



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 MAY - 30 JUNE 2008)

News round-up

As many Palestinians from the Diaspora prepare for their traditional summer trips to visit family and friends in their native towns and villages, Gaza remained closed to all but a select few who were granted permits primarily through intervention of international humanitarian and aid agencies. Throughout May and June, incidents of entry denials for those destined to the West Bank continued:

- * Subha Ahmed, her 9-year-old sister, and her mother, all US citizens were denied entry upon arrival at Ben Gurion airport on 25 May. The 3, who intended to visit elderly and ill grandparents in the West Bank were interrogated and detained over night. The following day, with a lawyer's intervention, they were able to enter after posting a \$9,000 bond. (See side box.)
- * On 4 June, a Belgian medical doctor who intended to visit family in her ancestral village in the Bethlehem area as well as visit local hospitals was denied entry at Allenby Bridge.
- * Also in June, Israeli border officials denied entry to PA diplomatic representative to France, Ambassador Ahmad Abd Al-Razeq, on grounds that he required "special coordination" as a PA official.
- * The renowned American author and intellectual Norman Finkelstein, known as one of the most prominent academic critics of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza was refused entry on 23 May. Finkelstein, who was on his way to visit friends in the West Bank, was immediately detained upon arrival at Ben Gurion airport and subsequently deported. He was told by a representative of the Ministry of Interior that he was denied entry on 'security' grounds and was informed that he is banned from Israel for ten years.

A number of Jerusalemite Palestinians have recently reported the confiscation of their residency documents by Israeli authorities, thus canceling not only their right to reside permanently in Jerusalem but also potentially their ability to stay/return home at all. Cases reported suggest that Israel is intensifying efforts to deny residency rights to Palestinian Jerusalemites as part of a broader escalation of its long-standing policy of using administrative, political and economic pressures to cleanse Jerusalem of Palestinians:

- * 27-year-old Zeina Ashrawi, daughter of prominent Palestinian politician and author, Dr Hanan Ashrawi, was refused a renewal of her Israeli travel document and denied a visa by the Israeli Embassy in Washington, DC. (For details see: http://english.pnn.ps/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2981&Itemid=5)
- * Muna Nasir, who returned from the US with her 5-month-old baby to visit family, was informed that her papers would not be renewed as she had chosen to marry an American; Ms

Nasir's husband, also born and raised in Jerusalem, had his residency rights revoked by the Israeli authorities in 2004 while he was living in the US. (See text box for details.)

- * Ziyad Saad, a Palestinian Jerusalemite whose residence documents were canceled and who was subsequently denied entry on his US passport, while his wife and children have been told if they leave Jerusalem to see him, they will also lose their residency, tells his story: " Imagine yourself travelling to a foreign country and it just happens that your passport is about to expire as you are present in that foreign country . You go to the consulate of your country to renew or extend your passport, and people at your consulate just confiscate your passport ; they take it away and tell you, you are no longer a citizen of your country, are not allowed to live there anymore, and they tell you to assimilate yourself in the country you're in right now... This is exactly what happened to me." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BinNhxfmN4>

My residency - no more

June, 13, 2008

Dear Friends and Family,

I am writing to share a little about what is happening in my life lately. As most of you know, I have been in Jerusalem since March 18 with [my son] Ramzi who at the time had barely turned 5 months. We left Habib [my husband] and made the sacrifice to be apart for the coming 4 months for the sake of preserving my Jerusalem ID, to keep my residency status. I know this might sound strange, but as a Palestinian who has lived her whole life in Jerusalem, and despite the fact that my family has lived in Jerusalem and Palestine for centuries, according to the Israeli law, Palestinians living in Jerusalem are only residents but not necessarily permanent residents, and therefore are at risk all the time of losing their residency rights.

