



גישה - מרכז לשמירה על הזכות לנוע (ע"ר)
Gisha - Legal Center for Freedom of Movement
مسلك - مركز للدفاع عن حرية الحركة

הודעה לתקשורת
NEWS RELEASE
بيان للصحافة

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High Court Orders Military to Give Bethlehem University Student Chance to Challenge Gaza Removal

- **High Court justices criticized the violation of due process that led to Berlanty Azzam, a 21-year old student at Bethlehem University, being blindfolded, handcuffed, and removed by force to the Gaza Strip.**
- **Court ordered the military to conduct an administrative hearing next week in which Berlanty and her attorney can challenge the removal.**
- **Berlanty, who was to complete her BA in Business Management in just two months, is missing her studies with every day that passes.**

Thursday, November 12, 2009 – At a High Court hearing today in the case of a Bethlehem University student who was detained and forcibly removed to the Gaza Strip, **the justices ordered the military to give the student, Berlanty Azzam, an opportunity to challenge her removal at an administrative hearing to be held next week.** The court rejected the State's request to prevent her attorney, Gisha's Yadin Elam from being present at the hearing, affirming Berlanty's right to legal counsel. However, the court declined Gisha's request to allow Berlanty to return to her studies in the West Bank in the meantime. Berlanty has already missed two weeks of classes toward her BA in Business Management. She was to graduate in less than two months.

The military forcibly removed Berlanty to Gaza on Oct. 28, based solely on the fact that her address in the Israeli-controlled Population Registry is listed in Gaza. Berlanty had been living in the West Bank since beginning her studies in 2005 at the Vatican-sponsored university. The military makes no claim that she poses any security threat whatsoever.

In today's hearing, the justices criticized the procedure that led to Berlanty's removal to Gaza: despite an explicit promise by the Office of the Military Legal Advisor to Gisha that Berlanty would not be removed pending a meeting with her lawyer and an opportunity to file an emergency court petition, she was removed that very same night, after being **blindfolded** and **handcuffed**.

The State claims that Berlanty was present in the West Bank "illegally" and has refused to allow her to return. In the court petition written on her behalf, Gisha claims that her passage to the West Bank was done legally, via a permit issued by the military commander that attached no conditions or limitations.

Berlanty is one of an estimated 25,000 people, including those who have been living in the West Bank for decades, in danger of being forcibly removed to Gaza, just because their addresses are registered there. Israel controls the Palestinian Population Registry and since 2000 has not permitted address changes from Gaza to the West Bank. The Israeli Supreme Court has yet to rule on the larger question of the rights of Palestinian residents, originally from Gaza, to live in the West Bank.

According to **Berlanty Azzam**: "I had hoped that I could return to my studies after today's court hearing. Each day that passes is critical for my chances of completing my degree."

According to **Gisha Attorney Yadin Elam**: "It is not clear what Israel gains by preventing this young woman from completing her degree. Israel must end this policy of tearing people away from their homes, jobs, schools and families – and preventing Palestinians from exercising their right to live in the West Bank."

For background, see Gisha, [Disengagement Danger: Israeli Attempts to Separate Gaza from the West Bank](#). For further details and to arrange interviews: Keren Tamir, Gisha Spokesperson: +972-3-6244120, +972-52-8919190, keren@gisha.org / Sari Bashi, Gisha Director, +972-54-8172103.