

Barriers to Education

The Israeli Military Obstruction of Access to Schools and Universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip



**Right to Education Monitor
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First page photo: Students are stopped by Israeli soldiers at the entrance to Birzeit University. Yasser Darwish, 2004

Right to Education Campaign, Birzeit University, Palestine, July 2004

1. Introduction

At the start of the school year 2000-2001, two landmarks in the history of Palestinian education took place: the first ever Palestinian national curriculum went into effect and the Ministry of Education launched its 'Five Year Educational Development Plan', committing itself to reforming and developing the education system at all levels. At almost exactly the same time, at the end of September 2000, the Intifada began and in the three and half years since, Palestinian education has faced a barrage of military attacks directed against schools, universities, students, teachers, and the Ministry of Education itself. Rather than tackling the long overdue issues of educational development, the Palestinian education system has once again been plunged into a state of emergency.

At one level, the Israeli military attacks and obstruction of schools, universities, students and teachers are a lens through which to see the impact of the Israeli occupation and illegal policies of collective punishment on Palestinian society as a whole. The ongoing process of cantonization and ghettoization of Palestinians by the Apartheid Wall and hundreds of military checkpoints and roadblocks that divide and encircle Palestinian cities, towns and villages, together with relentless closures and curfews, make all aspects of Palestinian daily life a struggle. "3.4 million Palestinians are living in a state of virtual confinement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip"¹ and access to schools and universities is affected in the same way that access to hospitals, the workplace or going to visit family and friends is systematically obstructed and prevented.

At the same time, it is also clear that Palestinian education is being directly targeted. Israel has a deliberate policy to militarily attack and obstruct Palestinian schools and universities, effectively undermining the entire Palestinian education system. Universities, kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools all over the West Bank and Gaza have been invaded and attacked by the Israeli Army. Birzeit University reports an average of 1-2 incidents every week of Israeli soldiers either blocking access to the University by road, harassing students and staff at the University's entrance gates or firing tear gas and rubber bullets on to the campus. The targeting of Palestinian education is further evident in the propaganda of 'terror' and 'incitement' against the educational curriculum and the forced closures of Palestinian schools and universities by military order. In particular, the military closures of Hebron University and the Palestine Polytechnic University in 2003 represent the continuation of a long history of Israeli closures of Palestinian educational institutions.²

One third of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza are students. Over half the population are children under 18 years old and almost 67% are under 24 years old. Raising the issue of the right to education in Palestine is therefore not a specialist concern; it is central to the daily lives of the majority. Moreover, Palestinians have long regarded education as a means of resilience and survival in exile and under military occupation, the basis for building the future through the success and development of Palestinian society as a whole. In much the same way, international law also recognizes that "the right to education is both a fundamental human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights".³

The Right to Education Campaign, based at Birzeit University in the West Bank, appeals to students, academics and human rights activists all over the world to stand up in defense of education in Palestine. We hope that the information contained in this report will both inform and equip you to speak out against Israeli attacks on Palestinian school children, students and teachers, and to demand an immediate end to the military obstruction of access to schools and universities that denies Palestinians their right to education.

¹ Al Haq, "Collective Punishment", Stop Collective Punishment Campaign, 2004

² During the first Intifada against the Israeli occupation, between 1987-1992, Palestinian education effectively became 'illegal' as schools and universities were closed indefinitely, and Israeli soldiers arrested students for attending 'underground' classes in people's homes and community centers, and even for carrying books. Since the 1970s Birzeit University has been closed by military order 15 times, the longest period being between 1988-1992 when the University was closed for four and a half years.

³ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), General Comment 13, 1

2. Barriers to Education

2.1 The Military Obstruction of Access to Schools and Universities

With 67 Israeli Army checkpoints throughout the West Bank and over 890 obstacles obstructing or preventing access to roads all over the West Bank and Gaza⁴, restrictions on the freedom of movement of Palestinians are extremely severe. In a recent survey, over 80% of respondents in the West Bank reported disturbance to their daily routine caused by restrictions on mobility, with 56% facing problems in getting to their place of work.⁵ This strangulation of Palestinians' basic ability to go about their daily life is one of the most devastating forms of collective punishment used by Israel against the Palestinian population, with consequences for all aspects of Palestinian life, including education.

In addition to the daily obstacles of checkpoints and roadblocks, the Israeli Army frequently imposes curfews on Palestinian towns and villages, particularly in the northern West Bank and in the southern West Bank city of Hebron. When there is a curfew, getting to school or university becomes impossible, whole school days are missed and schools are effectively closed if the curfew is for prolonged periods. The Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) reports that 498 government schools were disrupted or closed for varying periods of time due to curfews and closures during the school year 2002-2003, with a total of 1289 schools closed for varying periods since the beginning of the Intifada in September 2000.



