

**SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

**RESOLUTION ON ACADEMIC**

**FREEDOM OF US CITIZENS**

**VISITING ISRAEL AND PALESTINE**



## **SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

### **RESOLUTION ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM OF US CITIZENS VISITING ISRAEL AND PALESTINE**

Letter to Israel authorities about restrictions on international academics working in  
Palestinian universities

September 12, 2019

MESA – Letters and Statements from the Board

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August 19, 2019

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July 15, 2019

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Academics for Equality

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Re: Canceling visa restrictions on foreign academics hired to teach at Birzeit  
University

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Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel

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to leave Palestine

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Birzeit University

Arbitrary demands on foreign national academics working in Palestinian  
universities

August 6, 2018

MESA- Committee on Academic Freedom

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May 22, 2018

MESA- Committee on Academic Freedom

# Letter to Israel authorities about restrictions on international academics working in Palestinian universities

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SEPTEMBER 12, 2019 · LETTERS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE BOARD

≡ Interventions  Israel, Palestine

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Dear Prime Minister, Ministers and Ambassador,

We write to express our concern regarding the limitations imposed on international faculty at Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza, some of whom are members of our associations. For the past three years, the Israeli authorities have increasingly denied new and reentry visas, imperiling the right to education of Palestinian students.

Like peer institutions globally, Palestinian universities employ academics and administrators who are foreign nationals. Since the 2017-2018 academic year, well over half of the international faculty and staff members, some of whom have taught for years in Palestinian universities, have had to deal with a wide range of arbitrary demands to obtain re-entry visas, and many have been refused visa renewals. These include: changing documentation requirements without prior or official notification; lengthy processing periods that force applicants to overstay valid visas or leave the country; shortened and arbitrary duration of visas; the issuing of visas that restrict the holder to the West Bank; restrictions on ports of entry/exit; and demands for financial bonds of 5,600 to 22,500 USD. These ambiguous and obstructive

measures have meant that international faculty and staff are unable to determine if they can accept a job offer from a Palestinian university, if they can continue their employment for the duration of the appointment, or if they can travel for academic conferences or for research.

At Birzeit University, for example, in the 2018/19 academic year, nearly all international academics and staff have encountered problems in visa renewals. Teaching, instruction in foreign language, curriculum planning, program development, committee work, and the supervision of theses, in addition to faculty recruitment, have been disrupted and, in some cases, prevented altogether.


These measures contravene international humanitarian and human rights law. As the occupying power, in the view of the United Nations and international law, Israel must not interfere in the functioning of Palestinian civil institutions, including Palestinian universities, and therefore is obliged to issue a transparent policy that allows the entry and presence of foreign faculty and staff members. It is also obligated to ensure the right of the Palestinian people to education, as enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966).

To enable Palestinian universities to maintain knowledge production and academic freedom, we call on Israel to refrain from imposing arbitrary restrictions on the duration of stay or extension of stay for international academics, and to clarify lawful procedures for issuing entry visas and work permits for international academics in the West Bank and Gaza.

American Anthropological Association  
American Political Science Association  
Middle East Studies Association  
National Women's Studies Association  
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## Documents & Links

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## H-PAD Protests Israeli Infringement on Palestinians' Academic Freedom

🕒 August 19, 2019 👤 Historians for Peace 📁 H-Pad, Private 💬 0



In recent years, Israel has been placing increasing restrictions on the ability of international scholars to work at Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza. These restrictions have resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of international academics in Palestinian universities, and threaten to hinder Palestinian students' access to quality higher education. H-Pad has joined Palestinian, Israeli, and international organizations in condemning these restrictive measure and demanding that the Israeli government lift them. Please join us in supporting Palestinian academic freedom by signing this [petition](#), organized by Academia for Equality.

H-PAD has sent the letter below to Israeli officials to protest Israeli attacks on Palestinians' academic freedom.

We, scholars and academics in the United States and members of Historians for Peace and Democracy (H-PAD),

### SEARCH

### BROADSIDES FOR THE TRUMP ERA

*This is a series of one-page, printable handouts that summarize important historical events, movements, crises, and more that form the backdrop for our current political situation.*

1. Ellen Schrecker, "[McCarthyism, 1947-1960](#)"
2. Jeremy Kuzmarov, "[The U.S. War on Drugs](#)"
3. Linda Gordon, "[The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s](#)"
4. Robert Oppenheim, "[North Korea and Nuclear Weapons](#)"
5. Geoff Eley, "[Is Trump a Fascist?](#)"
6. Felice Batlan, "[Building a Regime of Restrictive Immigration Laws, 1840-1945](#)"
7. Margaret Power, "[Puerto Rico: A U.S. Colony in the Caribbean](#)"

write to protest the continuing Israeli infringement on Palestinians' academic freedom through the restrictions imposed on faculty members at Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza who are foreign nationals. Over the past three years, by placing a wide range of arbitrary demands and conditions for obtaining re-entry visas that allow their employment in Palestinian universities, Israeli authorities have further undermined the ability of international academic personnel to work at Palestinian universities. In addition, Israeli authorities have increasingly denied visas to academics scheduled for employment in Palestinian universities. These measures have significantly hindered the course of academic life in Palestinian higher education.

As a result of these measures, faculty members and universities face continuing uncertainty. Some faculty members have had to leave before the end of the academic year, while others remain in legal limbo, unable to leave given the absence of assurances that they would be allowed to return to the West Bank. Over the previous two academic years (2016/2017 and 2017/2018), Israeli authorities denied 12 entries into the country and at least 20 academics are currently facing obstacles to extending/securing visas. Under these conditions, there has been a sharp decrease in the number of international academics in Palestinian universities. At Birzeit University alone, twelve departments or affiliated institutions now face losing faculty members in the coming academic year.

As Adalah – the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel has argued, Israeli practices are contrary to international law. They are also in clear violation of academic freedom. They are unacceptable. They have devastating short- and long-term effects on Palestinian

8. Van Gosse, "[Why The United States Is Not A True Democracy, Part One](#)"
9. Kevin A. Young, "[Our Debt to Central American Refugees](#)" also available as a [text version with hyperlinks](#)
10. Van Gosse, "[Why the United States Is Not a True Democracy, Part Two](#)"

## NEWSLETTERS

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- H-PAD Steering Committee Newsletter #2, November 19, 2018
- H-PAD Steering Committee Newsletter #1, September 6, 2018

## MISSION STATEMENT

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In April 2017, the Historians Against War was renamed the Historians for Peace and Democracy. A new policy statement was adopted focusing on the the dangers of war abroad and the threats to democracy at home.

Continue reading...

## JOIN US

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Join Historians for Peace and Democracy.

Sign Up as an H-PAD Campus Contact!

universities. They will limit the development of the universities' teaching, research, and academic-scientific publications, and hinder Palestinian students' access to quality higher education.

We condemn the ongoing constraints imposed by the Israeli authorities on higher education in the Palestinian territories and we urge Israeli authorities to end this discriminatory policy immediately. We call upon the Israeli government to lift the restrictions preventing international academics from staying and working in the West Bank and refrain from imposing arbitrary restrictions on the duration of stay for international academics.

Margaret Power and Van Gosse

Co-Chairs

Historians for Peace and Democracy



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**LIFE DURING WARTIME**  
– Sunday, December 1, 2019 –



By Joshua Brown. For a full  
archive of Life during Wartime,  
see <http://www.joshbrownnyc.com/ldw.htm>

## INTERNAL AREA FOR SC

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members.

# Limitations and restrictions to foreign nationals teaching at Palestinian universities

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JULY 15, 2019 · COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

☰ Interventions, Updates 🌐 Israel, Palestine ↗ Birzeit University, Denial of visas

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

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US Ambassador to Israel

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Dear Prime Minister, Ministers, and Ambassador,

We write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to express our dismay regarding the severe and unreasonable limitations imposed on foreign nationals who are faculty members at Birzeit University (BZU) and other Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza. These faculty, some of whom have been teaching for years in Palestinian universities, now have to deal with a wide range of arbitrary demands and conditions in order to obtain re-entry visas that permit their employment in Palestinian universities. Moreover, for the past three years, the Israeli authorities have increasingly denied visas – both new and re-entry – to such academics. These restrictions severely imperil the quality of Palestinian education and the right to education of Palestinian students.

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 nearly 2500 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.

