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Gadi Algazi

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Nomadizing the Bedouins: Displacement, Resistance, and Patronage in the Northern Naqab, 1951–52

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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 1951, the Israeli military government of the Negev launched an operation to uproot over five thousand Palestinian Bedouin citizens from the relatively rainy northwest Naqab to its arid eastern side in order to take control of the fertile lands. The campaign formed part of a more comprehensive strategy aimed at inducing the Bedouins to leave the country “voluntarily.” While the operation had far-reaching consequences, it achieved only partial success, as the army was faced with resistance from the Bedouins, some of whose leaders still had powerful patrons within the Zionist movement since before the 1948 war. The hitherto unexamined story of the 1951 displacement campaign thus captures a particular historical moment in the aftermath of the war in which Bedouins’ patronage links were put to the test in the face of the military’s attempts to uproot them. It also demonstrates how the settler-colonial regime sought to take advantage of the contradictions of Indigenous society yet repeatedly found itself unable to fully capitalize on internal divisions among the Bedouins. Lastly, a study of the campaign undermines the prevalent image of a modernizing Israeli state promoting permanent settlement and confronted with obstinate nomadic Bedouins. Like other Palestinians, Bedouins insisted that they were rooted in the local landscape, while the settler-colonial state sought to uproot them, combining violent “nomadization” with forced “sedentarization.”


KEYWORDS

Bedouins; Naqab; displacement; resistance; patronage; land expropriation; Zionist left; kibbutzim; nomadization; sedentarization

I don’t want to get into the subtle mechanics of how people are willingly deported. There are very subtle mechanics here.

—MK Ya’akov Rittin, December 3, 1951.¹

ON DECEMBER 7, 1951, Palestinian Member of the Knesset (MK) Emile Habibi (Communist Party) submitted a parliamentary query to Prime Minister and Minister of Defense David Ben-Gurion. Habibi cited a letter he received from the heads of three Bedouin tribes in the Naqab.² The vast majority of Palestinians living there had become refugees following 1948, while those who remained and received citizenship or temporary transit licenses were concentrated by Israel in the *sayyig*—a closed military zone or reservation mostly located to the east of Beersheba with a smaller extension to its north.³ The amount of precipitation in this particular area, on the northwestern edge of the Naqab, enabled Bedouins to support themselves on a mix of dry farming and pastoralism. This is what the al-‘Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and

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al-Afinish tribes did until November 2, 1951, when they were displaced from their lands and resettled eastward in an area far more arid. Habibi recounted that in their letter, the heads of the tribes wrote

that the displacement occurred against their will; that they were discriminated against by the government compared to other tribes, such as the tribe of Sheikh Salman al-Huzayl, which remained in the northern area; that they were dispossessed of their lands, which they had prepared for farming and cultivated over many years; that the territory that was given to them in the eastern part of the region is not suitable for cultivation, and finally, they add, they are peace-loving tribes which did not take part in the war against the Israeli army, and that they were given a promise by the government in 1948 that they could remain on their lands.⁴

In light of this promise, Habibi asked Ben-Gurion what the reasons were for their displacement and what steps would be taken to give them back their lands and properties. Ben-Gurion answered on February 6, 1952:

On October 17, 1951, the heads of the displaced tribes signed a statement at the military governor's office in the Negev that they were willing to move of their own free will for a special payment. The military governor was interested in this move because the area where those moved previously lived used to be a crossroads of the smuggling routes between Gaza and Hebron, and the local Bedouins participated in these smuggling activities. The heads of the tribes themselves chose the area to which they would move. The government looked for lands for them and also provided them with water until the cisterns in the area were filled by rain. In addition, they were given a loan for [purchasing] seeds.⁵

The exchange, briefly reported in the press, is one of the rare pieces of information that reached the Israeli public regarding the displacement of more than two thousand Bedouin citizens to the arid eastern Naqab, where many continued to live decades later. The military operation had been kept secret until Habibi tried to use the parliamentary platform to expose it,⁶ but in response, Ben-Gurion depicted it as an innocuous deal between the Bedouins and the military government. Bedouin spokespeople repeatedly raised this affair before state authorities, but only after more than fifty years did it resurface in the media as a result of the tenacious struggle of several descendants, mainly of the al-'Uqbi, Abu Mdighem, and Abu Freih families, to return to the original lands from which they had been displaced, demanding recognition of their land rights in the al-'Araqib area, around ten kilometers north of Beersheba. Their struggle drew attention to the broader displacement campaign of 1951, which had occasionally been referenced but as yet never reconstructed in its entirety.⁷

Research for this article thus began with listening to stories about a forced displacement that, according to Ben-Gurion, never occurred. In view of the state's consistent denial of the events, this paper heavily draws on its own records—wherever possible, on contemporaneous documentation produced by the Israeli authorities. However, reliance on the available documents in army and state archives comes at a cost. First, Palestinians in general and Bedouins in particular appear in them first and foremost as mere objects of state action. Second, essential archival materials are still inaccessible, and others have only recently been declassified, with significant redactions; and third, censorship of archival materials was preceded by self-censorship during the displacement itself: The political constraints under which the military operation was conducted compelled the officers in charge to refrain from issuing written eviction orders to the Bedouins and to seek ways of inducing them to “consent” to imposed displacement. Quite exceptionally, however, in this case we are not confined to confronting

state documentation with Palestinian testimonies, but are able to supplement the dossiers in the military archive with uncensored documents from the archive of the left-wing Zionist party Mapam—some of whose affiliated kibbutzim were located close by in the northern Naqab. Mapam members were not mere witnesses; the ambiguities of their position—as neighbors and frontier settlers, operating within the state apparatus and on its margins—disposed them to play an important and contradictory role in this affair and, as a result, to produce some exceptional pieces of documentation.

A precise reconstruction is needed not only to critically examine the state's denial of the displacement campaign; only in high resolution can the objects of colonial rule emerge here as historical agents coping with the new conditions. This should allow us to make sense of their wavering between resignation, opposition, and collusion, and to comprehend how petitioning Zionist patrons could be combined with stubborn resistance on the ground. We can also see how the new settler-colonial regime took advantage of the rifts and fissures within Indigenous society, and thus gain a better understanding of the ambivalences and contradictions of Palestinian resistance under Israeli rule in the early 1950s.

The story illuminates the close relationship between forced displacement within the newly founded state and attempts to get the Bedouins to leave it “voluntarily.” It also enables a closer look at the ways local actors—Zionist settlers and Indigenous society, especially Bedouin elites—coped with the reality that emerged in the wake of 1948, as the power dynamics between the settlers and the local Bedouins were radically overturned. Would the ties of patronage that Bedouin elites forged under British imperial rule withstand the settler-colonial thrust of the state? What forms of resistance were available to those Bedouins who, despite being granted citizenship, remained in constant danger of expulsion from the country?⁸ Finally, while the ongoing conflict between the state of Israel and the Bedouins of the Naqab is often presented as one in which a “modern state” confronts “nomads” obstinately refusing to become “sedentary,” it was actually the Israeli authorities who forcibly “nomadized” the Bedouins of the northern Naqab as they tried to hold on to their lands. Nomadization thus emerged at the intersection of colonial fantasies of Indigenous rootlessness, exoticized images of the Bedouins as living relics of a biblical past, and strategic denial of their land rights. And while recurring displacements both invoked fictions of pure nomadism and sought to turn them into reality, imposed nomadization repeatedly mutated into its apparent opposite, “sedentarization”—the forced concentration of the Bedouins and their confinement to designated, narrow areas. These were two sides of the same Zionist settler-colonial policy toward the Bedouins of the Naqab.

Plans and Preparations

In September 1951, at the end of his term as military governor-general, Emmanuel Mor reviewed the achievements of the military government over the previous two years. With the help of a series of quiet operations, he reported with satisfaction to the assembled governors, the military government had managed to reduce the number of Arabs in Israel by 20,000 and vacate considerable amounts of land within its borders. Following the eviction of the Arabs of the western Naqab in the area surrounding the Gaza Strip the previous year, the Bedouins in its northern part were now also in the “process of being evacuated,” so that “*if any Bedouins remain* [in the Negev], they will only be in the eastern area.”⁹

Mor's remarks hinted at the comprehensive plan to displace Bedouins that had been discussed a month prior at the Negev military government headquarters. Its main purpose was to evict the Bedouins from the northern spur of the *sayyig*, a relatively rainy and fertile area, to its arid eastern sector. Its secondary goal was to create a ten- to-fifteen-kilometers-wide "closed area" without Arabs around the city of Beersheba. In fact, in 1949, the Israeli authorities already considered relocating the Bedouins to the eastern Naqab—an area so parched that Zionist colonizing institutions assumed no Jewish settlement was possible there. The plan was rejected because of the water shortage in the area.¹⁰ In 1951, however, even though the problem of water scarcity remained unsolved, the authorities decided to move the Bedouins eastward. Three factors explain this: optimistic (and exaggerated) expectations that Zionist settlement might turn the northern Naqab, still settled in part by Bedouins, into Israel's agricultural breadbasket;¹¹ the assumption that *de facto* displacement could pave the way for *de jure* land expropriation; and the hope that further undermining the Bedouins' livelihood and status would eventually spur them to leave Israel "of their own accord."

The plan was to displace about five thousand people—more than 40 percent of the Bedouin citizens in the Naqab¹²—but in the first stage, it was determined that the largest group in the northern Naqab, the al-Huzayl tribe, and two smaller tribes, al-'Uqbi and al-Talalqa, would remain in place pending a final decision in their case.¹³ The hesitations regarding the fate of al-Huzayl reflected the head of the tribe's special status. Sheikh Salman al-Huzayl maintained extensive patronage ties with the Zionist movement, having provided help in acquiring lands before 1948 and later furnishing the military with information. He also assisted the kibbutzim established in the area in 1946, especially Kibbutz Shoal, and described himself as their "protector."¹⁴ He was the first of the sheikhs with whom Michael Hanegbi, the future military governor of the Negev, met immediately after the Israeli occupation of Beersheba. It is likely that their conversation laid the groundwork for the public ceremony held in Beersheba on November 18, 1948, in which sixteen sheikhs recognized Israel's rule.¹⁵ Thus, by the early 1950s, Salman al-Huzayl held a privileged position, and his people were called "the Bedouins of the government."¹⁶ He leased most of his land—over 20,000 dunams—for a third to a half of the yield, becoming one of the richest sheikhs,¹⁷ and was known to send the officers of the military government after those who failed to pay on time.¹⁸ As part of his cooperation with the authorities, al-Huzayl handed over "infiltrators" (unless they enjoyed his protection) and emerged as someone who was able to settle problems with the military government (for a reasonable fee).¹⁹ In his official tent, al-Huzayl hung photographs of Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, and Ben-Gurion next to his own.²⁰

Furthermore, like other sheikhs during these years of penury and rationing, Sheikh al-Huzayl controlled the only store in his tribe where essential rationed products could be bought at a regulated price. Both the sale of consumer goods and the collection of agricultural produce from the Bedouins, who were denied legal access to the market, were in the hands of monopolistic wholesalers who operated with the help of local Bedouin middlemen—mostly, the sheikhs and their trusted men. While this double monopoly over local supply and collection increased the power of the state-appointed heads of "tribal" units over their people and allowed them to extract surplus rents, it also deepened their dependence on the military government that assigned the profitable monopolies.²¹

In May 1950, the prominent Sheikh al-Huzayl hosted a delegation of senior military officials, including Chief of Staff Yigal Yadin, General of the Southern Command Moshe Dayan,

Hanegbi, and Mor. The convoy of military vehicles, which included local journalists, foreign correspondents, and even a film crew, was greeted by a Bedouin cavalry that accompanied the visitors in what the Hebrew press described as a “parade of oriental splendor.”²² The guests were received with honorary gunfire, and an armed company comprised of Bedouin soldiers recently discharged from the Israeli army saluted Yadin.

Speaking on behalf of his father, al-Huzayl’s son invoked the tribe’s assistance to the neighboring Jewish settlements and to the army and declared the tribe’s loyalty to Israel and its willingness to participate in its defense. From the government, he requested weapons to defend against raids, permission to maintain Bedouin traditions, and mechanized agricultural equipment. The head of the smaller al-‘Uqbi tribe, Sheikh Sulayman al-‘Uqbi, who was close to al-Huzayl (his sister Wadha had recently become Sheikh Salman’s youngest wife), also spoke. Al-‘Uqbi described Yadin’s visit as a historic event that would be celebrated by the Bedouins every year. Under Israeli rule, he said, the Bedouins live in peace and enjoy freedom. In addition to agricultural assistance, al-‘Uqbi requested that taxes not be increased and that the privileges enjoyed by the sheikhs under British rule be preserved. Al-Huzayl presented a magnificent Bedouin sword to Yadin and a traditional dagger to Dayan.²³ After the meal, Yadin responded to his hosts and promised that their requests would be considered by the military government. “I was glad to hear,” he said, “that you live here in peace and tranquility, cultivating your land.”²⁴ Israel strives for peace, he added, but is ready for war: “We will do our best for our friends, but there will be no hope for our enemies.”²⁵

In closed meetings, however, al-Huzayl’s distinguished guests envisaged a different future for the Arabs of the Naqab, not one of “peace and tranquility.” Even before the visit, Hanegbi explained that “it is not yet certain” whether the Bedouins “will not be transferred to other places according to the needs of Jewish settlement and security,” and described the sheikhs who remained in office under Israeli rule as third-rate leaders headed by al-Huzayl, “whom we have propped up.”²⁶ Six months after the celebratory visit, Yadin, Dayan, Ben-Gurion’s advisor on Arab affairs Yehoshua (Josh) Palmon, and his senior advisor on land matters Zalman Lif, set down the principles of Israel’s policy toward the Arabs of the Negev: to “stabilize” those who have become citizens and “force them to concentrate within narrow and clearly defined” areas; and, at the same time, to make clear to every Bedouin that the land “is not his, but only cultivated by him, and we are allowed to move him from time to time, in accordance with our settlement policy, and will do so.”²⁷

Can we then conclude from al-Huzayl’s public displays of loyalty that he deluded himself about the intentions of the Israeli authorities? Not likely, as al-Huzayl had ample opportunity to experience firsthand the new power relations that emerged after 1948. As early as December 1949, a police officer threatened him with expulsion from the country if he did not stop spreading “rumors” about the corruption of a local police officer who enjoyed the special protection of the military governor. The sheikh, reduced to tears, had to deny that he had ever said anything to that effect.²⁸ He learned an even more important lesson from his attempts to gather around him the other sheikhs in defense of Bedouins’ collective rights. In October 1950, just a few months after the visit of the army chiefs, twelve sheikhs led by al-Huzayl sent a petition to the military governor. It began with a modest request to supply goods that were missing from the basket of rationed products, but the petitioners went on to present a series of substantive political demands: to put an end to collective punishments, to the expulsion of Bedouins across the border, and to their “removal from their property, as this is against every

law in the world”; to hold monthly consultations with the sheikhs regarding Bedouin affairs; and to reach a clear decision on the fate of Bedouin lands, including those they were prevented from cultivating and those considered “absentee property” even though their owners were actually living in Israel.²⁹

In early 1951, Sheikh al-Huzayl made a more daring move and sent Ben-Gurion and Hanegbi a statement signed by all the sheikhs of the Naqab, in which they gave him power to represent them before the authorities.³⁰ He hired a prominent Jewish lawyer to handle two critical issues: the Bedouins’ land claims and their continued expulsion from the country. When the military government officer in the area, Captain Avraham Shemesh, asked al-Huzayl why he did this, he pointed to recent press reports indicating that the state had no intention to recognize Bedouin land rights. He was undoubtedly referring to the State Property Law, which the Knesset had passed a few days earlier. *Davar*, the ruling party’s unofficial newspaper, reported this on its front page under the headline “Negev Lands to be Transferred to the State.”³¹ Al-Huzayl claimed that unnamed Jews advised him to act immediately and claim ownership, and explained that “all the Bedouins” clearly see that “the lands they were cultivating are diminishing” with the expansion of Jewish settlements and “feel that there is no place for them in the State of Israel.”³² Shemesh, who was notorious among the Bedouins for his brutality, reported to the governor that, on his order, he had initiated “a conversation” with the sheikhs and successfully thwarted the initiative.³³ While this proved more difficult than Shemesh had assumed,³⁴ three weeks later, the sheikhs informed Hanegbi that they were withdrawing the appointment of Salman al-Huzayl as their representative, explaining that they had acted without considering the matter thoroughly.³⁵ Al-Huzayl’s humiliating defeat was compounded by unexpected publications in the Hebrew press alleging that he was embezzling the food rations allotted to members of his tribe, keeping for himself a significant share of the rations that he was supposed to sell at a controlled price, and selling them under the table for profit instead. The sheikh tried to sue the newspapers for slander, but the report was well-founded and reflected a familiar practice.³⁶ The news items were almost certainly based on detailed information leaked by Shemesh to teach the recalcitrant sheikh a lesson.³⁷

Thus, al-Huzayl was neither blindly loyal nor oblivious to the policies of the Israeli authorities, and even tried to challenge them.³⁸ His bitter defeat exposed the structural weaknesses of his position: the collective opposition that he tried to establish from above, through an agreement with the other sheikhs, proved fragile and easily collapsed under pressure from the military government. Furthermore, the press reports about his exploitative practices revealed the resulting tensions within his tribe as well as the extent to which his power depended on the grace of military authorities. And so, when threatened with eviction in the autumn of 1951, al-Huzayl maneuvered between attempts to gain time by striking a deal with the military government and outright refusal, urging people to resist while at the same time turning to high-ranking Zionist patrons for help. Sheikh Sulayman al-‘Uqbi also tried to resist the army’s pressure to move. He reminded the authorities that he was among the sheikhs who had participated in the ceremony recognizing Israel’s sovereignty in November 1948 and that he had even been imprisoned by the Egyptian authorities for collaborating with Israel. But al-‘Uqbi was the head of a small and fragmented tribe that had regrouped after the war; he had no connections in the upper echelons of power, and internal strife undermined his position in his own tribe. When the displacement operation reached him, his fate and that of his people were therefore very different from al-Huzayl’s.

