**In Defence of Academic Freedom in Palestine: Expression of Rejection against *Procedures for Entry and Residency of Foreigners in Judea and Samaria Region***

We are academics from the University of Ghana who have read with deep concern the new directives – “Procedure for Entry and Residency of Foreigners in Judea and Samaria Region (Section C),” – issued by the Israeli government on February 20, 2022, which details the entry and residency of students, academics and scholars from oversees to Palestinian universities, effective May 20, 2022.

As sympathizers of Birzeit, we have been following developments at Palestinian universities with keen interest and concern due to the unduly severe restrictions that have been imposed on the running of Palestinian universities, especially Birzeit, which in our opinion, constitutes serious violations of international law. Birzeit and other Palestinian university students, faculty and employees have suffered for decades under a relentless Israeli military campaign. These abusive measures have included forced closures, campus incursions, intimidation, and imprisonment. We believe such actions are racially motivated against the Palestinian people and designed to deny them their fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right for freedom of expression and scientific development.

We are of the conviction that the new directive will have a more adverse effect on Palestinian universities, if power is granted to the Israeli military to implement this draconian policy.

Such procedures will further strangle higher education which is already suffering from the existing policies. It will disempower Palestinian universities from designing quality educational programmes that will contribute to the socio-economic and cultural development of the Palestinian society.

The T.B. Davie formula of academic freedom postulated to counter interference by the then apartheid regime in South Africa against higher education institutions in the country grants each higher education institution the freedom “from external interference in (a) who shall teach, (b) what we teach, (c) how we teach, and (d) whom we teach”).

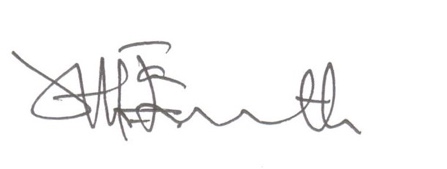
The power invested in the Israeli military to determine, for example, which international faculty, academic researchers and students may be allowed to visit Palestinian universities to teach, conduct research and to learn constitutes gross violation of this principle and, more importantly, of international law, including the 1997 *UNESCO Recommendation on the Status Higher Education Personnel*, the 1960 *UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education* and the 1974 *Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, the right to education enshrined in article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and article 13 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (1966). Promoting academic freedom and the right to education will ultimately lead to the inculcation of principles of justice, peace, democracy and human rights

The coming into effect of this law will obviously affect internationalisation, student and academic staff mobility and exchange programmes, which are critical for higher education institutions everywhere to survive.

We are aware that every pillar of academic freedom goes in tandem with duties, limitations and social responsibilities. They are not *carte blanche* and Palestinian universities, like all higher education institutions, academics and students, understand that. If the Israeli authorities feel that there have been serious violations of the law by Palestinian universities, we invite the Israeli authorities to resort to the available legal processes and mechanisms. We express our strongest objection to these repressive measures introduced to stifle freedom, the right to self-determination and democracy of the Palestinian people.

It is, therefore, our request that the directive be abandoned.

Yours truly,



Professor Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua

(Signed on behalf of concerned academics and friends of Birzeit)