

# EMPHNET Emergency Bulletin

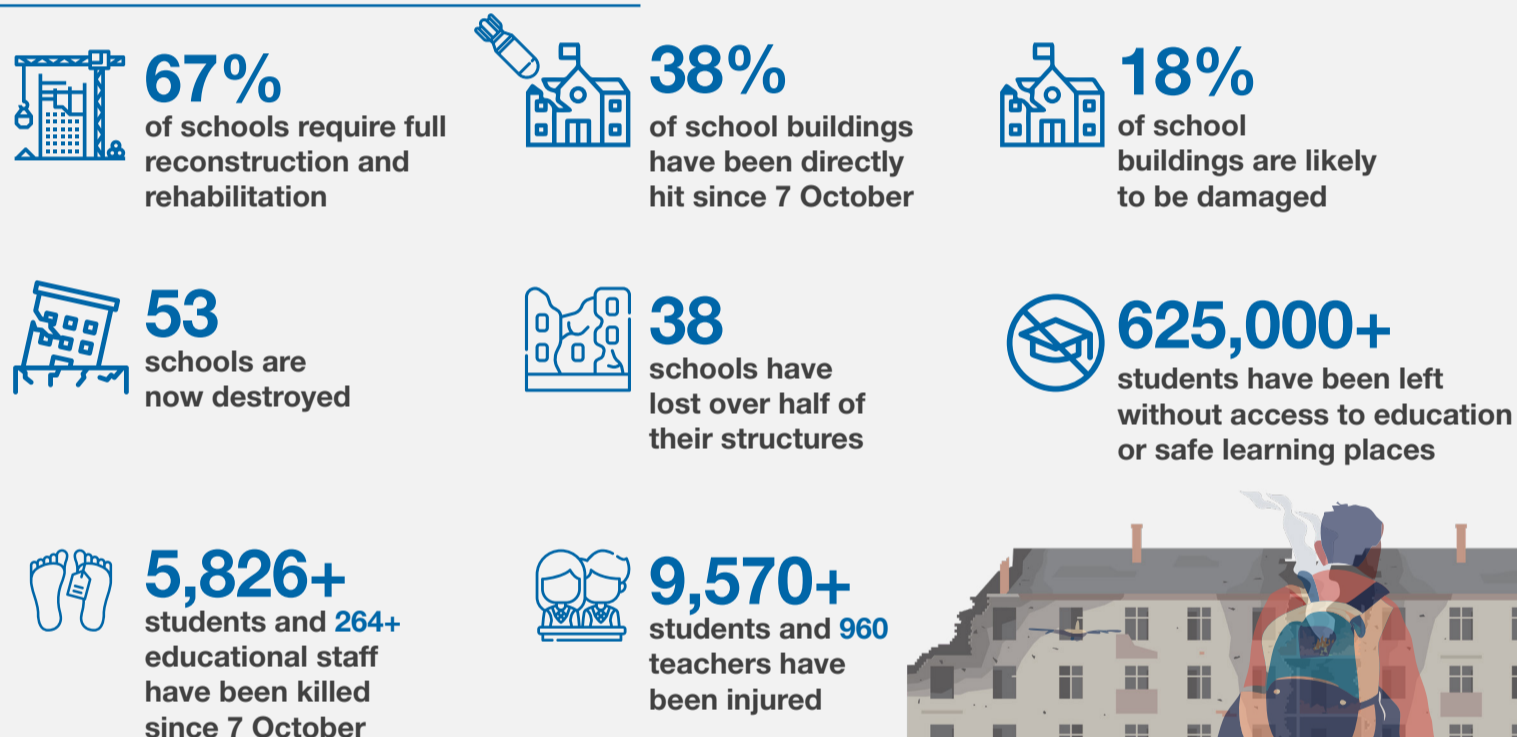
April 15, 2024

## Education Under Attack: Rebuilding in Gaza

### Situation Overview

In Gaza, the education system faces a severe crisis as a significant number of school buildings have been damaged or destroyed due to the military actions taken by the Israeli army. This situation impacts students, parents, and teachers alike. Now in its seventh month, the war on Gaza has led to widespread displacement, with many schools serving as shelters for families. This reality contributes to further complicating the already fragile education environment. Yet, efforts are made to provide psychosocial support to affected children and to continue education through innovative means. This fact highlights the resilience of communities in the face of adversity, as well as the urgent need for support and reconstruction in the education sector.