Displacement

The displacement campaign began at the end of August 1951. Deputy Military Governor, Major Moshe Bar-On, explained to his officers that “it is not advisable to put pressure on the tribes and force them to move, but they should be brought to such a situation that they themselves ask to be moved to another area.”³⁹ A major form of pressure was to prevent them from plowing their lands, since failing to do so before the short and unpredictable winter rains would entail missing the narrow window of opportunity and risking hunger.⁴⁰ This measure was used against the three tribes in the Laqiyya region who sought to buy time by declaring they agreed to move but asked to wait until enough water had accumulated in the cisterns where they were being relocated.⁴¹ Smaller tribes and those who no longer lived on their lands, having already been displaced at least once, yielded more easily to the army’s pressure, but as late as September 17, it was still unclear at the headquarters of the Negev military government how the operation could be completed as long as the largest tribe in the area, al-Huzayl, remained in place.⁴²

A week later, Dayan, who was about to end his term as chief of the Southern Command, announced that he had solved the problem. He reported that he and Hanegbi met with Sheikh Salman al-Huzayl and managed to secure his cooperation.⁴³ Initially, the two officers ordered al-Huzayl to move east to Tel ‘Arad, or further north to the Ramle area in the center of the country, and offered him a “large sum of money” (30,000 Israeli pounds, worth about \$80,000), but he refused. In the end, however, it was agreed that “at this stage,” al-Huzayl would stay in his present location with several hundred members of his tribe and would assist in the transfer of the other tribes.⁴⁴ We only have the officers’ account of the meeting, but given al-Huzayl’s persistent refusal to move, we should assume that he was pressured to concede and that he did so in order to gain valuable time and ensure at least that his family and inner circle would be able to remain on the land.

Dayan detailed the advantages of the displacement: with the relocation of the Bedouins, “about 60 thousand dunams will be freed up” for agricultural cultivation and the establishment of Jewish settlements. This was undoubtedly the decisive goal.⁴⁵ He also explained that displacing the inhabitants would enable a fundamental change in property relations: “Transferring the Bedouins to new territories will annul their rights *as owners of land*, and they will become lessees [of] government lands” (emphasis in the original).⁴⁶ To this, Dayan added security reasons: the displacement will result in the removal of all Bedouins, except for al-Huzayl and his men, from the northwestern Negev—the area linking Hebron and Gaza where “convoys of smugglers and refugees” pass.⁴⁷ Furthermore, in the eastern Negev, a frontier region bordering on the West Bank, the displaced Bedouins will serve as a buffer: They will “fill the void” in this area and prevent it from being cultivated by “foreign Bedouins,” the Jahalin—who had shortly before been expelled from Israel—and other residents of the area south of Hebron. The displacement eastward, Dayan admitted, also came with security drawbacks, as it could strengthen the ties of the displaced with the West Bank. Hanegbi later elaborated on this consideration: in the absence of sources of livelihood in the arid eastern Negev, the ties of the displaced Bedouins with Israel will weaken, and they will be forced to make a living from cross-border smuggling.⁴⁸ But Dayan had an answer to this as well, making clear that in his eyes, displacing the Bedouins within Israel’s territory should be understood in terms of a broader objective: “This point [i.e., pushing the Bedouins to the border area] also has two

sides, since it is their connections with Jordanian territory that will allow them and us to move them from the country to Jordan when an opportunity would arise.”⁴⁹

Dayan concluded by listing the remaining tasks: to locate water sources in the arid eastern area and to plow the land there for the displaced so that the operation could be completed before the winter rains; to immediately start cultivating the lands in the northern Negev obtained through the evacuation of the Bedouins; and to allocate about 50–60,000 Israeli pounds (about \$140–170,000) to Sheikh al-Huzayl and the other sheikhs “for handing over their lands.”⁵⁰ For Dayan, it was important to roughly set the amount of money to be given to the sheikhs, while the precise nature of the transaction could be determined later; he noted that it was still necessary to check the “legal ownership” of the various lands and determine whether the payment constitutes “compensation or purchase.”⁵¹ In fact, members of Kibbutz Shoval claimed that the money offered to al-Huzayl was a bribe,⁵² and Hanegbi later confirmed that “intimidation and bribery” were utilized in the campaign, though “not in all cases.”⁵³ Finally, besides offering money, Dayan instructed the military government “to put pressure on the tribes” in the northern region “to the point that if they would not be displaced voluntarily, the army would be forced to displace them.”⁵⁴

The military government now moved forward with the displacement campaign,⁵⁵ but Dayan’s confidence that he had removed the main obstacle by securing al-Huzayl’s agreement proved premature. Sheikh Salman must have realized that his consent to the displacement of his people would irrevocably undermine his position, especially since the military government considered the impending partial displacement only a first step toward full uprooting the following year.⁵⁶ He refused to accept the money, and rather than softening the opposition of the other sheikhs, he encouraged them to oppose the displacement. Jewish activists from the neighboring kibbutzim also encouraged the Bedouins to resist and, according to the military government, were those who advised them to send a memorandum to the authorities.⁵⁷

On October 11, the sheikhs of the al-‘Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and al-Afinish tribes sent an urgent memorandum to the Prime Minister, government ministers, and Arab Knesset members allied with Mapai, the ruling party. In three days, the three sheikhs wrote, “they are about to force us to vacate the places where we have lived since the days of our ancestors.”⁵⁸ The eviction order, they emphasized, was given to them orally without allowing them to appeal to government institutions or the courts, and they were forbidden to travel to Jerusalem to petition the Israeli Supreme Court. The sheikhs mentioned the ceremony in November 1948 in which heads of Bedouin tribes recognized Israel’s rule: “We surrendered to your honorable government” on the condition that our rights—“our lands, our honor, and our souls”—would be preserved and we would be allowed to possess “enough weapons for self-defense.”⁵⁹ On the eve of the recent Knesset elections, “and even before that,” they claimed, they had been promised “by the highest institutions” that no harm would be done to them:

Can there be a greater injury than when government officials tell you, “We want to sever you from your roots and you must go, transplant yourselves in a foreign place (not ours) and start rebuilding yourselves”—and abandon what belongs to us, to our ancestors, and to our children after us?⁶⁰

Nearby Jewish settlements are sitting safely, they continued, while “we are forced to start over a hard and bitter life despite the difficulties of the past year’s drought”—all this while the new government pledged in its electoral platform to maintain equal rights for Jews and Arabs. Before and during the war of 1948, the sheikhs wrote, “we were considered respectable and

worthy residents” by the government and the neighboring Hebrew settlements, whereas now we have become “blacks and submissive slaves.”⁶¹ And if “out of desperation we would seek to flee” to Arab countries, they concluded, “they will not accept us because in their eyes we are traitors.”⁶²

The sheikhs’ letter set off a wave of inquiries and written exchanges between various branches of the government.⁶³ The military government, for its part, reacted swiftly: On October 17, 1951, the three sheikhs were summoned to the office of the military governor in Beersheba, where they signed a short, preprepared statement in which they agreed to their immediate transfer in exchange for a given amount of money. While the blank form was found, the signed document has yet to be located in the archival material.⁶⁴

Bar-On, Hanegbi’s temporary replacement as military governor of the Negev, now reported that the difficulties had been resolved and predicted that as soon as the sheikhs received the money, they would also retract their memorandum. Two small tribes, he wrote, had already begun to move to the new sites. He did not explain what caused the three sheikhs to change their minds and agree to move, but his report contains two hints about the methods used by the military government. First, he mentioned Dayan’s instruction to apply pressure “to the point that if they do not move voluntarily, the army will be forced to move them.”⁶⁵ Second, he claimed that when the three sheikhs learned that Sheikh al-Huzayl had agreed to move and would receive money for doing so, they also signed the statement and were promised similar sums. According to Bar-On, at some point Salman al-Huzayl did consider accepting another offer made by the military—to sign a statement that he was willing to move “on the condition that he immediately receives 10,000 lira for the displacement of a thousand members of his tribe” (the number appears to reflect a rate of 10 lira per person)—“but he recanted this too.” He “broke the agreement” and was now “doing propaganda,” urging people “not to move.”⁶⁶ Thus, if Dayan had originally sought to enlist al-Huzayl’s help against the other tribes, now the military government was using them against the recalcitrant sheikh, just as it had done eight months earlier when al-Huzayl attempted to rally the sheikhs under his leadership to challenge the state’s policy of dispossession and expulsion.

At this point, Sheikh al-Huzayl found himself isolated and under increasing pressure. Winter was approaching, but the military government prevented his people, too, from plowing—an unmistakable sign of imminent displacement. Al-Huzayl now accused his fellow sheikhs of “selling their tribesmen and their lands to the Israeli authorities for money.”⁶⁷ He also sought redress elsewhere—not just horizontally, by challenging his peers to align themselves with his refusal to capitulate, but also vertically, by turning to patrons within the Zionist establishment.

Two days after the summons of the sheikhs to the headquarters of the military government, al-Huzayl wrote a letter to Ben-Gurion protesting that his people, who were still suffering from the consequences of the previous year’s drought, were now being prevented from plowing. “We hope,” he wrote, “that this did not happen with your honor’s knowledge, Mr. Prime Minister, for whom we voted in the last elections.”⁶⁸ During the elections, which took place merely three months earlier, 80 percent of al-Huzayl’s votes were cast for Ben-Gurion’s party, Mapai, to the great disappointment of the neighboring Mapam kibbutzim, which had expected the tribe’s support.⁶⁹ Al-Huzayl’s votes were secured for Mapai by Bechor-Shalom Sheetrit, former minister of minorities and acting minister of police: While Ben-Gurion toured the transit camps to gain the votes of the new Jewish immigrants, Sheetrit conducted “election visits” in Arab communities, including al-Huzayl’s.⁷⁰ Al-Huzayl’s letter landed on the desk of

Ben-Gurion's advisor on Arab affairs, but produced no tangible result,⁷¹ and neither did an appeal to Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett.⁷² Nonetheless, al-Huzayl visited Sheetrit, who did intervene on his behalf with the army command.⁷³

Also coming to al-Huzayl's aid were members of the Mapam-affiliated kibbutzim in the vicinity. Members of Kibbutz Shoal stood out in particular: when five years earlier they set up their camp in this frontier region, they were "thirty young people in an Arab population of thousands,"⁷⁴ and received vital assistance from Sheikh al-Huzayl and his people. In late 1951, their party, Mapam, was no longer a member of the government coalition but remained Mapai's junior partner within the colonizing institutions and the Zionist labor movement. This position guaranteed the area's kibbutzim vital access to land that had been taken over by the state, while allowing them at the same time to occasionally influence government policy and channel some resources to neighboring Arabs and develop their own patronage networks. On the other hand, partial integration into the hegemonic bloc also undermined their cohesion. It opened up opportunities for some kibbutzim members to move up in the new sociopolitical order, leaving behind their party, including its declared commitment to the "fraternity of peoples" and the collective discipline it sought to impose on its members. This was the case with the two senior officers in charge of displacing the Bedouins—governor Hanegbi, who was also a prominent member of Kibbutz Negba, and Colonel Oded Messer, commander of the Negev District, both members of Mapam. For the Zionist-socialist party, this created an embarrassing situation, as pro-Arab activists in the neighboring kibbutzim were well aware. They demanded that an internal inspection committee be convened to discuss the matter with the officers, but after several postponements, it finally convened on October 28, merely three days before the forced displacement of the remaining Bedouins commenced.

Still, the meeting was revealing. It was attended by Hanegbi, Messer, senior officials of Mapam's security department, the director of the party's Arab Section, Eliezer Be'eri (Bauer), and one local activist representing Kibbutz Shoal, Haim Shur. Shur did not hide his disappointment that no "inclination toward preventing the displacement" was shown at the meeting.⁷⁵ Hanegbi and Messer denied the claim that the Bedouins were being forcibly displaced. Rather than depicting them as a security risk,⁷⁶ they presented them as a potential asset, rehearsing only one part of Dayan's argument: in the eastern Negev, the displaced Bedouins would serve as a defensive buffer, almost as substitute settlers. Shur remained unconvinced. He had no difficulty in recognizing the strategic objective lurking behind the displacements—the one that Dayan had openly articulated and that the officers concealed from their comrades:

From the experience of previous displacements [of the Bedouins], we have learned that the overall approach [is] to serve the general policy of expelling the Arabs from the country "by peaceful means": in the first stage, moving them to an area without adequate living conditions so that they leave the country of their own free will.⁷⁷

Even within Mapam, Shur reported to his kibbutz, there are "serious [i.e., senior] circles and commanders who are looking for all kinds of 'reasons' to justify this line of action."⁷⁸ Be'eri reached a similar conclusion: the alleged consent of the Bedouins was essentially obtained "through intimidation and bribery,"⁷⁹ and there is nothing substantial in the security reasons for their displacement.

The meeting ended without agreement and exposed how powerless the party was vis-à-vis its own senior officers. Be'eri suggested that Hanegbi and Messer should appeal to the general of the Military Southern Command to rescind the order, claiming that they had assumed the

displacement of the Bedouins would be done “with their consent and under fair conditions,” and if the command insisted, Hanegbi would proceed with the displacement “to ensure as fair an arrangement as possible.”⁸⁰ Until the Mapam Central Committee reached a final decision or managed to convince the authorities to cancel the operation, all parties were to refrain from action: the officers would suspend the displacement, while their critics would refrain from any political action, such as submitting a public parliamentary query. Hanegbi and Messer, however, proceeded with the operation and did not show up for the following meeting of the inspection committee. Mapam leadership, for its part, was unable to come to a decision: members of the party’s expansionist wing warned that any confrontation with the two officers would only weaken the party’s waning influence in the army’s senior ranks.⁸¹

During the very same days that Mapam conducted the internal hearing with Hanegbi and Messer, the eviction campaign under their command was reaching its critical stage. After the military had the three sheikhs sign the agreement to move, it appeared that all obstacles had been removed, and on October 22, 1951, the Bedouins in the northern region were notified that they should make preparations to leave in early November.⁸² Eight days later, soldiers of the military government returned to Bedouin concentrations and told the people that they must prepare to move within 24 hours. In most cases, the Bedouins did not explicitly refuse to do so, but claimed that water had not yet accumulated in the cisterns where they were being moved and requested trucks for transport and weapons for self-defense. Only the people of al-Huzayl around Wadi al-Fukhari told the soldiers in no uncertain terms that they refused to move if Sheikh Salman al-Huzayl and his men were not going.⁸³ Enforcing Dayan’s plan to move most of the tribe while allowing Sheikh al-Huzayl, his family and close followers to remain proved difficult.

