

CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN INTERNATIONAL ARMED CONFLICTS: GAZA-PALESTINE

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Abstract. *Children's right to education is a fundamental human right enshrined in international law, yet in conflict zones like Gaza, this right remains critically endangered. Armed conflicts disproportionately affect children, leading to the destruction of schools, displacement of students, and long-term disruptions to learning. Recent hostilities in Gaza have severely damaged educational infrastructure, leaving hundreds of thousands of students without access to proper schooling. Beyond the immediate loss of education, the psychological toll of war has left many children traumatized, requiring urgent psychosocial support. The prolonged denial of education not only hinders personal growth but also threatens Gaza's economic and social stability, trapping future generations in poverty and insecurity. The crisis is exacerbated by the ongoing blockade, which has led to overcrowded classrooms, resource shortages, and insufficient funding for rebuilding schools. Attacks on educational institutions violate International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and fall under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which mandates the protection of schools during armed conflict. However, despite these legal protections, Palestinian children continue to face significant barriers to quality education. Addressing this crisis requires a comprehensive approach, including a ceasefire to ensure safe learning environments, increased international aid for school reconstruction, and stronger legal frameworks to protect education. Investment in teacher training and psychosocial support is essential to mitigate the long-term consequences of disrupted learning. The international community must act urgently to safeguard Palestinian children's right to education, fostering resilience, hope, and a path toward a stable future.*

Keyword: Armed Conflict, Gaza-Palestine, Mental Health Support, School Destruction, Teacher Training in Crisis.

ПРАВО ДЕТЕЙ НА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ В МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ВООРУЖЕННЫХ КОНФЛИКТАХ: ГАЗА-ПАЛЕСТИНА

Аннотация. *Право детей на образование является одним из основных прав человека, закрепленных в международном праве, однако в зонах конфликта, таких как*

Газа, это право остается под угрозой. Вооруженные конфликты непропорционально сильно затрагивают детей, что приводит к разрушению школ, перемещению учащихся и долгосрочным сбоям в обучении. Недавние военные действия в Газе серьезно повредили образовательную инфраструктуру, оставив сотни тысяч учащихся без доступа к надлежащему образованию. Помимо немедленной потери образования, психологические последствия войны оставили многих детей травмированными, требующими срочной психосоциальной поддержки. Длительный отказ в образовании не только препятствует личностному росту, но и угрожает экономической и социальной стабильности Газы, загоняя будущие поколения в нищету и отсутствие безопасности. Кризис усугубляется продолжающейся блокадой, которая привела к переполненным классам, нехватке ресурсов и недостаточному финансированию восстановления школ. Нападения на учебные заведения нарушают международное гуманитарное право (МГП) и подпадают под юрисдикцию Международного уголовного суда (МУС), который предписывает защиту школ во время вооруженного конфликта. Однако, несмотря на эти правовые гарантии, палестинские дети продолжают сталкиваться со значительными препятствиями на пути к качественному образованию. Для решения этого кризиса требуется комплексный подход, включая прекращение огня для обеспечения безопасной среды обучения, увеличение международной помощи на восстановление школ и более прочные правовые рамки для защиты образования. Инвестиции в подготовку учителей и психосоциальную поддержку имеют важное значение для смягчения долгосрочных последствий нарушенного обучения. Международное сообщество должно действовать срочно, чтобы защитить право палестинских детей на образование, способствуя устойчивости, надежде и пути к стабильному будущему.

Ключевые слова: вооруженный конфликт, сектор Газа-Палестина, поддержка психического здоровья, разрушение школ, подготовка учителей в условиях кризиса.

1. Introduction

International conflicts disproportionately affect children, disrupting their education and depriving them of a fundamental human right. Education is the cornerstone of a secure and fulfilling future, yet in times of armed conflict, it is often one of the first casualties (O'Malley, 2011). International law explicitly recognizes children's right to education, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of

the Child (CRC), Fourth Geneva Convention, Additional Protocols and ICC. However, in Gaza, Palestine, this right has been systematically violated due to ongoing hostilities, severely impacting an entire generation. Recent escalations in violence have inflicted catastrophic damage on Gaza's education system. Over 87% of schools have been damaged or destroyed, forcing hundreds of thousands of children out of classrooms. Beyond the immediate loss of learning, the psychological impact of war is profound. Exposure to violence, displacement, and loss has left many children suffering from severe trauma, necessitating extensive psychosocial support for both students and teachers (Iriqat, 2025: 1-19; *ReliefWeb*, 24 Jan 2024; Blog by Inger Ashing, 16 Apr 2024). The denial of education does not just hinder academic progress it jeopardizes future opportunities, economic development, and social stability. A generation deprived of education struggles to break the cycle of poverty and contribute meaningfully to society, further entrenching long-term economic and humanitarian crises (Asi, 2024: 24).

This crisis is further compounded by pre-existing challenges within Gaza's education sector. The blockade has led to severe overcrowding in schools, straining resources and reducing the quality of education. Limited funding prevents the construction of new schools or the repair of damaged ones, leaving the system in a perpetual state of crisis. Additionally, direct attacks on schools violate IHL, which mandates the protection of educational institutions during armed conflict (O'Malley, 2011). Addressing this crisis requires a multi-faceted approach. First and foremost, a lasting ceasefire is essential to allow children to return to school safely. The upholding of international law is critical to protecting schools from further destruction. Moreover, increased international aid is necessary to rebuild Gaza's education infrastructure and ensure Palestinian children can exercise their fundamental right to learn. Investing in teacher training, educational materials, and digital learning resources is also key to strengthening the education system and making it more resilient to future disruptions (Giroux, 2024: 12-23).

