



September in Gaza: A War Against Education and the Future of an Entire Generation

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September traditionally marks the time of return to schools and universities worldwide – a season of hope, growth, and the flourishing of youth. Yet, this year, in Gaza, September has become a chilling symbol of destruction and despair for education and the future of Palestinian children and young adults (1). Recent images from Gaza reveal the deliberate demolition of educational institutions, including the women's branch of Gaza's academic centers as of September 15, 2025. This destruction is not collateral damage; it constitutes a stark assault on knowledge, hope, and human prosperity – a modern-day war against education itself.

Throughout the ongoing conflict, countless schools and colleges have been damaged or destroyed, depriving tens of thousands of children and youth of their fundamental right to education. According to the latest estimates, over 60,000 Palestinians have lost their lives since the war began in late 2023, with more than one-third being children and adolescents of school age (2). This staggering loss is compounded by the fact that Gaza's children had already endured severe educational setbacks, losing approximately 24 months of schooling since 2019 due to COVID-19, previous military operations, and the current devastating conflict. Projections suggest that if the hostilities continue into 2026, the educational loss could reach up to five years, permanently affecting the future of an entire generation (1, 3).

The deliberate targeting of educational facilities and personnel blatantly violates international humanitarian law, most notably the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), which mandates the protection of civilian institutions, including schools, during armed conflicts (4, 5). The United Nations has categorically condemned such

attacks, recognizing them as potential war crimes and crimes against humanity. Furthermore, the Safe Schools Declaration, endorsed by over 110 countries, explicitly calls for measures to prevent the military use of schools and to safeguard education even amidst conflict.

Tragically, disturbing reports and public discourses attempt to justify these atrocities by labeling children in Gaza as potential future combatants – a dangerous ideology that seeks to legitimize the killing and displacement of innocent youth. This dehumanization is morally abhorrent and must be resisted by the global academic and medical communities with unwavering resolve (6, 7). As medical professionals, educators, and global citizens committed to human dignity and children's right to education, we must raise our voices vehemently against these violations. It is imperative to condemn these acts of war unequivocally, demand immediate ceasefires, and mobilize international efforts to rebuild Gaza's shattered education system.

Moreover, academic institutions worldwide should reassess any cooperation or relations with parties who endorse or facilitate such crimes. The ongoing blockade limiting food and medicine access to Gaza, which results in the starvation and death of children—even those waiting in line for aid – is a further grave crime that cannot be overlooked.

This September, as the world celebrates the safe return to classrooms and campuses, let us not forget the children of Gaza, whose classrooms lie in ruins and whose futures hang in the balance. Protecting education in conflict zones is not only a legal obligation but a moral imperative essential to safeguarding humanity's shared future.

Footnotes

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