The next day, the refusals spread further: in two concentrations of al-Huzayl’s people and in the al-Talalqa and al-‘Uqbi tribes, people declared that they would “not move from the place if Sheikh Salman al-Huzayl did not move.” The people of al-Talalqa even announced that they would bring back the tents that had already been moved to the new location since Sheikh al-Huzayl mocked them for agreeing to be displaced. Sheikh al-‘Uqbi also announced that he would not move. The soldiers learned that Sheikh al-Huzayl had instructed his followers in the Wadi al-Fukhari area that even if the army knocked over their tents, they should “remain in place and not move,” while he himself told the soldiers that they should not even come to his tribe to “talk about moving.”⁸⁴ He also urged Sheikh al-‘Uqbi to stand firm against the pressure.⁸⁵ Al-Huzayl’s wife Wadha, al-‘Uqbi’s sister, later recalled that her husband urged al-‘Uqbi not to surrender and reminded him: “A man is a wolf in his land, but a little desert fox in the land of strangers.”⁸⁶ Al-‘Uqbi told him that Captain Shemesh was extorting large sums of money from people in exchange for letting them stay.⁸⁷ Two weeks earlier, it still seemed that the military had succeeded in driving a wedge between the tribes. Now, however, the internal divisions among the sheikhs seemed to have given way to a common refusal, manifested in the passive resistance of their people and reinforced by the sense that they deserved the same treatment as al-Huzayl and his entourage—whose fate had not yet been decided.

On November 1, with the help of an armored brigade from the Southern Command, the troops of the military government began to transfer the people of al-‘Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and al-Afinish eastward to the vicinity of Hura. The operation was for the most part completed within a week,⁸⁸ but due to mounting Bedouin opposition, it now required the use of violence and intimidation. The effectiveness of threats by the military must be understood within the

context of the events that transpired in the region in 1948–49—in particular, the massacre of fourteen Bedouin young men from different families in the al-‘Araqib region by armed settlers.⁸⁹ The documents of the military government, however, are largely silent on the use of force in the operation—perhaps because anything less than loss of life at the hands of the military was not considered by the veterans of 1948 as violence worthy of mention,⁹⁰ or due to a decision to avoid, as far as possible, any explicit written documentation of a military operation against state citizens that Hanegbi knew was illegal. In his concluding report to his superiors, Hanegbi explained that the transfer

was carried out *mainly* through persuasion and financial pressure. We had no legal basis [for the operation], and there was even an explicit instruction not to use force; it was therefore necessary to exercise caution when carrying it out without getting entangled in legal issues. There were several attempts [by Bedouins] to contact lawyers, and appeals were made to the Knesset.⁹¹

How precisely did the military government deal with the need to “exercise caution?” In this case, quite exceptionally, the evidence found in the military archive can be supplemented not only with Bedouin testimonies but also with a number of contemporaneous reports by members of the local kibbutzim.

In a later interview, Sheikh Sulayman al-‘Uqbi said that in the weeks preceding the displacement, army units would appear in his place of residence “and shoot just like that in the air. The men were afraid, and the women were terrified to go out into the fields and pastures.”⁹² He finally agreed to move after he was told “that it was necessary to conduct a large military exercise on the land,” and that his tribe must therefore leave for a short period until after it ended.⁹³ His son, Nuri al-‘Uqbi, recounted in an interview:

I was a child then, and I remember the command cars that came here shooting in the air; they killed a donkey and dogs on the hill opposite, all to scare us. Afterward, they said to my father: “Sheikh, the governor wants you in the government office.” It was next to Kibbutz Shoval, and my father rushed there on his horse. Later he told me: “I sat in front of a man smoking a pipe who introduced himself as governor and did not know Arabic and would shout at me: ‘Sheikh, you must leave.’” Then he would return home, just long enough to wash his face and hands and barely eat, and then the police would come and say: “The governor wants you in [the headquarters of the military government in] Beersheba.” In the afternoon, my father would go to the governor in Beersheba, and the same person with the pipe would say to him: “Sheikh, you must go.”⁹⁴

Alongside attempts to terrorize the people of al-‘Uqbi, the military government tried to soften their opposition by claiming that the area was needed for military maneuvers, and they would be able to return to their homes after a few months. Nuri al-‘Uqbi keeps a note signed by Shemesh in which the officer promised to allocate to al-‘Uqbi’s people—once they move east to the Hura area—lands belonging to Bedouins who, according to Shemesh’s claim, were no longer in the country. According to the note, the allocation should be in force “until the return of the al-‘Uqbi tribe to their lands.”⁹⁵ However, the considerable sums offered to the sheikhs for consenting to move undermined the credibility of this promise, probably only intended to provide Sheikh al-‘Uqbi with a version that he could live with and present to his people. The pressures of the military government exacerbated the differences of opinion within the tribe, but in the end, Sheikh al-‘Uqbi acquiesced. His assent did not last for long, though: almost immediately, he began protesting the displacement, acquiesced again for a while, and then tenaciously demanded to return to his lands. His vacillations

further deepened the internal crisis, and some families left the tribe in an attempt to join al-Huzayl's and escape displacement.

A similar picture emerges concerning the eviction of the other Bedouin groups. A woman from al-Afinish testified decades later how brutally her tribe's transfer was carried out: "The Jews brought big cargo trucks. They loaded us on them and threw us [off] in Sa'wa [east of Hura]. No water, no food, nothing to drink."⁹⁶ Only later did the military bring water and oats to the place. Shortly after the displacement of the people of al-Talalqa, members of Kibbutz Shoval reported on the measures that were used against them. The tribe

was surrounded by the military government police in military vehicles. People fled, the encampment was dismantled, and those who were captured were also loaded onto vehicles and taken to Tel Arad. Ibn Talaq [Sheikh 'Amer al-Talalqa] wanted to contact a lawyer—[but] he was forbidden to go to Beersheba.⁹⁷

This account closely resembles the measures used by the military government against the Bedouins in the Laqiyya area, as summarized by Hanegbi himself. The prominent sheikh in the area, Ibrahim al-Sani', first agreed to the displacement, then retracted, claiming that his people were "raising [the] problem of security and water" in Tel 'Arad, where they were required to move.⁹⁸ Indeed, according to a military report, the eviction was "not successful" because the people "strongly resist[ed] their transfer."⁹⁹ In the end, however, Sheikh al-Sani' told Hanegbi that he would not leave "of his own will, but either with an explicit written order or by force."¹⁰⁰ This was a calculated risk that indicated al-Sani's grasp of the constraints under which the military government operated. Aware of the illegality of the whole operation, Hanegbi was careful not to give the Bedouins a written order to leave their homes. Thus, "despite the restriction on using force," Hanegbi reported, "an attempt was made, with the consent of the [Southern] Command, to force them to move."¹⁰¹ The soldiers tore down the tents, loaded the people onto trucks, and moved the families—presumably the women and children—under the assumption that this would force the men to join them, but "the owners of the tents did not leave and did not join their families who had been moved."¹⁰² The military government used a similar approach with al-Sani's neighbors, the tribe of al-Asad: "Some tents were forcibly moved to Tel 'Arad, but the sheikh persisted and did not move with his men," and so, those who had already been displaced returned to their places and sowed the land.¹⁰³ Faced with such a combination of cunning and tenacity, the military government had to back down, at least temporarily. It was decided that the tribes of Qderat al-Sani' and al-Asad would remain in Laqiyya until the following year's harvest season. This was essentially a decision to postpone the confrontation, and indeed, in the summer of 1952, the military government renewed its efforts to displace the tribe.¹⁰⁴

The Military Governors and the Sheikhs: An Exchange

On November 7, 1951, immediately after the displacement of the people of al-'Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and al-Afinish, the officers of the Negev military government held a meeting with their superior, Yitzhak Shani, director of the Department of Military Government at the Ministry of Defense.¹⁰⁵ At this stage, they still assumed that it would be possible to overcome Sheikh al-Sani's refusal by splitting the tribe and moving some of its people, and Hanegbi pointed out that the main problem yet to be solved was the displacement of the al-Huzayl tribe. The officers also discussed the promise to pay compensations to the sheikhs of the displaced tribes, arguing that this would enhance the position of each sheikh but disadvantage other negatively

affected families. Worse still, paying the sums promised would set a “dangerous precedent” that would encourage other displaced Bedouins to demand compensation. They concluded that, at present, no money should be paid and that a special committee should be set up to discuss the matter. The money was never paid.

Right after this consultation, the officers called in the Bedouin sheikhs, who had been summoned for a special meeting with Shani.¹⁰⁶ Hanegbi introduced the sheikhs to Shani and his chief assistant, saying they wished to get to know them and hear about their problems, such as “plowing, seeds, and other issues.” “If you have any issues to raise,” he added, “do so at this meeting.”¹⁰⁷ We only have the Hebrew minutes of the meeting, taken by the military governor’s office, but even the truncated record of this exchange between military governors and their colonial subjects deserves attention. Much remained unsaid in the conversation: Bedouin speakers not affected by the recent round of displacements did not mention them, while the others evidently could not yet dare to demand their return. Shani, the senior visitor, stuck to high-sounding phrases, but Hanegbi did not hesitate to switch from pious invocations of universal principles to brutal and humiliating responses.

Sheikh al-Huzayl barely spoke at this meeting; he made no mention of the ongoing attempts by the officers in front of him to displace his people nor of his own efforts to thwart their plans. When he did speak, al-Huzayl said that since the Bedouins had tied their fate to the State of Israel, they should receive the same agricultural aid as the Jewish settlers. Shani answered that in Israel, “everyone has equal rights,” but to earn equal rights, the Bedouins must share the burden of duties: “A state is happy when all its citizens are happy, and even though our state is still young, it does everything [in its power] for its sons and citizens.”¹⁰⁸ Sheikh Abu Rabi’a, on the other hand, mentioned that among the Zullam tribes, there were about 150 people who, despite the military governor’s consent to allow them to stay in the country, were about to be deported because they did not have identity cards. He claimed that they were not counted in the census because they were sick or engaged in grazing. Hanegbi dismissed these claims as excuses, while Shani replied that if the persons in question were women and children, the authorities might consider the request, but not if entire families should be granted immunity from deportation. Two sheikhs who were not among those displaced requested weapons for self-defense in view of the proximity of the Egyptian and Jordanian borders, and one of them even suggested that his men launch “partisan” operations against attackers. Hanegbi swiftly rejected the offer and made it clear that only the army, with Bedouin assistance, is authorized to initiate such operations.

More dissenting voices also spoke at the meeting. Sheikh al-Afinish cautiously asked for an explanation for the displacement of his tribe and received no response, but Sheikh al-‘Atawna and Sheikh al-‘Uqbi persistently raised the issue of displacements. Al-‘Atawna demanded to know if the displacements had indeed come to an end and if the Bedouins could now be certain that they could stay in their places of residence and develop them. “I don’t want to be in the position of [Sheikh] ‘Amer [al-Talalqa],” Al-‘Atawna said, “who built a school the previous year,” had to move, “and who knows what will [happen] next year.” “We are refugees *here*,” he said: “The refugees in Arab countries have the UN and governments who care and struggle [for them]. Who would struggle and care for us?”¹⁰⁹ Things would have been clear, he went on, had the government openly declared, “since the rest of the Arabs are our enemy, we do not want you here.” But given the uncertainty of our status, “what guarantee do we have that we shall remain here?”¹¹⁰ Shani chastised al-‘Atawna for comparing the situation of the

Bedouins in Israel to refugees: “As far as I know, there are doctors, education, provisions, and great concern for the Bedouins” in Israel. He pointed to the economic difficulties of the government, which remained on high alert since the 1948 war, while at the same time dealing with the absorption of “many [Jewish] refugees who came from Arab countries.” “We see you, the Arabs, as citizens,” Shani said. “If we considered you refugees, we would not be sitting here right now listening to you.”¹¹¹ Al-‘Atawna insisted that the issue was not Israel’s economic situation and recast the security issue in terms of Bedouins’ need to reside in safety, free from the threat of recurrent displacement: “We all want to tell our tribes that this is their place and each one of them can cultivate it.”¹¹²

In response, Shani contented himself with a general statement—“We will take care of a permanent settlement, too”—but Hanegbi intervened.¹¹³ For a former socialist, he was remarkably adept at using the rhetoric of equality to obscure the plight of the dispossessed by assimilating it to that of the settlers. Security, Hanegbi claimed, is not an issue that only concerns the Bedouins, but all the settlements in the area and the country as a whole, but the Bedouins see only their own “private problem.” “We move the Bedouins,” he said, to places that are “proper and habitable,” where they will be provided with seeds and allowed to plow.¹¹⁴ And in general, Hanegbi added in a more existentialist vein, “the whole world currently lives a life without the security [of knowing] what the future might bring on its wings.”¹¹⁵ As long as there is no peace, the government is forced to maintain “a huge army.” Hanegbi switched to the role of a kibbutz member: “I am also an agriculturalist, so why should I be [forced to serve] in the army [rather than cultivate the land]? And so, if you look at the general picture, you will see the matter in a different way. No tribes are thrown away [i.e., displaced] for no reason.”¹¹⁶ Rather than assuring the Bedouins that the displacements were over, Hanegbi feigned ignorance: “But regarding future arrangements, if I knew [what would happen], I would have been a prophet and not a governor.”¹¹⁷

Sheikh Sulayman al-‘Uqbi spoke close to the end. He protested the displacement of his people to the east: “I surrendered myself to Israel’s rule together with the other tribes for the sake of [preserving] our lands, our souls, and the souls of our tribes,” receiving “additional weapons for self-defense” and “safeguarding all our property” in return. Now, “we have been instructed to move from our lands on which we were born, we, our fathers, and our fathers’ fathers.”¹¹⁸ All his and his people’s labor on the land, including the trees they planted and levees they built for containing flash floods, has been lost:

The government asked us many times to move, and we refused. *However*, [in the end] *we signed* [that we agreed to move] *against our will* because we could not indefinitely resist a displacement ... [decided] by the supreme [government] institutions. It is true that we were promised equal rights with all citizens. But we hear [about equality] and do not see [it]. (emphasis in the original)¹¹⁹

He said that since his tribe had sided with Israel in the 1948 war, the state should protect them even more than its own people. Instead, they have been moved to an area where the lands already belong to other Bedouins, most of whom are in Israel; if my people use these lands, he clarified, a bloody conflict with the rightful owners would ensue. He asked instead that sufficient “abandoned lands” be allotted to the three displaced tribes “for this year”: “We shall do nothing permanent” at the new sites “because we are like refugees; we and the new [Jewish] immigrants are in the same condition.” Al-‘Uqbi said that at the time of the displacement, he sent letters to the Knesset but did not receive any reply and requested that the lands

from which his people had been displaced be preserved “even if at the moment the government needs them.”¹²⁰ At this stage, at least outwardly, he held onto the promise that displacement was only temporary.

In conclusion, al-‘Uqbi asked for permission to leave the closed area to enlist legal help and appeal to the Israeli Supreme Court. Hanegbi did not contradict al-‘Uqbi’s claim that he had been displaced by force, or his assumption that the move was only temporary. Instead, he mercilessly challenged the Bedouins’ conviction that when they accepted Israel’s rule in November 1948, they were promised that their land rights would be respected: “You surrendered to Israel’s rule unconditionally,” Hanegbi asserted and mockingly dismissed al-‘Uqbi’s request, saying that he did not need to worry about his lands in the northern part as they “remain in their usual place.”¹²¹ He also told al-‘Uqbi that he was entitled to turn to lawyers and that no one would prevent him. As Hanegbi well knew, however, the military government under his command was actually making efforts to deny the Bedouins access to legal assistance.¹²² Still, al-‘Uqbi clung to the governor’s words and asked for a permanent permit to travel north, probably to recruit a lawyer, but Shani quickly moved to end the meeting. He was “very happy,” he said, to get to know the sheikhs, “learn about all their problems” and that much was being done on their behalf.¹²³ He hoped to visit each of them soon, Shani added. At the very last moment, al-Huzayl tried to interject that what he was really asking for was the entirety of his lands and al-‘Atawna mentioned that the food rations allocated to the Bedouins were not distributed regularly, but Hanegbi abruptly concluded the meeting in the spirit of his previous remarks: regarding the distribution of food, “we are the same as you in this situation” of penury, “and there is no difference between us.”¹²⁴ In the following week, he told the Bedouins, the military government would provide them with seeds. He clearly expected the displaced to begin plowing and sowing.

Protest and Resistance

The displacement of the people of al-‘Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and al-Afinish eastward, to the Hura region, now seemed a *fait accompli*. However, rather than reconcile themselves to the new situation, they refused to plow the land—not only in protest of their displacement but also because the land they were given to cultivate belonged to other Bedouins. By doing so, they took into their hands, if only for a short while, one of the most powerful means of coercion wielded against them by the military government—the prevention of plowing—and turned it against the military regime, but, inevitably, also against themselves. Indeed, as the days passed, the risk increased that they would miss the scant rainfall and find themselves in the arid area without any livelihood after a year of severe drought.

