



Israel's Destruction of Gaza's Education System

August 2024



London | Washington

Contents

01

Overview of 'Scholasticide'

5

02

'Scholasticide' During Previous Israeli Attacks on Gaza

9

03

Israel's Killing of Professors, Teachers and Students Since October 2023

12

04

Israel's Destruction of Gaza's Universities, Schools and Educational Facilities Since October 2023

16

05

Palestinians' Resistance to Israel's 'Scholasticide' Since October 2023

20

06

Pledges to Rebuild Gaza's Education System

23

*

Footnotes

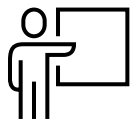
25

For the past 10 months, we have witnessed Israel's intentional and systematic campaign to destroy Gaza's education system as a key component of its genocidal campaign. Israel's obliteration of Gaza's education system has included the murder of over 5,500 university students, 270 teachers, and 100 university professors.

During the past 10 months, Israel has destroyed:

80%

of Gaza's schools



60%

of Gaza's educational institutions



13

libraries



Every university in Gaza



Central Archives of Gaza, which held over 150 years of Palestinian history



In addition to the destruction of Gaza's education system, it's also essential to remember that every university in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has been forcibly shut down at some point by Israeli forces, many of them regularly, and often alongside the arrest of their Palestinian students by Israeli forces.¹

We mourn all the lives, knowledge, and education viciously and systematically destroyed during this genocide, and throughout the past 76+ years. We have seen how touched the world has been by Dr Refaat Alareer's beautiful poem *If I Must Die*, and grieve the unwritten words and ideas of Gaza's martyrs, which had the potential to move the world in powerful ways.

Although gaining far less media coverage than the student intifadas in the West, we recognise all the Palestinian students and educators bravely resisting Israel's genocide by continuing their education online or in makeshift tents, despite their displacement and the destruction of Gaza's universities.

For every word – written, spoken and imagined – silenced by Israel's genocidal campaign, we dedicate this insight to the Palestinian students, scholars, and knowledge keepers. This insight is written in honour of the class of 2024 who will never graduate.

“We knew before, and see more clearly now than ever, that Israel is seeking to annihilate an educated Palestine.

Education is the most important thing – it is part of the family life, part of your identity and part of the rebellion. Everyone knows this, and in a refugee camp like Gaza, every child knows that in those same school desks sat your parents and your grandparents, whose tradition they carry on.”

Dr Karma Nabulsi
January 2009¹



01

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Overview of 'Scholasticide'

Stop the
Scholasticide.

Stop the
Genocide.

01

Overview of 'Scholasticide'

Scholasticide, also sometimes referred to as educide, refers to the systemic obliteration of the education system of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, through the arrest, detention or killing of teachers, students and staff, and the destruction of educational infrastructure.²

'Scholasticide' encompasses, but is not limited to:

- Killings and assassinations of university and schoolteachers, students, staff, and administrators
- Causing bodily or mental harm to university and schoolteachers, students, staff, and administrators
- Arresting, detaining, and incarcerating university and schoolteachers, students, staff and administrators
- Systematic harassment, bullying, intimidation of university and schoolteachers, students, staff, and administrators
- Bombarding and demolishing educational institutions
- Destroying and/or looting of teaching and research resources including libraries, archives, and laboratories, as well as facilities supporting the educational process, including playgrounds, sports fields, performance venues, cafeterias, and residence halls
- Impeding the import of essential materials for rebuilding damaged schools and universities
- Obstructing the creation of new educational structures
- Besieging schools and universities and using them as barracks, logistics bases, operational headquarters, weapons and ammunition caches, detention and interrogation centres
- Closing educational institutions and/or disrupting their daily operations
- Invading educational institutions
- Restricting faculty, student, and staff access to educational institutions.³

The term was first used by Palestinian scholar Karma Nabulsi in January 2009 to refer to the destruction of the Palestinian education system and infrastructure during Israel's bombardment of Gaza in late 2008.⁴

'Scholasticide' is closely linked to the term 'epistemicide', which refers to the destruction of indigenous knowledge systems by colonialism, whereby indigenous knowledge systems are erased and replaced by those of the coloniser.⁵

Overview of 'Scholasticide' continued...

