

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 27, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland
Security
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Dr. Miguel A. Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretaries Blinken, Mayorkas, and Cardona,

Education is a pillar of our democracy and a global human right. Academic freedom is fundamental to self-determination and peace. Both domestically and abroad, educational opportunities that center authentic learning - as opposed to fear and discrimination - empowers students to better know and understand themselves and their world.

We write to express our deep concerns with procedures released by the Israeli Defense Ministry's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) which severely restrict the ability of American academics and students to teach and study at Palestinian universities in Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)¹ while no similar restrictions apply to American academics and students seeking to teach and study at Israeli universities nor to Israeli academics and students seeking to teach and study in the United States. We find the policies outlined by the COGAT to formalize discriminatory treatment of Palestinian Americans and other citizens.

According to the recent COGAT announcement², a limit of only 100 foreign academics and 150 foreign students will be allowed to teach or study at Palestinian universities. Further, the Government of Israel will only grant visas to professors and students for approved fields of teaching and study and limit the amount of time professors and students can spend at Palestinian universities.

These one-sided procedures infringe upon Palestinians' right to education and the academic freedom of American professors and students who wish to engage with their Palestinian counterparts. We find no defensible rationale given by the government of Israel for policies enshrined in the February 2022

1 תבנית ממ"ח (www.gov.il)

2 [Israel to decide for Palestinians which foreign lecturers can teach at West Bank universities - Israel News - Haaretz.com](#)

COGAT procedure and practiced since at least 2018³ -- instead, these policies have the effect of stifling education and international academic partnerships.

We remain concerned that the government of Israel maintains entry policies that discriminate against U.S. citizens based on their ethnicity, national origin, religion, and/or political viewpoint. We are aware, as is shared on the State Department's website, that these policies disproportionately impact Palestinian-Americans who are frequently subjected to humiliating and obtrusive inspection and questioning by Israeli authorities and are frequently denied the opportunity of visiting their ancestral homeland.

According to the State Department's [international travel information](#) for Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory, "Some U.S. citizens of Arab or Muslim heritage (including Palestinian-Americans) have experienced significant difficulties and unequal and occasionally hostile treatment at Israel's borders and checkpoints." Further, U.S. citizens who are on the Palestinian population registry are not allowed to freely enter Israel and are often denied usage of Israel's airport. A number of Americans with certain political and nongovernmental organizations that are found to be "supportive of Palestinian rights" have also been denied entry.

Altogether, these entry policies have a compounding, limiting effect on authentic learning opportunities. As advocates for global peace, we recognize that education is a core element of building lasting peace, and we are committed to supporting academic freedom and partnerships that promote lifelong learning for all, regardless of ethnicity, national origin, religion, and/or political viewpoint.

These new procedures codified in the COGAT are scheduled to go into effect later in July 2022. In advance of this impending deadline, we request that you provide us with answers to the following questions no later than June 10, 2022:

1. How many American citizens seeking to study and/or teach at Palestinian universities were denied entry to Israel at Ben Gurion and at Allenby Bridge and what was the basis for denial?
2. What is the State Department's position on the procedures codified by the COGAT that would have the effect of limiting academic exchange and partnerships, that impact American citizens seeking to study and/or teach at Palestinian universities?

We thank you for your attention to these important questions, and we look forward to your expeditious response.

Sincerely,

³ NGO: Israel restricting visas to academics at Palestinian universities - The Jerusalem Post ([jpost.com](https://www.jpost.com))



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Cori Bush
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Marie Newman
Member of Congress



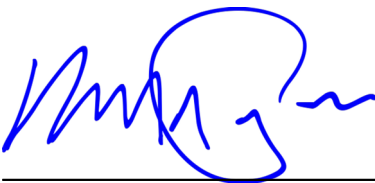
Rashida Tlaib
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André Carson
Member of Congress



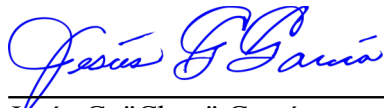
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress




Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



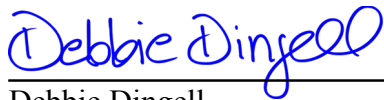
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Ilhan Omar
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