

[On official State of Israel Ministry of Defense letterhead]

Coordination of Government
Activities in the Territories
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25 January 2021

Assistant to the Minister of Defense Chief of Staff
Office of the Minister for Civilian and Social Affairs at the Ministry of Defense
Assistant to the Defense Minister - Adv. Ruth Bar

Re: **Exit by scholarship recipients from the Gaza Strip for academic studies abroad**

Addressee A – following your letter ref: 000312 dated January 21, 2021

Addressee B – following your letter dated January 25, 2021

1. Following your letter regarding the matter in reference, our response is as follows:
 - a. Firstly, we recall that according to work protocols agreed upon with the Palestinian Authority, all applications concerning the entry of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip into the State of Israel must be submitted to the Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee, which is the body responsible for receiving and prioritizing the transfer of applications by Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip to the Israeli side.
 - b. In this context, we emphasize that no applications in the matter of the residents mentioned in the letters in reference have been transferred to us by the Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee.
 - c. It is also noted that communications on behalf of the applicants do not replace the process detailed above. Therefore, in order to review the residents' applications, the applicants must contact the Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee.
 - d. With respect to the substantive arguments presented in the letters, we note that as part of measures put in place to address the coronavirus, a closure has been imposed on the Gaza Strip by government officials. However, there are several exceptions according to which Gaza Strip residents are permitted entry into Israel and the West Bank, including for the purpose of foreign travel (see document entitled "Reduction of travel via Erez Crossing as part of measures to address the coronavirus," posted on the COGAT website on January 12, 2021).
 - e. At the same time, applications transferred to the Coordination and Liaison Administration via the Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee are examined based on their individual merits, and the possibility of departing from the policy in place due to the circumstances listed in the application is considered given said policy and the exceptions thereto. For this purpose, applications must include a detailed description of the circumstances and enclose documents to support the applicants' arguments believed to justify a departure from the policy in their particular matter.
 - f. In relation to the overall policy, we note that currently, given increasing infection

numbers in the State of Israel, a closure has been imposed on its citizens and residents, and travel has been significantly reduced. Accordingly, no room was found at this point in time to grant the request to add travel abroad for the purpose of academic studies to the list of exceptions currently included in the policy.

- g. In light of the above, it appears that there is no room to depart from the policy in the matter of the eight residents named in section 10 of the letter by Member of Knesset Dr. Yousef Jabareen and at the end of the letter by Member of Knesset Ahmad Tibi, having considered their matters, ex gratia, both because no room was found to add this permit purpose to the existing exclusions, and because appropriate applications were not submitted via the Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee (see on this matter, AAA 6363/20 State of Israel v. Omar Shawa). Nevertheless, the residents mentioned in the letters may resubmit their applications via the Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee, enclosing all relevant documents, once the closure in the State of Israel is lifted. Such applications will be examined according to the policy in place at the time.
 - h. As a side note, we recall that documents attesting to non-objection by the State of Jordan to the residents' transit must be attached to the application, as per Jordanian requirements. We further note that a permit to travel abroad for academic studies is granted to the student only, meaning the student's family members are not included in this criterion.
2. At your request.

Sincerely,
Avi Mesika, Major
Assistant Coordinator of Government
Activities in the Territories