



**Ministry of Women's Affairs**

# **The Reality of Women's Education on the Eve of the Eighth of March**

**8 March 2026**

## Statement of Her Excellency the Minister:

On the eighth of March, International Women's Day, we reaffirm that the right to education constitutes a cornerstone in the empowerment of women and girls, and that any infringement upon it is a direct infringement on social justice and on the future of Palestinian society as a whole.

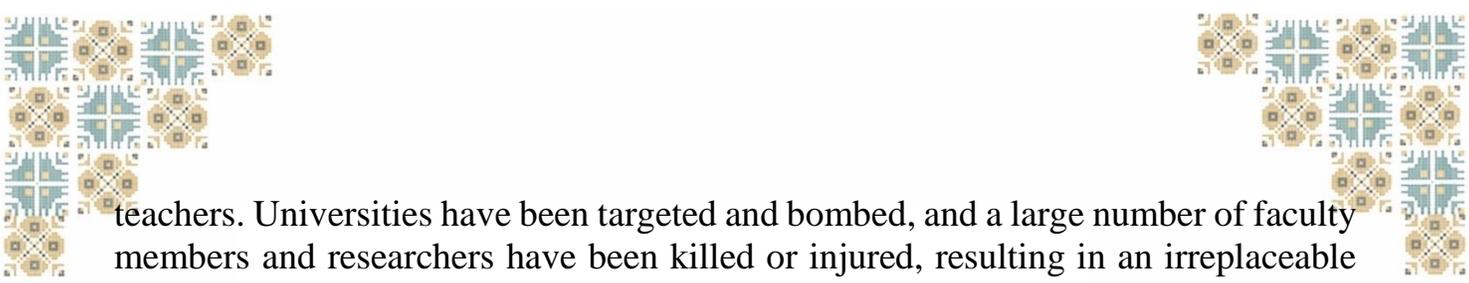
However, the education system in Palestine, particularly in Jerusalem, is subjected to systematic policies aimed at stripping education of its national and rights-based content. Foremost among these is the "Israelization" of curricula through the imposition of the Israeli curriculum or conditioning funding and official recognition on the removal of content related to Palestinian national identity. These policies target not only educational content, but also the collective consciousness of girls and boys, placing female students before a coercive dilemma between their right to education and the preservation of their national identity.

Moreover, the closure of UNRWA schools in several areas, especially in Jerusalem and the refugee camps, has deprived thousands of female and male students of a stable learning environment, exacerbated overcrowding, and deepened disparities in access to quality and safe education—an impact that is felt most acutely by girls in vulnerable and refugee communities.

In addition, policies of arrest and targeting of students continue, including the raiding of schools and universities and turning them into sites of confrontation. This undermines the concept of a safe school and creates a climate of fear and psychological instability. The arrest of students, the storming of university campuses, and the use of violence within educational institutions constitute grave violations of international humanitarian law and of standards for the protection of children and women in situations of conflict.

These practices, coupled with closures and military checkpoints, have led to the repeated resort to distance learning as an emergency alternative in many areas. While this modality is important for ensuring continuity of education, limited access to the internet and digital devices—particularly among low-income families—entrenches a gendered digital divide, as girls bear additional domestic responsibilities that reduce their equal ability to benefit from online education.

In the context of the aggression against the Gaza Strip, targeting has extended beyond educational infrastructure to directly affect academics, female teachers, and



teachers. Universities have been targeted and bombed, and a large number of faculty members and researchers have been killed or injured, resulting in an irreplaceable loss of human and intellectual capital. The targeting and killing of academics constitutes an assault on the Palestinian intellect and on the future of generations, undermines the foundations of sustainable development, and threatens the continuity of the educational process as a whole—particularly for girls who rely on stable and supportive learning environments.

In response to these challenges, the Ministry of Women's Affairs affirms the necessity of developing a gender-responsive national curriculum that promotes the values of equality, challenges stereotypes, integrates concepts of rights and human dignity, and ensures fair representation of women in educational content, in line with the National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2025–2027.

