

THURSDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2009

Waging war on Palestinian students –Update 2

By Stuart Littlewood

*Update to the following:*

- *How the “most moral army in the world” wages war on students*

*How the “most moral army in the world” wages war on students - Update 1*

The Berlanty Azzam affair has taken several twists and turns as the Israelis duck and weave. Here's the latest update to reach me. But first, very briefly, the story so far.

Berlanty Azzam, a fourth-year student of Bethlehem University, has been prevented from continuing her studies and robbed her of her degree. Last week, after attending a job interview, she was arrested by the Israeli military at a checkpoint, deported to Gaza blindfolded and handcuffed, and unceremoniously dumped there in the dark late at night.

The Israeli embassy in London, when asked for an explanation, said that Ms Azzam held a permit to stay in the West Bank for 4 days in 2005 and since the permit had expired she'd been living in the West Bank illegally. “As you probably know, every Gaza resident who stays in the West Bank requires a permit, failing to do so is a breach of the law. As Ms Azzam has failed to provide a valid permit she was deported back to Gaza.”

The embassy spokesperson added that if Ms Azzam wished to complete her studies at Bethlehem she should apply for a permit to the relevant authorities (COGAT) in Gaza.

After checking with Bethlehem University's senior management, it seems the embassy's excuses are insufficient, so I have pressed the ambassador's people for a fuller explanation.

Thank you for your reply of 4 November, which raises further questions.

1. When did the state of Israel pass and put into effect this law concerning the

residents of Gaza? Was it AFTER 2005, i.e. after Berlanty was already in the West Bank? When Berlanty went to Gaza in 2005, there was no such law, so her moving to the West Bank in 2005 was perfectly legal, was it not?

2. Does the democratic state of Israel forbid its own citizens to move from one city to another? Under what authority does the state of Israel forbid citizens of the Palestinian territories to move from one city to another?

3. Why did the state of Israel wait until she was within two months of graduating before pouncing?

4. You say that "if Ms Azzam wishes to complete her studies in Bethlehem University, she will need to submit her application to the relevant authorities (COGAT) in Gaza where they will be processed." How many students from Gaza have applied to COGAT in the past year? And how many students have had their applications approved?

Bethlehem University says that 12 students from Gaza have applied to attend the University and NOT ONE has received permission from the relevant COGAT authorities in Gaza. Do they all pose a security threat to the democratic state of Israel?

I look forward to your further reply and perhaps a word or two from the ambassador, Mr Prozor.

But I'm not holding my breath.

Stuart Littlewood

4 November 2009

<http://redressnewsblog.blogspot.com/2009/11/israel-waging-war-on-palestinian.html>