Surda Roadblock between Ramallah and Birzeit University. Photo: Yasser Darwish

Table 1

Year	Teaching days lost due to closure, curfew and movement restrictions
2003-2004	197,599 school children had school days lost or disrupted due to curfew and closure.
2002-2003	UNRWA schools lost 1475 days, an average of 15.5 days per school. ⁶
2002-2003	34,490 UNRWA teachers' school days were lost, an average of 145 teachers or 9% of total UNRWA teaching staff unable to get to school each day.
2002-2003	498 government schools closed for varying periods of time due to prolonged curfew or closure of cities (1,298 schools closed for varying periods since Sept. 2000) ⁷
2001-2002	Two thirds of teaching days lost during second semester at Birzeit University. The summer semester was lost completely. ⁸

⁴ According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) there are 57 'full' checkpoints in the West Bank (permanently manned by Israeli soldiers), 10 'partial' checkpoints (occasionally manned by Israeli soldiers) and a further 730 obstacles in the West Bank and 160 obstacles in Gaza. An 'obstacle' is anything that blocks road access, such as concrete roadblocks and earth mounds. <http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>

⁵ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *Survey on the Perception of Palestinian Population Towards the Socioeconomic Conditions*, May 2004

⁶ UNRWA, "13th Joint Meeting: UNRWA/Arab League Council of Education for the Children of Palestine", December 2003

⁷ Ministry of Education and Higher Education, "Assessment 10: the Impact of the Israeli Occupation on Palestinian Education 28/09/00 – 14/6/04", 2004

⁸ Birzeit University, "Working Days Lost", 2002

**Transcript excerpt of phone call from journalist Donna Baillie to IDF Press Office
2 February 2003**

Q: *I'm trying to find out what the official IDF policy is regarding children going to school during curfew in Hebron. There seems to be a lot of confusion about this.*

A: *Ah, well, make no mistake about it, when there is a curfew no one is allowed out of the house. The main objective is that those who are responsible for the terror infrastructure inside a city, any city...a curfew will be imposed, and the unfortunate thing is that children will not go to school.*

Source: quoted in *School Booklet*, Christian Peacemaker Teams - Hebron, 2003

2.2 Blocking the Road to Education

Israeli Army checkpoints and roadblocks are sometimes deliberately placed to inhibit access to educational institutions. For two and half years between March 2001 and December 2003, Birzeit University was virtually sealed off by concrete roadblocks and earth mounds on the road to the University from the city of Ramallah. The road was also bulldozed numerous times. Students and staff coming from Ramallah were forced to walk over 2km on foot to get past the roadblock, subject to regular harassment and arrest by Israeli soldiers on the way. With no possible 'security' explanation, the purpose of 'Surda Roadblock' was unambiguous; it was designed to bring a halt to the educational activities at Birzeit University. Over a hundred of Birzeit University's teaching days were lost during this period.⁹



Students and faculty are blocked from passing Surda Roadblock. Photo: Yasser Darwish



A 'flying checkpoint' on the road to Birzeit University stops students from passing. Photo: Yasser Darwish

The concrete blocks of Surda Roadblock were finally removed in December 2003, but in the six months since then, the road from Ramallah to Birzeit continues to be frequently blocked by Israeli Army jeeps and soldiers. Known as 'flying checkpoints', traffic is brought to a complete standstill, soldiers randomly check ID cards and students are sometimes pulled out of cars and taxis and held at the side of the road. While flying checkpoints are completely arbitrary, staff and students at Birzeit University have noticed certain patterns in their frequency, for example the road to Birzeit is blocked more often at the start of a semester and also during exam time.¹⁰

2.3 The Threat to Palestinian Universities: Case Study of Birzeit University

While schools have relatively small catchment areas, with school children usually traveling only small distances to get to school, universities are national institutions and serve the whole of the West Bank and Gaza, with some Palestinian students coming from inside Israel and from Jordan as well as from other Arab countries and the USA. The last four years have seen dramatic demographic changes in the student populations of Palestinian universities. Such

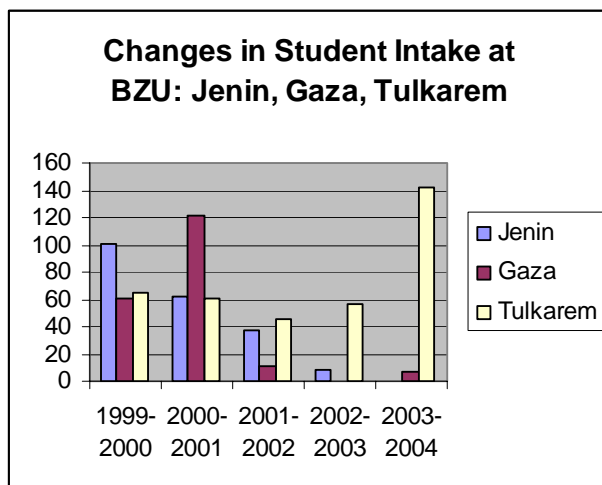
⁹ For more information on Surda Roadblock see <http://right2edu.birzeit.edu/news/catindex20>

¹⁰ Riham Barghouti, Director of Public Relations, Birzeit University

changes are a direct result of the ongoing process of cantonization and ghettoization of Palestinians by frequent closure of cities, hundreds of military roadblocks and the construction of the illegal Apartheid Wall. This reality translates into the denial of educational choice and opportunities for young people.