The Ministry also underscores the importance of encouraging girls to enroll in new and non-traditional fields of study, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), as well as the digital economy and artificial intelligence. This includes strengthening pathways in vocational and technical education and training to broaden their prospects in the labor market and enhance their economic independence. Linking education to career guidance programs, scholarships, and partnerships with the private sector constitutes a practical entry point for empowering girls to overcome social and economic barriers.

Protecting education in Palestine is inseparable from protecting women and girls from violence, as affirmed by the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women 2022–2030. Violence in the context of occupation takes multiple forms, including undermining the right to learn, obstructing safe access to schools and universities, and targeting academic staff. Accordingly, the eighth of March serves as a clear call to the international community to assume its responsibilities in protecting Palestinian educational institutions and their personnel, ensuring that education is neither politicized nor used as a tool of domination or collective punishment, and supporting national efforts to build a just, safe, and gender-responsive education system that enables girls to be full partners in building the Palestinian state and safeguarding its identity and future.

**H.E. Mona Al-Khalili**  
**Minister of Women's Affairs**

**Education in Palestine on the Eve of 8<sup>th</sup> of March**

The report reveals a **systematic targeting of the education sector**, including the destruction of schools and universities, movement restrictions, and disruptions to the educational process. This is particularly severe in the Gaza Strip, where the extended interruption of education amounts to what can be described as “**educational genocide.**”

In the West Bank and Jerusalem, girls face increasing risks of **school dropout** due to military checkpoints, settler violence, overcrowding, and financial crises that have disrupted the continuity of education. The report highlights the **long-term impact** of this reality on human capital, particularly among girls, and on their future opportunities in education, employment, and civic participation.

This section of the report examines the state of **women’s and girls’ education in Palestine** amid the ongoing genocide and Israeli aggression, which violate the core right to education and international conventions. Between the complete disruption of education in Gaza and movement restrictions and settler violence in the West Bank, Palestinian girls face escalating risks of **dropout, poverty, and loss of digital skills.**

## **Education in the West Bank and Jerusalem**

### **1. Impact of Israeli Violations and Attacks on Girls**

The educational journey of girls in the West Bank and Jerusalem faces **serious and escalating challenges** due to occupation policies, reflected in the following indicators:

- **Movement restrictions:** The number of military checkpoints and obstacles has exceeded **845 checkpoints**, including **300 iron gates** that are closed **60% of the time** (OCHA, 2025)<sup>1</sup>, often preventing students and teachers from reaching their schools.
- **Attacks by occupation forces and settler militias** have caused frequent interruptions in education and irregular attendance, which in turn threatens:
  - The **decline in academic performance and basic skills** among girls.
  - Increased **risk of school dropout.**
  - Reduced opportunities for girls to pursue **higher education** and access the **labor market.**
- **Targeting of educational institutions, students, and staff:** The Education Cluster and OCHA documented **over 2,000 incidents** affecting **540 schools**

<sup>1</sup> OCHA oPt. (May 2025). West Bank Movement and Access Update (Key figures as of 28 Feb 2025).

and **more than 84,000 students** during the 2024–2025 academic year (OCHA, 2025, #312)<sup>2</sup>. In the West Bank, **148 students were killed** and approximately **1,042 injured** (Palestinian Ministry of Education report, Oct 2025)<sup>3</sup>.

- **Escalation of Israeli attacks:** In the third quarter of 2025 alone (July–September), **93 incidents** impacted **12,020 students** and **700 teachers**, including direct school raids and restricted access to education (OCHA, 2025 #333).
- **Threats to educational infrastructure:** By October 2025, **85 schools faced demolition or closure orders**, directly threatening the education of **3,000 students**, including **6,557 girls** (OCHA, 2025 #333)<sup>4</sup>.
- **Settler and military violence:** In the first quarter of 2025, the Ministry of Education recorded nearly **4,000 incidents** linked to occupation forces and **28 direct attacks by settlers** targeting schools and education staff (UNICEF, 2025)<sup>5</sup>.
- **University incursions:** Violations extended to higher education, with documented campus raids and shootings in January 2026, creating unsafe learning environments (OCHA, 2025 #333).
- **Suspension of UNRWA educational services:** The closure of UNRWA schools severely impacted educational stability and quality. In northern West Bank camps (Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nur Shams), **over 4,000 students** have been unable to return to classrooms since early 2025 due to **10 school closures**, following forced displacement and Israeli restrictions on UNRWA activities (OCHA, 2025). Many students were forced to rely on overcrowded government schools or distance learning, which reduced the quality of education available to displaced girls.
- **Psychosocial impact on girls:** Girls in Gaza experience **prolonged psychological trauma** due to loss of family members, displacement, and the