Legacies of Scholasticide

The destruction of the educational infrastructure of a place can have long-term impacts on a population, such as:

- **Inaccessibility to education**
- **Educational delays and disadvantages**
- **Underemployment**
 - Due to the absence of education, people will not reach their potential in the education they could have achieved and/or are not able to receive their diploma. This leads to the possibility of people having work that does not reach their full capabilities and satisfaction in their jobs.
- **Linguicide**
 - If a certain language is no longer taught, there is a chance for the death of this language because people no longer know how to write or read it, nor develop their oral skills to the full potential.
- **Brain drain**
 - During 'educide', academics and students can be targeted and thus flee their country, leading to a brain drain as a result of those in higher education leaving their country to seek refuge.
- **Ethnic cleansing and/or genocide**
 - Removing the entire educational infrastructure can lead to a loss of collective memory and knowledge reproduction, and thus contribute to ethnic cleansing and/or genocide of a people and their identities.
- **Colonisation**
 - By removing the existing educational infrastructure and replacing it with a new one, a coloniser can control the reproduction and access to knowledge, which are instrumental in colonising a territory.⁶

Prior to the current genocide in Gaza, 'scholasticide' has been applied to the 2008 and 2014 Israeli attacks on Gaza,⁷ and to the destruction of Iraq's education system by international sanctions during the 1990s, the US-led invasion in 2003, the subsequent civil war from 2006-2007, and the rise of Daesh.⁸

'Scholasticide' by colonial powers often intends to replace indigenous education systems with colonial ones.⁹ For example, the US-led coalition systematically and intentionally destroyed Iraq's education system in order to replace Iraq's education system with one dependent on British and American universities that promote Western values and the English language over Arabic.¹⁰

“Now in Gaza...we see the policy more clearly than ever – this ‘scholasticide’. The Israelis know nothing about who we really are, while we study and study them. But deep down they know how important education is to the Palestinian tradition and the Palestinian revolution. They cannot abide it and have to destroy it.”

