



BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

A Newsletter Issued by Birzeit University, Occupied West Bank, Apr. '85, Issue #9



Army jeep blocks new campus entrance.



Dr. Gabi Baramki and Albert Aghazarian at press conference.

BIRZEIT PROTESTS CLOSURE

At a crowded March 12 press conference at the American Colony Hotel in Jerusalem, Dr. Gabi Baramki, Vice-President of Birzeit University, termed the tenth military-ordered closure of the University "the most calculated and punitive to date."

Birzeit University called the press conference to protest the two-month closure (March 8-May 8) of Birzeit's main new campus and to reply to charges made by the military authorities in a propaganda blitz preceding the closure that Baramki said was designed "to hammer the old falsehoods about our University into the minds of the public at large."

The closure followed a March 1 midnight raid on both campuses of the University. In the raid, Baramki, an eyewitness, described soldiers seizing "pictures of Palestinian personalities, magazines that are legal in Jerusalem, the student newspaper, and other materials also legal in Jerusalem." Baramki added: "I emphasize that no official University publications, materials from the library, or materials circulated by the University were seized. Yet the entire thrust of army propaganda has been to imply University responsibility for each piece of paper the army discovered when it ransacked the campus."

(continued on page 8)

LETTER FROM BIRZEIT

Dear colleagues and friends,

The two-month closure of our main new campus is drawing to a close and I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who protested this punitive closure. The support of the international academic community is an important safeguard of the academic freedom of our University.

In this regard, I would like to draw your attention to the demand that the Council of Jewish Settlements in the West Bank presented to Defense Minister Rabin in an April 1 meeting. The settlers demanded the permanent closure of Birzeit University in the wake of a March 31 incident in El Bireh in which a settler was killed. As there was absolutely no relation between the University and the incident, we must assume that extremist settlers will now seize on every occasion to push their campaign to close the University. Again, we ask for the assistance of the international academic community in thwarting these moves.

Among the many delays forced on us by the closure was the postponement of the opening of our new main library, located on the new campus. We now look forward to its opening in early summer. For many reasons, among them adequate shelving for new publications, study space for students, a comfortable and secure environment for the library and its users, the new library will greatly improve the academic environment of the University.

Sincerely,



G.A. Baramki
VicePresident



Karim Khalaf.

IN MEMORIAM Karim Khalaf

Birzeit University, its faculty, staff and students mourn the passing of Karim Khalaf, the elected mayor of Ramallah and a member of the Birzeit Board of Trustees. Khalaf died of a heart attack on March 30, 1985.

Khalaf, who delivered the keynote address at Birzeit's 1984 graduation ceremonies, numbered the University among his many concerns. Khalaf was elected mayor of Ramallah in 1976 and became a leading voice in the occupied territories on behalf of national rights for the Palestinian people. In June 1980, Khalaf was the victim of a car bomb attack by extremist settlers. In 1982, the authorities deposed Khalaf, along with a number of other elected mayors.

Despite a strict curfew, about 2000 people attended Khalaf's funeral in Ramallah on April 4. Birzeit faculty and students were among the many mourners. Birzeit University extends its deepest condolences to the Khalaf family, and to the Palestinian people, who have lost a courageous leader.

solidarity

FRENCH ACADEMICS PETITION PERES

About 400 prominent French academics and researchers sent a strongly-worded petition to Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres protesting the closure of Birzeit's main new campus for reasons which the academics termed "unconvincing." The academics, which included mathematician Laurent Schwartz, historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet, astro-physicist Jean-Claude Pecker, and physicist Paul Kessler, demanded the reopening of the University and "an end to the incessant harassments" of the University by the military authorities. They also demanded the release of detained students. The petition was organized by the "Centre de Cooperation avec l'Universite de Birzeit."

In a related development, Lucien Bitterlin of the "Association de Solidarite Franco-Arabe" condemned the closure of Birzeit in a debate broadcast on Radio France on March 9. The Association also condemned the closure in an official release.

CONYERS PROTESTS

U.S. Congressman John Conyers of Detroit, Michigan, sent a March 8 letter to Secretary of State George Schultz expressing his "grave concern" over the arrest of Birzeit students on March 1 and the subsequent "closing of the University."

Conyers pointed out that "there was no reason to believe that violence or other danger would ensue because the students care to commemorate events in Palestinian history and retain what they can of their cultural identity while under occupation."

Conyers added that "the reasons behind the Birzeit closure must lead us to seriously question the motives of our ally" and asked that the U.S. "call for the immediate reopening of Birzeit University."

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INQUIRY ON AMBULANCE DELAY BEGUN

The military authorities have informed the University that an official inquiry into the events of November 21, 1984, and specifically, into charges that the army delayed a car and two ambulances transporting wounded students to hospital, is underway.

