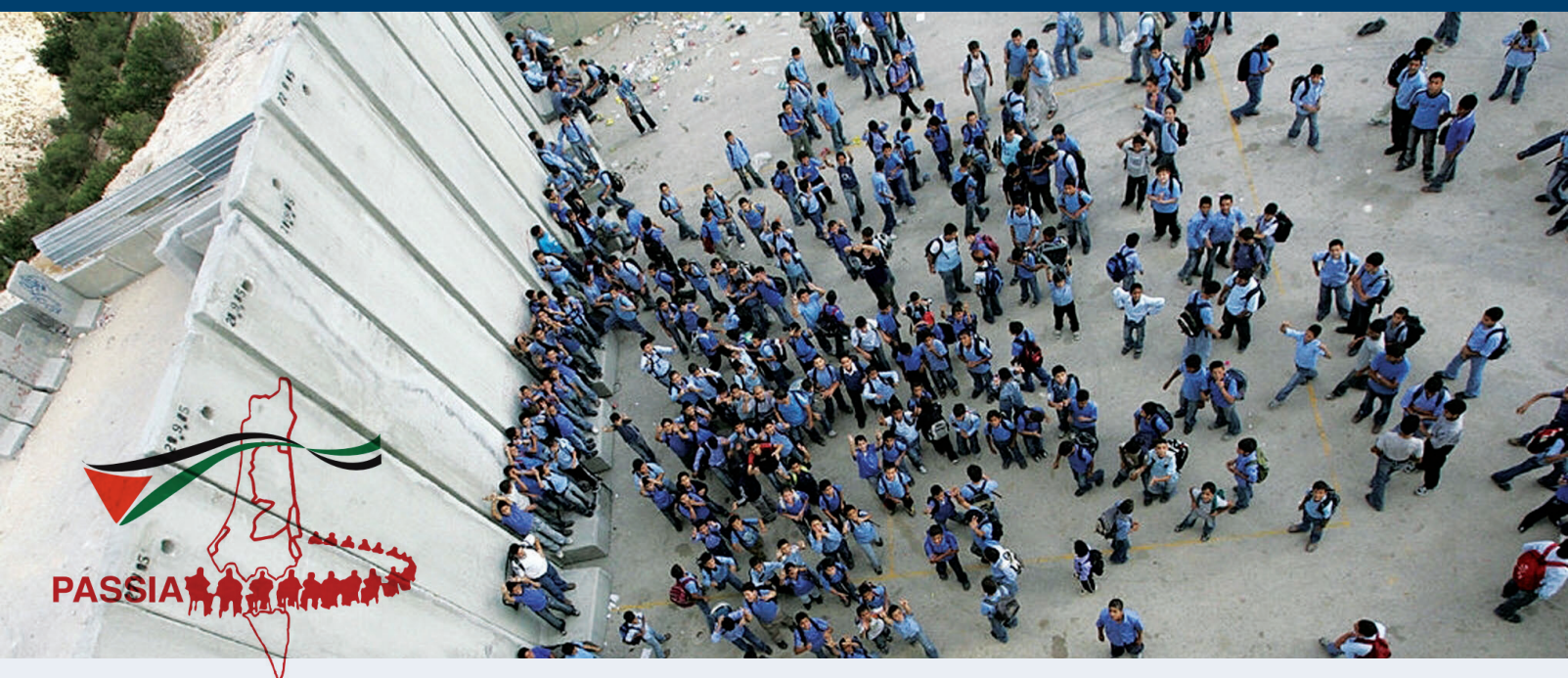


Education in Jerusalem 2016



Introduction

September 2016

After the occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, Israel issued a law that sought to illegally annex the newly captured territory. This law transmitted administrative responsibilities and the power of government to the State of Israel, effectively enabling Jerusalem authorities to extend Israeli laws, jurisdiction and administration to East Jerusalem.¹ Moreover, the new municipal borders of East Jerusalem were expanded from 5.6 square kilometers to approximately 72 square kilometers.

Later in 1980, the Israeli Knesset issued the "Basic Law: Jerusalem as Capital of Israel," which declared that a "full and unified Jerusalem is the capital of Israel."² This action was rejected and resisted by the Palestinians as well as the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly, who considered Jerusalem occupied territory.³ Accordingly, any claim made by the occupying power to extend its sovereignty and influence over East Jerusalem is void under international law.⁴

Contents:

Introduction	1
East Jerusalem Schools	3
Will the Israeli Curriculum Replace the Palestinian Curriculum in East Jerusalem?.....	8
School Dropout	11
Summary and Recommendations	12

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- ¹ While Israeli civil law is applied to Jerusalem due to the annexation, the West Bank is still subject to the military laws and orders applied there after the 1967 occupation.
- ² The Basic Law: Jerusalem is the Capital of Israel, 1980, passed by the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) on 30 July 1980.
- ³ Resolution 672 (1990) adopted by the UN Security Council at its 2948th meeting, on 12 October 1990), (S/RES/672).
See also UN Security Council Resolution 478. The International Court of Justice has recently confirmed this position. See the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of the Separation Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, International Court of Justice, 9 July 2004, paragraph (77).
- ⁴ The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which provides for the fundamental principle that prohibits the use of force to alter or transfer the sovereignty of occupied territory; Article 47 of the Geneva Convention provides that the treaty shall be effective against the inhabitants of an occupied territory even if that territory is subjected to the occupying power. "

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The right to education is a fundamental right under various international legal frameworks already ratified by Israel, such as the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13).⁵ It is also a fundamental right under Israel's Compulsory Education Law 1949, which states that children from ages three to seventeen are entitled to a free education.⁶

However, the reality of education in East Jerusalem reflects the policies of the occupation. The deliberate neglect of resource development over the decades can be clearly seen in the deteriorating state of the schools in the area.