Birzeit University, near Ramallah in the central West Bank, provides an important case study for this issue. Founded in 1924, first as a school and eventually becoming the first Arab university in Palestine in 1972, Birzeit University sees its role very much as a national institution, emphasizing social conscience and democratic values in a free civil Palestinian society.¹¹ At the start of the academic year in 2000, Birzeit University's student population was a measure of its national importance, with 60% of newly enrolled students coming from outside the Ramallah area and 10% coming from Gaza.

In the last academic year 2003-2004, there was a steep decline in new students coming to Birzeit University from the north West Bank and from Gaza, reflecting the very high impact of Israel's debilitating policies of collective punishment in those regions and the impact of the Apartheid Wall, which is at its most complete stage in the northern West Bank. The number of new students coming from the north West Bank district of Jenin decreased by 100%, from 101 students in 1999 to zero at the beginning of the last academic year 2003-2004. Similarly, while 121 new students from Gaza enrolled at Birzeit University in 2000, two years later there were no new students from Gaza and in the last academic year, there were only seven.



Equally erratic changes to the student demography also go in the opposite direction. For example, the number of new students at Birzeit University from Tulkarem district in the north West Bank almost tripled at the start of this academic year, largely due to the fact that getting to Nablus, the nearest major city where the majority of students from Tulkarem usually study, is now extremely difficult. To get between Tulkarem and Nablus, students must pass through Al-Bawaba checkpoint on the Western outskirts of Nablus, which is now only open two days a week: on Saturdays and Wednesdays. Not only are new students from Tulkarem choosing not

to go to An-Najah University in Nablus for this reason, some students currently enrolled at An-Najah University are transferring to other universities in order to make the journey between home and university more feasible.

In all cases, it is clear that students are now making decisions about their futures on the basis of military checkpoints and barriers rather than by educational considerations. This ominous trend is not only detrimental to individual student choice, it is also breaking the national coherence of the entire Palestinian higher education system. Universities once known for specialisms in particular subjects, now find that they can no longer attract the students they used to, while the Ministry of Education and Higher Education is reluctantly being forced to facilitate the duplication of specialist courses in different areas of the West Bank, for no other reason than military barriers to access. The ultimate fear is that if these trends continue unabated, the Palestinian universities will gradually become more localized, undermining their vital and progressive role in Palestinian society as the institutions of national pride and importance that they are now.

¹¹ Birzeit University Mission Statement: "Birzeit University strives to promote excellence in higher education by providing quality academic teaching, training, research and relevant community programs within the context of sustainable development, emphasizing social conscience and democratic values in a free civil Palestinian society."

2.4 The Wall's Impact on Education

The recent ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found that the 687km wall currently being constructed by Israel through and around Palestinian areas in the West Bank and Jerusalem is illegal.¹² Israel's misleading term 'security fence', obscures the reality that the Wall is being built on Palestinian land, dividing, isolating and encircling Palestinians areas. The Wall is more than twice the length of the Green Line, indeed only 11% of it actually runs along the Green Line, and according to the Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network (PENGON), "nearly 50% of the West Bank population will be affected by the Wall through loss of their land, imprisonment into ghettos and isolation into *de facto* annexed areas by Israel."¹³



School children wait at the Wall's gates in Tulkarem
Photo: courtesy of Ministry of Education and Higher Education

Areas in the north West Bank and around Jerusalem where construction of the Wall has been completed, are already showing signs of stress on the education system and frequent interruptions to the daily routines of both students and teachers. So far, 22 localities have been separated from their schools by the Wall.¹⁴ In Qalqilya, Tulkarem and Jenin areas, many students and teachers are forced to pass through the Wall's 'gates', which are often either closed or take several hours to pass through, in order to reach their schools on the other side of the Wall. In coordination with a local bus company and monitored by UNICEF, the Israeli Army now runs a bus service for school

children in Qalqilya, Tulkarem and Jenin areas to pass from one side of the Wall to the other in order to reach their schools. Far from providing a solution, the arrangement merely serves to demonstrate the total absurdity of the situation. UN bodies observe that the buses are frequently held up at the Wall for hours, making children late for school and late getting home.¹⁵

In early September 2003, the Israeli District Coordination Office informed the inhabitants of Jebara [near Tulkarem] that the gate providing access to and from the village would only be open for the 88 village school children between 6-8am when they go to school and between 12:30-2pm when they return home. But two weeks after its initial implementation, the schedule was unexpectedly changed. The gate, it announced, would only be open for 10 minutes each morning and afternoon. The precise time was not given. Consequently, the school children gather every morning, whatever the weather, waiting for the soldiers to open the gate. When the children return from school, the problems are even greater. Children in the first preparatory class finish school at 11am. However, these five-year old pupils have to wait for the gate to open at around 2pm, when all classes have finished, before they can return home.

