

## Organisational developments

Bimkom's Executive Director, Hedva Radovanitz, left her position as of end April 2022. She is replaced by co-executive directors Efrat Cohen-Bar and Connie Hackbarth. Efrat has been part of the Bimkom team since 2004, and was the deputy director in the past two years. She will continue to also serve as a senior planner among the project staff. Connie comes from a background of work in human rights and social change organisations, and her work will include a focus on resource development and outreach.

With the entrance of the new co-directors to their positions the organisation is beginning a period of internal learning and rebuilding of structures and strategies. We will be looking to implement trust-based management, which emphasises democratic participation of all staff.



## **2021 ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT**

### Bimkom Conference

In October, Bimkom held a successful conference: **Human Rights and Ethics of Planning Cultural Landscapes in Israel/Palestine**. Bimkom staff and board-members led tours highlighting a variety of planning issues, presented the topic of rights and landscape, and held discussions with professionals in the world of planning. We also heard from an artist and photographer who has developed exhibitions of mapping and videos of marginalized communities. Some 200 people attended in person, on Zoom and via Facebook. You can see videos of the talks and lectures (in Hebrew) [here](#).

### Area C of the West Bank

**Rashaida/Nuweima:** In a significant development, following intervention by Bimkom, the plans to forcibly relocate many small herder communities to a new "town" in Nuwiema were cancelled and instead, **plans are being promoted by the ICA which will recognize and regulate the area for the communities that live there, without the expectation that others will be relocated to the land.** Another important achievement is that the new plan is not based on a scheme of semi-urban building plots, but rather designates compounds based on existing patterns of habitation.

This is of course a very positive step, however Bimkom's analysis of the proposed plans showed that they are still overly small for the communities and their current and future needs. Bimkom therefore prepared objections to the plans, raising the need for improvements.

**Dkeike:** Bimkom has been working with the Bedouin community of Dkeike since 2005 and assisted the community to initiate a resident-led plan. Several planning alternatives were submitted, but all were rejected by the ICA. A few years ago Bimkom staff travelled with the Head of the Dkeike community to Brussels and the Hague. We assume that following this visit, concerted European pressure has contributed to positive change regarding the plan of Dkeike. **In 2021, the ICA decided to deposit a plan for Dkeike. This significant achievement was a result of 16 years of efforts and advocacy work.**

**Hizme:** A plan has been proposed for Hizme by the ICA, but, as is typical of ICA plans for Palestinian communities, it is small, leaving some homes outside the plan's boundaries and therefore still threatened with demolition. Bimkom worked with the community to understand the shortfalls of the plan, and the wishes of the residents. We filed an objection in May suggesting amendments, and attended the hearing in December.

**Daher al Maleh:** we also prepared an objection to the ICA's plan for the village, in cooperation with that of Adv. Tawfiq Jabarin. The whole plan covers only 70 dunams, and only 40 for housing. Furthermore, the residents were not given a chance for public participation as required by law. The planning was made possible in part due to Bimkom's previous interventions demanding connection of the village to electricity infrastructure, and proving that some of the homes had been in existence since before the Israeli occupation.

**Firing Zone 918:** Bimkom supported the legal actions toward a principled petition of Adv. Netta Amar against the evictions of communities from the Firing Zone. We analysed aerial photos dating between 1945-2020, tracing the development of these communities. We were able to prove that dozens of structures (tents, caves, enclaves) had existed and were occupied by the communities before the declaration of the firing zone, thus showing that the state's claims that these communities were not living in the area were wrong and had no basis.

**Wadi Abu Hindi:** In 2021, Bimkom staff held meetings with the residents as well as conversations with ICA officials. We made suggestions about planning solutions that could work, despite the obstacles caused by the village's location within a firing zone and within the confiscation area of the Separation Barrier. **This work resulted in a significant achievement, as the ICA decided to promote one of the planning alternatives for Wadi Abu-Hindi.**

**Confiscations:** Bimkom worked with ACRI on a principled petition against ICA confiscations of temporary buildings. This is a recent new policy of the ICA, in which there is no requirement for advance warning and therefore the communities are unable to take legal action in advance of the confiscations. The buildings confiscated are often the donation of the international community as they attempt to support the rights of the Palestinian residents.