The consequences of Gaza's disrupted education system extend far beyond the classroom. Investing in psychosocial support programs is crucial to fostering resilience and restoring hope among students and educators. Rebuilding the education sector is not just about restoring physical buildings it requires a comprehensive strategy that prioritizes mental health, teacher development, and long-term sustainability (Asi, 2024: 24). The international community must take decisive action, pressuring all parties to uphold their legal obligations and supporting initiatives that restore education in Gaza.

Only through collective efforts can we secure a future where Palestinian children have the opportunity to reach their full potential, breaking the cycle of conflict and paving the way for peace and development (Abusamra, 2024: 1137-1145).

Research Questions: The ongoing international armed conflict in Gaza, Palestine, poses a severe threat to the fundamental right to education for Palestinian children. This paper investigates the following critical questions:

- 1- How do ongoing hostilities in Gaza disrupt schooling, damage educational infrastructure, and impact students and teachers?
- 2- What are the psychological effects of conflict-related trauma and emotional distress on children's ability to learn and develop in Gaza?
- 3- How effective are international legal frameworks, including the UDHR, CRC, and Fourth Geneva Convention, Additional Protocols and ICC in protecting the right to education in Gaza during armed conflict?
- 4- what ways do blockades, overcrowding, resource shortages, and school destruction affect the quality and accessibility of education for children in Gaza?

Research Objectives:

- 1- Examining how ongoing hostilities disrupt schooling, damage educational infrastructure, and affect students and teachers.
- 2- Investigating the trauma and emotional distress caused by conflict and its influence on children's ability to learn and develop.
- 3- Reviewing international laws, including the UDHR, CRC, and the Fourth Geneva Convention, Additional Protocols and ICC, and their effectiveness in safeguarding education in Gaza.
- 4- Exploring the impact of blockades, overcrowding, resource shortages, and school destruction on the quality and accessibility of education.

Importance of the Research: This research is pivotal in highlighting the severe consequences of armed conflict on children's right to education, particularly in Gaza, Palestine.

Armed conflict disrupts educational systems, damaging infrastructure and displacing children from their classrooms, thereby denying them access to essential learning opportunities.

Education is crucial not only for personal development but also for the future of entire societies.

The loss of education in Gaza is devastating, with long-term effects on economic and social stability. By exploring how the conflict in Gaza has deprived children of their fundamental right to education, this research underscores the broader implications for their future and the region's development.

Beyond the immediate effects of school closures and displacement, the research also focuses on the psychological impact of war on children. Exposure to violence, trauma, and loss severely affects their emotional and mental well-being, hindering their ability to learn and recover from the shock. The lack of psychosocial support further exacerbates these challenges, making it difficult for students and teachers alike to resume their educational activities. This research highlights the critical need for comprehensive trauma-informed interventions that address both the emotional and academic needs of children in conflict zones, ensuring that education becomes a tool for recovery rather than a source of further distress.

Another key aspect of this research is its examination of international legal frameworks that aim to protect children's education during times of conflict. The study evaluates the effectiveness of existing laws, such as the UDHR and the CRC, and explores how international legal instruments have been enforced in Gaza. By identifying gaps in legal protections and accountability, the research offers recommendations for strengthening these frameworks to ensure that children's educational rights are better safeguarded during armed conflict. This focus on legal protections is vital for promoting greater international awareness and support for children in conflict zones.

Research Method: This study adopts a doctrinal research methodology, which involves an in-depth analysis of legal texts, frameworks, and relevant case laws to understand the violation of children's right to education in the context of armed conflict in Gaza. The doctrinal approach will focus on the interpretation and application of international legal instruments, such as the CRC, IHL, the Fourth Geneva Convention and ICC to assess how they protect the right to education in conflict zones. Moreover, the study will analyze primary legal sources, including international treaties, resolutions, and case law to explore how the right to education is protected under international law during armed conflicts. This will include examining the obligations of states and parties to the conflict under IHL. Furthermore, interpretation of Jurisprudence by examining key case studies and decisions from international courts, the study will evaluate the judicial interpretations of the right to education in armed conflicts, focusing on the Gaza context and its specific challenges.

2. The Right to Education International Humanitarian Law

The right to education during armed conflicts is a fundamental principle established under the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) and its Additional Protocols (1977). These legal instruments emphasize the need to protect schools, students, and teachers from the effects of war. Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention obligates occupying powers to facilitate (Focarelli, 2010: 125-171; Martinez, 2021: 206) and support the functioning of educational institutions, while Article 52 of Additional Protocol I prohibits attacks on civilian objects, including schools, unless used for military purposes. However, despite these clear legal obligations, conflicts like the one in Gaza-Palestine reveal the ongoing failure to uphold these protections, leaving children deprived of their fundamental right to education (Matheson, 2017: 233-245).