Source: Defence for Children International / Palestine Section, *Fragile Childhood*, p.65

A survey by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics conducted in December 2003 demonstrates the extent to which students and teachers living or studying in areas in close proximity to the Wall are affected educationally. The percentage of students and teachers missing school or university due to closure of passage through the Wall is particularly high, reaching almost 50%.

¹² http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/docs/UN/OCHA/English_update_15dec03.pdf In its summing up, the ICJ found that: "The construction of the wall and its associated regime...impede the exercise by the persons concerned of the right to work, to health, to education and to an adequate standard of living as proclaimed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child." International Court of Justice, 9 July 2004, *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, paragraph 134.

¹³ Palestinian Environmental NGO Network (PENGON) Map of the Wall, April 2004
<http://www.pengon.org/wall/newmaps/poster.pdf>

¹⁴ PCBS Quoted in ICJ, *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, paragraph

¹⁵ OCHA Updates, <http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>

Table 2: Coping Methods of University Students & Teachers in Response to the Wall¹⁶

Coping Method	Percentage
University Students	
Using Alternative Roads	56.2
Changing University	6.9
Changing Place of Residence	12.0
Absences from University due to Closure	21.5
Using Permits or Special Coordination with Israeli Army	2.9
University Teachers	
Using Alternative Roads	41.7
Changing University	1.0
Changing Place of Residence	5.7
Absent from University due to Closure	46.4
Using Permits or Special Coordination with the Israeli Army	5.2

Table 3: Coping Methods of School Students and Teachers in Response to the Wall

Coping Method	Percentage
School Students	
Using Alternative Roads	45.9
Student Drop-Out	1.0
Changing School	7.6
Changing Place of Residence	2.4
Absences from School due to Closure	42.4
Using Permits or Special Coordination with Israeli Army	-
School Teachers	
Using Alternative Roads	32.8
Changing School	4.9
Changing Place of Residence	1.9
Absent from School due to Closure	46.5
Using Permits or Special Coordination with the Israeli Army	8.3

2.5 A Wall to Education: A Case Study of the Nursing School at Al Quds University in Jerusalem

At the end of 2003, Al Quds University in Jerusalem ran an international campaign to stop the proposed construction of the Wall from cutting through the middle of the university campus and confiscating one third of its grounds. Subsequently the new course of the wall was moved to within a few meters of the entrance gate of the main campus of Al Quds University in Abu Dis. Abu Dis is a suburb of East Jerusalem that has been cut off from the city of Jerusalem, its life-blood, by an 8 meter high concrete wall. As a result, Al Quds (meaning Jerusalem) University has also been cut off from Jerusalem, along with 36% of its students. At the time of writing, faculty and students coming from Jerusalem are currently climbing over a pile of rubble beside a small gap in the Wall in a residential area of Abu Dis, in order to get to and from the University.

While the Wall has very grave implications for Al Quds University as a whole, the Nursing Department has been particularly affected. Established in 1979, the Nursing Department of Al Quds University is the oldest department for nursing studies in Palestine. For 25 years, nursing students at Al Quds University have done their clinical practice at the major Arab hospitals in Jerusalem, including Augusta Victoria Hospital and Al-Maqassed Hospital. Since the construction of the Wall around Abu Dis, the journey to Jerusalem for students and teaching

¹⁶ PCBS, "Impact of the Separation Wall on the Socioeconomic Conditions of Palestinian Households in the Localities in which the Separation Wall Passes Through", October 2004



Students from Al Quds University have to climb through a gap in the Wall in Abu Dis to get to the University. Photo: Helen Murray

faculty from the West Bank, while always difficult,¹⁷ has now become virtually impossible. At the start of the last academic year 2003-2004, for the first time in 25 years, the Nursing Department made the reluctant decision to move their clinical practice from the hospitals in Jerusalem to Ramallah. Not only does this have a detrimental effect on the University, it also has a serious impact on the hospitals in East Jerusalem, which have lost a major source for their intake of student nurses.

2.6 Preventing Access to Quality Education

Weariness and a continuous state of fear and uncertainty both inside and outside the classroom clearly impact on the capacities of students to learn and the energies of teachers to teach. The Israeli military barriers to education in Palestine not only prevent physical access to schools and universities, but also seriously inhibit students' access to quality education. According to the Head of Education for UNRWA in Jerusalem, the primary reason for the declining quality of education in schools in the West Bank, is the impact of the overall situation on teachers.