Among the main problems are: the shortage of classrooms; the increase of private schools recognized by the Israeli authorities; the attempts and financial inducements to impose the Israeli curriculum over the Palestinian curriculum in schools; and the frighteningly high student dropout rates.

Not only are the policies and practices implemented by Israel in East Jerusalem violations of international law, as described below, but they also aim to change the character of the Arab-Palestinian city in many aspects. In this bulletin, we will review some basic information about the right to education in the occupied city and explore the difficult educational conditions which Palestinian Jerusalemites must endure.

In this context, our responsibility as teachers and educators is to efficiently work towards finishing our development of the Palestinian curriculum. Developing this curriculum involves both keeping pace with modern standards and Palestinian national requirements, as well as fashioning a new intellectual and educational framework that is starkly different from more traditional methods of indoctrination.

The changes in the curriculum will comprehensively address issues on multiple levels, from the structuring of the books to the educational content as a whole. This modern, interactive curriculum will incorporate national Palestinian themes and establish the concepts of belonging and citizenship. Using technology, modern communication tools, and music and arts, this engaging and collaborative learning process will prioritize deep self-learning over indoctrination in an effort to help motivate students to be creative and self-reliant.



5 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations 1989, <http://www.ohchr.org/AR/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, United Nations 1976, <http://www.ohchr.org/AR/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>.

6 Ruth Levush, "Children's Rights: Israel," Children's Rights: Israel | Law Library of Congress, April 1, 2012, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/child-rights/israel.php>.

East Jerusalem Schools

Types of Schools in East Jerusalem

East Jerusalem's current state of education is a result of the multiplicity of educational systems found throughout the city. In the absence of a Palestinian National Authority, there is no supervisory body that can unify the educational system to express its Palestinian Arab identity, or work to improve the quality of education.

There are 109,391 students in East Jerusalem, as published by the Jerusalem Municipality in June of 2016.⁷ These students are distributed into different types of schools affiliated with different educational umbrellas, including:

- 1) Private schools: fully funded by private and independent entities, these schools do not receive any support from the Israeli government. Some examples include schools organized by Al-Awqaf or UNRWA, and a small number of other independent ones, such as the Dar Al-Tifel Al-Arabi School and Riyadh Al-Aqsa Islamic Schools. These schools teach an independent Palestinian curriculum and maintain their mission of educating and keeping their Arab-Palestinian identity away from the Judaization attempts of the Jerusalem Municipality and the Israeli Ministry of Education.
- 2) Schools affiliated with the Municipality of Jerusalem: known as municipal schools, these are fully funded and managed by the Municipality of Jerusalem and the Israeli Ministry of Education. This funding covers construction (or rental of residential buildings and their conversion into classrooms); financing the salaries of teachers and administrative staff; implementing educational projects; and purchasing educational materials and tools. Examples of these schools include: Al-Mamouniya School for Girls and Ahmed Sameh School in Al-Thawri. About 41% of the total number of Palestinian students in East Jerusalem study in these schools, while the majority of students study in private or recognized schools.
- 3) "Informal Recognized Schools": these are private schools that receive funding from Israeli authorities. They are affiliated with associations or churches but receive a formal recognition that is renewed annually by the Ministry of Education. Up to 75% of the costs of informal recognized schools are covered by the Ministry of Education, with the remaining financial needs being met by tuition fees paid by parents that can reach over NIS 7,000 per year. Examples of these schools include Frère Secondary School, Rosary Sisters' School, and Al-Iman Schools.

It should be noted that informal recognized schools have increased in the past decade; in fact, the majority of East Jerusalem schools are moving towards this alternative. This option sprang from an Israeli law known as the "day law", which was originally intended to respond to the needs of Jewish religious, or "Haredi", schools. The law provides financial support to schools and claims to grant them freedom of administration. Of course, this "freedom" is conditional, depending on the content of the curriculum, such as the inclusion of some basic mathematics and the Hebrew language.



Islamic Orphanage Secondary School

⁷ Data from the Israeli occupation authorities, as presented at the Ono Academic College of Israel by a student of the Faculty of Education at the end of June 2016.

