



رابطة الانثروبولوجيين الفلسطينيين
Insaniyyat | Society of Palestinian Anthropologists

Insaniyyat, the Society of Palestinian Anthropologists

A Call to Action: Speak Out Against Israel's Further Destruction of Palestinian Academic Freedom

May 2022

We members of *Insaniyyat*, the Society of Palestinian Anthropologists, call on you to join us in voicing your opposition to Israel's most recent attempt to undermine Palestinians' fundamental right to education, including the basic academic freedom and autonomy of our universities. In March of this year, the Israeli government announced, a new policy; "Procedure for Entry and Residency of Foreigners in Judea and Samaria Region" that grants the Israeli occupation authorities immense powers to isolate Palestinian universities from the outside world and to determine the future course of Palestinian higher education.

The new "procedures" grant the Israeli military the absolute right to select which international faculty, academic researchers and students may be present at Palestinian universities. They invest power in the military occupation authorities to decide which areas of specialization are a priority for Palestinian universities, what academic qualifications are acceptable and what scholarly areas of research are permissible. Moreover, the regulations set an extremely low annual quota for overseas faculty (100) and students (150) to be present in the occupied territories at any time. In addition, the appointment of overseas faculty to Palestinian universities is limited to a maximum of five non-consecutive years, thus undermining the ability of Palestinian higher education institutions to sustainably hire and promote needed overseas faculty members. Under these regulations, foreign applicants, including faculty, students, and researchers, must first be vetted at an Israeli embassy in their home country and if deemed "acceptable" would be required to post a costly financial bond in order to be allowed entry. Taken together these regulations aim to thwart any interest by overseas faculty and students from pursuing an academic career, course of study or research project in occupied Palestine. Their consequences are most acute for the majority of overseas faculty and researchers who are expatriate Palestinians, drastically narrowing their already extremely constrained access, in the process re-enforcing the territorial fragmentation of Palestinian academic life and peoplehood. In sum, the regulations will exacerbate the already besieged status of Palestinian higher education, further legitimize its *de facto* international isolation, while divesting it of the ability to exercise basic decisions that are a fundamental condition for academic freedom.

Many of *Insaniyyat*'s members have already directly or indirectly experienced the pernicious effects of Israel's ongoing restrictions on Palestinian academic institutions. For our members who are faculty at Palestinian universities, this includes living in constant existential uncertainty when they or their spouse and children are at the whims of arbitrary Israeli visa policies. For others, it is the experience of trying to run a university department or program when Israeli policy literally trumps your ability to retain a respected and needed colleague or hire a promising new faculty member without a local residency permit. At the best of times, it has meant having to explain to foreign students wanting to pursue a semester abroad in occupied Palestine that in order to do so they should not tell Israeli border control where they intend to go and, hopefully, they will be able to enter on a 3-month tourist visa. And all of



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this is in addition to the decades-long “normal” of Israeli military actions against Palestinian universities that includes periods of forced closure (sometimes for years), repeated campus incursions, and the constant intimidation and imprisonment of students and staff. For our many members who are expatriate Palestinian Anthropologists, simply wanting to undertake research or join colleagues at a conference has for decades been at the cost of facing harrowing Israeli border restrictions that often result in outright denial of entry.

These new regulations promise to further limit the already prohibitive access of international scholars wanting to undertake research in occupied Palestine – in the process stifling intellectual and academic exchange and limiting opportunities for international knowledge production on Palestine. This has particularly dire implications for anthropologists (and the Anthropology of Palestine and Palestinians more generally). As a discipline whose professional and scholarly identity is profoundly linked to ethnographic research, the lack of physical access will thwart coming generations of anthropologists from even considering Palestine as a site to pursue their academic research.

Indeed, we believe this is one of the larger aims of the new Israeli regulations – to end the crucial witnessing work that is central to ethnographic research in Palestine as a field site. Ultimately what Israel hopes to accomplish is the erasure of any representation of contemporary Palestinian life and experience from the international scholarly record. Given the Israeli authorities have been unable to delegitimize Palestinian experiences as an acceptable scholarly topic, with these measures, they simply close the door on the physical access necessary for them to be researched.

We call on our academic colleagues, in Anthropology and beyond to join us in vocally condemning these procedures, and demand that governments worldwide hold Israel, the occupying power, accountable for this clear violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), the right to education enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966).

As our colleagues at Birzeit University wrote:

This moment is dangerous for the future of Palestinian higher education, but it is also a moment to join together for justice, freedom, and equality. Palestinian universities, like all universities, are places of knowledge production that connect scholars and students across the globe and inspire them to imagine and build a better future for all.



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Ways to Take Action

We ask that you take some of the following actions to stop this latest Israeli policy targeting Palestinian's academic freedom, one that carries grave implications for the free movement and international access of scholars; including their right to intellectual interchange, knowledge sharing and deliberation with their academic peers and colleagues.

1. If you are a professional scholarly association we ask that you:

- Make a statement denouncing Israel's latest policies against Palestinian Higher Education and circulate it to your membership and beyond.
- Send the statement to your affiliate professional association in Israel demanding they take action. Anthropological associations can write to the [Israeli Anthropological Association](#) or contact the [Association's members](#).
- Your organization can also endorse [Birzeit University's statement](#). Please contact right2edu@birzeit.edu or pr@birzeit.edu to add your support.

2. If you are an individual scholar we ask that you:

Alert your scholarly network and/or professional association and ask that they make a statement denouncing Israel's policy.

3. Write to your government representatives and demand they intervene against Israel's latest attempt to undermine the basic rights to education and academic freedom of Palestinians.



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Read the principled stands already taken by major academic associations

[The American Anthropological Association](#)

[Scholars at Risk](#)

[International Sociology Association \(ISA\)](#)

[The Middle East Studies Association \(MESA\)](#)

[The Council of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association \(NAISA\)](#)

[British Society for Middle Eastern Studies \(BRISMES\)](#)

[City of New York University Community \(CUNY Community\)](#)