

To: Danny Atar, Chair of Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael (KKL)
From: The Arava Institute for Environmental Studies
Subject: Eviction of Sumarin Family from their home in Silwan
Date: June 22, 2020/30 Sivan, 5780

Since 1996 the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies has brought over 1,000 Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, and international students together on its Kibbutz Ketura campus, where they have been provided with the tools needed to learn to live and to work with each other. We expect our graduates to take the message of environmental cooperation beyond the academic framework into the field, and put what we teach into action. Therefore, we join together with our alumni in this request that the eviction of the Sumarin family cease.

The Sumarin Family has faced decades of legal harassment by Himnuta, a KKL subsidiary, in an attempt to remove them from their home in Silwan, in concert with the Ir David Foundation (Elad). These three bodies are working together in an attempt to evict the Sumarin family from the place that has been their home for over thirty years, through an unjust and discriminatory application of the 'Absentee Property Law'. The Israeli government has acknowledged that the 'Absentee Property Law' had been abused in many cases, and promised to refrain from using it in this way, but it is being used against the Sumarin family.

As an Institute dedicated to advancing environmental cooperation and dialogue in the region, we believe that, through its subsidiary Himanuta, KKL is advancing a political agenda contrary to what we believe should be the core purpose and mission of Keren Kayemet. Using force against this family stands in opposition to Jewish and humanitarian values. Jewish tradition gives powerful voice to these values. As Rabbi Jack Cohen taught, "The miracle of Sinai was that human beings came together to found a society not based on exploitation, but based on justice and taking care of the vulnerable."

Israel faces many real, serious and difficult challenges at this time. If Israel is to fulfill the vision of Israel as a democratic State influenced by the best of Jewish values, then when it comes to the situation in Silwan we call on the KKL and Himanuta to cease legal proceedings against the Sumarin family, and reach a solution which will let the family continue to live in their home.



David Lehrer
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