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## Policy Brief

## ورقة سياسات

### Popular Emancipatory Education in the Colonial Condition

Within the project "Emancipatory Human Rights"

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## Executive Summary

This policy paper highlights the need to reassess the existing educational system in Palestine and emphasizes the importance of incorporating a non-traditional learning model alongside formal education. The paper proposes the model of popular emancipatory education as an effective tool to begin dismantling the structures of colonialism and to create a national emancipatory educational project that responds to the political and societal aspirations of the Palestinian people. The paper aims to spark discussion and critical inquiry into the current state and the future of education, within a broader discussion the Palestinian People need to engage in, to discuss the future status of education in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The paper discusses proposals and policies related to popular emancipatory education. It begins with defining the concept and highlighting its significance, particularly within a colonial condition. It also examines historical Palestinian experiences, draws key lessons, and considers how these insights can shape the next phase of education in the Gaza Strip. Additionally, the paper calls for a re-evaluation for the government's education recovery plan for the Gaza Strip, raising concerns that the current strategies focus on procedural and institutional rebuilding while neglecting the content and purpose of education. The Policy Brief stresses the urgent need to address the reality of the Gaza Strip and the needs of students beyond infrastructure reconstruction efforts.

The paper presents a set of proposals and recommendations, emphasizing that the reconstruction and restoration of education must be Palestinian-led and supported by popular participation, with the goal of dismantling the colonial agenda. It calls for the government to develop a comprehensive action plan to address both immediate and long-term challenges—one that extends beyond traditional academic institutions, to support popular education initiatives. Additionally, the recommendations stress the importance of ensuring that education plans incorporate provisions for students' psychological, physical, and health needs. The government must also adopt non-traditional approaches to facilitate student enrollment in the educational process in the Gaza Strip.

The recommendations emphasize the need to uphold the central role of education and knowledge production, ensuring that learning remains emancipatory, and responsive to the next-phase needs for Palestinian society. Additionally, it is crucial to establish free spaces for academics and intellectuals, such spaces nurtures their contribution to popular education. This is sought through strengthening initiatives that promote the values of freedom, equality, and independence while working toward the elimination of oppressive systems.

## Introduction

In light of the current realities faced by the Palestinian people, including the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip and the continued confiscation of land in the West Bank, Israeli policies aiming to displace Palestinian, in particular in the refugee camps, Palestinians also grapple with internal challenges on multiple levels. On one hand, rebuilding the education sector in the Gaza Strip and defining its priorities is a pressing issue; on the other, economic, political, and social challenges continue to escalate.

In this context, popular emancipatory education is of an exceptional significance, particularly in the wake of the war of genocide in the Gaza Strip, which has been ongoing since October 2023, has targeted, and almost destroyed the education sector. Furthermore, the crisis affecting the Palestinian education system and student unions in universities; necessitates a shift toward alternative learning models, ones that raises awareness, sharpen critical thinking skills and foster creativity beyond the constraints of a crisis-stricken educational system. It highlights the urgent need for a broader discussion on the challenges facing the Palestinian people and an exploration of what strengthens their resilience and advances their liberation from colonialism and oppressive structures.

Knowledge production process and education play a critical role in emancipating systems of knowledge from colonial frameworks. Particularly as these frameworks have long been used to reshape individual consciousness in ways that reinforce the colonizers' narrative and the illusion of their intellectual superiority, compelling submission to various forms of domination—whether colonial or other. Therefore, education shall directly counteract all forms of hegemony such as colonial power, repressive political systems, and traditions and customs that uphold intellectual dogmas that subjugate individuals. Likewise, it must combat social structures rooted in submission rather than equality, as these restrict individuals, also, disconnects them from their realities and actual needs, commodify learning and intellectual production, and drown societies in distractions that divert attention from critical struggles.

