



Réf:DP/20-01/DG/MAE/23

Paris, the 23 January 2020.

Madam Director-General,

Please find herewith a letter from His Excellency Dr. Riad Malki, Minister of Foreign Affairs, concerning the recent Israeli violation in the field of education.

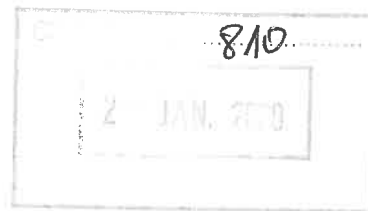
I kindly ask you, Madam Director-General, to annex this letter to the appropriate working document of the executive board in its 209th sessions.

Please accept, Madam Director-General, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Mounir Anastas
Ambassador, Alternate Permanent Delegate

S. Exc. Mme. Audrey Azoulay
Directrice Générale de l'UNESCO
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Cc : President of the General Conference
Chairperson of the Executif Board
Assistant Director-General for Education



State of Palestine
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates
Minister

Ramallah, 22nd January 2020

The Honorable Audrey Azoulay
Director General
UNESCO
Paris, France

Dear Madame Director General,

I write to express my grave concern regarding the systematic and wide spread Israeli campaign on Palestinian educational institutions, including against schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (OPT). This campaign of censorship, demonization, and financial starvation threatens schools with closure and is a direct assault on the rights of thousands of Palestinian children to education.

On 20 January 2020, Israel, the occupying power, announced the revocation of UNRWA schools permits in occupied East Jerusalem and announced its intention to supplant them with Israeli schools and curriculum, in line with the so-called Israeli municipal council's plans, announced in late December 2019. This latest illegal measure is part and parcel of Israel's prolonged discriminatory campaign against Palestinian students, their families, and their educational institutions, particularly in occupied Jerusalem. Specifically, the plan will target the Anata neighborhood and Shu'fat refugee camp, which are hard hit by Israel's illegal policies of settlement expansion, land appropriation, and severe restrictions on the Palestinian population.

These measures are a continuation of Israel's illegal policies of forcible transfer of the Palestinian people and Judaization of the occupied City by making the lives and living conditions of the Palestinian population untenable. In fact, due to these measures the families of approximately 1800 Palestinian children will be forced to make a cruel choice — between their lands and homes and their children's futures. Israel's unilateral decision will pave the way to ending the operations of UNRWA in the occupied City, in yet another attack on the Agency and Palestine refugees.

By targeting 1,800 UNRWA students, Israel is willfully coercing Palestinian students to either enroll in Israeli-run schools or move out of the occupied City to pursue their basic right to education. This policy constitutes an attack against the integrity of educational institutions and the quality of curriculums, both of which are crucial components of the educational experience. Israel, the occupying power, aims to politicize schools and alter the historical, cultural, and demographic composition of occupied East Jerusalem.



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Minister

Classrooms should be a sanctuary from conflict, where children can learn and develop into active citizens. They should never be the target of any violence and must not be exposed to any form of cultural appropriation or falsification, much less coercion. Israel's punitive and perverse measures, not only violate its obligations under international humanitarian law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention, but also violate the individual rights of children to a proper education that respects their cultural heritage and national identity, thus undermining their ability to become fully informed and active citizens in the future.

Israel's continued attack on Palestinian educational institutions and students also clearly violates UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education, of which Israel is a member. Specifically, these measures are in breach of Article 3, which stipulates that State Parties must obliterate discrimination and must work "...to abrogate any statutory provisions and any administrative instructions and to discontinue any administrative practices which involve discrimination in Education...", and "[n]ot to allow, ..., any restrictions or preference based solely on the ground that pupils belong to a particular group." In congruence, Article 15 of the Convention further sets an obligation upon States Parties to recognize that the Convention is "applicable not only to their metropolitan territory but also to all non-self-governing, trust, colonial and other [...], territories, making this Article applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

In light of these grave developments, I urge you to act within UNESCO'S mandate and endeavor to protect the right to education for all. Palestinian students have a basic right to access to a quality and equitable educational system of their choice, to maintain their schools, and to protect their cultural and historical identity. These rights are under assault and UNESCO has an obligation to defend them.

Dr. Riad Malki
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates
State of Palestine