



# Monitor

## Waiting for equipment

By Maria York

An-Najah is probably best known for its Engineering Departments. However, the Faculty of Engineering faces difficulties in upgrading its equipment and providing materials for teaching. This is due to the restrictions on all movement of goods and people by the Israeli closure regime in occupied Palestine.

Dr Nabil Dmeidi, the Dean of the Faculty, commented that the Faculty often has to wait long periods before specialized material and equipment is allowed to be imported through Israeli ports or be bought from Israeli wholesalers. "Sometimes the equipment is just waiting at the border, maybe for six months or more, leaving us without essential tools, such as those needed for manufacturing metals for production," he said.

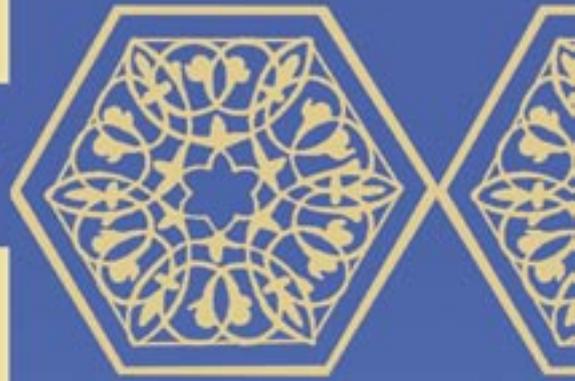
A glass-blowing machine destined for the University's vocational college, Hisham Hijjawi, was held at customs for over six months.

Some departments make do with equipment over 20 years old, unable to provide new technology to their students and staff. The Chemical Engineering Department is not able to buy certain chemicals for use in standard educational experiments.

These restrictions cause problems for students' graduation projects. In their final year projects, students often rely on High Frequency equipment, which the university is unable to buy or import.

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## An-Najah staff and students in prison

As of 26<sup>th</sup> May 2008, these staff members are in Israeli prisons:

1. Dr Abdel Aziz Dweik – Geography professor
2. Dr Omar Abdel Razaq – Economics professor
3. Mr Ghassan Touqan – Education professor
4. Dr Khader Sawandak – Dean of Shari'ah Law Department
5. Dr Ghassan Khaled – Law professor
6. Mr Mustafa Shinnar - Sociology professor
7. Mr Abdul Hadi Jawabra - Employee of the Journalism Department

Approximately 80 students are in Israeli prisons.

Dr Esam Al-Shaqar, a professor of Physics, has just been released after spending two years in Administrative Detention. His term of imprisonment was extended five times without a trial or sentencing.

### Harassment at night

“On Sunday night, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2007, at about midnight, I was woken up by my father and told to come to the front door with my ID card. I had been fast asleep and was still half asleep. There were four Israeli soldiers there dressed for combat. They wanted to see the ID cards of everyone in the apartment. My father, my sister and I gave them our cards. My father told them about my sister’s two-year old son who was asleep. One of the soldiers said in Arabic that they were going to search the apartment and if they found anybody else they would shoot them. My father said “Shoot them, there is no-one else here.” The soldiers did not search the flat and left. They did not go to any of the other apartments in the building.

My father then went downstairs to see how the soldiers had got into the apartment block. There is a locked gate and the locked door to the building. Both locks had been picked, and the locks were broken and could not be shut again.

I have no idea why the soldiers came to our apartment. It makes me think no-where is safe. We don’t normally lock the front door to our apartment, but we did that night. Imagine if we hadn’t, the soldiers could have walked right into our bedrooms.”

*Account taken on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007*

*Female employee of An-Najah National University*

*Name withheld to protect identity*

### The price of marrying a non-Palestinian

Dr Basal married last year in Paris. He met his wife, Lina, while they were both studying for further degrees in the USA. Dr Basal lectures at An-Najah and would dearly like to bring his wife to live with him in Nablus. He is Palestinian and she is Moroccan, but they cannot live in Nablus together because Lina cannot get a visa to enter Palestine. Basal has applied for family reunification, which is the process stipulated by Israeli policy for foreign nationals related to Palestinians to be allowed to visit, live or work in occupied Palestine. However, this is likely to take years if not decades to obtain. A recent calculation by the Right to Entry/Re-Entry Campaign<sup>1</sup> estimates that at the current processing rate it would take 57 years to clear the backlog of applications.

