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### Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

## Written submission by the Independent Commission for Human Rights of the State of Palestine\*

### Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat of the Human Rights Council hereby transmits the communication submitted by the Independent Commission for Human Rights of the State of Palestine\*\*, reproduced below in accordance with rule 7(b) of the rules of procedures described in the annex to Council resolution 5/1, according to which participation of national human rights institutions is to be based on arrangements and practices agreed upon by the Commission on Human Rights, including resolution 2005/74 of 20 April 2005.

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\* National human rights institution with A status accreditation from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

\*\* Reproduced in the annex as received, in the language of submission only.



## Annex

### Israeli Violations of the Right to Education in Occupied of Jerusalem

The occupied city of Jerusalem is experiencing the most volatile time. Informed and systematic Israeli plans have been designed by Israel to Judaize and exercise control over all aspects of life of the Palestinian population in the city. At the same time, the Israeli occupying authorities have escalated attacks on the Palestinian education system across the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) in general, and in Jerusalem in particular. Palestinian students, teachers, and schools continue to be targeted by Israeli attacks and settler violence, violating the right to education and systematically disrupting the education process.

In Jerusalem, school students total is about 83,734. The education system is supervised by five different bodies:

1. Islamic *Waqf* schools: Report directly to the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and teach the Palestinian curriculum. A total of 49 Islamic *Waqf* schools serve 12,160 students.
2. Private schools: In Jerusalem, there are 76 private schools accommodating 27,776 students and teach the Palestinian curriculum.
3. Israeli Ministry of Education (MoE) and Jerusalem Municipality schools: Using a distorted version of the Palestinian curriculum, these schools are fully and directly managed by the Israeli MoE and Jerusalem Municipality with a total of 70 Israeli schools serving 37,494 students.
4. Semi-formal schools: Although they are licensed by the Israeli MoE, these schools are not formal. They are profit-making enterprises, which are pursued at the expense of quality education. 19 semi-formal schools serve a total of 5,025 students.
5. United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools: Teaching the Palestinian curriculum, six UNRWA schools serve 1,279 students (1.5 percent) of the total student population in Jerusalem.

#### Israeli violations of the right to education in Jerusalem

A variety of Israeli practices have obstructed the education process in Jerusalem.

- In the course of Israelizing education in Jerusalem schools, it has reported that the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality has devised a plan to close all 13 Palestinian schools in the old city of Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Municipality has also removed lessons and pages addressing the Palestinian identity and history from Palestinian schoolbooks. The Israeli government has provided an allocation of NIS 2 billion, a major portion of which will be earmarked to promote the “Israelization” of education in Palestinian schools.
- day-to-day systematic violations of the right to education in Jerusalem, as follow
  - Severely impaired teacher and student access to schools by humiliating treatment, inspection of school bags, and invasive body searches. In the morning, students and teachers are stopped and detained at the gates to the old city of Jerusalem without any reasons, resulting in delayed access to school.
  - Verbally and physically assaulted students and teachers, who are also subjected to humiliating and invasive body searches.
  - Seized the ID cards of students over 16 years of age.
  - Threatened, intimidated, pointed weapons at, and beat students.
  - Guarded settlers, who provoke and assault students.
  - Targeted and imputed a variety of charges against young students between 12 and 18 years of age with a view to intimidating them.
  - Detained students and teachers for extended hours. Some students have been under house arrest. Others have been deported from their homes and places of residence, tearing families apart.

#### Israeli plans and policies targeting the Palestinian education process

In a public statement, Nir Barkat, former Mayor of Jerusalem, said: “We are seeking an educational revolution in Jerusalem. By this, we want to integrate the Arabs in Israeli

society.” Among other things, the Israeli plan 2018-2022 aims at Israelizing 90 percent of the education system in Jerusalem. The plans seek to achieve a set of goals, including:

- Eliminating the presence of schools in the old city of Jerusalem. Israel will seize control of these heritage school buildings, ultimately transforming the old city of Jerusalem into a tourist destination.
- Closing Palestinian schools in Jerusalem and inaugurating new ones that teach the Israeli curriculum. Classes will also be opened in current schools to teach the Israeli curriculum.
- After they are shut down, heritage buildings housing Palestinian schools in the old city of Jerusalem will be seized. To this avail, students who are not residents of the old city of Jerusalem will not be registered at these schools, which are run by the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality and MoE.

