without resort to long court cases, a claim which was made at the time.

The compensation received by the evacuated Arabs is variously estimated as 2%-15% of that given to the Sinai settlers. The Bedouin's land was not evaluated independently but by government evaluators working for the Implementation Authority established by the law. The land
assessors were initially instructed to assess the land 'according to its state of development in 1948 and to ignore any subsequent government improvements such as roads'. In many cases the evacuees were left, after compensation, in debt to the government since the money they received did not cover the costs of resettlement. The government had to provide five-year loans so that the beduin could afford to pay for the government land where they relocated and to build a home. Only those who had had more than 100 dunams of land could get land as part of their compensation: 5% of the area they had owned as irrigated land or 20% dry. Few beduin qualified for much irrigated land and of those who did many returned it to the state in exchange for money let alone invest in intensive agriculture. In spite of their financial plight the beduin were described as 'crafty negotiators ... holding out for greater compensation' and some Israelis considered the compensation excessive, since 'the beduin are not yet a money-oriented society and people close to them say that the evacuation could have been effected with much less money'.

It is probably true that few of the over 700 families evacuated had lived entirely off their lost land. But it was one important source of income in the extended family after wage labour. Five dunams of irrigated land is supposed to be adequate to support a family but it is admitted that no family can now live off its compensation land. Six years after the evacuation began no irrigation water had been provided in one of the two resettlement towns. The irrigated land some evacuees were allowed to buy with their compensation money was in some cases too salty to cultivate except with olive trees which need five years to bear fruit.

The eviction of the Tal-al-Malah beduin was widely regarded as a success story, and was claimed to have occurred without physical resistance and without anyone being forcibly evicted. However newspaper reports from 1979-1984 document a 500-strong demonstration of Jewish and beduin Arab Israelis being dispersed with shots in the air; attempts to prevent tractors from destroying crops being countered by gunfire and seven arrests; clashes when homes were demolished and the cultivation of fields prevented; people beaten by border police and people lying in front of bulldozers. There was sabotage and stone throwing at the new air base.

Two hundred and forty families were still refusing to move by June 1983 when the court denied them an injunction against eviction. In 1984 over two hundred families still lingered outside the air base perimeter and were still refusing compensation. Those who had moved to Kseifeh, one of the two towns set up to accommodate the evacuees, still had no electricity or paved roads. There are families who even now refuse to condone the taking of their land by accepting compensation. Meanwhile David Shoshani, the man credited with persuading the beduin to cooperate with their eviction, thought to create good relations between the air base and the beduin by persuading beduin to work as guards, each guarding for the army the land which had been his own.

The 1980 law implicitly recognized some Arab land rights in the Negev by offering compensation, however inadequate. Since beduin lands in the Negev were virtually always unregistered they can legally be taken without giving any compensation. Therefore some of those involved in the drafting and implementation of the 'Beduin bill' think it beneficial for the beduin; partly because it ended land disputes in the area where it applied. They hope that a similar law will eventually be used to 'resolve' all Arab land ownership in the Negev, or even all Israel.

Access to agricultural land

A minority of Arabs in the Negev farm their own land without paying rent to the state. They are the families who were not moved in 1952 and whose land has not yet all been registered in the name of the state. But most beduin agriculturalists in the Negev and Galilee have to rent from the state those lands already taken by it.

In the Jewish sector practically all agriculture is in cooperative or communal farms (moshavim or kibbutzim). They too lease land from the state. The Jewish settlements can lease land for up to 49 years and are practically guaranteed continuity of lease. Arab farmers must apply each year and are allotted plots for one agricultural season, six months, in the year. Each year they must reapply and are likely to receive different lands or even no lands at all. The authorities do not grant leases to all applicants or give reasons for the size of the allocated areas, which bear no relation to the amount requested. Even when land is granted, with six-month leases and constant switching of plots, fertilization and crop rotation are not possible and yields are consequently one quarter to one third of what they might be.

To be eligible to lease land a beduin must be over fifty with no other employment; an army or government employee; a resident of a planned village; or a tribal leader. Hence the young men of families still dependent on agriculture, who need land most, are denied direct access to it and are pushed towards wage labour. The allocation of land is also used as a means of control: a group of beduin sheikhs was told that beduin guilty of building without a licence would not be allowed to lease land. Sheikh Hassan al-Sani' was at a funeral in 1980 when he was by chance interviewed by Israel TV and talked of the expropriation of beduin lands. When Ariel Sharon, then Minister of Agriculture heard, he ordered that al-Sani' should be allotted no land that year.

On the eve of the 1948 War an estimated 65,000 to 95,000 beduin lived in the Negev and cultivated 1.6 to 2.1m dunams of land. Four decades later the Negev's Arab population is again approaching 90,000 but the community is leased only 250,000 dunams annually by the state. Even combining this with the 150,000 dunams still in beduin ownership the total cultivated today is only a quarter of the lower estimate for the 1940s.

Water

Irrigation is vitally necessary for successful cultivation in the Negev. Every kibbutz and moshav in Israel has its water allocation for irrigation. Except the few who got some irrigated land as compensation after 1980, beduin farmers do not get water allocations. In 1979 it was claimed that there was not enough water to accommodate new agricultural settlements for the beduin evacuated from Tal-al-Malah. Yet there was enough water for nine new agriculture-based kibbutzim and moshavim to be set up in the Negev from 1982 to 1985.

While kibbutzim use water inefficiently by spray irrigation under the midday sun, and there is no limit on water used for private lawns and municipal parks, 700 beduin dependent on one water pipe had their drinking water cut off in 1986 because the Agriculture Ministry suspected they were using water for irrigating crops. Kibbutz Keramim in the Negev was threatened with a water cut because they sold some of their water allocation to beduin who had no pipe for drinking.

Negative attitudes prevalent about Arab cultures are invoked to justify the inequality. An Agriculture Ministry official explained that 'the beduin do not have an irrigation culture'.

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In fact, despite being denied piped irrigation water, the Negev beduin have long been practising simple techniques of concentrating the winter rains onto small areas which then become fertile, by constructing dams. Hundreds of underground cisterns across the Negev were also used to save rainwater. Israeli writers describing the complex ‘run-off’ water systems of the ancient Nabateans in the Negev rarely mention that the beduin have for centuries been using a simplified continuation of Nabatean methods. Israeli research in this field aims to use water-harvesting techniques to allow self-sufficient agricultural villages to be set up — in Africa. The techniques have not been offered to Israeli beduin — perhaps because they are intended to be workers in the Negev’s future industries. In fact beduin can get into trouble for trying to develop the use of rainwater. Anthropologist Gideon Kressel enlisted Negev beduin to help dig out ancient cisterns for collecting rainfall, but the Ministry of Agriculture and the Green Patrol threatened a court case — against the beduin.

Even those Jewish Israelis who are in favour of beduin Arabs being allowed to set up agricultural settlements generally search for ways beduin can ‘farm and raise livestock even within the constraints of the limited Jewish settlements that the Negev enjoy’ — instead of challenging the policy which grants resources unequally to Jewish and Arab communities.

**Grazing land and herd restrictions**

In a climate like Israel’s it is imperative to prevent overgrazing and desertification by the controlled use of grazing lands. The Israeli authorities claim this concern when they limit the size of beduin flocks and grazing areas. But according to three Israeli ecologists, ‘botanical evidence shows that today overgrazing is severe in parts of Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] ... and areas near Beersheba (to which the Green Patrol are sending the beduin). There is no significant overgrazing in the Negev Highlands (from which they are evicting the beduin).’

The short lease policy, preventing fertilization and crop rotation, is also harmful to the land. The government’s acknowledged aim of urbanizing the beduin is the best explanation of its policies on beduin flocks and grazing land.

The families living most closely to the old semi-nomadic pastoralism (such as the al-'Azazmeh) have mostly not moved to government settlements and depend on herding for meat, milk, wool and goat hair for tent weaving. The end of herding and agriculture usually precipitates moving off the land, and so urbanization is promoted when herding and agriculture are made difficult.

This is done in a number of ways. Firstly the size of flocks is limited. In the late 1970s with the right-wing (Likud) Ariel Sharon as Agriculture Minister, there was an official plan to halve the size of the Negev beduin’s herds. Sharon agreed to allocate pasture for half the existing herds. The fate of the rest was not mentioned. To reduce the size of the herds the beduin were given two months to register their animals. Anyone who failed to do so would not be allocated grazing lands. Many did not hear about the ill-advertised registration until it was too late. Their flocks were not registered, they received no grazing lands and therefore their flocks could easily be seized by the Green Patrol.

