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Physical
Society

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American Physical Society

14 April 2017

Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
3 Kaplan St. Hakiryia
Jerusalem 91950, Israel

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu,

I write as President of the American Physical Society (APS). APS is the largest organization of physicists in the United States with over 54,000 members, worldwide.

For several years now, we have been monitoring the situation in Gaza, deeply concerned about obstacles facing both physics students and faculty at universities in Gaza who seek to travel to international scientific conferences, as well as barriers that many students from Gaza have encountered when seeking to pursue advanced study abroad.

In August 2016, it came to our attention that a physics graduate student at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) was not granted permission to travel by the government of Israel in order to attend the first Palestinian Advanced Physics School, held at the Arab American University of Jenin. We were also informed that two physics faculty members from IUG, Mohammed Shabat and Hala el Khozondar, were not granted permission to travel to the fifth Palestinian Conference on Modern Trends in Mathematics and Physics, which was also held at the Arab American University of Jenin. Both Shabat and el Khozondar were invited speakers.

We understand and respect the unique security needs confronting Israel. But since our inquiries with physics colleagues in Israel yielded little information about the situations in question, we would like to ask your office for help in securing additional information about these restrictions, and whether these cases reflect specific circumstances regarding some individuals, rather than a general policy. We would also like to emphasize that freedom of travel is especially essential for students, who must have access to advanced training, opportunities for which are currently highly restricted in Gaza.

We ask that the government of Israel allow students and faculty in Gaza the opportunity to travel as necessary as part of their scientific work, consistent with security needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura H. Greene".

Laura H. Greene