For the past 3 years, I have been married to Habib, a Palestinian by blood but an American by citizenship, because Habib's Jerusalem residency was revoked in 2004 - although Habib was born in Jerusalem, and has lived there until his adult life. Anyways, now it was my turn to renew my entry visa to "Israel" (yes, I needed a visa in my own country)- I met with a lawyer who asked for a substantial amount to help me renew my entry visa, which would preserve my residency ... but this time the Israelis refused to renew it and instead told me that since I made the decision to marry an "American", who can't reside in Jerusalem, I have made a decision to seek residency in a foreign country and am therefore "choosing" to abandon my residency rights in Jerusalem. (Palestinians are not allowed to have dual residency or citizenship, a law that is not applicable to Israelis who are able to hold dual or multiple citizenships.) To make a long story short, I lost my residency rights in my own country!!!! I can only go back to visit as a tourist, and have to acquire a tourist visa from the Israeli embassy!! I have lost my right to return; to my country.....to the only country I ever belonged to; the only place I ever called home.

... my 7 month old, Ramzi. Ramzi was born in the US and therefore got an American passport. Although he is the son of two full blooded Palestinians who call Jerusalem and Palestine home, he was denied residency rights in Jerusalem and was given a tourist visa....The Israeli government refused to grant a 7 month old baby an extension on his visa.... The ironic thing is that this poor little baby can't even say mama or baba, yet he is posing a security threat to Israel that they denied him a one month extension on his visa!!

So now, my little family of three is added to the millions of Palestinians who lost their right to reside in their country and have been kicked out of their homes. We now are residents of Las Vegas, but I will always refer to Palestine as my home. Since the 1948 Diaspora of our people, the Palestinians in the world have been waiting for a just solution, that would give them the right to return to their homeland, and now 60 years later the list gets longer everyday with people just like the 3 of us who were driven out of our country. I will never give up the hope that one day I would have the choice to live in Palestine, and I will make sure that Ramzi also knows that he has a right to return!

Mona

Meanwhile, the Director of the Palestinian Civil Affairs Authority, Hussein Al-Sheikh announced in late June that **Palestinian officials have now managed to issue identity cards for 70% of Palestinians who had previously been without them¹** and expressed hopes that **the issue of Palestinians residing in oPT areas without ID cards will be totally resolved by the end of 2008. Applicants from East Jerusalem and those not currently in the oPT, however, are not among the group referred to.** In a meeting with Campaign representatives on 22 June, Al-Sheikh urged any and **all persons with family unification applications outstanding to update their files with the Palestinian Civil Affairs immediately.**² He also urged parents to register their children before they turn 16. In a separate meeting, Director of Foreign Affairs Unit in the Palestinian Ministry of Interior, Ahmad Safi, informed Campaign members that **80% of all applications submitted through the PA by US citizens for visa extensions by Israeli authorities between January and May 2008 – 349 in total -- have been approved.**³

RTE meetings with diplomats & delegations

- 4 June – Association for International Aid Agencies, Jerusalem
- 22 June – Hussein El-Sheikh, Head of Palestinian Authority of Civil Affairs
- 23 June – Ahmed Safi, Director of Foreign Affairs Unit in the Palestinian Ministry of Interior
- 26 June - Maxwell Gaylard, Deputy Special Coordinator, UNSCO

In other developments, **nearly 500 businessmen and women, were granted special 14-day permits to attend the first Palestine Investment Conference.** Held from 21-23 May, Palestinian organisers with high profile support from Quartet members sought to promote the message that "Palestine is open for business" despite the fact that Israel has not demonstrated any serious intention to reduce the restrictions it is placing on access to and movement within the oPt. In a press release dated 20 May, the Campaign noted that investors expecting future access to their investments are unlikely to have the Quartet Special Representative Tony Blair regularly available to negotiate entry visas for themselves or for their staff. For investors, Israel's refusal to establish a transparent, internationally lawful policy on which foreign nationals wishing to enter or maintain their presence in the oPt can rely is clear evidence that third states are not doing enough to create the necessary environment for investments to succeed. The Campaign urged the Quartet and other third state actors to send clear signals that the arbitrary exclusion and expulsion of foreign passport holders from the oPt, like Israel's other abusive restrictions on movement and access, violates Israel's treaty obligations to those states, is contrary to the UN Charter and directly concerns the States themselves. It stressed the need for a comprehensive solution to the issue and pointed out the futility of attempting to realize investments in the oPt while the ability of Palestinian institutions and businesses to recruit and retain the human resources needed for

