



## Campaign for the Right of Entry/Re-Entry to the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt)

*A Grassroots Campaign for the Protection of Foreign Passport Holders Residing in and/or Visiting the oPt*

### SITUATION UPDATE (1 MARCH 2008)

#### News round-up

Israeli authorities left no doubt that the policy of arbitrary entry denial will continue in 2008, when at least two EU nationals were denied entry at Ben Gurion on 1 January. Those denied entry since the start of 2008 include:

- \* 18-year-old Ayah Dahdoul and her 15-year-old brother travelling from the US to visit their grandmother in the west Bank. Both US citizens, the siblings were denied entry at Ben Gurion airport on 13 February 2008 and deported to the US. When asked about the reason for their denial, Ayah Dahdoul was told by one of the Israeli border authority representatives she was being denied entry "because she had a bad mouth." (See side box, p.2 for Ayah's story in her own words.)
- \* Terry Rempel, a Canadian PhD student was barred from passage at the Allenby Bridge on 29 January. At least ten people were reportedly denied entry on the same day including Danish, French and American nationals, among them an employee of the Danish Representative's Office and 2 families, one with two small children.

The Campaign welcomed the announcement in late February that another 7,000 individuals who have applied for family unification over the past ten years will be issued Palestinian identity cards by Israel permitting them to reside permanently and legally in the oPt with their families. The Campaign continues to note with concern, however, that this represents only a small percentage of the tens of thousands of others

www.RightToEnter.ps

عدد السنوات اللازمة للموافقة على جميع الطلبات = مجموع طلبات لم الشمل  
عدد الطلبات الموافق عليها في السنة

يعني أنا أي سنة دوري؟

40 سنة =  $\frac{200,000}{5,000}$

**Family unification applications:  
200,000 applications/ 5,000 per year = 40 years...  
So what year does my turn come?**

### Visiting Grandma

*"Me and my little brother went to visit our grandma for the allowed period of 3 months..."*

*"The people [at Ben Gurion airport] who spoke to us denied giving us their names. After getting to the Tel Aviv airport we went to the passport control and gave the guy our passports, he took a look at them and then passed them to an immigration officer and made us wait until they called us. First they questioned my brother and then a guy called me and asked me the purpose of the visit and he got names of my family members who live in Palestine and he also showed me the records of the time I spent [in the West Bank] when I was little in school. After that they told me to go wait in a waiting room with my brother. While sitting down, the people that worked there who controlled passports were passing by over and over again laughing and talking in Hebrew and mocking us in a way. After I had told one of them not to look at me they went in where the lady had our passports and that's when the trouble began. They told us we were going back home because of me, because I had a "bad mouth." I insisted on knowing what it was that I said that offended them but they continued to tell us to shut up and sit down and to ignore our questions. I'm going to admit at that point I lost all control of myself and yelled at them and called them names but only because we had been waiting for 5 1/2 hours after coming from a very long exhausting trip. After all that nonsense they told us we were going to get our luggage and it was going to be placed in extreme X-ray, and they opened all our bags and made a mess and they searched us thoroughly with a metal detector. And after that they told us we were going to a hotel until our flight left. It was about 9:00am and the plane didn't leave until 4:00pm. They took us outside the airport to the "hotel" -- when we arrived at our destination it wasn't a hotel. No, it wasn't a hotel at all. It was a jail for people who came from the airport... before entering they were yelling at us and shouting obscenities. They took my brother first to the "bathroom" and had me waiting with them, while waiting they made me give up all my mirrors, my camera and my pens and books. They didn't allow us to use the phone no matter how many times we asked. Even at the airport they denied us the use of the phone. The cells were horrible... the windows had bars and the door was steel shut. There were bunk beds with a thin mattress on it and a smelly bathroom and bath, there was food on the table but it was cold and very old. After spending 7 hours in that horrible place a lady came and told us we were leaving. From jail they took us straight to the airplane. They refused to give us our passports until we got to Zurich ....*

*"Well that was my experience -- me and my brother: they treated us like criminals just because we were Arab and the worst part is they didn't want to give us any information on why they did what they did to us."*

- 18-year-old Ayah Dahdoul, denied entry on 13 February, 2008 with her 15-year-old brother

who have applied for family unification. As noted in our previous update, at the current rate, it will be decades before the backlog of applications alone is processed (any new applications excluded). In any case, Israel has yet to commit itself to processing the remainder of outstanding or forthcoming applications.