One of the most severe violations of the right to education in Gaza is the destruction of schools and educational infrastructure due to military operations. Numerous reports from organizations such as United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and Human Rights Watch document instances where schools have been damaged or destroyed by airstrikes and shelling. Such destruction directly contradicts IHL, which mandates the protection of educational institutions during conflict. Additionally, when schools are used as shelters for displaced civilians, they often become targets, further exacerbating the crisis. The widespread damage to schools makes it nearly impossible for children to continue their education in safe and stable environments (*Human Rights Watch*. 3 August 2024; *Watchlist*, March 2025).

Beyond physical destruction, access to education is further hindered by military blockades and severe resource shortages. The long-standing blockade imposed on Gaza has significantly restricted the entry of essential materials needed for education, such as books, computers, and even basic school supplies (Buheji, 2024: 1-26; Abusamra, 2024: 10). According to Additional Protocol I, Article 70, humanitarian relief must include supplies necessary for the survival and well-being of civilians, including access to education. However, the blockade directly undermines this provision by preventing schools from receiving the necessary resources to operate effectively.

Overcrowded classrooms, outdated learning materials, and inadequate facilities have become the norm, severely impacting the quality of education in Gaza (Feith, 1985: 36-47.)

In addition to physical and logistical barriers, armed conflict inflicts long-term psychological trauma on children, which affects their ability to learn and develop. Studies show that children who grow up in war zones experience heightened levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression, leading to difficulties in concentration and learning.

(Al-Sheikh, 2017: 1-12). Article 4(3)(a) of Additional Protocol II stresses the importance of continuing education even during non-international conflicts, yet psychological distress often prevents children from fully engaging in their studies. The emotional scars left by war not only impact academic performance but also contribute to higher dropout rates, limiting future opportunities for an entire generation (Junod, 1983: 29; Smith, 2020: 14-25; Alsaid, 2019). The targeting of teachers and educational personnel further disrupts the learning environment. Many educators in Gaza have been injured, killed, or displaced due to ongoing violence, leading to a shortage of qualified teachers. Additionally, some schools are forced to close due to safety concerns, further depriving children of their education. IHL recognizes teachers as civilians who must be protected during armed conflicts, yet repeated violations continue to place their lives at risk. Without teachers, even the schools that remain standing struggle to function, worsening the already dire educational crisis (Smith, 2020: 14-25; O'Malley, 2011).

Another critical issue is the militarization of schools, where armed groups or military forces use school buildings for military purposes. This practice not only places students and teachers in immediate danger but also violates Article 52 of Additional Protocol I, which mandates the protection of civilian infrastructure. When schools become military targets, children are either forced to study in unsafe conditions or are completely denied access to education. This further demonstrates the failure to uphold international legal protections designed to safeguard education in conflict zones (Haines, 2021: 21-43; Rogers, 2024: 97-124). The weak enforcement of international legal frameworks further exacerbates the crisis. While the Fourth Geneva Convention and Additional Protocols provide clear guidelines for protecting education during war, enforcement remains highly inconsistent. International bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and the ICC have mechanisms to investigate violations, yet political complexities often prevent effective action. Countries and groups responsible for attacking schools or restricting education often face little to no accountability, allowing such violations to continue unchecked. This lack of enforcement undermines the very purpose of IHL (Pedrazzi, 2024; Kihara-Hunt, 2025: 165-188).

Moreover, international humanitarian organizations struggle to provide effective assistance due to restrictions imposed by conflict parties. Organizations like UNICEF, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have consistently advocated for the protection of education in Gaza, yet their efforts are frequently obstructed by security concerns and access limitations (Milton, 2023:1024-1042; Kamel, 2006).

Article 70 of Additional Protocol I calls for the free passage of humanitarian relief, but when such assistance is blocked or restricted, children continue to suffer. Without stronger global intervention and diplomatic efforts, the situation is unlikely to improve (Liebenberg, 2020: 48-84; Griffey, 2011: 275-327). Despite these challenges, there have been efforts to strengthen protections for education during armed conflicts. Initiatives such as the Safe Schools Declaration, supported by the UN, aim to prevent the military use of schools and ensure that students can learn in safe environments. Some legal cases have also been brought against perpetrators of attacks on schools, but these remain limited in scope. Greater international commitment is needed to enforce existing laws, hold violators accountable, and prioritize education in humanitarian aid programs.

Without urgent action, the right to education in conflict zones like Gaza will remain an unfulfilled promise (*Human Rights Watch*. 3 August 2024; Nijim, 2020; Aldabbour, 2024: 696).

The Fourth Geneva Convention and Additional Protocols provide a strong legal framework for protecting education during war, their implementation remains weak. The destruction of schools, psychological trauma, lack of resources, militarization of educational spaces, and weak legal enforcement have all contributed to a severe educational crisis in Gaza (Παρασκευοπούλου, 2023: 24-33). If the international community fails to take concrete steps to uphold these legal protections, generations of children in conflict-affected areas will be deprived of their fundamental right to education. Strengthening legal accountability, increasing humanitarian aid, and ensuring the protection of schools and educators must be prioritized to bridge the gap between law and reality (Barakat, 2025:1-21).

3. Right to Education in Palestinian Legal Framework

The Palestinian legal framework incorporates the right to education, offering a strong foundation for its protection. Here is a breakdown of key aspects such as the Palestinian Basic Law, adopted in 2002, serves as a foundational document outlining fundamental rights and principles (Milhem, 2010: 263-286). Article 19 enshrines the right to education, stating: "Education is a right guaranteed by the law. It is compulsory and free in its basic stages." This aligns with international legal principles established in the UDHR. Promulgated in 2004, this law specifically protects the rights of children, including their right to education (Khalil, 2009:169-184). Articles 37, 38, 39, and 41 address this right. Article 37 Guarantees free and compulsory basic education for all children. Article 37 tackles two key ideas regarding a child's education. Free Education, this means the government ensures children can access basic education without having to pay tuition or fees that might create a financial barrier.