¹ According to Ma'an news agency, Al-Sheikh announced that 32,000 of 55,000 Palestinians who had been living with their families from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip without identity cards could now reside legally in their own country.

² Al-Sheikh noted that FU applicants are required to update the files in person in order to prevent middlemen from taking unnecessary fees. To update a file, individuals are asked to fill out a form and to attach a copy of their last entry visa/permit. According to Al-Sheikh, the percentage of applications rejected has been small – 25 of 10,000, allegedly on security grounds. Al-Sheikh informed the Campaign that priority in processing applications is given to those who have been longest in the oPt and special medical, humanitarian and relatives of prisoners and martyrs. Al-Sheikh informed the Campaign that the PA can apply for "family unification" on behalf of individuals of Palestinian descent residing in the oPt but with no remaining relatives holding Palestinian IDs.

³ Visa extensions are still limited to single entry and can only be extend for 27 consecutive months. According to Safi, applicants for visa extensions must have a spouse with a Palestinian ID. All other applications cannot be accepted by the PA as they are refused by the Israeli authorities with the exception of a limited number of "special cases" involving "special coordination," generally through a foreign national's relevant consulate or embassy.

Detention offers student new outlook on Israel

Monday, June 23, 2008

By CELIA HASSAN

What's a nice, Reed College sophomore doing in detention at Israel's Ben Gurion airport? I ask myself this during the hours I am held. What do I have in common with these dozen or so suspected security threats: the gray-haired women who whisper about their treatment, the 8-year-old girl, tears dried on her face and fear in her eyes, the 18-year-old travelling to see family? We have little in common except that virtually all of us are Americans. But unlike Jewish Americans who breeze through customs in seconds, we are Palestinian-Americans. In treatment reminiscent of the Jim Crow South, we stand in a separate line, are harassed and intimidated. In Israel, the principles we cherish as Americans disappear; we are suspect because we are not the "right" religion or ethnicity.

During my interrogation, an Israeli officer grills me about everything from what classes I took last semester to what my parents do for a living. Another shows me pictures of people — my cousin in California, and my great-grandmother — and asks if I know them. When she shows me a woman I don't know, she yells at me: "Don't lie!" When I am allowed to leave the airport, I am advised to make this my "last trip to Israel."

But this wasn't a trip to Israel. I will spend my summer at Birzeit University in the Palestinian West Bank. Israel has militarily occupied the West Bank and Gaza for 41 years and controls all border crossings. Nothing gets into or out of Palestinian territory without Israel's approval — not students wishing to learn, business people planning to invest in the Palestinian economy, parents hoping to visit their children; not food, medicine, or fuel... From my great-grandmother's house in Ramallah, I watched Sen. Barack Obama's speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. He called Israel a shining example of democracy and pledged unconditional support for it as a Jewish state. Palestinians were disappointed to hear him praise what others, like former President Jimmy Carter and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, call apartheid.

When will America demand of Israel what we fought so hard to achieve at home — equal rights for all? Maybe we should start by demanding equal treatment for all Americans at Israeli airports.

Celia Hassan, is a sophomore at Reed College. currently attending the International Summer Program at Birzeit University in the Palestinian West Bank. http://www.columbian.com/opinion/news/2008/06/06232008_Young-Voices-Detention-offers-student-new-outlook-on-Israel.cfm

development remains uncertain and subject to Israel's political discretion. "Real investment in Palestine starts with real access to all of the occupied Palestinian territory — the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip," concluded Campaign member and businessman Sam Bahour (See RTE press release 20 May.)

