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EDUCATION DAY 2024: END TO CONFLICT IS IMPERATIVE FOR A RETURN TO LEARNING IN PALESTINE

24 January 2024



Displaced children in an UNRWA school-turned-shelter, 2023 UNRWA photo by Ashraf Amra



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JOINT UN STATEMENT - 24 JANUARY 2024

As Palestine faces unprecedented levels of violent conflict and mass displacement, observing this International Day of Education under the theme of [‘learning for lasting peace’](#), resonates more deeply than ever. Indeed, both this statement and the opposite ring true in the current catastrophic conditions. While education is a prerequisite for peace, the hostilities which rage on in Palestine have hindered access to education for learners, as well as their teachers.

The urgency of this message is underscored by the stark reality that learning has been devastated in the Gaza Strip since the hostilities began in October 2023. Over 625,000 students and 22,564 teachers have been deprived of education and a safe place for over three months, and thousands of learners and education personnel are amongst the [more than 25,000 people](#), who have reportedly been killed.

Children and youth, as well as educators, have lost the anchor that is education – all UNRWA schools are closed in the Gaza Strip, depriving the 300,000 children who attended them of their education. The longer they stay out of school, the more difficult it is to catch up, with lasting consequences.

Most UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip have been turned into shelters, hosting over 1.2 million displaced people. Communities and support networks have been fractured, and educational infrastructure damaged or destroyed. [75% of all school buildings](#) across the Gaza Strip have been impacted, while numerous higher education institutions have also sustained damages. [At least 340 internally displaced people have been killed while seeking safety in UNRWA shelters and more than 1,100 injured](#). Attacks on educational premises and UN premises violate international humanitarian law.

While all eyes are on Gaza, in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, access to safe education has also been disrupted amid escalating violence in recent months. According to the Education Cluster, at least 782,000 students have been affected by movement restrictions, increased violence, and fear of harassment from Israeli settlers and forces since October. In the West Bank, the UN has recruited addition counsellors and teachers from the vicinity of schools given that many staff are unable to reach their workplace. We have also activated remote learning on days that schools are not operating.

In Gaza, despite the conflict, the United Nations and partners from the Education Cluster have been striving to offer much needed recreational activities for children, as well as psychosocial support in shelters.

Education is a fundamental human right and critical lifeline for the millions of children and young people affected by the war, and it must be sustained even throughout this crisis. Ending the conflict is imperative to enable Palestinian students and educators to begin to rebuild the foundations for a safe return to learning.

A just and sustainable future for Palestine begins with fostering peace and mutual understanding and improving livelihoods through education.

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Background Information:

UNRWA is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The United Nations General Assembly established UNRWA in 1949 with a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to registered Palestine refugees in the Agency’s area of operations pending a just and lasting solution to their plight.

UNRWA operates in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, The Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Tens of thousands of Palestine refugees who lost their homes and livelihoods due to the 1948 conflict continue to be displaced and in need of support, nearly 75 years on.

UNRWA helps Palestine Refugees achieve their full potential in human development through quality services it provides in education, health care, relief and social services, protection, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance, and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.

Your support is crucial to help us provide emergency aid to displaced families in Gaza



[Nearly 2 million people depend on assistance from UNRWA as war in Gaza enters 200 days and violence increases in the West Bank](#)



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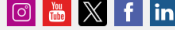
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