



*Committee on International Freedom of Scientists  
of the American Physical Society  
One Physics Ellipse, College Park, Maryland 20740, USA*

3 June 2008

**CIFS 2008**

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The Honorable Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Fax: (202) 261-8577

Dear Secretary Rice,

I write to you on behalf of the Committee on International Freedom of Scientists (CIFS) of the American Physical Society (APS). APS is the largest organization of physicists in the United States with a significant international membership. CIFS is charged by APS with monitoring the human rights of scientists throughout the world and assisting those in need.

The Committee believes that education, and science education in particular, is an essential element of peace, security, and individual liberty. The right to education is acknowledged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are concerned about all cases in which this right is restricted.

CIFS was disappointed to learn from recent accounts in the U.S. and international press of the Department of State's withdrawal of Fulbright scholarships awarded to Gaza students, and that Israel persists in its policy of not granting exit visas to Gaza citizens who want to travel abroad to study or to join academic institutions.

The Committee applauds your statement in which you expressed your support of the goals of the Fulbright scholarship program in Palestine. We were heartened to learn of the quick action taken by you and the Department of State to reverse this decision and reinstate the grants.

The Fulbright scholars are not the only students who cannot leave Gaza to pursue education or an academic career. CIFS has written to Prime Minister Olmert of Israel on January 15, 2008 expressing our concern with Israel's travel restrictions on more than 600 students from Gaza who were accepted to universities abroad. As this recent episode with Fulbright scholars shows, the government of Israel has not taken any measures to address the problem.

We hope that you could use the influence of your office and contacts to urge the Israeli authorities to lift this ban and to allow students to travel to the United States, Europe, and other destinations in pursuit of dreams of higher education. We firmly believe that this would be an important step to building peace and security in the region.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pavel Podvig". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Pavel Podvig  
CIFS Chair 2008