Colonial policies, reinforced by regional and international alliances, in their assault on Palestine as a whole—and the Gaza Strip in particular—demand a fundamental rethinking of intellectual, educational, and social orientations, as well as the educational systems that perpetuate colonial historical narratives. This reassessment is essential for both rebuilding and resisting in the pursuit of collective human emancipation. At the same time, the global solidarity movement with the Palestinian people and the interconnection of struggles across different countries play a crucial role in supporting the Palestinian cause. The shared need to cultivate a consciousness of human liberation—rooted in the justice of the Palestinian struggle and the rights of its people—makes popular education an indispensable tool.

## **Policy Paper Objectives**

This paper seeks to address of the question of emancipating education and the tools of knowledge production, through emphasizing the need for a critical review of existing educational systems. This does not necessarily mean abandoning the current system, but rather re-evaluating the nature of educational needs and requirements for the present and future—a matter of critical importance today in the Gaza Strip. Such a process requires the courage to acknowledge that any kind of knowledge shall be open to challenge, questioning, and critical reflection, regardless of the power structures that may govern it. These power structures may stem from society, an authoritarian government, colonial forces, or even internal groups within the society that seek to exclude others and exert control over the people. In light of the current situation, this approach appears to be the most suitable for supporting popular emancipatory knowledge production and exchange systems in a way that ensures the avoidance of simply replacing one hegemonic system of knowledge production and dissemination—including curricula—with another hegemonic force.

## The concept of Popular Emancipatory Education

The concept of emancipatory education in modern times had been associated with the Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire,<sup>1</sup> whose central tenet of his philosophy is: "There is no neutral education. Education is either for domestication or for freedom"<sup>2</sup>. Freire's perspective on education reflects a deep awareness of its role in driving revolutionary social and political change. He explains this through examining the reality, understanding political economy, and analyzing the roots of exploitation, social alienation, and other indicators of the urgent need for radical transformation.

It is also possible to think about popular emancipatory education based on the philosophy of the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, who argued that thought and culture should not be subjected to hegemony and authoritarian relations. In addition, he believed that the education process is a reciprocal one, without hierarchical relations that assume an established distribution of roles rather a reciprocal one; a teacher who possesses knowledge and a learner who merely receives it. This means that the learning process can be reciprocal and non-hierarchical in a free space and that learning is the creation of broad spaces for knowledge and the production of knowledge.

According to Gramsci, school in its traditional form serves as a tool for reproducing and reinforcing the power of hegemonic forces, instilling mechanisms of submission to the ruling class. Contrary to what is possible for the school to present, which is the opposite to the dominant culture, and work on emancipatory education that is not confined to the boundaries of educational institutions, but rather penetrates the work spaces of civil society according to his assigned role (including unions and political parties). In this context, the role of the *organic intellectual* becomes central to popular emancipatory education, actively shaping the awareness of the people and the oppressed classes.<sup>3</sup>

From this perspective, we can understand the connection between popular emancipatory education and the Global South, which has suffered, and continues to suffer from various forms of colonialism and exploitation. The experiences of social movements in Latin America, Palestine during the First Intifada (1987–1992),<sup>4</sup> and other struggles across different

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<sup>1</sup> Paulo Freire, *Cultural Action for freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard Education Review, 1970), 6. See also: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans., Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum International Publishing group, 1972), 34.

<sup>2</sup> بولو فرييري، *الفعل الثقافي في سبيل الحرية*، 17.

<sup>3</sup> Antonio Gramsci, **Prison Notebooks**, Volume III, Edited and translated by Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975, Translation 2007), 338.

<sup>4</sup> انظر: روجر هيكوك وعلاء جرادات (تحرير)، *انتفاضة 1987: تحول شعب* (بيروت: مؤسسة الدراسات الفلسطينية، 2020).

countries,<sup>5</sup> serve as evidence of the society's ability to self-organize,<sup>6</sup> and educate individuals and families, beyond the frames ruled by authorities. They demonstrate how popular emancipatory education emerges as a process of writing, theorizing, aligning knowledge production with the colonial reality and the need to change it, and free from the hegemony of colonial knowledge production.