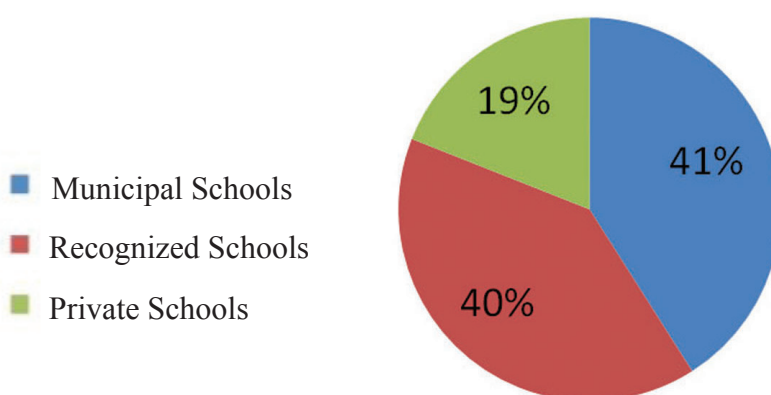
Recently, there has been pressure on recognized schools to teach a distorted Palestinian curriculum, from which the municipality removes the parts that it considers to be "inciting violence."

This increase in the number of informal recognized schools also stems from the need of the Israeli Ministry of Education to respond to a petition filed in the Supreme Court regarding the shortage of classrooms in East Jerusalem. The Ministry of Education realized that granting financial support to existing private schools in Jerusalem provides a convenient alternative to actually building more schools.

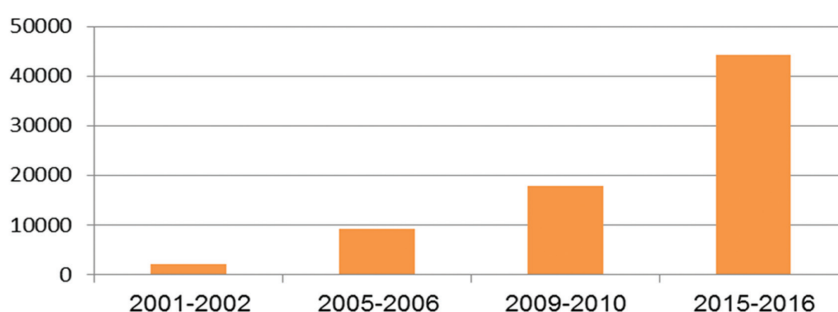
The following graphs and figures demonstrate the rise and existing prevalence of such recognized schools. As seen, in the 2001-2002 academic year, the number of students studying at recognized schools was only 2,000 students, whereas in the 2005-2006 academic year, there were 9,220 students studying in such schools. Five years later, in the 2009-2010 academic year, there were 17,779 students. Today, there are more than 40,000 students studying at recognized schools.⁸

	Number of schools	Number of classrooms	Number of students
Municipal Schools	82	1,783	44,781
Recognized Schools	74	1,603	44,321
Private Schools	68	854	20,289
	224	4,240	109,391

Distribution of Jerusalemite Students in Schools



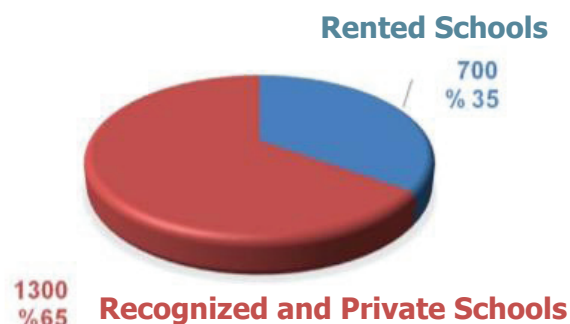
Number of Jerusalemite Students Studying at Recognized Schools between 2001-2016:



⁸ "Education in East Jerusalem: Curriculum and Classrooms", report by the Knesset (2010). For further information: <http://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/m02507.pdf>.

Shortage of Classrooms

Though the shortage of classrooms in Jerusalem is not new, the situation has worsened after the construction of the Separation Barrier and the Israeli military checkpoints that have isolated Jerusalem from the West Bank. Schools in the West Bank were before a known alternative for Jerusalemites when there was no scrutiny by the Ministry of Interior on the "center of life" regulations as a condition for renewal of identity cards. And while the schools in the West Bank are still the only possibility for some Jerusalemite students because of the plain lack of schools where they live, these political constraints limiting schooling alternatives nonetheless only exacerbate a severe school shortage.



Civil society organizations have been facing difficulties getting access to studies on the shortage of classrooms in Jerusalem. This is due to the secrecy of the Municipality of Jerusalem and the Ministry of Education in disclosing the real numbers, as well as the unavailability of many comprehensive studies. Nevertheless, there are some studies providing various numbers that can be examined below.



The first study on the shortage of classrooms and its effects on residents was published by an Israeli research institute, the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies. Published at the beginning of this century, the study mentioned a shortage of around 1,000 classrooms. Israeli authorities did not recognize this number or any other number. Then, in 2013, Israeli human rights associations obtained an official internal document from the Municipality of Jerusalem, stating that the shortage of classrooms is closer to 2,200 - far more than 1,000. Although this figure has been published and circulated in some reports, the Municipality of Jerusalem has never recognized it.⁹

In a session held at the Israeli parliament on 6 June 2016 - on the occasion of "Jerusalem Day" (with which Israel marks the day when East Jerusalem was occupied and Jerusalem became "united" in 1967) - the Education Committee of the Knesset addressed the issue of the shortage of classrooms in East Jerusalem. According to what was mentioned in that session, there was a conflict between the Municipality of Jerusalem and the Ministry of Education with the Ministry of Finance regarding financing the construction of these classrooms.¹⁰ In that session, the Municipality of Jerusalem referred to a shortage of 2,000 classrooms. This stands in sharp contrast to what it had claimed over the years was a shortage of 1,000 classrooms.¹¹

Rented Classrooms' Non-Conformity to Standards

One of the methods used by the Israeli government as a quick solution to the shortage of classrooms is the renting and subsequent refurbishment of residential buildings into schools. Because these buildings are often houses that have been transformed into schools, the outcomes are far from the official standards required to create an appropriate educational space. In fact, as stated in the aforementioned Knesset session by Nir Barakat, Mayor of Jerusalem, 548 out of 1,783 rented classrooms in various Jerusalem municipality schools do not conform to building standards.



