



**Arab Association for Human Rights (HRA)  
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**Israeli Authorities Destroy Thousands of  
Dunams of Crops in the Naqab (Negev)**

Half a month ago and again this week, Israeli authorities destroyed the crops belonging to citizens in the Naqab, who according to the most recent statistics are the nation's poorest, in the Araqib area, Ararat Al-Naqab, Zaarora, and Ktamat. The families of Sliman and Shami Al-Farawny were among the owners of the lands that were sprayed with toxic chemicals. Twenty people as well as sheep were exposed to the chemicals, and one man, Salim Abo Mdegem, was taken to the hospital to be treated for respiratory problems because he was unable to breathe after inhaling the crop poison. (*Al-Mithaq*, February 13).

Ahmad Al-Tory who is a member of Rahat municipality and one of the owners of the fields that were sprayed stated, "The crop destruction will not prevent us from cultivating our land. We will not be bothered that we lost this money. We have a great deal of patience, and they will not take that which they are dreaming of. We will re-prepare the land to cultivate it next summer."

In the village of Ktamat the damage caused by the crop spraying was the greatest because Sliman Al-Farawny's house was blanketed with the poisonous material. He told *Fasl Al-Maqal* newspaper: "My sons and I were surprised when we saw a plane above our home. As we looked up at the plane, the chemical material fell on us. At that point I knew that it was poisonous, and I sent my sons inside. Even so, the material still fell on my house as well as the houses of my cousins, with women and children inside. 100 sheep also came in contact with the poison. This is our land, and we have never received a demolition order. At the last meeting with the ILA (Israel Lands Administration), they told me that this is not my land, but I inherited it from my grandfathers. How could they come and destroy my crops without any notice?" (February 13).

Saed Al-Khromy from the Arab Unity political party stated, "After increasing the price of bread, the authorities destroyed our crops in the Naqab. It is inconceivable that they would do that to the poorest part of the country." (*Al-Mithaq*, February 13).

**For the Second Time in Two Months: 6  
Houses Demolished in Al-Uzumiyya, near  
Ailaboun**

For the second time in two months, the Building and Planning Committee demolished the house of Muhammad Zaal Swetat and the houses of his four sons and one daughter. More than 30 people from the family lived in these houses, which consisted of tents made from sheep's hair. Swetat related, "Two months ago they demolished our houses, but we rebuilt the tents because we had no other option in this poor weather and rain." He continued, "On Monday, they came back and demolished our houses another time without showing any compassion. They got the women and children out of the tents and then demolished the tents with all of the contents still inside. When my wife who is 63 years old and my daughter who is pregnant attempted to stop them, they pushed them to the ground. We had to take them to the hospital for treatment." Swetat added, "From one side they demolish houses on the pretext of unlicensed building, while from the other side they refuse to issue licenses on the pretext that the land belongs to the state. This is not true. And they deny us any alternative way of living, and perhaps, to remain homeless is the 'humane solution in this democratic country.'" (*Al-Sinnara*, February 13).

**Internally Displaced from Mear Village  
Combat Plan to Expand Yaad Settlement on  
their Cemetery**

The Mear Residents Committee complained to the District Planning Committee concerning the

Mishgav Regional Council's plan to expand building in Yaad, which is near Sakhnin, over Mear's old city. The proposed expansion will take place on areas where one can still find the cemetery, houses, neighborhoods, and mosque of Mear. (*Kull Al-Arab*, February 13).

Zaki Heby, a member of the Mear Committee said, "When the citizens of Yaad took over our old houses, we didn't object, but we will not agree to encroachment onto the cemetery." (*Sawt Al-Haqq Wal Hurriya*, February 13).

### **Peace and Social Justice Organization Report Shows 16% Unemployment Rate in Israel and 20% Unemployment in Arab Sector**

The Peace and Social Justice Organization published a new report that put Israel's unemployment rate 50% higher than the rate recorded by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). The CBS reported that the unemployment rate in 2003 was 10.7%, but according to the Peace and Social Justice Organization, it was actually 16%. This discrepancy was caused by the CBS data's omission of people who had given up on their job searches and people who worked part-time jobs while looking for full-time employment. Both sources showed higher levels of unemployment in the Arab sector. For example, CBS data showed that in 2002 the unemployment rate in Israel was 10.3% overall, 13.4% among Arabs, and 9.8% among Jews. The Peace and Social Justice Organization recorded that in 2002, 1.7% of the general population had despaired of finding work; 0.9% of the Jewish sector and 6.1% of the Arab sector had given up on finding employment.