**The approach to family unification applications, like the approach to Israel's policy on entry and visa renewal remains arbitrary and unlawful.** Uncertainty continues to characterise the lives of foreign nationals with family, work and/or studies in the oPt. Many are forced to relocate with or without their families. Business investment is thwarted and critical health, education, religious and social services are adversely affected. In short, Israeli authorities have failed to provide a transparent, lawful policy on which foreign nationals wishing to enter or maintain their presence in the occupied Palestinian territory can rely and instead continue to pursue both policies and practices that fail to comply with International Humanitarian Law.<sup>1</sup> **The absence of a clear, transparent policy amounts to *de facto* deportation for many individuals and families.**

US citizen Suzy Abunie is just one such example. Ms Abunie was first denied entry at Allenby Bridge on 27 March 2006. Two days later, Ms Abunie was issued a three-

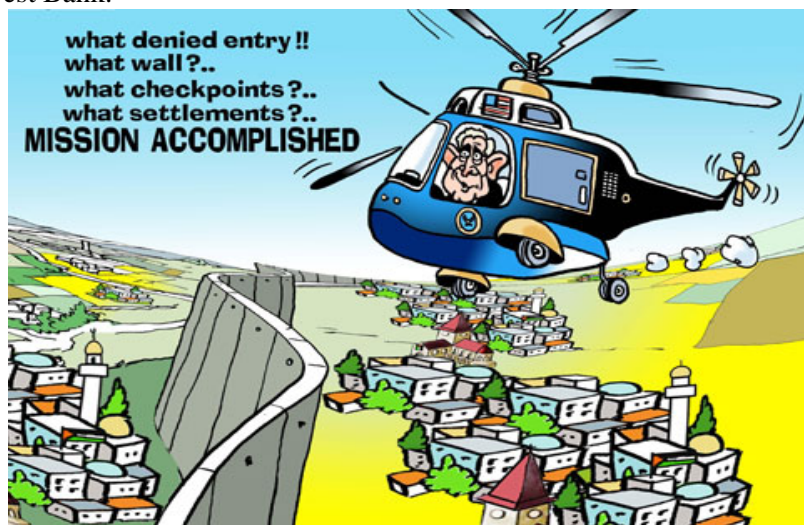
<sup>1</sup> See, for example, B'Tselem, Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. (February 2007) "Response to COGAT presentation: 'Key measures for easing the daily lives of the Palestinian population.'"

month visa upon entry at Ben Gurion Airport. Ms Abunie, a student in the international studies program at Birzeit University, applied through a lawyer for a student visa. She took her case to court and in October 2006 the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that she should apply through the Palestinian Ministry of Interior who will submit her application to the Israeli occupation authorities at Beit El. The Israeli authorities, however, refused to receive any applications from the Palestinian Authority from the end of 2006 through early 2007. In February 2007, when Israeli authorities finally resumed procedures for visa renewals Ms Abunie's application was submitted by the Palestinian Ministry of Interior along with hundreds of others. While her lawyer was successful in securing one-year tourist visas for several faculty members at Birzeit University, and despite a promise from the Israeli Attorney General that a visa was to be issued to Ms Abunie, she still had not received a visa eight months later. At this point, Ms Abunie had not seen her family in a year and decided she could no longer postpone a trip to the US. It was only through the intervention of the US Consulate that she was able to retrieve her passport from the Israeli authorities; a three-month tourist visa had been stamped in it. Despite coordination with her lawyer, Ms Abunie was again denied entry when she came to resume her studies on 4 September, 2007. After two days and numerous hours of waiting, she was able to enter with her lawyer's intervention. She was given a 24-day visa. Upon entry, Ms Abunie again applied for a visa renewal according to the recommend procedures. She has twice been denied. Having exhausted all avenues, no longer able to afford legal counsel and worn out by the uncertainty, Ms Abunie has recently taken a decision to leave her studies and leave the country.

Ms Abunie writes: *"It cost more than \$2,500 in lawyer and court fees. It's also very exhausting and a time-consuming process to try to get a visa to study at a Palestinian university, with little guarantee of success. This, of course, doesn't include all the travel costs (airfare, travel to Jordan and back to the OPT) to just simply renew a visa. The delays and the uncertainties by the Israelis have made it virtually impossible for me to plan my future and have disrupted my studies."*

Other recent cases of visa renewal applications that have been rejected include:

- \* A 53-year-old Palestinian American school teacher staying in the West Bank to take care of her 78-year-old mother who is confined to a wheelchair and her 88-year-old father who has recently undergone open heart surgery.
- \* A Palestinian American businesswoman who is in the process of setting up a new business in the West Bank.



This illustration was commissioned by the [Campaign for the Right of Entry/Re-entry to the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#) to mark Bush's recent visit to the West Bank. *Al-Quds* newspaper refused to publish it uncensored.

*Summary of documented cases 2007-2008*

<b>Types of entry denial cases documented since CoGAT announcement</b> <i>(13 Dec 2006 through 29 February 2008)</i>															
Cases of denial documented:	Dec '06	Jan '06	Feb '07	Mar' 07	Apr '07	May '07	Jun '07	Jul '07	Aug '07	Sep '07	Oct '07	Nov '07	Dec '07	Jan '08	Feb '08
<b>Ports of entry</b>															
Allenby Bridge	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Ben Gurion Airport	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Sheikh Hussein Bridge	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Taba				X		X	X		X						
<b>Nationals</b>															
Arab World**			X		X					X					
Europe	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Latin American	X		X				X	X							
North America	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Other		X	X		X							X			
<b>Types of visitors</b>															
Business persons		X	X	X	X			X						X	
Development, human rights, & humanitarian workers			X		X		X	X	X			X			
Family	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Health professionals, educators & social service providers	X	X				X		X						X	
Media & filmmakers		X	X		X		X		X				X		
Students & researchers	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X				X	
Tourists & visitors	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X			X		X
Other***							X	X		X		X		X	

\*from 13 December 2006 when Israeli Major General Mishlav, Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), first informed the EU of its revised policy on entry and visa renewals for the oPt.

