

THE DFL TIMES

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For some of our scholars, getting to destination is the first challenge!

On September 5th 2014, another student joined our four scholars already at the New College of Florida. Ayah Tafesh from Palestine was finally able to leave the Palestinian territory to catch a flight to Paris one her way to Sarasota Florida. In the history of our foundation, it was the first time a student was in jeopardy of not being able to travel to her new institution to start her courses.



(Ayah is first from the left along with her fellowsw scholars at the New College of Florida)

This sad and stressful situation was caused by the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Despite all her efforts, Ayah experienced many hurdles in getting her legal paper that would allow her to go through the numerous customs that she had to go through on the itinerary from Palestine to Florida. First she had to access Egypt to catch a flight to Paris, France. Once there, another check point had to be passed through. As if her journey was not already complicated enough, her laptop computer was not allowed on board at Charles De Gaulle Airport as the customs agent were unable to turn the power on. Since July 2014, as part of the increased scrutiny at certain airports, security agents may ask travelers to turn on their electronic devices at check-points and if they do not have power, the devices will not be allowed on the plane. She was therefore forced to leave her device behind and continue her trip to Sarasota.

Now that she has landed in Florida, Ayah can finally focus on her studies. She is starting a three years adventure during which she will acquire the knowledge and experience that will contribute in developing her leadership skills.

The Daughters for Life Foundation, The New college of Florida and the entire network of donators and supporters are joining forces to wish Ayah the best of success in her upcoming academic projects.

Since 2012 over 30 universities refused access to over 80 degree courses to female students

With the start of the new Iranian academic year, a raft of restrictions on courses open to female students has been introduced, raising questions about the rights of women to education in Iran - and the long-term impact such exclusions might have. More than 30 universities have introduced new rules banning female students from almost 80 different degree courses. These include a bewildering variety of subjects from engineering, nuclear physics and computer science, to English literature, archaeology and business.



No official reason has been given for the move, but campaigners, including Nobel Prize winning lawyer Shirin Ebadi, allege it is part of a deliberate policy by the authorities to exclude women from education.

“The Iranian government is using various initiatives... to restrict women’s access to education, to stop them being active in society, and to return them to the home,” she told the BBC.

Higher Education Minister Kamran Daneshjoo has sought to play down the situation, stressing Iran’s strong track record in getting young people into higher education and saying that despite the changes, 90% of university courses are still open to both men and women.

Iran was one of the first countries in the Middle East to allow women to study at university and since the Islamic Revolution in 1979 it has made big efforts to encourage more girls to enrol in

higher education.

The gap between the numbers of male and female students has gradually narrowed. In 2001 women outnumbered men for the first time and they now make up more than 60% of the overall student body.

Year-on-year more Iranian women than men are applying for university places, motivated some say by the chance to live a more independent life, to have a career and to escape the pressure from parents to stay at home and to get married.

Women are well-represented across a wide range of professions and there are many female engineers, scientists and doctors. But many in Iran fear that the new restrictions could now undermine this achievement.

“I wanted to study architecture and civil engineering,” says Leila, a young woman from the south of Iran. “But access for girls has been cut by fifty per cent, and there’s a chance I won’t get into university at all this year.”

Traditional politicians now see educated and powerful women as a threat”

“In the early days after the Islamic revolution, universities were one of the few places where young Iranian men and women could mix relatively freely.

Over the years this gradually changed, with universities introducing stricter measures like separate entrances, lecture halls and even canteens for men and women.

Since then, there have been many changes at universities, with courses cut and long-serving academic staff replaced with conservative loyalists” Said Saeed Moidfar Retired professor from Tehran

Noushin A student from Esfahan added: “From age 16 I knew I wanted to be a mechanical engineer, I really worked hard for it ... But although I got high marks in the entrance exam, I’ve ended up with a place to study art and design instead”

Many see the new restrictions on female students as a continuation of this process.

It is not yet clear exactly how many women students have been affected by the new rules on university entrance. But as the new academic year begins, at least some have had to completely rethink their career plans.

Since the implementation of these changes, campaigners have been watching closely to track the effects of the policy and are trying to gauge the longer-term implications.

To be continued...