



British Friends of Rabbis for Human Rights

Supporting the work of Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel and the West Bank

Sternberg Centre, 80 East End Road, London N3 2SY

June 5th, 2013/27th Sivan, 5773

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu,

We write on behalf of over sixty UK Rabbis, drawn from Orthodox, Progressive and Masorti denominations, to protest in the strongest of terms against the continuation of the legislative process of the Bill on the Arrangement of Bedouin Settlement in the Negev. If passed, the Bill would result in the forcible eviction of 30,000-40,000 Bedouin residents from their villages in the Negev into existing townships.

The Bill represents a great injustice towards Bedouin citizens of the State of Israel. Why should the Bedouin, living in 46 towns and villages, occupying just 5% of the entire land of the Negev region, be denied fundamental human rights accorded to other citizens: recognition of ownership of their land, water, sewage systems, electricity, education and health services?

A democratic, Jewish state cannot discriminate against any minority, particularly an impoverished and marginalised minority. In the name of our Judaism and democracy, in the name of justice and fairness, we are writing to protest against the Bill and its assumption that it is somehow democratic and fair to evict a section of the Israeli population from their historic homes and lands. In addition, the Bill's proposal to resettle the Bedouin in development towns disregards traditional family and kinship ties of the Bedouin and the communal and social fabric of their villages and has already been shown to result in disastrous levels of unemployment, destitution and disillusion.

We protest also in the name of our Judaism whose central values are justice and compassion. **צְדָקָה תְרוֹמֵם-גּוֹי** — 'Righteousness exalts a nation' (Proverbs 14:34) is the principle by which a nation should exercise leadership.

Please stop the passage of the Bill through the Knesset. Instead a proper consultative process should be established with Bedouin men and women to settle land claims and recognise the Bedouin's historic rights to their lands, leading to the provision of proper services for their villages. In addition, care should be given to the long-term needs of the Bedouin. Such a process will benefit the State of Israel as a whole.

As it stands, the Bill is likely to do serious damage to the international reputation of the State of Israel. A just and proper process will enhance Israel's international standing.

Yours sincerely

- 1 Shulamit Ambalu
- 2 Neil Amswych

3 Charley Baginsky
4 Rachel Benjamin
5 Miriam Berger
6 Francis Ronald Berry
7 Barbara Borts
8 Janet Burden
9 Howard Cooper
10 Frank Dabba Smith
11 Janet Darley
12 Colin Eimer
13 Warren Elf
14 Helen Freeman
15 Paul Freedman
16 Ariel J. Friedlander
17 Amanda Golby
18 David J. Goldberg
19 Mark Goldsmith
20 Aaron Goldstein
21 Andrew Goldstein
22 Jeremy Gordon
23 Anthony Hammond
24 Frank Hellner
25 Michael Hilton
26 Harry Jacobi
27 Margaret Jacobi
28 Richard Jacobi
29 Zoe Jacobs
30 Laura Janner-Klausner (Chair)
31 Deborah Kahn-Harris
32 Josh Levy
33 Jonathan Magonet
34 Monique Mayer
35 Maurice Michaels
36 Charles H. Middleburgh
37 Kathleen Middleton
38 David Mitchell
39 Lea Mühlstein
40 Julia Neuberger
41 Jeffrey Newman
42 Michael Pertz
43 Rebecca Qassim Birk
44 Danny Rich (Chair)
45 Sylvia Rothschild
46 Elli Tikvah Sarah
47 Marc Saperstein
48 Haim Shalom
49 Sybil Sheridan
50 Sheila Shulman
51 Gershon Silins
52 Reuven Silverman
53 David Soetendorp

- 54 Mark Solomon
- 55 Zvi Solomons
- 56 Celia Surget
- 57 Jackie Tabick
- 58 Daniela Thau
- 59 Pete Tobias
- 60 Jonathan Wittenberg
- 61 Charles Wallach
- 62 Lee Wax
- 63 Alexandra Wright (Spokesperson)
- 64 Roderick Young
- 65 Debbie Young-Somers

cc His Excellency Ambassador Taub