







Mitzpe Ilan outpost vs. the unrecognized village Dar ElHanoun
ICDH report, March 2008

	Dar ElHanoun	Mitzpe Ilan/Mitzpe `Iron
		
Location	Wadi Ara, State of Israel, 3Km from one another	
Land	Private (owned by residents)	Public
Founded	1925	2003
Families	10	39
Population	Indigenous farmers	Populated by an extreme right-wing settler association, backed by Israeli government
Road	 Improvised road sign (vandalized)	 Road and sign to Mitzpe Ilan
	 Entrance to Dar ElHanoun (pavement demolished by Israeli government)	 Entrance to Mitzpe Ilan
Government Policy	"A new settlement in this area is inconsistent with national and district planning." Meir Sheerit, Minister of Interior Affairs, 30.10.07	"This settlement has to be recognized, for security reasons, strategic reasons, and settlement reasons". Yigal Shahr, Head of northern district Planning authority, 13.3.06
Status by Israeli law	"Illegal" – destined for demolition	Approved by Israeli government (February 2008)
Citizenship	All residents are Israeli citizens	All residents are Israeli citizens
Ethnicity	Arab	Jewish

Practice of dispossession in Wadi 'Ara – Mitzpe Ilan outpost vs. the unrecognized village Dar ElHanoun

*Kobi Peter, Yoav Winter & Uri Zackhem –
Haokets (haokets.org), 11/02/08*

It is not always easy to see the discrimination and dispossession mechanisms that the State of Israel puts into action against its Arab citizens. But sometimes, a small and odd injustice helps in clarifying the dark considerations that guide the government's policy vis a vis its Arab subjects. Such a case happened last week, when the government decided to recognise the exclusively-Jewish locality Mitzpe 'Iron in Wadi 'Ara – also known as *Mitzpe Ilan*. The said locality is situated between Katzir and Harish, and was established in 2003 as a military outpost. The settlement there continued with the help of the Jewish agency, the Israeli government and a settlers association called *OR* (Hebrew for "light") that establishes exclusively Jewish localities and neighbourhoods within the green line. Nowadays Mitzpe Ilan houses 39 families that have responded to *Or's* emphatic call: "Come and Judaize the Galilee!"

The co-operation of the government with this extreme-right settler association was criticised by the state comptroller, for being improper. The society for the protection of nature, and the ministry for the protection of the environment also objected to the move because it harms open and green areas. The matter is now debated in the supreme court of justice, and the governmental decision was probably meant to create facts on the ground even before the court hearing. The process of establishing Mitzpe Ilan is nothing new for those who follow the establishment of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. However, Mitzpe Ilan is in Israel, within the green line, in an area where hundreds of thousands of Arab citizens live under dire housing problems.

Near the settlement there is an unrecognised village, *Dar ElHanoun*, inhabited by Arab citizens of Israel. The village was built more than 80 years ago, its land was purchased by the inhabitants during the British mandate, and they legally own it to this day. The planning and construction law of 1965 earmarked the village land as agricultural, even though stone houses had been there for tens of years already. The same law turned some 80 villages more around Israel to non-recognised, and today they are home to more than 80,000 people.

For more than 20 years the inhabitants of Dar ElHanun have been struggling for recognition. More than three months ago several MKs, including the chairman of the Knesset committee for internal affairs, Ofir Pines, sent a letter to the minister of interior Meir Shitrit, demanding that the village is recognised. The minister was also approached by *BIMKOM* association, an association of planners for human rights. Minister Shitrit's response was twofold: in the night of 14/11/07, hundreds of policemen, with a bulldozer, arrived in Dar ElHanoun in order to demolish the village

piazza. The second response was a letter to MK Pines, in which the minister explained why he's not going to recognise the village. As usual the minister was helped by planning pretexts, and noted the "special landscape values" of the region, that do not enable the establishment of a "new" (sic!) locality there. The very same reasons did not prevent minister Shitrit from supporting the nearby settlement of Mitzpe Ilan, on land allocated by the state only five years ago. Ha'aretz daily noted that several ministers openly talked about their fear of Arabs taking control of the area. Not knowing, they were talking about an Arab village whose land is privately owned by its inhabitants and is about as old as the city of Tel Aviv. In the *Newspeak* of the Israeli ethnocracy, there's no problem to describe an old Arab village threatened by demolition and expulsion as "Arab taking control of land".