In late October, the army still tried to enforce Dayan’s “deal” by exerting pressure on the subtribes of al-Huzayl to move. By mid-November, however, the military had to accept that Sheikh al-Huzayl would be allowed to stay with 500–600 family members and his close associates, and decided that the rest of his tribe would not be evicted until after the following year’s harvest.¹²⁵ In the short run, this meant immunity from displacement for the entire tribe—the combined result of the tenacious refusal of al-Huzayl’s people, encouraged by Sheikh Salman, of Shetreet’s lobbying on al-Huzayl’s behalf, and of the efforts of Mapam members.

After the inconclusive meeting with Hanegbi and Messer, Knesset Member Yaakov Riftin of the party’s left wing suggested that the Mapam kibbutzim in the northern Negev write a

memorandum regarding the displacement of the Bedouins and address it to him and to Knesset Member Yitzhak Ben-Aharon—Mapam’s representatives on the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee—so that they could bring up the matter with army leadership. The appeal only focused on Sheikh al-Huzayl, making note of his past services to the Zionist movement. Ben-Gurion and Yadin responded by recognizing these merits and promised that al-Huzayl would not be harmed.¹²⁶

Probably in response to Mapam’s intervention, the Operations Division of the General Staff, headed by Yitzhak Rabin, produced a highly selective report concerning the displacement campaign—the first iteration of what would later become the state’s public version. It mentioned neither the goal of taking possession of Bedouin lands nor the coercive means employed, but asserted that the Bedouins moved of their own accord in exchange for payment and chose themselves the sites to which they would move. The report even claimed that the reason why an exception was made for al-Huzayl was simply “the friendly relations that have existed for a long time with such a sheikh.”¹²⁷ While this innocuous version circulated, Hanegbi and Messer met to assess the progress of the campaign and concluded that their task had not yet been accomplished. Regarding the remaining Bedouins in the northern Negev, “*tlisha*”—literally, “uprooting” in Hebrew—“remains our clear goal.”¹²⁸

The decision to let al-Huzayl remain only intensified the opposition of the displaced, who felt discriminated against and must have been encouraged by al-Huzayl’s success. On November 16, Sheikh al-‘Uqbi wrote to the military governor and asked to return to his lands. When he was forced to move, he said, he was promised land and water in sufficient quantity and was told that if other tribes were not moved, he would be returned to his land. Now that his fellow sheikhs (alluding to al-Huzayl) stayed put, he petitioned to return, “if need be, even next year.”¹²⁹ Al-‘Uqbi also tried a more limited request: to be returned together with a handful of close associates from his tribe since the sowing season had already begun—or even to be moved to another area because he would not be able to sow in the arid lands to which he had been displaced and whose owners were present.¹³⁰ “People would come there,” Nuri al-‘Uqbi recalled about the days after the displacement, “point to their plots and say: ‘this is ours.’ And my father would say: ‘Your land, even if they gave us coffee—the most precious thing for Bedouins—we don’t want it.’”¹³¹

Two days later, the sheikhs of al-‘Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and al-Afinish sent a letter to Hanegbi requesting that they be allowed to return to their land.¹³² Drawing a lesson from the failure of their appeal in October to the government and the Arab members of the Knesset affiliated with the government, this time al-‘Uqbi sent a copy of their joint letter to Communist Knesset Member Habibi along with an accompanying letter of his own. Habibi hurried to submit the December 7 query with which this article opens, thereby piercing the shroud of secrecy that surrounded the events.

The sheikhs wrote that the government had forced them to move eastward and that they had been told that the displacement applied to all Bedouins living in the northern Naqab except for Sheikh al-Huzayl and six hundred members of his family, but in fact, al-Huzayl remained with his entire tribe of about two thousand people. They explained that, just like al-Huzayl, they too had been living until recently on their lands in the northern region (unlike other Bedouins who, as a result of previous displacements, lived on other people’s lands), and asked why they were being discriminated against. “We have refused to plow the land in the eastern area, and it is impossible for us to cultivate even a single dunam” there, putting our

livelihood at risk “for one reason—the lack of equality” between us and the other tribes.¹³³ In conclusion, they asked to be allowed to return and share the fate of the tribes that were not evicted:

And if this is impossible, [we ask you to] notify us in writing that we must leave Israel. And if this [too] is impossible, we hereby inform your excellence that we will leave the eastern for the northern area [from which we had been evicted] as soon as possible, on the basis of your excellence’s oral promise to us. And once we are in the northern area, things will be in your hands, sir—do as you wish.¹³⁴

The letter vacillates between a plea to keep past promises and a direct challenge to the authorities—expel us, but openly and in writing. Rather than directly addressing the issue of dispossession, it focuses on equal treatment, yet concludes with a defiant announcement of their intention to return to their lands and bear the consequences.

Sheikh al-‘Uqbi’s accompanying letter to Habibi was worded differently; he did not emphasize the discrimination against the three tribes compared to al-Huzayl’s, nor did he mention the doubtful promise that they could return. Al-‘Uqbi openly spoke about the Military Governor’s “brutal decrees,” the forcible transfer, and the homes, trees, and vineyards that had been destroyed. On the other hand, he relied on Israel’s commitment to respect the Bedouins’ land rights when they had accepted its rule and requested that Habibi ask the Israeli government “for what reason it was evicting us from our lands.”¹³⁵

Army headquarters provided Ben-Gurion with a draft response to Habibi—a tendentious version of the events that omitted any reference to threats or violence and claimed that the sheikhs themselves chose the areas to which they would move. Nevertheless, this version still mentioned that “with the move, an area of 70,000 dunams of fertile land is cleared for cultivation”—land that could now be filled “with Hebrew settlements”—and openly affirmed that in the future, “no Bedouins would remain ... north of Hebron-Beersheba Road.”¹³⁶ Ben-Gurion’s public statement in the Knesset suppressed even these parts.¹³⁷

The letter of protest from the three sheikhs proved that the temporary immunity granted to al-Huzayl only increased the resistance of the displaced. The army responded by renewing its efforts to displace parts of the al-Huzayl tribe and by intensifying the pressure on those who had been moved to Hura to give up their resistance and plow the land. The task of relocating one subtribe of al-Huzayl was entrusted to First Lieutenant Misha Negbi (Maurice Aghion). He reported that he encountered “vigorous opposition” from the people to “move as refugees to another area,” since each of them had “land property” in Wadi al-Fukhari.¹³⁸ In the end, he wrote, he was able to move them east to Laqiyya headed by Saqr al-Huzayl, one of Salman al-Huzayl’s rivals in the tribe. Immediately after these lines, an entire paragraph is redacted from Negbi’s report. This time, the military deployed political bribery: In return for his cooperation, Saqr al-Huzayl was made a sheikh of a separate tribe with all the economic benefits this entailed.¹³⁹ Negbi also suggested splitting the al-Huzayl tribe further and moving another sub-tribe to Laqiyya: Not only would this weaken Sheikh Salman and free up a “significant strip of land” for cultivation by Jewish settlements, but also create friction between the displaced and the current residents of the area. They would thus be pressured to move further east or, “according to a more far-reaching plan,” even “to cross the border altogether.”¹⁴⁰

Having thus reduced the number of Sheikh al-Huzayl’s people by about three hundred, the military government continued its efforts to erode his tribe. In January 1952, members of Kibbutz Shoal reported that about four hundred Bedouins from the al-Huzayl tribe were

residing near Wadi al-Fukhari after having been forced by the military to leave their land south of Wadi al-Shari'a. In order to force them to move further east, the military government assigned their food rations to Saqr al-Huzayl's people who had already moved, causing a severe shortage among the Bedouins who were forced to subsist for more than two months without any food supplies. A month later, the kibbutz noted that the military government had renewed its relocation efforts and the Bedouins were reporting acts of abuse.¹⁴¹ It seems that all these efforts have failed.¹⁴²

The second task, assigned to Captain Sasson Basrawi (Bar-Tzvi), in charge of the displaced tribes of al-Talalqa, al-'Uqbi, and al-Afinish, was to break their refusal to plow the land assigned to them in the arid eastern area. Confident that the Bedouins would not be able to persist in their refusal, Basrawi reported to the military governor in the margins of the three sheikhs' protest letter: "They are about to plow the land!"¹⁴³ To overcome the resistance of the people of al-'Uqbi, he deposed Sheikh Sulayman al-'Uqbi and appointed his brother Salem as head of the tribe,¹⁴⁴ but this did not put an end to Bedouin disobedience. On December 2, 1951, Hanegbi wrote to Basrawi that he was fed up with protests and petitions: "Submit a report to me on whether the aforementioned tribes plow and sow the lands that had been given to them. I am not willing to continue receiving letters. And if Ibn Talag [Sheikh 'Amer al-Talalqa] will not plow, we will give the land to someone else."¹⁴⁵ Basrawi reported that the al-'Uqbi tribe—now under the leadership of the new sheikh—and the al-Afinish tribe were already plowing, but those of al-Talalqa were still "delaying the plowing until the seeds and the rain"—that is, until the very last moment.¹⁴⁶

Even after his official removal from office, Sulayman al-'Uqbi continued to send letters of protest, signing them as Sheikh al-'Uqbi. He had no doubt that he had been deposed "for one reason"—for daring "to write to the military governor and ask to return the tribe to its land."¹⁴⁷ His brother and rival, Salem, soon proved his readiness to collude.¹⁴⁸ But there was another dimension to the conflict: the excuse Basrawi used to oust Sulayman al-'Uqbi was that he was opposed by his own people. In fact, Sulayman al-'Uqbi's precarious position in his tribe was not only caused by his protracted conflict with his brother Salem and his followers. In 1950, Sheikh Sulayman al-'Uqbi lost control over the tribal store, where rationed products were sold at a controlled price, and had struggled to regain it ever since. The officers of the military government granted these monopolies at their own discretion. Sulayman al-'Uqbi complained to them that the store was not under his control, whereas in other tribes it was in the hands of the sheikh. He also demanded that the shopkeeper provide him with supplementary provisions as befitting his status.¹⁴⁹

The conflict over the right to sell rationed goods to the al-'Uqbi people and to collect their agricultural produce did not dissipate during the dramatic months in which they collectively faced the pressures of the military government to leave their land. After Sulayman al-'Uqbi succumbed to the authorities' pressure to move, it even intensified. A few days after the displacement, a fight broke out between the local shopkeeper and Sulayman al-'Uqbi, who turned to the military government for help. And so—between the meeting with the military governors in which al-'Uqbi tried to protest against the transfer and his letters of protest against the displacement—he sent on November 12 another letter to Hanegbi. He claimed that when he gave in to the military government's pressure and left his land, he was assured that his requests would be met. To weaken his opponents in the tribe, Al-'Uqbi now demanded the monopoly over supplying food and the dismissal of the current shopkeeper who had confronted him,

because “the sheikh of the tribe is a government official and the government must protect him.”¹⁵⁰ He also asked that one of his prominent opponents be expelled from the tribe, arguing that if that person remained, he would “create a faction that would oppose the orders of the government,” and further requested that the officers “deport or transfer” two other opponents who he claimed were involved in smuggling.¹⁵¹ Basrawi admitted that the military government did have some obligation to keep the promises made to Sulayman al-‘Uqbi, but did not recommend fulfilling his requests, pointing to the weakness of his position: “Since the sheikh was not firm with his tribe, the tribe rebelled against him.”¹⁵²

The following day, several dozen heads of Bedouin families from the al-‘Uqbi tribe sent a letter asking the military governor not to comply with Sheikh Sulayman’s demand to take over the store. The current shopkeeper, they wrote, behaves honestly, whereas al-‘Uqbi used to take a greater share of the supply for himself before distributing the rest. They made further serious allegations. The sheikhs functioned as intermediaries between their people and the wholesale company that held a monopoly over the marketing of Bedouins’ agricultural produce; they would buy their tribe’s produce and sell it to the wholesaler at a profit. Sulayman al-‘Uqbi, the heads of the families claimed, went too far, and for each ton of barley, he would pay them four liras (compared to five or six liras in other tribes) and then sell it for seven liras to the wholesaler. To supplement their meager income, many Bedouins worked in road construction, quarrying, or as agricultural laborers. Al-‘Uqbi presumed to control access to such jobs and extorted money from those who sought them. This is the reason, the authors of the letter claimed, that some families had submitted requests to leave the tribe and join another.¹⁵³ Basrawi was well aware of these grievances and had already suggested in mid-November that Sulayman al-‘Uqbi be replaced by his brother. However, he did not receive Hanegbi’s approval until it became clear that al-‘Uqbi would not cease protesting against the displacement.¹⁵⁴

It would be wrong to suggest that were it not for Sheikh Sulayman al-‘Uqbi’s exploitative practices against his own tribe, he could have successfully resisted the pressures of the military government—the power imbalance was simply too great. But his predicament exemplifies the contradictions in which Bedouin elites were caught: he kept reminding the military government of his support for Israel in 1948, while seeking to withstand its policies of displacement and dispossession; he lost favor with the authorities by resisting, and further weakened his position in his tribe by acquiescing. After the displacement, al-‘Uqbi became the main spokesperson for the displaced tribes and tried to stand his ground by refusing to plow the land, but precisely then—when he most needed the support of his people to hold out against the pressures of the army—he had to ask for the military government’s help to reestablish his position in his tribe. Basrawi—the future military governor of the Negev—knew very well how to take advantage of Sulayman al-‘Uqbi’s growing isolation.¹⁵⁵ When he tried to return to al-‘Araqib in 1954, only few people joined him. He was arrested on the spot and released thanks to the intervention of Sheikh al-Huzayl on the condition that he remain in Hura and not try to return to al-‘Araqib.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, in the following years, al-‘Uqbi demanded again and again to be allowed to return to his land,¹⁵⁷ and in 1973, aided by his son, he renewed the attempts to reoccupy it.

The state enforced its policies as much as possible through the sheikhs, but the displacement campaign simultaneously undermined their authority and credibility. As a result, Bedouin families began to abandon tribes whose heads could not withstand the pressure of the authorities. The military government was disinclined to approve Bedouin requests to join other tribes

to avoid displacement, but some managed to do so anyway. Some sought shelter under the shadow of a stronger patron, as did members of the Abu Mdighem family who left al-‘Uqbi and joined al-Huzayl, while others simply evaded military control in an attempt to return. By the end of 1951, Basrawi reported that Suwaylim Abu Freih, who had been transferred to Hura in the east along with the rest of the al-‘Uqbi tribe, slipped away and went north “to the previous area” to plow his land. The officer demanded that Abu Freih be returned immediately and prosecuted “for violating the order of the military governor,” but I have not come across any evidence that the military government managed to get hold of Abu Freih and punish him.¹⁵⁸

Consequences and Lessons

Of the approximately 5,150 Bedouins that the military government hoped to transfer from the northwestern Naqab to the east, approximately 2,150 were moved in the 1951 operation. In 1952, an additional one thousand Bedouins from Laqiyya, who had initially succeeded in evading the campaign, were also displaced. Altogether, over a quarter of the Palestinian inhabitants of the Naqab were expelled from their lands in 1951 and 1952.¹⁵⁹ The architects of the campaign aspired to take control of about 100,000 dunams of fertile land and succeeded in cutting off the Bedouins from about 60–70,000 dunams.¹⁶⁰ It was a significant, albeit partial, success, especially considering the power imbalance. Time and again, the officers of the military government were surprised by the attachment of the Bedouins to the land and their tenacity: they dragged their feet and tried to buy time, stubbornly protesting and engaging in various forms of passive resistance. Citizenship did not grant them immunity from state violence and dispossession but did create significant obstacles to their transfer. This is why the military government attempted to elicit fragile “consent” for what was essentially forced displacement and combined violence and threats with rewards—while simultaneously toying with the more radical option of outright expulsion.

At the end of the operation, Hanegbi concluded that future displacements would require a more solid legal basis, establishing a designated office to handle the transfer of Bedouins to the arid east, and preventing political patrons from intervening so that the military government could operate unimpeded.¹⁶¹ These were important lessons, for the 1951 operation was not the last attempt to displace the Bedouins from the area. The military government assumed that in the coming years it would be able to overcome its failure to move the al-Huzayl tribe to the east and complete the eviction of Bedouins from all the northwestern Naqab. These hopes were never realized.