On November 21, soldiers mortally wounded a Birzeit University student, Sharaf Tibi. In a comprehensive report entitled No Mercy: An Investigation of Army Actions on November 21, 1984, Birzeit presented evidence through affidavits from eyewitnesses that the army delayed a private car transporting Sharaf to hospital for a full 25 minutes at a military checkpoint, as well as delaying two ambulances transporting other injured students.

LITERACY CENTER NEWS

The center's agricultural project, which started in March 1983, recently distributed "za'atar" plants and pesticides to students in the literacy program. This project, carried out with the support of the Mennonite Central Committee in Jerusalem, aims to establish income generating agricultural cooperative committees based around literacy courses in villages in the Birzeit area. Future plans include the provision of beehives, and instruction in bee-keeping, and also the initiation of rabbit breeding.

The literacy center runs two main projects with a strong developmental aspect; a Family Life Development Project incorporating hygiene, nutrition and childcare, and the Agricultural Program. The philosophy behind these programs is to combine education and basic literacy with an increase in the general awareness of students of issues affecting their everyday lives. The strong developmental aspect of the projects reflects the needs of rural communities in the West Bank.

CLOSURE HALTS HEALTH RESEARCH

Dr. Simon Kuttab, a consultant for Birzeit's Center for Environmental Health and Occupational Safety, was interviewed by the NEWSLETTER on the problems faced by the Center, whose research laboratories and facilities are on the new campus, during the two-month closure.

Kuttab explained that the three full-time research assistants employed by the Center were completely unable to pursue their lab work, while director Dr. Ramzi Sansour, whose work is about 70% lab work, was similarly crippled in pursuing his research. All of the Center's instrumentation is on the new campus; much of it is highly sensitive and sophisticated equipment that needs continuous use and maintenance. Kuttab estimated that it will take at least two weeks after the Center reopens to adjust the equipment and get it running.

The Pharmacy Quality Control Project, which Kuttab supervises, had been working to analyze samples of pharmaceuticals from the local market and test batches to see if they conformed with international standards. Not only is the work completely halted, but the entire project was undermined, as the Center will probably not be able to analyze batches issued in the period of closure, due to the backlog that will face project workers upon their return. Two days before the closure, several health institutions in the occupied territories asked the Center to provide certification for batches of pharmaceuticals recently purchased. The Center was unable to comply with this request.

Another project of the Center on pesticides in farm produce met a similar fate. This project takes fruits and



Center for Environmental Health in new campus.

vegetables from local farmers and analyzes them for residues of pesticides. The project also is conducting a field survey to classify the wide variety of pesticides used in the occupied territories. The instrumentation needed for this project is sealed away in the new campus. The same is true for a project analyzing water for its fluoride content.

PARASITOLOGY LAB OPENS

Birzeit's Community Health Unit opened a new parasitology lab in April that will greatly facilitate its on-going research on parasite burdens among schoolage children in the West Bank. Previously, the Unit had been carrying out its lab analysis in a small room donated by the Birzeit Women's Charitable Society.

Community health researchers are currently conducting a West-Bank wide survey of parasite burdens in children age 5-12 that should be completed in the autumn of 1985. In a related research project, the Unit is also measuring the concentration of fecal matter in water samples collected throughout the West Bank. The Unit will be able to use the results of both projects to investigate the epidemiological link between water and parasites.

VISITORS

Editor's note: Due to the sealing-off of the new campus, which houses the Public Relations Office, we currently have no records of our visitors before March 8, so our report is necessarily incomplete. We also thank the numerous journalists who we do not list below who came to the University old campus to report on the current situation of the University and to interview our faculty and students.

* The Birzeit Student Council hosted a week-long visit of an official delegation from the Student Union at the University of Umea in Sweden in mid-February. The Swedish students, accompanied by a University pastor and members of the Swedish Palestine Committee, toured towns and refugee camps in the occupied territories, as well as visiting Birzeit and other universities. The visit concluded with a twinning agreement between the two student unions.

*Jean-Luc Chagnollaude, Ex-Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Nancy and a board member of the "Association de Solidarite Franco-Arabe" and the Paris-based Committee for Palestinian and Lebanese Prisoners visited Birzeit several times in late February to investigate the human rights situation and to hold discussions with colleagues on research issues in the West Bank and Gaza in preparation for a forthcoming book.

* Robert Grose, Middle East Program Officer for the British-based United Nations Association visited the University on a number of occasions in February to learn about Birzeit's community development projects and to meet with faculty and staff on issues of development in the occupied territories.

*Mahmoud Mi'ari, Member of Knesset from the Progressive List for Peace, paid a solidarity visit to Birzeit on March 16 to investigate the problems the University faces as a result of the two-month closure.