Where teachers often used to travel outside their locality to teach at schools in neighboring villages or refugee camps, UNRWA is now being forced to alter its criteria in the recruitment of teachers to emphasize residence in the local proximity to schools over and above the quality of teaching experience and individual credentials. At the same time, the teachers that continue to make absurd journeys to get to school everyday often arrive late or exhausted and cannot stay outside of school hours, with the consequence that extra-curricular activities suffer.¹⁸

With the added pressure of teaching days missed due to curfews and closures, teachers also admit an increasing emphasis on rote-learning in order to get through the required material to complete a syllabus. In this way, despite the introduction of the new curriculum and national development plan for education in 2000, the last four years have actually seen schools reverting to outdated teaching methods that are quicker and easier for the teacher, but detrimental to children's learning and development. In other words, the quality of education is getting worse. The pressure to cover the required material for compulsory subjects such as Mathematics, Science and Arabic in a limited and highly unpredictable timeframe, has also led many schools to cut the time spent on non-compulsory subjects such as physical education or art: precisely the areas that provide a space for children to relieve stress or express themselves.

The deteriorating quality of education is tangible. Pass rates in UNRWA West Bank schools declined dramatically for the 2003-2004 year compared to 2000-2001, with the overall pass rate for 6th grade Mathematics dropping by 35% (from 68.7% to 33.6%) and the 4th grade Science pass rate dropping by 33.5% (from 71.5% to 38%)¹⁹. Exploring the direct correlation of the violence perpetrated by Israeli soldiers in Palestinian refugee camps with the declining educational performance of children in those camps, UNRWA conducted a comparative study in April 2003. The pass rates of an UNRWA elementary school in Tulkarem Camp, which is subjected to frequent Israeli Army incursions and curfews, were compared to those of another

¹⁷ In 1994, Israel banned all Palestinians with West Bank IDs from entering Jerusalem without a special permit from the Israeli Civil Administration. Only Palestinians with Jerusalem residency IDs are permitted to move freely between Jerusalem and the West Bank, and even their right to residency in Jerusalem, the city in which they were born, is under constant pressure.

¹⁸ Comments by Mr Mohannad Beidas, Head of Department of Education, UNRWA, Jerusalem

¹⁹ United Nations, OPT, "International Children's Day Fact Sheet 2004"

UNRWA elementary school in the relatively calm nearby Nur Shams Camp. These were the results:

Table 4

Grade and Subject	Nur Shams Camp	Tulkarem Camp
Girls 4 th grade Arabic success rate	38%	17.5%
Girls 7 th grade Arabic success rate	25%	2.5%
Boys 4 th grade Math success rate	43%	7%
Boys 7 th grade Math success rate	35%	10%

Source: United Nations OPT, International Children's Day Fact Sheet 2004

3. Incursions and Attacks on Schools and Universities

Schools and universities are often directly targeted by the Israeli Army. A recent report by Save the Children UK and Save the Children Sweden, *Living Behind Barriers*, found that "the physical environment of schools is perceived as a threat to children, especially when it is located near a checkpoint. In some schools outdoor playgrounds are considered dangerous".²⁰ There is no sense among teachers, parents or children that once in school a child is safe from whatever may be happening outside. This permanent state of fear and insecurity pervades the Palestinian learning environment.

Birzeit University reports an average of 1-2 incidents every week of Israeli soldiers either blocking access to the University by road, harassing students and staff at the University's entrance gates or firing tear gas and rubber bullets on to the campus. Such acts of military intrusion and violence on educational premises are even more common in elementary and secondary schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as United Nations records show that Israeli soldiers are invading schools or attacking school buildings by shelling, gunfire or tear gas, on an almost weekly basis.²¹



A pool of blood is left on the floor of an UNRWA school in Rafah after two ten year old boys were shot inside their classroom. Photo: AP

Table 6, based on reports from the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, shows that Israeli soldiers have been invading schools or attacking school buildings by shelling, gunfire or teargas, at least once a week over the last 3 months. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education reports a total of 298 separate incidences of shelling or breaking into schools since the start of the Intifada in September 2000.

On 1 June 2004, two ten year old boys were shot inside their classroom during the Israeli invasion of Rafah in southern Gaza. Peter Hansen, UNRWA's Commissioner-General, said: "This is the second time in a little over a year that a child in a UN classroom has been struck by Israeli fire. Such indifference to the sanctity of schools and the UN flags flying above them violates all humanitarian norms and is absolutely deplorable. Israel's military must take steps to investigate this incident and, if necessary, bring to justice those responsible."

Source: UNRWA Press Release, "UNRWA Condemns School Shooting in Rafah", 2 June 2004

²⁰ Save the Children UK and Sweden, *Living Behind Barriers: Palestinian Children Speak Out*, March 2004

²¹ UNOCHA Updates <http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>

Table 5

Israeli Military Attacks on Schools, Colleges and Universities 28/9/00 – 14/6/04²²	Number of Incidents
Schools shelled or invaded by Israeli Forces	298
Higher education colleges and universities shelled or invaded by Israeli Forces	11
Ministry of Education offices shelled or invaded by Israeli Forces	7
Schools evacuated	51
Damage to schools by bulldozers	48
School property vandalized	49
University property vandalized	10

Table 6: Incidents of forced entry and military attacks on schools over last 3 months²³