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<sup>2</sup> The **OCHA Humanitarian Update** reports that the **Education Cluster documented over 2,000 incidents** during the 2024–2025 school year, affecting **more than 540 schools** and **over 84,000 students**.

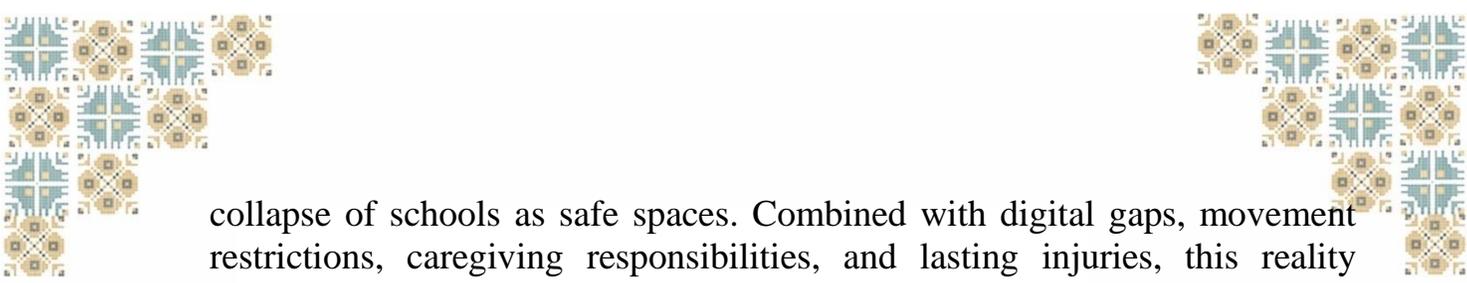
<sup>3</sup> *Wafa / Petra (Oct 2025), citing the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education regarding the number of students killed and injured in the West Bank.*

<sup>4</sup> **OCHA oPt. (23 Oct 2025). Humanitarian Situation Update #333 | West Bank.**

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-333-west-bank>

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF. (29 Apr 2025). State of Palestine Humanitarian Situation Report (as of 31 March 2025).

<https://www.unicef.org/media/170401/file/State-of-Palestine-Humanitarian-SitRep-31-March-2025.pdf.pdf>



collapse of schools as safe spaces. Combined with digital gaps, movement restrictions, caregiving responsibilities, and lasting injuries, this reality **reduces girls' chances of continuing education** and increases risks of **anxiety, depression, school dropout, and early marriage**, threatening their future opportunities and societal participation for years to come.

### **Consequences of the Israeli Government's Ban on UNRWA Activities and Arbitrary Measures on Education:**

The ban on the educational activities of the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)** came into effect on **30 January 2025**, alongside a series of arbitrary Israeli measures that disrupted the education system in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This has had severe impacts on millions of students and teachers, including:

- **Widespread denial of the right to education:** Approximately **324,000 students** were denied access to education, including **278,000 in Gaza** and **46,000 in the West Bank and Jerusalem**, in addition to vocational training programs. This has exacerbated educational disparities and limited future opportunities for girls in particular.
- **School closures:** **Six UNRWA schools in East Jerusalem** were closed, threatening the education of around **800 children**, along with **ten UNRWA schools in northern West Bank camps** that remained unopened, increasing the strain on local education systems.
- **Additional burden on overcrowded public schools:** Government schools, already facing overcrowding and underfunding, were forced to accommodate extra students, negatively affecting the quality of education and the ability of teachers to provide effective learning.
- **Disruption across all educational institutions:** The violations disrupted schooling in **schools, institutes, and universities** due to incursions, movement restrictions, and settler-related violence, causing continuous interruptions to the education process.
- **Particular impact on girls:**
  - Families restricted girls' mobility, especially at **secondary and university levels**, due to ongoing risks from settlers and movement limitations.
  - Reliance on **distance learning as an emergency measure** has widened the **digital divide**, as many families lack access to the necessary digital tools, reducing equal learning opportunities.