The Green Patrol confiscated animals for any infringement and apparently for none, admitting their motive was to reduce the number of beduin sheep and goats. The Plant Protection (Damage by Goats) Law of 1950 was also increasingly implemented to reduce goat numbers. Goats were only allowed inside the former reservation area and then only in small numbers.

Secondly, whereas *kibbutzim* have long leases on permanent pasture, beduin get four to five month leases, mainly on stubble fields, again with no guarantee of continuity or size of allocation, and through the mediation of sheikhs, necessitating good relations with the authorities. Grazing lands do not necessarily include provision for watering the animals. ‘If we leave our area to look for water, they confiscate our cattle. If we don’t we can’t water them’, a Negev shepherd explained.

A surprisingly frank explanation of the short lease policy was given in 1979 by ILA official Amos Muqadi who told a journalist: ‘that the policy aims to sever the tie between the beduin and the land, and that every legal means available is utilized to this end’; that ‘there is no intention, there was no intention and there will be no intention to give the beduin water for agricultural irrigation’; and that the aim of these policies was ‘that the beduin not develop (sic) ties to the land’.

**Life in the Government Settlements**

Government settlements for beduin were begun in the late 1950s in the Galilee, and a decade later in the Negev. Today there are five planned settlements in the Negev and six in the Galilee in addition to at least 10 villages built there illegally but later legalized. In the Negev only two of the illegal villages have been legalized, and although both (Lagiya and Hora) have been ceremonially opened as legal residential sites, development has scarcely begun. There was a delay of many years due to security considerations (the area is immediately south of the occupied West Bank) but in 1985 it was decided to proceed. However, since then no infrastructure has been built in Lagiya apart from a school and the many families who bought building plots there have been unable to build on them. In Hora one tribe began to build in late 1988, but by September 1989 the authorities had not yet installed electricity, a telephone line or water connections into the completed buildings. The continuing delay in Lagiya is blamed by some officials on the beduin but the underlying problem is of the authorities’ making: the land sold as building plots to the beduin does not, in the eyes of the beduin community, belong to the state but to its former beduin owners. As long as the authorities fail to make an agreement satisfactory to them, any beduin building on a plot will come into conflict with its former owners.

The experience of moving into a planned village has been traumatic for beduin families and particularly for the older generation. Living in close proximity to other households and next to other tribes is a difficult and stressful change for many families. Some, especially in the Negev, previously lived out of earshot of the next household and would feel their privacy invaded by a stranger passing within a hundred metres of their home. In beduin Arab culture women are seen as bearers of their families’ honour. In the settlements women are much more exposed to the men of other sub-tribes who may pass in the street or live in an adjacent neighbourhood. To avoid this, the women must remain in the house much more. Furthermore in the old setting with wooden houses and particularly with tents, any problems with neighbouring households could be relieved by moving to another part of the family’s land.

The Negev’s first planned settlement, Tel Sheva, was not built with separate neighbourhoods for the different tribes and the government-built houses are close together. The scheme was very unpopular and twenty years later many of the original houses are still uninhabited or inhabited by non-beduin Arab school teachers. When establishing Rahat, the next settlement, the authorities designated a separate area for each tribe and allowed each to build its own houses. This has reduced some of the problems and today, as its population approaches 20,000, Rahat is regarded as a success by the government.
Rahat is easily the largest planned beduin settlement. The smallest have fewer than 1000 inhabitants. In all the settlements the houses are large, two-storeyed concrete buildings with flat roofs, often spacious enough to house one or more married sons as well as the nuclear family. This feels cramped to the beduin but to many Jewish Israeli flat dwellers in this one respect the beduin villages appear luxurious. Families feel pressured to compete in building large houses and often run into financial difficulties although they do most of the building work themselves. Houses frequently remain unfinished for years while the families live next to them in temporary structures. Sons are persuaded to assist by leaving school and working and the practice of taking on good behaviour. The 1000 inhabitants of Wadi Salameh, a planned beduin village in the Galilee, moved there because they were denied services in their original village. But services were not provided in the new location, because some residents had built houses larger than was allowed — in effect a collective punishment. \(^{109}\) There is a widespread feeling among many Jewish Israelis that Arab Israelis should not expect the same level of public funding. Dismissing complaints of different funding for beduin Arab and Jewish towns in the Negev, the local Housing Ministry director said:

'It’s a mistake to mix things that don’t go together. The conditions and criteria for the beduin and Jewish populations are different, for better or for worse.'\(^ {110}\)

Indeed Jewish Israelis are not allowed to live in the planned beduin settlements. There are also Jewish settlements where Arabs may not buy land or build. The new town of Meitar in the Negev lies between the beduin villages of Lagiya and Hora. Its constitution, enacted with the approval of the I.L.A., states that members with the right to build must be Jewish as well as Israeli citizens.\(^ {111}\) Meitar is not the only such settlement.

In any new settlement in Israel elections to a local council take place only after some years of an appointed one. In the beduin government towns the councillors are partly Jewish Israeli government officials and partly older men from the beduin community. The period before elections is much longer than in Jewish settlements. In the Galilee, Bosmat Tiv'on was in existence for 13 years before it had an elected council. In the Negev Rahat’s 1989 elections came 17 years after its establishment, and Tel Sheva has no election date set after 20 years. In the Jewish development towns of the Negev, the first elections were on average five years after establishment.\(^ {112}\) Those Arab residents appointed to the council, which is invariably headed by a Jewish Israeli official, are mostly older men and traditional leaders.
participate fully in the council. In the communities they
(sheikhs). Some of them are illiterate or not literate enough to
members do not represent them.

Rahat’s first local council was appointed after eight years
when the population was approaching 10,000. There were
demands for elections but a council was appointed and
during its inauguration was protected from the populace by a
sizeable force of border guards and police in combat gear.
When the appointed council members elected their leader,
observers noted that the selection process seemed to have
be more pre-arranged. This would corroborate the change
made by many beduin that the Arabs on such councils are
chosen for their compliance.

Nine years later, when Rahat’s population was approaching
20,000, the town was allowed its first election. Reuven
Wissoke, the leader of the appointed council, told the author
that the beduin were not yet capable of democracy and
predicted that people would vote according to families, each
party representing the interests of one tribe. Religion would
not be an important factor. However in February 1989 the
Islamic movement crossing tribal boundaries won the
highest number of council seats and the election for the
council leader to replace Wissoke. Another of the eight lists,
which was not identified with one tribe, ‘The Alliance of the
Sons of Rahat’ polled well. Rahat residents allege that it
would have gained more votes if the vice-president of the
outgoing appointed council had not warned the al-'Ubra
family, who depend heavily on neighbouring kibbutzim for
work, that voting for the alliance was not in their interests.

The beduin Arabs of Kseifeh and ‘Ar’arah (the towns built
for the Tlib-al-Malah evacuees) and Segev Shalom got their
first appointed council in 1988 — Masos regional council.
They were addressed by the local Interior Ministry
representative on the subject of democracy:

‘Democracy is a valuable and important machine, and we need to
understand its use — for example, if we give a little boy a sweet he
will use it the right way, but if we give him a complicated watch, he
will wreck it.’

An indication of the unhappiness of the beduin Arabs in
planned settlements is given in research by social geographer
Yosef Ben David in 1982. Of 160 Rahat families asked, all but
five said that they were ready to give up town life
immediately. They found life in Rahat to be incompatible
with their lifestyle and values. In particular, they found the
high density of population compared with their former
villages and hamlets intolerable. Ben David described the
towns as having become ‘places of bitterness’ to the beduin.
He called the continuation of the government’s urbanization
policy into question, and warned that if present trends of
economic deprivation and disenchantment continued, the
consequences would be serious.

Employment

Over the four decades of Israel’s existence, there has been a
remarkable change in the source of livelihood of its beduin
Arab population. According to the 1931 census almost 90% of
beduin in the Negev depended on agriculture and 10% on
livestock. At the end of the 1980s nearly 90% of beduin in the
Negev live from wage labour, and over 80% in the Galilee.
Although 21% of beduin men in the Negev were employed in
agriculture in 1979 they were still employees and nearly all
worked in Jewish Israeli agricultural settlements. Another
20% were lorry drivers and 26% were building labourers.