Date	Forced Entry	School Attacks	Perpetrator
9-15 June 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bizariya Secondary - Nablus 		Israeli soldiers
2-8 June		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNRWA Al Umariya Elementary School – Rafah, Gaza. Two ten year old boys hit by bullets or shrapnel and taken to hospital UNRWA Tel Es-Sultan Elementary School – Rafah, Gaza. Soldiers opened fire towards the school causing panic amongst the students. UNRWA Ben AbdelAziz School, Khan Younis, Gaza. 7 windows were broken as a result of shooting in Khan Younis Camp 	Israeli soldiers
19-25 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary school - Fawwar Camp, Hebron. 4 students injured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary School Rafah, Gaza. Damage to walls, water pipes, doors. School records destroyed 	Israeli soldiers
12-18 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary school - Abud, Ramallah Headteacher forced to remove Palestinian flag. Harrassment of students and shooting around school 		Israeli soldiers
5-11 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al Badhan Secondary School – Nablus. Students evacuated by the school but harassed by soldiers outside. 		Israeli soldiers
27 April – 4 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNRWA girl school – Tulkarem. Tear gas thrown into school and 15 pupils suffered inhalation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settlers from Shakid and Hannanit settlement near Jenin entered Ar Raihan village at night and threatened to demolish the school claiming that stones are thrown from the school 	Israeli soldiers Israeli settlers
21-27 April		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tear gas fired into Fuqeiqis School, Hebron district. 50% of windows broken at UNRWA Ezbet Beit Hanoun School, Gaza 	Israeli soldiers
14-20 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls Secondary school and Boys secondary school - Silat ad Daher, Jenin. Students and teachers forced to leave due to curfew. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Israeli Army fired at secondary school in Yabad 	Israeli soldiers
7-13 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nursery school - Nablus. Children forced to leave. Two adjacent schools in Dura, Hebron. Soldiers entered before morning lessons. Clashes erupted and 3 students injured by rubber bullets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNRWA boys' schools - Al Am'ari Camp, Ramallah. 8 students injured UNRWA boys' school - Qalandia Camp, Jerusalem. 5 students and one teacher injured 	Israeli soldiers
31 March – 6 April			
23-30 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al Ibrahimya School – Hebron. Students searched before entering the school. 		Israeli soldiers

²² Ministry of Education and Higher Education, "Assessment 10: The Effect of the Israeli Occupation on Education from 28/9/00 – 14/6/04", June 2004

²³ Based on UNOCHA Updates March-June 2004, <http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>

On 16 March 2004, the Israeli Army completely demolished a teacher training college, near the Al-Shuhada Junction south of Gaza City. A branch of Al Aqsa University, the college used to serve around 3000 students. The campus comprised 5.5 dunums of land, a two-story building with 20 classrooms, 4 laboratories, a library, 6 administrative offices and a cafeteria. According to university sources, the losses resulting from this destruction are estimated to be more than US\$700,000, not including the price of the land on which it stood and the equipment inside. In its condemnation of the destruction, the Palestine Center for Human Rights in Gaza noted that the “continuous belligerent Israeli military attacks on Palestinian educational institutions...have resulted in the destruction of 73 educational institutions since the beginning of the Intifada”.

Source: Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), Gaza, Report, 16 March 2004

4. Military Closure of Schools and Universities

Reminiscent of the first Intifada when schools and universities were closed by military order and education effectively became ‘illegal’, since the beginning of the current Intifada, 2 universities and 10 schools have been closed by military order. A further 48 schools have been turned into military bases by the Israeli Army.

Table 7

Closure of Educational Institutions ²⁴	Number
Schools turned into military bases or detention centers	48
Schools closed by military order	10
Universities closed by military order	2



An Israeli soldier welds shut the entrance to Hebron University. Photo: courtesy of IPYL

The two universities in Hebron, Hebron University and the Palestine Polytechnic University, were closed by military order for 8 months in 2003, denying over 6000 students their right to education. The gates of the two universities were literally welded shut on 14 January 2003 and remained closed until 12 June, when students of Hebron University, in defiance of the military order, broke down the gates and managed to reconvene classes on the campus for 6 weeks. The Israeli Army reinforced the closure of Hebron University on 30 July, but unexpectedly reopened both universities on 15 August 2003.

The closures of Hebron University and the Palestine Polytechnic University were ordered by the Commander of the Central Region of the Israeli military forces in the West Bank, General Moshe Kaplinski. According to a military spokesperson, the closures were carried out because these universities “endorsed terror and acts of vengeance as part of their curriculum” and that the Israeli Army “has a duty to prevent education that incites murder of Israelis”²⁵.