Dr Basal is wondering how long he has to wait until he can live with his wife in Nablus. He is torn between wishing to be with her and fulfilling his professional obligation at the University.

*Real names changed to protect identities*

1. Campaign for the Right of Entry/Re-Entry to the Occupied Palestinians Territory (2008) Situation Update (1 January 2008).

## Arrested at the border

Will Fatima ever attempt to leave the West Bank across the border into Jordan again? She is a brave and determined woman if she does.

Fatima is a lecturer at An-Najah. She spent some of her summer vacation last year trying to secure a place on a master degree program at Damascus University in Syria. On returning to Nablus via Jordan, she was detained and imprisoned for 14 days by the Israeli Security Agency (ISA).

A Palestinian being detained and imprisoned by the ISA is hardly unusual, but Fatima's experience exposes the arbitrary and unpredictable nature of such arrests.

Like so many who are singled out for questioning at the Jordan-Israel border at Allenby Bridge, Fatima was left to wait until all the other travelers had been processed. She was then taken to a room where she was stripped to her underwear.

No explanation was given, and initially Fatima thought it was funny that they should suspect her. All of her belongings were examined. The belts and cigarettes she had bought as presents were slit open.

Fatima was questioned by security officers and left alone, then questioned again. It was only

when a doctor came to examine her that she became suspicious. She was told that she was going to prison. She was offered no explanation. International human rights law, in the form of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Article 9.2, states that 'Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him.'

Fatima was then put in a car and driven some distance to what she thought was the entrance to an Israeli settlement because of the guards she saw. She was let out of the car, handcuffed and shackled at her feet and made to sit on her suitcase. A group of men she suspected of being drunk appeared from the settlement and started to tease and touch her. This contravenes ICCPR

Article 10.1 which states 'All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person'.

Eventually another car came to pick her up and it drove her to Petah Tikva

prison in Israel.

She was taken to a court hearing the next day that ruled she be incarcerated for 15 days. The hearing was conducted entirely in Hebrew. She was appointed a court lawyer, but her lack of Hebrew meant she did not understand the proceedings. International legal standards<sup>1</sup>



AFP

1. Fourth Geneva Convention Article 72, European Convention on Human Rights Article 6.3e and the American Convention of Human Rights Article 8.2a.

stipulates that suspects must understand the process that they are undergoing.

During her period of detention she was interrogated, yelled at, intimidated and given a lie detector test three times. Fortunately, she was not subjected to torture or cruel treatment, as is frequently the case according to B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights and HaMoked, Center for the Defense of the Individual<sup>2</sup>. She was allowed to call her mother on the third day of her detainment, but was told that if anyone other than her mother answered the phone, the call would be terminated. Her sister answered and Fatima managed to tell her that she had been arrested before she was cut off.

After 14 days she was released and dropped off at a checkpoint she did not recognize. From there she made her way to her family. Later she heard that the International Committee of the Red Cross had visited the prison twice while she was there but they were not allowed to see her.

Fatima's story is typical of what happens to thousands of Palestinians. People are picked up by the Israeli Security Agency and incarcerated for varying lengths of time with unsatisfactory judicial process. A report published by Yesh Din<sup>3</sup> (2007) presents its findings from 800 observations of Israeli military courts for the West Bank. It shows that many of the principles enshrined in international human rights law, with the aim of protecting individuals in judicial hearings, are flouted. Amongst other things, the report illustrates the extent to which the presumption of innocence principle is ignored. This principle states that a person should be presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond any reasonable doubt. The report states:

*'indications of the presumption of innocence in the military courts can be found in data relating to the release of detainees from custody (prior to the filing of an indictment): in 118 detention hearings in which Yesh Din observers were present, only one person was released. Each of these detention hearings, in which a*

*suspect's detention was extended by 10.2 days on average, lasted an average of only three minutes and four seconds. Thus, the detention of suspects brought before the military courts is almost always extended, in hearings that are concluded in a matter of minutes. Hearings to authorize "arrest until the end of proceedings" (a detention that may extend for more than a year or even two) took even less time: one minute and 54 seconds, on average. In each of the latter hearings, where Yesh Din observers were present, the court granted the prosecution's motion to extend the suspect's arrest until the end of proceedings. Less than two minutes are required to send a person to detention until the conclusion of criminal proceedings.'*

Since 1990 an estimated 150,000 people have experienced this shocking trend to incarcerate people without any consideration, let alone presumption, of their innocence.