Concentrated as they are in low-income occupations or
unemployed, the per capita income of Negev beduin is less
than half the Israeli average. Dimona is a Jewish Israeli
development town in the Negev, close to the area where most
beduin live and underprivileged by Israeli standards. Unemployment among beduin in the Negev is significantly
higher than either the Israeli or Dimona average.

In the planned beduin settlements there is no industry. Rahat
is typical; out of a workforce of some 3500 only about 200 of
its residents work there. No government settlement for
beduin Arabs in Israel has an operational industrial zone
although plans include such zones. Rahat’s industrial zone is
still only a blueprint after 17 years and therefore no factories
can be opened there. Officials talk of the delays inherent in
the necessary bureaucratic process — for example Mr
Wissoke told the author that the Ministries of the Interior,
Housing, and Trade and Industry each place responsibility
with the others for establishing industrial zones in the beduin
settlements. However, similar delays were not encountered
when industrial bases were provided for the Jewish Israeli
development towns nearby. In the Negev these towns mostly
had industrial zones a few years after their establishment.

According to Eliahu Babai of the ILA industrial zones have
not been built in the beduin townships because the
authorities are waiting for the beduin to apply for sites in them. However Ilan Sagi, the government official heading
the new Masos council, had problems with too many anxious
beduin entrepreneurs wanting to set up businesses. A
more convincing explanation was that given to the Jerusalem
Post by a senior government official in 1987. He said that the
delays were due to government doubts about industrial areas
in beduin towns — it was feared that factories would be
tempted out of Jewish settlements as in Israel Arab labour is
cheaper than Jewish. ‘If it’s up to the government there won’t be industrial areas for another 50 years — the
government has a very clear policy.’

Agricultural villages — the alternative

The repeatedly expressed wish of the beduin Arab minority
has been to be allowed some land and water to set up
agricultural villages as an alternative to the urban
government settlements. Formal detailed requests have been
made such as the one from 500 families in the Negev to set up
farming villages ‘on parts of our empty lands which are not
significant to the state for development or security’. Even
this most conciliatory request received no answer, although it
was submitted three times between 1976 and 1979. A
variety of reasons has been given by officers of the

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<tr>
<td>% of households in which head is unemployed</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of population aged 15 or over unemployed</td>
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<td>% employed in</td>
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<tr>
<td>- construction</td>
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<td>- driving</td>
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<td>- unskilled work</td>
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<td>- agriculture</td>
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<td>- industry, finance, trade or public service</td>
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government for not favouring these requests. One is that there is not enough water. Another is that the agricultural methods used by Bedouin might succeed where others do not use modern methods but be based on traditional Bedouin agriculture — so as not to provide competition with ‘already existing’ (Jewish Israeli) agriculture.

**Education**

Before 1948, educational provision for the Arabs of Palestine was inadequate but expanding and in fierce demand. Formal education had been longer established in the north of the country than in the exclusively Bedouin south. Nonetheless even in the Negev 36 schools existed by 1948, including two large and beautiful buildings in Beersheba. One was ‘the biggest of all schools administered by the Palestinian government under the British mandate’. Secondary school level education had begun there in 1947, but the numbers reached only extended to a privileged elite — mainly the sons of sheikhs.

In 1948 this limited provision was disrupted. Beersheba was out of bounds to the Arab population until 1954. The school buildings were taken over by the army, which still occupies them. Most of the remaining Negev Arabs lost access to the limited schooling available when they were moved into the reservation. For most tribes, a whole generation had no formal education. For Galilee Bedouin, the disruption of education was less severe because they were not moved from their lands and because the areas to which they were confined included peasant villages, some with schools.

Education in Israel was made compulsory in 1949, but the new state’s institutions were busy with the absorption of Jewish immigrants, and inevitably schools for Arabs were not a priority. In 1958 an Israeli ambassador told a foreign audience that Israel was careful not to impose compulsory education on the Bedouin ‘before they show themselves ready to welcome and cooperate in it’. After ten years of Israeli statehood only five schools existed in the Negev serving 180 boys. It was not until the 1960s that schools were provided by the state, the buildings paid for by the Bedouin. Initially these schools consisted of one-roomed huts with one teacher for all classes. Even by 1970, only 23% of school age Negev Bedouin children attended. Many had to go long distances by donkey and on foot. Some groups of boys camped in tents around the schools.

Israel is proud of its Bedouin schools. Compared to 1948 the numbers receiving education are much higher with girls now forming about half of the lowest classes and around a third of the highest elementary grades (about age 14). But the Negev schools are of a lower standard than anywhere in Israel or the Occupied Territories. This explains why the Negev Bedouin community, despite a per capita income of less than half the Israeli average, spends around half a million US dollars yearly on sending as many of its sons as possible to study in the Arab schools in the Triangle area in the north. Over 300 were sent in 1987.

Educational provision for Bedouin has been subordinated to the policy of urbanization. An education official admitted that:

‘the government is reluctant to develop schools for temporary settlements because they want the Bedouin to move to permanent areas. The Bedouin tend to move when the schools are relocated. If they don’t, then the children simply don’t go to school.’

Schools in illegal settlements have many problems. The buildings are wooden pre-fabs dating from the 1950s and 1960s — originally temporary houses for Jewish immigrants and later given to the Arab population as schoolrooms. The buildings provide little protection against the extremes of climate. These schools have no surfaced access roads and are therefore virtually inaccessible in the winter rains when school is effectively cancelled. They have no electricity, libraries, laboratories, telephones or surfaced yards for sports. Several elementary schools in the Negev have run out of drinking water or toilets until recently. Abu Kaf school got running water in 1984, only after pupils were hospitalized with dehydration and sunstroke.

Another problem is distance. Because the government is unwilling to provide schools on sites from which it wants Bedouin to move, some children live far from school. One group of over fifty in the Negev live 50km from the nearest school. Requests for a small school in their area were not granted, and transport was not provided until 1988 when anthropologist Gideon Kressel intervened for them. There are many other groups of Bedouin children for whom getting to school is practically impossible. Most families cannot afford daily bus fares for several children where no school bus is provided. In these cases the law on compulsory education is meaningless, and it is certainly not enforced.

Schools in the government-planned settlements for Bedouin are better than those outside, but still lag far behind the standard of Jewish-Israeli education and have smaller budgets. Some elementary schools in the planned settlements of Rahat and Tel Sheva still depended on rented rooms in houses without access to running water or toilets in 1977. Even in the planned settlements, special education teachers, social workers and psychologists are practically unknown in Bedouin schools. Pass rates in the matriculation examinations in the three Negev secondary schools are strikingly low. In 1981-1984, 696 Negev Arabs finished secondary school while only ten passed the matriculation examination, i.e. 1.5%.

The situation is worse for Negev than Galilee because in the Negev about half of the teachers are unwilling immigrants from the north. Non-graduate teachers must serve for three years in the Negev before being eligible to teach in the north. As a result of this policy the Negev Arab schools have a very high turnover of newly qualified teachers from outside the Bedouin community, whose effectiveness is reduced by their reluctance to be in the Negev at all. On the other hand some of the local teachers appointed have no qualifications. In 1985 17% of the teachers from the Negev were unqualified. In most Negev elementary schools there are one or two teachers without even the matriculation exam.
A local journalist researched Arab education in the Negev and maintained that in selecting teachers the authorities and methodology of pre-school learning, a need now being degree holder if she or he is not politically "desirable".

Most parents are unaware of the need to support and encourage their children's school work. For the same reason, demoralization among the teachers has also stifled initiative. The community's realization that education is vital has greatly reduced by their not having served in the army. Hence the neglect and unequal provision for Arabs on the part of the authorities are compounded by the community's lack of initiative and its inexperience in improving formal educational provision by community involvement.

Although the beduin community, even in the Negev, has produced university graduates, including some doctors and lawyers, none has reached university without either completing secondary education in the north or additional years of preparation outside the Negev Arab schools. For those who make it to university, like other Israeli Arabs, their chances of getting university accommodation or bursaries are greatly reduced by their not having served in the army.

### Health

Beduin children in the Negev have a higher rate of hospitalization than their Jewish counterparts. A third of Negev beduin children are hospitalized at least once in their first year. 70% of the children in the Beersheba Soroka hospital's children's wing are Arabs, although beduin are only about 28% of the Negev population. Hence, although per capita expenditure on primary health care is lower than that for Jewish Israelis, on hospital costs the reverse is true. Beduin Arab infants also often suffer mild malnutrition and consequentially stunted growth, according to a 1983 study.

