

German Social Democratic party funds project to dispossess Bedouin of their land

20.12.12

For Immediate Release

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THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY GERMANY FUNDS PROJECT TO DISPOSSESS BEDOUIN OF THEIR LAND

The Negev Coexistence Forum Responds

Thursday, 20 December, 2012 (Beer Sheva, Israel): The Negev Coexistence Forum has learned of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands—SPD)'s project to plant trees on Bedouin land in the Negev. The Forum is highly concerned that this forestry project has and will continue to dispossess Bedouin of those lands for which they are currently fighting in court. The Negev Coexistence Forum sent the following letter to SPD Members:

Dear SPD Members,

It has come to our attention that the SPD is promoting a campaign to plant trees in the northern Israeli Negev as part of the “Forest of German States” project. The campaign's organizers have publicized it as a green venture that benefits local residents as well as the ecological system. However, this enterprise also plays into the Israeli government's prolonged policy of dispossessing the indigenous Bedouin population. The forest, in fact, covers land owned by Bedouins--Israeli citizens who are engaged in a legal dispute over the status of precisely that land on which the “Forest of German States” is being developed.

The trees that you are encouraging people to sponsor serve to keep the Bedouin owners of the land at bay, physically barring their return, while wiping out the memory of their once flourishing communities.

In the adjacent video, one can see that beneath the pine trees and the commemorative stones, lay the ruins; memories; and hopes of the original owners of the land.

It is unfortunate that such a positive and heart-warming gesture will serve not to make the desert bloom but rather to intensify contention between the Jewish and Arab communities of the Negev. We invite the SPD to reconsider this destructive campaign and join Israelis, Jews and Bedouins in their efforts to create coexistence in the Negev.

Sincerely,

The Negev Coexistence Forum

We are currently awaiting a response from the Social Democratic Party.

To learn more, please view the following NCF original video, Forest of German States in the Negev.