The Jerusalem Municipality sent a notice to the Principal of the Al-Qadisiyyah (Khalil Sakakini) Girls Preparatory School, stating that new students should not be admitted as the school would be closed in the 2019-2020 school year.

The Al-Quds Girls Preparatory School also received a notice, providing that not students would be registered in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade for the next school year. The school would be closed two years later.

The names of Khalil Sakakini and Al-Quds schools have been deleted from the list of schools on the Student Registration Portal.

### **Targeting and distorting the Palestinian curriculum**

Israel has targeted the Palestinian curriculum and constrained all components of the education system in Jerusalem. Israeli practices have set a dangerous precedent. In a desperate effort to implement the plan of Israelizing education in Jerusalem, misrepresentation and distortion have affected significant milestones of the Palestinian curriculum. Although it is the cornerstone in the education system and national identity formation, the Palestinian curriculum has been politically targeted by Israel under the guise of education.

Recently, the Israeli occupying authorities have reprinted and distributed distorted versions of Palestinian schoolbooks to Arab schools under the supervision of the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality and MoE. A close look at these forged versions shows that all Palestinian textbooks published by the Palestinian MoEHE’s Curriculum Development Centre have been misrepresented. Everything related to Palestinian national allegiance was crossed out. In violation of the Palestinian sovereignty, the Palestinian flag were removed on all schoolbook covers, and so were the Palestinian *Keffiyeh* and name of the Palestinian MoEHE. All international conventions and United Nations General Assembly resolutions provide that the national curriculum of a state is a symbol of sovereignty. By removing these symbols, the Israeli occupying authorities attempt to blot out national and historical dimensions of the Palestinian curriculum.

The Israeli occupying authorities have deliberately distorted, and emptied the Palestinian curriculum of its substance. To this end, Israel has introduced texts, and information that support Zionist accounts and replace the Palestinian narrative. This is aimed at brainwashing and domesticating Palestinian students so that they acquiesce to Israel. The end result would be intellectual appropriation, suppression of identity, and erasure of memory.

The Israeli occupying authorities have deleted everything related to the *Nakba*, which befell the Palestinian people in 1948, as well as the destruction of Palestinian cities and villages. Israel has wiped out any mention of Palestinian martyrs, injured citizens and prisoners, risks posed by settlement activity and the Separation Wall, and crimes perpetrated against the Palestinian people. In addition to attempts to exterminate the issue of Palestinian refugees, any statements on the disasters, atrocities and adversities that have affected the Palestinian people have also been deleted.

The approved Palestinian curriculum is informed by many international conventions, which ensure the Palestinian right to quality education and safeguard Palestinian rights and

freedoms. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “[e]ducation shall be directed to the [...] the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups [...] for the maintenance of peace.”

In the context of systematic incitement, Israeli schoolbooks are replete with negative stereotypes of Palestinians. In these books, Palestinians are presented as primitive, hostile and untrusted. They are labelled as “killers, hooligans and unproductive”. By contrast, Israeli schoolbooks present the Jews as waging a just humanitarian war against the aggressive Arabs.

Through the Israeli curriculum, Israeli students are prepared and trained to maintain control over, and occupation of, the Palestinian territory. To this avail, army officers serve as teachers at Israeli schools. Justifying continued occupation of the Palestinian territory, Israeli schoolbooks have played a pivotal role in escalating the conflict, nurturing hatred, and negatively portraying Palestinians.

### **Closure of UNRWA schools**

Apart from targeting the Palestinian curriculum, the Israeli occupying authorities have unveiled a serious attack against UNRWA schools in Jerusalem. UNRWA runs six schools in Jerusalem, half of which are located in the Shu’fat refugee camp. This Israeli scheme is part and parcel of broader restrictions, including threats to cut off financial support and eventually dissolve the UNRWA. The threat to shut down UNRWA schools in Jerusalem is a dangerous precedent. In a way or another, it is associated with Israel’s attempts to distort the Palestinian curriculum and bring an end to the Palestinian education system in Jerusalem.