Various factors stand in the way of better health for Arabs in the Negev. Firstly there is a lack of education and knowledge, particularly resulting from conditions which have only been experienced by the last generation of beduin. Concrete floored houses, dried baby milk and new processed food can lead to increased infant morbidity, diarrhoea and malnutrition, when appropriate knowledge about heating, hygiene and nutrition are absent. Secondly, bad housing and lack of running water contribute to children's respiratory infections in the winter and diarrhoea in the summer.

Thirdly, primary health care is inadequate. An independent Israeli survey of health care available to Negev beduin in 1983 concluded that they received medical services 'below the minimum standard to which every citizen is entitled'. The survey described a clinic in Kaeifeh, the planned town to which the Tal-al-Malah beduin had been evacuated four years earlier as 'a hut with neither electricity nor washrooms'. The largest of the planned settlements, Rahat, has two properly built clinics with six doctors — one for every 3000 residents. But the level of provision is far lower than that for Jewish Israelis. Arad had one doctor for 850 residents by 1983. Of course it is difficult to provide adequately for a scattered population. But all clinics outside the planned townships are seen as temporary until the population moves into planned townships. Hence they are in wooden buildings with inadequate facilities. All beduin clinics except two are staffed exclusively by Jewish Israeli doctors, often immigrants who do not speak Hebrew well, let alone Arabic, and cannot communicate well with older women and children who do not know Hebrew. The Negev Arab community itself includes eight doctors, but five of them are at work in Jewish Israeli clinics. According to one beduin Arab doctor they may not always choose to work in their own community.

The largest beduin clinic, in Rahat, is regarded as the best available to Arabs in the Negev. However per capita expenditure there — even excluding the uninsured population — was lower than in any of the ten Jewish clinics studied in a cost survey in 1983 with regard to medicines, laboratory tests, X-rays and staff. And the clinic's 'day hospital' developed since Rahat's adoption as a model clinic is regarded by some local doctors as a gimmick distracting attention from real needs, notably health education. These doctors treat numerous cases of seasonal diarrhoea and dehydration and respiratory tract infections but have no opportunity in their work to spend time on health education, although it could have a considerable effect.

The Labour Union (Histadrut) Sick Fund, which provides most curative health care in Israel, is not obliged to provide for the uninsured population. Only 51% of Negev beduin are insured. The Sick Fund undertook to provide services for all Negev beduin regardless of insurance (the uninsured pay for what they need). However, the ratio for insured beduin to doctors was 3194:1 in 1983 (and of all Negev beduin 6235:1) when the ratio for Jewish Israelis in Arad was 850:1 (although the ratio in other Jewish Israeli localities may be higher).

According to research by a medical sociologist and anthropologist, Dr. Gillian Hundt, the health services have not been adapted to the needs of the minority Arab community in the Negev. This would require an increased number of paediatric staff, more Arabic-speaking personnel, and the development of an adequate mobile service to reach remote areas. Translation facilities are also needed and absent from the Negev's hospital. Those beduin Arabs most likely to be in hospital are more likely not to speak Hebrew adequately or at all — old people, young children and women — and yet few of the medical staff speak Arabic. The experience of being in hospital is made yet more stressful by widespread anti-Arab attitudes among the overwhelmingly Jewish Israeli staff. Gillian Hundt spent many days observing interaction between nursing staff and beduin Arab women giving birth in Soroka hospital. She described the staff's speech as being "curt, minimal and accompanied by racist comments made in Hebrew which it is assumed are not understood".

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Education</th>
<th>Negev beduin</th>
<th>Israel average</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% attending school at ages</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-13 years</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>65-85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-17 years</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% completing secondary school</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with university degree</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median years schooling</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
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<td>adapted from B. Roth, Key statistics from the 1983 census, Shatil, Jerusalem, Feb. 1989</td>
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Although organized activity has not yet begun, some people in the beduin community in the Negev are considering how its health can be improved outside the official services — for example by setting up informal health education with lectures to women on nutrition, hygiene and childcare. As the number of beduin students in higher education increases, the community may have more medical professionals who can work with the community. Within the limits set by the inadequate and unequal provision of health care facilities, much can still be done by the community itself to improve its health.

Army Service

The issue of Israeli beduin serving in the Israeli army is an important one in view of the authorities’ attempted separation of the beduin and Druze communities from the rest of the Arab minority. Druze Arab Israelis have been conscripted since 1956. Beduin have never been conscripted but it is hoped by government officials that the majority will eventually choose to serve in the army. Both sides would see army service as a symbol of loyalty to Israel in the Palestinian Israeli conflict. This is the main reason why, although beduin are more easily accepted into the army than other Arab Israelis and although individuals can gain financial benefits from completing army service, only a few hundred beduin serve — a small minority of those eligible.

Exact figures are almost impossible to obtain, and the extent to which beduin Arabs serve is exaggerated by the Israeli authorities and media, creating an image of the beduin as without question ‘loyal to the state’. There is a common belief among Palestinians in the Occupied Territories that all beduin do army service. It is true that army trackers are usually beduin and that some beduin have risen to relatively high ranks in the army, but this impression is misleading. Volunteers have mostly come from a small number of tribes, whose traditional leaders have pressured their young men to join in return for preferential treatment of the tribe by the authorities. It is reliably reported that there are no soldiers in the beduin settlements of Kseifeh or ‘Ar’ara whereas there are some in the tiny Segev Shalom because its one tribe, the al-‘Azazmeh tribe, traditionally served in the army.

In recent years there have been some individual volunteers from other tribes. These are normally men who are unemployed and demoralized and cite their wish for regular paid work. Some beduin end up in uniform, albeit in a non-combatant capacity, as watchmen for example. In the Negev, beduin are important in contracting work with heavy earth-moving equipment. The army provides much of the demand for their services. Since it is a requirement (for security reasons) that the contractor must have served in the army, in many families one or two sons do military service so that their families’ equipment can be hired by the army, thus providing much-needed income.

Two Jerusalem Post reports of groups of beduin volunteering for the army in 1983–4 cite another motivation — the hope that they would be less discriminated against, expressed by one man as: ‘If we serve in the army nobody can put an obstacle in our way’. Individuals with army service receive higher social security and other benefits but the Druze community, with its history of conscription, has received a share of development funding comparable to other Arab communities. Nor are individual soldiers always spared harsh treatment. Juma’ al-Atiba served as a tracker for six years. In May 1978, ‘the police arrived and razed our tents. They took our tents and we don’t know where they threw them. The government destroyed our tents and let us without food and water, without blankets for our children’. There are many similar cases.

Women

Before 1948 the lives of beduin Arab women were uninterrupted hard work, shortened by the bearing of many children, about half of whom died in their first year and restricted to the world of the extended family. But women were of central importance in the community’s economic and social life. It was the women and girls who fed and watered, herded and milked the animals. The women made butter, cheese, yoghurt and samneh from the milk. They spun and dyed the wool and hair and wove tent cloth and rugs. It was they who made mattresses and pillows from fleeces, and sewed and repaired heavy tents. They also harvested grain and tree crops, fetched water and cooked and cleaned. They bore and raised children, and in their spare time they sewed and embroidered, maintained social relations and arranged and prepared marriages. Hence, although their lives were hard, women had considerable status within their prescribed role, since their work was economically indispensable.

Much social change has been forced by the events since 1948 and the lives of most beduin women are now totally different. A minority still have a full-time occupation in their traditional pursuits of herding, milk and wool processing and agriculture. These women, in the tribes living most traditionally, were described by Gillian Lewando-Hundt in 1973 as ‘subordinate to their men, and hard worked but also secure and protected, deriving satisfaction and a feeling of importance from their work’.

Many other women living in illegal villages are kept busy by the endless cleaning necessary in wood and metal houses on dirt roads, where seas of mud or dust have to be combated every day. But nearly half of beduin Arab women in the Negev, and over 80% in the Galilee, live in government settlements in more solidly built houses with easier access to running water and electricity, and apart from the few who go out to work in factories or as kindergarten and primary (rarely secondary) school teachers, they are frequently underoccupied. There is much work with large families, perhaps a dozen sheep or goats, and the house, but there are many women to share it — mothers of families and unmarried girls and women living at home. The community’s loss of land and transfer to wage labour has removed the economic role of these women and consequently their usefulness and status has been reduced. As in other societies where this has happened, women have been more scarred as they have ceased to work in the fields. Moreover in the government settlements men of other tribes live within short distances; thus shopping is usually done by the men and children and the women’s main opportunity to get out is when they have to go, with children or on their own behalf, to the doctor in the settlement or to the hospital further afield.