- Quality of education has declined, learning loss has accumulated, and **dropout rates** have increased.
- Severe **psychological effects** undermine girls' sense of safety and ability to continue schooling, negatively impacting their future professional and social opportunities.
- **Overall situation:** These indicators reflect the **harsh reality facing the Palestinian education sector** due to ongoing Israeli violations and settler attacks since October 2023. Daily risks to students and educators exacerbate educational fragility and threaten the long-term development of Palestinian human capital.

## Education in Jerusalem 'Second: Challenges to Girls

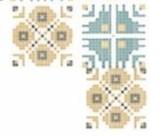
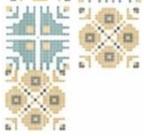
The educational challenge in occupied Jerusalem goes beyond geography and checkpoints, striking at the core of the educational infrastructure and national identity. Girls' education faces systematic obstacles, including:

- **Infrastructure crisis and overcrowding:** The educational sector in Jerusalem suffers from a severe shortage of classrooms, modern facilities, and recreational spaces, which negatively affects the quality of education<sup>6</sup>.
- **Conditioning funding on curriculum ("Israeli-ization"):** Israeli occupation authorities tie the construction of new classrooms or the provision of funding to schools to the adoption of the Israeli curriculum, placing students and teaching staff in a dilemma between securing a place to study and preserving educational independence and national identity<sup>7</sup>.
- **Erosion of UNRWA presence:** The closure of six UNRWA schools (including areas in Shuafat camp, Silwan, Wadi al-Joz, and Sur Baher) in May 2025 pushed around 800 students toward unstable alternatives, heightening families' fears for their daughters' safety due to the violations at military checkpoints, increasing the likelihood of school dropouts and depriving them of their fundamental right to education (UNRWA press release, April 2025)<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> MAS (2024)

<sup>7</sup> Policy paper titled "Effective Mechanisms to Provide Comprehensive Educational and Health Services for Palestinians in East Jerusalem", September 2024, Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute – MAS, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-commissioner-general-israeli-officials-jerusalem-municipality>



- **Violation of school safety:** Frequent raids and the use of repressive measures near educational facilities create an atmosphere of fear, weakening concentration and academic performance while increasing psychological stress on girls and their families (UNRWA press release, February 2025)<sup>9</sup>.
- **Law preventing the employment of teachers:** The Israeli Knesset passed legislation granting the Ministry of Education and the municipality the authority to dismiss teachers administratively without a court decision, based solely on suspicion of “political inclinations.” This law has been used as a tool to intimidate educational staff (Association for Civil Rights in Israel, 2024)<sup>10</sup>.
- **Targeting graduates from West Bank universities:** Measures were implemented creating obstacles to the recognition of certificates for Jerusalem-based teachers who studied at West Bank universities, or requiring them to undergo additional security exams to work in Jerusalem schools. This threatens the job stability of hundreds of teachers. In January 2026, the Knesset issued a decision prohibiting employment in education for those holding academic degrees from Palestinian higher education institutions (Israeli Knesset decision, January 2026)<sup>11</sup>.
- **Revocation of licenses and funding:** Restrictions include legislation allowing the revocation of school licenses if the curriculum contains Palestinian content deemed “inciting” by occupation authorities. This places teachers and administrators under continuous legal pressure. Previous Knesset publications indicate policies and discussions aimed at withdrawing or reducing funding from institutions using “inciting” curricula<sup>12</sup>.
- **Restriction of digital freedom of expression:** Teachers were monitored and sanctioned for their social media posts, with many union activities or expressions of national identity treated as “disciplinary violations” that could lead to dismissal from the education sector (Adalah, 2024)<sup>13</sup>.