**Ras at-Tin:** In December 2021, Bimkom submitted an expert opinion for a court petition led by Attorney Firas Assali against confiscations. Bimkom's expert opinion surveys the community and its way of living. The movement between the community's summer and winter locations, which has been going on for over 20 years, means that structures are dismantled and re-positioned twice a year. This renders them "new illegal structures" in the eyes of the ICA. We argue that it is essential to recognise and regularise the localities as permanent residential areas of Ras at-Tin, to prevent the confiscation of movable structures.

**Infrastructure Connections:** Bimkom and ACRI cooperated throughout the year in preparing requests for water connections for a number of villages. 14 such requests were submitted. Bimkom prepared in-depth assessments of the situation and needs of each community, as well as proposed solutions – mapping the location of existing water lines (often serving settlements) and proposing points of connection that could be used for the benefit of the villages. Many of them are now reliant on water brought in periodically, and a great expense, by tankers. Bimkom also submitted two requests to connect Bedouin communities to the electrical grid: Arab a-Ramadin and Arab Abu Warda.

**New procedure - Rejection of Plans:** While there is planning being carried out by the ICA – and some of it, as in the case of Rashaida, is in general beneficial to the Palestinian residents, plans prepared by the Palestinians themselves, or other stakeholders are being rejected out of hand. The ICA's High Planning Council enacted the new procedure on 1 November 2021, in which all planning requests in Closed Military Zones and Firing Zones will be outright rejected. Bimkom began a further partnership with Adv. Netta Amar toward a principled petition against this decision.

**Freedom of Information:** Early in the year we submitted to the ICA a FOI request for information about the numbers and locations of demolition orders and actual demolitions throughout Area C, as well as the numbers of building permit requests and permits granted. The data we received highlighted the

decrease in granting of building permits – such that most recently, less than 1% of permit requests have been accepted.

**E1**, between Jerusalem and Maalei Adumim, has been a source of contention for many years. Israel claims the land, but it is also a critical connection between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank, and its use for Israeli interests would have a severe impact on mobility for Palestinians, as well as increasing the already fragmented status of Palestinian-controlled areas. In December 2020 Bimkom filed objections to two Israeli plans in the northern part of E1, in the name of over 100 residents from 6 affected villages, as well as two community heads, and an organization representing residents of the Jerusalem neighbourhood al-Isawiyyah, who are the historical owners of much of E1. Hearings were held in 2021 with Bimkom presenting their claims. We also briefed members of Congress and other internationals about the situation. Due to both international pressure and the legal/planning actions of Bimkom and other stakeholders, the fourth hearing, in which the State was supposed to give its response, was indefinitely postponed, and **the plans have been frozen**.



Bimkom submitted objections and other interventions against a number of **plans for settlements, or the roads** that serve them, including: Tapuah West Settlement, HaRoeh Halvri (The Hebrew Shepherd) Settlement, Mordot Shilo Settlement, and outposts on the lands of Biddya and Mukhmas villages, as well as Road 45, the al-Walajeh bypass road and a planned sewerage line on the lands of Deir Istiya.

**ABCD:** Bimkom staff and board members took part in an intensive self-learning training in the use of the ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) method. Bimkom's Area C team began to consider which communities would benefit from an ABCD approach. We hope that working with a village community will enable us to learn and understand how to best implement ABCD work on the ground. To this end, we have selected the village of Um Salmona, and after Ramadan in 2022, will begin to work with the village population, particularly with women.