This language of ‘terror’ and ‘incitement’, tirelessly used by the Israeli Government to justify all kinds of violations of international law and war crimes against the Palestinian civilian population, also represents an ongoing attempt to discredit and even de-legitimize Palestinian education at the same time as attacking it militarily. In particular, the propaganda of recent years against the new Palestinian curriculum and textbooks has been proved by various independent studies to be baseless.²⁶

²⁴ MOEHE “Assessment 10: The Effect of the Israeli Occupation on Palestinian Education 28/09/00-16/6/04), June 2004

²⁵ International Palestinian Youth League (IPYL), *Occupied Campus: The Israeli Military Closure of Hebron University*, December 2003

²⁶ Two key studies on Palestinian textbooks include: Professor Nathan Brown of George Washington University in Washington DC, “Democracy, History and the Contest Over the Palestinian Curriculum”, November 2001 http://www.geocities.com/nathanbrown1/Adam_Institute_Palestinian_textbooks.htm and Fouad Moughrabi, “The Politics of Palestinian Textbooks”, *Journal Of Palestine Studies*, Vol XXXI, No. 1, Autumn 2001, Issue 121

5. Students and Teachers: A Life of Insecurity

On 6 July 2004, during a night raid on the city of Nablus in the northern West Bank, Professor Khalid Salah of An-Najah National University was killed in his home by Israeli soldiers. His sixteen year old son was also killed. Professor Salah received his PhD from the University of California and was an American citizen. He had taught at An-Najah University since 1979. The total arbitrariness of his death is a source of sorrow and outrage for his colleagues and students at An-Najah University. It also reveals the context of fear and insecurity within which all Palestinian teachers and students work and study.

A total of 34 school teachers and university employees have been killed since September 2000. In 2003, an average of 11 children were killed each month in the West Bank and Gaza²⁷ and 573 children have been killed since the start of the Intifada.²⁸ This unrelenting level of violence and insecurity has had a devastating impact on children's ability to concentrate inside the classroom. According to research carried out by Defence for Children International, "almost every child suffers from a form of psycho-social trauma",²⁹ and UNRWA describes how its Education Department has "to cope with a traumatized school population where fear, among other emotions, has dominated the consciousness of school children".³⁰

Table 8

Israeli Military Attacks on School Children, Students and Teachers 28/9/00 – 14/6/04³¹	Number
School children killed	495
University students killed	196
Teachers killed	27
Employees killed	7
School children injured	3377
University students injured	1245
Teachers injured	54
Employees injured	13

6. Child Prisoners and Students in Detention

Over 28,000 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza were arrested between the beginning of the Intifada in September 2000 and December 2003.³² Nearly 10% of them (over 2,500) were children under 18 years old. A total of 650 children were arrested in 2003 and one of the most worrying developments of last year was Israel's widespread arrest campaigns against children, "on occasions entering schools and taking up to 10 children into custody at a time."³³ There are currently 357 Palestinian children in Israeli prisons.

University students are either arrested on their way to and from university at military checkpoints, or during army raids on student homes and dormitories. An-Najah University in Nablus reports frequent night raids on student residences, while in the village of Birzeit, close to Birzeit University, whole dormitories have been evacuated in the middle of the night with literally busloads of students taken to the nearest Israeli detention center. 710 university students have been detained for varying lengths of time since September 2000.³⁴

According to Israeli procedure, both student and child prisoners are taken to a detention center and interrogated, often involving some form of abuse or torture such as beatings, sleep and

²⁷ Defence for Children International/Palestine Section, *Fragile Childhood: An Analysis of Human Rights Violations Against Palestinian Children in 2003*, p.31

²⁸ According to UN figures, a total of 573 Palestinian children under 18 years old have been killed since September 2000 (United Nations, OPT "International Children's Day Fact Sheet 2004", 1 June 2004)

²⁹ *ibid.* p.63

³⁰ UNRWA, "13th Joint Meeting: UNRWA/Arab League Council of Education for the Children of Palestine", December 2003

³¹ MOEHE, "Assessment 10", June 2004

³² Adameer statistic cited in Al Haq's 'In Focus' fact sheet, "Mass Arrests", Stop Collective Punishment Campaign, 2004

³³ DCI/PS, *Fragile Childhood*, 2004, p.45

³⁴ MOEHE, "Assessment 10", June 2004

food deprivation or being tied in painful positions for long periods. Defence for Children International estimates that up to 95% of child prisoners are subjected to some form of physical abuse often amounting to torture.³⁵

While some students are charged with belonging to groups within the elected student councils and the majority of children are charged with minor offences such as stone-throwing, a large proportion of student prisoners are held in 'administrative detention': imprisonment without charge or trial. Any information or evidence relating to their cases is declared 'secret' and withheld from both the detainee and his/her lawyer, making the possibility for a meaningful defense redundant. Detention orders are initially for a maximum of 6 months but can be extended indefinitely. Two students from Birzeit University have been held in administrative detention for over two years.

Tamar Pelleg Sryck, the Israeli defense lawyer for Birzeit University student, Khader Qados, who has been in administrative detention for almost 2 years without any charges brought against him, has made the following appeal to international supporters and human rights activists to help bring an end to Khader's arbitrary imprisonment, which is robbing him of his education, his family life, and his freedom.

