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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2025]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Educational Genocide in Palestine: Systematic Attacks on the Right to Learn Under Israeli Occupation

Introduction:

Education is a fundamental right enshrined in international covenants. In Palestine, however, this right is obstructed by structural and systematic barriers imposed by Israeli occupation policies, which extend beyond the military sphere to all aspects of life, including education.

The Palestinian education system has long been a direct target of occupation policies aimed at dismantling societal structures and restricting national development, culminating in the widespread destruction of educational infrastructure during the Gaza offensive.

This report highlights the severe violations against education in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the deliberate targeting of institutions and the suppression of academic freedoms—actions that amount to educational genocide and form part of broader policies of ethnic cleansing and systematic breaches of international law.

The Reality of Education Under Occupation:

Education is one of the fundamental rights that nations strive to preserve and develop in pursuit of a better future. However, this right in Palestine faces numerous challenges imposed by the Israeli occupation.⁽¹⁾ These challenges are not incidental, but rather form part of a strategy aimed at asserting control and dominance over the Palestinian people, in a manner that serves the political objectives of the occupying authorities and reinforces their settlement projects in the occupied Palestinian territories.⁽²⁾

These challenges and obstacles imposed by the occupation are manifested through a series of repressive practices, including restrictions on movement due to the widespread military checkpoints across the West Bank, the demolition of schools, and the arrest of teachers and students.⁽³⁾

This policy also includes imposing restrictions on virtual education on the one hand, and isolating the Palestinian education sector from the rest of the world on the other, by limiting access to Palestinian content on the internet.⁽⁴⁾ It also includes restrictions on the entry of international academics and students into the Palestinian territories, while imposing similar obstacles that prevent Palestinian academics and students from traveling abroad, which negatively affects the development and quality of the education sector.⁽⁵⁾

These policies are not limited to targeting the educational infrastructure, but also extend to the core of the educational process itself. For decades, the occupation authorities have worked to undermine the Palestinians' will to pursue education through multiple interventions, most notably the imposition of modifications to educational curricula, especially in schools in the city of Jerusalem, where this intervention reaches its peak in a manner that serves colonial interests and undermines national identity and Palestinian presence.⁽⁶⁾

These policies are clearly manifested in the city of Jerusalem, where educational institutions, especially UNRWA schools, are under attack. Six schools were documented to have been evacuated in May 2025, forcing 800 students to leave their classrooms.⁽⁷⁾ This comes after the occupation authorities passed laws aiming to terminate the agency's operations in East Jerusalem, in violation of the rights of Palestinian refugees and in an attempt to criminalize humanitarian aid.⁽⁸⁾ Such laws also constitute a breach of the United Nations Charter and the relevant obligations stipulated in international law.⁽⁹⁾

In the same context of attacks on educational institutions affiliated with UNRWA, the Gaza Strip has witnessed, over a period of 19 months, direct and deliberate targeting of UNRWA schools. Not only did education cease in these institutions, but they were also transformed into shelters for the displaced. Despite this, the Israeli army continued bombing these schools, resulting in their destruction and the killing of large numbers of displaced persons who had sought refuge there.⁽¹⁰⁾ These practices fall within what is referred to as educational genocide, which aims to comprehensively destroy the Palestinian education system.⁽¹¹⁾

Education in the Context of Gaza Genocide:

The genocide and ethnic cleansing crimes committed by the occupation authorities in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have resulted in violations of all rights, including the right to education. Since the beginning of the aggression on Gaza, the Israeli army has deliberately destroyed the infrastructure of educational institutions, leading to a complete halt of the educational process.⁽¹²⁾ The Israeli army has also committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the assassination and arrest of students, teachers, and academics.⁽¹³⁾

The gravity of these violations is reflected in the shocking figures that document the scale of human and material losses inflicted on the education sector. In terms of material damage, the Israeli army completely destroyed 143 schools and universities and partially damaged 366 others. As a result, more than 785,000 students have been deprived of education. As for human losses, more than 13,000 students, 800 teachers and education staff, and 150 scientists and researchers have been killed.⁽¹⁴⁾

By the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023, the number of students in the Gaza Strip reached approximately 684,943 students, including 597,722 in schools and 87,221 in higher education institutions.⁽¹⁵⁾ From October 7, 2023, to May 2025, the Israeli war machine targeted more than 13,000 students — approximately 2% of the total student population. On a daily average, the occupation forces assassinated about 22 students per day during this period, in a blatant violation of the rights to education and to life.⁽¹⁶⁾

Before October 7, 2023, there were 752 operating schools in the Gaza Strip,⁽¹⁷⁾ and 17 universities and colleges.⁽¹⁸⁾ Since the beginning of the aggression until May 2025, educational institutions have been subjected to widespread destruction. Given that universities account for less than 3% of these institutions, it can be estimated that the vast majority of the affected institutions are schools — around 140 schools were completely destroyed, and approximately 358 schools were partially damaged.⁽¹⁹⁾ It has been documented that 95% of all schools in the Gaza Strip were affected.⁽²⁰⁾

Conclusion:

What the education sector in Palestine is being subjected to cannot be considered mere collateral damage of conflict, but rather a direct result of systematic policies aimed at undermining the right to education and rendering the entire educational process nearly impossible. These policies also seek to weaken Palestinian national identity and deprive future generations of the tools of awareness, knowledge, and development. The repeated targeting of educational infrastructure, the assassination of students and teachers, and the imposition of restrictions on curricula and academic mobility all constitute flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, and fall within what can be described as educational genocide.

In light of this reality, it is imperative to act urgently and within a broad framework to protect the education sector in Palestine. This includes establishing an independent investigative committee into Israeli violations, providing international protection for educational institutions, lifting restrictions imposed on students, teachers, and curricula, supporting efforts of reconstruction and psychological and educational rehabilitation, and ensuring that these violations are reflected in reports by relevant international bodies as part of policies of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

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