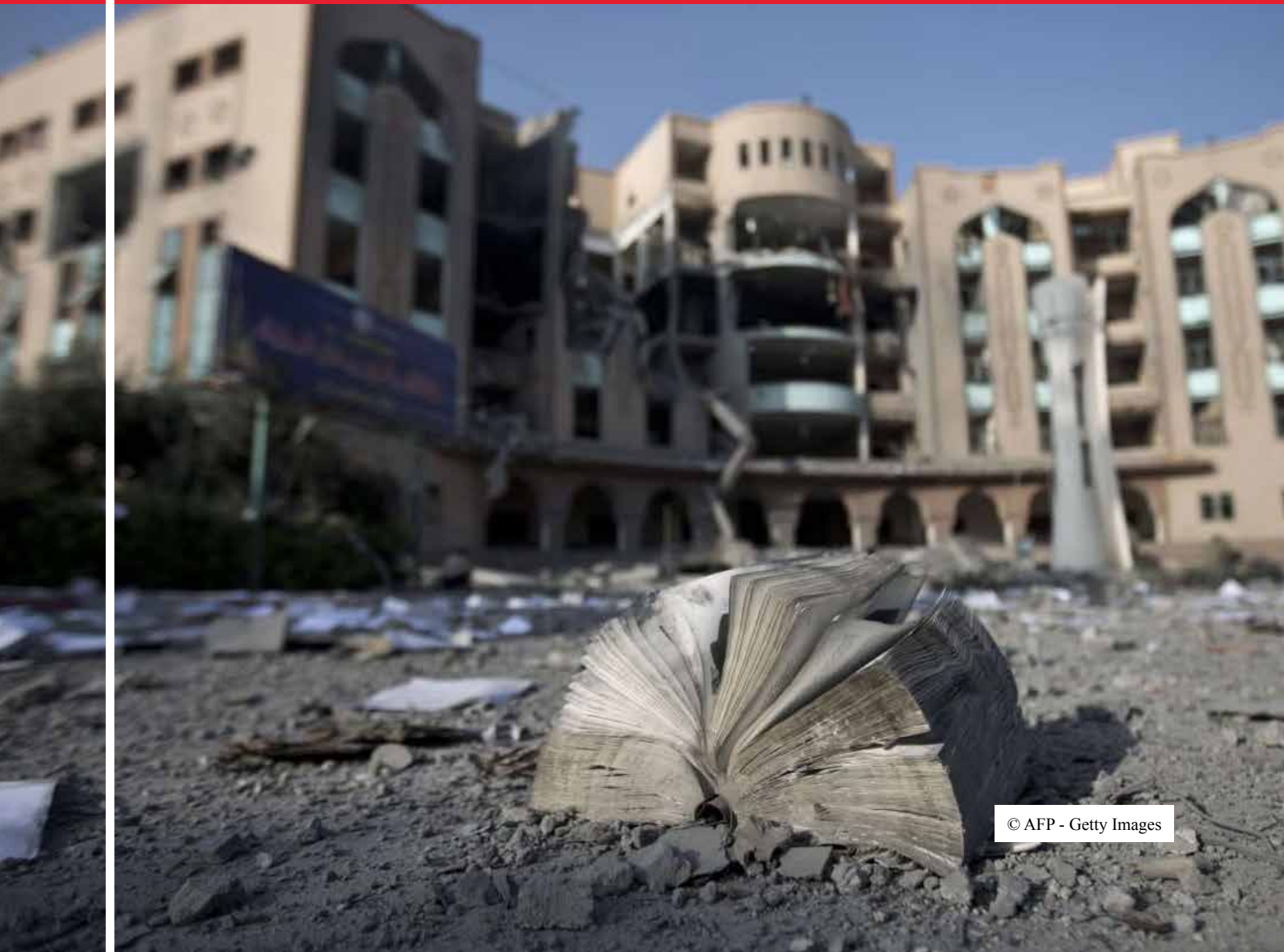
Dr Karma Nabulsi
January 2009¹¹



02

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

‘Scholasticide’ During Previous Israeli Attacks on Gaza



© AFP - Getty Images

02

'Scholasticide' During Previous Israeli Attacks on Gaza

2008-2009

Israel conducted six direct strikes on Gaza's Islamic University, causing severe damage to the main buildings, destroying administrative records, and disrupting studies.¹²

Israel conducted direct strikes on Gaza's the Ministry of Education twice.¹³

Israel attacked the UN school in Jabaliya refugee camp, massacring at least 40 people.¹⁴

Israel launched an airstrike on the American International School, killing a night watchman and destroying the building.¹⁵

Due to Israel's ground invasion of Gaza, end-of-year examinations had to be abandoned.¹⁶

2014

During Israel's bombardment of Gaza in 2014, around 407 university students and 9 members of university staff were killed, and a further 1,128 students were injured.¹⁷

Israeli attacks destroyed three buildings at Al-Azhar University, and two buildings at the Islamic University of Gaza.¹⁸

The total damage to Gaza's higher education sector as a result of Israel's attacks in 2014, was estimated to cost over \$10 million to repair.¹⁹

“The persistent, callous attacks on educational infrastructure in Gaza have a devastating long-term impact on the fundamental rights of people to learn and freely express themselves, depriving yet another generation of Palestinians of their future. [...] When schools are destroyed, so too are hopes and dreams. [...] These attacks are not isolated incidents. They present a systematic pattern of violence aimed at dismantling the very foundation of Palestinian society”

UN experts,
part of the Special Procedures
of the Human Rights Council²⁰



03

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Israel's Killing of Professors, Teachers and Students Since October 2023



03

Israel's Killing of Professors, Teachers and Students Since October 2023

Since the genocide in Gaza began in October 2023, Israel has killed over 5,500 university students, 270 teachers, and 100 university professors.²¹

Some of the most well-known university professors killed by Israel's genocide include:



Professor Sufian Tayeh

President of the Islamic University and award-winning physicist and UNESCO Chair of Astronomy, Astrophysics and Space Sciences in Palestine²². Professor Tayeh was killed by an Israeli airstrike alongside his family.²³