On the other hand, the displacement campaign of 1951, building on earlier ones, allowed the state to expropriate the land of those who had been moved. Through the Land Acquisition Law (1953), it converted facts on the ground, brought about by the displacements, into formal land expropriation. But this conclusion, too, must be qualified: the displacement of the Bedouins was an essential step in the dispossession process, but it could not be completed without strict enforcement in the following years to prevent the displaced from returning to their lands (though a few managed to do so),¹⁶² and without effective colonization to occupy the land permanently. In this, the state succeeded only in part: the forced displacement of the Bedouins and their expropriation on paper were easier to carry out than eradicating their attachment to their land, enforcing restrictions on the movement of Bedouin citizens in the following decades, and radically reshaping the landscape through cultivation and settlement.

As subsequent Bedouin struggles to return to their lands would prove, forced eviction was not enough to uproot them as the state hoped.

Another consequence of the displacement campaign was an immediate humanitarian disaster. The officers of the military government knew all along that they were moving the Bedouins into an arid area where “absolute drought conditions” had prevailed the previous year.¹⁶³ The winter of 1951–52 was not dry, but by the spring of 1952, the people of al-‘Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and al-Afinish in the eastern region were suffering from “a lack of water for drinking and for watering the livestock,” and conflicts erupted between the recently displaced and the local inhabitants.¹⁶⁴ In May, water sources ran out and further fights broke out. All the military government could offer was to deliver some water in a one-cubic-meter tank that was soon found defective. Lieutenant-Colonel Basil Herman, the military governor who replaced Hanegbi, reported in July that the situation “is getting worse and there are fights over the water between the tribes, and several requests to return to the northern region have already been submitted.”¹⁶⁵ As the summer heat reached its peak, the hardship increased, and so did the clashes among the Bedouins.¹⁶⁶ The military government began to fear that repressive measures would no longer suffice to confine the displaced to the eastern area and they would try to return to their lands at any cost;¹⁶⁷ it therefore proposed using funds originally allocated for the displacement operation to alleviate its destructive consequences. However, according to the plan, the Bedouins who lost their own water sources as a result of their eviction were expected to pay in the future for the water that would be supplied to them.

The government hence constructed an eight-kilometer-long water pipeline that branched off from the new Jewish settlement of ‘Omer—built on the Bedouin site of Khirbet ‘Umrah—in the hope that the unused water from the settlement would be enough for the displaced Bedouins. However, the faltering settlement was already suffering from a severe lack of water, and its settlers abandoned it again and again. In fact, in 1956, when Jews from North Africa were brought to the settlement directly from the ships on which they arrived, they initially refused to get off the vehicles, and they too left within a few years.¹⁶⁸

Herman made a detailed plan for a public ceremony to celebrate laying the pipeline and, in December 1952, invited Bedouin sheikhs, military and police officers, UN observers, journalists, and photographers to the festive occasion, hoping to “fully exploit the political value” of the event—an “unprecedented enterprise for the Bedouins in the Negev.”¹⁶⁹ The Israeli press enthusiastically reported on the government’s “great act,” by which the Bedouins would finally be “tied to the land and become agriculturalists.”¹⁷⁰ Having lived “for hundreds and thousands of years” as nomads, the Bedouins were finally “going to stop their wanderings” after “the military government endowed them with a permanent source of water.” The pipeline would bring about “a great revolution to the ancient way of life of the Bedouins, for whom a constant source of water was never a part of their lives.”¹⁷¹ According to the reports, the Bedouins, who had learned “not to fear” the cameras, now waited “very politely” until the photographers completed their work and listened patiently to the speech of the military governor who explained that the Bedouins’ nomadic way of life had become impossible in a “dynamic country like Israel.” Therefore, the government was now “assisting them to change to a settled form of life.”¹⁷² A “large banquet” was held for the guests, and one reporter even noted that the Jewish guests “demonstrated great knowledge of Bedouin eating practices.”¹⁷³ The event concluded with horse and camel races, the prizes for which were handed out by the military governor.

The pipeline did not work. The severe drought of 1953 exacerbated the plight of the displaced Bedouins, but the water pipeline remained empty for most of the year. When water flowed, those who had been transferred still needed to carry it on donkeys or camels from the pipeline's endpoint to their camps, a distance of three to eight kilometers. To ensure the flow of water, additional investments were needed, but the authorities were reluctant to pay and sought to shift the cost to the displaced Bedouins. In April 1955, after another year of drought, Israeli Minister of Agriculture Peretz Naftali visited the area and promised that the pipeline would be activated, but the government ministries continued to pass the responsibility from office to office, even though it was clear that without a booster to push the water to higher locations, the problem would not be solved. The Ministry of Agriculture demanded that those who had been displaced finance the repair of the pipeline and even suggested making water supply dependent on the willingness of the displaced Bedouins to sign a land settlement dictated by the state.¹⁷⁴ The Bedouins agreed to pay, and the pipeline was replaced, but by the summer of 1956, it still did not work. Forced deprivation gave rise to new forms of dependency and exploitation; thus, Bedouins without access to water paid "outrageous prices" to those who did have access because they lived in lower areas.¹⁷⁵ Just before the summer of 1957, almost six years after the displacement, the authorities admitted that although the Bedouins had paid, the pipeline had not been properly repaired.¹⁷⁶ There followed six consecutive years of severe drought in the Naqab, which caused a major humanitarian crisis.¹⁷⁷

The long-term consequences of the displacement campaign were not limited to the expropriation of Bedouin land and the loss of fields, homes, and cisterns. They also undermined Bedouin development efforts in the field of education. During the 1940s, there was an increase in the number of Bedouin schools in the Naqab. However, of the eight schools that survived after 1948, only five remained after the displacements, and their number did not increase by 1958. The people of al-'Uqbi lost the school that served them and their neighbors; al-Talalqa lost the school they built with their own money; and the people of Tarabin al-Sani' were displaced after collecting a considerable sum for a school that they were never able to build. Yosef Tzur, a member of Kibbutz Shoal, wrote at the end of 1952: "Throughout the Negev there are Bedouin schools that were built during the mandate or after the founding of the State of Israel and stand empty because the Arabs were expelled from the place," while "most of the Bedouin children do not go to school."¹⁷⁸ This did not prevent the state from trying to collect an education tax from the Bedouins—and Israeli observers from assuming, as a matter of course, that Bedouin schools were the result of a top-down modernization process initiated by the State of Israel.¹⁷⁹

Sheikh Salman al-Huzayl's trajectory illustrates the transformation of patronage ties between Zionist settlers and Bedouin leaders after 1948. Before 1948, Zionist settlers at the frontier needed his protection; by 1951, however, as colonization advanced swiftly under the aegis of the state, local power relations were reversed, and he now depended on their help. Before 1948, al-Huzayl demonstrated his ability to operate successfully within an imperial framework and undoubtedly hoped that under the new Israeli regime, he would be able to establish himself in the area as a major power broker. But Zionist settler colonialism differed from British imperialism, and it soon became apparent that the dispossession process was literally cutting the ground out from under his feet. This is why attempts to offer him and his protégés partial immunity in exchange for sacrificing the rest of his people failed. Instead, the people of al-Huzayl escaped transfer through an unlikely combination of resistance and patronage: Sheikh

al-Huzayl managed to activate previous connections with senior patrons in the state apparatus and local patrons in neighboring kibbutzim, and this temporary immunity bolstered his people's tenacious hold on the land.

In the short term, Sheikh al-Huzayl's success in withstanding displacement in 1951 strengthened his position among the Bedouins, but at the same time, made clear that the connections he had forged with the Zionist movement before 1948 would not grant him durable immunity. The Israeli authorities were determined to displace him and his people and to further undermine his position if he resisted. In the late 1950s, Sheikh al-Huzayl gradually became the token sheikh invited to official events and occasionally adorned the pages of Israeli newspapers, which never mentioned the repeated attempts to uproot him and his tribe. Yet subsequent displacement attempts failed too, and in this regard, thwarting the military government's attempt to clear the northwestern Naqab of all Bedouins in 1951 was of enormous significance for Bedouins' presence in the area—even as the attempts to undermine Sheikh al-Huzayl's status would persist and ultimately succeed.

The members of kibbutzim also learned a bitter lesson. On the one hand, despite their recent electoral disappointment and the persistent friction between them as settlers and the Indigenous Bedouins, they mobilized to thwart the transfer operation, or at least to reduce its scope. On the other hand, their protest was rooted in their self-image as protectors and patrons of the Bedouins and in their ambiguous situation. Their position as junior partners in the ruling power block gave them privileged access to resources and to the upper echelons of state power and, at the same time, imposed heavy constraints on their action: their protest was limited to invoking al-Huzayl's past services and circulating internal messages. Their political representatives refrained from publicly denouncing the displacement campaign because this would have exposed the involvement of senior officers—members of Mapam—in the eviction of the Bedouins and raise further questions about the kibbutzim's own role in the process. Thus, when Knesset Member Riftin brought up the issue of Bedouin displacement in a closed session of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, Yadin evaded a direct answer and shrewdly challenged Riftin to submit a public query to the Minister of Defense. "I am very surprised" by the protests of the kibbutzim, Yadin added, "since not one of these settlements could exist unless a Bedouin tribe had been evicted from that same place."¹⁸⁰

When the military government resumed in January and February its efforts to displace more Bedouin to the east, activists of Kibbutz Shoval threatened to spread news of the affair in party branches if no measures were taken. But it was not until October 1952 that Mapam succeeded in convening an inspection committee, which summoned Hanegbi to explain his actions.¹⁸¹ While attempting to deflect responsibility from himself, Hanegbi confirmed that he "did not rule out the need for displacements (deportations) for the sake of security and development," although he claimed he advised against doing so immediately. At the same time, Hanegbi confirmed that "the army's intention was to undermine the status of the displaced tribes in order that they leave the country's borders." Other officers who are members of Mapam, he added, "are also forced to carry out policies that go against the party line."¹⁸² The committee dawdled and produced its summary report only a year later, when urged to do so by another urgent appeal. Even then, however, Mapam had difficulty reaching a decision regarding Hanegbi, who in the meantime had moved on to become a private entrepreneur, extracting surplus rents from the Bedouins under the auspices of the military government.¹⁸³ The embarrassment was not confined

to the mother party: the contradictory position of left-wing Zionist settlers was also revealed at a general meeting of Kibbutz Shoal, held right after the completion of the main stages of the displacement operation. The chairman of the kibbutz political committee, Dov Meron, asked if the rumor was true “that we received land at the expense of the [displaced] Arabs.” He was pithily told that it was indeed from the land of the four Bedouin tribes that had been recently removed.¹⁸⁴

Finally, the transfer of the Bedouins undermined their sense of security and left deep traces in their social consciousness. When summing up the campaign, Hanegbi noted that it instilled in the Bedouins a sense of deprivation and “insecurity about their status in the state.”¹⁸⁵ A year later, his successor Herman concluded: “There is a fear among the Bedouins that the development of Jewish settlement will push them out from their lands.” He added that the “impact of the last transfer operation of tribes, which was carried out in 1951, is still strongly felt,” and even now, they feel “insecure in their hold on the land”—a feeling that prevails even “among the tribes who have been sitting on the same land for generations.”¹⁸⁶ The Knesset members who toured the area that year also heard from the Bedouins that, after being moved “from their places, they do not feel like they own the lands that were given to them”—that is, the lands in the locations to which they were transferred.¹⁸⁷

During the entire operation, it was the spokesmen of the so-called nomads who repeatedly demanded to be allowed to permanently reside on their lands, while Israeli authorities consistently refused to commit to ending the process of displacement and resettlement. This was in accordance with the double principle formulated as early as 1950: to “stabilize” and forcibly “concentrate” the Bedouins, and at the same time, to repeatedly “move” them in order to undermine their conviction that they own the land.¹⁸⁸ This was at the heart of Zionist settler-colonial practice; it permeated the state’s shifting plans for the Bedouins in the decades that followed—forced displacement, expulsion, induced exodus from the Naqab, or concentration in townships.

The 1951 displacement campaign in the northern Naqab thus evinces that, contrary to the common perception of a persisting conflict between the State of Israel and its Palestinian citizens in the Naqab as a confrontation between a “modern state” and tenacious “nomads” whom the state seeks to make sedentary, forced sedentarization *and* nomadization functioned as two intertwined moments in the local version of settler colonialism. Any attempt to reduce the process to one of these two moments misses its core dynamic—the forcible concentration of the Bedouins and their repeated displacement, a process of settlement and resettlement. One wave of settlement required uprooting the Bedouins and resettling them, while a subsequent wave of colonization could lead—as indeed happened repeatedly in the decades after 1951—to undermining the fragile stability achieved and to a renewed displacement campaign. Settler colonialism is not a finished, static structure, but a structured social process, dynamic and contradictory.

Acknowledgments

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About the Author

Gadi Algazi is a professor of history at Tel Aviv University. He currently works on the social history of scholarly families in the early modern period, and on histories of dispossession and resettlement in Israel of the 1950s.

Endnotes

1. Minutes of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee [in Hebrew], December 3, 1951, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. Abbreviations used throughout this article: ISA: Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; IDFA: the IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; HHA: HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel. All translations are by the author.
2. In this piece, the term “Negev” is used whenever Israeli sources are quoted or referenced; the term “Naqab” is used whenever articulating the Palestinian perspective. The Bedouin Arabs of the Negev/Naqab are part of the Palestinian people. Following the usage in most of the historical documents and common parlance, they will be referred to as Bedouins.
3. See Mansour Nasasra, *The Naqab Bedouins: A Century of Political Resistance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), for more on the topic; for a very brief introduction to the period between 1948 and the early 1960s, see Emanuel Marx and Avinoam Meir, “Lands, Towns and Planning: The Negev Bedouin and the State of Israel,” *Geography Research Forum* 25 (2005): 45–47, <https://grf.bgu.ac.il/index.php/GRF/article/view/290>.
4. Knesset Member Emile Habibi, parliamentary question to Minister of Defense David Ben-Gurion, “Displacement by Force of Bedouins from Their Lands North of Beer Sheva” [in Hebrew], December 7, 1951, file G-2913/6, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; the question was officially entered in the Knesset minutes on December 12: Minutes of the Knesset Plenum [in Hebrew], February 6, 1952, https://fs.knesset.gov.il/2/Plenum/2_ptm_250290.pdf (Bedouin names misquoted in the original and amended).
5. David Ben-Gurion, response to Emile Habibi’s parliamentary question [in Hebrew], February 6, 1952, Minutes of the Knesset Plenum [in Hebrew], https://fs.knesset.gov.il/2/Plenum/2_ptm_250290.pdf.
6. Once the parliamentary question had been submitted, it became impossible to censor news reports about its content. However, before the Hebrew Communist daily was able to report Habibi’s allegations, the semiofficial National News Agency distributed a very short and muddled item, which was carried by all major Israeli newspapers on December 9, 1951. It indicated that approximately three thousand Bedouin families who lived on 75,000 dunams of land were (or should be) transferred within two weeks. The most likely explanation for the distribution of a news item that named two Bedouin groups that were actually one and the same, exaggerated the number of those displaced, and presented them as absentees, is that it had been hastily put together to spare the government embarrassment over the imminent revelation of what it had sought to conceal. See “Two Bedouin Tribes Moved near Beer Sheva” [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, December 9, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>; “CPI’s Representatives in the Knesset Raise Issues of Discrimination against Arab Citizens in Parliamentary Questions to the Government Ministers” [in Hebrew], *Kol Ha’am*, December 10, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
7. Previous studies brought to light a few relevant pieces of evidence, but in the absence of more sustained research on the campaign, the documents remained without context, and scattered traces of the transfer operation were sometimes mistakenly linked to earlier campaigns. See Zeev Zivan, *Jewish-Bedouin Frontier Relationships in the Negev 1940s–1950s* [in Hebrew] (Beersheba: Negev Center for Regional Development, 2017), 139 and the appendices; Chanina Porat, “Settlement and Development Policy and the Negev Bedouins, 1948–1953” [in Hebrew], *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel* 7 (1997): 425–26 (following Ben-Gurion’s version). See, however, Alexandre Kedar, Ahmad Amara, and Oren Yiftachel, *Emptied Lands: A Legal Geography of Bedouin Rights in the Negev* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University

