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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 International Association of Justice Watch, 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.

[27 January 2025]

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



Systematic Destruction of Education in Gaza

Education is not just a basic human right; it is essential for rebuilding societies, reducing poverty, and promoting peace and stability around the globe. Systematic violations of this right, particularly in crisis areas, have dire consequences for the future of nations. Today, we are witnessing one of the most serious violations in modern history: the intentional and ongoing attacks on schools, universities, teachers, and students in Gaza. These actions do more than rob children of their education; they tear apart the very foundation of hope and progress for an entire generation.

Available data highlights the severity of the situation: more than 80% of schools in Gaza have been either damaged or completely destroyed, resulting in 625,000 children and students being deprived of formal education. The numbers are shocking—over 10,000 schoolchildren and more than 400 teachers and education professionals have lost their lives in the ongoing Israeli's military attacks over the past year. Furthermore, over 16,000 students and 2,400 teachers have suffered injuries.

In September 2024, there were 17 airstrikes that hit schools, with 14 of those institutions providing refuge for displaced individuals. Even United Nations schools, which were supposed to be "safe zones," have not been immune to these attacks. Such actions are blatant violations of international humanitarian law and highlight a troubling trend that UN experts refer to as "scholasticide," which involves the systematic destruction of education by targeting teachers, students, and educational facilities.

The impact of these actions is significant. Education provides children with stability, hope, and a sense of normalcy, especially during crises. Without it, we risk losing entire generations to despair and insecurity, which can perpetuate cycles of poverty and conflict.

The systematic destruction of education in Gaza constitutes a grave violation of international law and fundamental human rights. The most important international documents that have been violated are listed below:

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

- Article 26: Everyone has the right to education. The destruction of schools and educational facilities undermines access to this fundamental right, particularly for children in conflict zones like Gaza.

2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

- Article 13: This article recognizes the right of everyone to education and emphasizes that primary education must be compulsory and free for all. The destruction of educational infrastructure directly obstructs this right.
- Article 14: States must take steps to ensure the progressive realization of universal access to education. Targeting schools in Gaza delays and, in many cases, reverses this progress.

3. Geneva Conventions and Protocols

- Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention: Obliges occupying powers to ensure and facilitate proper working conditions for institutions devoted to the care and education of children. Destroying schools violates this provision.
- Protocol I, Article 48 and 52: Establishes the principle of distinction, requiring that civilians and civilian objects, including schools, must be protected during armed conflicts. Attacking schools is a direct breach of this principle.

4. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

- Article 28: The child's right to education must be ensured without discrimination. Targeted attacks on education in Gaza disproportionately impact children's ability to learn and thrive.
- Article 38: Calls for the protection of children in armed conflict and obligates parties to ensure that children are not deprived of their rights during such situations.

5. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)

- Article 8(2)(b)(ix): Defines the intentional targeting of schools and other civilian infrastructure as a war crime. The systematic destruction of education in Gaza could therefore fall under the jurisdiction of the ICC.

6. United Nations Security Council Resolutions

- Resolution 1998 (2011): Condemns attacks on schools and hospitals in conflict zones and recognizes such acts as grave violations of international law. The situation in Gaza reflects ongoing non-compliance with this resolution.

7. International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

- Principle of Proportionality: Even if schools are alleged to be near military targets, attacks on them must not cause disproportionate harm to civilian lives or property. The systematic destruction of schools in Gaza violates this principle.

The deliberate or systematic targeting of education in Gaza undermines the rights of children, violates numerous international legal instruments, and perpetuates cycles of poverty and conflict. Upholding these articles requires urgent action from the international community to ensure accountability and prevent further violations.

The International Association of Justice Watch calls on the international community, including the United Nations and its relevant agencies, to take swift and decisive measures to tackle this crisis. Failing to act decisively will lead to severe and widespread consequences. The loss of education is not only a tragedy for Gaza but also a stain on the conscience of humanity. Education is fundamental to progress, justice, and peace. It is crucial that we safeguard it, not merely as a right, but as a source of hope for future generations.

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