We previously wrote to you on this matter on 6 August 2018. Like peer institutions across the world, Palestinian universities employ academics and administrators who are foreign nationals. For the past three years especially, these faculty and staff members have encountered numerous arbitrary measures imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities which endanger their employment and the quality of their research. These measures include: changing documentation requirements without prior or official notification; lengthy processing periods that force applicants to overstay valid visas or leave the country; shortened and arbitrary duration of visas; the issuing of visas that allow the holder to reside and work only within the West Bank; restrictions on ports of entry/exit; and demands for financial bonds of 20,000 to 80,000 NIS or 5,600 to 22,500 USD. The application of such measures has not been transparent, and hence foreign nationals are unable to determine if they can accept a job offer from a Palestinian university, if they will be able to continue their employment for the duration of the appointment, or if, as a university employee, they would be permitted to travel abroad for academic conferences or for conducting research. Indeed, travel to a conference --in the United States, Europe, or the Middle East --or making a research trip to an archive, including archives in West Jerusalem, could threaten the future employment of these professors, thus negatively affecting the quality of the scholar's research.

Because of these arbitrary and opaque measures, there has been a sharp decrease in the number of international academics in Palestinian universities. A survey conducted in February 2018 by the Palestinian National Authority's Ministry of Education and Higher Education showed that the previous two academic years (2016/2017 and 2017/2018) were exceptionally difficult for foreign nationals. The job security of US, British, Dutch, French, German, Indian and Jordanian citizens working as faculty and staff in several Palestinian universities (Al-Istiqlal, Al-Quds Open, An-Najah National, Birzeit, Hebron, Kadoorie Palestine Technical, The Arab American, Jenin, and the University of Palestine in Gaza) was under severe threat: over half of these scholars faced denials or restrictions on entry and residency. Israeli authorities denied twelve entries into the country and at least 20 academics are currently facing obstacles to extending/securing visas.

Denials or restrictions on entry and presence have been particularly devastating for BZU. Almost all foreign national academics and staff, from chairs to administrators, have encountered problems in visa renewals over the past year. The denial and restrictions of entry and residency visas have harmed the daily functions of BZU: teaching, instruction in foreign language, curriculum planning, committee work, supervising theses and papers, conducting research -- in short, everything that academics do to ensure the proper training of students and the quality of their research. Some of these professors began to work at the university more than a decade ago and have long-standing connections, not only with students and colleagues, but also with the community in which they live. The situation deteriorated further in June 2018, when Israeli authorities denied visa extensions to seven international faculty members, one-third of the international staff at the university. In the 2018-2019 academic year, eight international faculty of nineteen were denied visa extensions or entry.

These measures have short-term and long-term effects. In the short term, they jeopardize academic and administrative work in these universities. In the long term, they imperil the right of Palestinians to education, isolate the Palestinian community from the rest of the world, and may eventually cause severe harm to the educational and employment opportunities of the next generation of Palestinian students.

We condemn, in general, the ongoing constraints imposed by the Israeli authorities on the higher education sector in the West Bank and Gaza. We condemn, in particular, the denial of the right to education of the hundreds of students in the West Bank who have been taught and mentored by these

professors, and the imposition of capricious and cruel measures on our colleagues. These measures violate principles that should be protected, and indeed cherished, in any democratic state and are in contradiction of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. As the occupying power, Israel must maintain the functioning of Palestinian civil institutions, including Palestinian universities. In other words, Israel is obliged to maintain a transparent policy that allows the entry and presence of foreign faculty and staff members in a manner that does not harm or endanger Palestinian higher education. It is obligated, as well, to ensure the right of the Palestinian people to education. The right to education is enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966), an obligation ratified by Israel.

We therefore call upon you to ensure that these professors can renew their visas, and that the academic restrictions, whose sole purpose is to make it exceedingly difficult for foreign nationals to work in academic institutions in Palestine, be abolished immediately. We join the call from Birzeit University, Al-Haq, and Adalah--the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel--for an immediate halt to this policy of targeting Palestinian academic freedom and Palestinian institutions of higher learning. We ask that Israel lift the restrictions preventing international academics from staying and working in the West Bank, refrain from imposing arbitrary restrictions on the duration of stay or extension of stay for international academics, and order the publication of a clear and lawful procedure for issuing entry visas and work permits for international academics in the West Bank, to enable the university to manage and maintain its academic freedom.

We look forward to your response.


Sincerely,

Judith E. Tucker  
MESA President  
Professor, Georgetown University

Laurie Brand  
Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom  
Professor, University of Southern California

## Documents & Links

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PDF 518 KB

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 No Passage to Palestinian Universities by Elizabeth Redden (Inside Higher Ed, July 26, 2019)



אקדמיה לשוויון

أكاديميون من أجل المساواة

Guarantee full freedom of movement for international academics working at Palestinian academic institutions!

Dear colleagues,

Please consider signing this petition regarding the discrimination against Palestinian universities, an initiative of Academia for Equality (<https://www.academy4equality.com/?lang=en>).

The petition will be forwarded to the following: Israeli Interior Minister Aryeh Deri, Israeli Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, Israeli Chief Military Advocate General Sharon Afek, and the Israeli military's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT).

You can find more about the discrimination against Palestinian universities from the Times Higher Education Supplement: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/palestinian-university-fights-israeli-visa-restrictions>

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We, the undersigned, members of the international academic community, demand that the Israeli authorities immediately cease to restrict international academics from working at Palestinian Universities and other academic institutions.

Over the last three years, the Israeli authorities have further undermined the ability of international academic personnel to work at Palestinian universities. Among other unlawful practices, the Israeli authorities have refused to issue work permits, have set additional, unreasonable conditions for granting visas to visiting faculty, and have made transit through Ben-Gurion Airport conditional on extremely high guarantees. These practices have already had dramatic consequences: some faculty members have had to leave before the end of the academic year, whereas others are in a legal limbo, stranded in the West Bank and unable to leave in the absence of assurances that they would be allowed to return. At Birzeit University alone, twelve departments or affiliated institutions now face losing faculty members in the coming academic year, including the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music.

Both international law and the principle of academic freedom make Israeli practices wholly unacceptable. The current practices not only deprive Palestinian society of a key resource for its growth in the short term, but will have long-term detrimental effects on it.

As academic professionals, we demand that this discriminatory policy ceases immediately. The working conditions of international academic staff in Palestinian universities should be identical to those of their counterparts in Israeli universities, and in line with international norms.



## Israel forcing international lecturers out of West Bank Palestinian universities

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11/07/2019

**Birzeit University, Adalah, Al-Haq now fighting to end escalating discriminatory Israeli policy aimed at preventing international academics from staying in the West Bank and refusing to renew visas for those with teaching contracts.**



Israel is refusing to issue work permits for international academics working at Palestinian universities in the occupied West Bank and is escalating a harsh visa policy that is forcing them to abandon their students and leave the country. Murky and arbitrary Israeli regulations leave international lecturers and their families in constant uncertainty and subject to deportation at any time.

Now, a Palestinian university in the West Bank, together with two Palestinian human rights groups, are taking legal action.



*Aerial view of Birzeit University campus (Birzeit University Public Relations Office)*



After three consecutive academic years during which Israel has intensified its efforts to force international lecturers to leave the country, Birzeit University, Al-Haq, and Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, are demanding an immediate halt to this policy targeting Palestinian academic freedom and isolating Palestinian institutions of higher learning. **Birzeit University – despite operating under Israeli military occupation – must be guaranteed the ability to exercise its right to freedom of education.**



<https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9765>

In a [letter sent on 30 April 2019](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit_letter_ENG_30042019.pdf) ([https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit\\_letter\\_ENG\\_30042019.pdf](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit_letter_ENG_30042019.pdf)) to Israeli Interior Minister Aryeh Deri, Israeli Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, Israeli Chief Military Advocate General Sharon Afek, and the Israeli military's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) Kamil Abu Rokon, Birzeit University, Al-Haq, and Adalah demand that Israel:

- lift the restrictions preventing international academics employed by Birzeit University from staying and working in the West Bank;
- refrain from imposing arbitrary restrictions on the duration of stay or extension of stay for international academics;
- order the publication of a clear and lawful procedure for issuing entry visas and work permits for international academics in the West Bank, which will enable the university to manage and maintain its academic freedom.