This could include things like textbooks, uniforms, or other necessary school supplies. Compulsory Education, this makes attending school mandatory for all children within a certain age range. This ensures that every child receives a foundational education, regardless of their family's background or situation. In simpler terms, Article 37 says that all children deserve a basic education, and the government has a responsibility to make sure they get it for free and don't skip out. Article 38 Mandates the state to take necessary measures to prevent withdrawal of children from schools. This article emphasizes the importance of education by requiring the government to take steps to keep children in school. The idea is to prevent situations where children are taken out of school before completing their education. This could happen for a variety of reasons, such as child labor or pressure to help support the family financially. Article 39 Promotes the elimination of various forms of discrimination against children in accessing education. Article 39 focuses on creating a level playing field for education. It recognizes that children can face discrimination based on various factors, and this should not prevent them from getting an education (*Palestinian Basic Law*, adopted in 2002).

Here is a breakdown of what this article means elimination of Discrimination; this article aims to remove any practices or situations that disadvantage certain groups of children when trying to access education. Various Forms; Discrimination can come in many forms. It could be based on a child's gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, socioeconomic background, or even their family situation (like being orphans or refugees). Accessing Education: This refers to the entire process of getting an education. It encompasses being admitted to school, having equal opportunities to participate and learn within the classroom, and not facing obstacles that prevent them from completing their education (Ainscow, 2020: 7-16). Basically, Article 39 says that all children, regardless of their background, deserve a shot at getting an education, and there shouldn't be any biases or unfair practices that hold them back. Article 41 Supports children's participation in decision-making processes regarding their education. Article 41 flips the script on traditional education by recognizing children's agency in their own learning. Here is a breakdown of what it means: Supports Children's Participation; This article encourages schools and educational systems to create opportunities for children to have their voices heard and considered when making decisions about their education. Decision-Making Processes: This refers to the different ways choices are made about what and how children learn. It could involve things like choosing topics or activities for class projects; Providing input on classroom rules or routines; Having a say in the

teaching methods used; Offering feedback on the learning environment (*Palestinian Basic Law*, adopted in 2002; Killian, 2022: 15188).

Why is this important? Research suggests that when children have a say in their education, they become more engaged and invested in their learning. They take more ownership of their education and are more likely to see it as relevant to their lives. This article does not mean children get to make all the decisions. There will always be limitations based on age, maturity, and the expertise of teachers. The emphasis is on creating age-appropriate ways for children to contribute their ideas and perspectives. These provisions demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring all Palestinian children have access to a quality education (MacKenzie, 2020: 805-832). While the legal framework provides a solid basis, there are limitations and ongoing challenges such as Resource Constraints, the Israeli occupation and blockade on Gaza restrict resources needed for building new schools, repairing existing ones, and providing adequate educational materials.

Overcrowding: Limited resources coupled with population growth led to overcrowded classrooms, hindering the quality of education. Effective implementation of the legal framework remains a challenge. Palestine is not yet a full member state of the UN but has acceded to various international human rights treaties, including the CRC. This creates an obligation to uphold the right to education as outlined in the CRC. The Palestinian legal framework offers a strong basis for protecting the right to education. However, addressing resource limitations, promoting effective implementation, and holding parties accountable for violations are crucial steps towards fully realizing this right for all Palestinian children (Danil, 2023: 39-51; Shalhout, 2023).

Moreover, The Palestinian legal framework provides a strong foundation for protecting the right to education through its Basic Law and Palestinian Child Law. These laws emphasize education as a fundamental right, ensuring that it is free, compulsory, and non-discriminatory. The Basic Law (Article 19) aligns with international standards, such as the UDHR, by guaranteeing free and compulsory basic education. Similarly, the Palestinian Child Law (Articles 37-41) reinforces this right by addressing critical issues such as accessibility, non-discrimination, prevention of school dropout, and children's participation in educational decision-making. (Viterbo, (2012). These legal provisions highlight a strong commitment to upholding children's educational rights despite ongoing challenges in the region. However, significant obstacles hinder the full implementation of these laws, particularly in Gaza, where the Israeli occupation, military operations, and blockade have severely impacted the education system. Resource constraints limit the construction of new schools, the repair of damaged facilities, and the availability of essential

educational materials (Kovner, 2018: 616-639). The blockade also restricts the entry of books, computers, and other learning resources, further weakening the quality of education. Overcrowded classrooms, caused by a growing population and insufficient infrastructure, make it difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to students. These challenges undermine the effectiveness of the legal guarantees, making it difficult to fully realize the right to education (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2014: 1-24).

