



FACTSHEET

THE ISRAELI MEASURES IMPACTING PALESTINIAN EDUCATION IN EAST JERUSALEM

The Oslo Accords marked a turning point for education in Palestine, granting Palestinians the ability to shape their educational curricula after years of Israeli occupation. However, Israel has since implemented policies aimed at asserting control over Jerusalem, pressuring Palestinian schools to adopt Israeli curricula. This factsheet examines the tools used by the Israeli authorities to influence and control Palestinian education in East Jerusalem, highlighting logistical and intellectual challenges.

Schools' Categories in East Jerusalem

According to a report that was prepared in mid of 2023, approximately 110,293 students (*excluding kindergartners*) attend 249 schools in East Jerusalem.

These schools are classified into 3 main categories:

- 1- **Official and recognized schools** (called municipal schools), which are supervised by the Israeli Ministry of Education through the municipality of Jerusalem, which means that they are managed and funded by the Jerusalem municipality. There are **65 schools**, that forest 41% of the students in East Jerusalem
- 2- **Recognized schools but unofficial** these schools receive partial funds from the Israeli Ministry of Education and are supervised (*partially*) by the municipality. These schools are mainly private schools, and most of them belong to church-based institutes, nonprofit organizations, and a limited number of private companies¹.

¹ According to the Israeli law, private companies are allowed to run schools for the purpose of profit. These schools are called **Contracting Schools**.

There are **105 schools** of this category, that forest 44% of the students in East Jerusalem.

- 3- **Unrecognized Schools:** These educational institutions were founded prior to 1967 and do not receive any financial support from the Jerusalem municipality. Most of these schools, (*approximately 73 schools*), fall under the administration of the Islamic Awqaf while being operated, funded, managed, and overseen by the Palestinian Ministry of Education.

Moreover, there are six schools in East Jerusalem under the administration of UNRWA. These schools serve as educational institutes for Palestinian refugees.

It is worth mentioning that only 15% of the students in East Jerusalem attend unrecognized schools.

Logistical Challenges

The primary concern in education in East Jerusalem is **classroom capacity**. East Jerusalem's population grows at a rate of 2.5% annually, requiring around **80 new classrooms each year**. Current provisions barely meet half of this need.

Palestinian-controlled schools can accommodate about 31,500 students, serving more than 45,500. Therefore, an additional 560 new classrooms are urgently required, plus an annual 80 classrooms to meet the demand over the next five years.

Another pressing concern pertains to the physical state of existing unrecognized schools. These institutions are primarily residential buildings adapted for educational purposes and often lack the necessary specifications that a

typical school should possess. According to some data provided by the Jerusalem Directorate of Education for the academic year 2019/2020, it becomes evident that the space allocated to each student in Awqaf schools is approximately 1.60 m², while private schools offer an average of 1.52 m² per student. It's worth noting that international standards recommend a minimum area of 2 m² / student.

Out of 146 schools that falls under the Palestinian umbrella², only 96 are equipped with science laboratories, averaging an area of 48.31 m², and merely 121 have computer laboratories, with an average area of 44.60 m². According to 2020 statistics, 83 schools (*constituting 56.85% of all schools*) require the addition of 947 drinking water taps and 716 additional toilets. Additionally, 50 schools (*34.25% of schools*) need to provide 242 sinks.

Taking no account to all the factors discussed earlier, the Israeli authorities in 2019, announced their intentions to revoke permits for UNRWA schools in East Jerusalem. These schools, catering to about 1,800 students, were set to be replaced by Jerusalem municipality-run



² This is a term that is used to describe Palestinian schools that follows Palestinian Ministry of Education.

schools, supported by Israel's education ministry.

Intellectual Challenges

Following the 1967 war, Israeli authorities seized all the historical public schools in East Jerusalem and planned to enforce its curriculum into these schools.

In 1971, well-established private schools and Islamic Awqaf schools adhering to the Jordanian curriculum prompted a reversal and rejected the use of the Israeli curriculum. All schools in East Jerusalem went on strike for almost one month, leading the Israeli authorities to accept the use of the Jordanian curriculum in East Jerusalem schools.

Such an arrangement persisted until 1999 when, *as a result of the Oslo Accord*, the Palestinian Ministry of Education began developing its own curricula, featuring a comprehensive Palestinian narrative. It is worth mentioning that this process was monitored and supervised by the international community.

In 2000, students in East Jerusalem, as well as other Palestinian students in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, began studying in the Palestinian curriculums.

Until 2012, all schools in East Jerusalem (*including the ones under the municipality umbrella*) continued to use and teach the Palestinian curriculum, which was managed and printed by the Palestinian Ministry of Education. However, in that year, the Israeli government started imposing modified Palestinian books on Palestinian schools receiving Israeli funding.