Since women’s role as bearers of the family honour has remained, and since girls’ education beyond elementary school is not generally regarded as important, many girls are withdrawn from school in their early teens and kept at home until they marry. They are often bored and frustrated although few openly question their situation. Such a girl’s ambitions to continue her education, to continue to university or teacher training college or train for a job, are usually in vain — her relatives cannot afford to keep her in education (boys come first), and prefer not to risk the family’s reputation and honour by allowing her to go to work (which might necessitate travelling alone after dark, and mixing with men from other tribes). It is particularly unfortunate that girls are disproportionately affected by the authorities’ removal of schools from illegal villages since parents are more reluctant to allow daughters to travel daily to different settlements.

Those women who do complete their high-school education or study further are often frustrated by their families’ continuing
to treat them as servants in the home and to impose restrictions on their movements and behaviour. An unmarried woman with a BA is still a ‘girl’ to her family and society. But most women do not get to this stage and its problems. The median number of years of schooling among Negev beduin Arab women was 0.6 in 1983 (compared to 6.7 for men). When the beduin Negev Educational Association ran courses for women in kindergarten teaching it was the educational as much as the vocational aspect which women appreciated.

Social change is slow because of the conservative pressure of society on individuals. A father who takes the lead in allowing his wife or daughters more freedom risks the reputation, not only of his own family, but of the larger group, and he fears that his daughters will be less marriageable. For these and other reasons mothers are often no less zealous in perpetuating the restrictions that limited their own lives.

Few beduin women are ambitious for revolutionary changes in their role but most want a little more freedom within the existing mould — freedom to continue education as far as they want, to move around without disrepute and to be allowed to marry whom they want. At present, girls are under pressure to marry within their extended family, often a first cousin. According to Shifa al-Huzail, the first beduin Arab woman social worker in the Negev, 90% of Arab girls there are married, not by their choice or against their will. She says that most such cases do not later develop into good relationships and depression is one result. Women do not ask for divorce because they would rather suffer than bear the social shame. A small minority of men of the older generation have more than one wife, which can result in more stress and frustration for the women involved. But a woman in her twenties who has not married will often agree to become a second wife rather than remain in her parents' home without the limited measure of independence afforded by her own household.

Clitoridectomy or ‘female circumcision’ was practised among some tribes, in the Negev at least, until about 20 years ago. It is now history but for the majority of beduin Arab women life is still severely restricted. The rise of religious observance in recent years among the beduin as well as other Palestinians has not only contributed to unify beduin society across tribal divides but has also resulted in more pressure on women to wear religious dress and keep to their homes. This pressure is fuelled by the community’s desire to assert Arab culture as different from and equally valid to Jewish Israeli culture, and by the men’s frustration and feeling of powerlessness. Thus there are strong forces opposing the women who want change. Many, especially the older women, seem relatively content. Many more, especially the younger women who dream of freedoms their mothers did not consider, would sympathize with one of their number who told the author: ‘We are handcuffed.’

### Table 3: Beduin Schooling in the Negev — 1985-86

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Boys (nos)</th>
<th>Girls (nos)</th>
<th>Girls (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 1-8</td>
<td>7345</td>
<td>4975</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 9-12</td>
<td>1386</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Arif Abu Rabi’a, Education, 1986

Divide and Rule

The Israeli media and government consistently assert a distinction between Palestinians and Arab Israelis, and between the different parts of the Arab minority in Israel — known as ‘the minorities’ — ‘Druze, Beduin and Arabs’ or ‘Druze, Beduin, Muslims and Christians’ although the Druze and beduin are also Arabs, and beduin are also Muslims and Christians. This policy of division has been mainly responsible for convincing most of the Jewish Israeli public, as well as parts of the Palestinian community in Israel and the Occupied Territories that the beduin mostly serve in the army, like the Druze, that they are nomads and therefore different from the other Arabs, are not interested in politics and have never considered themselves Palestinians.

When people like anthropologist Yitzhak Bailey have stated categorically that ‘the beduin have never adhered to Arab nationalist sentiment against Israel’ it is not surprising to find most people believe it, even officials dealing with beduin daily. Ilan Sagi, council head for three beduin towns told the author: ‘they don’t really see themselves as Palestinians. They see themselves as beduins. ...That’s the difference between the beduins and the Arab citizens in the North.’ And most Jewish Israelis like to think that at least the beduin are ‘loyal’ or ‘friendly Arabs’. One told the author ‘They don’t call themselves Palestinians. It’s the first time I’ve heard it. The other Arabs in Israel sometimes do, but not these. What, are they against Israel then?’

Palestinians in the Occupied Territories also often subscribe to these views. They too follow the Israeli media which promote this image. For example, traditional beduin leaders coopted by the authorities may appear on television, as did unelected councillors from Rahat who were given a quarter hour slot to say that the community they ‘represented’ had no interest in commemorating Land Day (an annual day of protest by Palestinian citizens of Israel marking 30 March 1976 when six of them were shot dead protesting about the expropriation of Arab lands). But no beduin Arab is given time on television to put alternative and more representative views.

‘Palestinization’

The beduin Arab community’s self-identification is very different from the authorities’ representation. The author asked beduin Arabs of both sexes, a wide age range and from different places and tribes in the Negev about their identity. Without exception they said they were Palestinians by nationality and Israelis by citizenship. One man said: ‘that we are Palestinians is not a matter of choice, it’s history. We can deny it for an easier life, but then we’re just lying. If they make us say we’re not Palestinian, it won’t change the fact.’

As a new generation grows up which does not clearly remember military rule, a confidence and willingness to assert this national identity is slowly growing, among beduin Arab Israelis as it has among other Palestinian Israeli communities. The authorities claim that the beduin are only now beginning to think of themselves as Palestinians, and that most who do are only a small minority of students who have probably been in contact with the ‘negative politics’, as they say, of other Arabs from the North. This they call ‘Palestinization’ and the government aims to minimize it by rewarding those who avoid it and intimidating, punishing and isolating those who do not.

However beduin Arabs maintain that their self-identification as Palestinians is not new, it is only the confidence among part of the community to make it public that is new. The circumstances corroborate this. After all, most of the 1948 beduin community are now refugees along with other Palestine refugees and their descendants in neighbouring
countries. Every beduin family in Israel has relatives in the refugee camps of the West Bank or Gaza, or elsewhere.