⁹ See the report, *Failed Grade East Jerusalem's Failing Educational System* (August 2012) by Ir Amim & ACRI, which estimated the shortage of classrooms at around 2,200 classrooms. Available at: <https://law.acri.org.il/en/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/EJeducation2012en.pdf>.

¹⁰ Protocol of the Knesset session of 6 June 2016 regarding the shortage of classrooms in Jerusalem. <http://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/committees/Education/Pages/CommitteeAgenda.aspx?tab=3&ItemID=2003165>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The results of this method can be unsettling. There are schools where bedrooms, balconies and even kitchens have been turned into overcrowded classrooms. In most cases, these schools lack playgrounds or facilities for extracurricular activities. And when they are present, these spaces often cannot accommodate the large numbers of students, let alone allow the presence of all of the students at the same time. In total, the cost of this messy process of renting buildings and transforming them into schools in the last five years reached NIS 20 million.¹²

Construction of Classrooms

For more than a decade, Jerusalem authorities have claimed that they are working hard to build schools to cover this shortage in order to enable all Palestinian Jerusalemite children to access their right to education. In February 2016, the Municipality of Jerusalem offered the following data on the development of classrooms in East Jerusalem, some of which are still in the process of being built:

Total classrooms (from 1 st Grade)	244
Total kindergarten classrooms	138
Total	382

According to an announcement by the Municipality, 129 classrooms were planned to be built during 2016 in the following places:

Al-Issawiya	8	Primary
Sala'	26	Primary
At-Tur	9	Preparatory for Girls
Sur Baher	8	Secondary for Girls
Beit Safafa	18	Secondary
Sharafat	15	Classrooms for Special Education
Nurseries		
Shu'fat	42	
Um Tuba	3	

Confiscation of Land for Building Schools

One of the most common justifications used by the Jerusalem authorities for the large shortage of classrooms is the claim that there is simply not enough land to build schools that would conform to standards. In reality, the main reason is the absence of a structural plan for the city, as well as the lack of an clear outline of local Palestinian villages and neighborhoods. It is therefore difficult for authorities to seize and effectively develop public areas for public services, since the Israeli authorities generally confiscate lands which it officially registers on its behalf prior to the construction of public facilities.

In this way, 223 out of the 382 anticipated classrooms will be on lands that are in the process of being confiscated. For this purpose, the Israeli Ministry of Education has allocated NIS 60 million to the Municipality of Jerusalem.¹³

¹² Protocol of the Knesset session of 7 June 2016 regarding the shortage of classrooms in Jerusalem.

¹³ Protocol of the Education Committee of the Israeli Knesset in February. <http://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/committees/Education/Pages/CommitteeAgenda.aspx?tab=3&ItemID=574756>.

The Annexation and Expansion Wall and Its Impact

The construction of the separation barrier as well as the Israeli military roadblocks have led to major changes in Jerusalem in general, and the educational sector in particular. After the construction of the wall, which was built in an attempt to empty Jerusalem of its indigenous Palestinian population, Jerusalemite residents were forced to constantly defend their residency by proving to the Ministry of Interior that their 'center of life' was in Jerusalem or have their residency status revoked. Failure to do so successfully results in the revocation of one's residency status.

Consequently, Palestinians rushed to return to the neighborhoods and villages of Jerusalem to be inside the municipality's borders. This placed a growing demand for spots in schools.

Jerusalem areas that are cut off by the wall (such as the Shu'fat Refugee Camp, Ras Al-Kheimh, Ras Shehadeh, Dahiyet Al-Salam, and Kufr Aqab) became some of the most overpopulated areas, with around 120,000 Palestinians (roughly one-third of East Jerusalem population) living in these isolated communities. Despite that, there are only four municipal schools and 18 recognized schools in these areas, which is wholly inadequate to accommodate all of the students living there. And though the Jerusalem Municipality does provide daily transportation for some students, many still must endure crossing checkpoints on a daily basis just to reach their schools inside the wall. For example, 3,500 children pass through Shu'fat Refugee Camp checkpoint every day to reach their schools in Shu'fat or other areas in Jerusalem, due to the lack of sufficient classrooms within the camp itself.

Students attending private schools but who live outside the wall also must pass checkpoints and use public transportation on a daily basis in order to reach their schools. The number of these students is unknown, though it is estimated to be in the hundreds. These students leave their houses at 6:30 a.m. in order to be at school before 8:00 am. They arrive at their classrooms exhausted after spending at least an hour and a half traveling, let alone the extra time they may spend at checkpoints amidst the Israeli security complications.

