

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE 55 GAZAN STUDENTS

**These students submitted their applications in line with the procedures followed in previous years.** This is not the first time Irish universities have offered scholarships to students from Gaza through these arrangements; this is the third time. Yet, despite this established practice, students are now facing new documentation demands and refusals that have left them caught in a system that appears to have changed its approach without providing clear, consistent instructions to match.

Some students were refused visas on the basis of documents they had never been asked to provide. When they attempted to obtain and submit the additional documents, they were instructed to appeal using their original documents and send them by post – an impossible requirement for students in Gaza, where there is no functioning postal service. Left with no practical alternative, they were forced to pursue their appeals through lawyers.

Others were asked to surrender their passports to the embassy and were informed that an evacuation was expected in July. Throughout this process, the embassy repeatedly confirmed to them in writing that it had no role in the decisions and that responsibility rested with Dublin. **The Taoiseach has himself acknowledged a disconnect between the Department of Justice and the universities.** What failed this year is the coordination between the Departments of Justice, Foreign Affairs and Higher Education, and the universities. No single department can fix that, and only the Taoiseach, as head of Government, can.

On 9 October 2026, three students' cases were resolved through a settlement with the Government. This demonstrates that a resolution is possible. If a settlement could be reached for these students, why are the remaining 55 still being left in limbo, facing the loss of their university places and potentially life-saving evacuation opportunities? **We ask the Taoiseach to ensure that the remaining 55 cases are resolved on the same basis as the three already settled.** In the meantime, we ask him to direct the Department of Foreign Affairs to submit the names of all 55 students now for the security clearances needed for evacuation, while their appeals are resolved, so that no student misses the next evacuation because of delays they did not cause.

**The consequences are already extending beyond Ireland.** Some students have applied to universities in other countries, only to have their applications refused because of their Irish visa refusals. A decision made by one government is now threatening to close educational doors elsewhere, too. These students are paying the price for a failure they did not cause and have no power to correct.