

# The Bedouins — A Community Indigenous to Palestine



Courtesy of UNDP/PAPP

**B**edouins and herder communities are among the most vulnerable in occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The majority of Bedouins, who were forcibly displaced from the Naqab Desert, now reside in Area C and Greater Jerusalem, where they face numerous humanitarian and development challenges.

Bedouins bear the brunt of the persistent geopolitical context and, being somewhat removed from mainstream Palestinian society, have seen their traditional way of life and its chances of survival erode over time. The Bedouin community has difficulty accessing state services, including the justice system. It has fewer opportunities for decent employment and is subject to massive social disruptions. In Bedouin communities, marginalized groups such as women and youth face even greater vulnerability.

In addition, Bedouin livelihoods are impacted by Israeli policies such as restrictions on freedom of movement, forced displacement due to the construction and expansion of settlements, restrictive zoning and planning regimes, land confiscation, the denial of building permits, house demolitions, and a lack of law enforcement in response to settler violence.

Bedouins reside under frequently harsh conditions in areas that lack proper road access and are isolated by checkpoints, severing them from essential services and markets and impeding their ability to generate an income and graze livestock.

In an effort to address the challenges confronting Bedouin communities, UNDP provides assistance based on available resources, with a particular emphasis on promoting the transition of Bedouin communities from the “Humanitarian” to the “Development” tier, through the lens of fostering the Humanitarian-Peace-Development HDP nexus while supporting their choice of lifestyle.

With assistance from the donor community and under a number of initiatives, most notably the former UNDP-Palestinian government initiative, Community Resilience Development Programme (CRDP), which was funded by the governments of Sweden, Norway, Austria, and Finland, substantial interventions have been made to alleviate the difficulties that Bedouin communities face. Investments were made in alternative energy, support for education and health systems, the development of new economic empowerment models, and the exploration of tourism’s potential, with due regard for the customs and traditions of the Bedouin community and a strong focus on the inclusion of women. These efforts continue to shape the UNDP’s emphasis on this essential and authentic layer of the Palestinian community, with the goal of expanding engagement to reach a large segment of the Bedouin population throughout the oPt.

UNDP was able to construct new schools, largely funded by the government of Germany via KfW. In addition, through the Education

Cannot Wait (ECW) program, UNDP addressed the emerging needs of Bedouin communities with a focus on improving school learning environments and facilitating student transportation in remote areas. More recently and through the ongoing UNDP/Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) TARABOT Palestine program, which is funded by the governments of Austria and Finland, UNDP, in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and Bedouins Without Borders, is expanding the cultural tourism scope in order to lay the groundwork for the expansion of desert tourism.

In accordance with its Transformative Resilience Framework, UNDP/PAPP will continue to advocate for the rights of the Bedouin community, support their sustainable development objectives, and explore practical solutions to the challenges they face. This is coupled with an overarching strategy for strengthening community engagement, preserving identity, and fortifying the bonds between the Bedouin community, the larger Palestinian population, and government entities in order to improve their socioeconomic resilience.



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