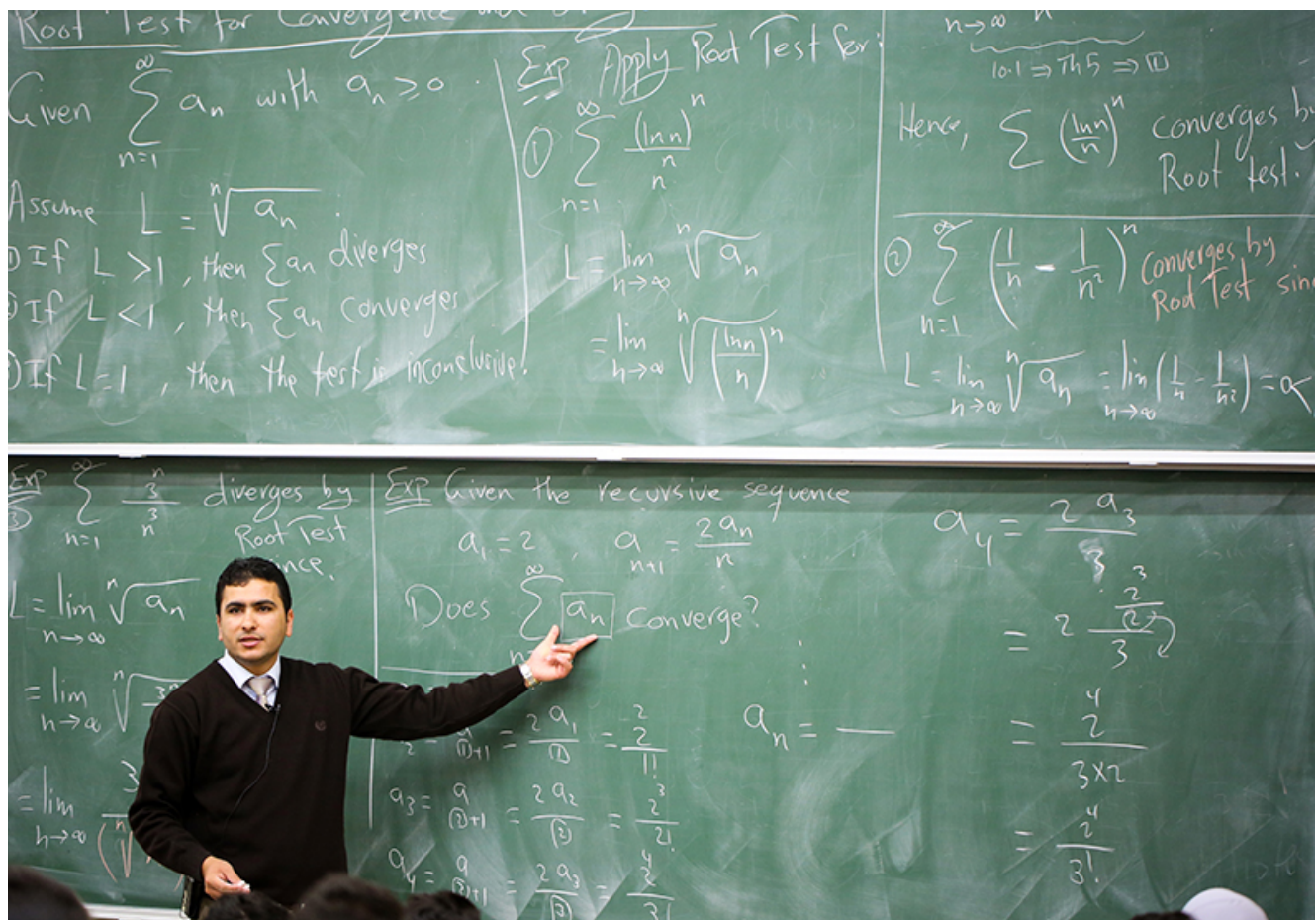
*Birzeit students on campus (Birzeit University Public Relations Office)*

## THE NUMBERS

While only Israeli authorities can provide full figures over the past number of years, by 2017 a variety of sources confirmed an escalation in Israel's refusal to renew visa extensions as well as a range of other conditions. The Right to Enter Campaign, which has monitored the issue of entry and visa procedures for foreign nationals for over a decade, reports a clear escalation in refusals on visa extension applications and tightening of restrictions since at least mid-2016.

For example, the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, an affiliate of the Board of Trustees of Birzeit University, reported a 200 percent increase in visa denials over the past two academic years alone: In the 2017-2018 academic year, four international faculty out of 20 were denied visa extensions or entry at the border; in 2018-2019, eight international faculty out of 19 were denied visa extensions or entry.





Teaching a class at Birzeit University (Birzeit University Public Relations Office)

Between 2017 and 2019, four full-time and three part-time international lecturers at Birzeit University were compelled to leave the country and were not able to continue their teaching because Israel refused to renew their visas. In 2019, Israel denied entry to two international academics with Birzeit University contracts. Not a single international faculty member, with the exception of those directly employed by foreign government-sponsored programs, was issued a visa for the length of their 2018-2019 academic year contract. As of press time, six full-time international faculty members contracted for the 2018-2019 academic year are without valid visas; another five – including a department chair – are overseas with no clear indications of whether they will be able to return and secure visas required for them to stay for the coming academic year. Over 12 departments and programs face losing faculty members in the coming academic year because of the Israeli policy.

**Birzeit University President Abdullatif Abuhijleh said: "Blocking our right to engage international academics is part of an ongoing effort by the Israeli occupation to marginalize Palestinian institutions of higher education. The latest escalation in visa restrictions is just one in a longstanding and systematic Israeli policy of undermining the independence and viability of Palestinian higher education institutions".**

## PALESTINIAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE CROSSHAIRS

Birzeit University is not alone: universities across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are being affected by the Israeli policy.



*Israeli military forces raid the Birzeit campus in 2014 (Samer Nazzal via Birzeit University Public Relations Office)*

A February 2018 Palestinian Ministry of Education study found that more than half of the international lecturers and staff (32 out of 64) at eight universities were detrimentally affected during the previous two years by Israeli rejections of applications for new visas or visa extensions or by refusal to allow them to enter the West Bank. These academics, many of them Palestinians holding foreign passports, are citizens of various countries including the Netherlands, France, Germany, India, and Jordan, with the majority from the U.S. and European Union member states.

Over the past two years, Israel has been escalating the visa restrictions it is imposing on international academics, including: denial of entry to the West Bank; refusing visa extensions; delays in processing visa extension applications beyond the duration of the period the visa is valid; arbitrarily granting visas for short periods, sometimes ranging from only two weeks to three months; restricting visas to the West Bank only and permitting entry and exit only via the Allenby Bridge crossing rather than via Ben Gurion Airport; requirements to deposit large sums as guarantees, sometimes as much as NIS 80,000 (approx. US\$23,300).

**[CLICK HERE for stories of Birzeit University faculty members personally affected by the Israeli policy \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9765\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9765)**

Without work permits issued by Israel and no clear means for securing visas to enter or stay, international academics have no guarantees they can travel to Palestinian universities that recruit them, remain in the OPT for the duration of their academic contracts, or return if they travel abroad for academic or personal reasons.

These Israeli restrictions have severe repercussions on Birzeit, its students, and the Palestinian public at large, isolating the university from other educational institutions around the world and diminishing the quality of education it offers to the Palestinian people.

## **ISRAELI POLICY ILLEGAL**



In [2019's QS World University Rankings](https://www.birzeit.edu/en/international-rankings/qs-world-university-rankings) (<https://www.birzeit.edu/en/international-rankings/qs-world-university-rankings>), Birzeit University ranked within the top three percent of universities worldwide. But these rankings are based on a number of key indicators – including the proportion of international faculty and international students – that Israel is now targeting. By preventing Birzeit from employing international faculty, Israel is impeding its ability to function as a university that meets international standards.



*A student conducting research in a Birzeit lab (Birzeit University Public Relations Office)*

**The Israeli policy toward international academics violates both Israeli law and international law.** It violates universities' freedom to expand the areas of research and studies it offers to Palestinian and international students alike. As such, Israel is blocking the occupied Palestinian population from determining for themselves what kind of education they want to provide.

**Adalah Deputy General Director Attorney Sawsan Zaher, who drafted the letter to Israeli authorities, said: "Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip – like all other peoples around the world – are entitled to exercise their right to academic freedom as part of their right to self-determination. The Israeli military occupation cannot prevent Palestinians from exercising this right".**

Indeed, according to the interpretation applied to Article 43 of the Hague Regulations of 1907, sovereignty of education does not change hands – it is inalienable – and must remain in the hands of the occupied Palestinian population.