Dr Ahmed Hamdi Abo Absa

Dean of the Software Engineering Department at the University of Palestine.²⁴ Dr Absa was shot dead by Israeli soldiers as he walked away after having been released after three days of enforced disappearance.²⁵



Professor Muhammad Eid Shabir

Professor of Immunology and Virology, and former President of the Islamic University of Gaza.²⁶ Professor Shabir was killed by Israeli airstrikes alongside members of his family.²⁷



Professor Refaat Alareer

Professor of Comparative Literature and Creative Writing at the Islamic University of Gaza, co-founder of We Are Not Numbers and a published author and poet.²⁸ Professor Alareer was killed by Israeli airstrikes alongside members of his family.²⁹

Israel's Killing of Professors, Teachers and Students Since October 2023 continued...

Some of the most well-known librarians, archivists, and knowledge custodians killed by Israel since October 2023 include:



Abdul Karim Hashash

Writer, researcher and collector of Palestinian rare books.³⁰ Abdul was killed alongside many members of his family.³¹



Bilal Jadallah

Director of the Press House.³²



Doaa Al-Masri

Librarian at the Edward Said Library.³³ Doaa was killed alongside her parents and siblings.³⁴



Dr Jihad Suleiman Al-Masri

Historian and Director of Al-Quds Open University's Khan Yunis branch.³⁵



Iman Abu Saeed

Oral Historian at the Tamer Institute for Community Education.³⁶ Iman was killed alongside her children and husband³⁷



Marwan Tarazi

Archivist of Photo Kegham, Kegham Djeghalian's photography studio.³⁸ Marwan was killed alongside his wife and daughter whilst sheltering at Sain Porphyrius Orthodox Church.³⁹

“I owe Dr. Refaat a great deal for my writing skills. He generously shared his knowledge with us, provided the space to express ourselves, and encouraged us to write fearlessly. His office was always open for us. His departure is a tremendous loss. I can’t imagine our English department without him.”

Dima,
a senior English language
and translation student at the
Islamic University of Gaza.⁴⁰



04

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Israel's Destruction of Gaza's Universities, Schools and Educational Facilities Since October 2023



Israel's Destruction of Gaza's Universities, Schools and Educational Facilities Since October 2023

Israel has destroyed every university in Gaza, 80% of Gaza's schools, 60% of Gaza's educational institutions, 13 libraries, and many archives in Gaza – which held over 150 years of Palestinian history.⁴¹

Archives, libraries and museums destroyed by Israel since October 2023 include:

- The Central Archives of Gaza City - the largest archives in Gaza
- The Omari Mosque and Library in Gaza city, which contained one of the most significant collections of rare books in Palestine
- Ataa Library, IBBY Children in Crisis Library, which had previously been destroyed in 2014
- Diana Tamari Sabbagh Library in the Rashad al-Shawa Cultural Center, which had been sheltering hundreds of displaced Palestinians
- Edward Said Library in Beit Lahia
- Enaim Library
- Gaza Municipal Library
- Al-Kalima Library and Publishing House in Sheikh Radwan
- Kana'an Educational Development Institute
- Lubbud Library
- Al-Nahda Library
- Samir Mansour Bookshop and Library
- Al-Shorouq Al-Daem Library
- Al-Aqsa University Library
- Islamic University of Gaza Library
- Al-Israa University Library and National Museum
- Al-Quds Open University Library, Gaza City
- Jawaharlal Nehru Library, Al-Azhar University
- Akkad Museum, containing 2,800 artifacts dating back to prehistoric times
- Cultural Kararah Museum
- Deir Al-Balah Museum
- Ibrahim Abu Sha'ar Heritage Diwan, including an extensive collection of Bedouin heritage
- Khudari Museum
- Palestinian Costume Museum
- Al-Qarara Cultural Museum, also known as the Khan Younis Museum, containing 3,500 artifacts dating back to 4,000 BC
- Rafah Museum
- Shahwan Museum⁴²

Israel's Destruction of Gaza's Universities, Schools and Educational Facilities Since October 2023 continued...