### The Situation in Numbers



### Military Use of Schools

Schools being used for military operations by Israeli Security Forces (ISF), including detention centers, interrogation centers, and military bases. This complicates efforts for educational recovery and raises concerns about the neutrality and safety of educational spaces.

(Source: OCHA, 2024)



28 February 2022 Gaza Palestine, young children in Rafah are still enthusiastic about learning despite the destruction of their homes and the loss of loved ones. Photo Credit: SATRIA NANGISAN

### Implications of Attacks on Education

The war inflicts a devastating toll on Gaza's entire education system. The destruction of schools, the displacement of students and teachers, and the profound psychological trauma severely undermine the well-being and future potential of Palestinian students. This devastation extends to the university level, where restricted resources and the tragic loss of scientists further stifles research and the transfer of knowledge and innovation. Universities and colleges were systematically targeted, and many were completely or partially damaged. Damage has been inflicted classrooms, libraries, and laboratories.

This disruption in education has far-reaching socioeconomic and cultural consequences. Despite ongoing aid efforts to provide recreational activities, psychosocial support, and emergency learning supplies, the challenges to continue education remain immense. Security risks, limited resources, and overcrowded facilities hinder the restoration of safe learning environments. The distribution of essential supplies, like dignity kits and stationery, offers a measure of support but highlights the ongoing struggle to meet basic needs and reduce the risk of students dropping out.

The war systematically targets Gaza's scientific community. The destruction of universities, the killing of scientists and students, severe travel restrictions, and the lack of resources form a cycle of oppression all make the resumption of scientific work nearly impossible. This leads to the erasing of potential contributions to local, regional, and global knowledge from Gaza, and it hinders the development of solutions to local problems. The destruction of universities like the Islamic University of Gaza and Al-Azhar University starkly illustrates the consequences of this crisis, creating scars on the scientific infrastructure that will take generations to heal.

The precondition for implementing successful and effective responses to preserve life and health and rebuild the educational system is an immediate cease-fire, lifting the siege, and allowing freedom of movement. This should be followed by the immediate return of the forcefully displaced persons to their homes, original places of residence, and schools to enhance community solidarity among the population. The rapid restoration of schools and the resumption of study as soon as possible, especially for the primary grades, will further facilitate the return of children to their everyday lives.

### Urgent Needs and Support Actions



#### Infrastructure Reconstruction:

It is paramount to prioritize rebuilding destroyed schools and universities to restore safe learning environments. This includes repairing damaged buildings and providing essential facilities, furniture, and educational equipment.



#### Alternative Learning Modalities:

While reconstruction is underway, innovative approaches to providing educational continuity are needed. This includes temporary learning spaces, distance learning options where possible, and the distribution of portable learning materials.



#### Psychosocial Support and Trauma-Informed Care:

The extensive psychological trauma faced by students, teachers, and their communities requires urgent attention. Investing in psychosocial support services, training educators in trauma-informed practices, and creating safe spaces for healing are essential.



#### Protection of Educational Institutions:

Advocacy is crucial to uphold international humanitarian law that protects schools as civilian spaces and safeguards the right to education in conflict zones.



**Support for the Scientific Community:** Rebuilding research facilities, replenishing lab equipment, and fostering collaborations with international institutions are necessary to support Palestinian scientists and counter the systematic dismantling of scientific capacity in Gaza.

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