

Gaza University Staff Appeal to their Foreign Counterparts

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We call on our supporters to help us resist the Israeli campaign of scholasticide and rebuild our universities.

We have come together as Palestinian academics and staff of Gaza universities to affirm our existence, the existence of our colleagues and our students, and the insistence on our future, in the face of all current attempts to erase us.

The Israeli occupation forces have demolished our buildings but our universities live on. We reaffirm our collective determination to remain on our land and to resume teaching, study, and research in Gaza, at our own Palestinian universities, at the earliest opportunity.

We call upon our friends and colleagues around the world to resist the ongoing campaign of scholasticide in occupied Palestine, to work alongside us in rebuilding our demolished universities, and to refuse all plans seeking to bypass, erase, or weaken the integrity of our academic institutions. The future of our young people in Gaza depends upon us, and our ability to remain on our land in order to continue to serve the coming generations of our people.

We issue this call from beneath the bombs of the occupation forces across occupied Gaza, in the refugee camps of Rafah, and from the sites of temporary new exile in Egypt and other host countries. We are disseminating it as the Israeli occupation continues to wage its genocidal campaign against our people daily, in its attempt to eliminate every aspect of our collective and individual life.

Our families, colleagues, and students are being assassinated, while we have once again been rendered homeless, reliving the experiences of our parents and grandparents during the massacres and mass expulsions by Zionist armed forces in 1947 and 1948.

Our civic infrastructure - universities, schools, hospitals, libraries, museums and cultural centres - built by generations of our people, lies in ruins from this deliberate continuous Nakba. The deliberate targeting of our educational infrastructure is a blatant attempt to render Gaza uninhabitable and erode the intellectual and cultural fabric of our society. However, we refuse to allow such acts to extinguish the flame of knowledge and resilience that burns within us.

Allies of the Israeli occupation in the United States and United Kingdom are opening yet another scholasticide front through promoting alleged reconstruction schemes that seek to eliminate the possibility of independent Palestinian educational life in Gaza. We reject all such schemes and urge our colleagues to refuse any complicity in them. We also urge all universities and colleagues worldwide to coordinate any academic aid efforts directly with our universities.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the national and international institutions that have stood in solidarity with us, providing support and assistance during these challenging times. However, we

stress the importance of coordinating these efforts to effectively reopen Palestinian universities in Gaza.

We emphasise the urgent need to reoperate Gaza's education institutions, not merely to support current students, but to ensure the long-term resilience and sustainability of our higher education system. Education is not just a means of imparting knowledge; it is a vital pillar of our existence and a beacon of hope for the Palestinian people.

Accordingly, it is essential to formulate a long-term strategy for rehabilitating the infrastructure and rebuilding the entire facilities of the universities. However, such endeavours require considerable time and substantial funding, posing a risk to the ability of academic institutions to sustain operations, potentially leading to the loss of staff, students, and the capacity to reoperate.

Given the current circumstances, it is imperative to swiftly transition to online teaching to mitigate the disruption caused by the destruction of physical infrastructure. This transition necessitates comprehensive support to cover operational costs, including the salaries of academic staff.

Student fees, the main source of income for universities, have collapsed since the start of the genocide. The lack of income has left staff without salaries, pushing many of them to search for external opportunities.

Beyond striking at the livelihoods of university faculty and staff, this financial strain caused by the deliberate campaign of scholasticide poses an existential threat to the future of the universities themselves.

Thus, urgent measures must be taken to address the financial crisis now faced by academic institutions, to ensure their very survival. We call upon all concerned parties to immediately coordinate their efforts in support of this critical objective.

The rebuilding of Gaza's academic institutions is not just a matter of education; it is a testament to our resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to securing a future for generations to come.

The fate of higher education in Gaza belongs to the universities in Gaza, their faculty, staff, and students and to the Palestinian people as a whole. We appreciate the efforts of peoples and citizens around the world to bring an end to this ongoing genocide.

We call upon our colleagues in the homeland and internationally to support our steadfast attempts to defend and preserve our universities for the sake of the future of our people, and our ability to remain on our Palestinian land in Gaza. We built these universities from tents. And from tents, with the support of our friends, we will rebuild them once again.

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