### **Palestinian Neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem**

**Al Isawiyyah outline plan and related plans:** The new outline plan for the neighbourhood was deposited for public review at the end of January 2020 with objection eventually due in April 2022, in addition to three other related plans which affect al-Isawiyyah. We have filed objections, together with the residents, to plan for a business district which is not compatible with the existing buildings, and does not provide realistic solutions; and to a planned landfill site (to which we had objected in the past and which has been redeposited after changes) which takes over al-Isawiyyah lands, will lead to the expulsion of a small unrecognized Bedouin community, and could present a health and safety hazard, and a national park on the slopes of Mt. Scopus which hems in al-Isawiyyah, is due to be deposited. We have been fighting this plan in various guises for years together with residents from both al-Isawiyyah and at-Tur, who claim most of the land, and for whom it is effectively the last area into which they could expand and develop.

We are currently gathering input and feedback from residents toward submission of an objection to the neighbourhood plan. The plan (as we knew in advance) is many ways a success: it includes innovative planning tools – based on ideas touted by Bimkom - which will enable the regularization of homes and allow landowners to prepare their own smaller-scale plans for construction in line with their needs and wants. Nonetheless we will be objecting to the small size and restrictive boundaries of the plan which does not enable growth, as well as some other difficulties.

**Ash-Shayyah:** Bimkom's lawyer wrote a formal letter to the police as exhaustion of remedies before legal action regarding opening a road closed since 2016 to ease access to and from the neighbourhood.

**Al-Walajeh:** After 1948, al-Walajeh residents rebuilt their homes on village lands that remained on the West Bank side of the Green Line. In 1967, the northern section of the village was annexed to Israel. Today, this part of the village is a small community of approximately 150 homes, which are considered "illegal" by the Israeli authorities. A court injunction, following legal attempts to promote their own plan, provided temporary protection for 38 homes. In May 2020, the Supreme Court explicitly ordered the District Planning Committee to discuss the community's plan. The committee rejected it, and placed harsh conditions on the possibility of advancing a fair planning scheme in the future.



In an attempt to challenge the Planning Committee's decision, a petition was filed by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), representing al-Walajeh residents, together with Bimkom, Ir Amim and Israeli activists. In the hearing in October, the court ruled that the conditions placed towards further planning were not permanent, implying that the District Committee would be expected to objectively consider a new plan. To this end, the residents have begun a new planning process.

UPDATE: At a hearing of the case regarding the homes slated for demolition on March 30th, 2022, **the freezing of the demolition orders was upheld** and renewed for at least a further six months, and the issue of proper planning of the area was again raised. We were very involved in advocacy (local and international) about this case, and will now move into high gear to ensure that some planning procedures that will provide long term solutions can be begun.

**Beit Safafa** is being hemmed in on all sides by Jewish/Israeli development. This includes plans for expanding Giv'at Hamatos, and a new settlement area in Giv'at Shaked. We see significant overlaps between areas for settlement development and the settlement of land rights procedures which have recently begun. We discovered that most of the land to the north is listed as controlled by the General Custodian or is privately owned by Jewish landowners. The municipality is formulating planning policy for this area but had not involved the Beit Safafa Community Council in any way. Bimkom assisted in demanding that the Council have a say. The current planning guidelines are patently discriminatory, as 6-10 floor residential building will be allowed in the (mostly Jewish) area, while Beit Safafa itself is restricted to four. We are cooperating with the local community council on the response.

Additionally, the municipality is moving ahead with land expropriations in the southern part of Beit Safafa for a road planned years ago but not implemented. We have been involved in bringing the issues facing Beit Safafa to the attention of Members of Knesset and other stakeholders, and are in constant contact with the Community Council.

A further area in which settlement expansion is going hand in hand with settlement of land rights procedures is **Atarot**. Bimkom participated in a hearing on the topic and was involved in bringing the issue to the attention of the Minister for the Environment, who demanded a full environmental survey in advance of any ongoing planning procedures. This step serves to to block the plans at least in the short term.

Bimkom attended the hearings of objections to the **American Road**. Most claims were rejected but it was agreed as we suggested that residences may be above the commercial level and not only on the highest floors.

## Settlement of land rights

This has been the main subject of Bimkom's East Jerusalem work. The process may lead to registration of land ownership or the registration of other property rights in the official land registry.