Dr. Gabi Baramki greets Israeli academics at checkpoint.

* A group of Israeli academics invited to Birzeit University on March 23 for discussions with colleagues on the problems facing the University were prevented from reaching the campus by an army checkpoint. The academics met with Vice-President Dr. Baramki and faculty members at the Board of Trustees building in Ramallah.

* A delegation from the Association of Arab Academics in Nazareth was prevented by an army checkpoint from reaching the University on March 23 and met with Birzeit administration and faculty members in Ramallah.

* A delegation from the National Conference of Black Lawyers in the U.S. was also prevented from reaching Birzeit on March 23 by an army checkpoint. They met with Birzeit Public Relations staff in Ramallah. The National Conference of Black Lawyers has issued a number of statements in the past supporting Palestinian self-determination and protesting Israeli violation of human rights in the occupied territories.

* Colin Roth, Middle East Director of the Overseas Development Agency in Britain, met with Birzeit faculty on March 29 to discuss research issues in the occupied territories.

* Historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet visited the University on March 29 and met with faculty members to discuss the current problems of the University.

BIRZEIT ABROAD

* Toulia Serna, Director of Birzeit's Computer Center, attended a March 31-April 5 conference in Amsterdam for users of the HP-3000 computer. Birzeit's HP computer was sealed away in the new campus during the two-month closure of that campus.

* Dr. Bakr Abu Kishek, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Economics, attended a March 25-29 conference in Vienna on "Economic Conditions in the Occupied Territories." Abu Kishek delivered a paper on the "Contribution of the Construction Sector to the Economy of the Occupied Territories."

* Dr. Omar Atari and James Cormick (English Department) and Dr. Tomis Kapitan (Cultural Studies and Philosophy Program) attended the Fourth Linguistics Conference at Yarmouk University from April 2-4. Dr. Atari presented a paper on "Correlates of Teachers' Holistic Evaluation of College Composition and Coherence"; Mr. Cormick gave a presentation on "Palestinian Arabic Vowels in Pharyngealized Environments"; Dr. Kapitan delivered a paper on "Variables, Pronouns and Intensions." The conference brought together linguists from universities throughout the Arab world.

* Dr. Marwan Awartani (Mathematics Department) was unable to attend the annual Topology Conference in Tallahassee, Florida, where he was scheduled to participate, because all men from the ages of 16-40 from his home village of Anabta were forbidden to travel by the military authorities as a measure of collective punishment against the village.

* Dr. Nidal Sabri (Commerce Department) gave a paper on "Accounting Methods without Interest" at a March conference at the University of Illinois.

* Dr. Abdul Raouf Taha and Wahbi Suleiman (Mathematics Department) attended a March 24-26 conference on "Computer Science and Information Systems in Arab Universities" at Yarmouk University, Jordan, sponsored by the Association of Arab Universities. Dr. Taha presented a paper entitled, "Notes on the First Stage of Implementing Information Systems in Arab Universities."



FAREWELL LECTURE

* Dr. Mahfouz Rais of the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Kuwait, gave a farewell lecture at a February gathering in the new offices of Birzeit's Department of Civil Engineering. Dr. Rais had been a visiting faculty member at Birzeit University for the past year. Dr. Shadi Ghaban, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, and Dr. Abbas Abdul Haq, Chairman of the Department of Civil Engineering, also gave talks at the gathering.

GUEST LECTURES

* The Department of Sociology and Anthropology sponsored a March 18 colloquium in which Sonia Nimr, a Birzeit graduate now working on her doctoral dissertation at Exeter University, and Ted Swedenburg, a graduate student at the University of Texas, discussed their current fieldwork on the 1936-1939 rebellion in Palestine.

* Professor Hörst Kopp of Tübingen University delivered two guest lectures at Birzeit University on March 23 and 25. The first discussed "Traditional and Modern Methods of Agriculture in North Yemen and its Influence on the Environment." Professor Kopp discussed in his second lecture the Tübingen Atlas of the Middle East, an on-going project which he heads and in which Birzeit faculty member Dr. Kamal Abdul Fattah participates.

of fallacy & folly

An highly irregular column from the Birzeit Public Relations Office.

NEVER HOLD A BOOK EXHIBIT IN A BLIZZARD

We deeply regret to inform the public at large that our cherished "authorities," formerly renowned both for their ingenuity and their unerring sense of style (despite a strange addition to olive-drab clothing), are clearly in a rut.

To wit, our sister institution, Bethlehem University was recently closed for one week by military order after an army raid on a book exhibit. Really, fellows, another raid on books? We are confident you could do better: what about a nice attack on an inciting physical education class? an illegal department meeting? an inflammatory physics lab? As William Carlos Williams aptly put it: "Make it new."