- Press, 2018), 153–54, an important study of the land issue that focuses on the fate of the al-‘Uqbi family.
8. On Palestinian citizenship after 1948, see Lana Tatour, “Citizenship as Domination: Settler Colonialism and the Making of Palestinian Citizenship in Israel,” *Arab Studies Journal* 27, no. 2 (2019): 8–39, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3533490>.
 9. Summary of the military governors’ meeting [in Hebrew], September 27, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel (my emphasis).
 10. Minutes of the Committee for Refugee Affairs meeting [in Hebrew], September 1, 1949, file KKL5/17148, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem; Minutes of the Committee for Refugee Affairs meeting [in Hebrew], October 12, 1949, file 13-232/1972, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 11. Chanina Porat, *From Wilderness to Green Fields: The Development and Settlement of the Negev 1949–1956* [in Hebrew] (Beersheba: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2002), 155; Zev̄v Tzur, *The Kibbutz ha-Meuchad in the Settlement of Eretz Israel* [in Hebrew] (Ramat Gan, Israel: Yad Tabenkin, 1979–1986), 3, 22; Eyal Weizman and Fazal Sheikh, *The Conflict Shoreline: Colonization as Climate Change in the Negev Desert* (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2015), 17–20, 24–28. The severe drought of the previous year highlighted the discrepancy between the western and the arid eastern Negev: “Mahlon and Chilion in the Fields of the Negev” [in Hebrew], *HaBoker*, April 5, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>; for exuberant assessments of the northern Negev’s agricultural potential, see, for example, Avraham Salomon, “Safiah–Beit Kama” [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, June 21, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>, and “An Abundant Yield in the Northern Negev” [in Hebrew], *Herut*, May 9, 1952, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
 12. Michael Hanegbi to Operations Division, “Displacement of the Bedouins in the Negev” [in Hebrew], November 14, 1951, file 54-848/1959, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. The number stated by Hanegbi refers only to displacement from the northern Negev, on which I focus, and not to the second component of the plan—the concentration of Bedouins and their removal from the area around Beersheba.
 13. Minutes of the Negev Military Government Headquarters meeting [in Hebrew], August 27, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. A list of the tribes is included in a memorandum of the Negev Military Government meeting [in Hebrew], June 25, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 14. Kibbutz Shoal to the Knesset Committee of Interior Affairs [in Hebrew], April 19, 1953, file K-90.4(5), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel; Salman al-Huzayl to Moshe Dayan [in Hebrew], March 25, 1954, file 27-8/1956, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Salman al-Huzayl to President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi [in Hebrew], October 18, 1954, file GL-17030/17, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. See ‘Arif al-‘Arif, *History of Bi’r al-Sab’ and Its Tribes* [in Arabic] (Jerusalem: unknown publisher, 1934), 105–6; Porat, “Settlement and Development Policy,” 401–2; Hillel Cohen, *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948–1967*, trans. Haim Watzman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 181–85; David Ben-Gurion, *War Diaries 1947–1949*, ed. Gershon Rivlin and Elhanan Orren [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1982), i, 76.
 15. Hanegbi reported that he had received requests from several sheikhs but decided to meet only with al-Huzayl, “one of our old friends.” Michael Hanegbi to Major General Elimelech Avner [in Hebrew], October 13, 1948, file 223-121/1950, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. For a reconstruction of the meeting between Hanegbi and the sheikhs from the state’s point of view, see Havatzelet Yahel and Ruth Kark, “Israel Negev Bedouin during the 1948 War: Departure and Return,” *Israel Affairs* 21, no. 1 (2015): 64–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2014.984421>.
 16. “The Minister of Police Visited the Minorities” [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, July 11, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
 17. Military Government Department, report on April–May 1954 [in Hebrew], file HZ-2401/19, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; Yitzhak Yaakobi, “Sheikh Exploits His Tribe” [in Hebrew], *Davar*, November 10, 1953, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>; Yitzhak Yaakobi, “They

- Sowed but Did Not Reap” [in Hebrew], *Davar*, August 5, 1956, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>; “Heavy Taxes Imposed on Drought-Stricken Bedouins” [in Hebrew], *Al HaMishmar*, January 1, 1956, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
18. Eid al-Turi, “The History of the al-Malahi Tribe as Told to David Alon,” *Kingdom of the Animals: Bedouin Legends and Folktales on Animals*, ed. Rafi Malka [in Hebrew] (Lahav and Jerusalem: Joe Alon Center and Ariel Press, 1996), 13.
 19. Captain Sasson Basrawi to Michael Hanegbi [in Hebrew], March 15 and March 28, 1949, file 245-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Negev Regional Commander to the Military Governor [in Hebrew], October 17, 1951, file 282-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Israeli Police Sergeant David Ben-Ezra [in Hebrew], survey of Bedouin tribes, February 2, 1956, file L-2460/19, p. 18, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
 20. “People” [in Hebrew], *HaOlam HaZeh*, April 15, 1952, <https://thisworld.online/1952/755/>. Al-Huzayl, here called “the most famous of the sheikhs in the Israeli Negev,” starred in the following years in countless Orientalist articles in the Israeli press. On some of the later uses of visual representations, see Emilie Le Febvre, *A Shaykh’s Portrait: Images and Tribal History amongst Bedouin in the Negev*, Royal Anthropology Institute, 2016, <https://www.therai.org.uk/images/stories/photography/AnthandPhotoVol2.pdf>.
 21. See Gadi Algazi, “Colonial Profits in the Shadow of Military Rule” [in Hebrew], in *Colonization and Resistance in Israel/Palestine: Selected Issues and Historical Events in a Long-Term Perspective*, ed. Lev Grinberg and Daniel De Malach (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute Press, 2023), 164–207; Menahem Kapeliuk, “The Census of the Negev Bedouins Continues” [in Hebrew], *Davar*, April 2, 1954, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
 22. “A Bedouin ‘Fantasia’ in Honor of the Chief of Staff” [in Hebrew], *HaBoker*, May 3, 1950, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
 23. Yadin gave the sheikh—on an unknown date—a rifle with a dedication commending his service to the State of Israel. Haviv Kna’an, “Ruler of the Bedouins from Sea to Sea” [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, January 25, 1953, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles> (the rifle is already mentioned in “This Week’s Notes” [in Hebrew], *Davar*, March 16, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>). After Israel occupied Gaza in 1956, al-Huzayl toured the city armed with several firearms, including the rifle he had received from Yadin. See “Why We Occupied Gaza” [in Hebrew], *Maariv*, February 22, 1957, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
 24. “A Bedouin ‘Fantasia’ in Honor of the Chief of Staff” [in Hebrew], *HaBoker*, May 3, 1950, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>; “The Bedouins of the Negev Welcome the Chief of Staff” [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, May 3, 1950, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
 25. We obviously do not have the actual text of what was said in Hebrew and Arabic and translated by the military interpreter, but there is a large degree of overlap between the reports. See, in addition to *Haaretz*’s and *HaBoker*’s reports, Ephraim Talmi, “The Bedouins in the Negev Declare Their Loyalty to Israel” [in Hebrew], *Davar*, May 3, 1950, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>; Carmel Newsreels, May 13, 1950, Nathan Axelrod Collection ii-046, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. Ezriel Carlebach struck a more ominous note in his report: “Among Bedouins” [in Hebrew], *Maariv*, May 3, 1950, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>. Sheikh Salman invited Israel’s leaders two months earlier for a visit. Avraham Shemesh, “Weekly Security Report” [in Hebrew], March 18, 1950, file 844-721/1972, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 26. Minutes of the Secondary Coordination Committee meeting [in Hebrew], January 25, 1950, file 13-232/1972, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 27. Colonel Tzvi Tzur, “The Problem of the Bedouins in the Negev” [in Hebrew], September 15, 1950, file 846-721/1972, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel, summarizing a meeting held on August 11, 1950.
 28. See Cohen, *Good Arabs*, 183; Inspector Singer to Israeli Police Southern Region [in Hebrew], December 12, 1949, file L-91/41, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. My thanks to Hillel Cohen who kindly provided me with this document. It seems that al-Huzayl’s claims about the corruption of the police officer patronized by Military Governor Michael Hanegbi were essentially true (Algazi, “Colonial Profits,” 172, note 21).

29. Letter from twelve sheikhs of the Naqab to the military governor [in Arabic], before October 3, 1950, file 282-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. I have not found a response to this letter. On October 12, al-Huzayl addressed another letter to the minister of supply and rationing, this time on behalf of “the Bedouins of the Naqab and especially those of Sheikh Salman al-Huzayl,” requesting access to the full range of rationed consumer products and agricultural assistance (file 282-834/1953, IDFA).
30. Letter from Bedouin sheikhs and notables to the prime minister [in Arabic], February 2, 1951, file 282-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. During this period, mail from Bedouins was screened by the military government. Shemesh asked the governor, who rejected the petition, whether to pass the letter on to the prime minister; it seems that the answer was negative.
31. “Negev Lands to Be Transferred to the State” [in Hebrew], *Davar*, January 30, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>. The third clause of the law, presented in November 1950 to the Knesset, stated that ownerless land would be deemed state property. The minister of justice’s explanation in the press highlighted that the “accepted opinion” is that the Negev “is for the most part the property of the state, and there are almost no private property rights over it.” “First Reading of the State Property Law” [in Hebrew], *Davar*, November 8, 1950, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>. On January 29, 1951, the chairman of the Knesset Finance Committee presented the definitive version of the law and explained that according to the third clause, “the largest part of the Negev will probably be registered” under the name of the State of Israel “since there are no known rights of private owners or other owners over the large majority of the Negev.” Minutes of the Knesset Plenum, January 29, 1951, https://fs.knesset.gov.il/1/Plenum/1_ptm_250093.pdf.
32. Avraham Shemesh to the Negev military governor [in Hebrew], February 26, 1951, file GL-17003/4, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
33. Shemesh to the Negev military governor, file GL-17003/4, ISA. On March 7, 1951, Hanegbi reported to the advisor on Arab affairs (file 282-834/1953, IDFA) that the action of Advocate Gideon Margalit, which had taken place without the government’s knowledge, was “interrupted and ceased.”
34. A later report suggests that Shemesh had to make additional efforts to counter al-Huzayl’s attempts to gain the support of the sheikhs of the northern Naqab, and hence pushed for the prosecution of Sheikh al-Huzayl for embezzling rationed food. See Avraham Shemesh, biweekly security report [in Hebrew], March 17, 1951, file 74-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
35. Letter from eighteen sheikhs of the Naqab to the Negev military governor [in Arabic], March 18, 1951, file 282-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
36. “The Robber-Supervisor” [in Hebrew], *Al HaMishmar*, March 19, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>; “Bedouins Complain about Their Sheikh” [in Hebrew], *Davar*, March 19, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>. The military government knew of al-Huzayl’s misuse of his position at least since March 1949 (see note 19). On this practice, see Hamed Abu S’eilik to the Negev military governor [in Hebrew], January 25, 1950, file 54-7/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Algazi, “Colonial Profits,” 170, and below, p. 20.
37. The newspaper story repeats Shemesh’s biweekly security report from March 17, 1951, file 74-834/1953, IDFA. Responding to Hanegbi, who was trying to find out the source of the news item, Shemesh wrote that al-Huzayl should “learn that he is not a big man.” Avraham Shemesh to the military governor [in Hebrew] with eight testimonies supporting the allegations [in Arabic], March 25, 1951, file 282-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
38. Cohen’s characterization of al-Huzayl should be modified accordingly: Cohen, *Good Arabs*, 181–85.
39. Major Moshe Bar-On, Minutes of the Negev Military Government Headquarters meeting [in Hebrew], August 27, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
40. On Bedouins’ dependence on the few and unpredictable days of rain, see Emanuel Marx, *Bedouin of the Negev* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1967), 20–23.

41. Avraham Shemesh, report to the military governor [in Hebrew], August 28, 1951, file 74-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Minutes of the Negev Military Government Headquarters meeting [in Hebrew], September 3, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
42. Minutes of the Negev Military Government Headquarters meeting [in Hebrew], September 17, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. Even at this meeting, al-Huzayl, al-'Uqbi, and al-Talalqa (who were located east of al-'Araqib, in the region of Twail Abu Jarwal) were not yet included among those designated for transfer. Even at Dayan's meeting with the military governor on September 22, 1951, the goals of the operation were agreed upon, but not their method of implementation. See Oded Messer, memorandum from a meeting of coordination between the general of the southern command and Negev military government [in Hebrew], September 28, 1951, file GL-61372/4, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
43. Letter from Major General Moshe Dayan to deputy chief of staff and the military government [in Hebrew], September 25, 1951, file 54-7/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. The meeting must have taken place between Dayan's meeting with Hanegbi on September 22 and Dayan's letter reporting it on September 25. Hanegbi was temporarily transferred to the Armistice Committee (perhaps due to the Knesset elections) and formally returned to his position as governor on October 23, 1951.
44. Dayan to deputy chief of staff and the military government, file 54-7/1954, IDFA. Compare with Hanegbi, "Displacement of the Bedouins," file 54-848/1959, IDFA.
45. Dayan to deputy chief of staff and the military government, file 54-7/1954, IDFA. This is corroborated by Hanegbi, "Displacement of the Bedouins," file 54-848/1959, IDFA and a letter by Yitzhak Shani, director of the Department of Military Government, to the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency [in Hebrew], June 20, 1952, file GL-13911/6, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
46. Dayan to deputy chief of staff and the military government, file 54-7/1954, IDFA.
47. Dayan to deputy chief of staff and the military government, file 54-7/1954, IDFA. Both Jews and Arabs living near the new borders were involved in smuggling during this period, and sometimes it was even carried out at the behest of the army itself. On the Bedouin "border economy," see Nasasra, *The Naqab Bedouins*, 164–68.
48. Hanegbi, "Displacement of the Bedouins," file 54-848/1959, IDFA.
49. Dayan to deputy chief of staff and the military government, file 54-7/1954, IDFA.
50. Dayan to deputy chief of staff and the military government, file 54-7/1954, IDFA.
51. Dayan to deputy chief of staff and the military government, file 54-7/1954, IDFA.
52. "As of now, al-Huzayl refuses to accept bribes but may relent." Aharon Cohen, note of a conversation with Yosef Tzur (mistakenly called Even Tzur) and Avraham (family name not indicated), January 10, 1952, file 95-11.10(1), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel.
53. Summary of Hanegbi's comments during the November 6, 1952 hearing [in Hebrew], in Shlomo Tilman and Shmuel Cohen's report to Mapam Central Committee, December 12, 1953, file 90.110(6), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel; Kibbutz Shoal, memorandum to Mapam Center, "Bedouin Displacement from Shoal Area" [in Hebrew], January 28, 1952, file 90.110(6), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel, mentioning "conspiracies, bribery, and pressure"; Eliezer Be'eri to Mapam Central Committee [in Hebrew], February 2, 1952, file 90.110(6), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel.
54. Dayan to deputy chief of staff and the military government, file 54-7/1954, IDFA; Moshe Bar-On to Yehoshua Palmon, advisor on Arab affairs, the Department of Military Government, and Yitzhak Rabin, head of Operations Division [in Hebrew], October 24, 1951, file 54-7/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
55. In September, preparations for the opening of al-'Uqbi's school still continued, but on the morrow of Dayan's letter, it was reported that the school had been "canceled." Sasson Basrawi to the military governor [in Hebrew], September 21–26, 1952, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. Avraham Shemesh reported that he moved the people of Jaber Abu Srihan to Umm Batin on September 28. Shemesh, Security Report [in Hebrew], October 3, 1951, file 74-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.