Supreme Court Petition for Recognition of Classroom Shortage and Fee Reimbursement

The huge shortage in classrooms pushed several civil society associations, as well as 900 parents, to file a petition before the Supreme Court of Israel in 2001. They demanded the construction of all the missing classrooms in order to obtain their legal right to education, according to the national and international laws. The deliberations on this petition continued for years, during which the court issued a decision to build 400 classrooms. However, the court did not abide by the decision, and as a result, human rights organizations filed another claim. In 2008, the Israeli human rights organization Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) filed a petition demanding compensation for the parents who are forced to send their children to private schools due to the shortage of classrooms in municipal schools. The court decided to combine both petitions into one. In 2011, after several court sessions and a decade after the first petition was filed, the court issued a decision ordering the Jerusalem authorities to build all of the missing classrooms in East Jerusalem within five years.

According to this decision, if enough classrooms were not built by the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic year, and if families are forced to reach out to and attend recognized schools after unsuccessfully applying to municipal schools, then Jerusalem authorities must cover the costs of private school tuition fees instead of the parents.¹⁴

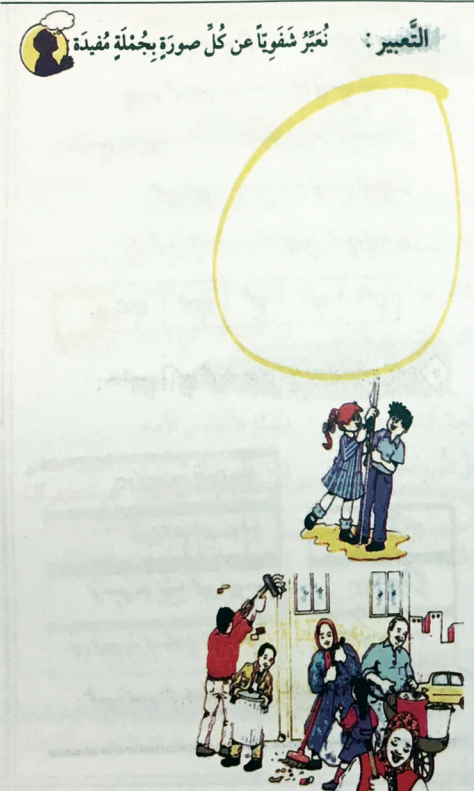
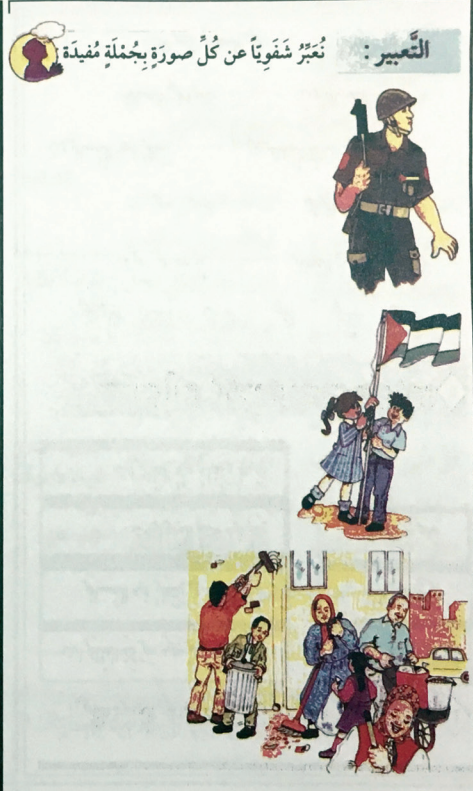


¹⁴ Abu Libdeh petition against the Israeli Minister of Education, the decision and formal deliberations before the court, ACRI; <http://www.acri.org.il/he/1670>.

Will the Israeli Curriculum Replace the Palestinian Curriculum in East Jerusalem?

After the occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, the Israeli authorities attempted to impose their own curriculum on the schools of East Jerusalem. Parents and teachers rejected this decision, declaring an open-ended strike in all Jerusalem schools that lasted for several months. In the end, the Israeli authorities rescinded their decision, and the schools of Jerusalem returned to the Jordanian curriculum.

After the 1994 Oslo I Accord, a Palestinian curriculum replaced the Jordanian curriculum. Right-wing members of the Israeli Knesset opposed the change. As a result, Israeli decision-makers held a public political discussion concerning the new Palestinian curriculum, which was described as containing "offensive and provocative" content against Israel. Initially, the sessions focused on the extent of the supervision of Palestinian curriculum books by the Israeli Ministry of Education, and if the offensive content against Israel should be deleted. But, in 2006-2007, this discussion reached the Israeli Knesset, which devoted several sessions in its Committee of Education to the subject.¹⁵ The outcome of these sessions was a tightening of control over the content of the books and curriculum in a manner that had not previously been witnessed, in addition to the deletion of any material related to the Palestinian state or narrative.¹⁶ This tightening of control now also works alongside other methods used by the Jerusalem Municipality and the Ministry of Education, such as financial incentives, to encourage schools to adopt more 'accommodating' curricula. Ultimately, the goal of this larger phenomenon is to Israelize East Jerusalem and strengthen the influence of the Israeli occupation over the occupied territories.

