



THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FACT SHEET

RIGHT TO EDUCATION CAMPAIGN , *BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY*, 17 MAY 2008

DETENTIONS

Birzeit University:

*Total incarcerated since Nov 2003: 346

*Currently incarcerated: 88 (34 of whom have not been charged)

- 54 sentenced
- 19 awaiting trial (plus 5 released on bail)
- 13 in Administrative Detention (the longest incarceration is over 2.5 years)
- 2 in interrogation

* In December 2007, the head of Birzeit University's Student Council was charged with belonging to an 'illegal organization' and 'holding a position of responsibility' within this organization. He is currently held in Ofer prison, and will be incarcerated for at least 1 yr on what is a legalistic means to punish young Palestinians engaged in political activity. For more information see:

<http://right2edu.birzeit.edu/news/article506>, *R2E press release*

* Since January 2008, 1 employee and 8 students have been arrested, including Fadi Ahmad's replacement as head of the Student Council, Adbullah Owais, who is still awaiting charges. Three of these students are under Administrative Detention.

* Many students, regardless of whether they are involved in student activities, are subjected to arbitrary interviewing. Students who object to such questioning are then harassed at checkpoints, denied work permits and subjected to house invasions.

*About 30% of the student population living in Birzeit village have been subject to such 'interviews'.

An-Najah National University:

* 3 Faculty members were jailed by the Israeli army since December 2007.

* Currently incarcerated:

- 6 staff
- 1 security guards
- About 80 students

Al Quds University:

* Around a tenth of the student population in Al Quds University have been imprisoned by the Israeli occupation forces.

GAZA

* After the closing of Rafah crossing in June 2007, 722 Palestinian university students studying abroad were trapped in Gaza - about 30 study in US universities, and 10 in the UK. Another 2,000 students enrolled in foreign schools were also trapped. They are a part of the 7,500 Gazans who need permission to continue their work, education or medical treatment outside of Gaza.

* For an update on the access to international education for Gazans, see the report by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, *Gaza Students Face Denial of International Educational Opportunities*, February 2008:
<http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/clouse/english/Special%20-%20Education.pdf>

* For information on how Israel undermines higher education in Gaza, please visit a report by Gisha, October 2007 :
http://www.gisha.org/UserFiles/File/publications_english/Publications%20and%20Reports_English/Appendix%20to%20Press%20Release%2022.10.07_eng.pdf

* In January 2008, there were 625 Gaza students still trapped in Gaza and unable to continue their studies.

* Students from Gaza are also forbidden from attending Palestinian universities in the West Bank. In 2006, a ruling in the Israeli High Court forbade 10 Palestinians from accessing Bethlehem University to study Occupational Therapy. The argument used by the State was that once they were given permits to leave they would become "information carriers".

* In June 2006, an F-16 fighter plane bombed the Islamic University in Gaza.

* Nearly 78% of the population live below the poverty line, resulting in many poor families alternating which kids they send to school so they can share the same uniform.

* Queen's University, Belfast, produced a report stating that 98% of children in Gaza suffer from psychological trauma, serious and debilitating psychiatric and psychological effects.

* The head of UNRWA in Gaza, John Ging, states that "Among other things, the cumulative impact of years of violence and closures, of disrupted schooling and endemic poverty is clear from the stark exam results of Gaza's schoolchildren." - *The Independent*, 6 Oct 2007

* In September 2007, UNRWA revealed that 30% of their students were without textbooks as the Israeli army prevented them from entering Gaza. UNRWA accounts for 200,000 students in Gaza, about half the total number of school children in the Strip.

* The ban was extended to all raw materials such as paper, ink, and binding materials and exacerbated the shortage, particularly as PA-run public schools textbooks are printed in Gaza after they replaced the Egyptian curriculum with their own in 2006. The Palestinian Education ministry said 27% of government school textbooks had not been printed by September 2007. Government schools take care of half the total number of school children in the Gaza Strip.