This activity was formulated in reaction to an announcement that the settlement of land rights was to be renewed by Israel, which had stopped the processes begun by the Jordanians (and before them the British) in relation to East Jerusalem lands. The renewal was being "marketed" by Israel as a way to help closing gaps between East and West Jerusalem, and thus as a positive development for the Palestinians who would be able to claim their rights. From the beginning, Bimkom, and fellow organisations, were suspicious that the settlement procedure would nonetheless be used to benefit Jewish/Israeli land claims, rather than those of Palestinians.

This fear was crystallised by the case of Umm Haroun, which came to light in April 2021. A few weeks later we wrote on Facebook:

**Umm Haroun neighborhood in ash-Sheikh Jarrah:** Around two weeks ago, the residents of Umm Haroun, which is the Western section of ash-Sheikh Jarrah, learned by chance that land registration in their neighborhood had progressed significantly, and may even have been finalized, completely without their knowledge. Land registration is meant to be a public procedure in which all residents of a particular area are called upon to request the registration of their rights to the land. The registrar clarifies the various rights and they are listed in the Land Registry (Tabu). This is an essential process for urban development. ../ the existence of a registration procedure that none of the Palestinian residents knew about, contrary to the law and accepted practice in registration proceedings, raises serious suspicions that this is another step by the State to support Jewish settlement in the neighborhood while displacing Palestinian residents who have lived there for decades.

Immediately upon uncovering the registration in Umm Haroun, we filed a petition to the High Court, together with the Residents' Association and with Ir Amim, demanding that the registration process be frozen ...

**اعرفوا حقوقكم!**  
**حقوق السكّان وواجبات الدولة تجاههم، في إجراء تسوية الأراضي**

بدأت دولة إسرائيل في إجراء عملية تسوية للأراضي في القدس الشرقية. هذه العملية طويلة، بدءاً من الاستفسار عن الحقوق في قطعة الأرض ووصولاً إلى عملية التسجيل في الطابو. سيكون لهذه العملية أثرٌ على جميع أصحاب الأراضي والساكين عليها. ومن يقرر من هؤلاء عدم المطالبة بحقه في الأرض، فإن من شأن هذا أن يفقده الحق فيها، وفي مثل هذه الحالة، تستطيع الدولة أن تقوم بتسجيل الأرض على اسمها.

عن الإجراء باختصار:  
• يجب على الدولة أن تنشر في موقع عام، إعلانات وخرائط حول المنطقة المستهدفة بالتسوية على المعنين بالأمر تقديم استمارة مطالبة بالحق في الأرض، سواء أكان هذا الحق حق ملكية، أو استئجار طويل، أو غير ذلك  
• يجب إرفاق البيانات بالاستمارة: كوشان، ورقة إرث، مصافقات ضريبية، عقد إيجار، وما إلى ذلك  
• يجب على الموظف المسؤول عن التسوية، وهو الموظف الموكّل من جانب الدولة بهذا الإجراء، أن يقوم بفحص استمارات المطالبة، أن يتواصل مع المدّعين وأن يقوم بإجراء القياسات في الأرض عند انتهاء الإجراء، يتم تسجيل قطعة الأرض في الطابو على اسم المدّعين الذين تمكنوا من إثبات حقهم فيها

ستقوم في وقت لاحق بنشر كتيب إرشادات شامل حول حقوق السكّان في عملية تسوية للمباني

تعمل جمعية بيمكوم مع سكان القدس الشرقية في مواضيع التخطيط والأرض (كما تعمل الجمعية مؤخراً في حي أم هارون في الشيخ جراح) في حال كانت لديكم أسئلة حول إجراءات التسوية أو حول النشرات والإعلانات التي شاهدتموها، فيمكنكم التوجّه إلينا عبر الوسائل التالية:  
عبر الهاتف (ديانا) 0524293336 عبر البريد الإلكتروني (سري) [sari@bimkom.org](mailto:sari@bimkom.org)

كما وننتصمك بالتشاور مع محام متخصص في موضوع الأراضي

We were not successful in blocking the settlement of land rights in Umm Haroun, since the process was already complete, however this case was a catalyst for us to increase our understanding of the process and to begin warning Palestinians. We produced a brief "postcard" explaining the basic situation and letting residents know what to look out for.