Therefore, popular emancipatory education can be defined as a dynamic and participatory learning process, one that is adaptive and responsive to the needs of the people, shaped by the priorities of each era, circumstance, and place. This form of education addresses societal needs and priorities, serving the development of the society. In addition, it is intertwined with political, social, and economic realities; which operates within social and political movements,<sup>7</sup> and is closely linked to transformative change that confronts root causes rather than merely addressing superficial symptoms.

What distinguishes popular emancipatory education is that it does not follow a fixed model; rather, it takes shape according to the needs of society. It is not limited to a specific field of knowledge but instead encompasses everything that individuals are capable of learning. As a people-led educational model, it operates independently from official institutional frameworks,<sup>8</sup> making it accessible to everyone and engaging with all aspects of collective and individual societal awareness. As it is emancipating, it calls for the emancipation from imposed restrictions and stereotypes that hinder the acquisition of knowledge. It establishes a defensive mechanism against authoritarian forces' efforts to separate knowledge from the realities, needs, and aspirations of society. Additionally, it fosters emancipation from traditional and formal educational structures, allowing individuals to become active participants in the production and exchange of knowledge.

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<sup>5</sup> The writer Marjorie Mayo provides number of examples for worldwide experiences on the topic of popular education, see:

Marjorie Mayo, *Community-based learning and social movement: Popular Education in a Populist Age* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2020).

Moreover, Freire speaks of education as a cultural process in the pursuit of freedom: "Education is nothing but a cultural act for freedom; thus, it is an act of knowing, not of memorization. A mechanistic theory can never fully account for this complex act in its entirety, for such a theory fails to comprehend education as a whole." — Freire, *Cultural Action*, 25.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Popular Education Network (PEN), Jim Crowther (the network's coordinator) distinguishes between popular education and populist education. He defines popular education as fundamentally different from mere populism—it is deeply rooted in the real interests and struggles of the people, explicitly political and critical of the status quo, and committed to progressive social change.

Jim Crowther, "The International Popular Education Network: Its Purpose and Contribution", **Rizoma- Instituto Paulo Freire da España**, no. 14 (2013), <https://www.rizoma-freireano.org/articles-1414/the-international-popular-education-network> (Accessed: 23 July 2024) and; Mayo, *Community- based learning*, 19-20,57.

<sup>7</sup> ماهر الحشوة، " التربية التحررية النقدية"، *معهد مواطن للديمقراطية وحقوق الإنسان*، 21 آب/ أغسطس 2021، <https://rb.gy/wq1594> (تاريخ الوصول: 25 تموز / يوليو 2024).

<sup>8</sup> Abdalla al-Kurd and Barton R. Herrscher, "Alternative Education under the Intifada: The Palestinian Response to Israeli Policy in the Occupied Territories" in *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, ed., Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, (New York: University of Texas Press, 1995), 298.

## The Importance of Popular Emancipatory Education

The importance of popular emancipatory education lies in its ability to analyze and reflect the struggles of the society; it plays a pivotal role since it fosters and supports social struggles outside formal educational institutions such as universities and schools. In addition, it contributes to liberating national, political, economic, and social structures from various forms of colonial and authoritarian domination.

In the Palestinian context, the significance of popular emancipatory education emerges in its role in advancing the national liberation project, strengthening political, economic, and social strive, shaping and focusing on political and cultural action, and reinforcing collective consciousness,<sup>9</sup> as opposed to individualism, which has been reinforced over the past decades for various reasons. While this paper does not delve into these reasons in detail, one of the most significant factors has been the dominance of neoliberal policies across different aspects of life, including the education sector.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the value of popular emancipatory education is evident in its role in confronting the dominance of colonial power, resisting its imposed agenda, and challenging its direct and indirect control over the education system—whether through closing schools and universities, targeting and destroying it, imposing curricula, confiscating and banning books, or demolishing libraries. Popular emancipatory education seeks to break free from fatalism or, as Maher Al-Hashweh puts it: "Critical emancipatory education, therefore, fundamentally aims to liberate human beings—to make them more human—by empowering them to change the unjust society in which they live."<sup>11</sup>

