

# Visa refusals and delays must not deny Palestinian students access to education

*ESN Ireland and ESN International call for urgent action on the outstanding visa appeals of Palestinian scholarship students from Gaza*

Erasmus Student Network Ireland (ESN Ireland) and Erasmus Student Network (ESN) International call on Ireland's Minister for Justice and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to urgently prioritise the outstanding visa appeals of Palestinian students from Gaza who have secured places and scholarships at Irish higher education institutions for the 2026/27 academic year, including examining whether these cases can be reviewed through an expedited process, with a view to enabling eligible students to take up the educational opportunities they have already secured.

According to a [joint statement published by six civil-society and human-rights organisations on 1 September](#), at least 103 Palestinian students with fully or partially funded scholarships at Irish higher education institutions have been affected by study visa refusals, impacting students due to attend several institutions across Ireland. We welcome the fact that some students have received visas and have been able to travel to Ireland. However, many others remain unable to take up their places, demonstrating the need for urgent decisions on their outstanding appeals.

## Urgent decisions are needed

These students have already overcome extraordinary barriers to secure admission and funding while living through conflict, displacement and the destruction of educational and essential civilian infrastructure. They now face the possibility of losing opportunities they have worked exceptionally hard to secure.

The 2026/27 academic year has begun, but a number of the students concerned remain unable to travel to Ireland. Reports that visa appeals may take up to 12 months are particularly concerning, as students risk losing an academic year, their university place or the scholarship supporting their studies.

There are also serious concerns about whether ordinary documentation and evidential requirements adequately reflect the conditions facing applicants in Gaza. Conflict, displacement and the destruction of essential infrastructure can make it exceptionally difficult to access original documents, banking records and other evidence ordinarily required during visa and appeal procedures. These circumstances should be taken into account in the assessment of individual applications, including through appropriate flexibility regarding documentation and alternative forms of evidence where standard requirements cannot reasonably be met.

## **A shared concern across the education community**

We welcome the [recent joint statement from Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn and the European Students' Union](#), as well as the work already undertaken by Irish higher education institutions, students' unions and civil-society organisations.

[The Irish Universities Association](#) has also expressed concern regarding the higher level of visa refusals observed this year and confirmed that it continues to engage with the Government at ministerial and senior-official level.

These efforts demonstrate the broad concern across the education community and the urgent need for a coordinated and meaningful government response. ESN Ireland and ESN International add our voices to this call, with a particular focus on ensuring that visa and mobility procedures do not prevent students from accessing educational opportunities they have already secured.

## **International education and mobility must remain accessible during conflict**

International education and mobility can provide students with continuity, safety and the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills that will support their communities in the future. These opportunities must remain meaningful and accessible in practice.

In [Bridging Futures: Rebuilding International Higher Education in Gaza and the Middle East after October 2023](#), ESN called for stronger support for students whose education has been disrupted by conflict. This includes greater flexibility in admission and mobility procedures, tailored support with visa and relocation processes and practical measures to ensure that students from conflict-affected contexts can access and continue higher education.

Students who have secured admission and funding to study in Ireland should not lose access to those opportunities solely because the ordinary appeals process cannot be concluded within a timeframe that allows them to commence their studies.

## **Our call to the Irish Government**

ESN Ireland and ESN International therefore call on the Minister for Justice and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to:

- urgently prioritise and examine the outstanding visa appeals of Palestinian students who have secured places at Irish higher education institutions;
- establish whether these cases can be reviewed through an expedited process, in light of the commencement of the academic year and the exceptional circumstances facing the students concerned;
- ensure that documentation and evidential requirements take appropriate account of the exceptional circumstances faced by applicants in Gaza, including through appropriate flexibility and the consideration of alternative forms of evidence where ordinary documentation cannot reasonably be obtained.
- ensure that applications and appeals are assessed with due consideration of these exceptional circumstances and that visas are granted without unnecessary delay where the applicable requirements are met;
- communicate appeal decisions within a timeframe that gives successful students a genuine opportunity to travel to Ireland and begin their studies during the 2026/27 academic year.

We also encourage close coordination between the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the affected higher education institutions to support the students concerned. Wherever possible, students' university places and scholarships should remain protected while their appeals are being considered.

The availability of an appeal is not sufficient if the decision comes too late for a student to take up their university place. The appeals process must be meaningful in practice, not only available in principle.

ESN Ireland and ESN International will continue working with student representatives, higher education stakeholders and civil-society organisations to advocate for access to education and mobility for students affected by conflict.