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## Education under Occupation

### *Listening to Girls' Stories*

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## **Dedication**

*To the girls of Qurtoba School*

*Whose journey to school is a journey of death*

*Who suffer silently from pain and torture*

*Who decide to stay at the school as a way of resistance*

*Who look forward hopefully for peace with justice*

*Who hope that international supporters will convey their message to the rest of the world*

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## Introduction

It is well documented that women and youth make up the vast majority of individuals affected by conflict (Al Zaroo & Hundt, 2003; Machel, 1996; Women's Commission for Refugee Women & Children, 2008) with more than half being comprised of those under the age of majority (Nicolai, 2003). The consequence of armed conflict on children impacts not only their survival, but also their development and well-being (Boyden, 2003). While boys and girls suffer equally during times of conflict, their experiences are gendered and such experiences manifest in different ways. Carlson & Mazurana refer to the fact that during armed conflict, girls are subjected to widespread and systematic forms of human rights violations that have emotional, spiritual, physical and material consequences (2006, p. 1). Universally, the impact of conflict has incredibly negative consequences for girls and their schooling, as girls are often removed from the public sphere for reasons of protection. Recent conflicts illustrate this point.

Under the Taliban in Afghanistan (1996-2001), religion was utilized as an excuse to deny Afghan girls an education. Girls were not allowed to attend school and local women's organizations worked clandestinely, often under threat of death, to educate their students (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, n.d.). Little has improved in recent years under the Karzai administration for girls and their schools continue to receive threats of death and vandalism (Meo, 2008). In other conflict zones, girls used as combatants and as sex slaves concurrently, such as in Colombia (1964-present), northern Uganda (1986-present), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (1998-2003), face difficulties integrating into a normal school system as they contend with unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and trauma (Jeffrey, 2007; McKay, n.d.; Taylor, 2006). Ongoing internal conflict may reduce girls' education to an unnecessary expense as state revenues are funneled directly into warmongering. The military *junta* in Burma (1962-present) does not view girls' education as a worthwhile investment, especially for girls of non-Burman ethnic groups (Burma UN Service Office-New York & the Human Rights Documentation Unit National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, 2002). Girls are also the first to experience containment and seclusion when the battleground is just outside their front door. In Iraq (2003-present), the American-lead invasion has resulted in girls being withdrawn from schooling for fear of kidnapping and rape (IRIN, 2007).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949) states that, "Everyone has the right to education" (Article 26). Despite this declaration, the Palestinian child's right to education has been denied for many decades due to ongoing conflict, dispossession and displacement. The period from 1994-2000 was considered a reconstruction stage for the occupied Palestinian state. However, from 2000 until recent, an emergency situation has surfaced following the failure of the peace negotiations and the eruption of the Second Intifada. Many reports documenting the lives of children in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) draw attention to the violation of their right to education, protection and freedom during this time (Affouneh, 2007; Nicolai, 2006; Save the Children, 2002; 2004; UNICEF, 2004a; 2004b; 2004c). Around the world there are often large gender disparities, usually to the disadvantage of girls, during education in emergency situations.

In the case of the oPt, despite the fact that many indicators show that there is little problem in girls' access to education, there are clearly threats to girls' physical and psychological safety in obtaining such an education.

The focus of this research is to highlight the ways in which armed conflict, in this case the Israeli Occupation and the Second Intifada, have conspired to deny the Palestinian child an appropriate education. Additionally, this study intends to highlight how this denial is gendered, resulting in profoundly negative emotional and psychological experiences for Palestinian girls. This research is important because there is limited information concerning the violation of girls' rights during conflict situations, especially with regard to their right to education. Further still, is the lack of documentation on girls' perceptions of their situation during conflict. There is a continued need for documentation, monitoring and reporting on the effects of armed conflict on children as was first discussed by Graca Machel, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in her groundbreaking document, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children" (1996). This information is needed for the purpose of strengthening and developing policies and programming to prevent further rights violations (Carlson & Mazurana, 2006).

