



BETHLEHEM UNIVERSITY

جامعة بيت لحم

How long should it take to get to your University?

22 October 2009



For our students from Gaza, this is an open question – and they need your prayers and support!

WHY?

The Israeli military is not permitting Bethlehem University students to attend class.

A student like Odeh, who studied for his high school exit exam in the bathroom of his family's Gaza home, is now not allowed to come to class at Bethlehem University. Last year, studying in the bathroom offered Odeh protection from the violence around his home that left 40 bullet holes in the walls of the house. Life for Odeh and his classmates was difficult and dramatic even before the December 2008 Israeli military assault that left an estimated 1,300 Gazans dead.

Now, Odeh and his peers are simply looking for a chance to pursue their university education at the Vatican-sponsored Bethlehem University, in circumstances that are as normal as possible given the realities of life in the Middle East. However, until today, Odeh and his fellow students from Gaza have not been given permission from the Israeli military authorities to go from Gaza to Bethlehem to begin their studies.

In fact, the twelve students from Gaza pictured above applied to and were accepted for the 2009-2010 academic year at Bethlehem University. They have been waiting since May 2009 for permission from the Israeli military authorities to travel to Bethlehem. So far, none of them have received approval.

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Since its founding in 1973, Bethlehem University has educated students from Gaza along with their West Bank and Jerusalem peers. In fact, there are more than 435 students and graduates of Bethlehem University from Gaza, and many of them are engaged in vital work to rebuild their devastated communities.

However, from the year 2000 it has been increasingly difficult for students from Gaza to get permission from the Israeli authorities to leave Gaza and to come to Bethlehem. After the extreme escalation of violence in Gaza with the Israeli military operations beginning in December 2009, **the Papal Nuncio and Apostolic Delegate Archbishop Antonio Franco was asked by the Mother Teresa Sisters of Charity** who live and work in Gaza, to intervene so that the university aged young people of Gaza could come to the Vatican-sponsored Bethlehem University. His Excellency Archbishop Franco and Bethlehem University Vice Chancellor Brother Peter Bray, FSC, agreed that the University should do all it can to be of more service to the people of Gaza.

Bethlehem University seeks the support of any and all persons and organizations in securing the necessary travel permissions from the Israeli authorities for our students from Gaza to come to Bethlehem and to be able to return to Gaza – during their studies and after their studies are completed.

As we continue our efforts to get these students to Bethlehem, thanks to the generosity of donors who believe in their right to education, we are also providing some course work for these students as they wait in Gaza.

What can you do to help?

- Talk about these students and the injustice of their education at the Vatican-sponsored Bethlehem University being denied by the Israeli military authorities.
- Tell the story – especially to your elected officials – and ask for their intervention.
- Consider making a donation to Bethlehem University to support the education of these twelve students – now and into the future.

<http://www.bethlehem.edu/Gifts%20and%20donations.shtml>

- Pray for these students in Gaza, for their families – that they not lose hope.
- Pray for the Israeli military authorities in whose hands rest the lives and future of these students and their families.
- Pray for the people of the Holy Land, for Israelis and Palestinians – for Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

For more information or to assist us in any way with this initiative, please contact
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Also, please visit our website for more information:
http://www.bethlehem.edu/archives/2009/2009_023.shtml