Since formal education struggles to respond to various challenges, including economic, social, and political conditions within the colonial context. Institutional education in Palestine is predominantly provided through governmental schools, which serve approximately 75% of students in the occupied Palestinian territories. These schools are subject to policies that have led to widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of provided education. Therefore, it is crucial to explore ways to ensure that learning is not limited to what this system offers. Additionally, the Israeli government, which upholds a racist ideology, controls the Palestinian education curriculum in 1948 territories, Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, whether directly or indirectly (through international pressure, for example).<sup>12</sup> In particular, influential actors

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<sup>9</sup> See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 48 "How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation?"

<sup>10</sup> "Critics have located this within the context of neoliberal approaches more generally, individualizing educational provision, presenting this as an investment good, offering varying returns on individuals' learning- to be calculated in terms of the future earnings to be anticipated (Colini, 2012,2017)." Mayo, *Community-based learning*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> الحشوة، التربية التحررية النقدية.

<sup>12</sup> ندين ربيع، ومرام عودة، وسارة العلم، "نظام التعليم الإسرائيلي القائم على الاستعمار والفصل العنصري: استعباد عقول الفلسطينيين وحقوقهم (بيت لحم: بديل المركز الفلسطيني لمصادر حقوق المواطنة واللاجئين، كانون الأول 2020).

have sought to distort the Palestinian narrative,<sup>13</sup> making curricula and the educational process both a target of colonialism and a tool for resisting it at the same time.

The strength of popular education lies in the fact that it is not constrained by bureaucratic frameworks, nor is it regulated by the government or any authority imposing control. This increases the potential for resistance against any oppressive system, allowing for creativity and the expansion of knowledge beyond the constraints of formal curricula, as it is not tied to the official institutions centrism. Popular education guarantees freedom from rote learning. While, rejecting authoritarianism and indoctrination is a fundamental condition for education to be truly emancipatory. Moreover, popular education is a cumulative process, built over time, and may require many years to yield outcomes different from institutionalized education, which often fails to account for regional differences or evolving circumstances.

Since formal education is not possible in the exceptional circumstances that the Gaza Strip is going through, there is a need to support other forms of education. Such as popular, emancipatory education, which is based on simulating priorities and circumstances, and constitutes a response far from the “rescue” perspective, going beyond merely addressing humanitarian crises but to understand their root causes,<sup>14</sup> and seek to solve it. In practice, many models of popular education have emerged in Gaza, led by groups of teachers and students engaging in educational sessions and initiatives, aimed at creating hope and ensuring the continuity of education under the current circumstances. This approach —closely resembles the intellectual and cultural sessions conducted by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons.

Popular emancipatory education is one of the alternative means and tools to combat the targeting of education and the colonial attempt to make nations illiterate. It seeks to transform education in schools from one that reinforces structures of hegemony into an emancipatory and revolutionary education. This is necessary to establish a completely different kind of school, as proposed by Gramsci a political school serving the struggles of the oppressed classes, which can ultimately become a revolutionary school.

## Forms of Popular Emancipatory Education

At the beginning of the last century in Palestine, Khalil Sakakini adopted participatory education and worked according to the principle of respecting the student’s intellect. He believed that formal education in its Western form was an act of humiliation and a form of imitating others. As a result, he raised the slogan “honoring” the student rather than “humiliating” them at his school in Jerusalem (1909), where there were no grades, no rewards, and no punishments.

His famous saying: *“as if you were the teachers, and as if I were the student,”* reflects a change in the prevailing perception of school and education—moving away from the notion that learning is merely about obtaining grades and achieving distinction, and thus securing

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<sup>13</sup> وزارة التربية والتعليم العالي، متحدثون يؤكدون ضرورة إنهاء استعمار التمويل في التعليم ورفض اشتراطه، وزارة التربية والتعليم العالي، 25 أيار 2023، <https://www.moe.pna.ps/c/29943> (تاريخ الوصول 25 أيلول 2024).

<sup>14</sup> Susan Mark, “Human Rights and Root Causes,” *The modern law review* 74, no.1, (2011): 57-78.



a prestigious job based on dominant social values. Instead, he emphasized that school is a tool for knowledge acquisition and that possessing knowledge is a lifelong goal, serving as a means to understand phenomena and strive for progress. Through this approach, the student's perception of learning is shifted from viewing education as a burden, a concern, or a competitive tool that creates pressure, to enjoying knowledge and analysis, and for education to become a tool for intellectual exploration, understanding, and interpreting phenomena.

In the 1980s, during the events of the First Intifada, Munir Fasheh viewed formal education as incapable of fostering the emancipatory learning he aspired to. In response, he initiated the establishment of the Tamer Institute for Community Education, which worked to enhance learning and critical thinking and introduced the concept of Mujaawarah (المجاورة). Fasheh defined this concept as follows:

A community framework comprised of seekers who desire to meet together, with no internal or external authority governing them, and no licensing or budget. It is a framework based on face-to-face, conversational relationships, and considers knowledge an act formed through reflection on experiences, experiments, and interactions with various sources, and the effort to synthesize meaning from them. Mujawara is a medium for learning and understanding on both the personal and collective levels; a medium that combines freedom, responsibility, dignity, equality, and honesty; a medium that weaves a fabric between people on various levels and with place, civilization, and collective memory.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, there have been numerous experiences of popular education during the First and Second Intifadas. Such experiences emerged in response to the circumstances the Palestinian people were facing at the time. In the Gaza Strip, during the First Intifada, the idea of popular education arose as a form of popular resistance against the occupation's policy of imposing illiteracy by shutting down schools for extended periods. In response, popular committees in refugee camps formed teaching groups to continue the educational process.<sup>16</sup> In the West Bank, there were various grassroots initiatives and organizing networks. Jalal Qumsieh mentions several popular initiatives during the First Intifada in Beit Sahour, a town in Bethlehem, describing how individuals organized themselves into popular committees that provided different services to residents of each neighborhood. One of these tasks was teaching students within schools as a form of resilience and defiance against the conditions imposed upon them.<sup>17</sup>

There are also a number of recent initiatives for emancipatory education in the West Bank,<sup>18</sup> including *University in the Camp* (جامعة في المخيم), an informal university in Dheisheh Refugee Camp (where "university" in Arabic is "Jamaa" means a public gathering place). Additionally, various institutions support educational initiatives, such as *Filastiniyat*, *Ashtar Theatre*, *The Teacher Creativity Center*, and *Afkar for Education and Cultural Development*. There are also independent initiatives. Khaled Odetallah, who founded the *Suleiman Al-Halabi Circle* (دائرة

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<sup>15</sup> منير فاشة، "السر بالخطة" موقع مجاورة (د.ت.)، <https://shorturl.at/g5wnq> (تاريخ الوصول 10 آب 2024).

<sup>16</sup> يحيى اليعقوبي، "التعليم الشعبي".. هكذا أفضل الفلسطينيون محاولات تجهيل جيل الانتفاضة، *فلسطين أونلاين*، 8 كانون الأول 2021، <https://t.ly/VxML5>. (تاريخ الوصول: 24 أيلول 2024).

<sup>17</sup> أحمد عز الدين أسعد، شهادات من الانتفاضة: العصيان واللجان والشبكات والقيادة والتنظيم الشعبي، مؤسسة الدراسات الفلسطينية، 18 آب 2023. <https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1654221> (تاريخ الوصول 23 أيلول 2024)

<sup>18</sup> حنان الرمحي، التعليم في فلسطين: التحديات الراهنة والبدائل التحررية، (فلسطين: مؤسسة روزا لوكسمبرغ المكتب الإقليمي، 2015).