[CLICK HERE for stories of Birzeit University faculty members personally affected by the Israeli policy](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9765) (<https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9765>)

[CLICK HERE to read the letter \[Hebrew original\]](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit_letter_30042019.pdf) ([https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit\\_letter\\_30042019.pdf](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit_letter_30042019.pdf))

[CLICK HERE to read the letter \[Arabic translation\]](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit_letter_ARB_30042019.pdf) ([https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit\\_letter\\_ARB\\_30042019.pdf](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit_letter_ARB_30042019.pdf))

[CLICK HERE to read the letter \[English translation\]](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit_letter_ENG_30042019.pdf) ([https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit\\_letter\\_ENG\\_30042019.pdf](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Birzeit_letter_ENG_30042019.pdf))

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- **Mati Milstein, Adalah (English), [mati@adalah.org](mailto:mati@adalah.org) (<mailto:mati@adalah.org>), +972.58.778.1437**

April 30, 2019

To:

**Mr. Avichai Mandelblit**

Attorney General of Israel

via fax: 02-6467001

**Mr. Kamil Abu Rokon**

Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories

via fax: 03-6975177

**Mr. Sharon Afek**

Chief Military Advocate General

via fax: 03-5694526

**Mr. Aryeh Deri**

Minister of Interior

via fax: 02-5666376

**Re: Canceling visa restrictions on foreign academics hired to teach at Birzeit University**

On behalf of Birzeit University, which operates in the West Bank, we are writing to demand that you:

- A. lift the restrictions preventing the entry of foreign academics to the West Bank for employment by Birzeit University;
- B. refrain from imposing arbitrary restrictions on the stay of these foreign academics or the extension of their stay;
- C. order the publication of a clear and proper procedure for issuing entry visas and visa extensions for foreign academics in the West Bank, similar to the procedure that exists for Israeli institutions of higher education that seek to hire foreign lecturers or researchers.

These demands are based on the following detailed arguments:

1. This letter demands that Birzeit University be allowed to employ foreign academics from abroad, without impediment or restriction, in order to enable the university to independently exercise its academic freedom and conduct higher education in a proper and orderly way.

**P.O. Box 8921 Haifa 31090 Israel Tel: (972)-4-950-1610 Fax: (972)-4-950-3140**

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**Email: [adalah@adalah.org](mailto:adalah@adalah.org)**

**<http://www.adalah.org>**

2. This demand arises in the wake of last summer, when the Israeli authorities denied visas extensions for West Bank residency to seven foreign academics employed by the University.
3. A survey conducted in February 2018 by the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Education found that among eight universities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) including East Jerusalem, more than half of the foreign lecturers and staff at these institutions were detrimentally affected during the past two years by a rejection of their applications for visa extensions or refusal to allow them to enter the West Bank. The data showed that among 64 foreign lecturers and staff members, at least 32 encountered these and other visa-related difficulties. These academics are nationals of various countries: the U.S., the Netherlands, France, Germany, India, and Jordan, but most are citizens of the U.S. and European Union. Entry visas were denied to 12 of these academics and at least 20 of them encountered various difficulties and obstacles in extending their visa.
4. The survey also showed that Birzeit University was most severely impacted by the policy of the Israeli authorities: Up to the time of which the survey took place, among 26 foreign lecturers and staff members employed by Birzeit University, 15 had encountered difficulties in entering the West Bank or in renewing their visas.
5. This is not coincidental since Birzeit University is the oldest Palestinian university operating in the West Bank. The university was established in 1924 as a girls' school, and developed and grew over the years. In 1942, it became Birzeit College and in 1975-1976 was recognized as a university and changed its name to Birzeit University. The university's objectives include a commitment to excellence, encouraging creativity, experimentation, innovation, achievement, teamwork and values grounded in democratic practices based on diversity, freedom of expression and respect for others. Thus, over the years the University relied greatly on foreign lecturers and researchers from universities in various countries as members of its faculty and as part of the academic relations it conducts with international universities and research institutes around the world. Consequently, Birzeit University has the largest number of foreign academics of any other institution of higher education in the West Bank. As of the 2017-2018 academic year, the University operated nine different faculties offering 111 academic programs, including 75 undergraduate programs, 32 masters degree programs, one PhD program and one program for foreign students. In that academic year, 14,506 students were enrolled at Birzeit University, which employed 446 faculty



members and staff. Some 38,600 students graduated from this institution between the academic years 1974-1975 to 2017-2018.

6. As noted, visa restrictions on academics from overseas have increased during the past two years and this has affected the University's activity. The various restrictions include: denial of entry into the West Bank; unreasonable delays in processing visa applications for entry or residency; granting visas for very short periods, sometimes ranging from only two weeks to three months; restricting visas to the West Bank only and permitting entry-exit only via the Allenby Bridge crossing rather than via Ben-Gurion Airport; and requirements to deposit very large sums as guarantees, sometimes as much as 80,000 shekels.
7. In addition, the foreign academics who receive visas or visa extensions are granted tourist visas that prohibit them from working. It should be emphasized that although, formally, there is a procedure for receiving a work permit in the OPT, in practice such visas have rarely been issued in recent years. Along with these restrictions, the academics encounter an almost complete lack of transparency with regard to the criteria for their entry to the West Bank, the rejection of their applications and the way their applications are processed.
8. These restrictions have forced many academics to leave, some in the midst of the academic year and before completing the courses they are teaching to their students; others live in conditions of uncertainty; some are forced to leave the OPT every three months in order to renew their visas; and most of them are forced to contend with a long and complicated procedure that includes depositing a large sum as a guarantee. They teach in the undergraduate and graduate programs, chair various academic committees at the university, direct and work at research institutes and, as in any other university, serve the students and general public by participating in research, seminars and lectures.
9. The visa restrictions on foreign lecturers and staff members at Birzeit University and other universities in the OPT make it difficult for them to operate in an orderly way, in both the short term and long term. In *the short term*, these restrictions pose an enormous obstacle to recruiting additional foreign academics, who fear they would not receive a visa or would receive a visa for only a very short period that would not allow them to work at the institution for a full academic semester. The restrictions make it impossible to replace lecturers who are forced to leave, adversely affect the courses

taught by the lecturers who are forced to leave, disrupt the everyday life of the university on the academic and administrative levels, and are detrimental to the students.

10. In *the long term*, these restrictions have very severe repercussions on the university, the students and the Palestinian public at large. The employment of foreign academics under these conditions and the inability to recruit additional faculty members isolate the university vis-à-vis other institutions of higher education in the world and diminish the quality of the studies it offers; this will harm the level of studies at the university that is essential for broadening the students' exposure to information and academic research, and will hinder the development of the university's academic studies, research and academic-scientific publications.
11. In response to the harm caused to Birzeit University, the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) wrote in August 2018 to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, Interior Minister Aryeh Deri and Education Minister Naftali Bennett demanding an immediate end to the denial of entry visas and visa renewals to foreign academics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the promulgation of a transparent and clear policy. The letter from the MESA committee also demanded that the academics who suffered from these restrictions be assured entry and residency in order to maintain the academic freedom of Palestinian universities. See:  
<https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2018/08/06/arbitrary-demands-on-foreign-national-academics-working-in-palestinian-universities>
12. A similar message was sent in August 2018 to the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, Kamil Abu Rokon, by California Scholars for Academic Freedom .See: <https://cascholars4academicfreedom.wordpress.com/2018/08/25/letter-to-major-general-kamil-abu-rukon-about-systematic-interference-by-israeli-authorities-in-palestinian-education-academic-freedom-freedom-to-travel-and-to-teach-study-and-research/>
13. And in October 2018, another letter was sent to the same officials by the British Society for Middle East Studies, denouncing the visa and employment restrictions imposed on foreign academics in Palestinian institutions of higher education and demanding a halt to these restrictions. See:  
<http://www.brismes.ac.uk/resources/israeli-violations-of-palestinian-academic-freedom>

14. The arbitrary way in which the applications of foreign academics are handled by the Israeli authorities is reflected in the single procedure governing this subject, entitled “Regulation for the Entry of Foreigners to the Territories of Judea and Samaria,” issued by the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) (Order No. 202). This regulation, which applies to citizens of countries that have diplomatic relations with Israel, stipulates (in paragraph 2) the category of foreigners eligible to apply for an entry visa for up to three months only, including “lecturers and advisors.” The regulation states that foreigners who are citizens of countries that have not signed visa exemption accords with Israel can apply to the nearest Israeli embassy or consulate and submit a visa application, and that the foreign national must present documents that verify his status and position, and the purpose of his visit. Foreigners who are citizens of countries that have signed a visa exemption accord with Israel may enter the West Bank via Israel after presenting the documents that verify their status and position, and the purpose of their visit, and this is subject to the scrutiny of COGAT representatives at Ben-Gurion Airport. This regulation goes on to state that a visa may be extended for an additional period of up to a year and for no more than a total of 27 months, but such extensions are possible only for the spouses of Palestinian residents of the area, the children of Palestinian residents of the area up to the age of 16, business people / investors / holders of business licenses in the West Bank / humanitarian cases and others. **Academics and advisors are not included** in the section on visa renewals. In addition, since the Israeli authorities have not issued employment permits in recent years in the West Bank, especially for foreign academics, they cannot be included in this category that allows for extending their stay for a total of up to 27 months.

