

## Call to Open West Bank Colleges

We view with concern the decision of May 2, 1979, by the Military Governor of the Ramallah District to close Birzeit University for an indefinite period. The closure order was issued without a full investigation of the disturbances attendant upon the Independence Day procession of Gush Emunim supporters through the village of Birzeit. In contravention of the spirit of due legal process, it arbitrarily places responsibility for the disturbances upon Birzeit University by imposing collective punishment on the students, deprivation of the right to pursue an education.

In the name of security, the order serves to obscure the distinction between criminal acts and the free expression of political views. At a time when our government is shaping policy concerning Autonomy, freedom of discussion is more, not less, imperative. In such circumstances, the closure of Birzeit University and other West Bank institutions of higher education, will be construed as an attempt to suppress opinions contrary to those of the Israeli authorities.

The closing down of a university denies the tenets of democracy, free speech and free thought. As Israeli educators, we are under special obligation to assure that Palestinian Arabs are secure in the same rights we demand for ourselves, including the right to higher education.

(Advertisement in Ha'aretz, May 21, 1979 signed by 60 Israeli university professors and lecturers).