

Negev Coexistence Forum

Thank you, Madame Chair, Distinguished participants, Special Rapporteur, the Negev Coexistence Forum for civil equality is a joint Arab-Jewish organization that advocates for the right of the Bedouin minority in the Negev in Israel. In the Negev, over 100,000 Bedouin citizens live in 35 of what we call the “unrecognized villages”, without planning status where essential services are severely limited and families now face the constant anxiety that their home may be demolished. Right now, [inaudible], a village of more than 500 people, is facing imminent destruction. On top of demolition that took place over the last months in [inaudible]. These mass demolitions are an important part of discriminative policies that are being implemented in the Negev, policies that reinforce harmful stereotypes, create mistrust between communities and state institutions, and undermine our effort to build a shared society. For years, our organization has worked to promote coexistence. In the current political situation, we came to understand that coexistence and social cohesion cannot be achieved where exclusion and discrimination persist, and without trust. To protect the Bedouin minority and build social cohesion, we believe comprehensive legislative and policy reform, land rights recognition, and more investment in educational healthcare institutions in Bedouin villages are necessary, together with dialogue with the residents of these villages and civil society organizations. Instead of incitement and enforcement, we urge member states and the UN to address these issues and, as a priority, the issue of the demolitions of homes. Where coexistence is built through equality and recognition. Thank you.