**The following outlines the contents of this study:**

Chapter One aims at providing a brief background on the history of the oPt, the Occupation, and the Palestinian education system in order to better understand the context of the research and the impact of the political situation on the education system and children's learning.

Chapter Two begins a thorough discussion of the concept of education in emergencies, a concept that seeks to educate children during conflict situations or in areas affected by natural disasters. It then moves on to the justification for education in emergencies, with its focus on a child's right to education and protection, the challenges that face this kind of education, and the types of programs introduced. Towards the end of this chapter there is a brief description of education in emergencies within the Palestinian context.

The following chapters present the empirical research. Chapter Three explains the 'journey' taken in collecting the data. The chapter starts with the research questions and the research design, including the main tools that were used in this research, the sample, and the translation and analysis of the data.

The presentation of the findings is reported in Chapter Four. Utilizing the voices of children, the findings outline the following themes: the impact of violent experiences on children; the impact of conflict on girls; the schools' reactions to the armed conflict and Occupation; and education priorities in times of conflict. The data analyses show that girls have suffered from different kinds of humiliation, stress, withdrawal and feelings of hopelessness. Palestinian girls suffer on a daily basis from the policies of the occupying forces and, thus, violence increases inside schools. The research illustrates how the current curriculum does not meet the girls' needs. A case study of one of the more affected schools, Qurtoba School, is presented in order to illustrate the difficulties Palestinian girls face as they access

schooling. As a final point, recommendations from the children to the Ministry of Education, parents and the international community are offered. Girls and boys share their thoughts and desires for new activities, such as sports, drama, music and dance, to be added to their school programs. Girls, especially, talk about their needs for counselors to help them cope with the difficulties that they face as a result of the Occupation.

The final chapter presents concluding thoughts and a set of recommendations for all stakeholders invested in the education of Palestinian children.

# Chapter One: An Education System under Occupation

## Introduction

This chapter endeavors to describe the Palestinian education system as one under occupation and in the midst of an emergency. The discussion will start with a brief description of the problems facing the Palestinian people in recent history and will then concentrate on the impact of occupation on the education system. Towards the end of the chapter, a brief summary of the international laws concerning the child's right to education and protection will be highlighted.

### A History of Education under Occupation

The Palestinian people have never had a state of their own and as a result, different authorities and governments at different times have controlled the education system. The dissolve of the Ottoman Empire (1917) resulted in the partition of the Empire's lands, primarily by the European powers of Britain and France. Historic Palestine fell under British Mandate (1917-1948) around the same time growing numbers of European Jewry began arriving in the region. In 1948, the Mandate quite Palestine and the state of was Israel declared, known universally among Palestinians as the *Nakba* ('catastrophe'). During this process, nearly three quarters of a million Palestinians fled their homes, many becoming refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, in addition to areas that were to eventually be called the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Shortly thereafter, in 1949, the United Nations Relief & Works Agency (UNRWA) was established to provide education, health, relief and social services to all displaced Palestinians.

Israel thus occupied 78% of the land of historic Palestine; the remainder was divided into two parts: the West Bank, which was annexed to Jordan, and the Gaza Strip, which was administered by Egypt. In 1967, after the Six Day War, Israel then occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, while forcibly 'uniting' Palestinian East Jerusalem with the western half. Shortly following the Occupation, illegal Israeli settlements began to appear on land throughout the whole of the occupied territory, creating even greater tension and displacement among Palestinians. Twenty years later, the First Intifada ('eruption') emerged out of the Jabalia Refugee Camp in the Gaza Strip (1987-1992), resulting in a grassroots effort at resisting the Occupation. Palestinian education during this period suffered greatly, especially during the period January 1988 through January 1989, as the following timeline illustrates:

- 3 February 1988: A closure order simultaneously shuts all kindergartens, primary, secondary schools and higher educational institutions in West Bank until "further notice"
- End of May 1988: Schools were allowed to reopen for a few weeks while universities remained closed
- 18 August 1988: Alternative popular education is banned by military order
- September 1988: School closure is extended until November 1988