As a result, all of Gaza's children, and around 88,000 university students have been unable to continue their studies since October 2023, and were unable to sit their end of year exams in June 2024.⁴³

Many of Gaza's remaining schools are being used to shelter displaced Palestinians who have fled their homes – **preparations for which began in 2017** after Israel's 2014 attacks on Gaza.⁴⁴

Despite UNWRA's longstanding and clear plan for schools in Gaza to be used as shelters during future emergencies,⁴⁵ Israel has continued to relentlessly and intentionally bomb them since October 2023, massacring tens of Palestinians at a time.⁴⁶

Most recently, Israel bombed al-Tab'een school on 10 August 2024, where around 2,400 displaced Palestinians were sheltering,⁶² killing over 100 Palestinians and injuring more than 50.⁶³

“People choose these schools because they believe sheltering under the UN flag, as international law states, should provide safety”

Louise Wateridge

UN Communications Officer,
explaining why Palestinians in Gaza
continue to shelter in schools despite
their systematic attack by Israel.⁴⁷



05

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Palestinians' Resistance to Israel's 'Scholasticide' Since October 2023



Palestinians' Resistance to Israel's 'Scholasticide' Since October 2023

Remarkable numbers of Palestinian students have found ways to continue their education despite multiple displacements and Israel's destruction of their universities.⁴⁸

Many teachers have set up volunteer schools in tents in Gaza's displacement camps, and schools from the occupied West Bank have allowed students from Gaza to join their classes online, for those with access to internet in Gaza.⁴⁹

Many students from Gaza who have been displaced to Egypt are also joining classes led by West Bank schools online, and the Palestinian embassy in Cairo intends to hold end-of year exams for around 800 high school students displaced from Gaza.⁵⁰

Some university students have also been able to join online classes, run both in Palestine and in Europe.⁵¹

There have also been non-institutional initiatives, such as Academics4Gaza, which have recruited more than 100 scholars from around the world to support university students from Gaza.⁵²

However, there are fears that in the long term, online enrolment could delay the rebuilding of Gaza's universities if students become dependent on online teaching.⁵³

Although online teaching has provided an interim solution for many Palestinians, there is an absence of practical learning required for subjects such as medicine and engineering.⁵⁴

“The role and power of education in an occupied society is enormous. Education posits possibilities, opens horizons. Freedom of thought contrasts sharply with the apartheid wall, the shackling checkpoints, the choking prisons.”

Dr Karma Nabulsi⁵⁵



06

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Pledges to Rebuild Gaza's Education System



06

Pledges to Rebuild Gaza's Education System

As over 72.5% of schools in Gaza require complete or substantial rebuilding after the genocide,⁵⁶ many student protestors in the West have asked their universities to pledge to rebuild Gaza's higher education system. However, this funding has yet to materialise.⁵⁷

Gaza's professors have warned that they want help to rebuild Gaza's preexisting education system, and that they do not want Western universities to see this as an opportunity to take over and colonise Gaza's high education system with curriculums developed in the West, partnerships with Western universities, and an over-emphasis on the English language.⁵⁸