Beyond infrastructure and resources, the conflict itself has direct psychological and social effects on children's education. Many children in Gaza suffer from trauma, anxiety, and depression due to continuous violence, displacement, and loss of family members. While the legal framework seeks to ensure education for all, psychological distress can lead to high dropout rates, reduced academic performance, and long-term emotional struggles (Habashi, 2015:122-131). Article 41 of the Palestinian Child Law, which encourages children's participation in educational decisions, is particularly relevant in this context, as empowering children in their learning process can help them regain a sense of control over their futures. However, without mental health support and trauma-informed teaching methods, children in conflict zones may continue to struggle with their education. Additionally, Palestine's international obligations further emphasize the right to education, but enforcement remains a challenge. Although Palestine is not a full member of the United Nations, it has acceded to key international human rights treaties, such as the CRC. These commitments place a legal and moral obligation on the Palestinian authorities to uphold and improve the education system despite external challenges. However, enforcement mechanisms remain weak, particularly in conflict-affected areas where international law is frequently violated.

The absence of strong accountability measures allows continued disruptions to education without sufficient consequences for those responsible (Mahamid, 2023: 412). The Palestinian legal framework provides a comprehensive foundation for ensuring children's right to education, with strong provisions in the Basic Law and Palestinian Child Law. However, the Israeli occupation, blockades, resource shortages, and psychological trauma pose major obstacles to its implementation. Addressing these issues requires increased international support, stronger legal enforcement, and improved infrastructure to make education accessible and effective for all Palestinian children. Moving forward, enhancing accountability, ensuring stable funding, and integrating trauma-informed education are critical steps toward fulfilling the promise of education as a fundamental right (Khoury-Kassabri, 2006:1060-1073).

4. Impact of Armed Conflict on Education in Gaza

Armed conflict has severely impacted the education system in Gaza, creating numerous obstacles for students, teachers, and educational institutions. Schools, once places of learning and hope, have become targets of violence, destruction, and instability. The frequent airstrikes and military operations have damaged or destroyed hundreds of schools, leaving students without safe spaces to learn (Barakat, 2025: 1-21). In many cases, school buildings have been repurposed as shelters for displaced families, further reducing the availability of classrooms. The lack of safe learning environments forces many children to abandon their education, either temporarily or permanently, leading to a significant increase in dropout rates. Without access to quality education, an entire generation in Gaza is at risk of being deprived of the knowledge and skills needed for their future. The psychological impact of war on students is another major consequence of armed conflict. (Nijim, 2020). Many children in Gaza have experienced severe trauma due to bombings, destruction, and the loss of family members or classmates. The constant fear of attacks creates anxiety, depression, and PTSD among students, making it difficult for them to concentrate and engage in learning. Teachers also struggle to support traumatized students, as they themselves are living under constant stress and insecurity (Aldabbour, 2024: 696; Abudayya, 2023: 200-305; Amro, 2024: 68). Without proper mental health support and trauma-informed education, students find it challenging to return to a normal academic routine, leading to reduced academic performance, lack of motivation, and increased school dropouts (Holail, 2024: 304).

The destruction of educational infrastructure has further deepened the crisis. Many schools in Gaza operate under poor conditions, with overcrowded classrooms, lack of basic resources, and damaged facilities. The blockade imposed on Gaza restricts the import of essential materials needed for rebuilding schools, repairing classrooms, and providing students with necessary learning tools (Abudayya, 2023: 200-305; Amro, 2024 68). Many schools lack electricity, clean water, sanitation, and technological resources, which negatively affects the quality of education. Without functioning libraries, laboratories, and digital learning tools, students are unable to receive a well-rounded education. The continued deterioration of educational infrastructure further discourages students from attending school and limits their learning opportunities (Abuawad, 2024). Teachers and educators in Gaza also face immense challenges due to armed conflict. Many educators work under unsafe and unstable conditions, struggling with low salaries, limited professional development opportunities, and the constant threat of violence. Some teachers have been injured or killed during attacks, while others have been forced to flee their homes, disrupting the education system (Nijim, 2020: 1123-1134).

The shortage of qualified teachers, combined with inadequate training and lack of educational resources, negatively affects students' learning outcomes. Additionally, teachers must deal with large class sizes and overcrowded schools, making it difficult to provide individualized attention to students. The ongoing instability creates a demotivated and overburdened teaching workforce, ultimately impacting the quality of education (Hauser, 2024).

The blockade and movement restrictions imposed on Gaza further limit access to quality education. Students and teachers face difficulties traveling abroad or even within Palestine to access higher education, training programs, and academic exchanges. Many universities in Gaza struggle with outdated curricula, limited research opportunities, and inadequate facilities, preventing students from receiving a globally competitive education (Abuawad, 2024). The blockade also restricts the entry of scholarly materials, laboratory equipment, and technology, hindering the ability of higher education institutions to provide advanced learning opportunities.

These limitations reduce the prospects for Palestinian students to pursue careers in science, technology, medicine, and other critical fields, affecting the long-term development of the region (Hamad, 2017). Another consequence of armed conflict is the increase in child labor and early marriages due to economic hardships. Many families in Gaza struggle with poverty, unemployment, and loss of income, making it difficult for them to afford school expenses. As a result, some children are forced to drop out of school and work to support their families, engaging in low-paying and sometimes hazardous jobs. Others, particularly girls, may be pressured into early marriages, further limiting their access to education. The long-term effects of this trend are devastating, as it reduces literacy rates, widens gender disparities, and perpetuates cycles of poverty and dependency. Without economic support programs and policies to keep children in school, these negative effects will continue to worsen (Habashi, 2015:122-131).