Notes	Distorted Version	Palestinian Version	Subject	Grade
ملاحظات	النسخة المحرفة	النسخة الفلسطينية	المادة	الصف
<p>Palestinian Version: The picture of the soldier and the Palestinian flag are there</p> <p>- الفلسطينية: صورة الجندي وعلم فلسطين</p> <p>- المحرفة: تم حذف صورة الجندي وعلم فلسطين</p> <p>(صفحة: ١٧)</p> <p>Distorted Version: The picture of the soldier and the Palestinian flag were deleted (p. 17)</p>			<p>Arabic Language/ Part 1</p> <p>اللغة العربية/ الجزء الأول</p>	<p>3rd Grade</p> <p>الثالث الأساسي</p>

¹⁵ The Ministry of Education in Jerusalem, "Curriculum and Classrooms", report by the Knesset in 2010, <https://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/m02507.pdf>.
¹⁶ As most of the Palestinian curriculum books that are used in the municipal schools are produced in printing houses that make deals with the Jerusalem Municipality, the contents deemed undesirable by Israeli censorship were easily deleted.

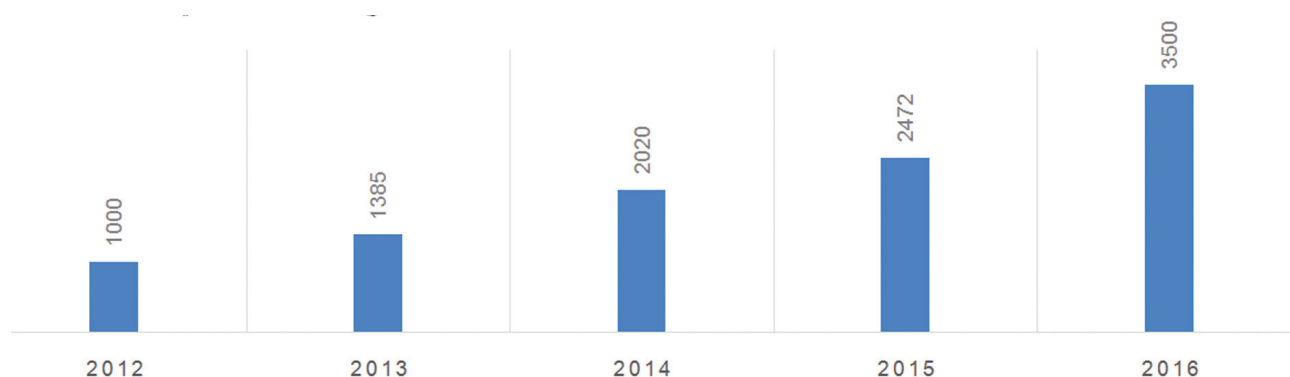
Data on the Increase of East Jerusalem Schools Teaching the Israeli Curriculum

For many years, the Israeli curriculum was only taught in one school in East Jerusalem, the Beit Safafa School. However, there has recently been a significant increase in the number of schools teaching this curriculum, in part thanks to the evolving political negotiations of the issue in the Knesset and the allocation of a specific budget for the matter. By the end of the 2015-2016 academic year, the Israeli curriculum was implemented in ten municipal schools in Jerusalem; by the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic year, that number was 14¹⁷. Another nine recognized schools and 14 official schools were scheduled to teach the Israeli curriculum by the start of the 2017-2018 academic year.

Schools Teaching the Israeli Curriculum in the 2016-2017 Academic Year

School	Academic Level	No. of Classes	No. of Students
Beit Hanina Mixed Primary School	1 st -6 th Grades	7	170
Beit Hanina Preparatory School for Boys	7 th -10 th Grades	12	315
Ras Al-Amud Comprehensive School for Girls	10 th - 11 th Grades	2	50
Ibn Rushd Comprehensive School for Boys	7 th - 12 th Grades	13	323
Sur Baher Primary School For Boys	4 th -5 th Grades	2	40
Beit Safafa Primary School "A"	1 st -6 th Grades	15	395
Beit Safafa Primary School "B"	1 st -6 th Grades	12	350
Beit Safafa Comprehensive Mixed School	7 th -12 th Grades	22	737
Abdullah Ibn Al-Hussein Comprehensive School for Girls	7 th -11 th Grades	5	105
Technological School for Boys	9 th -11 th Grades	4	100
Shu'fat Primary Mixed School	1 st -6 th Grades	6	150
Ibn Khaldoun Comprehensive School for Boys	10 th Grade	1	25
Ras Al-Amud Comprehensive School for Boys	10 th Grade	1	25
Aafak	10 th Grade	2	40

Number of East Jerusalemite Students Studying the Israeli Curriculum¹⁸



According to these figures, although much money and effort have been allocated to pushing the adoption of the Israeli curriculum, the numbers are still low; 3,500 out of more than 100,000 East Jerusalemite students have been affected. All the same, the growing numbers remain a concern considering the clear agenda of this policy.

¹⁷ Data by the Municipality of Jerusalem as presented at the Ono College by students of the Faculty of Education by the end of June 2016.

