

Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

The University of Arizona · 1232 North Cherry Avenue · Tucson, Arizona 85721

20 October 1995

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street
Jerusalem 91919
Israel

Dear Prime Minister:

The Committee on Academic Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa of the Middle East Studies Association would like to express its concern over the situation of students from Gaza enrolled in West Bank educational institutions. They currently face a severe threat to their ability to pursue their education.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2,400 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa. The Association publishes the respected *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom throughout the region.

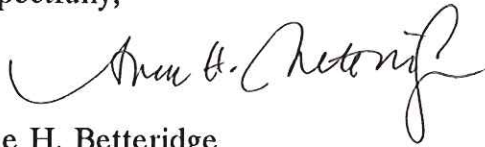
At present, Israeli military authorities require that students from Gaza must obtain permits to enter the West Bank for the purpose of academic study. Such a requirement contravenes article 26 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the right to education. It also contravenes the agreements signed between Israel and the P.L.O., which provide for the West Bank and Gaza to be considered "a single territorial unit" (Article 11 of the most recent agreement). In addition, we express our concern that, according to reports, even the process of granting permits to students from Gaza is arbitrary and influenced by political considerations. We are also concerned about reports that students from Gaza are denied permission to study without any written explanation and that academic permits, even when granted, are often subject to blanket cancellations for security reasons.

Such a situation creates conditions which impede the ability of Gazan students to pursue their education in a continuous and orderly manner. We understand that at present virtually all the 600 students from Gaza who have registered to study at universities in the West Bank are unable to attend classes. For example, in the case of Birzeit University, classes began on September 18, but the 350 students from Gaza are

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still unable to participate in the University's academic program. We respectfully request a prompt and thorough resolution of this situation so that these students can study without disruption and interference, and with due respect for the academic calendar. Please inform us of the result of any actions that you take in this matter.

Respectfully,



Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

cc: Brigadier General Ilan Shiff, Judge Advocate General
Brigadier General Shaul Mofaz, Commander of the West Bank
Colonel Moshe Rosenberg, Legal Adviser for the Central Command
David Liba'i, Minister of Justice
Judge Yosef Harish, Attorney General
Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich