

Coalition for Jerusalem

الائتلاف من أجل القدس

Occupied East Jerusalem, 13. October 2005.

Dear Director General Matsuura,

We, the Palestinian educational institutions, Palestinian Non Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and Religious Dignitaries in Occupied East Jerusalem are writing to you to draw your attention to the disastrous implications of Israel's policies on the education sector in Occupied East Jerusalem. By constructing the illegal Apartheid Wall in and around Occupied East Jerusalem, imposing severe restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in and out of Occupied East Jerusalem, and building and expanding Jewish colonies in Occupied East Jerusalem, Israel is succeeding with its aims to isolate Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories in order to consolidate its illegal annexation of East Jerusalem. These measures and their continuation will ensure that the Palestinian education sector in Occupied East Jerusalem will collapse, jeopardizing the education and future of Palestinian children.

Currently, Palestinian children receive a substandard education as Israel's government-supported school system neglects its legal duties to provide education to Palestinians, covering a mere 20% of educational needs. The situation has led to a poor quality education system characteristic of overcrowded classrooms, inadequate buildings serving as schools, the absence of facilities and a high drop out rate. The conditions are worsening at a rapid rate due to the Wall. Approximately 25,154 pupils attend 66 schools in Occupied East Jerusalem excluding Kindergartens and higher education institutions. An estimated 52% of teachers and 22% of students hold West Bank Identity cards and are being denied access to their schools in Occupied East Jerusalem by the occupation authorities. Schools will be shut down if there are not enough teachers, impacting education at all levels. Schools in Palestine started at the beginning of September, however, in spite of numerous complaints sent to various concerned parties, this problem has not been resolved and Israel continues to breach international law. The aforementioned is a mere mention of the obstacles currently confronting education. Others include the influx of families in order to safeguard their Jerusalem residency and the inability of schools to absorb the pupils, as well as the recent harassment of teachers by the occupation authorities as they try to reach schools, among other realities.

Within this context, we hereby reaffirm the following:

- Israel continues to violate international laws and conventions, as well as numerous UN resolutions by annexing East Jerusalem, therefore altering the status of Occupied East Jerusalem and its Palestinian residents.
- Israel is violating the very basic rights of Jerusalemites, such as the right to movement, the right to education, the right to health and the right to work.

We therefore call on UNESCO, as the guardian of education around the world and a UN agency working towards achieving the Millennium Developmental Goal of ensuring "Education to All" to take action regarding the following:

Members of the coalition:

Miftah
Palestinian Counseling Center
Welfare Association
Agricultural Relief Committees
ARIJ
JCHR
Arab Engineer's Union
Al Haq
Bur El Laqlaq
Nidal Center
Assaraya Center
YMCA
YWCA
ECRC
Women Center for Legal Aid
and Counseling
Palestinian Women Union
Arab Hotel Association
Arab Thought Forum
Yabous
Edward Said Music
Conservatory
Land Research Center
Dar El Tifel
Rawdet Al Zuhur
UPMRC
UHCW
UAWC
Old City Youth Association
Jerusalem Center for Social
and Economic Rights
Arab Working Women Society
Al_Maqased Society
PASSIA
Hydrology Group
Education Coalition for
Jerusalem

And other individuals from East
Jerusalem, West Bank and
Gaza

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1. Exert pressure on Israel and urge member states to exert pressure on Israel to respect international law and the human rights of the Palestinians.
2. To ensure that the basic human rights of Palestinians such as freedom of movement in and out of Occupied East Jerusalem is granted, as well as the right to education, health and work.
3. That UNESCO, within its capacity, voice its condemnation of Israel's policies and violations, particularly regarding Occupied East Jerusalem, the Wall, its impact on education and illegal settlements.
4. To ensure that the education sector in Occupied East Jerusalem is fully operational and supported by all UN agencies.
5. To hold Israel accountable regarding its violation of international laws and conventions.

We trust that UNESCO, its Executive Board and the General Conference will give this matter its utmost attention and will immediately intervene to protect and safeguard education in Occupied East Jerusalem.

Yours sincerely,

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Education Coalition for Occupied East Jerusalem

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