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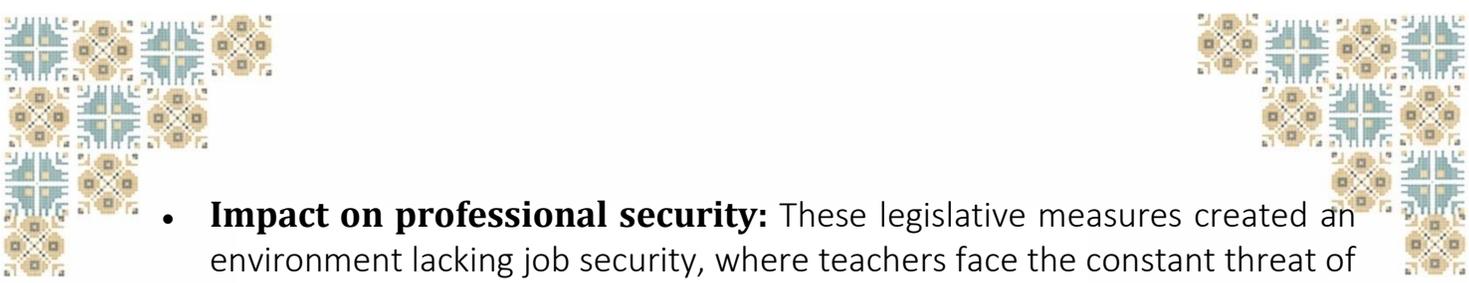
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/children-and-young-people-east-jerusalem-denied-their-right-education>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.english.acri.org.il/post/human-rights-in-the-knesset-january-february-2024>

<sup>11</sup> <https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/press220126b.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> <https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/press14723e.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> Adalah. (2025, January 23). *The Israeli Knesset is back and set to advance a new wave of oppressive legislation targeting Palestinians' rights.* <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/full/216>

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- **Impact on professional security:** These legislative measures created an environment lacking job security, where teachers face the constant threat of losing their livelihoods based on vague criteria. This has led to a shortage of specialized staff and a decline in the quality of education provided to girls in Jerusalem.

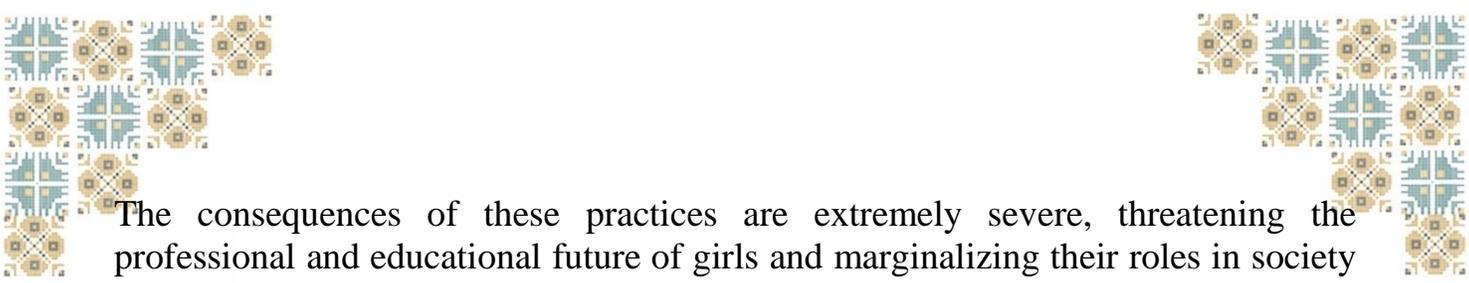
## Educational Extermination in Gaza

Over more than two years of the genocidal war, the Gaza Strip has experienced a systematic educational extermination. The Israeli occupation has deliberately targeted the education sector, including students, educational staff, school and university buildings, libraries, laboratories, and other educational facilities. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education and international organizations, the impact is as follows:

- **Losses among academic and teaching staff:** 246 university academics and 794 school teachers were killed, and 1,491 university staff and 3,261 teachers were injured to varying degrees.
- **Student casualties:** More than 20,000 students were killed and 30,000 injured across all educational levels.
- **Destruction of infrastructure:** The Israeli occupation completely destroyed 179 government schools and 100 UNRWA schools, in addition to the full or partial destruction of 63 universities and higher education institutions, according to Ministry of Education reports.
- **Collapse of the educational process:** More than 745,000 students have been out of school for over two academic years, including approximately 650,000 school students, half of whom are girls.