**Attitudes to beduin**

To Europeans the word 'beduin' evokes a strong and generally positive image. For Israelis it is rather different. As one writer put it, 'beduin are less romantic in Israeli eyes than in British. Where Englishmen see noble simplicity and the exhillaration of desert horizons, the Israeli thinks of smugled hashish, trachoma and illiterate children'. Nonetheless, beduin as exota are still celebrated, and appropriated as part of 'Israeli folklore' for the tourist industry. One tourist centre advertises the government concentration village of Tel Sheva as thus

```
'an authentic
BEDOUIN VILLAGE'
with an 'Elegant Restaurant/
Nightclub –
housed in an exotic
BEDOUIN TENT'
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A nightclub is about as far from beduin Arab culture as can be imagined. The Thursday market in Beersheba is similarly popular among Jewish Israelis as the 'beduin market', but the absence of most of the stall-holders on some Thursdays during the uprising after December 1987 showed that, even if they were beduin, they were also Palestinian refugees – mostly from the Gaza Strip.

The stereotype image of beduin has mixed positive and negative aspects. The 'primitive' is romantic and mysterious, but not compatible with 'modern civilization'. This sheds light on the prejudices among Jewish Israelis mentioned earlier: that beduin Arabs are incapable of 'proper' agriculture, irrigation, enterprise, industry, cooperation and democracy. Beduin Arab citizens are publicly represented as 'good Arabs', loyal to the state, but for security purposes the distinction between 'Arabs, Druze and Beduin' is forgotten and the security police pay the same attention to beduin as to other Arab communities.

Jewish Israeli civilians also have ambivalent attitudes. Most of the time they feel more positive towards them than towards their relations in the Occupied Territories whom they regard as Palestinians. But after one of the sporadic bomb attacks or hijackings against Jewish Israelis, beduin Arab citizens are suddenly Palestinians and terrorists. After the bus hijacking near the Negev's nuclear centre in March 1988, beduin school pupils were followed when they got off the bus after school by two soldiers and two civilians. One pupil was assaulted and knocked to the ground. All the Arab pupils were forced to leave the bus. The father of the pupil assaulted told the author he did not intend to complain to the police. According to his experience, after an event like this hijacking, he did not expect the police to have a different attitude from the soldiers and civilians on the bus. His resignation is common throughout the community.

The supposition that beduin Israelis identify as Palestinians less than other Arab citizens of Israel is almost always important to those Jewish Israeli individuals and groups who speak up in favour of better treatment of the beduin community. Part of their motivation is to prevent a group they believe has hitherto felt a 'loyalty' to the state, from changing. In their fear of this, Jewish Israelis fail to imagine a loyalty to the state which could exist alongside a self-identification as Palestinians.

Palestinian Israelis are in general resigned to being Israeli citizens, and their ambitions for their nation centre on the creation of a Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories and the attainment of full equality in Israel for those Palestinians with Israeli citizenship. These aims are compatible with responsible, law-abiding citizenship in Israel. But Jewish Israelis find such a position threatening. They want a loyalty that includes army service (which necessitates participation in the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip) and excludes any political identification with the Palestinian people.

**Change in the beduin community**

Beduin society in Israel has gone through very large changes in the last four decades. As previously mentioned it has been transformed from an almost entirely agricultural and pastoral community to one overwhelmingly dependent on mainly unskilled wage labour. Such economic changes have not come about without consequences for the internal structure of the community.

One major change has been the gradual weakening of the tribal structure of beduin society and the power of the sheikhs or traditional tribal leaders. On the one hand, this hierarchical structure was deliberately reinforced by the Israeli authorities in both the beduin and other Arab communities after 1948 when it was needed as an implement of indirect state control. On the other hand, after the lifting of military government, the eventual decline of the sheikh's power and the weakening of the tribal structure became inevitable, because the authorities could not continue to dispense all permits and grants via the tribal leaders. Individual beduin could go directly to the various government agencies on their own behalf. Against this the authorities still try to give the sheikhs some power and the mediation of a sheikh who has good relations with the government is therefore very useful in getting favourable leases on agricultural and grazing land.

Nonetheless, the many beduin who no longer supplement their wages by farming or keeping livestock are in no need of their services. Compared with their traditional role in the pre-state era, the beduin sheikhs are virtually powerless. Today, especially to the younger generation, they are often figures of fun — pathetic individuals who stand on their dignity to the community but are quick to bend to the whim of the authorities who today appoint and depose them as sheikhs and pay them a small stipend.

As the power of the tribal leaders at various levels declines, so the dependency of the individual on the tribe's approval and support decreases. It is still impossible for women to act against the will of their male relatives but individual men have more freedom as tribal cohesiveness becomes less important. This can result in great tension within the group. For example at election time, beduin tribes used to vote almost exclusively in what were family block votes. This tradition is beginning to break down effectively and in the 1989 local election in Rahat it was possible to find conflicts within extended families — where one man would campaign for the tribe's list and another for the (inter-tribal) religious list — competing to rally the tribe's votes. Such conflicts must in turn further weaken tribal cohesion.

The old elite of the usually illiterate but powerful sheikhs is to some extent being replaced as it fades by a new elite of younger educated men — the few who managed to get a tertiary education whether in Israel or abroad. Although they are regarded with a less awed respect than the sheikhs once were, since they have no direct power over individuals as such and because they are younger, nonetheless it is these men who have the knowledge necessary to protect themselves and their families in the modern state, who are more familiar with and are more respected by Israeli officialdom. It is
mainly younger men such as these, who have over the last decade, set up various associations to improve the lot of their community and to protect its rights. Several such groups exist in the Negev but by all accounts there is as yet nothing comparable among the beduin in the north.

In the Negev the Sons of Lagliya Cultural Association (see address listing on page 25) has constructed a youth club with a surfaced basketball court and classrooms and runs after-school and holiday activities there, including lessons, sports, summer camps and excursions. Its activities are limited to Lagliya village; and in practice its facilities are maintained and used almost exclusively by one of the three tribes there. In addition to the club a clinic was built and run until the Sick Fund finally provided one for the village; the graveyard is maintained with trees and a fence, as is the mosque and a memorial to the Sabra and Shatilla massacres.

Another organization is based in Beersheba and is officially for the 'Support and Defence of Beduin Rights in Israel' although its two kindergartens and part-time clinic are all based in the Negev. Founded in 1979, the association has given numerous press conferences to publicize the plight of Israeli beduin, but its other activities are severely restricted due to perennial leadership problems.

The Negev Educational Association was set up by a small group of graduates to improve the educational standards of Negev beduin. In its first two years of funded activity it has organized courses for local women in kindergarten teaching and set up and run five kindergartens — in the face of court cases and demolition orders for illegal building. A new Association for Beduin Heritage, which has as its main aim to familiarize beduin youth with their own cultural tradition, was set up in 1989.

Lastly a group of women teachers and social workers is organizing a women's association to set up a women's centre in Rahat and provide courses for women and girls in literacy, primary health care, preschool education and needlecraft, and lectures on health and social issues. Predictably, the associations described above have been hindered by tribalism; they tend to originate in one tribe and then direct resources to it or the be set up by members of different tribes but end up in the hands of one.

The significance of these developments is greater than their effect to date — although their achievements have been impressive in a community with no previous experience in fund-raising or of cooperative voluntary work. These attempts at organization signal a turning point in the community's slow change from intimidated inactivity — in effect a victim mentality of the years during and after the military government. Since then two decades have passed and confidence is increasing, in at least part of the beduin community, in its ability to fight for its rights using the state's own laws as implements or merely protection.

The intifada, the uprising of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip under Israeli occupation, which erupted in December 1987, has radicalized the beduin population as it has the whole Arab Israeli minority. There is tension in the beduin communities as a few tribes continue to send their sons to the army while the general sympathy is clearly overwhelmingly with the Palestinians under occupation. In a series of interviews by the author in the Negev in the spring of 1988, the indentification was made clear. The son of a sheik explained:

'We all have relations in Gaza and the West Bank. It is not conceivable that we should not care what is happening there. The Jews feel hurt by the fate of the Jews in the Soviet Union, how should I not feel hurt by the fate of the people of the Occupied Territories?'