ECONOMIC ISOLATION

* The total cost to universities due to Israeli invasions is: **\$7,888,133 USD**
- Ministry of Higher Education, Palestine, see *The Effect of the Israeli Occupation on the Palestinian Education, 28/9/2000- 14/5/2008*:
<http://www.mohe.gov.ps/downloads/textdoc/assE.doc>

* Birzeit University usually receives around USD\$1.5m from the PA every year as part of the normal package given to all universities proportional to their size. Since the economic blockade, the PA was able to transfer a mere drop of this fund leaving the University short of USD\$1.2m. As a result, staff salaries were halved for two months, 3,000 students were unable to pay fees and went on strike, and the annual budget was severely affected.

PHYSICAL ISOLATION

* The cantonisation of West Bank has resulted in Birzeit losing some its national character as students face increasing difficulties in accessing the University. Qalandya checkpoint, for example, delays students by about 1-2 hours daily.

* The difficulties in traveling result in some students not having freedom of choice in which subject they study, for example:

- The Arab American University of Jenin cannot offer engineering degrees.

- Al Quds University and An-Najah are the only medical schools in the occupied territories.

- Bethlehem University has 70% female students, which says reflects the difficulties in travel to other universities - families prefer to send sons rather than daughters to live outside the home.

* 80% of the population report difficulties in their daily routine, including reaching schools and universities. See *Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: Survey on the Perception of Palestinian Population Towards the Socioeconomic Conditions*, April 2004:
http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/socapr_e.pdf

* The Wall cuts the path of 36% of students of Al-Quds University and prevents about 15,740 students from reaching their schools. It has also resulted in a shortage of teachers for Palestinian areas of Jerusalem, as many came from the West Bank.

SOCIAL ISOLATION

* The state of Israel controls the borders and population register of the occupied Palestinian territories (oPts).

* In 2000 there were 350 Gaza students at Birzeit University, many were deported, others stayed in the West Bank 'illegally' and risk being deported at any moment. By 2005 there were only 35 Gaza students in Birzeit. Today there are none.

* Since the beginning of 2006, many thousands of Palestinians with foreign passports, and foreigners, have been denied entry to visit, work or study in the oPts. This policy has brought tremendous insecurity to Palestinian Universities.

* Birzeit University's financial and academic wellbeing were particularly affected. There was about a 50% drop in staff holding foreign passports: from 52 in May 2006, to 27 in September 2006.

* In the academic year 2006-2007, there were at least 14 faculty members at risk of not making it to the end of the year. There were also 383 students (who are still waiting for their I.D.s to be issued by Israel) in fear of deportation or imprisonment every time they cross a checkpoint.

* Departments are at constant risk of losing staff, and when it happens, it results in other staff being overburdened or courses being cancelled.

* At least 13 students attending the Palestinian and Arabic Studies Programme in Birzeit were not permitted entry/ re-entry to start or continue their studies. This effectively puts the Arabic language and culture programme at risk as it is entirely self-sufficient and dependent on foreign students' access to the University.

* At An-Najah University in Nablus, one French teacher was denied re-entry in 2006, and the English department cannot find enough native English-speaking teachers to meet demand - resulting in An-Najah students missing out on scholarships to study abroad due to a lack of language skills. In 2007, 7 international students attending the University's summer camp were denied entry at the border, and a teacher with a US passport was permitted entry into the country but not into Nablus.

* Similarly, 8 Palestinian teachers holding Israeli I.D.s are no longer permitted to enter Nablus, and one of these teachers risks arrest daily as he is determined to continue his job. The university also has 30 students with Israeli I.D.s facing the same predicament.

* In July 2007, the English department of the Arab American University of Jenin was nearly closed due to the difficulties in attracting native-speaking teachers. These difficulties are due to the current practices of Israeli immigration which turns employment in West Bank universities into a gamble.