According to Hussein Al-Sheikh, in follow up to May's Investment Conference, **the PA has secured initial approval from Israel on a plan that would allow businesspersons investing \$300,000 or more in the oPt to receive six-month, multiple-entry temporary residence permits including permission to enter Israel.** Investors interested should contact Jaafar Hadib at the Investment Promotion Agency. PA officials informed the Campaign, that no clear and consistent provisions are yet in place for securing work permits for any other categories of persons, whether university professors or teachers, health and social service professionals, humanitarian and development workers or others.

In the USA, the **American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the American-Arab Institute (AAI), and the American Task Force for Palestine (ATFP) met with State Department officials** from the Bureau of Consular Affairs, and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs on 19 June to discuss Israel's ongoing practice of denying entry to US citizens of Palestinian or Arab descent into Israel and the oPt. The three organisations **raised concerns about the ongoing pattern of discriminatory practice engaged by the State of Israel against US citizens of Palestinian or Arab descent,** particularly with the start of the summer vacation season, noting that

Israel's denial of entry and harassment of citizens has prompted many of the Arab American community to stop spending summers in the oPt. ADC National Executive Director Kareem Shora stressed: "It is a vital issue that Americans, regardless of national origin, race, or ethnicity, be treated equally when travelling overseas. Arab, and specifically Palestinian, Americans are to be treated as full American citizens when entering either Israel or Palestine." For its part, **the State Department emphasized that it is crucial for individuals to report travel difficulties to the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem in order to sufficiently monitor progress on this issue.**

In the media

- * **20 May: Real investment starts with real access,**
<http://www.palestinemonitor.org/spip/spip.php?article421>
- * **21 May: East Jerusalem businessman says Palestinian investment should be in Jerusalem**
<http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/62553>
- * **30 May: Tutu meets Hamas, raps Israel for barring entry,**
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/988172.html>
- * **17 June: Number of people denied entry into Israel up by 61% since 2005,**
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/992670.html>

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 family 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 the stipulation by Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) 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 multiple entry 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 whose relatives may have 'overstayed' their original visa duration
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 to Israel nationals seeking to enter third countries is reciprocated by correct treatment of their nationals seeking to enter Israel 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 a letter to Israeli, UN, the Quartet Representative's Office and your government representatives**, documenting your case and emphasizing the need to obtain clear assurances from Israel that persons carrying foreign passports will not be arbitrarily denied safe and secure passage to the oPt and that all foreign citizens seeking entry will be treated with dignity and respect.
2. **Write your local press** protesting Israel's unlawful policy of entry denials by telling your personal story and the impact it has had on you, your loved ones, your business, your organisation, etc.
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>
US citizens are also encouraged to file a report with ADC at:
[http://www.adc.org/index.php?id=2980&no_cache=1&sword_list\[\]=Entry&sword_list\[\]=Denial](http://www.adc.org/index.php?id=2980&no_cache=1&sword_list[]=Entry&sword_list[]=Denial)
and file a report with ADC at:
[http://www.adc.org/index.php?id=2980&no_cache=1&sword_list\[\]=Entry&sword_list\[\]=Denial](http://www.adc.org/index.php?id=2980&no_cache=1&sword_list[]=Entry&sword_list[]=Denial)
For questions or assistance in taking action, please contact Christina Zola from AAI at 202.429.9210, Fahed Al-Rawaf from ADC at 202.244.2990 or Ghaith Al-Omari from AAFP at 202.887.0177
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.

The following letter was issued by 2 key caucuses of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) representing over 100 film scholars from around the world.