IHL, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and the CRC, prohibits attacks on schools and mandates the protection of children's right to education during armed conflict. However, in Gaza, these legal protections are frequently violated, and perpetrators of attacks on educational institutions often go unpunished (Abudayya, 2023: 200-305; Amro, 2024 68). The lack of accountability for violations of education rights in conflict zones allows such attacks to continue without consequences. The ICC and other legal bodies must take stronger action to investigate and prosecute those responsible for destroying educational institutions and denying Palestinian children their fundamental right to learn. Strengthening legal accountability mechanisms is crucial to ensuring the protection of education in Gaza.

Despite the immense challenges, resilience and determination among Palestinian students and educators remain strong. Many students continue to pursue education despite difficult conditions, lack of resources, and psychological trauma.

Teachers and school administrators work tirelessly to create safe learning environments and provide emotional support for students. Local and international organizations also play a role in offering scholarships, rebuilding schools, and providing educational materials to keep learning opportunities alive. These efforts, though limited by external constraints, demonstrate the unwavering commitment to education as a tool for empowerment and resistance (Abu Hamad, 2021: 40).

To address the impact of armed conflict on education in Gaza, urgent international intervention and long-term solutions are necessary. Humanitarian organizations, governments, and international bodies must work together to protect schools, provide emergency education support, rebuild infrastructure, and ensure access to mental health services (Iriqat, 2025: 1-19).

Additionally, lifting restrictions on educational resources, increasing funding for teacher training, and expanding digital learning opportunities are essential steps toward improving education in Gaza. Without these efforts, an entire generation risks losing access to education, further deepening the cycle of poverty and instability in the region. Investing in education is not only a humanitarian necessity but also a crucial step toward long-term peace and development in Palestine (Cervantes-Duarte, 2016: 238-261).

5. Challenges to Accessing Quality Education in Gaza

The education system in Gaza faces immense challenges, preventing many children from receiving quality education. Decades of conflict, political instability, economic hardship, and infrastructural destruction have severely impacted schools, teachers, and students. While education is a fundamental right under both Palestinian and international law, the reality on the ground presents significant obstacles to ensuring safe, accessible, and effective learning environments (Hamad, 2017; 3-14). Understanding these challenges is crucial for addressing the deep-rooted issues affecting Gaza's education system. One of the biggest barriers to education in Gaza is the frequent destruction of schools and educational infrastructure due to military operations. Airstrikes and shelling have repeatedly damaged or destroyed schools, forcing thousands of students into overcrowded and unsafe learning spaces (The Education Cluster, 2023; Hamad, 2017; 3-20).

According to UNESCO and UNICEF reports, many schools operate on double or triple shifts to accommodate displaced students, which reduces instructional time and affects the overall

quality of education. The destruction of schools not only disrupts learning but also leaves children with a sense of insecurity, making it difficult for them to concentrate and thrive academically (*The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)*, Oct. 12, 2023; Hamad, 2017; 3-12).

In addition to physical damage, Gaza's blockade has led to severe resource shortages, affecting the availability of books, technology, school supplies, and even basic utilities like electricity and clean water in schools. The restrictions on imports have made it nearly impossible to renovate damaged schools or build new ones to meet the growing demand for education. As a result, classrooms are often overcrowded, with some schools holding up to 50 or 60 students per class (Shraim, 2018; 309-332). Overcrowding makes it difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention, significantly lowering the quality of instruction. The psychological impact of conflict also presents a major barrier to effective learning. Many children in Gaza have experienced trauma, displacement, and loss of family members, leading to high levels of anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Dawas, 2017: 555-572). The constant exposure to violence affects their ability to concentrate, retain information, and participate actively in school. While some schools have implemented psychosocial support programs, the demand for mental health services far exceeds available resources, leaving many children without adequate emotional support (Abu Hamad, 2021: 40).

Another critical challenge is the shortage of qualified teachers due to economic hardship and restrictions on movement. Many teachers are underpaid or have left Gaza in search of better opportunities, creating a significant gap in the education sector. The blockade has also limited teacher training programs, preventing educators from acquiring modern teaching methods and skills necessary for effective instruction. Without adequate professional development, many teachers struggle to provide quality education, further impacting students' academic performance (Shinn, 2012: 608-633). The economic crisis in Gaza has also forced many children to drop out of school to help support their families. High unemployment rates and widespread poverty mean that education is often deprioritized in favor of child labor or other means of survival (Hassoun, 2025:124433). Although Palestinian law mandates free and compulsory education, many families cannot afford transportation, school supplies, or uniforms, making it difficult for children to stay in school. This economic pressure particularly affects girls, who are more likely to be kept at home due to financial difficulties or cultural expectations (Rabaia, 2024: 46-72).

Girls in Gaza face additional challenges in accessing education due to gender-based discrimination and social norms.

While many girls attend school, some face pressure to leave early for marriage or household responsibilities. In conflict situations, girls are also more vulnerable to violence and harassment, which discourages families from sending them to school (Shraim, 2010:159-173). The lack of safe transportation and gender-sensitive policies further limits educational opportunities for girls, reinforcing cycles of inequality and marginalization. The political divide between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza has also affected the education system.

Disagreements over funding, curriculum, and governance have led to instability in school management and teacher salaries (Bsharat, 2024: 1133-1143). The political situation has also influenced the content of education, with concerns about the politicization of school curricula.

A lack of consistent policies and funding has left the education sector fragmented, further weakening its ability to provide quality learning opportunities for children (Iriqat, 2025;1-19).