(سليمان الحلبي and its affiliated *the Popular University* in 2011, explains that the idea of the *Popular University* is to "create a popular educational space, which is accessible for everyone, that integrates two fundamental aspects: rigorous, methodical knowledge that is not just rhetoric, mobilization, or opinion, and the infusion of knowledge linked to society's questions, concerns, and the struggle for liberation from colonialism."<sup>19</sup> The *Suleiman Al-Halabi Circle* seeks to free knowledge production from elites and institutionalized higher education centers, disseminate this knowledge, and subject the colonial system in Palestine to serious examination to expose, analyze, and understand its mechanisms. It also aims to benefit from revolutionary and emancipation experiences to enhance the people's consciousness and resistance.

On another level, the education developed by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons represents one of the most remarkable examples of popular emancipatory education, which enforces its emancipatory nature despite the spatial constraints of imprisonment. Even if the prisoners try to organize it officially, for example the experience of *Hadarim University*, which "is the product of a struggle against the prison space and a rebellion against its colonial function, transforming it from a space of isolation, control, and discipline into a space for higher education".<sup>20</sup> The university operates under an educational philosophy rooted in emancipatory learning, which is seen as "a practice of emancipation from the authority of the prison, the authority of the colonizer, and the authority of traditional educational forms and methodologies."<sup>21</sup>

In an effort to resist compliance, Palestinian prisoners actively preserve books and knowledge resources, ensuring the continuation of political and cultural discussions, and political sessions. These activities are carefully structured and programmed based on the priorities of political education and national consciousness, allowing prisoners to produce literature and intellectual work even behind bars. Despite constant Israeli attempts to suppress these efforts, including the confiscation and banning of books, repeated attacks on prisoners' capability to live and learn. In particular, after the "Erda Plan",<sup>22</sup> which marked a significant escalation in the Israeli campaign against education in prisons, intensifying efforts to erode Palestinian prisoners' collective consciousness and distract them with secondary concerns.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the promotion of material welfare and individual consumption culture (the cantina/ canteen),<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> نداء بسومي، "باب الواد": الإنتاج المعرفي الفلسطيني خط مواز للمقاومة"، نون بوست، 10 كانون الأول/ ديسمبر <https://www.noonpost.com/42608/> (تاريخ الوصول: 23 تموز/ يوليو 2024).

<sup>20</sup> قسم الحاج، "جامعة السجن في هداريم" استتلاف الموحش وفقه البقاء"، *مجلة الدراسات الفلسطينية* 135، (صيف 2023): 107-130، 108-109.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>22</sup> مؤسسة الضمير لرعاية الأسير وحقوق الإنسان، "دفتر.. فلك وقيد: دراسة حول التعليم والحياة الثقافية في السجون الإسرائيلية" (رام الله: مؤسسة الضمير لرعاية الأسير وحقوق الإنسان، 2020) 94-95.

<sup>23</sup> وليد دقة، "صهر الوعي أو إعادة تعريف التعذيب"، (الدوحة: مركز الجزيرة للدراسات، 2010).

<sup>24</sup> The Cantina/ Canteen refers to the shop inside the Israeli prisons where Palestinian detainees can purchase –on their own expense their basic needs and supplies, including clothes, food, personal hygiene products, cleaning materials. The canteen sells items at a price that far exceeds the market price outside of the prison. For more details:

المركز الفلسطيني للإعلام، "الكانتينا.. متنفس للأسرى حولته إسرائيل لأداة عقاب"، *المركز الفلسطيني للإعلام*، (25 أيلول 2020)، <https://palinfo.com/news/2020/09/25/167336> (تاريخ الوصول 20 تشرين الثاني 2024). وانظر أيضاً: مؤسسة الضمير لرعاية

also, geographical affiliations at the expense of national affiliations, and the dismantling of national political parties' structures. In response, prisoners have persistently worked to sustain educational activities, reinforcing moral discipline and collective values as a form of resistance. This was mostly before the start of the ongoing war on the Gaza Strip, the fierce attack on the prisons, the violation of the minimum rights, and the complete abolishment of the prisoners' achievements that were made over years of struggles and sacrifices.<sup>25</sup>

## Palestinian Government Plans Related to Education

The government's approach, early in 2024—whether under a technocratic government or the provisional government—regarding education was outlined in the "Plan of the Ministries of Education and Higher Education to Save the Educational Process Immediately after the Aggression Stops." This plan was primarily driven by the urgent need to restore education and prevent Gazan students from losing their academic year. As a result, the focus was limited to reinstating the education system in its institutional form, with a strong emphasis on rebuilding schools, sourcing books, adhering to curricula, implementing distance learning, and expanding e-learning. However, while these efforts are important, this perspective appears disconnected from reality and lacks a comprehensive vision given the widespread destruction of everything. It is an approach that remains fixated on the external structure of education—embodied in the construction of schools—without fully considering the core of educational needs of students. While infrastructure remains crucial, the current situation demands a different approach, one that draws on previous educational methods used by oppressed and colonized societies during wars and colonial rule, such as popular education.

The Ministry's plan included the need to provide 4,500 classrooms from various materials, including reinforced tents or prefabricated caravans, which require sufficient areas of land after cleaning them from war remnants. In addition, providing them with basic services so that all schools to operate on a morning and evening shift system, and starting to implement social and psychological activities to ensure a smooth return for students and teachers to Education. These efforts aim to strengthen the capacities of students and educators for appropriate learning. Additionally, the plan included conducting a survey to assess the state of infrastructure and determine the extent

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الأسير وحقوق الإنسان، "الاستغلال الاقتصادي للأسرى الفلسطينيين في سجون الاحتلال الإسرائيلي"، مؤسسة الضمير لرعاية الأسير وحقوق الإنسان (2017)، <https://shorturl.at/npTtg> (تاريخ الوصول 12 تشرين الثاني 2024).

<sup>25</sup> "الأسرى الفلسطينيون في زمن الطوفان"، **جدلية**، 13 تشرين الثاني/نوفمبر 2023، <https://11nq.com/zHkWp> (تاريخ الوصول: 25 تموز/يوليو 2024)، وكذلك زاوية الأسرى من مدونة موقع مؤسسة الدراسات الفلسطينية، <https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/blogs/all2> (تاريخ الوصول: 25 تموز/يوليو 2024)، وكذلك ملف الأسرى من مجلة الدراسات الفلسطينية عدد 137، (شثناء 2024)، [https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/journals/explorer?f%5B0%5D=field\\_special\\_issue%3A19770](https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/journals/explorer?f%5B0%5D=field_special_issue%3A19770) (تاريخ الوصول: 25 تموز/يوليو 2024)، وكذلك موقع هيئة شؤون الأسرى والمحررين، <https://cda.gov.ps/index.php/ar> (تاريخ الوصول: 25 تموز/يوليو 2024)، وكذلك موقع مؤسسة الضمير لرعاية الأسير وحقوق الإنسان، <https://www.addameer.org/ar> (تاريخ الوصول: 25 تموز/يوليو 2024).

of damage suffered by each school building to expedite reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts.<sup>26</sup>

The plan lacked basic elements to survey and evaluate the aftermath of the genocide, and what is required to restore the culture of resistance and steadfastness, and what is required to restore hope or even the ability to learn and face challenges. The genocide was not just about destroying infrastructure; it was also intended to render the Gaza Strip uninhabitable. Therefore, the focus should not solely be on school buildings or classrooms, but rather on a deeper discussion about the nature of education itself—what kind of education is needed, in what language should knowledge be conveyed, and what forms of critical thinking are necessary.

