

25 September 2018

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (Fax: +972-2-566-4838; pm\_eng@pmo.gov.il)  
Minister of Justice Ayelet Shaked (Fax: +972-2-628-5438; mancal@justice.gov.il)  
Minister of the Interior Aryeh Machluf Deri (Fax: +972-2-670-3733; sar@moin.gov.il)  
Minister of Education Naftali Bennett (Fax: +972-2-649-6011; nbenet@knesset.gov.il)

RE: Access for visiting scholars and foreign nationals working at Palestinian universities

Honorable Prime Minister Netanyahu and Ministers Shaked, Deri, and Bennett,

In response to a request from our colleagues at Palestinian universities, we respectfully ask the Israeli government to change current visa policies so that they provide foreign nationals undertaking collaborative scholarship with faculty and students at Palestinian universities the same access currently enjoyed by foreign nationals at Israeli universities. This includes visiting scholars as well as foreign nationals who are regular faculty, some of whom have been teaching for years in Palestinian universities.

The American Anthropological Association is the world's largest scholarly and professional society of anthropologists, with nearly 10,000 members. More than 30 of our members are Israeli and Palestinian anthropologists. Anthropology is the scholarly field that aims to make the world safe for cultural differences, and as an Association, we are committed to advancing our collective understanding of the human condition, as well as applying that understanding to tackling some of the world's most pressing problems.

Our Association is also committed to protecting the principle of academic freedom, a cornerstone of democracy and a necessary element of a free society. Everyone – including elected officials as well as administrators at all levels of higher education – has an obligation to preserve, protect, and promote the pursuit of knowledge and the free exchange of ideas.

We have watched with growing concern over the past two years as Israeli government authorities have increasingly denied visas – both new and re-entry – to foreign national academics visiting or teaching at Palestinian universities, thereby threatening the quality of education and research for Palestinian students and colleagues. And when not denying visas outright, recent practices have encumbered the issuance of these visas with steep limitations and bureaucratic burdens, effectively denying or restricting entry and residency to nearly three dozen individual scholars, and perhaps more that we don't know about.

This, in turn, threatens the quality of higher education on Palestinian university campuses, and may ultimately have adverse impacts on educational and employment opportunities for students on these campuses, jeopardizing the financial self-sufficiency and well-being of an important constituency.

We respectfully request that current practices restricting visas for foreign nationals who have been invited to work in Palestinian universities be changed to make these practices the same for Palestinian universities as they are for individuals working at Israeli universities. We believe that it is in our common interest to promote, rather than restrict, the global circulation of scholars and scholarship. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,  
Alex Barker, President  
Edward Liebow, Executive Director

Cc: President of Israel, Hon. Reuben Rivlin; US Ambassador to Israel, Hon. Daniel Friedman