"Born in 1974, from Zawiya (Qalqilya), Khader is a student of civil engineering at Birzeit University. He is married and the father of two girls who were both born while he was in jail. I became his lawyer in 1999, after an administrative detention order had been issued against him and he was sent to the military jail of Megiddo inside Israel. This detention interrupted his studies, robbed him of his family life, and lasted for a year and a half.

Extension orders for Khader's detention were systematically issued by the military commander on the request of the Israeli intelligence service (Shabak). All of them were confirmed by the military judges on the basis of secret evidence which was presented to them by the same intelligence service. And so it went until 14th February 2001.

On that date Khader was released. A town arrest order replaced the administrative detention order and he was also ordered to present himself once a fortnight at the police station of Qedumim. At the time it was a dangerous trip. Only when this order expired, on the 18th August, was he able to go back to his studies hoping that this time he will graduate. However, he did not. On the 12th November 2002 Khader was arrested again. As before, no charges were brought against him and he has been kept in administrative detention ever since. The judges dutifully pronounced him 'dangerous to the security of the region' and offered their approval.

The petition to put an end to the administrative detention filed by us with the High Court of Justice, heard on the 22 of October 2003, was rejected. The Justices mentioned that they expect the Authorities to continue their efforts to investigate the case in order to obtain evidence that will enable them to replace administrative detention by proper criminal proceedings. Khader remains under administrative detention which makes defense practically impossible.

As for today, we have to wait for the present order to expire. This will happen on 18 August 2004, by which time Khader's detention will have reached a year and 9-months. Khader asks for your help. He urges you to intervene with the Israeli Authorities demanding to put an end to his arbitrary detention based on information supplied by collaborators, never verified in proper court proceedings nor disclosed to him or his lawyer."

³⁵ DCI/PS poll in 2001

7. Conclusion

In the Israeli invasions of Palestinian cities in April 2002, many Palestinian governmental, non-governmental and cultural offices and organizations were raided and vandalized by the Israeli Army. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education was one of the worst affected, with databanks, hundreds of files, computer hard-drives and office equipment completely destroyed. In her article, "Operation Destroy the Data", the Israeli journalist Amira Hass made an argument that is still relevant to the continuing attacks on Palestinian education two years later.

*Let's not deceive ourselves; this was not a mission to search and destroy the terrorist infrastructure... This was not a whim, or crazed vengeance, by this or that unit, nor a personal vandalistic urge of a soldier whose buddies didn't dare stop him. There was a decision made to vandalize the civic, administrative, cultural infrastructure developed by Palestinian society... sabotaging for years to come the Palestinian goal for independence, sending all of Palestinian society backward.*³⁶

Education under military occupation has always been a basic struggle rather than a basic right. During the first Intifada against the Israeli occupation, between 1987-1992, Palestinian education effectively became 'illegal' as schools and universities were closed indefinitely, and Israeli soldiers arrested students for attending 'underground' classes in people's homes and community centers, and even for carrying books. Since the beginning of the current Intifada in September 2000, Palestinian education has once again come under attack. Two universities and ten schools have been closed by military order,³⁷ but it is the physical barriers to education, including hundreds of military roadblocks, the Wall, closures of cities and prolonged curfews, that have meant that students and teachers have not been able to get to school or university.

Alongside the devastating impact of Israel's illegal policies of collective punishment on access to education, the evidence contained in this report also points to the fact that the Israeli Army is directly targeting Palestinian schools and universities. Needless to say, the Israeli military obstruction and attacks on Palestinian education violate a number of human rights, including the right to education. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that "everyone has a right to education", while the Fourth Geneva Convention, protecting civilians under military occupation, firmly lays the responsibility for the right to education with "the occupying power [which] shall, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children".

Despite the enormous barriers to education, Palestinians refuse to let the military obstruction of access to their schools and universities deprive children and young people of their right to education. During this Intifada, school children, parents and teachers in Nablus made the brave decision to break months of continuous curfew in order to get the children of Nablus back to school, while students in Hebron physically broke down the gates to their university to reconvene classes after 6 months of military closure. The right to education is based on the legal and moral authority of a host of international agreements, conventions and declarations relating to education and the protection and freedom of students and children. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of governments, international institutions, organizations and ordinary people to defend the right to education and to demand its realization.

³⁶ Amira Hass, "Operation Destroy the Data", *Haaretz*, 24 April 2002

³⁷ 10 schools have been closed by military order, with a further 48 schools turned into military bases. (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, "Assessment 10: The Effect of the Israeli Occupation on Education from 28/9/00 – 14/6/04", June 2004)

Appendix 1: The Right to Education in International Law

<p>Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949</p>	<p>“The occupying power shall, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children”</p>
<p>Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948</p>	<p>“Everyone has the right to education”</p>
<p>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966³⁸</p>	<p>“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms”</p>
<p>General Comment 13 on the Implementation of ICESCR, 1999</p>	<p>“Academic freedom includes the liberty of individuals to fulfill their functions without discrimination or fear of repression by the State or any other actor”</p>
<p>Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989</p>	<p>“States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity...[and shall] Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means”</p>

³⁸ Ratified by Israel in 1991