15. This is a general and vague regulation that does not define the criteria for permitting the employment of foreign academics in Palestinian institutions of higher education and does not authorize COGAT to impose the type of severe restrictions described above.

16. In contrast to this vague regulation, institutions of higher education in Israel are able to recruit foreign academics under a separate procedure that allows the entry and employment of foreigners for a period of up to five years. The “Procedure for Granting a Work Permit, Visa and Residence Permit to a Guest Lec-

turer/Researcher at an Institution of Higher Education” (Procedure No. 5.3.0005, updated on June 14, 2015) issued by the Ministry of Interior’s Population and Immigration Authority, enables foreign academics to be employed under a special residency permit granted by the Population and Immigration Authority, a B-1 Researcher/Lecturer Visa. The procedure requires the institution of higher education to apply for employment of the foreign academic and does not impose this obligation on the academics themselves, as in the case of employing academics in the West Bank. The academic is entitled to bring his/her immediate family to Israel; the spouse receives a tourist visa and children under the age of 18 receive a residency permit for the period of the academic’s employment. The academic and his/her accompanying family can apply for a multiple-entry visa for the entire period, as many as the academic requires for him/herself and immediate family. The procedure stipulates how to submit the application and all the documents that must be attached to it; the application will be examined and, if necessary, the applicant will have 21 working days to provide any missing documents. A decision will be sent within ten days of reviewing a complete application.

17. The procedure details the duration of the permit, if approved, and states that it will initially be granted for up to two years, based on the institution’s request and in accordance with the decision of the Population and Immigration Authority. The permit can later be extended for a maximum period of two additional years, and for a cumulative period not to exceed 63 months (five years and three months). If the academic wishes to remain in Israel beyond this period, it is possible to submit an application to the Interior Ministry for a B/2 residency permit. In addition, this procedure also includes a provision for residency permits for academics on (unpaid) sabbaticals, and allows for extending the residency permit for up to one year.
18. It should be emphasized that there is a clear and detailed procedure for employing foreign academics at universities in Israel, including details on the criteria, process, required documents, dates, status of the academic and his/her family. Most importantly, the procedure enables the entry and residency of foreign academics for extended periods of time, without restrictions, without harassment and without imposing a financial burden, enabling them to be properly employed at an institution of higher education.

19. There is no doubt that the policy toward foreign academics who wish to enter the West Bank to work at universities there is arbitrary and harmful, violating the institution's academic freedom, interfering in its freedom to employ foreign academics and its academic freedom to expand its areas of research and the academic studies it offers to Palestinian students and to the general public.
20. There is no doubt that such policy interferes with the civic life of the protected civilian population while harming the freedom of expression and dignity of the institution, the lecturers, the students and the Palestinian population at large. This right of the university – which operates in a reality of occupation and is responsible for developing sound academic and cultural life, which affects the social, economic and cultural life in the West Bank in general – is an integral part of its right to self-determination as an institution of higher education.
21. As detailed here, this policy violates Israeli law as well as international law that applies to it as an occupying power.
22. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), in an advisory opinion issued on July 9, 2004 on the separation wall constructed by the government of Israel in the West Bank, emphasized the State of Israel's duty as an occupying power to honor and fulfill its obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. In the **Mara'abe** case, the honorable court did not reject the application of these principles to the West Bank (HCJ 7957/04 **Mara'abe v. Prime Minister of Israel**, PD 60(2) 477, 492 (2005)).
23. Article 43 of the Hague Regulations, which guides the main consideration in exercising the authorities of the occupying power, states that the occupying army must maintain the law that existed in the area prior to the occupation and act in accordance with it, and that the main consideration of the occupying power in exercising its authorities is the benefit of the civilian population, unless there is an urgent and immediate security-related need that prevents this. The good of the civilian population is what drives the laws of occupation and creates the fabric of considerations that the occupying power can consider when exercising its governing powers and administering the occupied territory. Article 43 stipulates as follows:

Art. 43. The authority of the legitimate power having in fact passed into the hands of the occupant, the latter shall take all the measures in his power to restore, and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country.

See the Supreme Court rulings that affirmed the application of Article 43 to the West Bank: the **Jam'iat Iscan** case, 794-795; the **Mara'abe** case; HCJ 2150/07 **Abu Safiya v. Minister of Defense**, PD 63(3) 331 (2009); HCJ 69/81 **Abu 'Aita v. Commander of IDF Forces in the West Bank**, PD 37(2), 197 (1983); HCJ 10356/02 **Haas v. Commander of IDF Forces in the West Bank**, PD 58(3), 443, 455 (2004).

24. Therefore, Article 43 imposes a positive duty on the occupying power to take all measures necessary to ensure public order and safety, with “public order and safety” interpreted as including the civilian life of the local population. The policy of the Israeli authorities, which leads to restricting the academic freedom of Birzeit University and other Palestinian universities in the West Bank, is contrary to this positive duty because it sabotages orderly and sound higher education, which is one of the components of public and civilian life.
25. In all of the cases we received, there was no security need justifying the restrictions imposed on the academics. Indeed, of all the academics whose visa was restricted or whose entry was denied, it was hard to find even one whose visa or entry was restricted for security reasons.
26. Consequently, since there are no security grounds justifying the policy of restricting the visas of foreign academics in the OPT, the occupying power has no authority to limit the freedom of the university to conduct its academic affairs. The university’s right to self-determination under occupation by exercising its academic freedom, particularly regarding decisions on developing and enhancing the institution’s academic level, is not abrogated or suspended because of the occupation, especially when there are no security considerations to justify this.
27. In this context, the occupying power’s policy of restricting the visas of foreign academics harms the population itself, which has the right to study at a high-quality university, develop and fulfill itself – educationally, socially and economically. Furthermore, the occupation does not abrogate the right of the civil-

ian population and the university to self-determination in conducting as normal a life as possible, while exercising their rights. The exercise of these rights takes on even greater importance as the occupation becomes protracted, all the more so when it reaches its fifty-second year. See also in this context: Orna Ben-Naftali, Aeyal M. Gross, and Keren Michaeli, *Illegal Occupation: Framing the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 23 Berkeley J. Int'l Law. 551 (2005).

28. The Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are entitled like other people to exercise their right to self-determination, which also includes making excellent universities available that can provide their sons and daughters with top-notch higher education. In this context, the occupation in itself does not prevent, and it must not prevent, them from exercising this right. Indeed, according to the interpretation applied to Article 43, sovereignty in these matters – education – does not change hands; it is inalienable. This means that under Article 43, the current policy described above is very extreme because it violates the right of the Palestinian people to exercise its right to manage its institutions of higher education at a satisfactory and even high-quality level in the same way as other peoples.
29. In light of all of the above, we ask you to accede to the demands stated in the introduction to this letter.

Respectfully,

Sawsan Zaher, Attorney

cc: Mr. Shai Nitzan, State Attorney, via fax: 02-6467006

## Birzeit University faculty members available for media interviews

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07/07/2019

**Please contact press liaisons for additional details and to arrange interviews. (Direct contact details below).**



**HANEEN ADI**, who teaches English literature and writing at Birzeit University, has been without a visa and thus effectively restricted to the West Bank city of Ramallah since November of 2017 – the middle of her first semester at Birzeit. Unwilling to risk the possibility that she will be barred from returning, Ms. Adi has been unable to leave the country for nearly two years now. She not only missed being with her family on the occasion of her sister's wedding, another sister's graduation and the death of a relative; when her father tried to visit her in the West Bank, Israeli authorities denied him entry. [CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766)



**DR. RANA BARAKAT**, an assistant professor of history and contemporary Arab studies, spent 18 months unsuccessfully pursuing a visa extension while teaching undergraduate and graduate students at Birzeit University. Awarded a prestigious Columbia University fellowship in the spring of 2019, Dr. Barakat faced a huge dilemma: "I was afraid that if I left before I secured a visa extension for my current stay, I wouldn't be allowed to return to Birzeit". [CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766)



