

## **Campaign Personal Report - Brandon Dooley (#16327446)**

As part of my involvement in the broad curriculum module *BCNM01 - Human Rights in the Middle East* I was a member of the group that decided to tackle Human Rights issues in relation to Gaza and Palestine. This initially was as a result of my prior knowledge of another student also taking the module, Thuraya A. Sheehan. Thuraya joined my secondary school class in 2009 after leaving Gaza and over the course of the two years she was with us in secondary school I gained a slight insight into her life in Gaza.

Myself and Thuraya got chatting one day during the module and I asked if it would be okay if myself and John Carbeck joined groups with her and Sharon as we thought it would be quite interesting to be part of a campaign in which one of the members was directly affected by the issue at hand. Due to all four of us being Computer Science students we decided the best way for us to go about creating a campaign to highlight the human rights issues in Gaza was through a website. Sharon had a large amount of prior experience in designing websites so we decided amongst us that she was probably the best person to go about setting up the website. Thuraya began gathering and writing specific content for the website whilst also getting testimonies from her friends back in Gaza, she was assisted in this by myself and John who also began researching and composing content for the website.

The area I decided to focus my research on was how individual human rights as described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were deprived from the citizens of Gaza as a result of the military hardships they constantly suffer at the hands of the state of Israel. As I progressed further into my research some of the events that I learned about were quite astounding and I will discuss some of them throughout this short report.

In the UDHR<sup>1</sup> under Article 3 it states that “*Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*” From my research into the Israeli-Gaza conflict I discovered that this is indeed a right that is from time to time deprived of the citizens of Gaza. Whilst it is not directly deprived at the hands of Israel there has been several occurrences in the past when there has been ‘indirect’ attacks on schools housing both refugees and students. For example in July 2014 a UN school in Jabaliya refugee camp was the scene of an atrocious shelling attack in which 15 people, mostly children and women were killed. Close to 3,300 people were crammed into the school as a result of Israel releasing warnings for civilians to leave their homes due to intensified conflicts. However, two shells strook the school in close succession killing 15 people and injuring a further 100<sup>2</sup>.

The Israelis were quick to denounce responsibility for the bombings claiming that “*Hamas militants fired mortar shells from the vicinity of the school*”. This was a narrative I found arose quite regularly from Israeli state responses in regards to some of the atrocious events that have unfolded throughout previous conflicts in Gaza. However, US State Department spokeswoman, Jen Psaki spoke out publicly criticising the Israelis response stating ““*The suspicion that militants are operating nearby does not justify strikes that put at risk the lives of so many innocent civilians,*”<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/30/world-disgrace-gaza-un-shelter-school-israel>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/03/us-appalled-disgraceful-israeli-shelling-gaza-un-school>

Another human rights violation that I found quite appalling throughout my research into the topic is described under Article 13 (2) of the UDHR which states that *“Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”*. This is quite evidently not the case in Gaza and other areas within Palestine.

In order for a Gazan citizen to leave Gaza they must receive permission. An applicant's request must be approved by both Hamas and by the Palestinian authority. Even in the case of illness and special treatment being needed in the neighbouring states of Israel or Egypt Gazans must request specific permission to be allowed leave and enter the specific states. There are reports throughout the internet about both bodies requesting large sums of money in exchange for exit permits, even in the case of extreme illness.<sup>4</sup>

When leaving Gaza citizens must travel through either of the neighbouring states of Israel or Egypt. If citizens wish to travel through Egypt they must request permission directly from the Egyptian authorities to pass through the Rafah crossing. However, due to disagreements between the two states especially when it comes to Hamas being in power, the Egyptians have shown strict control over their border even closing it until there were no Hamas personnel operating on the crossing.<sup>5</sup>

Gazans can also exit Gaza via the neighbouring state of Israel. Similar to the situation with travelling through Egypt, these citizens must also receive special clearance from Israeli officials. Weekly buses pass from the Erez Crossing to Amman. From Amman most Palestinians fly to their destinations since they are forbidden from flying out of Tel Aviv. In February 2016, Israel introduced a new policy allowing Gazans to go to Jordan via Israel i.e a temporary short-term pass. However, these Gazans must commit to not return to Gaza via Israel for at least 12 months.<sup>6</sup>

It is clear from all of the above that the citizens of Gaza are highly restricted and deprived of their right to both leave and return to his/her country as described under Article 13 of the UDHR. Although, under the new Israeli legislation they may travel easier than previously it can be interpreted that there is a larger plan behind this legislation. Forcing Gazans to leave for at least 12 months can be seen as an effort to further reduce the civilian population, forcing any person who wants to leave to fully emigrate and not return.

In conclusion, as a result of my research and input into this human rights campaign I have learned an immense amount about the situation in Gaza and the hardships it's citizens suffer daily. I have only managed to discuss a few of the basic human rights deprived of these citizens within this short essay however the list is endless. It is an absolute disgrace that events of this manner are occurring in the 21st century and how little is heard about them within the Western media.

-Brandon Dooley (#16327446)

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<https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/.premium-pa-keeping-gazans-from-medical-treatment-in-israel-1.5488669>

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<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2015/3/6/egypt-wont-open-rafah-crossing-if-hamas-controls-it>

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