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REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE

ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS

OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL

Thirty-fourth year

Letter dated 5 September 1979 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of
the Permanent Mission of Jordan to the United Nations addressed
to the Secretary-General

The enclosed article was written by Dr. Emil Tuma and published in the newspaper Al-Ittehad, issued in the Palestinian City of Haifa on 24 August 1979. It shows without doubt the bitter horrors of a drama that has faced the Arab Bedouin of the Negev since 1948 until the present time and in which they are about to be deprived of all their lands and be driven to the status of refugees in their own homeland. It also shows, in a chronological manner, the various laws of the jungle passed by the Israeli Knesset in order to deprive these Bedouin of their lands and to prevent them from going to court to save their property.

I kindly request Your Excellency to circulate the article as a document of the General Assembly, under item 51 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saleh A. S. AL-ZUBI
Minister Plenipotentiary
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

* A/34/150.

ANNEX

Article entitled "The full story of the tragedy of the Bedouin
of the Negev: how they became refugees in their own homeland"
appearing in Al-Ittehad on 24 August 1979

by

Dr. Emil Tuma

Seizure of lands

Since the establishment of Israel, its rulers have promulgated a series of legislative measures for the purpose of seizing the lands of Arab citizens.

The pretexts have been various, but they have all centred on requirements of "security", "development" and "the public interest"! In this way, the authorities have expropriated more than 85 per cent of the lands belonging to Arab citizens, so that the latter have been left with no more than 400,000 dunams, or less than one dunam for each member of the Arab national minority.

However, the 1979 draft Negev Lands Acquisition Law, which was approved by the Knesset in first reading by a majority of only two votes, emanated, as stated in its title, from the "peace" agreement with Egypt and therefore "serves" (!) the cause of peace.

In the past, Israel's rulers used to cover up their true motives with such fine-sounding terms as "development" and "the public interest". But, recently, they have no longer been disguising their practice, which is replete with racism and based on the intensification of national oppression.

Accordingly, they speak openly about the Judaization of Galilee - not the "development" of Galilee, as they did in the past - and they describe the Arabs as aliens and even as a cancer, not as citizens.

Viewed in this light, the nomenclature of the law on the expropriation of the land of the Arabs of the Negev seems to reveal a disparity and to imply a contradiction between general practice and the practice in the Negev.

However, there is no contradiction at all. The allusion to the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel is there because of the dramatic and comprehensive nature of the blow which they are about to inflict on the Arabs of the Negev, the purpose of which is to uproot 45,000 Arabs. Its reverberations will resound throughout the region and throughout the world, and it was therefore necessary to justify it as serving the cause of peace.

But how can peace grow in the soil of military airfields and encampments planted in the Negev? That is a different matter, about which Israel's rulers are not greatly concerned.

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A return to the past or false promises

The Minister of Justice, Shmuel Tamir, has announced that the lands on which the Arabs of the Negev are currently living are actually State property and that to compensate the Arabs for them is therefore an act of generosity.

However, the Prime Minister's adviser on Arab affairs, Benjamin Gur-Arieh, admits that the Arabs of the Negev have been living on these lands since 1948 at least. This in itself confers ownership on them.

What Israel's rulers do not mention now is that Chaim Weizmann and the then Chief of Staff and the present Deputy Prime Minister, Yigal Yadin, persuaded the Arabs of the Negev to move from their lands in the south to the north and broke their promise to the chiefs of their tribes that their lands were to remain their property.

It was assumed that they would return to their lands in the south after the 1948 War, but the military rule imposed on them prevented them from doing so, and during the period between 1948 and 1966, in which year the military restrictions on freedom of movement were repealed, the authorities expropriated their lands and established settlements on parts of them, one such settlement being the town of Arad.

In this way, the authorities took away the southern lands of the Negev Arabs and left them with only their lands in the north.

Under the last Alignment Government, efforts were initiated to seize the lands of the Negev Arabs on the pretext of resettling these Arabs in industrial townships in the region, and two such townships were actually established. However, this project failed in face of the Arabs' insistence on their rights.

The Alignment Government proposed to the Arabs in the Negev, as a compromise solution, that their lands should be divided equally, one half "becoming State property" (?) and the other half belonging to them with government acknowledgement.

Some of the leaders showed a readiness to accept the "compromise solution" and stipulated, as a condition for implementation of the agreement, that the Government should first acknowledge their ownership of the lands and that then the division should be made, but the Government rejected this proposal.

When the Coalition Government came to power, the authorities began their assault on the lands of the Negev Arabs, and the Minister of Agriculture and Colonial Settlements set up green patrols for this purpose in 1977, at least one and a half years before the Sadat "peace" initiative and the Israeli-Egyptian separate peace agreement.