¹⁸ Data of the Municipality of Jerusalem, as presented by the Education Committee of the Israeli Knesset, on 1 February 2016.

Financial Incentives

The Israeli government allocated around NIS 47 million exclusively for education in East Jerusalem as of 29 June 2014.¹⁹ The funding proposal clearly states the goals behind this:

1. Increasing the number of students studying the Israeli curriculum.
2. Increasing the number of Jerusalemite students attending the preparatory years at Israeli universities.
3. Increasing the hours of teaching Hebrew language at East Jerusalem schools.
4. Computerizing schools in East Jerusalem.
5. Developing a plan to reduce the dropout rates from East Jerusalem schools.

However, according to an article published by *Haaretz* in December of 2016, all the additional budget and extra academic hours will only be distributed to schools teaching the Israeli curriculum (for the Bagrut certificate). Municipality schools that choose to teach for the Tawjihi exams, on the other hand, will not be affected and will keep receiving the same abysmal financial support as before. Later on, an additional budget of around NIS 20 million was allocated to be used to renovate, computerize, and add laboratories and air conditioners - again, exclusively for those schools teaching the Israeli curriculum. In light of the struggle for survival amidst scant budgets, this warped and discriminatory funding dynamic puts pressure on schools to teach the Israeli curriculum. And although Israeli occupation authorities claim that this is for the interest of academically empowering Jerusalemite students, the financial incentives to adopt the Israeli curriculum indirectly betray a clear political agenda aimed at Israelizing and controlling East Jerusalem.

In addition to the financial inducements, there are also other reasons why some opt for the Israeli curriculum. These include:

1. After building the separation barrier and isolating Jerusalem, reaching schools and colleges in the West Bank became harder and more complicated. This requires passing through the Israeli military checkpoints, not to mention the wasting of time and the daily struggle and humiliation students face in order to simply access their right of education. In light of that, many people believe that studying the Israeli curriculum and graduating with the Israeli Bagrut certificate would make registering at Israeli universities and colleges easier, and would also avoid having to pass through the checkpoints in order to reach Palestinian universities.
2. Admission to Israeli universities is difficult as it requires a certain level of Hebrew language proficiency, as well as becoming accustomed to a teaching method that is completely different from that used in East Jerusalem schools. As a result, those who want to enroll at Israeli universities must pay the costs of a preparatory year. Thus, some people believe that obtaining the Bagrut certificate through the Israeli curriculum instead would increase their ability to enroll at Israeli universities.
3. It is often difficult for West Bank university graduates to find a job in their fields of study in Jerusalem. This can be due to the lack of employment opportunities for Jerusalemites, the peculiarities of the labor market, a sometimes insufficient Hebrew language proficiency, as well as the complicated Israeli procedures regarding the recognition of Palestinian certificates. Some degrees from Palestinian universities are not recognized by Israeli institutions and become recognized only after passing many complementary courses, which require additional years of education.
4. The method usually used in teaching the Israeli curriculum is easier for students, as it depends on analysis more than indoctrination. Therefore, there are greater academic opportunities for all levels of students, not just for the outstanding ones. For example, there are programs that allow the distribution of units in each subject over a period of years. This reduces the material that the student must study at one time, and does not require that the student sit for one cumulative exam at the end of the 12th grade. This can particularly help students with learning difficulties succeed.

These and other reasons have led to an increase in the number of students studying towards the Bagrut and an increase in the number of Jerusalemite students enrolling at Israeli universities. For example, from 2000 to 2012, the number of East Jerusalemite students studying at the Faculty of Science and Medicine of the Hebrew University has increased from 1% to 10%.

¹⁹ The decision of Israeli government of 29 June 2014 <http://www.haaretz.co.il/st/inter/Hheb/images/jeru2.pdf>.

Outcomes of the Increase of Teaching the Israeli Curriculum in Jerusalem Schools

The issue of teaching the Israeli curriculum in some schools in Jerusalem is a popular topic for discussion. Most of the parent committees as well as Palestinian personalities in Jerusalem, oppose this change.

In addition to the opposition to the Israeli curriculum that is grounded in politics and patriotism, there are also many fundamental flaws in the contents of the Israeli curriculum itself. For example, the Israeli curriculum does not mention Al-Nakba at all but only the "establishment of the State of Israel." There is also nothing on the work of Palestinian authors and poets nor anything else related to Palestinian nationality as the Israeli curriculum as a whole actively avoids including anything Palestinian. Not only does the Israeli curriculum not speak for the Palestinian people, it persistently denies the Palestinian identity.

Palestinians who hold the Israeli citizenship and have been studying the Israeli curriculum since 1948 have been fighting this for decades. The High Follow-up Committee for Palestinian Education, for example, recently published an alternative book for civic education in Arab schools that adequately incorporates the Palestinian presence.