**DR. RANIA JAWAD**, assistant professor of English literature, has been threatened with deportation since fall 2017. She is married to a Palestinian with a West Bank ID, also a BZU faculty member, and together they have two small children. She was told by an Israeli official that her visa extension would be granted only if she resigns from her position at Birzeit University. The official informed her that were she to be granted a visa extension on grounds of her marriage to a West Bank ID holder, she would not be permitted to work. [CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766)



**DR. OMAR TESDELL**, assistant professor in Birzeit's Department of Geography, is one of only a few active researchers in biodiversity conservation, landscape transformation, and agroecology in Palestine. He also advises several graduate students. The difficulties with regard to residency have affected his ability to support students, conduct research, and maintain an active research agenda by traveling for workshops and conferences. [CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766)



**A CURRENT CHAIR OF FACULTY OF ARTS AT BIRZEIT** was told by Israeli authorities in late 2017 to resign if she was extended. An EU citizen married to a Palestinian ID holder and mother to small children, she refused to tender her resignation and continues to teach at Birzeit. Her commitment has come at a high cost and her efforts to secure visas for the past two years have been met with a litany of obstacles including being ignored by Israeli authorities, forced to pay a NIS 30,000 deposit, and banned from travel via Ben Gurion Airport. She has now been denied entry and is stuck outside the country, depending on colleagues to administer her exams on her behalf. [CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766)

**Press liaisons for interview requests & further details:**

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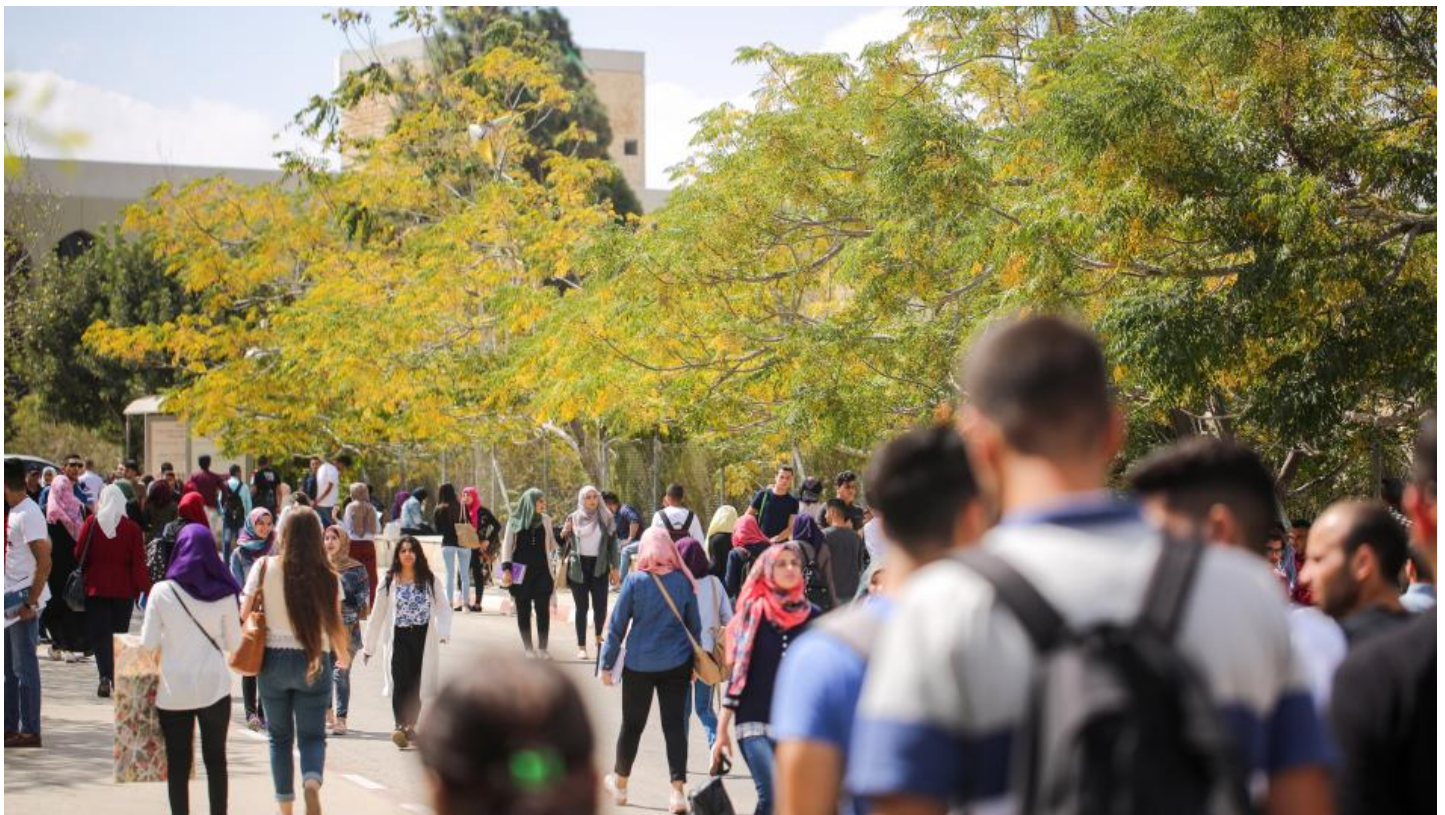


## Birzeit University condemns breach of academic freedom after academics forced to leave Palestine

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12 Jul 2018



To endorse, contact

Ghassan Khatib | [gkhatib@birzeit.edu](mailto:gkhatib@birzeit.edu) (<mailto:gkhatib@birzeit.edu>)

Since the beginning of the current academic year (2017-2018), scores of foreign passport holders, many of Palestinian origin but without residence documents, living and working in the occupied Palestinian territory have been denied entry in the country, or have had their visa renewal applications refused by the Israeli authorities. At Birzeit University alone, we have 15 foreign passport-holding faculty members whose requests for visa renewals have been refused or significantly delayed.

These faculty members have full-time status, work in all the various faculties on our campus, and include senior faculty and department chairpersons. Our faculty who are currently under threat teach in the BA, MA, and Ph.D. programs at Birzeit University, are members of university committees, and serve the larger Palestinian community through public seminars and lectures. Already some professors have been forced to leave the country; including one from the Department of English and Literature, and a professor of European History at the Ibrahim Abu Lughod Institute for International Studies who has devoted his entire academic career to Palestine and the university for the past four decades.

These international professors play a critical role not only in the ongoing provision of quality education at Birzeit University but also in the long-term development of Palestinian higher education. If this policy continues, Palestinian universities, including Birzeit University, will be further isolated from the global academic environment. Our ability to deliver a world-class education will be further compromised if we lose the international perspectives, diverse professional experiences and high-level skills these faculty members crucially bring to Palestinian academic life and the campus environment as a whole. In the global academic environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, having an internationally diverse faculty has become a fundamental cornerstone of academic excellence at universities worldwide. If Birzeit University and Palestinian higher education as a whole are denied the right to engage international faculty members, what is ultimately being denied is our right to deliver a quality and standard of education that meets the accepted global norm.

The right to education is a fundamental human right as established in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That article simultaneously underlines the critical link between education and the furthering of global perspectives, understanding and connection between diverse peoples and nations:

”

*Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*

A long line of UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and rulings of the International Court of Justice affirm Israel's obligation to exercise its responsibility as the occupying power in West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in accordance with international humanitarian law (including the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949) as well as applicable international human rights law. Israel is obligated by international law to both protect and facilitate the functioning of Palestinian civil institutions, including higher education. All states that are signatories to these resolutions also bear a responsibility to ensure that Israel exercises its obligations towards Palestinian education under international law; including that it exercises its control over the entry and presence of foreign academics in a manner that avoids unnecessary harm to Palestinian higher education and to the occupied population's fundamental right to education.

We call on everyone – including governments, institutions, academics, and associations – to decry these policies, protect our fundamental right of academic freedom at Birzeit University and for all Palestinian higher education. We call upon you and the international community to put the full weight of pressure on the Israeli authorities to put a halt to this extremely destructive policy. We ask that you:

- Hold Israel accountable for its violations, and enjoin it to undertake its obligations under international law
- Demand a halt to Israel's arbitrary and abusive practice denying access to and presence of international educators and academics contributing to Palestinian's educational development
- Make it incumbent on Israel to adopt and implement a clear documented and transparent policy enabling unhindered access and presence to foreign nationals who are coming to educate or promote educational development in the occupied Palestinian territories.