Since then, the Bimkom team, especially our lawyer, have been intensively studying the laws pertaining to the settlement of

land rights procedures, as well as related issues, particularly the absentee property law, and have prepared a detailed rights brochure. We are also working on an interactive mapping of the locations of lands currently involved in the settlement of land rights that will be linked to and from the rights brochure. The [Hebrew version](#) is already online.

In the meantime, the issue of the settlement of land rights has become another prism through which to view our ongoing work to limit demolitions and enable development. We received, via partner organisation Ir Amim, official data obtained via a Freedom of Information request on the location of plots currently in land title process. Overlapping this data with the proposed plans of new settlements,

such as in Atarot and Giv'at Shaked, demonstrates quite clearly that land title is being settled in places where it will benefit Israeli/Jewish interests, and not those of Palestinians.

### **Negev Bedouin Communities**

In the past months, following the establishment of the new government in June, expectations arose for some positive developments for the Bedouin population of the Negev, primarily because the Ra'am political Party, led by Mansour Abbas, is currently part of the Coalition. During his party's election campaign, he had committed to achieve recognition for some Bedouin localities. Abbas has also committed to continue the work of his party member, the late MP Saeed al-Harumi, a Negev Bedouin. Al-Harumi represented the local communities in the Knesset and in the Coalition, and worked for years to promote issues concerning them. His sudden death in August 2021 was a great loss for his constituency.

A significant success has been the decision to **recognise three villages** that have long waited this step - **Abdeh, Rahmeh and Hashem Zaneh**. One final government vote is required to finalise the recognition, but planning of the villages has already begun. With that, it must be noted that the conditions being set for recognition – which could theoretically be cancelled after seven years - are harsh, and unrealistic. In Har HaNegev, the recognition of the locality of Abde has been a very positive step. However, this poses a problem for residents of nearby Bedouin localities, including **Wadi Ariha and Nahal Hava**, who are now expected by the state to move into the boundaries of Abde. On November 7th, a site visit to the Har HaNegev area was organised by neighbouring (Jewish) activist residents, with the Chair of the District Planning Committee, staff from the Southern Planning Bureau, Bedouin residents and Bimkom staff, in order to view the situation on the ground and present the residents' case to the planning authorities.

Following initial contacts and preliminary negotiations, here was a large-scale meeting, arranged by Bimkom, between the local committee of **Hashem Zaneh** and the heads of the nearby Moshav Nevatim and the Bnei Shimon Regional Council, along with representatives of the Bedouin Authority – and Bimkom. As Hashem Zaneh is being planned, and possibly expanded, the nearby Jewish communities have expressed concerns about possible frictions with their Bedouin neighbours. We thought that bringing together the heads of the communities could help to begin building trust and better neighbourly relations. The meeting was quite positive, and there is an intention to arrange working meetings on a regular basis in the future.

The **al-Saadin and al-Amrani extended families** have lived for many decades with the consent of the authorities in their current location on the site known as Ir Ovot, however in substandard living conditions and without any proper planning response. Several Jewish families have lived in Ir Ovot since 1967. In 2018 the Bedouins were issued eviction orders, as part of the state's intention to plan Ir Ovot and expand it, establishing it formally as a Jewish locality. Following a petition against the eviction orders, in the High Court of Justice demanded that the National Planning Council include a solution for the Bedouin families within its discussion of the establishment of Ir Ovot.

As part of the planning process, in April the planners of Ir Ovot suggested two alternatives for the new locality, one in which the al- Saadin and al-Amrani families will be allocated plots on the edge of the locality, and the other which suggests allocating land for them in a more central part of the new locality. Both versions of the plan afford appropriate plots of land to the Bedouin families, which allow the building of housing, small tourist commercial facilities, and agriculture. Bimkom staff met the families, to discuss the plan and formulate their preferences. Bimkom planners have also met with a forum of activist residents from the neighbouring localities along Route 90, who have supported the Bedouin families in the process of demanding an appropriate planning solution.