The Israeli occupying authorities intend to close UNRWA schools in Jerusalem. According to recent Israeli media reports, Barkat’s plan will be implemented in the next school year 2019-2020. Accordingly, operating licences of UNRWA schools in the city will not be renewed. These will be replaced by schools that report to the Jerusalem Municipality and teach the Israeli curriculum.

### **The impact of Israeli violation on the education process in Jerusalem**

Israeli systematic abuses, attacks and polices obstruct and adversely reflect on the education process in Jerusalem. These include daily violations and impediments caused by Israeli military checkpoints and Separation Wall around the city.

#### **❖ The impact of military checkpoints and Wall on the education process**

The Wall isolates Jerusalem from the rest of the oPt. At least 20 percent of the student population are forced to cross checkpoints around the city, delaying access to schools.

Obstructing timely access, Jerusalemite students and teachers have to cross 12 military checkpoints set up at the main entrances to Jerusalem every day to reach their schools. In addition to closure, students are subjected to humiliating treatment, physical searches, and seizure of school bags, causing panic and fear among children at different school levels.

#### **❖ Lack of suitable school buildings**

Palestinian students are deprived of learning in proper school buildings. To freeze the construction of new school buildings, Israel has placed extensive restrictions on issuing construction licences to schools. Israel turns a blind eye to natural population growth, resulting in overcrowded classrooms. This practice has negatively impacted teacher performance, educational attainment and wider education process. Israel has also distributed demolition orders against school buildings.

Jerusalem schools are impaired by a severe shortage of classrooms. Approximately 2,200 new classrooms are needed. The majority of schools are situated in rented residential buildings. Of these, many schools are scattered; they are not located in a single building. Schools do not fulfil educational, health or psychological standards. They also lack various educational facilities, including yards, playgrounds, halls, laboratories, and libraries.

Although school yards and playgrounds are lacking, exorbitant fines and attorney fees of up to US\$ 30,000 a year are paid for installing canopies on school roofs to protect children from heat in the summer and rain in the winter.

In this context, Islamic *Waqf* schools have been prosecuted on grounds of lacking Israeli-issued licences or unpaid taxes.

### **Increasing dropout rates at Jerusalem schools**

Compared to just 1 percent in Israeli West Jerusalem schools, data show that 13 percent of Jerusalemite students drop out from schools every year.

Day-to-day practices and violations have discouraged Palestinian students from going to five schools in the old city of Jerusalem. Teachers have also been reluctant to serve at schools in this area. Eventually, these schools would almost empty and could be easily shut down. Short specialisations have also negatively impacted quality education.

### **Recommendations**

The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) calls on all relevant authorities to play their role in exerting pressure on the Israeli occupying authorities to put an end to practices, attacks and abuses of the right to education in Jerusalem. Israel should cease attempts to target the Palestinian education system and curriculum in Jerusalem, Israelise the education process, and impose the Israeli curriculum on Palestinian schools. Israel should also put an end to ongoing violations, including raids on Palestinian education institutions and detention of Palestinian teachers and students. In this context, the ICHR:

- Calls on the Human Rights Council and international community to meet their responsibilities for protecting Palestinian education institutions and curriculum, providing protection to Palestinian students and teachers from Israeli attacks and violations, implement provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and facilitate the education process in Jerusalem.
  - Rejects targeting of the Palestinian education process, restrictions on schools, and seizure of school facilities in Jerusalem. Israel should suspend fines against schools. UNRWA schools should be protected and maintained as part of the broader presence of the Agency in Jerusalem, ensuring support to and sustained operation of these schools.
  - Calls on the Human Rights Council, human rights organisations, and legal institutions to play their role in holding Israel to account for its practices against the Palestinian education process and institutions in occupied Jerusalem.
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