

For the First Time, Young Bedouin Say: "Don't Vote by Family or Tribe"



Yaakov Levi | Oct 29, 2019 | 1:49 p.m.

In traditional and tribal-based communities like that of the Negev Bedouin, it takes courage to break voting patterns. Today, for the first time during municipal elections, young Bedouin urge friends: "Don't waste your voice, vote your mind."

The municipal elections that will take place tomorrow (Wednesday, Oct. 7) herald winds of change in the Bedouin community of the Negev, particularly among the young. The young members of Desert Stars, an organization which works to benefit the entire Bedouin society, issued an extraordinary appeal.



An appeal to integrate women and young people into the sector's leadership. Photo credit: Meir Azulai

"Our brothers and sisters, voters in our beloved Negev," wrote the Desert Stars members in an open letter. "With your vote, you will determine a future in line with

your conscience. Vote for someone who understands you, who will represent you in the local council. Let's use this vote to uphold justice for ourselves and our community. Your vote matters. Do not waste it. Give it to those who deserve it. Exercise your free will by voting your conscience."

In addition to calling on the community to cast a vote in line with their conscience, not tribal affiliation, the young members of Desert Stars promote multiple issues and values.

One young man, Qusay Alamour, said, "Despite the fact that Negev women are managers and businesswomen, they hardly participate in the local council's political leadership. We must integrate women into influential political roles so that women may be full partners in our local leadership."

Ayman Alshafiee added, "There are many young people with leadership skills who don't reach influential positions in the Bedouin community because of family background and tribal voting patterns. Even today, candidates don't give the younger generation a role in leading the Bedouin towns."

Sami Ashwi, who also signed the letter, explained, "The letter is the voice of the young people in the Desert Stars leadership network, who come from different tribes around the Negev. In the letter, we ask voters to set aside tribal and family preferences and instead vote for a quality candidate with the right qualifications for the job."



Casting a vote for candidates with the right qualifications, not familial connections. Photo credit: Haim Hornstein

The letter's full text:

The young people of Desert Stars, Municipal Elections Manifesto, 2018.

In light of the approaching municipal election in Israel and in the Negev region, and out of the belief that the elections are a genuine opportunity to express a viewpoint and are a lesson in democracy, and in order to promote the true interests of the people in our towns and community and strengthen the foundations of freedom and social justice, we, the young members of Desert Stars, appeal to our community with the following messages:

A. All of have the responsibility to speak out. We will vote for the right candidate with the right experience, skills, expertise, professionalism, reputation, and credibility.

B. We will not vote for a candidate out of familial loyalty or tribal jealousy. Our vote will be based on the following principle: the right person at the right time.

C. We will vote for a candidate with a full, insightful plan for office who presents a vision for the future that serves and advances the community while cultivating its potential.

D. We will vote for a candidate committed to fair, clean and transparent elections in both words and deeds.

E. We will vote for a credible candidate who never fails to demonstrate integrity, responsibility, and justice.

Our brothers and sisters, voters in our beloved Negev, you are an integral part of this community. Fulfill your role and exercise your right to vote in this spirit. With your vote, you will determine a future in line with your conscience. Vote for someone who understands you, who will represent you in the local council. Let's use this vote to uphold justice for ourselves and our community. Your vote matters. Do not waste it. Give it to those who deserve it. Exercise your free will by voting your conscience.