Further criticism of this perfunctory system has been made by Mr Martin Scheinin, the UN Special Rapporteur for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism. In his visit report<sup>4</sup> of 2007, he noted that the use of military courts for civilians should be exceptional rather than the norm; that the use of military orders to arrest and detain suspects does not require the arresting authority to inform the person the reason for their arrest, contrary to Article 9.2 in the ICCPR; that the use of military orders allows detention for periods up to several weeks before the person is permitted to meet their lawyer or have contact with the outside world, opening up the possibility for abuse and torture in detention.

Local and international condemnation of the practices of the Israeli military when arresting people has come from a wide variety of sources. Although the subject has been widely reported, cases like Fatima's continue to occur daily.

*Real name changed to protect identity.*

2. 'Absolute Prohibition: The Torture and Ill-Treatment of Palestinian Detainees, May 2007, B'Tselem and HaMoked.

3. 'Backyard Proceedings: The Implementation of Due Process Rights in the Military Courts in the Occupied Territories', Dec 2007, Yesh Din.

4. 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism Addendum – Mission to Israel, including Visit to Occupied Palestinian Territory'. Human Rights Council Sixth Session, Agenda item 3 – A/HRC/6/17/Add.4.

## NEWS FROM OTHER UNIVERSITIES

### Recent arrests at Birzeit University

*Birzeit University Right to Education Campaign, May 2008*



Since January 2008, eight Birzeit University students and one employee have been arrested by the Israeli military. None of them have been charged.

The recent arrests include the Acting Head of the Student Council, Abdullah Owais, who replaced Fadi Hamad, the previous Head who was also detained in November 2007. Fadi Hamad has since been charged with belonging to an illegal organization and holding a position of responsibility while belonging to this organization. He was sentenced to 14 months imprisonment. Under Israeli military law, it is illegal to belong to a student group that is affiliated to a political party irrespective of their activities. We are waiting to see whether Owais will also be charged.

Three of the eight arrested students, including Abdullah Owais, are being held under Administrative Detention. Administrative Detention is authorized by administrative order rather than judicial order when the prosecuting authority, usually the Israeli military, cannot present sufficient evidence to charge the person held. The detainee is thus incarcerated until enough evidence is found. The majority of cases, however, result in the release of the detainee without charge. Detainees can spend many years in prison waiting to be charged. One Birzeit University student, for example, has been held for two and half years under Administrative Detention.

Birzeit University currently has 15 students held under Administrative Detention, and 95 students and employees in prison – 38 of whom have not yet been charged.

For more information, please go to <http://right2edu.birzeit.edu>



Mamlouk doorway by Gate of the Chain, Jerusalem

### Studying Jerusalem from over the Wall

Al Quds University was delighted to open a new MA program on Jerusalem Studies this academic year. There is a catch, however. Most of the students cannot visit the city.

The course covers the history of the city, taking in the political and socio-economic contexts, and its religious significance. Optional courses on the literature of pilgrims and tourism are also offered. One element missing from the program, are visits to the city.

The course is delivered at Al Quds' campus in Abu Dis, an area of Jerusalem cut off from the rest of the city by the Separation Wall. Only three of the students have permission to enter Jerusalem, while the other four do not. Yet, Jerusalem is visible over the Wall from the windows of the University, but most students are not allowed to enter it.

Noor Dkeidek, a student enrolled on the course, commented, "It is crazy to learn about this subject without all of us having the chance to see what we are learning about, but it's great that the course has attracted students who are not from Jerusalem to learn about it."

## Support for divestment at LSE

The Student Union of the London School of Economics (LSESU) voted decisively to call on its university and the National Union of Students (NUS) to divest from companies that provide military and commercial support for the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. In a vote at the weekly Union General Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008, 339 students voted in favor and 46 against a motion that resolves to lobby the LSE and NUS to divest from companies that provide military support for the Israeli occupation, facilitate the maintenance of the Separation Wall or operate illegally on occupied land or within settlements. The Union seeks to support targeted divestment until companies cease investing in commercial activities with links to the occupation or until Israel ends its occupation of Palestinian communities.

A member of the LSESU Palestine Society, Irenen Calis, stated, "It is time for us to demand our universities divest and stop funding



LSE students occupy Board Meeting in protest at Director's 'Pro-Israeli' stance, Oct 2007

Palestinian oppression. By putting political and economic pressure on the Israeli state, the student movement can not only show continued solidarity with the Palestinian people, but also expedite the end of the Israeli occupation."