**In Bir Hadaj**, Bimkom is working with the Regional Council of Neve Midbar about extending the locality's boundary. We have conducted a small-scale survey to collect data from the residents about their situation and needs, and suggested two alternative possible outlines for planning Bir Hadaj. We presented those alternatives in a meeting attended by the Head of the Regional Council of Neve Midbar, the General Manager, the Engineer and the residents. They decided in favour of one of the proposed

planning alternatives, which includes various housing types, an employment zone that will be shared with the Kibbutzim in this area, an area for tourist initiatives, and a regional park.

We prepared a first draft of planning principles for **Tel Arad**. The State wants the community to relocate to a neighbourhood of Mar'it, but we believe there is sufficient basis for in-situ recognition for the 2000 residents. On March 1<sup>st</sup> we met with the Director of the Bedouin Authority, together with his advisors and members of the community council to present the case for in-situ recognition. The meeting was positive, and the Bedouin Authority expressed willingness to consider a solution for the community, if they would be flexible about the precise location of homes, so that the village would be more compact.

We are continuing to examine with the residents of **Um-Matnan** possible solutions to meeting the planning authority's requirements to make the village (as a "neighbourhood" of Abu Krinat) more compact. Bimkom with the residents are examining the options for suggesting a plan for a denser built area, that will make the provision of infrastructures easier, less costly, and more compatible with the institutional planning principles. However, this is a complex and long process, that requires negotiations and agreements among the residents. Bimkom staff updated the proposed map and planning principles document following feedback from the residents.

Bimkom has continued to support the residents of **Ras a-Jraba** in their attempts to achieve recognition. The municipality of Dimona is advancing a plan for a new neighbourhood to the east of Dimona, which covers much of the land of Ras a-Jraba, aiming to evict the Bedouin residents, rather than find a solution for them as part of the new neighbourhood. The Bedouin Authority has suggested to relocate the families to the recognised village of Kasr al-Ser, however the families are not interested in moving. Legal proceedings to cancel eviction orders for Ras a-Jraba residents are led by Adallah. Bimkom staff have assisted by researching historical maps, aerial photos and archival materials that testify to the presence of Bedouins in Ras a-Jraba and its surrounding area before the establishment of Dimona. Bimkom staff have also written a detailed document, in consultation with the residents, detailing ways in which they can be incorporated into the new neighbourhood.

**In Wadi Naam**, Bimkom with ACRI and the residents have presented their objection to the Outline Plan prepared by the state, which involves moving all of Wadi Naam's residents. Following a hearing of the case against the plans, the judge ordered that the state immediately present a summary of an updated assessment of the potential environment dangers. A central contention point around the new plan is the dispute about the "safety radius" around the nearby Ramat Hovav hazardous industrial area. Due to changes in technology and safety measures, there is a possibility for this radius to be minimized, which should allow many of the residents to remain in their current location. Following the residents' demands and long-term struggle, part of the plan has been marked as an Area for Future Development, should the Committee conclude that it is safe to designate the land for housing. Bimkom staff have approached the newly appointed Minister of Environmental Protection, Tamar Zandberg (of Meretz Party), and requested a meeting with her to discuss this issue.



Meanwhile, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority is developing a new Local Outline Plan for ecological corridors in the Negev (as part of a larger scheme to introduce such corridors throughout the country), which affects Wadi el-Naam. Bimkom staff met with officials from the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and pointed out that the proposed corridor near Wadi al-Naam is in fact already inhabited by many Bedouin families. Moreover, this is the land designated for Future Development, pending the

recommendations of the Expert Committee, and any such development would be incompatible with an ecological corridor. The Nature and Parks Authority staff members admitted they were not aware of the land designation, and intend to modify their plan accordingly.

Bimkom staff have continued to work with residents in the various localities in the **Beer Sheva Valley**, and to collaborate with Sikkuy and the Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages of the Negev (RCUV) to advocate for a planning outline for the whole area, focusing especially on developing infrastructure and services for the entire Beer Sheva Valley.

