

In the Naqab, only a small part of the two million dunums owned by the Palestinians was left after all their villages were destroyed in the 1947-48 war, and the ensuing confiscations on «security», «development», and military pretexts. Then, after the Camp David accord was signed, more than 300,000 dunums were confiscated to build three military airports to replace the ones from which the Israelis withdrew in the Sinai. In May 1982, the Jewish Agency announced a project to settle one million Jews in the Naqab and to build 100 settlements by the year 2000. Intensive efforts are now underway to confiscate large areas of land from the Zubeidat family to join it to nearby Jewish settlements.

The Zionist government is also seeking to settle the Bedouins in seven housing areas as a step towards confiscating their land. However, this conspiracy has met fierce resistance despite all the repressive measures used against the people, their herds and crops, by the Green Patrol, created by Ariel Sharon when he was minister of agriculture, to execute the Judaization and expulsion plans. Despite all the land that has been confiscated, the Zionists have fallen short of their goals in the Naqab. At a festival held in Eshkol settlement on September 21, 1986, for the 100th anniversary of Ben Gurion's birthday, Israeli President Haim Hertzog admitted that «the settlement that had started intensively in the Negev is losing its thrust, and we are today very far away from seeing the Negev as Ben Gurion envisioned it, and these days we need a dramatic effort in this field.» Ben Gurion considered the Naqab as a sensitive area that must be settled to form a human and military wall against Nasser's Egypt.

2. HOUSING POLICY

This is a studied policy that aims at restricting Palestinian residents all over, forbidding them from settling down, creating social diseases as a result of overcrowding and housing shortages, and ultimately driving them to despair and emigration. There is a dual basis for this policy. First is the lack of a plan for the majority of Arab cities and villages. This serves the Zionists' expansionist aims of swallowing Palestinian land to annex it to Jewish settlements. Second is the discriminatory policy of the Housing Ministry which denies Palestinians access to housing projects, while providing such projects, apartments and other facilities for Jews. As an example, the Jewish town of Upper Nazareth was built at the expense of the Palestinian Arab city Nazareth and the villages of Ain Mahil, Rina, Kafr Kana and Al Mashhad. The area of Nazareth is approximately 7,500 dunums, of which one-third is owned by the state and churches, while Upper Nazareth covers 9,500 dunums. This is despite the fact that Nazareth's population is over 40,000, while Upper Nazareth's population is about half that.

Such institutionalized discrimination is the source of the problems of overcrowding and housing shortages from which the Palestinian Arabs suffer, and which leave negative social and psychological effects. Since the Israeli government deliberately delays the granting of construction licenses to Palestinian residents, they often start to build without a license. Today, over 7,000 houses in the Galilee and Triangle were constructed in this way, and are threatened with destruction. Many committees have been formed to study this matter, the latest being the Kovitch committee which recommended that 4,500 of these houses be retained, while the rest, located near or on roads, crossings and state land, be destroyed. Still, the government only agreed to grant a few hundred licenses, perpetuating the problem. Koenig, governor of the northern region, resigned last March as a result, for he had insisted on all these houses being destroyed.

In the Naqab, the Zionist government refuses to grant any construction licenses since it is seeking to settle the Palestinian Arabs in special villages so they can serve as a cheap labor force. The government decided to destroy all unlicensed houses, especially those in Zubeidat village. However, a committee of the Interior Ministry, formed to handle the housing problem, recommended issuing licenses for these houses in return for the confiscation of 500 dunums of the village land to be annexed to Kiryat Taoun settlement.

In Jaffa, where the Palestinian Arabs are concentrated in two quarters, Al Ajami and Jabala, they also suffer from overcrowding. Here the authorities refuse to grant them licenses for

construction, repair or enlarging their homes, or to buy buildings or apartments. In addition, Jewish residents refuse to lease to Palestinian Arabs. In the May 22, 1981 edition of the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, Ilan Shouri wrote, «The two quarters in which the Arabs live in Jaffa leave the impression of two neglected refugee camps. Thousands of residents who seem to have equal rights in the State of Israel, live there in subhuman conditions, and in buildings more like stables or archaeological sites at best. In Jaffa, time stopped 33 years ago.»

The situation in Acca is not different. Here the Palestinians live behind the old walls of the city, surrounded by Jewish quarters that keep them from expanding with population growth needs. They live in old houses, about 200 of which were estimated to be on the verge of collapse by Acca township in 1973. The sunlight cannot penetrate the cracked walls that still don't stop the rain from coming in, all of which causes dangers and diseases. The authorities prevent the Palestinians from repairing, rebuilding or enlarging their houses in an obvious attempt to drive them to leave for a village or emigrate altogether. Meanwhile the residents adhere to their homes. The protest campaigns they have mounted always elicit promises to build an Arab quarter in Acca, and transform the old city into a tourist attraction. However, after 12 years nothing has come of these promises. There are houses to be bought in Acca, but purchase is conditional on the buyer's having finished military service, which excludes the Palestinian Arabs.

Although Palestinian Druze are forced to do military service, they suffer the same dilemma. Despite all promises given by the government to build a special housing quarter, especially for released soldiers and newly married couples, nothing ever materialized. This proves beyond the shadow of a doubt the discrimination practiced against the Palestinian Arabs.

3. FUNDING LOCAL COUNCILS

There are 63 local councils for Palestinian Arabs, of which 17 are in Druze villages. These councils were established in the sixties and seventies after continuous struggle on the part of the Palestinians. The number of Palestinian citizens under the jurisdiction of these councils is over 12% higher than the total number of residents in the jurisdiction of the other local councils in the Zionist state. However, only 2.3% of the budget for local councils is allocated to the Palestinian councils by the Interior Ministry. In 1985, the budget was \$1.3 billion. This means that less than \$60 is spent for each Palestinian, whereas the share of the individual Jew is \$300. The Palestinian Arab councils' budget is subject to the Zionist regional governor's estimations and moods. It covers only a fraction of the needs and services of the Palestinian towns and villages. While the Israeli Property Department collects 400 million shekels yearly in taxes, only 3% of this is transferred to local councils. Revenues from taxes collected by the Palestinian Arab councils constitute only 16% of their self-acquired income, while the self-acquired income of the local Jewish councils is 32%, of which 18% is collected from local taxes imposed by the councils (1985 census).

This discriminatory policy has led to the accumulation of a deficit in the local councils' budget for many years, with no solution. This deficit reached \$17 million in July 1985, and \$25 million one year later. Thus, the councils were unable to pay employees and school teachers for many months, after which salaries are paid in a lump sum; then things return to as they were before. Many development projects have been stopped, and the services provided by the councils have deteriorated. Employees, teachers and students went on strike scores of times in 1985-86, to protest these conditions; the citizens at large declared their solidarity and went on a general strike. The Regional Committee of Local Arab Council Heads, formed in 1982, negotiated with government officials, but this resulted in nothing more than bits and pieces of no consequence. (In contrast, when the Jewish local councils faced a financial problem in 1985, the government quickly granted emergency aid totalling \$6 million for each of these councils.)

Members of the local Arab councils, along with the citizens at large, have repeatedly demonstrated in their towns and villages, and in front of the Israeli Knesset and the Prime Minister's office, shouting: «Oh Peres, oh Rabin, we want bread and flour... oh Peres, oh Rabin, you made us poor...» The results