

Middle East Network Newsletter - **Action Alert**

December 14, 2010

Hope for Gaza: Urge Your Representative to Act Now

[Contact your member of Congress today.](#) Ask your Representative to sign two helpful letters on Gaza now circulating in the House:

1. Ask him or her to sign the McDermott/Ellison letter to President Obama calling for opening the Gaza borders to aid, commerce, and transit.
2. Ask him or her to sign the Moran/Inglis letter to Secretary of State Clinton calling for access to education for Gaza students.

[Call or write your Representative today to help!](#)

One year after the Gaza war, Palestinians in Gaza still don't have clean water. Homes, schools, and hospitals remain in rubble because basic building materials aren't allowed in. Food, fuel, medicine, and sanitation supplies are limited and sporadic due to the border closures. Commerce is at a near stand-still, and residents are restricted when traveling in and out of Gaza.

The sick are especially vulnerable, as their ability to transit is subject to an Israeli permit regime that can involve long delays or result in denial of permission to travel. Dr. Tawfiq Nasser, director of the Lutheran Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in Jerusalem, explains, "While Gaza cancer patients are arriving at AVH, the length of time that it takes to obtain a permit to leave Gaza may range from a few weeks to months, which can lead to serious progression of disease and complications."

Higher education is an important issue as Gaza students face Israeli restrictions on studying at West Bank universities. Most recently, Berlanty Azzam, a senior at Bethlehem University was deported to Gaza and prohibited by the Israeli High Court from returning to the West Bank to complete her degree. Many advocates, including [Bishop Bruce Burnside of the ELCA South-Central Synod of Wisconsin](#), wrote letters on her behalf. The House letter to Secretary Clinton is a constructive next step to help students like Azzam.

While Israeli security concerns are cited as the reason for Gaza restrictions, the border closure policy is counterproductive. Israel's security is not enhanced by having an impoverished, overcrowded, and isolated community next-door in Gaza. Furthermore, the closed borders mean increased unmonitored tunnel traffic. Re-opening the monitored border crossings to aid, commerce, and transit would serve the welfare of Gaza and the safety of Israel.

[Call or write your representative today to help!](#)

Ask your representative to sign the [letter to President Obama](#) circulated by Reps. Jim McDermott (D-WA) and Keith Ellison (D-MN) calling for urgent efforts to address the dire situation in Gaza.

Ask your representative to sign the [letter to Secretary Clinton](#) circulated by Reps. Jim Moran (D-VA) and Bob Inglis (R-SC) calling for support for higher education opportunities for Gaza students.



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