



Date: 8/7/2012

Dear Excellency,

Greetings.

Please find below an urgent request to the donor community to set aside a special package for the support of higher education in the Palestinian Territories (PT).

1. **Background:** Just over 180,000 students currently study in the various institutions of Higher Learning (12 'traditional' universities, 31 community colleges and university colleges and one open university) in the PT. Nearly 60,000 students are registered in the open university, and 100,000 in the 'traditional' universities. The rest are registered in the various kinds of colleges listed. Traditional universities employ 9735 FT and 2600 PT staff members, of whom there are 1456 PhDs (ranked as full, associate and assistant professors).<sup>1</sup> **These constitute the bulk of the local Palestinian 'brain trust'.**<sup>2</sup> Programs of education (at the Bachelor and Masters levels) cover the majority of disciplines, ranging from fine arts to medicine. The Higher Education Database estimated the annual operational costs of the traditional universities in 2007 to have been around \$112 million, but due to cost-of-living adjustments brought about through union action towards the end of 2008, it is estimated that this will have reached the \$156 million mark by now. According to some estimates<sup>3</sup> revenues before the adjustments reached around \$90 million (\$80 million for fees and tuition, and \$10 million through other sources –scholarships, loans, donations and research), while the PA's budgeted (but unfulfilled) contribution, at its one-time peak, was set at \$20 million (constituting only 3% of the national budget). Even assuming the PA's commitment to its budgetary plans (in fact, the PA's allocated subsidies to *all* higher education for this year has been slashed down from 179 million to 47 million shekels, or to just over \$12 million), the **expected deficit**

**in the operational costs of the traditional universities for this year will amount to about \$66 million.**

<sup>1</sup> Higher Education Database (2009). Unpublished internal report

<sup>2</sup> A majority of 'civil servants', including those in high positions, have been drawn from the university sector. This process began even prior to the establishment of the PA, when the Palestinians created the 'technical committees' in 1991 as a first 'shadow' government.

<sup>3</sup> Kamal R. (2008). New Standard Cadre, study presented to the higher education ad-hoc committee





2. **Request:** There are two overriding reasons for why it is highly advisable for international parties who are already involved in our region henceforth **to begin directly providing for the operational deficit of higher education** (whether by explicitly earmarking the amount in its annual contributions to the PA, or by transferring the said amount specifically to the Higher Education Authority in the PA, or by making the transfers directly to the universities themselves):

- (1) Failing political progress, at least economic stability should be provided for. Partly, such stability can be achieved through sparing universities –whose campuses are potential powder kegs- financial hardships that will be reflected on both students and staff.
- (2) Looking forward for political progress, both education and health are essential prerequisites for the building up of a self-reliant economy. These are areas that have unfortunately not received as much support from the foreign community (as reflected in PA budgeting) as is deserved, or in contrast with other areas of expenditures (e.g. security, or elephant projects). Historically, education has held the pride of place of Palestinian achievements. Special attention to it now can only reinforce a well-proven ‘natural resource’, while neglecting it will undermine a major pillar of state-building.

Your positive response to this request (implemented under whatever arrangement suitable to yourselves) will both spare the PA one additional financial headache, and will spare us ours.

Respectfully,

  
**Dr. Amjad Barham**

**The President of the Unions**

Of Teachers and Employees of Palestinian Universities



**Al- Najah University Union**

**Al – Azhar University Union**

**Berziet University Union**

**Bethlehem University Union**

**Hebron University Union**

**Polytechnic University Union**

**Al Quds open University Union**

**Al Islamic University Union**

**Al Quds University Union**