Footnotes

- ¹ 'In Gaza, the schools are dying too' *The Guardian* (10 January 2009) available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/10/gaza-schools>
- ² 'UN experts deeply concerned over 'scholasticide' in Gaza' United Nations Special Procedures (18 April 2024) available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/un-experts-deeply-concerned-over-scholasticide-gaza>
- ³ 'Tool Kit: International Actions Against Scholasticide' Scholars Against the War on Palestine (14-29 February 2024) available at <https://scholarsagainstawar.org/toolkit/>
- ⁴ 'In Gaza, the schools are dying too' *The Guardian*
- ⁵ 'Epistemicide: Intellectual Genocide and Eurocentric Modernity' *Modern Diplomacy* (13 April 2023) available at <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/04/13/epistemicide-intellectual-genocide-and-eurocentric-modernity/>
- ⁶ 'Tool Kit: International Actions Against Scholasticide' Scholars Against the War on Palestine ⁷ 'In Gaza, the schools are dying too' *The Guardian* ⁸ https://cberuk.com/cdn/conference_proceedings/2022-09-16-09-29-05-AM.pdf
- ⁹ 'Resisting Israeli Scholasticide and Academic Apartheid' *Spectre Journal* (9 July 2024) available at <https://spectrejournal.com/resisting-israeli-scholasticide-and-economic-apartheid/>
- ¹⁰ 'Educide: The Genocide of Education' *The Business and Management Review* (August 2022) available at https://cberuk.com/cdn/conference_proceedings/2022-09-16-09-29-05-AM.pdf
- ¹¹⁻¹⁶ 'In Gaza, the schools are dying too' *The Guardian*
- ¹⁷⁻¹⁹ <https://pomeps.org/the-hidden-war-on-higher-education-unmasking-the-educide-in-gaza>
- ²⁰⁻²¹ 'UN experts deeply concerned over 'scholasticide' in Gaza' United Nations Special Procedures
- ²²⁻²⁹ 'The Hidden War on Higher Education: Unmasking the 'Educide' in Gaza' *Project on Middle East Political Science*, available at <https://pomeps.org/the-hidden-war-on-higher-education-unmasking-the-educide-in-gaza>
- ³⁰⁻³⁹ 'Israeli Damage to Archives, Libraries, and Museums in Gaza, October 2023–January 2024' Librarians and Archivists with Palestine (January 2024) available at <https://librarianswithpalestine.org/gaza-report-2024/>
- ⁴⁰ 'Every University in Gaza Has Been Destroyed. So Have These Students' Dreams.' *The Nation* (26 July 2024) available at <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/gaza-students-future/>
- ⁴¹ 'UN experts deeply concerned over 'scholasticide' in Gaza' United Nations Special Procedures
- ⁴² 'Israeli Damage to Archives, Libraries, and Museums in Gaza, October 2023–January 2024' Librarians and Archivists with Palestine
- ⁴³ 'Every University in Gaza Has Been Destroyed. So Have These Students' Dreams.' *The Nation*
- ⁴⁴⁻⁴⁵ 'Gaza schools equipped as shelters in preparation for future emergencies' UNICEF (30 June 2017) available at <https://www.unicef.org/sop/stories/gaza-schools-equipped-shelters-preparation-future-emergencies>

Footnotes continued...

- 46-47 'Israel keeps bombing Gaza schools. Why do people still shelter there?' *Al Jazeera* (18 July 2024) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/7/18/israel-keep-bombing-gaza-schools-why-do-people-still-shelter-there>
- 48-51 'Palestinians in Gaza strive to study even as Israel's war destroys their education system' *Middle East Monitor* (13 May 2024) available at <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240513-palestinians-in-gaza-strive-to-study-even-as-israels-war-destroys-their-education-system/>
- 52-54 'Scholars and students fight to keep Palestinian education alive' *Times Higher Education* (17 May 2024) available at <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/depth/scholars-and-students-fight-keep-palestinian-education-alive>
- 55 'In Gaza, the schools are dying too' *The Guardian*
- 56 'Palestinians in Gaza strive to study even as Israel's war destroys their education system' *Middle East Monitor*
- 57 'With every university in Gaza destroyed, Oxford students say their protest is justified' *Middle east Eye* (8 May 2024) available at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/war-gaza-uk-oxford-university-students-protest-israel-divestment>
- 58 'Scholars and students fight to keep Palestinian education alive' *Times Higher Education*
- 59-61 'Decolonisation is not a metaphor' *Decolonisation: Indigeneity, Education & Society* (2012) available at <https://clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck%20and%20Yang%202012%20Decolonization%20is%20not%20a%20metaphor.pdf>
- 62 '“Just civilians”: Families of Gaza school strike victims refute Hamas links' *Al Jazeera* (13 August 2024) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/8/13/just-civilians-families-of-gaza-school-strike-victims-refute-hamas-links>
- 63 'Israeli airstrike on a Gaza school used as a shelter kills at least 80, Palestinian officials say' *AP* (10 August 2024) available at <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-hamas-war-10-august-2024-f33867d7596ebb70c1cb3a77fd4437cc>