



**South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

November 23, 2009

Mr. Daniel Rubenstein
Consul General
U.S. Consulate
Jerusalem
Via Fax: 011 972 2 624 9462

Dear Mr. Rubenstein,

I am writing to you regarding the case of Ms. Berlanty Azzam, a senior at Bethlehem University, who was deported by the Israeli military to Gaza on October 28, 2009.

Let me begin by expressing appreciation to you for your time and interest in Ms. Azzam's case. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is a member organization of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) which advocated on behalf of Ms. Azzam with the State Department. CMEP's update to member organizations included a press report noting that you had visited Bethlehem University in response to Ms. Azzam's case. We are deeply grateful to you for this effort.

As you are aware, Ms. Azzam remains in Gaza as she awaits a review by the Israeli High Court. It is possible that her case will be decided or that steps will be taken toward deciding her case this week, so it is with a sense of urgency that I write to ask you to do whatever you can to see that Ms. Azzam is allowed to return to Bethlehem University to complete her studies. It is our understanding that she is not accused of posing a security threat, but rather is being deported on the basis of her Gaza residency. Clearly it is in her interest, and the interest of a peaceful future, to allow students to complete their higher education and to go on to become capable and knowledgeable members of their communities.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Bishop Bruce Burnside
Chair, Conference Committee on Middle East Issues
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America