- November 1988: The closure is extended until December 1988
- December 1988: The closure is renewed until “further notice”  
(Palestinian Liberation Organization Department of Information, 1989)

The First Intifada formally ended in 1992, and attempts at a peace process were carried out just previously during the Madrid Conference (1991). Two years later, the Oslo Accords (1993) became the framework for the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

The peace process eventually broke down, culminating in then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Al Aqsa Mosque, igniting the Second Intifada (2000-present). Many Palestinians have been killed, maimed, and/or detained during this period. Subsequent to the conflict, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were 'reoccupied' in 2002 during Operation Defensive Shield, the largest military operation in the West Bank since the Six Day War. A five-week siege ensued where nearly 2,000 Palestinians were wounded or killed (United Nations, 2002), and more than 6,000 were detained (Amnesty International, 2002). Students and schools were also gravely affected according to a United Nations report documenting the atrocities of the siege:

Students in eight West Bank districts were prevented from attending school. It is estimated that, during the reporting period, some 11,000 classes were missed and 55,000 teaching sessions were lost;

Fifty Palestinian schools were damaged by Israeli military action, of which 11 were totally destroyed, 9 were vandalized, 15 used as military outposts and another 15 as mass arrest and detention centers (2002, p. 10).

The year 2002 also saw the creation and propagation of checkpoints and roadblocks between Palestinian villages and cities, rendering freedom of movement next to impossible. Further obstacles were implemented, the most notorious being the Apartheid Wall which does not follow the internationally recognized Green Line, but instead deviates throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which at its highest is a 25-foot concrete structure. Examples abound of the Wall, including surrounding checkpoints and roadblocks, having a grave impact upon the Palestinian education system and its students.

The northwest village of Barta’a Al Sharqiah, which is surrounded by the Wall, does not have a science track in its only secondary school which leaves many students unprepared for higher education. A number of students, mainly girls, have left school and/or have not continued on to higher education. For those that wish to continue, it is especially difficult as there is no nearby university. In Abu Dis, just south of Jerusalem, students east of the Wall have been forced to leave their schools when they were physically separated from them on the west side (Institute of Women’s Studies, Birzeit University 2005, pg. 29-30). A girl’s school in the completely enclosed city of Qalqiliya is also surrounded by the Wall and includes an Israeli military sniper tower (Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, 2007). These are but a few of the daily obstacles that Palestinian students must face in their quest for an education.

It is clear that the Palestinian Ministry of Education (MoE), created shortly after the Oslo Accords, faced many difficulties as the education system had been in a state of near-collapse from the Occupation and the Second Intifada. Despite the aforementioned obstacles, many Palestinians continue to view education not only as an economic and social security, but also as a tool for nation-building and resistance.

### **The Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education**

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) was created in August 1994 in the wake of the Oslo Accords, taking responsibility for education at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary). In 1996, the Ministry of Higher Education became a separate ministry responsible for post-secondary education while the MoE maintained responsibility for primary and secondary education. In 2002, both institutions combined into one Ministry. The MoE is organized into 22 directorates in which each directorate contains 58 departments and each department is responsible for a specific educational task. There are 19 educational district offices, 14 of them in the West Bank and five in the Gaza Strip. The MoE in Ramallah is the main office, and organizes all the work in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Another branch for the MoE is located in the Gaza Strip, which was initiated due to movement restrictions between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

### **Formal Education**

Primary education, which is compulsory for all Palestinian children, consists of grades 1-10 (ages 6-16 years). The following two years constitute secondary education for grades 11-12 (ages 16-18 years). Secondary education contains two different streams: academic education where students complete their education in either a literary or scientific stream, and vocational education where students complete their education in an agricultural, industrial or commercial stream. After the end of grade 12, students sit for the final secondary exam called the *Tawjihi*.