Bimkom staff met with residents of the communities, to continue formulating planning principles and prepare for negotiations with the Bedouin Authority, that has previously declared these localities as places that have potential for regularization and recognition.

The residents have organised themselves and formed a joint committee. Bimkom staff held a number of meetings with representatives from the localities of Khirbet al-Wattan, Al-Roess, Bir al-Hammam, al-Zarnouk, Bir M'shah and al-Ghara. Following these meetings, Bimkom staff formulated a draft set of documents and maps, which the leadership group presented to ministers Yair Lapid, Mansour Abbas and Meir Cohen, as well as to Sigal Moran, Director General of the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs, and the planning heads of the Bedouin Authority and the Southern District Planning Committee. The document shows how to recognize each village, as well as giving a wider perspective on the area, including possible municipal arrangements.

### **Arab Localities**

Bimkom and Adalah filed an objection to the plan for the **Giv'ot Alonim nature reserve** which includes lands owned by Arab residents, and has been used for years by local communities for grazing. Our objection was rejected (other than some very minor concessions), however we requested the right to appeal and presented our case again, with further details about the affected communities and the harm that the plan may cause them. In the meanwhile, we also arranged a meeting bringing together residents, the National Parks Authority (NPA), national politicians and local authorities to discuss the issues. The atmosphere at the meeting was positive, with openness to reaching agreements about use of the land before the case is heard again.

One of the affected villages is **Ibtin**, a Bedouin village which needs to expand in order to allow development for the community's future. The area best suited for this expansion, on lands the villagers claim, has now been designated as part of the park. Bimkom's team helped the village council in preparation of a letter to the planning authorities requesting the expansion.

**Hussaniya** village has a new outline plan but it is not sufficient for the residents' needs and leaves homes outside of the boundaries and thus threatened with demolitions. Recently we have succeeded in arranging a meeting with the mayor and will try to advance solutions, after research into the situation and discussions with the village leadership about realistic possibilities.

There are also problems regarding the boundary between the village of **Ras al-Ein** and the adjacent Tzalmon River Nature Reserve. Some years ago we were involved in mediation between the Regional Council, NPA and the village leadership, but not all of the village extended families were involved. We are now trying to reach all the main families to ensure a united approach and to restart discussions with the authorities about possible solutions.

A new outline plan for **Jisr az-Zarka** was completed three years ago, and includes the addition of a new neighbourhood, but this is dependent on rerouting the Coastal Road by the town. The new route is included in the plan but nothing has been done about implementation – which is itself likely to take some years. In the meantime, the need for new housing is critical and the residents are waiting for solutions. It would also be possible to establish the new neighbourhood on the far side of the road, but this is clearly a less desirable outcome. Nonetheless, the residents wish for a final decision one way or another in order to begin work on the new section of town as soon as possible. Bimkom is continuing its accompaniment of the town leadership on this matter.

Last year we reported on the failed plan for **Ein Rafa**. The plan was eventually corrected and resubmitted. Bimkom filed an objection, along with the village council and their lawyer, asking to



correct the plan and make it more reasonable and implementable. Most of the objections, including ours, were rejected, however one important issue was upheld, regarding the division of development areas. The plan will therefore be corrected again, and we hope that the development will be able to move forward in line with the residents' wishes.

## **Women's Project**

In the last two weeks of 2020 Bimkom officially began a new project supported by the European Union, on increasing the roles of marginalized women in decision making relating to planning. This project, which cuts across Bimkom's usual departments, is being carried out in partnership with Sidreh Bedouin women's organisation and the Association for Distributive Justice in Israel.

In the past year, the partners have carried out training and empowerment workshops on gender, rights and planning for groups of women in three Bedouin villages and in the Old City in Acre (Akko), and are beginning to crystalise leadership groups or activists from among the participants who will take forward particular issues of interest to them with their local authorities or other bodies. In Acre, the women are formulating a vision statement of how they wish their part of town to be planned and built to meet their needs.

We have recently started work in the village of Rahme, which is now being planned and which requires only one final government decision for formal recognition. We will ensure that women from each of the family groupings will have a say in the planning process, having gained an understanding of the plan and tools to voice their opinions and wants.