Many spoke like this woman:

'Of course the state of affairs in the Occupied Territories hurts us but what are the beduin supposed to do? We can't join in, but we partake in our heart of all of it. What can we do. We had a campaign to raise food and money for the besieged camps in Gaza. We filled a truck and sent it. Let them know from this that we are not all the same. We are not all in the army'.

Many in the beduin community feel this anguish at the image of beduin Israelis in the Occupied Territories and the consequent sense that as a community they are fully acceptable neither to the nation they feel part of nor to the state they are citizens of. One woman's view was:

'we'd better all lie down and die, us beduin, for we're stuck half way, neither in an Arab state nor properly part of Israel'.

Political awareness and activity is spread unevenly through the beduin communities. It is stronger in the larger of the government townships and illegal villages. The weakest communities are the remote scattered families, especially of the tribes who have traditionally sent their sons to the army. But in general, the beduin community is slowly becoming more open about its identification with other Palestinians and this was made clear to Jewish Israelis in December 1987 when some beduin joined in a one day strike among Arab Israelis in demonstration of their solidarity with the Palestinian uprising. This demonstration in particular was a shock to the Jewish Israeli community although there had been many demonstrations in previous years: Land Day rallies; a demonstration against house demolition in Lagliya in 1987; a three month student strike and demonstrations against school closures in 1984; a parents' protest about schools without water in the same year; and protests against Agriculture Ministry policy at its offices in Jerusalem. It would seem historically inevitable that this trend will continue and that Israel will therefore be faced with growing political awareness among the beduin population and an increasing readiness to use Israel's own laws to fight for beduin communal rights.

The future

The future of beduin in Israel will be the future of Israeli Palestinians in general. Theirs is a difficult and ambiguous position and one inextricably linked to the wider Israeli Palestinian conflict on other fronts. It is difficult to predict how the fate of Israeli Palestinians might be affected by the establishment of a Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories. Some argue that it would increase their bargaining power as Israeli citizens, others that it would increase Jewish Israeli intolerance of their demands for equal treatment within Israel. It is more certain that as the collective memory of military government fades and the educational level of the Arab Israeli community rises and with the radicalizing effects of the intifada, Palestinian Israelis in general and beduin in particular will become more confident in their demands for equal treatment and communal rights and funding and in their assertion of their Palestinian identity within Israeli citizenship.

Threats, like those from the Prime Minister, Defence Minister and President, to the effect that Arab Israeli citizens' rights may be revoked if they do not desist may be expected to continue and there are already plans to use the existing methods of political control more intensively against targeted Palestinian individuals and groups inside Israel.

These measures are however unlikely to succeed except in the very short term. The trends described among Palestinian Israelis are clearly going to continue. Furthermore the higher birth rate among Arab Israelis and the very low rate of Jewish immigration to Israel are slowly increasing the Arab minority
inside Israel. Researcher David McDowall estimates that 30% of Israeli citizens will be Palestinians by 2020.

This demographic swing is particularly significant in the Negev. Within a few years beduin Arabs will outnumber Jewish Israelis in the whole Negev with the exception of the town of Beersheba (where nearly half the Jewish population of the Negev live). The demographic swing will further undermine government control of the Palestinian Israeli community and in the view of one Jewish Israeli observer, consulted by the author, the authorities 'may like it or lump it' but will be unable easily to regain their former control.

**Conclusion**

The predicament of beduin Arabs in Israel could be greatly eased without prejudicing the interests of the Jewish Israeli community. Indeed it is in the interest of the Jewish Israeli community to resolve this internal conflict and to live harmoniously with its neighbours.

The beduin community claims rights over the lands it owned before 1948 (but not including land owned by the refugees). This should be accepted and, if the state were to acknowledge that the beduin did indeed own the land and have rights to it, most beduin would be prepared to accept title to smaller parcels of land, as long as they were sufficient to support an agricultural livelihood for their families.

Official acknowledgement of beduin land rights is an important psychological point in itself. Thereafter it would be not only just but feasible to give beduin Arabs who still wish to live on agriculture and herding, freehold or long term leases on areas of land sufficient to support them, with irrigation water quotas equal to those received by Jewish Israeli farmers. If water is in short supply, at least it should be restricted for all farmers and not denied to Arabs as at present.

There is no imperative reason to promote the current urbanization policy or to deny the granting of building licences. Many *kibbutzim* are very small with less than one hundred inhabitants. They do not receive all of the services from government funds, yet they are not illegal. Similarly beduin villages of any reasonable size could be legalized as residential areas without any obligation on the government to provide each one with all services. The government would contribute to services in a measure proportionate to the per capita amounts spent on services in Jewish Israeli towns and the beduin inhabitants could finance the rest gradually.

The demolition of beduin houses should be stopped. Many beduin have no opportunity to build legally because of stalled development of towns like Lagiya or Hora, or because they cannot afford to buy a building plot. These house demolitions cause great hardship for whole families made homeless by them. The beduin occupation of lands at present is not extensive and would not preclude the establishment of new industry.

In the beduin townships industrial zones should be established as they have been in Jewish towns and Arab localities should receive government funds on a par with Jewish ones of similar size. Agricultural lands should be made available for long term lease around the existing urban settlements so that those beduin who have already moved may still farm if they wish.

Lastly the Green Patrol, to whose brutality beduin Arabs have been exposed for over a decade, should be abolished. If replaced at all it should be by a different body of trained people under different leadership and much stricter control.

Any suggestions as to how the Israeli authorities might deal more fairly with the scattered settlements and large land claims of the beduin population can too easily be met with many objections. The point remains that until now the authorities have been implacable in denying beduin land rights and pushing through the urbanization policy without regard to the suffering caused.

It would be entirely possible for the Israeli authorities to respect the beduin community's land rights, its right to engage in agricultural enterprise on equal terms with Jewish Israelis, and its right to build homes on its own land or land onto which it was forcibly removed by Israel. All of this need not mean abandoning the rule of law or harming the interests of the Jewish Israeli community. Indeed respecting the beduin community's communal rights could only have positive consequences for the state.

Conversely if these rights continue to be denied it is clear that the conflict will continue and grow but on a less unequal footing. As the beduin Arab community increases in numbers and confidence and as its collective sense of injustice is fuelled they may present a formidable alienated minority within the state of Israel. It is time to act now to ensure that minority rights are upheld and the prospect of conflict is minimized.
Reliable and substantive information on beduin in the Middle East is not easy to obtain. Most literature on Israeli Palestinian tends to ignore the beduin and Druze, minorities within a minority, and especially ignores the beduin of the Negev. The situation of the Galilee beduin has more similarities to that of other Palestinian communities. This report does not deal with the estimated 50,000 beduin of the Sinai desert who were under Israeli administration from 1967 to 1982.

According to an estimate based on government figures, by Ian Sagi, head of the Masos regional council in the Negev. Others would say 70,000 is more accurate, but this figure has been current for several years.


CO 733/344/4 and CO 733/348/11 Public Record Office, Kew.

Muhsam, *op cit*.

See note 12.


John Hope Simpson, *Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development in Palestine*, Cmd. 3686 1930, p73 and 20. 'Arif al-'Arif, the prominent Palestinian historian and British mandatory government official, wrote of the Negev: 'Every inch of land is owned by someone and everyone knows his land in spite of the absence of boundary fences.' *op cit*, p180. Not all beduin owned land. A large minority were of non-beduin origin, landless share croppers on land owned by other beduin.


Amiran and Ben-Arieh, *op cit*, p166.


See e.g. S. Erskine, *Palestine of the Arabs*, 1935 p203.

See note 18.


*aFw*, 1/2/84 'In 1948-51 about 17,000 beduin were expelled to the then Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip and to Jordan.' Other Arabs, including beduin from the north, were also expelled in these years using the Emergency Defence Laws originally promulgated by the British.


*bFw*, 10/5/78.


*aFw*, 13/12/85.


For example, the al-'Uqbi tribe were moved from their traditional lands in 'Araqib, c20km NW of Beersheba, to Hora, 15km NE of Beersheba. Qedirat al-Sani' were moved from their lands in Zumarah, c25km NW of Beersheba, to other lands of their tribe in Laqiya, and again across the border into the Jordanian-controlled West Bank. However they were eventually allowed back into Israel and were told they would be taken back to Laqiya. Instead they were put in an uninhabited spot in Tel Arad, near the Dead Sea. There were no buildings for shelter, no road, no water supply, no school till 1963 and no doctor. The al-Sani' stayed there until 1975, when part of the tribe took up a government offer to move back to Laqiya.