The greatest danger of the imposing of the Israeli curriculum in Jerusalem is its attempt to distort the Palestinian identity and transform students into "Israeli residents" who adopt the Israeli narrative, and, as a result, lose their Palestinianness and become estranged from the Palestinian cause and its history.²⁰

School Dropout

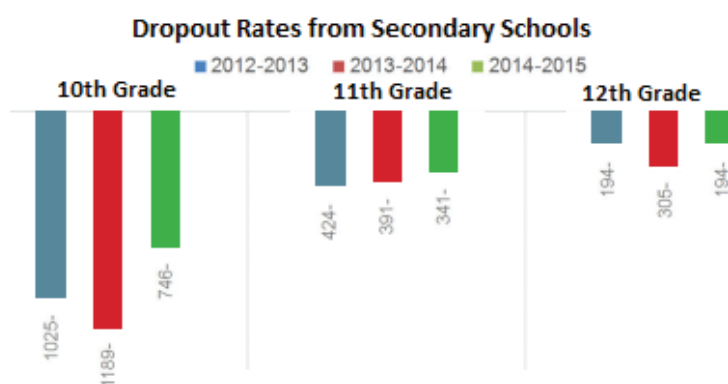
The high rates of school dropout make it one of the largest educational dilemmas in East Jerusalem. According to the available information, 13% of school students in East Jerusalem drop out of school each year, compared with only 1% in the schools of West Jerusalem. Even when compared to the dropout rates in Palestinian schools inside the Green Line, East Jerusalem holds the highest rates, as school dropout rate is 4.6% in Arab schools in Israel and 2.6% in Israeli schools.

The total rate of dropout for Palestinian Jerusalemite students in all academic years, i.e. from the 1st-12th grade, is 36.23%. Most school dropouts occur in secondary school (see chart), the transition level between preparatory and secondary schools (an extremely critical time in students' school journeys), and when changing schools.

According to a study presented two years ago by the Education Department of the Jerusalem Municipality, NIS 15 million are needed to implement a comprehensive program to address school dropouts East Jerusalem. However, the Municipality allocated only NIS 3 million of its annual budget for this issue.

There are only eight programs for preventing school dropouts implemented by the Municipality in East Jerusalem schools, whereas there are 21 such programs implemented in the schools of West Jerusalem. There is, though, a department in the Israeli Ministry of Education that cooperates with the Ministry of Social Welfare to reduce the phenomenon of school dropouts. The "Shahar" program, which means "dawn", provides educational alternatives for students who face learning difficulties. This program is only present in schools teaching the Israeli curriculum, making it actually unavailable in most East Jerusalem schools. In fact, only a mere four schools in East Jerusalem - out of the total of 45 educational institutions in all of Jerusalem - have this program.

In 2015, 123 classrooms were opened as part of "Shahar" program to serve 2,471 Jewish students in Jerusalem. In comparison, only 41 classrooms serving 785 Arab students received this service, despite the fact that these students have higher dropout rates.²¹



²⁰ Protocol of the session of the Education Committee of the Knesset on 1 February 2016.

²¹ Letter from Ir Amim and the Legal Clinic of the University of Haifa addressed to the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Municipality of Jerusalem.

Summary and Recommendations

In the past decade, we have witnessed a dramatic change in the education system in East Jerusalem, which is distinctly reflected in the deterioration of the quality of education. Today, there are few schools that succeed in qualifying students in East Jerusalem to complete their academic education successfully. This harsh reality comes in tandem with a broader Israeli effort to facilitate the institutionalization of their occupation by consolidating the reality of a unified capital of the Jewish state. This general policy of oppression necessarily entails a constant humiliation and exploitation of Jerusalemites - a strangling from which Jerusalem's inhabitants continue to suffer on every level, from the absence of Palestinian leadership to a choking of budgets and administrative capacity.

There are many steps that must be immediately taken to bring about an urgently needed change in the status of education in East Jerusalem. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Establishing more schools to accommodate students and alleviate the acute shortage of classrooms in East Jerusalem, which currently amounts to about 2,000 classrooms.
2. Demanding the reimbursement of the fees paid by parents to recognized schools (according to the 2011 court decision), and forcing Jerusalem officials to study how and where the budget must be distributed.
3. Strengthening the Palestinian curriculum in Jerusalem through changing the educational methods to become more modern, practical, analytical and computerized, in order to be able to compete with the Israeli curriculum.
4. Managing alternative funding for recognized schools, in order for these schools to return to being financially independent, while maintaining an appropriate level of performance.
5. Ensuring the Palestinian curriculum meets the needs of the Jerusalemite students. This can include introducing Hebrew in schools at a sufficient enough level to enable students to manage their own affairs. This proficiency would empower students to deal with the Israeli institutions without the need for assistance from lawyers or translators. With this comes a greater awareness of the Israeli laws imposed on them and of their rights when confronting abuse.
6. Establishing supplementary initiatives in Palestinian universities for those who have dropped out of school or failed to complete 12 academic years, in order to encourage completion of their academic education.
7. Securing programs to reduce school dropout and motivate students to complete high school, while taking into consideration their conditions, such as the high rates of poverty, arrest, and dropping out to work illegally.
8. Influencing the international community to take legal responsibility for the rights of East Jerusalemites to self-determination by confronting these oppressive policies. Accordingly, the international community must take practical steps to reflect their declared positions on Jerusalem. They should also hold Israel accountable for its violations of the national and humanitarian rights of Jerusalemites, in addition to its violations of international law, UN resolutions, and previously signed agreements. Failure to do so will only contribute to the consolidation of the Israeli occupation and the prolongation of the conflict.



**Palestinian
Academic
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