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Israel sues 34 Bedouin for costs of repeated demolitions of their homes

Unprecedented law suit seeks NIS 1.8 million in damages from Negev Bedouin; Israel Lands Administration says defendants built homes on land belonging to the state.

By Jack Khoury

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The state filed an unprecedented suit against 34 Negev Bedouin in Be'er Sheva Magistrate's Court on Tuesday, seeking NIS 1.8 million in damages for the expense repeatedly incurred in evicting the defendants from state land and demolishing their homes.

The state, through the Israel Lands Administration, told the court that the defendants had built homes in the Al-Arakib area, northeast of Be'er Sheva, on what had been state land since the time of Ottoman rule.



A Bedouin woman in an unrecognized village El'arajib, which is slated for demolition.

Photo by: Eli Hershkovitz

"The squatters against whom the suit was brought, of the Abu Madigham and the Abu Jaber families, already have houses built on land the state gave them in the area of Rahat," the court was told by the ILA, representing the state. The ILA said the defendants keep returning to the disputed land, despite court orders prohibiting them from doing so.

The agency's representative told the court the fact that the Bedouin have homes in Rahat, some distance from Al-Arakib, shows they have no lack of housing, and that they are using public relations activities to accuse the state of repression, while they are the ones in breach of the law.

The ILA said that it had leased the lands in question until 1998 for seasonal agricultural activities for Bedouin in the area. But, in 1998, members of the defendants' families ousted the leasees and began squatting on the land.

In 1999, the state took action to evict the squatters, according to the prosecution.

In March 2000, the parties consented to a judgment in which a permanent injunction was issued barring the squatters from the land except to visit a cemetery and a small mosque, the only structures on the land at that time.

A source in the ILA said that suing for damages "can be an efficient way to deal with squatters and illegal construction."

Sheikh Siyah Abu Madigham al-Turi, the leader of the village of Al-Arakib, said neither he nor any of his family was told about the lawsuit, and that he first heard about it from the media.

"We also submit a lot of complaints but no one listens to us, about all the buildings of ours that they destroyed - and the state does not care. The first demolition cost us NIS 500,000. The trees that were uprooted in the village cost us NIS 500,000. They destroyed the village 27 times; that cost us NIS 150,000 each time.

The sheikh said the land belonged to them - and that the matter is still under consideration by the courts.

Dr. Awad Abu-Frih, a resident of Al-Arakib and an activist in the campaign against its demolition, told Haaretz the residents expect compensation from the state, not the other way around. "The state is afraid of a precedent over Al-Arakib, and so they talk to us in a language reserved for enemies who must be defeated, so the hold over the land won't be an inspiration to other Bedouin in the Negev."

Abu-Frih said hundreds of Bedouin, who are joined by Jewish and foreign volunteers, come to rebuild the village every time it is demolished.

The residents and activists are to hold a march Wednesday night from the Lehavim junction north of Be'er Sheva to Al-Arakib.

Dr. Thabet Abu Ras of the human rights group Adalah also said the matter is still before the courts. "The state recognizes ownership rights over the lands of Al-Arakib and is constantly offering them meager compensation for the land. What's more, a law requiring the builder of a house to pay for its demolition was not passed by the Knesset."

The state has demanded compensation for the demolition of illegally built houses in the past in the Galilee and the Arab communities of central Israel; those cases are still before the courts. However, most of those claims are against homes built on private land, not state land, for sums between NIS 300,000 and NIS 400,000. This is the first time such a large suit for damages has been brought against such a large number of defendants.

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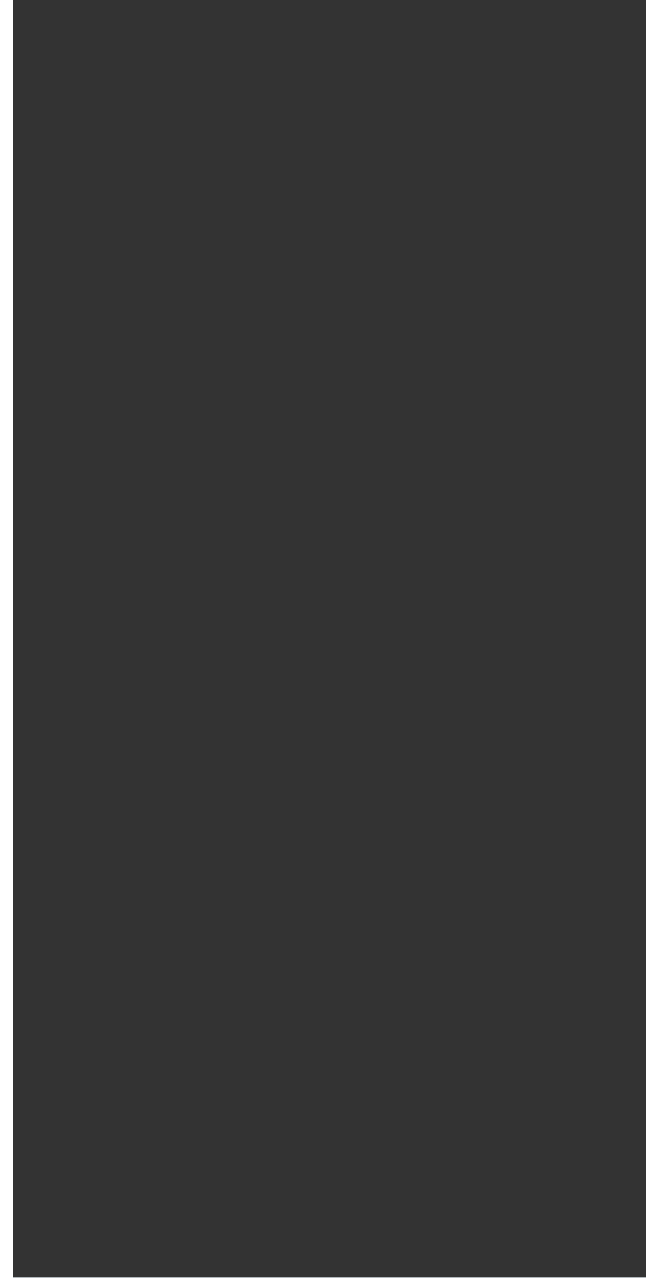
26. **why?** 11 1
bernardo | 27.07.11 | 17:08
25. **the bedouins should convert to judaism then there would be no problem** 12 5
Returner | 27.07.11 | 14:09
24. **what about suing the settlers for the same thing.** 29 1
Sam | 27.07.11 | 13:06
23. **State land?** 25 5
James | 27.07.11 | 12:03

