



Education under attack in the occupied Palestinian territory

July 2020

Education under attack in the occupied Palestinian territory

July 2020

The protracted Israeli occupation and the continuing conflict have severely compromised access to education in the occupied Palestinian territory. The right to education is continuously undermined by the numerous education-related incidents, such as attacks or threats of attacks on schools, lost school time due to delays at checkpoints, military presence at school entrances, closed military areas in addition to the use of live ammunition and tear gas in and around schools, school search, confiscation of education items, detention of students and school staff, settler related violence, or school demolitions and stop work orders.

As a result, students' wellbeing, performance and completion rates are severely affected by the situation, which has negative implications for their future prospects.

In the West Bank, the physical availability of educational facilities is undermined by the destruction of school buildings, the imposition of demolition and stop work orders on education infrastructure, and the denial of building permits and impediments to development.

At the same time, the education sector is operated under an emergency situation, due to Israeli continue blockade since 2007. In 2014, Israeli strikes demolished five schools, and partially demolished other 282 schools. Thousands of students are in continuous need for psychosocial support, and the education system is highly vulnerable due to lack of resources. Palestinian internal divisions between Fatah and Hamas are considered as well one of the main factors affecting this sector in the Gaza Strip.

Reported education-related incidents are on the rise, with 328 recorded cases in 2019, as compared to 206 cases in 2018. In 2019, these incidents affected 19,913 students overall.

In 2019, 325 cases were recorded by the education cluster in the West Bank, including 151 in the Hebron governorate alone (83% of the incidents in the governorate took place in the H2 Area, which consists of roughly 20% of the city). East Jerusalem remains another hotspot of incidents with 12 recorded cases in 2019.

In the Gaza Strip, education was also impacted by the escalations of violence that took place in May, November and December, resulting in minor sustained damages and school closures.

Reported education-related incidents are on the rise, with 328 recorded cases in 2019, as compared to 206 cases in 2018. In 2019, these incidents affected 19,913 students overall.

About 143 school classes were lost due to the firing of tear gas on schools and/or students.

Around 33% of all reported education-related incidents involved tear gas firing. Schools in the H2 area of Hebron were the most impacted by this education-related violation, with 69 recorded cases affecting around 2,600 students. In addition, several cases of school days being suspended due to the firing of tear gas were recorded.

Israeli military presence around schools remains another threat to students and school staff, with educational facilities in the proximity of settlements or main roads accessed by settlers being affected the most, leading to increased tensions between soldiers and students.

In 2019, 69 students were arrested or detained within school buildings or during their commute to schools. In one of the incidents that took place in Isawiya – East Jerusalem, a student was physically assaulted, arrested and taken by force from the school to an interrogation centre by the Israeli Security Forces before appearing in court. He was released on bail the following day and placed under house arrest for three days.

Attacks by settlers also inhibited safe access to schools for Palestinian children or targeted school staff. In 2019, there were 33 cases of settlers' violence against schools and/or students, with most of them targeting the H2 area of Hebron, Bethlehem and Nablus. In one of these incidents, Israeli settlers accompanied with the Israeli Security Forces entered the eastern neighbourhood of the Urif village. The Israeli Security Forces fired tear gas towards the villagers while the settlers targeted the Urif Secondary School for Boys in Nablus, throwing stones at the school windows, resulting in six broken school window glasses.

A total of 51 Palestinian schools are under a constant threat of demolition. 43 schools located in Area C and 8 schools in East Jerusalem received a partial or full demolition order, or stop work order due to lack of building permits, which are nearly impossible to obtain. About 5,200 students are affected by this situation that prevents both the maintenance and expansion of school infrastructures.

The hostile environment in the oPt severely impacts the psychosocial condition and development of school-going children, thereby further adversely impacting their capacity to receive an education of an acceptable standard.

The Humanitarian Country Team estimates that 265,000 Palestinian children are in need of psychosocial support, while around 51% of Gaza's children and 31% of the adults suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of the 2014 Israeli attack on the besieged Gaza Strip.

The education sector in the oPt expects the international community to take all necessary measures to avoid the damage or destruction of educational infrastructure, including ending administrative demolition of educational facilities and revoking demolition orders in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank, in addition to take all responsibility towards the Gaza strip, by ensuring protection to educational facilities as a first priority, and ending the ongoing blockade over Gaza Strip.