The “government's education plans”,<sup>27</sup> remain within the framework of formal education, and align with neoliberal values that tie education to the market system and prioritize the restoration of traditional educational structures and content. However, these plans fail to engage with the core meaning of education and do not fully account for the realities on the ground or the feasibility of implementation in the current context.

The brutal war launched by the Israeli occupation has exposed the fragility of the Palestinian reality, particularly in the West Bank, across various aspects, economic, political, and social. However, it has also revealed mechanisms of resilience and defiance and highlighted numerous grassroots initiatives for popular emancipatory education. Some of the most prominent examples were educational sessions inside the tents, psychological support gatherings providing safety and solidarity, which were unfunded initiatives and independent, or the attempts to allow Gazan university students to join their colleagues in the West Bank.

**Therefore, the Policy recommends the following:**

1. Ensure that the plans of reconstruction and the restoration of education are Palestinian-led, rather than externally projected. Efforts should focus on strengthening ties between Palestinian universities, breaking the siege on the Gaza Strip, and acknowledging the unique and long-standing crisis in the Gaza Strip—not just since the last genocidal war but over the past eighteen years.
2. Preparing a comprehensive action plan that effectively responds to current challenges and is not limited to traditional official academic institutions.
3. Ensure that education plans—both formal and popular—address the psychological, physical, and health needs of students, rather than merely focusing on academic achievements. It is unrealistic to assume that students can learn effectively while suffering from severe and deteriorating mental and physical health conditions.

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<sup>26</sup> وفا الإخبارية، "الحكومة تعتمد خطة وزارتي التربية والتعليم العالي لإنقاذ العملية التعليمية فور وقف العدوان"، وفا الإخبارية، 4 آذار/ مارس 2024، <https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/91306> (تاريخ الوصول: 23 تموز/ يوليو 2024).

<sup>27</sup> وحدة العلاقات العامة والدولية والإعلام، "التعليم العالي تبشر بتنفيذ خطتها لاستئناف طلبة غزة مسيرتهم التعليمية في جامعات الضفة الغربية"، موقع وزارة التربية والتعليم العالي، 13 آذار/ مارس 2024، "التعليم العالي" تبشر بتنفيذ خطتها لاستئناف طلبة غزة مسيرتهم التعليمية في جامعات الضفة الغربية (تاريخ الوصول: 23 تموز/ يوليو 2024).

4. Support and encourage popular emancipatory education initiatives that help transfer knowledge and experiences to navigate the crisis and adapt to changing circumstances, in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
5. Adopt non-traditional educational methods to facilitate student enrollment in schools and universities, including e-learning, the creation of innovative learning spaces, and the implementation of alternative assessment systems. These approaches should prioritize knowledge acquisition over rigid adherence to credit hours and formal academic requirements. The goal is to create a flexible and an emancipating learning environment and develop evaluation tools that measure actual gained knowledge, regardless of the medium, which it was acquired through.
6. Provide support for academics, intellectuals, writers, poets, artists, and local institutions to enhance their role in popular education. This includes securing logistical and material resources, facilitating the dissemination of cultural and intellectual work, and fostering initiatives that promote values of freedom, equality, and independence while resisting hegemonic structures and its actors.
7. Establish and fund platforms to document and analyze the Palestinian experience during the war in all its dimensions, conducting evaluative studies on the role of education in enhancing critical thinking, resistance, and transformative change.
8. Assess and examine the role of academic institutions in providing expertise that contributes to strengthening the Palestinian economy.
9. Support the steadfastness of Gazans inside the Gaza Strip, ensuring that assistance meets their needs for resilience rather than facilitating their migration abroad under the pretext of “voluntary displacement”, which in reality is forced displacement. Related projects shouldn’t encourage the displacement of students and academics under the pretext of scholarships and opportunities in Arab and European universities. The goal should be to strengthen education inside the Gaza Strip, rather than depleting it of its academic and intellectual elite.

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