



9 November 2009

The Honorable Avigdor Liberman  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
9 Yitzhak Rabin Blvd.  
Kiryat Ben-Gurion  
Jerusalem 91035  
Israel

Dear Mr. Liberman:

As Chairman of the Human Rights Committee of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, I would like to bring to your attention the recent arrest and expulsion of Ms Berlanty Azzam from the West Bank.

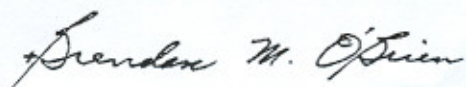
Originally from the Gaza Strip, Ms Berlanty has been living in Bethlehem since 2005, and is only two months away from completing her bachelor's degree at the Vatican-sponsored Bethlehem University. This past 28 October, she was arrested at a checkpoint under the pretext that she did not have a permit from the State of Israel allowing her to remain in the West Bank. Ms Berlanty had a permit from Israel to enter the West Bank in 2005, but did not have a permit to remain there because no such permit existed at that time. Despite reassurances to her lawyer that she would not be deported, she was handcuffed, blindfolded and forcibly expelled to the Gaza Strip, without ever having met with her lawyer.

We are concerned because Ms Berlanty's expulsion is in clear violation of her right to have access to education, her right to freedom of movement, and her right to choose one's place of residence within one's own territory. Furthermore, she has not been accused of being a security threat and has committed no crime. We are therefore requesting, on compassionate and humanitarian grounds, that you allow Ms. Berlanty Azzam to return to Bethlehem University to complete her studies.

We also believe permitting her to return to Bethlehem to complete her degree would be in the spirit of the "Agreement on Movement and Access" negotiated between the Palestinian Authority and Israel in 2005.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brendan M. O'Brien".

Most Reverend Brendan M. O'Brien  
Archbishop of Kingston  
Chair of the Human Rights Committee  
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

CC: The Honorable Yaakov Margi, Minister of Religious Affairs, Israel  
Her Excellency Miriam Ziv, Israeli Ambassador to Canada  
The Honorable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs