

PUBLIC

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UA 226/08

Freedom of movement/Right to education denied

**ISRAEL/
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES (OPT)/
EGYPT**

400 Palestinian students

Some 400 Palestinian students may lose their university places and scholarships unless the Israeli authorities allow them to leave the Gaza Strip before the new academic year, which starts in the next few weeks.

The students have enrolled to study subjects including law, sciences, business and medicine. At least 37 of the students have university places and scholarships in Europe and North America, while hundreds of others are due to travel to universities in countries in the Middle East and elsewhere. Several of these students have been denied permission to leave Gaza since last year.

Certain fields of study are limited or not available at Gaza's universities, especially at post-graduate level. This is notably the case for sciences, as Gaza's universities lack the resources for advanced research and the Israeli authorities restrict the import of necessary equipment and material. By denying students permission to pursue their studies abroad, the Israeli authorities are ultimately denying the Palestinian community the benefit of their future contribution.

The Israeli authorities' refusal to allow these students to leave Gaza to pursue their studies in universities abroad violates their right to education, which is set out in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), to which Israel is a state party. The ICESCR stipulates that: "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms..." (Article 13.1).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The 1.5 million Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza cannot leave without a permit from the Israeli army. Since June 2007 Israel has tightened its blockade of Gaza and imposed a travel ban on the entire population. Bar few exceptions, permits to leave Gaza are denied. Even critically ill patients in need of life-saving treatment which is not available in Gaza's hospitals are often refused passage out of Gaza (see UA 11/08, MDE 15/001/2008, 14 January 2008, and follow-ups).

The Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt – the only gate to the outside world for the inhabitants of Gaza - was ordered closed by Israel June 2007 and remains closed. In some exceptional cases Israel has allowed Egypt to partially open the Rafah border crossing for some patients or others to leave or to return to Gaza. In recent weeks some 20 students were allowed to leave Gaza via the Erez crossing into Israel. However the overwhelming majority of the students remain trapped in Gaza.

The Israeli blockade on Gaza, including the stringent restrictions imposed on the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza, constitutes a form of collective punishment – a practice which is expressly forbidden by international law. In this case, it is students seeking to advance their education by studying abroad who are being targeted for collective punishment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

To the Israeli authorities:

- calling on them to immediately allow some 400 students to leave Gaza to pursue their studies in universities abroad, and to guarantee that they will be able to return to Gaza.

APPEALS TO:

Ehud Barak
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv 61909, Israel

Fax: +972 3 691 6940
Email: minister@mod.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Minister

Colonel Moshe Levy
Head of the District Coordination Office
Erez Crossing
Israel

Fax: + 972 8 6741625
Email: arbelgaza@gmail.com
Salutation: Dear Colonel Levy

To the Egyptian authorities:

- calling on them to work urgently to ensure the prompt passage of these and other students out of Gaza via the Rafah border crossing

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Habib Ibrahim El Adly
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
25 Al-Sheikh Rihan Street, Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt

Fax: +20 22 279 0682
Email: moi@idsc.gov.eg or center@iscmi.gov.eg
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Yuli Tamir (Ms)
Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
PO Box 292, 34 Shivtei Israel, Jerusalem 91911, Israel

Fax: +972 2 560 2223
Email: ytamir@knesset.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Minister

And to diplomatic representatives of Israel and Egypt accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 September 2008.