↻ **it means that 95% of israel is state land.the owner can do what he likes.allocate and develop to whom and how it chooses.how it became state land? by astute/ very-rough bargaining.any problem?none-israel is stable,peaceful and rich.a jungle villa forever.** 1 4
|perfectly legal | 27.07.11 | 14:06
22. **Drug Smuggling** 3 18
Andy | 27.07.11 | 11:12
21. **Lawless Bedouins** 6 43
Chaim Ben Kahan | 27.07.11 | 10:43

↻ **Dear Chaim Ben Kahan, at least be fair...** 15 0
|Dov ben David | 27.07.11 | 14:03

↻ **Dear Chaim Ben Kahan, at least be fair...** 6 0
|Dov ben David | 27.07.11 | 14:03
20. **How twisted can you get ?** 20 0
Carol Scheller | 27.07.11 | 09:39
19. **"so they talk to us in a language reserved for enemies who must be defeated"** 5 3
Eliyahu | 27.07.11 | 09:26
18. **Next charge the families for the bullets after firing?** 38 4
Basil Keilani | 27.07.11 | 09:18

↻ **Contradictions** 1 4
|Avi | 27.07.11 | 13:00



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- 17. **Classic land thieves** 👍 4 🗨️ 39
 Gordon Wachsmann | 27.07.11 | 09:06
- 16. **Israels Gov.** 👍 23 🗨️ 1
 Tobias | 27.07.11 | 07:25
- 15. **As a Proud Zionist and Israeli** 👍 27 🗨️ 3
 ?????????????? | 27.07.11 | 07:20
- 14. **It is not the Bedouin's land. They keep putting up houses on state land. They should pay for the cost of demolishing them each time.** 👍 2 🗨️ 22
 Sabab | 27.07.11 | 07:14
- 13. **George** 👍 54 🗨️ 2
 Just like the fine levied against the Jewish community after Krystallnacht
 27.07.11 | 07:05
- 12. **A source in the ILA said that suing for damages "can be an efficient way to deal with squatters and illegal construction."** 👍 36 🗨️ 0
 Jen | 27.07.11 | 06:55
- 11. **hokey pokey** 👍 15 🗨️ 4
 Vickie | 27.07.11 | 06:52
- 10. **ILA** 👍 25 🗨️ 0
 Arieh Zimmerman | 27.07.11 | 06:43
- 9. **The Chinese still get the gold medal** 👍 11 🗨️ 0
 Li | 27.07.11 | 06:33
- 8. **wat** 👍 26 🗨️ 1
 Daniel Lolzbergsteinowitz | 27.07.11 | 06:21
- 7. **Beduins sued for Israaeli crimes** 👍 28 🗨️ 2
 Hank Curtis | 27.07.11 | 05:25

👍 **Are you saying that beduins should be above the law?** 👍 1 🗨️ 2
 |Avi |27.07.11 |12:56
- 6. **Charge the settlers too** 👍 31 🗨️ 2
 Yusef | 27.07.11 | 05:16
- 5. **Needless, i suppose, to point out the fact that settlers get subsidized by the gov't for illegally squatting on palestinian land. Needless right?** 👍 174 🗨️ 13
 hokey pokey | 27.07.11 | 04:28
- 4. **Wow!** 👍 166 🗨️ 8
 Baloney | 27.07.11 | 04:02

👍 **The question is who is the victim, not who has more** 👍 3 🗨️ 15
 |Brad |27.07.11 |06:52
- 3. **... and what next, start charging rent to the 1000s of imprisoned Palestinians?** 👍 164 🗨️ 5
 Victor | 27.07.11 | 04:01

👍 **Actually, that is not an unreasonable idea Victor.** 👍 2 🗨️ 21
 |Brad |27.07.11 |06:54

👍 **That's a good idea** 👍 0 🗨️ 4
 |Avi |27.07.11 |12:52
- 2. **Beyond chutzpah doesn't even begin to cover this.** 👍 129 🗨️ 4
 Vitctor | 27.07.11 | 03:59
- 1. **In Communist China, After An Execution, They Present The Guy's Family With A Bill For The Bullet** 👍 114 🗨️ 13
 Binyamin in Orangeburg | 27.07.11 | 03:59

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