The government's meeting brings into the fore the *Star plan* initiated by Ariel Sharon in 1990-1992 when he was the minister for housing construction. Its aim was, among others, "to create barriers inside the Arab population, in order to intercept the immanent danger of unification between existing small Arab localities which will become large and strong Arab cities". The area between Katzir and Harish – the northernmost *stars* of the plan – include the land of Dar ElHanoun. This area, if settled by Jews, according to the government's wish, will be able to separate between Kufr Qare' and 'Ar'ara in the north, and Baqa ElGharbiyya in the south. Populating the region with Jews is one of the objectives of the establishment of Mitzpe Ilan. Mitzpe Ilan was established in order to prevent a continuum of Arab localities that may grow and get connected to the Arab localities of the central triangle. The continuing denial of recognition is part of these efforts.

Things are quite clear now: the systematic discrimination of Arabs in Wadi 'Ara is not because of "planning" or "environmental" reasons as the ministry of interior claims. It's a hysteric obsession that settled in the minds of all the decision makers, aided by the neutral discourse of planning and land allocation. Ministers, clerks and planners in the ministry of interior are still most bothered by the "danger of unification of Arab localities" and "Arab taking control" of land. Equality, distributional justice, or just allocation of resources, bother them much less. And so, the government decision to recognise Mitzpe Ilan clearly mark the outlines of the struggle for equality in Israel: not a detached technical planning debate, but a fight against institutional racism. In the fuzzy discourse around the processes of dispossession, it is a small achievement.

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English translation: Uri Zackhem

The Arab locality will be destroyed, the Jewish locality enlarged

Sharon Rofe-Ofir & Tani Goldstein / YNET (ynet.co.il), 19.2.08

The government decision to establish a Jewish locality in Wadi 'Ara and demolish an unrecognised Arab village nearby, caused a turmoil in the Knesset committee for internal affairs. MK Taha [Tajamu' / Balad / National Democratic Alliance]: "Shitrit [Minister of Interior, Kadima] surprises me. On the one hand he wants to establish an Arab town, and on the other to demolish an 80 years old locality".

Shitrit: "The area is a green reserve".

"On what values do you want us to raise our children, that see that the left hand demolishes an Arab locality and the right hand establishes a Jewish locality?" This strong question was made today (Tuesday, 19/02/08) by MK Wasel Taha [Tajamu' / Balad / National Democratic Alliance] in a stormy debate in the Knesset internal affairs committee, about the government's decision to establish a Jewish community village in Wadi 'Ara while demolishing a nearby Arab locality, 80 years of age.

MK Taha raised the issue of the uprooting of Dar ElHanoun, and came against what he termed "the double policy". On one hand the government wishes to demolish an Arab locality on the pretext that it ruins the view and the ambience, and on the other hand wishes to create Mitzpe Ilan - a community settlement for religious Jews - mere 3 Km. away.

Since it was established, Dar ElHanoun has not been recognised officially, and is considered an illegal locality. There are 150 people living in Dar ElHanoun. Taha approached the ministry of interior and requested that Dar ElHanoun is annexed to the nearby municipality of 'Arara. It was agreed, but since Shitrit was appointed as the minister of interior the process has been freezed.

"Is the Jewish locality not an environmental hazard?"

Mitzpe Ilan started a few years ago as a NAHAL [Pioneer Combatant Youth - an IDF unit used as paratroopers and settlers] settlement. Early this month [February 2008] the government decided that it is going to be a recognised civil settlement. Between Mitzpe Ilan and Dar ElHanoun the Vered quarry is situated. Recently the Arab villagers received letters ordering them to demolish their own homes because they are an environmental hazard.

"If hurting the environment is the reason to evacuate a locality, then the quarry has to be removed as it hurts the environment. Besides, isn't the Jewish locality an environmental hazard?" asked MK Taha the committee members.

Talking to YNET, Taha said that especially in these days, when the minister of interior boasts his plan to establish an Arab town, these things cause anger. "I am surprised by the contradicting statements of Shitrit. On one hand he wants to establish an Arab town, and on the other he wants to uproot an 80 year old locality. This policy has to be uprooted."

The chairman of the Knesset committee for internal affairs, Ofir Pines [Labour, previously minister of interior] said: "I believe that the evacuation is really a crime. This locality exists for tens of years - before the state was established. It has to be made legal and not uproot it. One cannot be removed from one's land arbitrarily".

Shitrit reacted: "The houses in Dar ElHanun were built illegally and without any authorisation. Every such construction is bound to be demolished. The area is a green reserve in which construction is impossible. The supreme court rejected the appeal of the eight families that live there, and I'm surprised that the chairman does not defend the law".

In the end of the debate, the committee recommended the ministry of interior to recognise the village and not evacuate it.

International Committee for Dar ElHanoun (ICDH)

http://www.geocities.com/dar_elhanoun/icdh.html