Some readers whose minds have been twisted by logic might wonder why Bethlehem University was closed for one week for a book exhibit and Birzeit for two months. The answer is simple: it was very cold the night of the raid on Birzeit and everyone knows it's much more trying to ransack a University campus when one is feeling chilly. Moral: Never hold a book exhibit during a blizzard.

ON THE FRONTIERS OF KNOWLEDGE

As an academic institution, we must tip our hats to the extremist settler movement, who have succeeded in utilizing the most au courant and abstruse philosophical concepts in their campaign against Birzeit University. A fine example is the statement of the Council for Jewish Settlements on April 1 calling for the

permanent closure of Birzeit University in the wake of the killing of a settler in the Bireh vegetable market. The settlers did not stoop to rank empiricism to prove their point. Indeed, the complete absence of any empirical relation between the event and Birzeit University was the real clue, as any fashionable French philosopher would know. Thus, the settlers seized upon the "silence" in the text, like philosophical bloodhounds. They proceeded to "deconstruct" the text of the situation and discovered the underlying relation between students and vegetables. Clearly, there are fugitive post-structuralists at large in the West Bank. Beware.

A KIND INVITATION

Birzeit University notes the gracious invitation of soldiers guarding a March 23 checkpoint that prevented a group of Israeli academics from visiting the University. Hospitable soldiers kindly informed a Birzeit faculty member that the University could have "as many Arabs as they liked" visit its premises. So, for those people who thought the authorities might be unwelcoming, be assured that a standing invitation has been issued.

PRISON REPORT

In a new 16-page report entitled STUDENTS BEHIND BARS, the experience of 14 students imprisoned on July 27, 1983 is described. The students served 1 1/2-2 years in prison for allegedly participating in an illegal rally.

The report raises serious questions about prison conditions for Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons. Particular concern is directed to the problem of overcrowding, and the inadequacy of medical provision. The questionable circumstances surrounding the trial of the 14 students is also described in the report.

Copies of the report are available from Birzeit University Public Relations Office.

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An earlier press release from the University noted that the army raid and campaign "was not launched for reasons of "security," or even to make a legal case against the University. Rather its purpose was to orchestrate damaging publicity, as the illegal methods of search and seizure underline."

Board of Trustees attorney Raja Shehadeh elaborated on the "draconian" nature of military orders concerning illegal literature. Not only are materials freely available in Jerusalem illegal in the West Bank, but the definition of illegal literature is so wide as to include all published material that does not specifically have a military permit.

Hebrew University sociologist Dr. Stan Cohen, speaking on behalf of the Israeli Solidarity Committee with Birzeit University, emphasized that the main issue was the use of collective punishment against Birzeit University and called on all academics to protest the closure of the University.

Albert Aghazarian, Assistant to the Vice-President for Public Relations, described the difficulties the University faced in finishing its first semester in the extremely cramped quarters of the old campus and the obstacles facing faculty both in teaching and continuing on-going research, especially in the sciences. The main new campus houses the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Commerce and Economics, including all laboratories and engineering workshops. In addition, it contains all administration offices, the Computer Center, the Science and Engineering Library, and the bookstore.

Birzeit University's tenth military-ordered closure came as the University was marking its first ten years as a four year University.

SUMMER AT BIRZEIT

SUMMER CAMPS

As in previous years, the Student Affairs Office, in association with the Student Council, will be organising summer workcamps for students and young people from all over the world. Because of disruption to the academic program caused by closures there will be just two camps this year. The first will run from August 5 - August 16, and the second from August 19 - August 30.

Participants in the camp will receive food and tent accomodation in exchange for work in a wide variety of agricultural and simple construction projects in all parts of the occupied territories. Cultural activities, lectures and excursions will also be organized. An equal number of Birzeit students will participate in the camps with the foreign volunteers.

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER COURSES

In addition to the summer camps, a number of international summer courses for foreign students will be offered at Birzeit. The six-week courses will run from July 2 - August 16, 1985. The cost of tuition per course is \$250. Accomodation is available from the university at a cost of \$175 for six weeks.

1. Arabic 131 (Arabic for non-native speakers A)
2. Arabic 132 (Arabic for non-native speakers B)
3. Arabic 130 (Colloquial Arabic)
4. Sociology 335 (Sociology of Religion)
5. Sociology 438 (Special Topics: Development Under Occupation)
6. Sociology 234 (Palestinian Society)
7. Anthropology 233 (Introduction to Folklore)
8. Political Science 433 (Modernisation of the Arab World)

HOW TO APPLY: For an application, write to SUMMER CAMPS or SUMMER PROGRAM, Birzeit University, Birzeit, West Bank, Via Israel.