### **The Palestinian School System**

The Palestinian school system is comprised of three types of schools: government, private and UNRWA. The MoE has jurisdiction over government schools that account for 1,775 out of 2,337 schools; 80% of which are in the West Bank and 20% in the Gaza Strip. These accounted for 76% of all schools for the 2006-2007 academic year.

Religious institutions or charitable societies generally run private schools. There are 276 of these schools that form only 12% of all schools within the oPt; 88%, are in the West Bank, and only 12% are in the Gaza Strip. The MoE is currently encouraging the Palestinian community to invest more in private schools so as to decrease their burden.

Inside the oPt there are 286 UNRWA schools that constitute 12% of all Palestinian schools, with the majority, 67%, in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA provides only basic education except in Lebanon, where Palestinian refugees have limited access to secondary education (UNRWA, 2004). Table no. 1 shows the distribution of Palestinian schools by authority and regions.

Table no.1

*The Distribution of Palestinian Schools by Authority and Regions, 2006-2007*

<b>Number of schools</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>UNRWA</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>West Bank</b>	1,418	244	93	<b>1,755</b>
<b>Gaza Strip</b>	357	32	193	<b>582</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,775</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>2,337</b>

(PCBS, 2007c)

### **Students**

In the school year 2006-2007 the number of students enrolled in all types of schools were 1,085,274 of which 65% were in government schools, 28% in UNRWA schools and 7% in private schools, as Table no. 2 shows.

Table no.2

*The Distribution of Students by Gender and Supervising Authority, 2006-2007*

<b>Gender/Type</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>UNRWA</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Male</b>	349,638	150,773	42,854	<b>543,265</b>
<b>Female</b>	357,057	155,431	29,521	<b>542,009</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>706,695</b>	<b>306,204</b>	<b>72,375</b>	<b>1,085,274</b>

(PCBS, 2007d)

Tables no. 3 and no. 4 show the distribution of schools, students, teachers and classes by gender.

Table no.3

*The Distribution of Students and Teachers by Gender, 2006-2007*

	<b>Students</b>	<b>Teachers</b>
<b>Male</b>	543,265	19,080
<b>Female</b>	542,009	23,215
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,085,274</b>	<b>42,295</b>

(PCBS, 2007e)

Table no.4

*The Distribution of Schools and Classes by Type, 2006-2007*

	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Classes</b>
<b>Male</b>	828	12,961
<b>Female</b>	814	13,199
<b>Co-ed</b>	695	5,803
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,337</b>	<b>31,963</b>

(PCBS, 2007b)

The student-teacher ratio is about 24:1 in the West Bank and 29:1 in the Gaza Strip (nearly 26:1 for the oPt). The student-teacher ratio in government schools is about 25:1, while in UNRWA schools it increases to 31:1 and, in private schools, decreases to almost 18:1 (PCBS, 2007a).

Most students in secondary school enroll in the academic sector while only a few choose vocational schools. Four percent of all schools are vocational schools, and only 0.5% of all students enroll in these schools despite efforts made by the MoE to develop this sector and to increase community awareness (MoEHE, 2007).

### **Education, Gender Parity and Bias**

According to the previously cited statistics (Tables no. 1-4), there is near parity with boys' and girls' enrollment and attendance in primary and secondary education. There is a difference between boys' and girls' enrollment rates to the advantage of boys in primary education, yet at the secondary level, girls' enrollment rates increase. However, looking more deeply at the numbers it is revealed that the percentage of girls enrolled in governmental schools and UNRWA schools is 51% each, while the percentage of girls enrolled in the private sector is only 41%. While government and UNRWA schools are free of charge, private schools are expensive and are considered to provide a higher quality education. The higher levels of boys in private schools reveal families' preferences for investing in a son's education.