May 7, 2008

Israeli Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit
The Knesset
HaKiryah
Jerusalem 91950 ISRAEL

Dear Minister Sheetrit:

We are writing to express our dismay and disapproval concerning the Israeli Ministry of the Interior's decision to temporarily detain Palestinian-American filmmaker, Annemarie Jacir, and to deny her entry into the West Bank either to complete the shooting of her new film, *Salt of this Sea*, or to attend its world premier in Ramallah. We deplore Israel's calculated infringement of Ms. Jacir's civil rights at this particular historical moment, as Israel celebrates its 60th anniversary as a nation on May 14. Ms. Jacir's film will play at the Cannes Film Festival alongside Israeli entries, and your deportation of her from her historic homeland only serves further to blight Israel's reputation in the world community interested in peace and justice for the Palestinian people.

As you may know, Annemarie Jacir is an internationally renowned filmmaker whose works have twice been selected for screening at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival and have won numerous funding grants and festival awards. Recently, our organization, Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS, the premier such organization in the world), decided to honor Ms. Jacir by screening three of her most important short films at its annual conference in Philadelphia, USA. The films played to a capacity audience. Unfortunately, due to the actions of your ministry, Ms. Jacir herself was unable to attend the screening, insofar as she was tied up trying to complete the shooting of *Salt of this Sea* outside her preferred--and appropriate--filming location in Palestine.

We hereby request that your ministry communicate transparently to the world community the grounds on which Ms. Jacir was told by the Israeli security agent who denied her entry into the West Bank that she has "spent too much time" in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. How is this possible? Surely you know that denying entry to Ms. Jacir, a descendent of Palestinian refugees, violates her internationally mandated right of return (UN Resolution 194). It also violates Israel's treaty with the United States regarding the equal treatment of mutual visitors, insofar as Ms. Jacir is a U.S. citizen and holds a U.S. passport.

Ms. Jacir's unfounded treatment at the Israeli border and while in Israeli detention is a travesty of your ministry's charge to defend the internal security of Israel, as demonstrated by the pettiness of targeting for deportation an individual whose work involves the cinematic depiction of her historic homeland and national culture. For your country to violate the civil rights of any Palestinian is deplorable, and is particularly inane when done to an artist. Jacir's film represents ethical aspirations of her people; your ministry's attempt to disrupt its production was an act of cowardice. Jacir herself, as any artist, should be respected as a broker of justice, hope, and peace.

As members and supporters of the international community of filmmakers, artists, and intellectuals, we denounce the actions of your ministry and request that they cease and desist not only with respect to Annemarie Jacir but to all filmmakers, artists, journalists, and anyone else who seeks peacefully to enter or remain in Palestine.

Sincerely,
Middle Eastern Caucus of SCMS
Asian Pacific American Caucus of SCMS

cc: Tzipi Livni, Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs; Galeb Majadle, Israeli Minister of Culture; Yoram Morad, Consul for Cultural Affairs, Consulate General of Israel in New York

Summary of documented cases 2007-2008

Types of entry denial cases documented since CoGAT announcement (13 Dec 2006 through 30 June 2008)

	Dec '06	Jan '06	Feb '07	Mar' 07	Apr '07	My '07	Jun '07	Jul '07	Aug '07	Sep '07	Oct '07	Nov '07	Dec '07	Jan '08	Feb '08	Mar '08	Apr '08	May '08	Jun '08
Ports of entry																			
Allenby Bridge	X	X	X	X	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	X	X	X	X	X
Sheikh Hussein Bridge	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X			
Taba				X		X	X		X								X		
Nationals																			
Arab World**			X		X					X									
Europe	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
Latin American	X		X				X	X									X		
North America	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Other		X	X		X							X							X
Types of visitors																			
Business persons		X	X	X	X			X						X					
Development, humanitarian & HR workers			X		X		X	X	X			X				X	X		
Family	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Educators, health & social service workers	X	X				X		X						X					
Media workers & artists		X	X		X		X		X				X			X	X		
Students & researchers	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X			X		X			
Tourists & visitors	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X		X		X	X	
Other***							X	X		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 individuals affiliated with the church and/or other religious institutions and diplomatic missions.