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There is therefore no foundation for the authorities' assertion that the draft law on the seizure of the lands of the Arabs of the Negev emanated from the "peace" agreement between Egypt and Israel.

The avowed and unavowed objectives of the draft law

The authorities claim that they have resorted to this form of legislation, namely, depriving the injured parties from recourse to the courts for a hearing on the orders for the expropriation of their lands, owing to pressure of time: the construction of the airfields and military encampments connected with withdrawal from the Sinai cannot be postponed until the courts have completed a hearing of the Negev Arabs' objections to the expropriation and the decision concerning it.

This is hypocrisy intended to delude public opinion.

The author Lesley Hazleton asks why the authorities did not embark on negotiations with the Arabs of the Negev with a view to resolving the dispute with them by mutual agreement a year ago, when the Camp David accords, which provide for the construction of the Tel Malhata airfield, one of the sites which the Government wishes to take from the Negev Arabs, were signed. (The Jerusalem Post, 9 August 1979.)

The real motives of the authorities are clear from the fact that the original draft law barred Negev Arab landowners from the right of recourse to the courts for arbitration concerning compensation for the expropriated lands. The Government waived this clause at the request of the Alignment representatives.

According to press data on the scope of the draft law, the expropriation is to cover 157,000 dunams, but the loose wording of the law gives the Government the right to extend its application to an additional 150,000 dunams.

The proposed compensation is paltry. The facts indicate that the Government is to pay £I 1,500 per dunam and between £I 50,000 and £I 150,000 per building.

Naturally, the authorities claim that the expropriation is essential "for peace" - it has no intention of neglecting the Negev Arabs and driving them from their homes.

The officials are planning to transfer the Negev Arabs to four villages or industrial townships, thereby ensuring them the means of a decent livelihood.

The truth, however, is completely different. The purpose of the expropriation is to uproot the Arabs of the Negev from their lands and turn them into refugees in their own homeland.

Or at best to turn them into a cheap labour force.

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This has been openly stated by Meir Batz, chief planner for the Negev, at a conference held in February this year, when he said: "The Beduin can't have Moshavim - we need them to work in ... industries in the Negev".

The truth is that this does not reflect the reality. Israel's rulers have closed the doors of industry to Arab workers and have turned them into labourers at the lowest level in the construction, agriculture and service sectors. The purpose of uprooting the Negev Arabs from their lands and barring them from cultivating their crops and raising their livestock is to supply the Israeli labour market with the cheapest possible labour force.

So much for the first point. The second point is that it is a part of barbaric Zionist practice to prevent the Negev Arabs from establishing agricultural settlements elsewhere in the Negev.

Lesley Hazleton wrote in her article, entitled "Because they're Beduin" (The Jerusalem Post, 9 August 1979), that when she asked a senior government official directly involved with the issue why the Government did not consider building agricultural settlements (Moshavim) for the Arabs of the Negev, he replied: "I'm not giving good Jewish land and water to Arabs".

It is thus clear that the underlying purpose of the draft law on the expropriation of the lands of the Arabs of the Negev is nothing but a plan to Judaize the Negev - or a "Negevi" form of the plan for the Judaization of Galilee which is currently being implemented by the authorities of national oppression and racial discrimination by rapid measures, as is proved by the attack on Ma'alaya.

We must note here that the authorities' refusal to allow the Negev Arabs to engage in crop cultivation and the raising of livestock in locations in the Negev is due to the Zionist leaders' vision of the future.

They imagine that driving the Arabs from the land will make it easier for them, when the time comes, to force those Arabs to leave, willy-nilly, by making it impossible for them to earn a livelihood.

The battle is a battle for survival

The authorities have now become alarmed because the struggle of the Negev Arabs has aroused support in some Israeli democratic circles, and they have therefore mobilized their propagandists in order to refute the claims of those Arabs.

One of these is the hypocritical writer Gideon Weigert, who has published pamphlets extolling peaceful coexistence between Arabs and Jews in the occupied areas and singing the praises of the occupation authorities in the occupied areas.

In an article which Weigert wrote in The Jerusalem Post, under the headline "Same law for all", he says that 20,000 Negev Arabs have been settled in "beautifully built" houses constructed for them by the authorities; there are only 22,000 left and the authorities have planned fine settlement projects for them.

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He concludes by saying that the Bedouin want to impose the law of the desert and be above the law, but that in Israel the law applies to all (9 August 1979).

Naturally, he and his ilk can write what they like: the law of the land allows that, and they are not bound by the "law of the desert", as Weigert would say.

But the Arabs of the Negev are fully aware that their battle for their lands is a battle for survival against a vicious Zionist plan to disperse them and put an end to their national and human existence. This awareness will make them stand firm and give them the strength to intensify their unremitting and relentless struggle.
