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CAS Meets: Ayman Talal Quader

Gaza, February 1, 2010 (Pal Telegraph) - A Student From Gaza My name is Ayman Talal Quader, I am 23 years old, and I live in the [Nuseirat refugee camp](#), in the middle of the Gaza Strip.

CAS: What is it like to be a student in Gaza?

Ayman Talal Quader: I remember when I was still at secondary school, it was before the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from Gaza in 2005, and the Israeli army would block the road which ran from where I lived to where my school was. So, from an early age I learnt the education of occupation.

I finished my degree at the [Islamic University of Gaza](#) in January 2008. The situation for students in Gaza is completely different from those studying outside of Palestine. Most students here never get the chance to prove their true potential. I am 100% certain that they have the desire and energy to do so, but they are simply not given the space to demonstrate their abilities. Of course, the students are seriously affected by the ongoing siege of the Gaza Strip; we cannot get the materials we need, the books, stationary and even paper! In the most recent war, several of the university buildings were either partially, or in some cases completely destroyed. With the borders are still closed, no raw materials are being allowed into Gaza, so those buildings that were destroyed a year ago are still lying in piles of rubble.

CAS: Are you hoping to continue your studies?

Ayman Talal Quader: I hope to study towards a Masters at [Universitat Jaume I \(UJI\)](#) in Spain, in a city called Castellón, not far from Valencia. I was granted a scholarship in November 2009, to study Peace, Conflict and Development Studies.

I have all the legal papers I need: passport, visa, an acceptance letter from the University, supporting letters from NGOs in Spain, and even from the Spanish Embassy in Cairo. But as you know, the borders are closed, so no-one can leave easily. My problem right now is that my studies start in six days from now, on February 8th, and I have no way of leaving Gaza... I have been co-ordinating with embassies and human rights organisations, but I still haven't heard anything. My flight leaves from Cairo on February 1st, but if I'm not allowed out then I will lose my ticket. I am so frustrated by this situation.

I saw in the news yesterday that Spain are acting as a mediator, to assist myself and 13 other students to leave the Gaza Strip, who are about to lose their scholarships. So I hope that everything will be OK, and I feel so lucky to have been able not only to get my voice out there, but also to help raise awareness about those other 13 students.

CAS: If you are not allowed to travel abroad, how do you see your future?

Ayman Talal Quader: This is a very frustrating question for me. I hope that I will get out without any problems. This is a golden opportunity for me, and I don't want to lose it under any circumstances, but I do fear for my future.

CAS: How can students in other countries support your cause?

Ayman Talal Quader: As students from across the world, we all share one thing in common - the right to education. This is a right supported by international law, supported by the UN, by the EU, and by governments and agencies from all over the world. So all I need is my right, to pursue my studies like any other student.

I have already received a lot of support from international students, people that are just like me, especially from those in Spain. They are running a [petition](#), which has received 200

signatures so far, they launched a Facebook group called "[Open Rafah For Ayman](#)" which many people have joined, and it makes me so happy to see their comments in the group. I have also been interviewed by newspapers, magazines, and two days ago by a local Spanish radio station in Castellón, where I spoke about my story and the ongoing suffering of the Gaza people.

The support is great, but in reality it doesn't mean anything, all I need now is a quick solution for my situation.

CAS: What gave you the idea to start your "[Voice From Gaza](#)" blog?

Ayman Talal Quader: During the war on Gaza, I was stuck in my home for 23 days straight, with nothing to do. I didn't have much experience in writing or blogging at the time, but after the war ended, I felt that I had something to get out, from my heart. I found that I could do so through writing.

There was one family that were evacuated from their home; they were living very close to where the Israeli troops were stationed at the time, so they were forced to leave. They were being sheltered at my family's home. They used to walk to their house to check that it hadn't been damaged and that the rest of their extended family hadn't been harmed, and they would come back to our house by walking down Salah ad-Din Street, the main street in Gaza. It was very clear to the Israeli soldiers that they were civilians walking in the street, looking for shelter. One day, we were waiting for them to come back to our house, and three of the children from the family, whilst they were on the way, were targeted by an Israeli missile, which had several shrapnel bombs inside, and all three were severely injured. So half of the family were at my home, and the other half were in the hospital. I saw the suffering of their father and their mother in front of me... their home was in danger, and now three of their children were in hospital with life-threatening injuries, and it was such a tragic situation. I felt like I had to write something about this.

I wrote an article and published it online, and I was shocked by the response; it was translated into several languages, and I was getting e-mails from people all over the world, so I decided that I would start to write a couple of stories per month, and continued from there. The messages of support push me to keep on writing.

CAS: It says at the top of your blog that you believe, one day, justice will prevail here. With the siege now tighter than ever, how do you think a solution can be achieved?

Ayman Talal Quader: What's happening in the Gaza Strip is a real injustice, and it's unlawful, in regards to the siege, the war, and the suffering of the Gazan people. But to believe in something, is better than not to believe. We are passing through very harsh conditions now, with the closure of the borders, shortages of food supplies and shortages of medicine, but these conditions will not last forever. For myself, I believe that justice will prevail one day, and no-one can deny me of this. I am sure that this day will come.

CAS: What gives you inspiration?

Ayman Talal Quader: The smiles of the Gazan people. The people of Gaza have lived through everything, and can adapt to any situation; if it is a time of war, they live in war, if it is a time of peace, they live in peace, if it is a time of entertainment, they enjoy themselves! Whatever happens here, they try to live their lives. So when I see children here smiling, laughing, shaking hands and playing games with each other, it gives me inspiration.

CAS: If you could send a message to the international community, what would you say?

Ayman Talal Quader: In my case, we were very successful in gaining the support of the media. I think that the European media in particular is finally taking an interest in the plight of the Palestinians, and it is important for people to take advantage of this.

The world cannot stay silent forever. This is a severe injustice in the Gaza Strip, and our human rights are being violated every day.

If the world continues to watch our rights being violated without taking action, then this is a real catastrophe... Not just for the people of Palestine, but for all of us.

Ayman Quader's blog, "[Voice From Gaza](#)", can be found at www.peaceforgaza.blogspot.com