We have also just begun work with women activists in the Arab Wadi Nisnas neighbourhood of Haifa, and are creating the syllabus for the trainings. The women there have already been involved in crafting a vision statement and are looking for opportunities to advance change and development to benefit the residents.

We held a seminar for young women in the Desert Stars Academy of Bedouin leadership, exposing them to concepts of planning, rights, and gender, and encouraging them to become active in these areas, and even consider studies and careers in the field. The sessions were well received, and will be repeated with next years' cohort, and possibly also with the Academy's graduate group.

Bimkom also cooperated with Betzalel Academy of Art and Design on a studio course for one of three groups of senior students in their architecture degree programme for Haredi (ultra-orthodox) women. There were 11 Haredi women students enrolled on the studio / course, and we held 14 sessions with them, one each week for the length of the term. A typical studio day is about 7 hours long, during which the students do actual design work, have formal and informal talks with the course instructors, hold internal presentations and receive critique and feedback from fellow students and from teachers. As part of these, we ran a class that lasted 1.5-2.0 hours each time. Because the students were working in the studio before and after our sessions, we often engaged in conversations with them, both about the contents of our course, and about how these contents could be implemented in their own design work. We also took part in some of the critique sessions, which involved student presentations to teachers and other guest critics. In some of our lectures, students from the other two design studios joined the group that we worked with, totalling 20-30 women students. The course was very successful. The students were interested, enthusiastic, and actively engaged. They participated in group discussions and asked questions. In one of the sessions, they met with a woman who is the City Architect of Beit Shemesh, a city with a mixed Haredi and non-religious population. This meeting with a woman public sector worker was very meaningful for the students. Although she is not Haredi, she is a religious professional woman, that has a positive attitude and understanding of the needs of the Haredi community. The students said they were very impressed by a woman holding such a position, and that they realised how important this is. Another guest lecturer that inspired the students works for the government's Planning Administration and has conducted research into the housing needs of the Haredi community. He stressed that within the national planning administration, there is a lack of

Haredi planners, who are in the best position to provide appropriate planning for this community. Meetings with these two guest lecturers inspired the students to think about their own professional futures, and consider the public planning sector as a viable option. The students were appreciative of the course, and said the sessions were interesting and enriching. We will participate in a similar course in the next academic year.

### Other issues

Bimkom serves as a "hotline" for planning issues in Israel and the areas it controls, and receives calls for assistance on many planning-related matters. Many such calls are answered with brief advice, explanations of the relevant laws, and referrals to the bodies or organisations which can or should deal with the issue in question. Others require research on our part, and the provision of data and professional opinions. We present information, lectures or briefings for students and academics, NGOs, diplomats and others.

**“Crates” (Argazim) Neighbourhood:** After research and analysis, in March 2022 Bimkom filed an appeal against the approval of a plan for the complete demolition and erasure of the north of the Crates Neighbourhood in Tel Aviv, which will lead to the forced eviction of some 214 families living there. The appeal was presented in the name of members of the Tel Aviv City Council, Shula Keshet and Moriah Shlomot.

The authorities settled immigrant Jewish families in the Crates Neighbourhood, (formerly the lands of the village of Salameh - a problematic issue in itself), in the late 1940s and beyond, but their rights were never registered. In the 1990s the State issued a tender for the transfer of the land to private developers who would evict these residents, and in return receive the rights to the land. The chosen developers negotiated over eviction and compensation but the results are highly problematic and too many families are left without a solution.

Bimkom's main argument, and our motivation to represent in the appeal, is that there is too large a gap between the huge building rights in the new plan and the extremely low compensation for residents - most of the residents will come out with minimal monetary compensation or no compensation at all, while the developers gain building rights three times what is usually allowed – and will thus make an immense profit from selling the apartments.

We also argue that the economic calculations of the plan must be publicised, that the local committee did not have the authority to approve it for a variety of complex reasons, that there are not enough allocations for public areas, that more affordable housing and public housing is required and the Israel Land Authority must intervene in the compensation scheme.

