

2 December 2009

Update on Berlanty Assam, Bethlehem University Student

35 days since she was blindfolded, handcuffed, and taken from Bethlehem to Gaza

Dear Friends of Bethlehem University,

Many of you have written to know what happened at Monday's Hearing. My apologies for the delay in responding.

Bottom line, I regret to say, is that it is not over yet!

1. Berlanty is still not back in Bethlehem. She is in Gaza while her academic courses and her future aspirations remain “on hold.”
 - It is now 35 days since she was taken from Bethlehem.
 - At the Monday, November 30th Hearing at the High Court, the Court did not decline to instruct the Israeli Army to return Berlanty to Bethlehem for her to complete her education at Bethlehem University – but instead allowed her to be returned to Gaza as the Court continued to consider the matter.
 - Three hours after the Monday, November 30th Hearing, the Israeli High Court issued a ruling requesting the Israeli Army to “again attempt to locate the documents relating to the request from 2005 and the permit that was issued” –and to submit to the Court an update on this effort no later than 6 December 2009 at 10:00am.

I hesitate to ask you to write once again – but then again, I feel compelled to do so since it means so much to Berlanty and to her future. Would you consider writing once again to:

1. The Israeli Embassy or Consulate in your Country. If you go to this website and find your country, you will find the email for the Israeli Embassy or Consulate in your country:

<http://www.embassiesabroad.com/embassies-of/Israel>

2. US Consul General in Jerusalem, Daniel Rubinstein

UsConGenJerusalem@state.gov

3. Major General (Res.) Amos Gilad, Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)

cogatspokesman@gmail.com

4. Your own elected representatives in the USA, UK, Ireland, Spain, The Netherlands, Philippines, Spain, Denmark, Canada, Italy, France, Germany, etc.

Perhaps you might consider saying something like:

I am writing concerning the life and freedom of a 22 year old young woman, Ms. Berlanty Azzam. On October 28th she was forcibly removed from Bethlehem – blindfolded and handcuffed – and brought to Gaza – just two months before completing her studies at Bethlehem University.

Petitions have been before the Israeli High Court requesting her return to Bethlehem, where she has lived since 2005 as she studied at Bethlehem University.

Two Hearings have been held , the most recent being on November 30th. The Israeli Army has admitted that it made a mistake in taking Berlanty without any due process. The Israeli High Court has recommended to the Israeli Army that they allow Berlanty to return to Bethlehem to complete her studies at the Vatican-sponsored Bethlehem University which is conducted by the international religious order of the De La Salle Christian Brothers.

To date, after more than one month of delay, the Israeli Army has not complied with this request of the High Court. Each day that Berlanty is not allowed to return to classes at Bethlehem University:

- she is losing,
- the State of Israeli is losing,
- the Palestinians are losing,
- all people of the Holy Land are losing, and
- all of us - you and me included - people who believe in the right to and value of education are losing.

I ask that in your commitment to truth, freedom, and democracy – and on compassionate and humanitarian grounds – that you do all in your power to require the Israeli government, military, diplomatic, and legal officials immediately allow this young 22 year old woman, Ms. Berlanty Azzam, to return to Bethlehem University to complete her studies.

It is important to remember that we are talking about the real life of a real young woman and her future goals and aspirations - all of which are being placed “on hold”without any accusation whatsoever of any criminal or other negative behavior being leveled against her.

I pray for you, for the judges, for the lawyers and leaders of the Israeli government and military, for Berlanty and for her lawyer, that you all may they be united in your efforts to bring about justice and to "***bring Berlanty back to Bethlehem.***"

Thank you for your support and prompt attention to this request. I await your response.

Sincerely,