56. This is what the deputy military governor reported, but it is unlikely that the prospect of fully uprooting the tribe was explicitly mentioned at the meeting with the sheikh. Bar-On to Palmon, the Department of Military Government, and Rabin, October 24, 1951, file 54-7/1954, IDFA.
57. Bar-On to Palmon, the Department of Military Government, and Rabin, file 54-7/1954, IDFA; Avraham Shemesh, security report [in Hebrew], November 2, 1951, file 74-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. We do not have to accept unquestioningly the military government's assumption that Bedouin protests were "guided" by Jewish activists.
58. Urgent memorandum by Sheikh 'Amer al-Talalqa, Sheikh Sulayman al-'Uqbi, and Sheikh Muhammad al-Afinish to the prime minister, minister of interior, minister of police, and Knesset Member Saif al-Din al-Zu'bi [in Hebrew], October 11, 1951, files GL-13923/2 and G-2218/14, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. The only available version of their letter is in Hebrew, but the wording leaves no doubt that it was conceived in Arabic and translated. Letters to the authorities were usually sent through representatives of the military government, which allowed for close supervision of their content. However, the senders seem to have evaded such control by sending the letter directly from Beersheba.
59. Urgent memorandum by Sheikh 'Amer al-Talalqa, Sheikh Sulayman al-'Uqbi, and Sheikh Muhammad al-Afinish to the prime minister, minister of interior, minister of police, Knesset Member Saif al-Din al-Zu'bi, files GL-13923/2 and G-2218/14, ISA.
60. Urgent memorandum by Sheikh 'Amer al-Talalqa, Sheikh Sulayman al-'Uqbi, and Sheikh Muhammad al-Afinish to the prime minister, minister of interior, minister of police, Knesset Member Saif al-Din al-Zu'bi, files GL-13923/2 and G-2218/14, ISA.
61. Urgent memorandum by Sheikh 'Amer al-Talalqa, Sheikh Sulayman al-'Uqbi, and Sheikh Muhammad al-Afinish to the prime minister, minister of interior, minister of police, Knesset Member Saif al-Din al-Zu'bi, files GL-13923/2 and G-2218/14, ISA. The "slaves" from whom the signatories are careful to distinguish themselves are Bedouins of African origin; see Safa Abu-Rabia, "Is Slavery Over? Black and White Arab Bedouin Women in the Naqab (Negev)," in *Struggle and Survival in Palestine/Israel*, ed. Mark LeVine and Gershon Shafir (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 271–78. On the way African Palestinians were treated by members of the Bedouin elite, see Avraham Shemesh, report to the military governor [in Hebrew], July 27, 1950, file 282-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
62. Urgent memorandum by Sheikh 'Amer al-Talalqa, Sheikh Sulayman al-'Uqbi, and Sheikh Muhammad al-Afinish to the prime minister, minister of interior, minister of police, Knesset Member Saif al-Din al-Zu'bi, files GL-13923/2 and G-2218/14, ISA.
63. On October 19, 1951, Knesset Member Saif al-Din al-Zu'bi sent a telegram to the prime minister and to Yehoshua Palmon, advisor on Arab affairs, asking for their intervention. On the same day, Palmon asked the military government for explanations regarding the operation, in the planning of which he had not been involved. However, in response to a request for clarification by Shimon Landman, director of the Minorities Department at the Ministry of Interior, Palmon produced a censored and softened version of the events. Yehoshua Palmon to Shimon Landman [in Hebrew], November 9, 1951, file GL-13923/2, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
64. A report about the signing and a bilingual preprepared form of the declaration, unsigned, in Bar-On's report to Palmon, the Department of Military Government, and Rabin, October 24, 1951, file 54-7/1954, IDFA. References to the signed statement: Avraham Shemesh to the military governor [in Hebrew], November 2, 1951, file 74-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; minutes of the Negev Military Government Headquarters meeting [in Hebrew], November 8, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. It is striking that when Sheikh al-'Uqbi protested his transfer right after this meeting (pp. 15–16 above), Hanegbi did not counter his claim by referring to the signed statement, a move that might have raised questions concerning the manner by which such "consent" had been obtained.
65. Bar-On to Palmon, the Department of Military Government, and Rabin, October 24, 1951, file 54-7/1954, IDFA.
66. The sums promised to al-Talalqa (384 people, NIS 4,000) and al-Afinish (140 people, NIS 1,500) seem to be based on the same rate offered to al-Huzayl—NIS 10 per person, but al-'Uqbi (402

- people) was offered a bit more, NIS 5,000. Population figures are based on Bar-On's earlier report [in Hebrew], October 1951, file GL-17102/37, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
67. This was Avraham Shemesh's assessment in his report to the military governor, file 74-834/1953, IDFA.
 68. Sheikh al-Huzayl to the prime minister [in Arabic], October 19, 1951, file GL-17030/17 (the letter arrived on October 31, 1951), Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
 69. See the detailed election results among the Bedouins in Negev military government to the Minorities Department in the Ministry of Interior [in Hebrew], September 16, 1951, file G-2216/9, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
 70. Shetreet resigned on the eve of the elections from the short-lived Sephardi party and joined Mapai's list for the Knesset. His associates spread a rumor that after the elections he would head a revamped Ministry of Minorities. See "The Minister of Police Makes an 'Election Visit' to the Bedouin Sheikhs in the Negev" [in Hebrew], *HaBoker*, July 6, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>; "The Minister of Police Visited the Minorities" [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, July 11, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>. The worsening of relations between the kibbutzim and al-Huzayl on the eve of the elections is evidenced by incidents between the settlers and the Bedouins; an unsigned report found among the papers of the Negev military government interprets them as a pressure campaign by the kibbutzim on the Bedouins and clarifies Shetreet's role. "Elections in the Second Knesset in the Bedouin Tribes" [in Hebrew], probably from August 1951, file 54-848/1959, 64, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. Al-Huzayl complained to the police about "terror" on the part of kibbutz members who shot at the tribe's herds, killing a cow and slightly injuring two children and a camel. Following his complaint, the military government warned the kibbutzim to refrain from further assaults. See "Beduin [*sic*] Claim Election Threat," *Jerusalem Post*, July 30, 1951, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/917686777/>; "In Beersheba" [in Hebrew], *Maariv*, July 31, 1951, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
 71. Palmon had doubts about Dayan's moves (see Palmon's letter to the Department of military government and the Negev military governor [in Hebrew], October 13, 1951, file GL-13923/2, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem). To a copy of Sheikh al-Huzayl's letter to Ben-Gurion, Palmon appended a note to the head of the military government, making clear that his position was that "moving Bedouin concentrations or tribes should occur with their consent." Thus, from his point of view, the operation failed to manufacture the required "consent." Letter from Yehoshua Palmon to Yitzhak Shani [in Hebrew], November 6, 1951, GL-17030/17, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
 72. Eliezer Be'eri to the Mapam Central Committee [in Hebrew], November 7, 1951, file 90.110(6), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel; Aharon Cohen, note of a conversation, January 10, 1952, file 95-11.10(1), HHA; Be'eri to Mapam Central Committee, February 2, 1952, file 90.110(6), HHA.
 73. Hanegbi, "Displacement of the Bedouins," file 54-848/1959, IDFA; Michael Hanegbi, "The Situation of the Bedouins in Israel" [in Hebrew], February 22, 1952, file 20-405/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. Al-Huzayl's appeal to Shetreet appears to have taken place around October 20; on the 25th of the month, the military government reported to the advisor on Arab affairs that it had answered Shetreet's questions on the matter (file GL-13923/2, ISA), which suggests that at this stage the decision to comply with Shetreet and avoid the transfer of al-Huzayl had not yet been made.
 74. Yosef Tzur, "The Bedouins in the Negev" [in Hebrew], January 1953, file K-90.4(5), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel.
 75. Haim Shur, "Information" [in Hebrew], *Kibbutz Shoal Bulletin* 21, November 16, 1951, Kibbutz Shoal Archive, Shoal, Israel.
 76. Hanegbi and the local kibbutzim repeatedly argued that Bedouin presence near the kibbutzim actually enhanced their security; Hanegbi, "Displacement of the Bedouins," file 54-848/1959, IDFA; Hanegbi, "The Situation of the Bedouins in Israel," file 20-405/1954, IDFA; memorandum by the Kibbutzim Mishmar HaNegev, Shoal, Safiah (currently called Beit Kama) and Dvir to members of the Knesset Yaakov Riftin and Yitzhak Ben-Aharon [in Hebrew],

- November 2, 1951, file 120-79/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
77. Shur, "Information"; Eliezer Be'eri to Kibbutz Shoal Political Committee, February 2, 1952, file 90.110(6), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel.
 78. Shur, "Information."
 79. Be'eri to Mapam Central Committee, November 7, 1951, file 90.110(6), HHA.
 80. Be'eri to Mapam Central Committee, November 7, 1951, file 90.110(6), HHA; compare Aharon Cohen, note of a conversation, January 10, 1952, file 95-11.10(1), HHA.
 81. Minutes of Mapam Central Committee meetings [in Hebrew], December 6, 1951 and January 14, 1952, file 90.64(2), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel; Be'eri to the Kibbutz Shoal Political Committee, February 2, 1952, file 90.110(6), HHA; Be'eri to Mapam Central Committee, February 2, 1952, file 90.110(6), HHA.
 82. Negev military government, war diary [in Hebrew], October 22, 1951, file 846-721/1972 (misprinted date), IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. The director of the Department of Military Government requested the distribution of additional weapons to the tribes to be transferred to the border area. Yitzhak Shani to the National Headquarters of the Israeli Police [in Hebrew], October 25, 1951, file 54-7/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 83. Menashe Hareli, after action report [in Hebrew], October 30, 1951, file 152-405/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 84. Hareli, after action report, October 31, 1951, file 152-405/1954, IDFA. It seems that only the small al-Afinish tribe did not openly refuse to move.
 85. Sheikh Salman al-Huzayl, minutes of a meeting of the advisor on Arab affairs with the sheikhs [in Hebrew], undated (circa 1974–75), file GL-13941/6, Israel State Archive, Jerusalem; testimony of Yusuf Farhoud al-'Usaybi [in Arabic], June 11, 2015, Zochrot, <https://www.zochrot.org/testimonies/view/56305/ar>.
 86. Ahmad al-Huzayl, "Hajja Wadha al-Huzayl al-'Uqbi Speaks about the Period before and after the Nakba of 1948" [in Arabic], *Deyar al-Naqab*, March 15, 2010, <http://www.deyaralnegab.com/main.php?content=13&id=2776>. The testimony of Wadha al-Huzayl also mentions the sheikhs' rejection of the military government's pecuniary offer.
 87. Al-Huzayl, "Hajja Wadha al-Huzayl al-'Uqbi Speaks."
 88. Some Bedouin families managed to slip away. A hint at what happened can be found in the fact that during the operation, thirty Bedouins were given a speedy trial by a military court; see Negev military government, war diary [in Hebrew], November 1951, file 846-721/1972, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Regiment 7, readiness report for October 1951 [in Hebrew], November 4, 1951, file 62-103/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. There were attempts to locate those who evaded the transfer; see handwritten notes exchanged between Michael Hanegbi and his officers [in Hebrew], December 7, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Negev military government, unit diary [in Hebrew], November 20, 1952, and December 3, 1952, file 847-721/1972, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 89. See Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 446–47; Ibrahim Abu Jaber, *Al-Araqib: The History, the Land, the Man* [in Arabic] (Nablus, Palestine: An-Najah National University, 2018); al-Huzayl, "Hajja Wadha al-Huzayl al-'Uqbi Speaks;" "Testimony of Muhammad 'Alyan al-'Usaybi and Interview with Sheikh Sayyah Abu Mdighem a-Turi" [in Arabic and Hebrew], in *Remembering al-Araqib*, ed. Omar Aghbariya (Tel Aviv: Zochrot, 2009), 24–25, 30–31, https://www.zochrot.org/publication_articles/view/50822/en.
 90. Compare, for example, a report about the "killing of people, the confiscation or killing of herds" as part of the "pressure" exerted by the army on the al-'Azazma tribe in the early 1950s to drive them across the Egyptian border toward the Sinai. Negev military government, "The Bedouins of the Negev Mountain" [in Hebrew], February 23, 1955, file 51-782/1958, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 91. Hanegbi, "The Situation of the Bedouins in Israel," file 20-405/1954, IDFA (my emphasis).

92. Yoela Har-Shefi, "The Cry of the Bedouins" [in Hebrew], *Yedioth Ahronoth*, March 7, 1975, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
93. Har-Shefi, "The Cry of the Bedouins." The promise that displacement was only temporary is also mentioned in the sheikhs' letter discussed below (p. 18, note 134), and is supported by the testimony of the field guard of Kibbutz Mishmar HaNegev; Zivan, *Jewish-Bedouin Frontier Relationships*, 154. As we have seen, al-'Uqbi refused to move even after receiving this promise.
94. Aviva Lori, "Deep in the Land" [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, June 21, 2006, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>. See also Nuri al-'Uqbi, *Waiting for Justice: The Story of the Elokbi Tribe in Israel* [in Arabic and Hebrew] (self-pub., 2001), 12.
95. The note of October 21, 1951 is reproduced in Kedar, Amara, and Yiftachel, *Emptied Lands*, appendix 19, 310; see Muhammad al-'Usaybi's testimony, Beersheva District Court, CC-7161/2006, October 26, 2009, and p. 18, note 134.
96. Sophie Richter-Devroe, "Biography, Life History and Orality: A Naqab Bedouin Woman's Narrative of Displacement, Expulsion and Escape in Historic Southern Palestine, 1930–1970," *Hawwa* 14, no. 3 (2016): 320, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15692086-12341313>. Compare the brief report in the Negev military government, war diary [in Hebrew], November 1, 1951, file 846-721/1972, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
97. Aharon Cohen, note of a conversation, January 10, 1952, file 95-11.10(1), HHA.
98. Minutes of the Negev Military Government Headquarters meeting [in Hebrew], November 8, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
99. Negev military government, war diary [in Hebrew], November 9, 1951, file 846-721/1972, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
100. Minutes of the Negev Military Government Headquarters meeting, November 8, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
101. Hanegbi, "Displacement of the Bedouins," file 54-848/1959, IDFA.
102. Hanegbi, "Displacement of the Bedouins," file 54-848/1959, IDFA. Captain Shemesh proposed to overcome Sheikh al-Sani's opposition by splitting the tribe and transferring some of his people (minutes of the Negev Military Government Headquarters meeting, November 8, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDFA), but there are no indications that he managed to do so. Shemesh similarly tried to split the al-Afinish tribe to overcome its resistance; see the notes exchanged among the officers of the Negev military government [in Hebrew], December 7, 1951 to February 8, 1952, file 277-834/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
103. Kibbutz Shoal, memorandum to Mapam Center, January 28, 1952, file 90.110(6), HHA. According to al-Asad tribe elders, Hanegbi confiscated the land tax registration notebook that served as proof of ownership. Salih al-Asad, "Changes in Land Values and Uses among Urbanizing Bedouins in the Negev: The Case of Laqiyya" [in Hebrew] (master's thesis, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2006), 30.
104. The displacement of the people of Qderat al-Sani' deserves a detailed reconstruction that I hope to complete in the near future.
105. Minutes of the Negev military government meeting with Shani [in Hebrew], November 8, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
106. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs [in Hebrew], November 8, 1951, file 133-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
107. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
108. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
109. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
110. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
111. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.

112. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
113. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
114. Israeli officials described providing seeds and plowing the land for Bedouins as a way to “sweeten the bitter pill” of displacement. See, for instance, minutes of the meeting of the Committee for the Implementation of the Land Acquisition Law [in Hebrew], November 5, 1954, file 4-610/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
115. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
116. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
117. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
118. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
119. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
120. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
121. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
122. See al-Talalqa’s attempt to secure legal assistance, Aharon Cohen, note of a conversation, January 10, 1952, file 95-11.10(1), HHA; Hanegbi, “The Situation of the Bedouins in Israel,” file 20-405/1954, IDFA; as well as the military government’s thwarting Advocate Margalit’s involvement (Hanegbi to the advisor on Arab affairs, file 282-834/1953, IDFA).
123. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
124. Minutes of the meeting of Shani and other officers of the military government with the sheikhs, file 133-834/1953, IDFA.
125. Unsigned and undated memorandum, “The Displacement of the Bedouins in the Negev” [in Hebrew] (most probably from mid-November 1951), attached to a handwritten note to the deputy chief of staff, drawing attention to the decision to let al-Huzayl stay, November 15, 1951, file 54-7/1954, IDFA (further discussed below, p. 17, note 127); Captain Shlomo Gazit, administration officer in the Operations Division, to the Bureau of the Chief of Staff, November 16, 1951, file 54-7/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. The Southern Command was notified of the decision on November 22; a further discussion with Shani was scheduled for December 9, 1951, but I have not encountered relevant documentation.
126. Memorandum by the Kibbutzim Mishmar HaNegev, Shoval, Safiah (currently called Beit Kama) and Dvir to Riftin and Ben-Aharon, file 120-79/1954, IDFA; Riftin at the meeting of Mapam Central Committee [in Hebrew], January 14, 1952, file 90.64(2), HHA.
127. Unsigned and undated memorandum, “The Displacement of the Bedouins in the Negev,” file 54-7/1954, IDFA. The short memorandum is a redacted version of Hanegbi’s detailed report of November 14 (“Displacement of the Bedouins,” file 54-848/1959, IDFA), which had been addressed to the Operations Division, with the addition of the decision about al-Huzayl. Yitzhak Rabin closely monitored the campaign. See Rabin to the administration officer [in Hebrew], October 28, 1951, file 54-7/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Major Dror Amitai, Operations Division, to Negev military governor [in Hebrew], November 21, 1951, file 107-7/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
128. Oded Messer to Michael Hanegbi, meeting summary [in Hebrew], November 16, 1951, file 54-7/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
129. Sulayman al-‘Uqbi to the Negev military governor [in Arabic], November 16, 1951, file IDFA 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.

