



**Middle
East
Studies
Association**
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October 19, 2007

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert
3 Kaplan St., Qiryat Ben-Gurion
PO Box 187
91919 Jerusalem
Israel

via fax: 972-2-6512631

Dear Prime Minister Olmert:

I write to you on behalf of the Middle East Association of North America (MESA) and its Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) to express our concern about the restriction of movement and travel imposed by your government on Palestinian students from Gaza. Recently, Israel's Supreme Court rejected a petition brought by Gisha, the Israeli human rights organization, on behalf of Khaled al-Mudallal, a resident of Rafah. Mr. Mudallal was prevented from resuming his studies in management and business at the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, the Association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has more than 2700 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

Israel's Supreme Court decision of October 2, 2007 to accept the government's argument that Gazans with study permits trapped in Gaza should wait for the resumption of the shuttle bus service to Eretz crossing, discontinued since September 6, amounts to a denial of Mr. al-Mudallal's rights to an education. Israel has the responsibility to ensure the Right to Education as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which it ratified in 1991.

The ongoing disruption of Palestinian education constitutes a violation of a basic human right that will have long-term and negative political, economic, and humanitarian consequences for all peoples involved. We call on the Israeli government to allow Mr. al-Mudallal as well as the hundreds of other registered Gazan university students to travel to their educational institutions, whether abroad or in the West Bank.

Sincerely,

Zachary Lockman
MESA President

cc: Minister of Defense Ehud Barak
Prime Minister Gordon Brown
Gisha