The educational extermination in Gaza has disproportionately affected girls. War conditions and ongoing displacement have deprived approximately 320,000 girls of continuous education. Daily interruptions have accumulated significant learning losses and undermined their chances of completing their educational paths.

Moreover, displaced girls face compounded risks due to overcrowding, lack of privacy, absence of safe sanitary facilities, limited ability to maintain personal hygiene, and fear of movement. Families, under the pressure of poverty and insecurity, have resorted to coping mechanisms with severe consequences for girls, including withdrawing them from school for household responsibilities or early marriage.



The consequences of these practices are extremely severe, threatening the professional and educational future of girls and marginalizing their roles in society across multiple domains.

### Education in the 'Third: The Financial Crisis and Its Impact on Girls West Bank

The severe financial crisis, resulting from the ongoing occupation and the seizure of clearance revenues, led to the postponement of the 2025/2026 academic year, causing significant disruption to the educational process. The crisis is reflected in the following indicators:

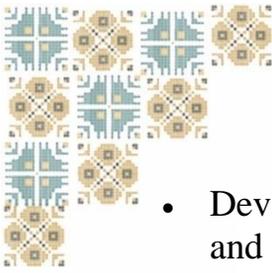
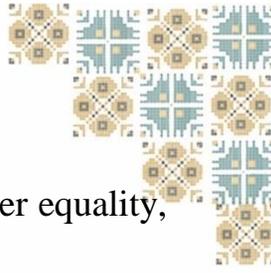
- **Salary delays and reduced school days:** The continuation of this crisis has significantly increased public debt, preventing the Palestinian Authority from paying teachers' salaries regularly, which in turn has reduced classroom instruction and in-person learning.
- **Decline in quality and academic performance:** National assessment studies (2025), conducted by the Ministry of Education for core subjects (Arabic, mathematics, and science), show a decline in achievement levels and basic skills due to cumulative learning loss and the financial pressures on teaching staff.
- **Risk of dropout:** Girls are the most vulnerable to dropping out, as financial pressures force families to cut spending on transportation and educational necessities, increasing the likelihood of interruption during transitional stages (middle and high school).
- **Increased domestic care burden:** With irregular school attendance and reduced household income, girls face greater domestic responsibilities, which limits their study time and directly affects their school attendance and academic performance.

#### Recommendation:

This paper recommends a practical path to protect the right to education, prioritizing urgent action in Gaza across all educational levels, as well as in the West Bank and Jerusalem:

#### Protecting national educational identity and curricula

- Affirm that the Palestinian curriculum is part of national sovereignty and cultural identity, and reject any funding conditions aimed at imposing an alternative curriculum in Jerusalem.

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- Develop content that promotes citizenship, national culture, gender equality, and strengthens resilience and rights awareness.
  - Support schools and teaching staff in Jerusalem legally and institutionally to counter policies of “Israeli-ization” (asrara).

### **Documenting and exposing violations against the education sector internationally**

- Include attacks on schools, universities, students, and academics in accountability files submitted to the Human Rights Council and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 mechanisms.
- Classify the targeting of education as a crime affecting an inalienable fundamental right, and expose the so-called “educational genocide” in Gaza.
- Highlight the assassination of academics and targeting of educational staff as attacks on Palestinian human capital.

### **Defending the right to education as an inalienable human right**

- Call for effective international protection to ensure safe access for girls to schools in the West Bank and Jerusalem.
- Emphasize the international community’s responsibility to prevent movement restrictions or the closure of educational institutions.
- Link the right to education with the rights to development, employment, and future political participation for women.

### **Integrating education into recovery and reconstruction priorities**

- Consider the rebuilding of schools and universities a sovereign priority in Gaza’s reconstruction plans.
- Ensure women’s participation in educational reconstruction committees.
- Include education in social protection programs to prevent girls’ dropout or early marriage under crisis pressures.