Despite these challenges, international organizations and local initiatives continue to work toward improving education in Gaza. Efforts to build temporary learning spaces, provide emergency education materials, and offer online learning opportunities have helped mitigate some of the barriers to education. However, these initiatives remain limited in scale due to funding shortages and restricted access to humanitarian aid. Sustainable, long-term solutions require political stability, increased funding, and international intervention to ensure that education remains a priority. In conclusion, the education system in Gaza is severely strained by conflict, economic hardship, overcrowding, psychological trauma, and resource shortages (Hussein, 2024: 23-36). While legal frameworks guarantee the right to education, the realities of war and political instability make it difficult to uphold this right. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes investments in infrastructure, mental health support, teacher training, and economic relief for struggling families. Without urgent action, generations of children in Gaza will continue to be deprived of their fundamental right to quality education, deepening existing cycles of poverty and instability (Hamad, 2017; 3-14; Hansen, 2019: 1-23).

Furthermore, The ICC plays a crucial role in addressing violations of IHL, including attacks on education in conflict zones like Gaza. Despite legal frameworks such as the Rome Statute, which criminalizes the targeting of civilian infrastructure, including schools, enforcement remains a significant challenge. Many incidents, including the bombing of schools, the killing of students and teachers, and the destruction of educational facilities, have been documented, yet accountability is often limited (Milton, 2023:1024-1042). The lack of consistent investigations and prosecutions under the ICC weakens the deterrent effect of international law, leaving Gaza's

education sector vulnerable to continued attacks. Furthermore, political obstacles such as Palestine's non-full member status at the United Nations and geopolitical tensions complicate efforts to seek justice for violations of children's right to education (Imperiale, 2021: 22-38; Duthel, 2024: 44-47).

Another challenge is the limited enforcement capacity of the ICC in conflict zones. Even when cases are opened, investigating war crimes and holding perpetrators accountable is a slow and complex process. In Gaza, the ongoing blockade, restricted access for international investigators, and geopolitical pressures make it difficult to gather evidence and prosecute violations effectively. Additionally, states that are not ICC members may refuse to cooperate, further obstructing legal proceedings (Kihara-Hunt, 2025: 165-188). As a result, many crimes against education go unpunished, creating a cycle of impunity where attacks on schools continue without legal consequences. Strengthening international cooperation, advocacy for stronger enforcement mechanisms, and diplomatic efforts is crucial to ensuring that education in Gaza is better protected under international law (Jebril, 2024: 112-124).

6. Conclusion

The right to education is a fundamental human right, enshrined in international law and protected by treaties such as the UDHR, the CRC, and the Fourth Geneva Convention. However, in conflict zones such as Gaza-Palestine, this right is severely undermined by ongoing violence, political instability, and economic hardship. The impact of international armed conflict on Gaza's education system is devastating, affecting schools, teachers, students, and families. While legal frameworks exist to protect children's right to education, their implementation and enforcement remain weak, allowing systematic violations to continue. One of the biggest challenges facing education in Gaza is the destruction of educational infrastructure due to repeated military attacks.

Schools have been bombed, shelled, and repurposed as shelters, making it difficult for children to have safe and stable learning environments. Even when schools remain operational, the lack of resources, overcrowding, and limited access to essential supplies such as books, electricity, and the internet significantly reduces the quality of education. The blockade imposed on Gaza further exacerbates these issues, restricting the flow of humanitarian aid, reconstruction materials, and educational resources needed to restore and improve schools. Beyond physical destruction, the psychological impact of war on children presents another major barrier to education. Many children in Gaza suffer from PTSD, anxiety, and depression due to constant exposure to violence, loss of family members, and displacement.

This emotional distress affects their ability to concentrate, retain information, and engage in learning. The absence of mental health support systems in schools means that these children do not receive the help they need to cope with their trauma, leading to higher dropout rates and lower academic performance. Education, which should serve as a path to stability and hope, instead becomes an additional struggle for children who are already facing immense hardship.

The economic crisis in Gaza further limits access to education, as many families struggle to meet their basic needs. Widespread poverty and high unemployment rates force many children especially boys into child labor, while girls are often kept at home due to financial constraints or traditional gender roles. Although Palestinian laws mandate free and compulsory education, many families cannot afford transportation, school supplies, or uniforms, making it difficult for children to attend school regularly. The economic strain on households, combined with the uncertainty of the future, often leads families to prioritize immediate survival over long-term education, depriving children of opportunities for a better future. Moreover, the political divide between Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank further weakens the education system. Disputes over funding, teacher salaries, and curriculum development have led to instability in school governance, affecting both public and private education. The politicization of education, where school materials and teaching methods are sometimes influenced by political agendas, further complicates efforts to provide neutral, high-quality education. The lack of consistent policies and investment in education leaves Gaza's children vulnerable to an uncertain academic future, limiting their potential to contribute to rebuilding their society.

Despite these immense challenges, efforts are being made to protect and improve education in Gaza. Local and international organizations work to rebuild schools, provide emergency educational resources, and create online learning opportunities. These initiatives help mitigate some of the educational setbacks caused by conflict, but they remain insufficient due to funding shortages, logistical challenges, and restrictions on aid delivery. Sustainable improvements require long-term commitments from the international community, including humanitarian assistance, diplomatic intervention, and legal accountability for violations of children's educational rights.