The Union also resolved to affiliate to the international campaign to end the siege on Gaza and engage in education campaigns to publicize more widely the injustices of Israel's discriminatory policies. This includes working with Palestine solidarity organizations such as Jews for Justice for Palestinians, the British Committee for Universities in Palestine (BRICUP), the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Zochrot and the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), in a bid to end the legalized racial and religious discrimination in Israel.

## CAMPAIGN NEWS

### Checkpoint Project Takes Stock

By Safa Wael, 2<sup>nd</sup> year Pharmacy student

Thinking about the Israeli occupation these days, you immediately conjure up the image of a checkpoint lying at the entrance of your town. Checkpoints have become normal, the everyday. We have learned to live within their confines and we have forgotten how much they restrict our freedom and affect our lives.



Container checkpoint, Feb 2008

At the checkpoint there is no child or elder, no man or woman, no sick people or emergency cases. Everyone is the same and everyone has to wait in line. We students get more attention than most because we represent youth, which in the Israeli dictionary means danger and threat.

To quantify the misery of students at the checkpoints, the Right to Education Campaign set up the Checkpoint Project to record students' experiences while passing checkpoints. We recruited 28 Checkpoint Observers and trained them how to observe and keep records.

After a three month trial, information on 356 occasions of students passing through a checkpoint was collected.

Based on the students' records from the three month period, we found that men spent twice as long waiting at checkpoints as women. Waiting times at both Huwwarra and Beit Iba checkpoints, which lie at either end of Nablus, ranged from zero to 45 minutes. All of the Observers in the study pass through one checkpoint, either Beit Iba or Huwwarra, to get home, but some live further away and have to pass through one or two more. The students who live in Bethlehem have to pass five checkpoints on their homeward journey, which they do weekly rather than daily.

After a few weeks of data collection, a number of students reported being nervous that their logging sheets would be found by Israeli soldiers and they stopped using them. It was additionally reported that concentrating on the time and events at checkpoints was making the experience more noticeable when in reality it is an activity that most students prefer to forget about or ignore. For these reasons, the Project was drawn to a close and instead students are being asked to report verbally on particular incidents on a case by case basis focussing on major incidents rather than the daily grind of waiting at checkpoints.

### **Documentation of rights abuses**

In March 2008, the Right to Education Campaign expanded its team with the arrival of the Documentation Officer, Ms Asmaa Dweikat. She is charged with establishing a system for investigating human rights violations perpetrated against the staff and students of An-Najah. To this end, she and a colleague from the Ramallah-based human rights NGO Al Haq, conducted a two-day training workshop in May for 15 students.

The workshop forms the introductory phase of the students' training, and after they have completed a series of tasks in their probationary period, they will become fully-fledged field workers investigating rights abuses. They will collect testimonies and investigate violations against staff and students that result in an interruption to their education.

They will thus provide a vital resource for lobbying and advocacy.



Field Worker training, May 2008

## Ambassadors Programme - A student's reflection

Heba Hafez, 1<sup>st</sup> year IT student

An-Najah doesn't have much in the way of student activities, or at least that is what I thought. But the PR Department has two activities for us students to get involved in – Zajel and The Right to Education Campaign. Both programmes try to find ways to tell the outside world about our problems under occupation. Zajel focuses on exchange programmes ([www2.najah.edu](http://www2.najah.edu) – Zajel Youth Exchange) and brings Palestinian and international volunteers together to learn about each other. The Right to Education Campaign collects information on how education suffers under occupation and tells the outside world about it.

Last semester, I received an email inviting me to join a new initiative called the Ambassadors Programme run by these two programmes. It involves attending workshops, but they are in English. At first, I thought I would never understand, and also I was afraid to speak in English because I've forgotten so much of my vocabulary. But the more I have tried, the better I have become. Now I can stand in front of the group and give a presentation in English.

The Ambassadors Programme transforms you from ignorance to a state of knowledge. The 40 of us are being trained to understand what happened and is happening around you as a Palestinian and as an Arab, but first of all as a human being. I am developing my skills and knowledge: I am learning how to present myself to others; and I am learning about history, the occupation, the media, and about other cultures.

Finally, I think if we improve our skills and knowledge, and work to develop them we will become good messengers and ambassadors so that we can build bridges between east and west.



Ambassadors workshop, Jan 2008



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