\*\* Citizens of Arab countries are particularly reluctant to report entry denials. Procedures outlined in the COGAT and MOFA notices pertain only to countries having visa agreements with Israel; no provision for visas or entry permits are made for Jordanian nationals – the vast majority of those seeking family unification – or other Arab nationals seeking to visit or reside in the oPt.

\*\*\* Others include those affiliated with the church and/or other religious institutions.

***In the media***

Firas Aridah, "Restrictions by Israel on Christians: Threatening the Future of Church"

January 18, 2008. <http://karmalised.com/?p=2824>

"International Peace Activists Turned Back at the Allenby Bridge," January 11, 2008.

[www.imemc.org/article/52274](http://www.imemc.org/article/52274)

## ***Take action***

Third states maintaining friendly relations with Israel command the standing to challenge the arbitrary exclusion of their nationals from the oPt. They also have **an obligation to scrutinize Israel's exercise of authority as an occupying power and to oppose arbitrary denials of entry and residency** that harm Palestinian family life, educational, religious and social service institutions, businesses and socio-economic development more broadly.

### **Third states are urged to:**

1. Ensure Israeli implementation of the rights to family unity and reunification and the establishment of clear and transparent procedures for foreign nationals seeking to reside in the oPt, in keeping with international law.
  - obtain Israeli cancellation of CoGAT's stipulation that foreigners are restricted to a 27-month, single entry, maximum stay
  - demand Israel's adoption and implementation of a clear, transparent policy for issuing residency permits to foreign nationals
2. Call for an immediate halt to Israel's arbitrary and abusive practice of denying entry to foreign nationals travelling to the oPt.
  - demand Israel's adoption and implementation of a clear, transparent policy for unhindered access to the oPt by foreign nationals
  - obtain explicit assurances that people who have previously been denied entry will be permitted to re-enter the oPt
  - end the practice of issuing permits that restrict exit and re-entry
  - end the practice of issuing permits of less than three months to those travelling to the oPt
  - cease the collective punishment of those with relatives accused of overstaying their visas
3. Apply vigorous scrutiny to cases of denied entry and denied residency in the oPt with a view to promoting Israel's adoption and transparent application of principles consistent with the internationally accepted rights and obligations of an occupying power.
  - set up clear mechanisms for citizens to report and appeal cases of denied entry
  - set up clear mechanisms for liaising with Israeli authorities to ensure safe passage to the oPt for all citizens and ensure the prompt and proper resolution of cases where safe passage has been hindered
  - insist on receiving a formal explanation of each decision taken by Israel to bar any of their citizens from the oPt
  - object to all arbitrary denials of entry and residency that harm Palestinian family life, educational, health and social service institutions and businesses and act to resolve all such cases of exclusion.
4. Respect the duty of all states not to acquiesce to internationally unlawful acts, bearing in mind that failing to object to *prima facie* unlawful acts or policies when notified of them implies accepting them as lawful.
5. Promote Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law with appropriate and effective tools of persuasion and dissuasion. Take appropriate measures based on reciprocity to ensure that the correct treatment accorded Israeli nationals seeking to enter third countries is reciprocated by correct treatment of their nationals seeking to enter Israel and/or the oPt.

**Concerned individuals and organizations are called on** to intensify their efforts to hold the governments of Israel, third states and the Palestinian National Authority to their respective obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

1. **Send (another) letter to Israeli, UN, your government representatives, EU and USA officials**, documenting your case and emphasizing the need for clear assurances that Israel will grant safe and secure passage into the oPt to all those carrying foreign passports and treat all citizens with dignity and respect.
2. **Write your local press** protesting Israel's unlawful policy of entry denials and describing the impact it has had on you or your loved ones.
3. **Update the Campaign on your experience**. Updated and reliable information about how entry denials (whether recent or past) continue to affect individuals, families and the general welfare of the Palestinian people in the oPt is essential to effectively combat Israel's policies. Even if you wish to keep your information confidential, it helps the Campaign to have documentation and statistics to establish trends and report impact. If you've attempted / been successful in returning, let us know. If you haven't tried, let us know why and under what conditions you might try to return. **Fill out the Campaign's denial of entry form and contribute to the Campaign's efforts to document and defeat Israel's unlawful policy of restricting entry into the oPt.** The on line form can be found on this link: <http://www.righttoenter.ps/ReportYourCase.php?mid=16&sid=18>
4. **Encourage friends and family members affected by the policy to take action**. The successful return of individuals previously denied entry and the unhindered entry of others was made possible by **organized civic action involving a broad alliance of concerned individuals and organizations** within the Palestinian, Israeli and international communities.

***We must re-double our efforts to put an end to Israel's denial of entry policy. Random and piecemeal "alleviation" of the unlawful practice of entry denial is no substitute for its abolition.***