

# Birthright Does Not Apply to Palestinians in Jerusalem

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*Life has been difficult as a stateless person in Jerusalem for **Mustafa Kharouf**. He had the unfortunate case of being born to Jerusalem parents while they were in Algiers. His parents brought him back to Jerusalem but the Israelis for obvious racist reasons have refused to grant him residency in the only city he has lived in all his life. Ironically Jews around the world have a legal right not only to residency but also to citizenship in Israel simply because of what the government considers is their birthright because they belong to the Jewish faith.*

Passing on permanent residency is a natural in any city in the world. But for Israel demographics trump personal right. Ever since the 2003 temporary law that allows Israel to deny family reunification to Jerusalemites married to Palestinians from the rest of the occupied territories, the lives of people like Mustafa has been hell. Even after he married and had a daughter, the Israelis have refused to grant him residency in Jerusalem where he has worked as a photographer for the Turkish Anadolu news agency. The fact that his parents, siblings and his wife all have legal permanent residency didn't help him as Israeli officials insisted on deporting him.

Six months ago Israel arrested Mustafa in order to deport him, but since he is stateless it was hard to get a court agreement to deport him. Israeli authorities came up with various reasons to deport him including a secret security file claiming he is a security threat. As always Palestinians demand to see what is in the so-called secret file and they ask the simple question, why not try him for a crime if he is so dangerous? Is the fact that he works for a Turkish news agency a reason to accuse him of being a "security threat", or is it that he constantly films Israeli extremists violations in Al Aqsa Mosque and in Jerusalem at large the real reason?

Efforts by the HaMoked human rights organisation and lawyer Adi Lustigman came to an end last week when the Israeli high court refused to listen to his case, thus paving the way for deportation. The Israeli authorities have been told that if Jordan doesn't accept him, he should be free to continue his life with his family in Jerusalem. Adi Lustigman described the deportation attempt against a person who has lived all his life in Jerusalem as being "illegal and immoral".

The deportation process began 9pm Sunday night. Mustafa was taken from the special pre-deportation facility at Ramleh prison to the King Hussein Bridge. For over three hours Israeli officials tried to convince their Jordanian counterparts to take him since he has a temporary Jordanian passport although he is not a citizen of Jordan, but Jordanians refused. Colonel

Rafat Matarneh told me that no one will enter Jordan without proper documents.

That should have ended what the Israeli officials bent on deporting him already knew from the courts and from previous Jordanian positions. After being rebuffed at the King Hussein Bridge, Israeli forces took Mustafa for a four-hour journey to the Wadi Araba Crossing. He arrived at the wee hours and was literally dumped at the Jordanian crossing that only opens at 8am.

Jordanians at the Wadi Araba, just like the officials at King Hussein Bridge, went through the legal proceedings again and sent him back since his documents were not valid for entering Jordan.

Israel is obliged now according to the legal proceedings to let him go, but instead Mustafa has been rearrested. It is not clear what new crime or accusation will now be used to keep him away from his family, his wife and his two-year-old child.

Israel claims to be the only democracy in the Middle East. This might be the case for Jews (especially those of the European origin). But for Palestinians and others, it is difficult after following the case and suffering of Mustafa Kharouf to really think that Israel is a democracy for all those under its control.

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