



OIFIG AN AIRE GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
(OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS)

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
(DUBLIN 2)

Ms. Máirín McDonagh
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Our Ref: POL090949

Dear Ms. McDonagh,

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Micheál Martin T.D. has asked me to reply to your emails of 31 October and 12 November concerning the case of Bethlehem University Student Berlanty Azzam, and to thank you for your concern.

The Minister shares your concerns about the deportation of Ms. Azzam. He has issued a public statement on the matter and also written directly to the Ambassador of Israel about the case. I enclose for your information a copy of the Minister's statement, which makes clear his views.

The Department has been in contact with Bethlehem University about this issue from the beginning, and we receive directly the updates circulated by Brother Curran. We are also following developments through our Missions in Tel Aviv and Ramallah.

Yours sincerely,

Aidan Cronin
Private Secretary

Minister for Foreign Affairs Expresses Concern over Expulsion of Bethlehem University Student

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D., has issued a strong appeal to the Israeli Government to re-consider the expulsion and forcible return to Gaza last week of a young Bethlehem University student, Ms. Berlanty Azzam.

“I was extremely concerned to hear of the circumstances surrounding Ms. Azzam’s detention last week and subsequent forcible return to Gaza. Ms. Azzam was on the verge of completing her business degree studies at Bethlehem University and there appears to be no credible justification for detaining and forcing her to return to Gaza, simply because she came from there originally.”

“It should be obvious that young Palestinians like Berlanty who, despite her difficult background is just a few weeks short of graduating, represent the best hope for a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians alike, and should be encouraged. As a Business graduate, Berlanty will also be in a position to contribute to the overall economic development of the Palestinians territories to which we all attach such importance.”

“I would also be concerned that this decision, if not reversed, could have very serious implications for the future of Bethlehem University and the ability of young Palestinians to receive third level education. I therefore urge the Israeli authorities to reverse this apparently unjustified and mistaken action, and allow Ms. Azzam to return to Bethlehem University to complete her studies.”