

9 December 2009: Waiting for Court Ruling

Update on Berlanty Assam, Bethlehem University Student  
43 days since she was blindfolded, handcuffed, and taken from Bethlehem to Gaza

Dear Friends of Bethlehem University,

Here's what we know about the latest with Berlanty. Our last contact with her lawyer from Gisha, Yadin, was around noon on Tuesday, 8 December. Today, Wednesday, 9 December is the 43<sup>rd</sup> day since Berlanty was taken blindfolded and handcuffed by the Israeli Army from Bethlehem to Gaza.

Here's the situation of the past few days:

Sunday, 6 December @ 10am

There was no actual Hearing at the High Court on this day – it was just a deadline for documents to be submitted to the Court. The lawyers for the Israeli Army submitted to the High Court their status report on their search for supporting documents as requested on Sunday at 10am – and the lawyers for the Army said that they could not find the application that Berlanty had made in 2005 to leave Gaza, nor could they locate a copy of the permission that they had given to Berlanty in 2005.

The Court's ruling on Sunday was that Berlanty's lawyers had until today, Monday, to reply to the Army's status report.

Monday, 7 December

Again, there was no actual Hearing at the High Court on this day – only documents submitted to the Court. Berlanty's lawyers submitted their response, as was requested by the Court, noting, among other things:

1. Since the Army can't find the documents upon which they are basing their claims that Berlanty was in the West Bank illegally since 2005, then the Court should rule in favor of Berlanty since the Army can't provide any evidence to support their claim.
2. In 2005 Berlanty asked the Greek Orthodox Patriarch to help her get a travel permit to study at Bethlehem University. She was not allowed to make this request directly to the Israeli authorities at that time because the Israeli authorities were not accepting requests from "individuals" – only from organizations. Berlanty asked the Patriarch to seek a permission for her to study at Bethlehem University – she doesn't know what the Patriarch actually wrote on the request since Israeli did not allow students to individually make an application.. She doesn't know what the Patriarch told the Israelis, but she does know what she told the Patriarch.

Monday, and Tuesday, 7 and 8 December:

A few phone calls to Berlanty's lawyer at Gisha, Yadin Elam, only to learn that "We don't know when the Court will rule. We must wait, We will call you," the lawyer said, "You'll be the second to know – after Berlanty."

I might note that on Monday, 30 November, when there was a Hearing in the High Court, an avadavat was submitted to the Court indicating that the Papal Nuncio, the Vatican's Ambassador to the State of Israel (who also is the Chancellor of Bethlehem University) joined with Berlanty in requesting that she be allowed to return to Bethlehem University to complete her studies. To date, this request of the Papal Nuncio has gone unheeded.

I thank you for your continued support in providing the opportunity for quality higher education for the youth of Palestine.

During this season of Advent let's continue to remember Berlanty Azzam, the student who was detained, blindfolded, handcuffed, and removed from Bethlehem to Gaza by the Israeli military. Please pray with the prophet Isaiah.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me;  
He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners.

Berlanty is hoping for liberty and release from the prison of Gaza. She has stated "I'm dreaming of the day when I can return to my studies. I'm worried and fearful of what might happen, and I hope that my right to education will not be violated."

Let's pray that the Lord may come to create a new earth where there will be justice and peace. May Jesus' coming bring hope and healing to all!

And so, we wait -- yet again - in hope and with prayer .. in this Advent Season, we wait in patience for the "Prince of Peace" to come among us ...

Thanks again for your prayers and support

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