**For further reading:** [Palestine Monitor](http://www.palestinemonitor.org/details.php?id=9qzu2ka19923ymctgm73xf) (<http://www.palestinemonitor.org/details.php?id=9qzu2ka19923ymctgm73xf>), [International Middle East Media Center- IMEMC](http://www.imemc.org/article/foreign-residents-in-palestinian-territories-denied-visa-renewals/) (<http://www.imemc.org/article/foreign-residents-in-palestinian-territories-denied-visa-renewals/>), [Aljazeera English](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/foreign-residents-palestinian-territories-denied-visa-renewals-180713112441505.html) (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/foreign-residents-palestinian-territories-denied-visa-renewals-180713112441505.html>), [Middle East Eye](https://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/empty-chairs-combatting-israel-s-assault-palestinian-academia-65505017) (<https://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/empty-chairs-combatting-israel-s-assault-palestinian-academia-65505017>), [The Electronic Intifada](https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/israel-forces-teachers-leave-palestine) (<https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/israel-forces-teachers-leave-palestine>), [The Independent](https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/israel-palestine-conflict-universities-education-students-gaza-middle-east-a8594446.html) (<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/israel-palestine-conflict-universities-education-students-gaza-middle-east-a8594446.html>), [Times Higher Education](https://sites/default/files/raja_shehada_028_the_sep1318_3.pdf) ([/sites/default/files/raja\\_shehada\\_028\\_the\\_sep1318\\_3.pdf](https://sites/default/files/raja_shehada_028_the_sep1318_3.pdf))

#### List of endorsing organizations

The International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP), USA

[US Academic and Cultural Boycott Campaign \(USACBI\), USA \(http://usacbi.org/2018/08/usacbi-condemns-israeli-violations-of-palestinian-academic-freedom/\)](http://usacbi.org/2018/08/usacbi-condemns-israeli-violations-of-palestinian-academic-freedom/)

APJP - Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine, UK

BRICUP (British Committee for Universities of Palestine, UK

American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA), USA

Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA), USA

Sociology of Islam and Muslim Societies Network, Turkey

Campus Antifascist Network, USA

University of Hawai'i Students and Faculty for Justice in Palestine, USA

University and College Union (UCU), UK

[Anthropologists for the Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions, USA \(https://anthroboycott.wordpress.com/2018/08/18/call-to-action-respond-to-increasing-israeli-attacks-on-palestinian-educational-institutions/\)](https://anthroboycott.wordpress.com/2018/08/18/call-to-action-respond-to-increasing-israeli-attacks-on-palestinian-educational-institutions/)

#### Letters of Support:

[Modern Language Association \(MLA\) \(https://www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Executive-Council/Executive-Council-Actions/2018/MLA-Statement-on-Restricted-Entry-and-Presence-of-Foreign-Nationals-Serving-Palestinian-Universities\)](https://www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Executive-Council/Executive-Council-Actions/2018/MLA-Statement-on-Restricted-Entry-and-Presence-of-Foreign-Nationals-Serving-Palestinian-Universities)

[California Scholars for Academic Freedom, USA \(https://cascholars4academicfreedom.wordpress.com\)](https://cascholars4academicfreedom.wordpress.com)

[Middle East Studies Association- Committee on Academic Freedom \(MESA-CAF\) \(https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2018/08/06/arbitrary-demands-on-foreign-national-academics-working-in-palestinian-universities\)](https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2018/08/06/arbitrary-demands-on-foreign-national-academics-working-in-palestinian-universities)

[The Executive Committee of the American Comparative Literature Association on Scholars in Palestine. \(http://https://www.facebook.com/American-Comparative-Literature-Association-115771241805609/?\\_xts\\_\\_\[0\]=68.ARDalMCMukfXQlmbjwllGuFpAobfe34BMzsu5BeK1Umg3ZURB0KQqrbVV23Z9KNqIxAVBr52Rf6FiMZCdUxcURRj6KQvJXpBqwfvgxkCmVS5IM7yRjZKISNTKxRkKl-4lvcM RpfNl2kaIPts92XzhVBDORtcBxKTuHLIYzvmHgmWISO2oZPfg&\\_xts\\_\\_\[1\]=68.ARB-2OsRxl2siTqLrEgLNvY9BuzBwCBG3jN2zY78c-ZeodjB\\_g\\_3BifN2Fle3104yY3FndIzjigEDO2\)YBxtBRcACxFzSCKahtOxEt1Wvh\\_r19juLjVjCAxFe-Kd6nKrUV5klugeEMH4N02la-R\\_axQKMwPPtw4LmwW1A0MTE6bgLoyiohZUDA&hc\\_ref=ARRLPd6HAzjuji\\_XWkNNQyoq9uni8DWbeuCsdPsr7cA8UgMtyeHZULdmab5f9Pzz1M&fref=nf&\\_tn\\_=kC-R\)](http://https://www.facebook.com/American-Comparative-Literature-Association-115771241805609/?_xts__[0]=68.ARDalMCMukfXQlmbjwllGuFpAobfe34BMzsu5BeK1Umg3ZURB0KQqrbVV23Z9KNqIxAVBr52Rf6FiMZCdUxcURRj6KQvJXpBqwfvgxkCmVS5IM7yRjZKISNTKxRkKl-4lvcM RpfNl2kaIPts92XzhVBDORtcBxKTuHLIYzvmHgmWISO2oZPfg&_xts__[1]=68.ARB-2OsRxl2siTqLrEgLNvY9BuzBwCBG3jN2zY78c-ZeodjB_g_3BifN2Fle3104yY3FndIzjigEDO2)YBxtBRcACxFzSCKahtOxEt1Wvh_r19juLjVjCAxFe-Kd6nKrUV5klugeEMH4N02la-R_axQKMwPPtw4LmwW1A0MTE6bgLoyiohZUDA&hc_ref=ARRLPd6HAzjuji_XWkNNQyoq9uni8DWbeuCsdPsr7cA8UgMtyeHZULdmab5f9Pzz1M&fref=nf&_tn_=kC-R)

[British Society for Middle Eastern Studies \(BRISMES\) \(http://www.brismes.ac.uk/resources/israeli-violations-of-palestinian-academic-freedom\)](http://www.brismes.ac.uk/resources/israeli-violations-of-palestinian-academic-freedom)

[Friends of Birzeit University \(FOBZU\) \(https://fobzu.org/blog/2018/10/15/fobzu-and-education-unions-write-to-uk-government-over-visa-restrictions-at-palestinian-universities/\)](https://fobzu.org/blog/2018/10/15/fobzu-and-education-unions-write-to-uk-government-over-visa-restrictions-at-palestinian-universities/)

[Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York \(PSC-CUNY\) \(/sites/default/files/birzeit\\_resolution\\_2.docx\)](https://sites/default/files/birzeit_resolution_2.docx)

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14 Dec 2019



(/en/news/workshop-discusses-

## Birzeit University faculty members available for media interviews

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07/07/2019

**Please contact press liaisons for additional details and to arrange interviews. (Direct contact details below).**



**HANEEN ADI**, who teaches English literature and writing at Birzeit University, has been without a visa and thus effectively restricted to the West Bank city of Ramallah since November of 2017 – the middle of her first semester at Birzeit. Unwilling to risk the possibility that she will be barred from returning, Ms. Adi has been unable to leave the country for nearly two years now. She not only missed being with her family on the occasion of her sister's wedding, another sister's graduation and the death of a relative; when her father tried to visit her in the West Bank, Israeli authorities denied him entry. [CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766)



**DR. RANA BARAKAT**, an assistant professor of history and contemporary Arab studies, spent 18 months unsuccessfully pursuing a visa extension while teaching undergraduate and graduate students at Birzeit University. Awarded a prestigious Columbia University fellowship in the spring of 2019, Dr. Barakat faced a huge dilemma: "I was afraid that if I left before I secured a visa extension for my current stay, I wouldn't be allowed to return to Birzeit". [CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766)



**DR. RANIA JAWAD**, assistant professor of English literature, has been threatened with deportation since fall 2017. She is married to a Palestinian with a West Bank ID, also a BZU faculty member, and together they have two small children. She was told by an Israeli official that her visa extension would be granted only if she resigns from her position at Birzeit University. The official informed her that were she to be granted a visa extension on grounds of her marriage to a West Bank ID holder, she would not be permitted to work. [CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766)



**DR. OMAR TESDELL**, assistant professor in Birzeit's Department of Geography, is one of only a few active researchers in biodiversity conservation, landscape transformation, and agroecology in Palestine. He also advises several graduate students. The difficulties with regard to residency have affected his ability to support students, conduct research, and maintain an active research agenda by traveling for workshops and conferences. [CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766)