At the secondary level, education is divided into three streams: scientific, literary and vocational. Forty-nine percent of girls are enrolled in the scientific stream, 55% in the literary stream, and 29% in the vocational stream for the school year 2005-2006 (World Bank Group, 2006, p. 10). These numbers can be seen from two different points of view. The positive view is that girls are enrolled in the scientific stream equally with boys; the other view is the acknowledgement of the low rate of girls' enrollment in vocational education despite all the efforts taken by the MoE to attract more girls to this stream. The most important issue in achieving gender parity in this stream is realizing that courses must prepare women for the labor market rather than simply warehousing them into 'traditional' fields that simply prepare them for domestic duties. Opening new courses to girls, especially in non-traditional fields, may assist in making the labor market more accessible as rates of participation are shockingly low, 14.7% in the 1st quarter 2008 (PCBS, 2008b).

Dropout rates within the oPt tend to vary according to gender and academic class. In primary education, girls' dropout rates are less than boys', 0.5% versus 1.3%, averaging 0.9% for all students. In secondary education, however, the dropout rates increase significantly, averaging 3.4% for both genders. Upon further inspection, there is an obvious gender gap within these rates after grade 10, as girls' dropout rates increase to 3.8% and while boys' increase to only 3% (PCBS, 2008a); this shift demands further discussion. While for boys, the justification for dropping out of school (at both the primary and secondary levels) is often the need to seek employment; girls primarily leave school at the secondary level for early marriage and to look after younger siblings and

parents. These reasons stress the traditional roles for both genders within Palestinian culture.

The MoE has faced many challenges in recent years, and has started a coherence review of the education system by developing a strategic plan and redeveloping the Palestinian curriculum under a new vision. One of the specific objectives of its plan is to achieve gender equity in education which is in line with the United Nations sponsored Millennium Development Goals. Unfortunately in 2000, the year for implementing the first Palestinian curriculum, the Second Intifada began. In the months and years following the Second Intifada, it has become clear that there is a sustained policy of Israeli military obstruction and aggression directed towards Palestinian education (Halstead & Affouneh, 2006, p. 205). The MoE describes the effects of the Israeli Occupation on the Palestinian education system as fraught with closures, violence, damage to property, and human loss (2004).

### **Israel's Denial of the Palestinian Right to Education**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) specifies the right of all children to an education, and this includes the Palestinian child. However, the application of this convention within the oPt is disputed by Israel, the occupying power. While Israel claims this convention is not applicable to Palestinian children given that the oPt has never been a state (Save the Children, 2004), human rights organizations argue that Israel, per the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), is responsible for ensuring the rights of Palestinian children since it is the duty of the occupier to ensure the safety and welfare of the occupied. According to de Santisteban the rights of the Palestinian child have clearly been violated as, "It can be safely said that Palestinian teachers and students [are]...subjected to a plethora of human rights violations at the hands of the occupiers," (2002, p. 5). Human rights organizations claim that even though the responsibility of the education system has been transferred to the PNA, Israel must respect and facilitate the Palestinian child's right to an education. (Please see Annex no. 1 for more information).

In areas affected by armed conflict, girls' education is particularly affected. Their right to education, protection and well-being is violated, as Boyden and Ryder point out, "In many areas [under conflict] there are serious gender disparities in access to education, with girls consistently lagging behind boys" (1996, p. 3). While they consider conflict as the primary reason for this disparity, they also acknowledge that 'traditional' thinking and cultural norms, which often exist before the outbreak of conflict, are factors as well. At the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, many countries committed to "ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls in difficult circumstances [...] have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality" (2000). So in order to achieve gender equality and to eliminate gender disparities in education, it is vital to implement international laws for universalizing girls' access to high quality education (UNESCO, 2007).

