

Bradford student's ordeal comes to an end

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Meet Khaled Al-Mudallal a 22 year old Palestinian studying at the University of Bradford. Today, he would have been in the midst of the final year exams for Business Management, instead, he was locked down in Gaza with no clear way out.

He was one of an estimated 670 Palestinian students in Gaza studying abroad. Khaled came to Bradford almost 10 years ago with his family and parents. He successfully completed his GCSEs and A-Levels at Grange Technology College in the city and studying Business Management was the final step in his educational journey in Bradford.

Instead, this summer when he went to Gaza to marry and bring his wife, Duaa, back with him, things took a turn for the worst. First, warfare broke out between rivals Hamas and Fatah, leaving Hamas in control. Then, Israel announced a virtual lock-down of Gaza, closing all routes out of Gaza and leaving Khaled, as well as many others like him, trapped and unable to return to continue their studies.

Gisha - Legal Centre for Freedom of Movement took his right-to-education case to the Israeli Supreme Court in October on Khaled's behalf but it was rejected. In a surprise move on the 4th of December, Khaled was allowed to fly back to the UK. He arrived in Heathrow and had the following to say:

"I am happy to be back in the UK but the fight does not end here. I will continue the struggle for the rest of the students still trapped in Gaza. I would like to thank everyone who has supported me in this difficult time, especially NUS."

Khaled had the support of many of his fellow students and student organisations all around the UK. A recent petition on the Government's website attracted nearly a thousand signatures whilst a parallel petition on another site, at the time of writing, has gone past the 2,500 mark.

A previous statement by the NUS President, Gemma Tumelty, said:

"The Prime Minister should call on the Israeli government to allow Khaled Al-Mudallal to leave Gaza immediately. The right to education is a human right as stated in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right for students to study freely and safely across the world must be defended. Education will be central to finding a peaceful resolution in the Middle East."

A statement released by Khaled himself still in Gaza read:

"I challenged the restrictions imposed by the "The state of Israeli" on me, which to tell the world and especially to the British public that I am a victim of the Israeli restrictions on freedom of movement which also affects hundreds of students in Gaza Strip. Why Israel is punishing me for what I haven't committed. Is it because I am a Palestinian who has been living abroad since he was 16, working hard for his future. I am seeking to finish my degree and to have brighter future as I wished but unfortunately Israel comes and closes all borders in front of me, preventing me from leaving Gaza.

Recently I refuted a statement by the Israeli embassy in London which they claimed that I had the choice to leave Gaza as I have not been able to leave Gaza since June 2007 due to the restrictions on freedom of movement, not because I have chosen not to, but because I was prevented from doing so"

You can find out more information on Khaled's case by visiting a website set up by his supporters on:
<http://www.letkhaledstudy.co.uk/>