The new report also showed that the general unemployment rate for women in Israel is 90% higher than the unemployment rate for men. However, the report lacked information on the unemployment rate among Arab women who had never been employed, which make up a significant portion of the Arab female population. This information is important because the percent of Arab women who have never been employed is changing, and there is a growing disparity between the unemployment rate of Arab and Jewish women due to the worsening political situation. An unnamed source reported that 70% of Arab women do not work, and 45% of all Arab women have never worked in their

lives. Also, the percent of women who have never worked in the Naqab is twice the percent of women from the North who have never worked. (*Al-Sinnara*, February 13).

### **Situation of Arabs in Israeli Prisons**

Ansar Al-Sajin – Friends of the Political Prisoners appealed to human rights organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to intervene to put a stop to violence against Arab women prisoners in Hasharon Prison. Ansar Al-Sajin lawyer Shadi Abo Younis said that the following women were beaten in the prison and several of them were placed in solitary confinement: Sahar Badir, Ghada Afify, Latifa Abo-Draa, Rawya Al-Sheikh, Arin Ahmad, Soad Abo-Hamad. (*Al-Sinnara*, February 13).

The Israel prison administration is also said to be training a special force to work in the prisons to deal with difficulties with the prisoners. This means that relations with the prisoners will further deteriorate and become more violent. (*Fasl Al-Maqal*, February 13).

MK Abd Al-Malik Dahamshy heard about this force from the prisoners that he visited on 10 February 2004. In Natsan, 88 prisoners had been beaten, and violence in the prison has come to be considered routine. Prisoners also complained that it is difficult to see and communicate with visitors because an iron grating separates the prisoners from their guests in the main visiting area. The prison's clinic had 22 patients, 17 of them who have been there permanently. The prisoners in the clinic complained of poor nutrition and a large plastic wall that was built in the clinic's visiting room to separate prisoners from their visitors. (*Hadith Al-Nas*, February 13).

### **Two Arabic Teachers Searched in a Degrading Manner upon Visit to Tel Aviv University**

MK Dr. Ahmad Tibi questioned the Interior Minister about an incident in which two Arabic teachers were searched in a degrading way by two policewomen at Tel Aviv University. The two teachers, Azim Sidki and Raafat Eweda from Taibi, were stopped by two policewomen as they entered the campus and asked for their identity

cards. Despite Sidki and Exeda's compliance with this request, the police proceeded to remove all of their belongings from the car and put them on the ground. The two women found this treatment humiliating. MK Tibi asked the police to investigate the incident, and he asked for suggestions for how the ministry can confront such cases which have been prevalent in recent times and which he attributed to racism.

#### **Charges Brought Against Ghassan and Sarhan Athamly, Two Members of Tajamoa**

On Sunday February 8, the general attorney presented a list of charges against Ghassan and Sarhan Athamly to the central court in Nazareth. The two defendants are brothers from Reine village and are both members of Tajamoa (also Balad – National Democratic Assembly). The charges levied against them include relations with Hezb'allah, and the official political and security bodies in Israel have been using the charge sheet to incite public sentiment against Arab citizens in Israel. Tajamoa issued a statement concerning the charges in which it repudiated attempts to link them to the party: "All those attempts are aimed at removing Tajamoa from a position of political influence." The statement also stated, "Tajamoa is a political party and movement that is working for full equality and for peace and to achieve rights through lawful means."

MK Muhammad Barake (Jabha) said that conclusions should not be drawn before the court makes its decision and that it must be careful not to include all Arabs in the charge sheet. (*Al-Ittihad*, February 9).

On Thursday February 12, the Knesset held a discussion on the case about whether the Knesset has the authority to consider issues that are still in court. MK Jamal Zahalka (Tajamoa) said, "We are speaking of persons who have not yet been found guilty according to the law because the court has not passed a judgment yet, and the Knesset does not have the right to put itself in the place of the judge." He asked, "What will all of the people who are stirring up incitement against Tajamoa and the two brothers say when they find out that the charges are not true?" *Fasl Al-Maqal*, February 13).

#### **Police Arrest Muhammad Kanany from Ibaa Al-Balad**

On Saturday February 7, the police forced their way into the home of Muhammad Kanany, conducted a search, and arrested Kanany and his brother Hossam. Police also searched Ibaa Al-Balad's office in Arabe where they beat in the doors and took a computer and several papers. At the same time, police entered the office of Al-Balad Al-Thaqafiyya (Education Village Organization) and the movement's club in Haifa. (*Al-Ittihad*, February 9).

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