The role of the international community is crucial in ensuring that the right to education is upheld in Gaza. Governments, human rights organizations, and educational institutions must work together to pressure for an end to attacks on schools, increase humanitarian aid, and implement policies that protect children's learning environments.

Additionally, holding those responsible for violating international laws accountable is essential for preventing further harm to Gaza's education system. The Fourth Geneva Convention and CRC explicitly prohibit attacks on educational institutions and demand the protection of children in conflict zones. However, without strong enforcement mechanisms, these legal protections remain largely symbolic.

Addressing the educational crisis in Gaza requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond emergency responses. Investing in mental health support for students, improving teacher training, rebuilding infrastructure, and ensuring access to modern educational resources are all necessary steps to create a more resilient education system. Moreover, long-term political solutions are essential to ending the cycle of violence and instability that continues to disrupt education in Gaza. Without addressing the root causes of conflict and occupation, educational initiatives will remain temporary solutions to a deeper, systemic crisis. Ultimately, education is more than just a basic right—it is a key to resilience, empowerment, and a better future. For children in Gaza, access to education represents their only hope for breaking free from the cycle of poverty and conflict. By ensuring that schools remain safe, resources are available, and teachers are supported, we can help restore a sense of normalcy and stability for children living under the shadow of war. The international community must act decisively to protect the right to education in Gaza, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute to a peaceful future. Only through collective action and a commitment to justice can we ensure that the promise of education is not lost for the children of Gaza.

7. Suggestions

1. Enhance Legal Enforcement – To ensure the protection of children's right to education in conflict zones, it is vital to strengthen the enforcement of international laws that safeguard education. Legal frameworks such as the CRC and the Fourth Geneva Convention must be more rigorously applied. Additionally, holding accountable those who violate these laws, including states and non-state actors, can act as a deterrent to further violations. Supporting mechanisms that ensure these laws are not just theoretical but are actively implemented, alongside robust monitoring and reporting systems, will help create an environment where educational institutions and the right to education are better protected even during times of armed conflict.

2. Protect Schools from Attacks – It is crucial to advocate for schools to be officially recognized as safe zones under IHL. This includes pushing for the widespread adoption of the Safe Schools Declaration, which commits countries to protect education during armed conflict.

Encouraging parties involved in conflict to refrain from attacking educational institutions, using schools for military purposes, or engaging in any activities that jeopardize students' safety can greatly reduce disruptions to learning. This protection not only provides physical safety for students and teachers but also ensures that education systems can resume functioning as quickly as possible after conflict.

3. Increase International Funding – Securing more international financial support is essential to rebuilding the infrastructure of educational systems devastated by conflict. Governments, international organizations, and private donors must invest in rebuilding schools, providing teachers' salaries, and supplying educational resources such as books, technology, and other learning materials. Increased financial support will allow countries affected by conflict, such as Gaza, to restore educational facilities and improve their quality, ensuring that education can continue even in the aftermath of war.

4. Strengthen Teacher Training – Teachers are on the frontlines of education, especially in conflict zones. They not only need to impart academic knowledge but also serve as emotional anchors for children who have experienced trauma. It is essential to provide ongoing professional development that helps educators incorporate trauma-informed teaching strategies and develop skills in crisis management. Teachers should be equipped to deal with the emotional and psychological needs of their students while continuing to provide a quality education. Offering psychosocial support training, workshops on handling classroom disruptions, and conflict-sensitive pedagogy will enhance the ability of teachers to effectively manage classrooms during and after conflicts.

5. Improve Educational Access for Vulnerable Groups – Ensuring that children from marginalized communities, such as refugees, internally displaced children, and girls, have equal access to education is critical in Gaza. These groups often face additional barriers to education, including cultural discrimination, gender-based violence, and economic hardship. Special efforts should be made to provide safe, inclusive learning environments that address the unique needs of these groups. This includes providing targeted scholarships, building safe spaces for girls, and offering tailored educational programs for refugee children to prevent them from falling through the cracks.

6. Address Economic Barriers to Education – Many children in Gaza are unable to attend school due to the high economic costs of education, such as tuition fees, uniforms, school supplies, and transportation. To address these barriers, governments and humanitarian organizations should

provide financial assistance, including school fee waivers, free school meals, and subsidized transportation. These measures would reduce the financial burden on families and help ensure that more children stay in school. Additionally, providing cash transfers to vulnerable families can help cover basic educational costs and incentivize the continuation of studies.

7. Develop Long-Term Educational Policies – While emergency measures are essential during times of conflict, long-term educational policies are necessary to build resilience and sustainability in Gaza's education system. This includes creating policies that focus on the reconstruction of schools, curriculum development, and teacher retention after conflicts. It also involves investing in educational infrastructure to ensure that schools are built to withstand future conflicts. Policies should include long-term planning for inclusive education, economic support mechanisms, and community-based approaches to ensure that education systems can recover and thrive after the immediate impacts of conflict. Furthermore, creating post-conflict educational recovery plans will help address gaps in education and ensure that children do not lose years of schooling due to disruptions caused by conflict.

These recommendations offer a comprehensive approach to addressing the chronic challenges that children face in Gaza, and other conflict-affected regions, in terms of accessing quality education. Through targeted interventions, financial investment, and coordinated international efforts, it is possible to mitigate the effects of armed conflict on education and work toward a more peaceful, resilient, and sustainable future for children in Gaza.

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