

Student 'challenges occupation'

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AFP Gaza City

A Palestinian student forcibly relocated from the West Bank to Gaza two months before she was to complete her university studies was awarded her degree in the Hamas-ruled territory yesterday.

Berlanty Azzam, 22, who on October 28 was detained and sent to Gaza by Israel because she had a Gaza ID, said she had "challenged the occupation" by completing her studies at the Vatican-sponsored Bethlehem University.

"I am sad because I was not able to graduate with my colleagues in Bethlehem, but I was able to challenge the occupation and today I am graduating from the university despite all the difficulties," she said at a ceremony attended by family and friends, her eyes filled with tears of joy.

Peter Bray, the vice chancellor of Bethlehem University, praised Azzam's determination as he awarded the bachelor's degree in Gaza City, saying the school "was not going to let the Israeli military prevent her from graduating."

He added that her professors had worked with her via the telephone and Internet to allow her to complete her studies from Gaza.

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Palestinian Student Berlanty Azzam receives her bachelor degree from Peter Bray (left), the Chancellor of Bethlehem University, in the presence of Archbishop Antonio Franco, the Vatican's Apostolic Nuncio to the holy land, in Gaza City yesterday