130. At this stage, al-‘Uqbi did not yet know that all of al-Huzayl tribe would remain and essentially asked to return with his entourage as Dayan had earlier offered to Sheikh al-Huzayl.
131. Lori, “Deep in the Land.”
132. The sheikhs of al-‘Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and al-Afinish to the military governor [in Arabic], November 18, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. The officers of the military government noticed that Sheikh al-Afinish did not sign the letter himself and noted this in the margin; everything indicates that Sulayman al-‘Uqbi composed the letter. A copy (with some errors) in the files of Mapam’s Arab Section (file 90.76(1), HHA) indicates the tightening of cooperation between the displaced Bedouins and the neighboring kibbutzim. Another copy: file G-2913/6, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
133. The sheikhs of al-‘Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and al-Afinish to the military governor, file 281-834/1953, IDFA.
134. The sheikhs of al-‘Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and al-Afinish to the military governor, file 281-834/1953, IDFA.
135. Sheikh Sulayman al-‘Uqbi’s and four prominent members of the tribe to Emile Habibi [in Arabic], November 18, 1951, file G-2913/6, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. In his parliamentary question, Habibi elided this element and simply described the displaced tribes as “peaceful.”
136. Captain Pinchas Amir, Department of Military Government, to Operations Division [in Hebrew], January 10, 1952, file 54-7/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Major Amitai, Operations Division, to Operations Directorate, “Bedouin Displacement from the Beersheba Area: Response to Parliamentary Question no. 52” [in Hebrew], January 11, 1952, file 30-68/1955, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Lieutenant Colonel Michael Avitzur, bureau chief of the chief of staff, to the prime minister’s military secretary, “Displacement of Bedouins from Lands near Beer Sheva” [in Hebrew], January 16, 1951, file G-2913/6, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. This was also the first public version that relied on the sheikhs’ presumed consent to moving in exchange for some payment (see above, p. 8, notes 51–53).
137. David Ben-Gurion, response to Emile Habibi’s parliamentary question, minutes of the Knesset Plenum [in Hebrew], February 6, 1952, https://fs.knesset.gov.il//2/Plenum/2_ptm_250290.pdf, quoted above, p. 2.
138. First Lieutenant Misha Negbi (Aghion), report on the displacement of Bedouins [in Hebrew], November 21, 1951, file 362-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
139. Negbi (Aghion), report on the displacement of Bedouins, file 362-834/1953, IDFA. Complementary reports: Aharon Cohen, note of a conversation, January 10, 1952, file 95-11.10(1), HHA; Kibbutz Shoval, memorandum to Mapam Center, January 28, 1952, file 90.110(6), HHA.
140. Negbi (Aghion), report on the displacement of Bedouins, file 362-834/1953, IDFA. Negbi also suggested applying the same strategy to the Abu ‘Abdun tribe: to join them with another tribe in the hope that tensions would arise between them and the local residents would “encourage” the people to leave eastward. The proposals were approved and executed; see Lieutenant Colonel Rechavam Ze’evi to head of Operations Directorate and the Southern Command [in Hebrew], March 22, 1954, file 26-8/1956, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
141. Aharon Cohen, summary of a conversation with Dov Meron at Kibbutz Shoval [in Hebrew], January 14, 1952, file 95-10.11(1), HHA; Kibbutz Shoval, memorandum to Mapam Center, January 28, 1952, file 90.110(6), HHA; Bèeri to Mapam Central Committee, February 2, 1952, file 90.110(6), HHA; Dov Meron, telegram to Eliezer Bèeri [in Hebrew], February 29, 1952, file 90.76(1), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel (the text should read 400 persons, not families). In response, Riftin wrote again to Chief of Staff Yigal Yadin concerning the fate of the al-Huzayl tribe; this time Yadin equivocated and told Riftin that he should address his complaint on the matter to Ben-Gurion, but expressed his willingness to “revisit” the matter. Minutes of Mapam Central Committee meeting [in Hebrew], March 5, 1952, file 90.64(2), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel.
142. The number of al-Huzayl’s men eventually decreased only by about 300–350, roughly matching the number of people under Saqr al-Huzayl’s control; Ze’evi to head of Operations Directorate and the Southern Command, file 26-8/1956, IDFA. Compare the data in Bar-On’s report from

- October 1951, file GL-17102/37, ISA, with the census of the Negev Bedouins [in Hebrew], July 31, 1953, file 98-490/1956, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
143. Hebrew translation of the letter by the sheikhs of al-‘Uqbi, al-Talalqa, and al-Afinish to the military governor, November 18, 1951, with a marginal note by Sasson Basrawi, November 22, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 144. Sasson Basrawi to the military governor [in Hebrew], November 22, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. See p. 20, notes 153–54, for a fuller account of this move.
 145. Michael Hanegbi to Sasson Basrawi [in Hebrew], December 2, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 146. Sasson Basrawi to Michael Hanegbi [in Hebrew], December 5, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 147. Sulayman al-‘Uqbi to the Negev military governor [in Hebrew], April 19, 1953, file GL-13923/2, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; Sulayman al-‘Uqbi to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion [in Hebrew], December 3, 1952, file K-589/20, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
 148. By the end of November, the new Sheikh Salem already reported on a “serial infiltrator” who he claimed had received protection from his brother, the previous sheikh; Basrawi to Hanegbi, December 5, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDFA. On the policy of splitting tribes and appointing sheikhs ready to perform the government’s bidding, see Avinoam Meir, *As Nomadism Ends: The Israeli Bedouin of the Negev* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 94.
 149. Sasson Basrawi to the military governor [in Hebrew], June 26, 1951, and July 17, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 150. Sulayman al-‘Uqbi to the military governor [in Arabic], November 12, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 151. In addition, he also repeated his request for the allocation of suitable lands and weapons for self-defense. Sulayman al-‘Uqbi to the military governor, November 12, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDFA. Al-‘Uqbi’s concern about preserving the traditional status of the sheikhs under the new regime was already evident in his speech at the ceremonial meeting with Yadin in 1950.
 152. Sasson Basrawi to Michael Hanegbi [in Hebrew], November 11, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 153. Letter from more than forty heads of households to the Military Government [in Arabic], November 13, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 154. Handwritten notes exchanged between Sasson Basrawi and Michael Hanegbi [in Hebrew], November 14 and November 19, 1951, file 281-834/1953, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 155. ‘Amer al-Talalqa, whom the officers of the military government considered a dangerous opponent, was not dismissed from his position, and they later described him as “highly respected and accepted by his tribe.” Negev military government, survey of Bedouin tribes [in Hebrew], July 30, 1956, file 477-72/1972, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 156. According to Nuri al-‘Uqbi’s testimony, December 7, 2009, Beersheba District Court, Civil Case 7161/2006, only members of his family joined Sulayman al-‘Uqbi, and this happened in 1954. Ahmad Salem Muhammad al-‘Uqbi mentioned “three or four people” who accompanied Sulayman al-‘Uqbi and assumed that this happened earlier, about a year after the displacement. See his affidavit, December 13, 2011, Beersheba District Court, Civil Case 1161/200.
 157. Al-‘Uqbi to Ben-Gurion, December 3, 1952, file K-589/20, ISA; al-‘Uqbi to the Negev Military Governor, April 19, 1953, file GL-13923/2, ISA (asking for his reinstatement as sheikh); petition by the al-‘Uqbi family [in Hebrew], December 30, 1955, file G-2263/12, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; members of the al-‘Uqbi tribe headed by Sulayman al-‘Uqbi to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion [in Arabic], August 10, 1960, file GL-17093/2, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; a quote from Sulayman al-‘Uqbi’s letter to the minister of agriculture [in Hebrew], minutes of the Land Leasing Committee meeting, December 12, 1965, file GL-13908/21, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; Sulayman al-‘Uqbi to the advisor on Arab affairs [in Hebrew], December 26, 1971, file GL-17093/13, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; Sulayman al-‘Uqbi to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin [in Arabic], August 17, 1975, file GL-7447/7, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.

158. Sasson Basrawi to the military governor [in Hebrew], November 28, 1951, file 281-834/1953. Back in al-'Araqib, Abu Freih may have resorted to the protection of Captain Avraham Shemesh; see al-Huzayl, "Hajja Wadha al-Huzayl al-'Uqbi Speaks."
159. Hanegbi put the number at 2,000–2,200: Hanegbi to Operations Division, "Summary of the Bedouin Displacement Operation," January 8, 1952, file 54-848/1959, IDFA. On the basis of the data provided by Bar-On in October 1951 (file GL-17102/37, ISA), a similar result can be reached: al-'Uqbi, 402; al-Talalqa, 384; Abu 'Abdun, 137; al-Afinish, 140; Tarabin al-Sani', 206; Tarabin Abu Bilal, 228; Tarabin Abu 'Amra, 65; Abu Srihan, 195; Saqr al-Huzayl, 300–350.
160. In his report of November 14, 1951 ("Displacement of the Bedouins," file 54-848/1959, IDFA), Hanegbi spoke about "a partial displacement" that yielded 60,000 dunams; in his "Summary of the Bedouin Displacement Operation," January 8, 1952, file 54-848/1959, IDFA, he mentioned 70,000 dunams.
161. Hanegbi, "The Situation of the Bedouins in Israel," file 20-405/1954, IDFA.
162. Bedouins displaced to the eastern Negev who were caught crossing the Beersheba–Hebron Road to the west were detained by the military government's troops and forced to pay considerable fines "as if this road were an armistice line or an inter-state border." Memorandum by Sheikh Ibrahim Abu Rqayq [in Arabic], December 16, 1955, file G-2263/12, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
163. Michael Hanegbi to Shalom Cohen of the Labor Ministry [in Hebrew], January 28, 1951, file GL-17098/25, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. These areas, Hanegbi stated in the summary of the operation, are "neglected, unoccupied, arid areas doomed to frequent droughts," and only a considerable investment of resources will enable them to "support a fair existence for a large population." Hanegbi, "The Situation of the Bedouins in Israel," file 20-405/1954, IDFA.
164. Michael Hanegbi, Negev military government security report [in Hebrew], May 13, 1952, file 20-405/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. See, also, Michael Hanegbi to the Department of Military Government [in Hebrew], May 22, 1952, file GL-13911/6, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
165. Basil Herman, monthly report of the Negev military governor [in Hebrew], July 26, 1952, file 20-405/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
166. Even the small military tanker was no longer available. Basil Herman, monthly reports of the Negev military governor [in Hebrew], August 25, 1952 and September 25, 1952, file 20-405/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
167. Minutes of the Negev military government meeting [in Hebrew], June 16, 1952, file 6-369/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Yitzhak Shani to director of the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency, June 20, 1952, file GL-13911/6, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
168. "A Group of Immigrants Rioted in the Omer Settlement" [in Hebrew], *HaTzofe*, July 15, 1956, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>; Aharon Dolev, "A Second Version of the Nahal'ot Affair" [in Hebrew], *Maariv*, January 11, 1957, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
169. Basil Herman to the Ministry of Defense of the Military Government [in Hebrew], November 1952, file 54-7/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
170. "A New Pipeline Was Laid for a Bedouin Tribe in the Negev" [in Hebrew], *Davar*, December 14, 1952, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
171. Yizhar Arnon, "The Negev Bedouins at the Inauguration of the Water Pipeline" [in Hebrew], *Herut*, December 14, 1952, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
172. "New Pipeline Brings Nomadic Life to End for 13,000 Bedouins," *Jerusalem Post*, December 12, 1952, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/894503939/>. This report even claimed that whereas "the majority of the Beduin [sic] of the northern Negev have pitched their tents near adequate water supplies," the (displaced) tribes "until now had to bring water long distances from scanty and inadequate sources."
173. Arnon, "The Negev Bedouins at the Inauguration of the Water Pipeline."
174. David Zecharia, Arab Village Development Department, to Negev military government [in Hebrew], June 6, 1955, file G-725/7, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; Yehoshua Verbin, Negev

- military governor, to the Arab Village Development Department [in Hebrew], June 9, 1955, file GL-13199/6, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; Meshulam Rhein to David Zecharya [in Hebrew], November 6, 1955, file G-3510/10, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
175. Shmuel Zamir, agricultural development officer, to Avraham Hanuki of the Agricultural Development Department [in Hebrew], June 8, 1956, file G-3510/10, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem; Department of Military Government to Avraham Hanuki [in Hebrew], June 14, 1956, file G-3510/10, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem (water still did not reach the taps); "Issues in Supplying Drinking Water to the Bedouins in the Negev" [in Hebrew], *Al HaMishmar*, August 10, 1956, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
 176. Staff officer in charge of civil issues at the military government to Avraham Hanuki [in Hebrew], May 21, 1957, file GL-13911/6, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
 177. See, for instance, Mordechai Artsieli, "Famine in the Third Year of Drought" [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, March 11, 1960, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>; Knesset Member Tawfik Toubi, "Proposal for the Knesset Agenda: Hunger Crisis among the Negev Bedouins" [in Hebrew], minutes of the Knesset Plenum, March 15, 1960, https://fs.knesset.gov.il/4/Plenum/4_ptm_251670.pdf; survey on the situation of the Bedouins [in Hebrew], April 1960, file GL-17093/2, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
 178. Yosef Tzur, "The Bedouins in the Negev," January 1953, file K-90.4(5), HHA; see also Basil Herman, monthly report of the Negev military governor [in Hebrew], December 25, 1952, file 20-405/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel. On pre-1948 schooling, see Aref Abu-Rabia, *Bedouin Century: Education and Development among the Negev Tribes in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berghahn, 2001), 73–79.
 179. Basil Herman, monthly report of the Negev military governor [in Hebrew], August 26, 1952, file 20-405/1954, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono; minutes of the military governors' meeting [in Hebrew], June 30, 1957, file 83-513/1967, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel; Eliyahu Eilat, "The Bedouins in the State of Israel" [in Hebrew], *LaMerhav*, March 14, 1958, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles>.
 180. Minutes of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee meeting [in Hebrew], December 3, 1951, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. Yadin knew that Mapam would refrain from raising the issue publicly in the Knesset. Rostam Bastuni, Palestinian Knesset member on behalf of Mapam, asked to raise the issue in the Knesset, but was turned down. See minutes of Mapam Central Committee meeting [in Hebrew], September 9, 1952, file 90.64(3), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel; memorandum by the Kibbutzim Mishmar HaNegev, Shoval, Safiah (currently called Beit Kama) and Dvir to Riftin and Ben-Aharon, file 120-79/1954, IDFA.
 181. Secretariat of Kibbutz Shoval to Mapam Central Council [in Hebrew], January 28, 1952, file 90.110(6), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel; Aharon Cohen, note of a conversation, January 10, 1952, file 95-11.10(1), HHA; Eliezer Be'eri to Yosef Tzur [in Hebrew], November 5, 1952, file 90.37(6), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel; Yirmiyahu Shmu'eli to Mapam Central Committee [in Hebrew], October 21, 1952, 90.110(6), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel.
 182. Shlomo Tilman and Shmuel Cohen's report to Mapam Central Committee, file 90.110(6), HHA.
 183. Shlomo Tilman to Meir Talmi [in Hebrew], December 6, 1953, file 90.41(1), HaShomer HaTzair Archive, Yad Yaari, Israel. On Hanegbi's activity as a colonial entrepreneur, see Algazi, "Colonial Profits," 172–83, 186, 194.
 184. Minutes of the Kibbutz Shoval General Assembly [in Hebrew], November 26, 1951, Kibbutz Shoval Archive, Shoval, Israel.
 185. Hanegbi, "The Situation of the Bedouins in Israel," file 20-405/1954, IDFA.
 186. Basil Herman, annual report on 1952 [in Hebrew], February 19, 1953, file 19-522/1957, IDF & Defense Establishment Archives, Kiryat Ono, Israel.
 187. Minutes of the Knesset Interior Affairs Committee [in Hebrew], June 30, 1953, file K-63/9, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
 188. Colonel Tzvi Tzur, "The Problem of the Bedouins in the Negev," file 846-721/1972, IDFA; see above, p. 5.