**A CURRENT CHAIR OF FACULTY OF ARTS AT BIRZEIT** was told by Israeli authorities in late 2017 to resign if she was extended. An EU citizen married to a Palestinian ID holder and mother to small children, she refused to tender her resignation and continues to teach at Birzeit. Her commitment has come at a high cost and her efforts to secure visas for the past two years have been met with a litany of obstacles including being ignored by Israeli authorities, forced to pay a NIS 30,000 deposit, and banned from travel via Ben Gurion Airport. She has now been denied entry and is stuck outside the country, depending on colleagues to administer her exams on her behalf. [CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY \(https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766\)](https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9766)

**Press liaisons for interview requests & further details:**

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# Arbitrary demands on foreign national academics working in Palestinian universities

AUGUST 06, 2018 · COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

☰ Interventions ☉ Israel, Palestine ☒ Birzeit University, Denial of visas

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Dear Prime Minister and Ministers,

We write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to express our dismay regarding the severe and unreasonable limitations imposed on foreign nationals who are faculty members at Birzeit University (BZU) and other Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza. These faculty, some of whom have been teaching for years in Palestinian universities, now have to deal with a wide range of arbitrary demands and conditions in order to obtain re-entry visas that permit their employment in Palestinian universities. Moreover, for the past two years, the Israeli authorities have increasingly denied visas – both new and re-entry – to such academics, to a degree that severely imperils the quality of Palestinian education and the right to education of Palestinian students.

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 nearly 2500 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.

Like peer institutions across the world, Palestinian universities employ academics and administrators who are foreign nationals. For the past two years especially, these faculty and staff members have encountered numerous arbitrary measures imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities which endanger their

employment and the quality of their research. These measures include: changing documentation requirements without prior or official notification; lengthy processing periods that force applicants to overstay valid visas or leave the country; shortened and arbitrary duration of visas; the issuing of visas that allow the holder to reside and work only within the West Bank; restrictions on ports of entry/exit; and demands for financial bonds of 20,000 to 80,000 NIS. The application of such measures has not been transparent, and hence foreign nationals are unable to determine if they can accept a job offer from a Palestinian university; if they will be able to continue their employment for the duration of the appointment; or if, as a university employee they would be permitted to travel abroad for academic conferences or for conducting research. Indeed, travel to a conference --in the United States, Europe, or the Middle East --or making a research trip to an archive, including archives in West Jerusalem, could threaten the future employment of these professors, thus negatively affecting the quality of the scholar's research.

Because of these arbitrary and opaque measures, there has been a sharp decrease in the number of international academics in Palestinian universities. A survey conducted in February 2018 by the Palestinian National Authority's Ministry of Education and Higher Education showed that the past two academic years (2016/2017 and 2017/2018) were exceptionally difficult for foreign nationals. The job security of US, British, Dutch, French, German, Indian and Jordanian citizens working as faculty and staff in several Palestinian universities (Al-Istiqlal, Al-Quds Open, An-Najah National, Birzeit, Hebron, Kadoorie Palestine Technical, The Arab American, Jenin, and the University of Palestine in Gaza) was under severe threat: over half of these scholars faced denials or restrictions on entry and residency. Israeli authorities denied twelve entries into the country and at least 20 academics are currently facing obstacles to extending/securing visas.

Denials or restrictions on entry and presence have been particularly devastating for BZU. Almost all foreign national academics and staff, from chairs to administrators, have encountered problems in visa renewals over the past year. The denial and restrictions of entry and residency visas have harmed the daily functions of BZU: teaching, instruction in foreign language, curriculum planning, committee work, supervising theses and papers, conducting research -- in short, everything that academics do to ensure the proper training of students and the quality of their research. Some of these professors began to work at the university more than a decade ago and have long-standing connections not only with students and colleagues, but also with the community in which they live. The situation deteriorated further in June 2018, when Israeli authorities denied visa extensions to seven international faculty members, one-third of the international staff at the university. Two professors who are US citizens were given two-week tourist visas upon returning from a trip abroad in May and were unable to secure a new visa at the Israeli military coordination office in Ramallah. Since June, Israeli authorities have refused to renew the visas of at least five other international faculty members at Birzeit University.

These measures have short-term and long-term effects. In the short term, they jeopardize academic and administrative work in these universities. In the long term, they imperil the right of Palestinians to education, isolate the Palestinian community from the rest of the world, and may eventually cause severe harm to the educational and employment opportunities of the next generation of Palestinian students.

We condemn, in general, the ongoing constraints imposed by the Israeli authorities on the higher education sector in the West Bank and Gaza. We condemn, in particular, the denial of the right to education of the hundreds of students in the West Bank who have been taught and mentored by these professors, and the imposition of capricious, ill-informed, and cruel measures on our colleagues. These

measures violate principles that should be protected, and indeed cherished, in any democratic state and are in contradiction of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. As occupying power, Israel must maintain the functioning of Palestinian civil institutions, including Palestinian universities. In other words, Israel is obliged to maintain a transparent policy that allows the entry and presence of foreign faculty and staff members in a manner that does not harm or endanger Palestinian higher education. It is obligated, as well, to ensure the right of the Palestinian people to education. The right to education is enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966), an obligation ratified by Israel.

We therefore call upon you to ensure that these professors can renew their visas, and that the academic restrictions, whose sole purpose is to make it exceedingly difficult for foreign nationals to work in academic institutions in Palestine, be abolished immediately. More specifically, we ask that Israel abolish these random denials of entry to foreign nationals traveling to the West Bank and Gaza, adopt a transparent policy, and provide assurances that academics who have been unjustly denied entry will be allowed to re-enter the West Bank and Gaza. We also ask that the Israeli authorities cancel the policy that restricts foreign academics to the West Bank, and respect their right to freedom of movement.

We look forward to your response.


Sincerely,

Judith E. Tucker  
MESA President  
Professor, Georgetown University

Amy W. Newhall  
MESA Executive Director

## Documents & Links

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 Israel20180806  
PDF 178 KB

# Israeli Blacklisting of Katherine Franke and Vincent Warren

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MAY 22, 2018 · COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

☰ Interventions ☉ Israel ☞ Israel Travel Ban, Katherine Franke, Vincent Warren

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu  
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Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Hotovely  
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Minister of Public Security Gilad Erdan  
gerdan@knesset.gov.il

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers,

We write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to communicate our outrage over the interrogation, deportation, and apparent banning from Israel of Professor Katherine Franke, Sulzbacher Professor of Law, Gender and Sexuality Studies at the Law School of Columbia University, and Attorney Vincent Warren, Executive Director of the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, MESA publishes the International Journal of Middle East Studies and has nearly 3,000 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

We have written you previously (10 March 2017:

<https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2017/03/10/travel-ban-for-supporters-of-boycott-of-israel>

) in order to express our grave concern over the 6 March 2017 decision taken by the Knesset to impose a travel ban on some twenty civil society organizations which have indicated their support for nonviolent opposition to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the ongoing besiegement of the Gaza Strip, in the form of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

As we wrote to you on 10 March 2017, the anti-BDS travel ban “introduces an ideological litmus test for anyone entering the country.” The concern appears justified in light of the recent mistreatment of Professor Franke, Mr. Warren, and two other unnamed members of a 19-person human rights delegation that was traveling to Israel and the West Bank. Their group was set to meet with Israeli and Palestinian individuals and organizations that are involved with documenting human rights violations in Israel and the Occupied Territories.



Professor Franke and Mr. Warren were pulled aside for additional questioning upon their arrival at Ben-Gurion International Airport on Sunday, 29 April. After 14 hours of interrogation, Franke was accused by the Strategic Affairs Ministry of playing a “prominent role” in Jewish Voice for Peace, one of the organizations on the aforementioned blacklist. When she denied the claim, Franke was accused of lying. After what appears to have been a summary decision taken “on the spot”, Franke, Warren, and two of their traveling companions were instructed that they had to leave the country immediately and were then informed that they would thenceforth be prohibited from entering Israel.

We condemn the arbitrary interrogation and unjustified deportation of Professor Franke, Mr. Warren, and their two anonymous colleagues. The State of Israel is demonstrating to the world that it is uninterested in free and open debate—including within the Jewish community—in matters pertaining to international law, human rights, and the legitimate voices of the Palestinian people. We therefore call upon the State of Israel to uphold the values of a democratic society and polity, to permit civil discourse, including criticism of its policies and practices, to reject this ideological litmus test for entry into the country, and to lift this arbitrary travel ban

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Judith E. Tucker  
MESA President  
Professor, Georgetown University

Amy W. Newhall  
MESA Executive Director