Conversation with the author. The author has a photocopy of the document mentioned.

Ian Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority*, University of Texas, Austin/London, 1980, p41.

*aFw*, 10/8/84.

Lustick, *op cit*, p58 and p44.

'The Land Acquisition (Validation of Acts and Compensation) Law, 1953 states that: 'Property in respect of which the [Finance] Minister certifies ... (1) that on the 1st April 1952 it was not in the possession of its owners; and (2) that within the period between 14th May 1948 and 1st April 1952 it was used or assigned for purposes of essential development, settlement or security; and (3) that it is still required for those purposes - shall vest in the Development Authority ... and the Development Authority may forthwith take possession thereof.' Frequently however conditions (1) to (3) did not obtain but the Minister's certificate could not be challenged.


Interview with Yosef Ben David, Jewish Israeli social geographer, 26/10/88.


JP, 18/6/78.


JP, 17/8/84.

JP, 6/6/78.


see eg. Oded, *ibid*, p 47 "Powerful elements in [the government] are anxious to remove the beduin from the Negev. Four years ago Mr. Moshe Dayan, perhaps the most determined backer of transfer of the Bedouin to the north and Minister of Agriculture at the time, sponsored a plan to move them to the centre of the country. 'In 1982 Labour-Alignment Member of the Knesset Uri Sabag proposed resettling the Negev beduin in the West Bank, i.e. outside the borders of the state. They would then either have lost their citizenship or have become the first non-Jewish, Israeli settlers in the West Bank. The proposal was vehemently rejected by beduin Arab leaders as 'tantamount to eviction and dispossession.' *JP*, 15/9/82.


JP, 25/10/85.

Lustick, *op cit*, p195. See also Falah, *op cit*, 1989; *aFw*, 1/2/84; *JP*, 10/5/78.


*JP*, 1/7/77. An official publication stated: 'a major effort is now being made to persuade the beduin to give up their nomadic way of life and settle down permanently.' *aFw*, 1/2/84.

JP, 23/12/86 and 17/2/87.
Interview with the head of Bosmat Tiv’on local council, Abu ‘Ali az-Zbidaat, 18/8/88.

From the verdict of Justice Zvi Segal in the Magistrate’s court of Haifa as giving the judge discretion as to whether or not to issue such a decree, and the decision was upheld by the Supreme Court. Yet the magistrate’s court frequently ignores this discretion and the chances in an appeal are small. I would say that the discretion given to the courts by the legislature has practically been cancelled by the judiciary. Interview Rami Yovel, 1988.

From the verdict of Justice Zvi Segal in the Magistrate’s court of Haifa, in the case of the Royal Commission for Planning and Building in the South v Ibrahim Ashiba, criminal case 2760, 1986. In this case, on appeal by Rami Yovel, the imprisonment was cancelled and the fine reduced to 100 shekels.


62 JP, 1/7/77.

63 1982, archive of Dov Coller.

64 Yodiot Akharonot 15/1/82 translated in aFe, 12/2/82.

65 JP, 6/6/78. Galili shot a beduin intruder at Sdeh Boger in 1985, sending him to intensive care in hospital. He declared he did not regret the shooting, only that the man recovered. Galili continues in the same job. JP, 7/10/86.

66 JP, 3/2/83.

67 JP, 31/5/78.

68 aFe, 5/2/82.

69 aFe, 14/3/81 and 17/5/81.

70 aFe, 22/1/82.

71 Eg. Khalil Muhammad Abu Rabi’a aged eight, from taped testimonies translated from the archives of Dov Coller.


74 According to Yitzak Bailey, JP, 6/6/78.

75 Planning Department, 1976, quoted in Falah, op cit, 1987 p12.

76 JP, 9/8/79; 22/10/79; 30/7/78.

77 JP, 16/2/79. The first reading was in August 1979.

78 The evacuated beduin had 244 breezeblock houses, 354 wooden houses, and 87 tents. They cultivated corn and wheat and had 1,400 trees, all rainfed, supplemented by 200 cisterns. aFe, 31/5/81.

79 Conversation with Emmanuel Marx, 9/10/88.

80 JP, 9/9/79.

81 JP, 30/7/79; 19/2/80.

82 JP, 31/8/79.

83 Calculations of Meir Lamm, a Jewish Israeli lawyer advising the evacuated beduin Arabs. JP, 8/7/80.

84 Interview with Ilan Sagi, (Head of the Implementation Authority 1983 – August 1988), 4/10/88.

85 JP, 2/1/89.

86 Interview with David Shoshani (Head of the Implementation Authority 1980-83) 12/9/88.

87 Normally it is impossible for any citizen to buy land freehold from the state. The small amounts beduin were allowed to acquire in the Negev in return for relinquishing far larger areas were therefore seen as a significant concession by those who drafted the law. That the law allowed the sale of ‘State’ lands to Arabs, freehold, even when it was only a dunum in a town, was the main objection to it in the Knesset.

88 JP, 21/10/79 and aFe, 31/5/81; 18/1/81 and 12/9/86.

89 JP, 16/6/83. According to Ilan Sagi, the last families had left by 31/8/83.

90 JP, 7/8/84.

91 The lease period was reduced from 9 to 6 months in 1987.


93 Being ineligible does not absolutely mean having no access to land. Such people can sub-lease from sheikhs or others. The large land allowances for sheikhs reinforces others’ dependence on them and the traditional hierarchical social structure which has served as an instrument of indirect control for the government.

94 JP, 11/10/87.

95 aFe, 7/12/80.


97 JP, 1/3/79.

98 JP, 8/12/86.

99 Interview with Arnon Rosel, formerly of Kibbutz Keranim, 22/8/88.

100 JP, 16/1/87.

101 JP, 18/12/86.

102 JP, 14/6/78; 16/1/79; 30/5/78.


104 JP, 16/1/79. Confiscated animals can only be reclaimed by paying the Green Patrol’s costs for transportation, accommodation and food. These costs exceed the value of the animals within a few days.


107 According to a resident of Lagiya, Arabs are not able to gain access to similar size – analysis of Israel Central Bureau of Statistics figures in Khadashot, 1/4/88.

108 According to a resident of Lafiya, Arabs are not able to gain entry to one of them.

109 aFe, ‘Galilee beduin stripped of their rights’ by ‘Awad ‘Abdel Fattah.

110 JP, 17/12/84.

111 Clause 5 of the constitution of the ‘Association of the Settlers of Wadi Hebron, the founders of Meitar’ serial number 580029874.

112 In 1984-5 the Jewish town of Arad got 7 times more local authority funding than Majjar, 4 times more than Sakhnin and Tamra, and over 5 times more than Tira (all Arab localities of similar size) – analysis of Israel Central Bureau of Statistics figures in Khadashot, 1/4/88.

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121 Industrial zones were set up in Arad and Mizpeh Ramon immediately; Ofakim had one after one year, Netivot after five. Yerokham however waited over 13 years. In each case the Ministry of Trade and Industry was involved. (Information obtained from local councils by Yunis al-Grinawi.)

122 Interview with Eliahu Babai, Deputy Director-General of the IIA, 12/10/88.

124 The request was submitted to Aharon Uzan and Ariel Sharon as Ezer Weizmann in 1985, see the leaked report of Moshe Arens, then Minister responsible for Arab affairs, and his aide Amos Gilboa, reported in ha-Aretz, 25/10/87.

125 It is alleged that agents of the Shin Bet (General Security Services) go to a sheikh or elder and warn him that the political activities of someone in the tribe have been noticed. (It may be no more than involvement with a beduin rights or self-help organization. It may be involvement with the communist party, which is a legal organization participating in Israeli elections). The sheikh is told that if this continues it could harm the tribe's interests.


129 According to the research of Ghazi Falah. Conversation with him, 1988; Ahmad ‘Abayyid in aFw, 28/9/84.


131 See the leaked report of Moshe Arens, then Minister responsible for Arab affairs, and his aide Amos Gilboa, reported in ha-Aretz, 25/10/87.

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133 Interview with Eliahu Babai, Deputy Director-General of the IIA, 12/10/88.

134 President Chaim Herzog said on 22/12/87: 'Israeli Arabs should not risk the gains made and the democratic rights they enjoy by following the lead of the extremists' and Prime Minister Shamir and Defence Minister Rabin made similar threats.

135 The Tourist Recreation Centre, Ltd. near Tel Sheva.

136 The extreme to which Israeli stereotypes of beduin tend is illustrated in a curious story by the celebrated Israeli writer, Amos Oz, entitled 'Nomad and Viper', 1963 in Where the Jackals Howl, Fontana 1980, translated from the Hebrew. The portrayal of beduin – predictably 'inscrutable', 'elusive as the wind', their flocks 'a dark, seething mass' is so unreliedly and exaggeratedly negative that one searches repeatedly for indications of irony. But there is no hint of any distancing from the portrayal of the 'nomads'.
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'PLACES OF BITTERNESS'

was the phrase used by one researcher describing the 'government settlements' where the Israeli government plans to relocate its beduin population. Nearly half of the 90,000 beduin in the Negev already live in these settlements. They have no industry and provide almost no employment. Their infrastructure is inferior to those of Jewish Israeli settlements and all but one do not have councils elected by residents, but government appointed ones dominated by officials from the Jewish Israeli community.

Many beduin do not live in the government settlements but in so-called 'unauthorized villages' or spread out in isolated groups of dwellings over their traditional lands. Because all these houses are illegal, demolitions regularly take place, thus pressuring the beduin to move to government settlements.

Beduin Arabs, formerly nomadic tribes, are a minority within a minority — about 15% of Israel's Arab population. The Negev beduin have over the past forty years suffered from forced exodus and and expulsions, removal from their lands into a closed area, military government and resettlement. Most face continued exclusion from their traditional lands and harassment by the security forces of the "Green Patrol".

The Beduin of the Negev, MRG Report No 81, outlines the history of the Negev beduin from Ottoman times to the present Israeli government. Written by Penny Maddrell with additional research by Yunis al-Grinawi, it provides a detailed account of this little known group and demonstrates why, despite efforts to separate them from the other Arabs of Israel, they are an intrinsic part of the Palestinian community there.

An indispensable resource, sympathetic yet objective, which will prove of great value to students, academics, development agencies, governments and all those interested in minorities.