Additionally, they announced that they were going to refuse to provide funds to schools not using the modified books, and, in some cases, schools deviating from the Israeli-selected curriculums were denied permits to operate.

As part of the “modification/adjustments” of the Palestinian curriculum in Jerusalem, specific phrases were deleted, and titles were replaced with others. These changes were applied to **54 Palestinian textbooks**, totaling **689 alterations**. These modifications included the removal of symbols of Palestinian sovereignty, such as the Palestinian flag, national anthem, keffiyeh, references to Palestinian cities, and mentions of Palestinian detainees.

Moreover, in May 2018, the Israeli government introduced Decision No. 3790; “**Reduction of Socio-economic Gaps and Economic Development in East Jerusalem**” allocating approximately 2.2 billion NIS (*about 630 million USD*) over five years for socio-economic development in East Jerusalem, including education.

The decision aimed to increase Palestinian enrollment in the Israeli curriculum, allocating 43.4% of the funding to East Jerusalem schools teaching it, despite only 20% of Palestinian students attending these schools in 2020 (*while it was only 10% in 2019*). The Israeli curriculum, known as “Bagrut,” is being promoted as a prerequisite for higher education in Israel and enhances employment prospects in the Israeli labor market.

Threats to withdraw recognition and licenses from Palestinian schools that use the unadjusted curriculums have been made. Many Palestinians identify this as an attempt to Israelize the city and erase their national identity and values.

The Palestinian Curriculums in East Jerusalem

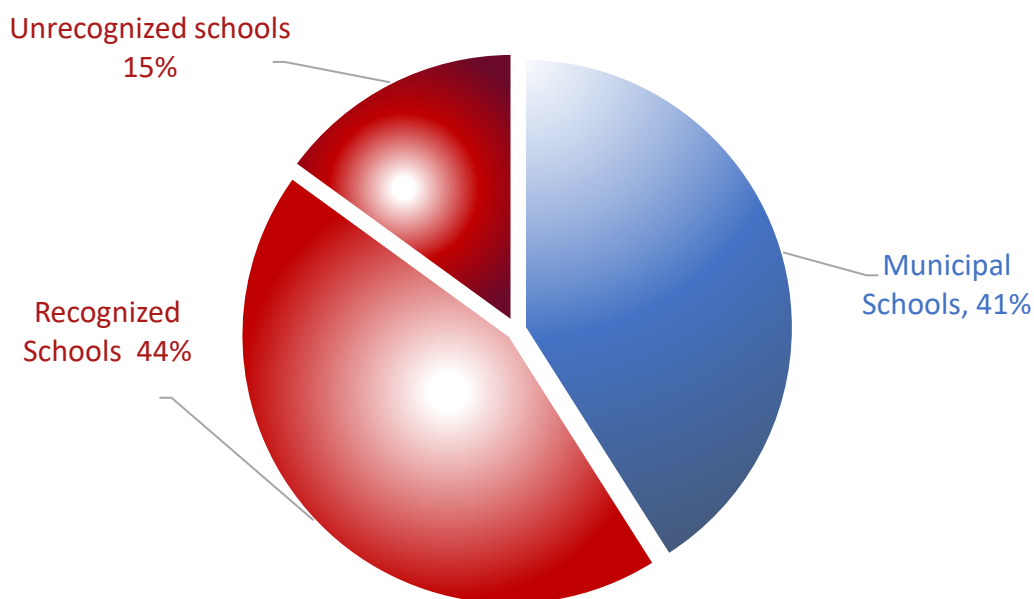
Recent actions against the Palestinian curriculum intensified following EU condemnation of Palestinian school textbooks, accusing them of “**incitement**” and

"antisemitism." The Israeli government has sought to modify Palestinian textbooks, deleting phrases, and replacing titles.

Nevertheless, one of the restrictive actions against the Palestinian curriculum is the forceful "modification" of its material which aims to

erase any presence of the Palestinian cause within the textbooks.

The pervasive Judaization of Jerusalem threatens every facet of Palestinian life, marginalizing their narrative and obstructing their pursuit of self-determination and dignity.



Conclusion

To conclude with education in East Jerusalem faces a myriad of challenges, with Israel's policies impacting both logistical and intellectual aspects of Palestinian education. The Palestinian schools that do not receive Israeli funding are facing real challenges to ensure a healthy and proper environment for their students, and the limitations that are being imposed over them by the Israeli government will push them to collapse.

Still, the schools that receive Israeli funding are also facing issues concerning the censorship and the modification of the Palestinian curriculum, dissociating the identity of Palestinian students by offering them books that erase their existence and gaslight the political context that makes their lives challenging under the Israeli regime.

These measures have far-reaching consequences for the Palestinian population's identity and prospects in the city.