



– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

Israeli forces destroy Bedouin village, leaving 300 homeless

Montreal, July 28, 2010 — Tuesday morning, Israeli police demolished the Bedouin village Al-Arakib, located in the southern Negev desert, and evicted its 300 residents—200 of them children. According to a joint press release by the Al-Arakib Popular Committee, the Negev Co-Existence Forum and human rights group Gush Shalom, around 1500 armed police surrounded the village at 4:30 a.m. The police removed the villagers’ belongings into prepared containers, then proceeded to bulldoze the villagers’ homes, sheep pens, fruit orchards and olive groves. The police destroyed the village in three to four hours. A few people were detained but later released; some sustained minor injuries in scuffles. The villagers were left at the site with no remaining shelter.

The demolitions were carried out despite the fact that the land’s ownership is a matter still being examined by an Israeli court. Al-Arakib existed many years before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and ownership of the land is currently the subject of proceedings in the Be’er Sheva District Court. Academic researchers have already testified in confirmation of the residents’ ownership rights to the land. However, the village is in an area that the Jewish National Fund (JNF) has categorized as for Jews only. Police spokesperson Mickey Rosenfeld told Al Jazeera news network that the homes had been “illegally built” and were destroyed in line with a court order issued 11 years ago.

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East urges the Canadian government to condemn the destruction of the village. “This is an appalling act, one which underscores the extreme discrimination faced by Israel’s non-Jewish citizens and residents. The international community should be vocal in its condemnation,” says CJPME President Thomas Woodley. He notes that the Israeli government riles at the use of the term “apartheid” to describe its web of measures controlling and dispossessing Arab Israelis, yet its conduct Tuesday is another confirmation that the term is apt.

Al-Arakib is one of about 45 Bedouin villages not recognized by the Israeli government. According to the Negev Co-existence Forum, about half of the Negev’s 155,000 Bedouins—all of whom are Israeli citizens—live in villages unrecognized by the Israeli government. As a result, they do not receive municipal services, e.g. water and electricity. Bedouins have the highest rate of infant mortality in Israel, due to lack of access to water and other services.

About CJPME – *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.*

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