



## Hostilities in the Gaza Strip Call for Action: Denial of Children's Right to Education in Gaza

An already poor education situation is being made considerably worse

### Generations of children in Gaza already have had their right to learn restricted

**January 2024:** Seventeen years of blockade and conflict have already damaged the education infrastructure. Schools have had to work double shifts; classes have been overcrowded and school hours have been curtailed.

The current conflict has impacted the psychosocial well-being of both children and teachers. It has affected children's opportunity to learn and teachers' ability to teach.

A survey conducted after the May 2021 hostilities in the Gaza Strip found that 42% of UNRWA first-grade school children in Gaza needed psychosocial support. Nine months after the survey, 35% of these children were still suffering from reactions to trauma, with some even resorting to suicide<sup>1</sup>.

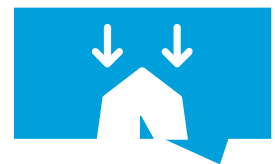
Since the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2023, an already bad situation has deteriorated:



As of 10 January, over **4,327 students** and **231 educational staff** have been killed and more than **7,819 students** and **756 teachers** injured.



There has been no access to education for more than **625,000 students** and **22,564 teachers** in Gaza.



As of 19 January, **378 schools** (76%) have been **destroyed or damaged**. **264 schools** are being used as **shelter** by **1.4 M IDPs**.

### Once hostilities have ended, there will need to be a massive investment of resources to enable children to exercise their right to learn

The education infrastructure will need to be rebuilt entirely. Education materials will need to be completely replaced. Even more challenging, children, teachers and caregivers will need significant and careful psycho-social support if an effective learning environment is going to be put in place

The estimated cost of rebuilding and ensuring the resumption of a safe, inclusive and quality education for all school-aged affected children and youths of Gaza is **USD 855 million**.

<sup>1</sup> UNRWA Gaza Field Office, Rapid Gender Analysis, October 2023

## Urgent actions are needed

The humanitarian crisis is denying children their right to education and exposing them to dire protection risks. We need to take urgent action:

- Ensuring now that children, teachers and caregivers are supported as much as possible during the conflict in shelters and in host communities.
- Preparing now, so that children can return to a safe learning environment as soon as hostilities stop. This translates practically into the identification and set-up of safe spaces to provide MHPSS support to children and to start to re-establish a sense of normalcy and learning.
- Preparing now to restore the formal education system through the reconstruction of the education infrastructure and to ensure adequate staffing to continue learning.

## Call to action

**The Education Cluster calls for recognition of the catastrophic effect that the hostilities in Gaza are having on Palestinian children's ability to learn both immediately and in the future.**

### Call to Action to the Parties to the Conflict:

- To cease fire immediately.
- To take all possible measures, as required under international humanitarian law, to safeguard schools, so they can be used for educational purposes and remain safe.
- To recognize the right of children to learn as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child including during emergencies as set out in UN Resolution 64/290 of 2010.

### Call to Education Service Providers:

- To prepare to resume appropriate education activities once the conflict ends. In doing so, paying close attention to children's psychosocial, cognitive, physical health and wellbeing development.
- To prepare and implement alternative learning solutions – such as distance learning - for children to continue learning.

### Call to Action to Education Cluster partners:

- To increase immediate education support for children in Gaza as much as possible.
- To prepare to provide emergency educational and MHPSS support as soon as there is a sustained ceasefire, including emergency educational materials and school furniture.
- To prepare to rebuild the educational infrastructure as soon as conditions allow.

### Call to Action to Donors:

- To recognize the catastrophic damages to the education system in Gaza.
- To advocate for a long-term ceasefire and the stop of the war, and advocate for safeguarding of schools, so they can be used for educational purposes and remain safe for children.
- To ensure that the funds needed to support the immediate education requirements, as well as the long-run reconstruction of the education structures, are provided. Worryingly, only 3% of the 104 million USD flash appeal for education have been funded.



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