In the oPt, many reports draw attention to widespread violations of children's rights (Halstead & Affouneh, 2006; Save the Children, 2002; 2004; UNICEF, 2004a; 2004b;

2004c) due to the Israeli Occupation. Between 2000 and 2008, 657 students were killed, 3,602 were injured and nearly 715 were detained by Israeli military forces (MoEHE, 2008). Many schools and houses have been attacked and students and teachers have missed numerous classes as a result of curfews, closures and roadblocks (Affouneh, 2007). Under these conditions, the right to freedom of movement for teachers and students has been violated, and many female students have been killed, injured or detained in their classrooms or on their way to school. For example, nine-year-old Ghadeer died at the hospital in 2004 after having been shot in her classroom in an UNRWA school in the Gaza Strip (DCI, 2004), and Iman, a 13-year-old girl, was shot dead on her way to school in Rafah. These are but a few cases that reveal how the violence of the Occupation has managed to infiltrate the daily lives of even the youngest of students.

### **The Impact of Checkpoints on Education**

According to an Israeli human rights organization, during the first half of 2008, 62 permanent checkpoints divided the West Bank (16 checkpoints alone are inside of Hebron), and an average of 85 flying checkpoints and 512 physical obstructions were in place in March of that year (B'Tselem, 2008a). These obstacles have led to mobility restrictions for nearly all Palestinians in general and for students and teachers in particular. For Palestinian girls, whose movement is already restricted somewhat by their families and communities, these checkpoints and obstructions imposed by the Israeli military add yet another layer of power and control to their lives. Girls are especially affected by these checkpoints and their movements restricted since more than half of school children are girls.

### **The Impact of the Wall on Education**

The Apartheid Wall, begun in 2002, deviates from the internationally recognized Green Line, appropriating almost 12% of Palestinian land, and cutting through many Palestinian cities and villages like Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Tulkarem, Jenin, Salfit and Qalqiliya affecting almost 500,000 residents of the West Bank (B'Tselem, 2007). The construction of the Wall affects Palestinian education by adding obstacles which restrict students' and teachers' movements. In the northern West Bank, nearly 2,898 school students are affected by the Wall's presence, such as at Nazlet Issa School (Tulkarem governate) where children are forced to pass through one of the Wall's gates to reach their school, since the Wall has separated the village from its school (MoEHE, 2008).

According to a report prepared by the MoE, many Palestinians need permission from the Israeli military to travel to their schools, universities and jobs. The Wall causes a disruption in the school system since students and teachers are made to wait at the gates of the Wall; students spend more time at checkpoints than in their classrooms (MoE, 2007). It is not only that students and teachers face restrictions in their movements to and from their schools but also the distribution of materials like textbooks and other scholastic equipment is delayed.

The following are examples of some schools affected by the Wall in the Jenin district: Barta'a Al Sharqei, Um al Rehan, Khirbet Abdallah Alyounes, Khirbet Thahr Al Maleh, Khirbet Barta'a; and in the Qalqiliya district: Nazlet Issa, Aziun Atmeh schools. These are just few examples of the many schools that have been cut off from their communities. Children must pass through the gates of the Wall, at least twice a day, in their journey to school; sometimes they need to wait for hours if the Israeli soldiers have locked the gates.

While this situation affects both boys and girls, it is often more difficult in the case of girls who live in communities that have no schools and must travel to other communities' schools. In these instances, some families stop their girls from going to school for safety issues and cultural concerns, resulting in girls being deprived of their right to education. In the Jenin district, nearly 75 students, the majority of them girls, were forced to drop out of school because of the difficulties in reaching their school every day. Six schools have been isolated from Jenin by the Wall and therefore students and teachers are forced to cross it on their daily trek to school (MoE, 2007).

It is not only girls and their teachers who are negatively affected but so, too, is the quality of education. Due to the regular absence of teachers and students, teachers often are unable to complete the assigned curriculum for the scholastic year and many extracurricular activities are removed, such as after-school clubs, field trips and summer camps. This predominantly affects girls since these extracurricular activities might be the only activities that girls participate in due to a conservative culture and family restrictions. The building of the Wall thus violates Palestinian girls' right to education in general, and to a well-rounded, quality education in particular.

This chapter has endeavored to clarify briefly the historical background and the impact of Occupation on the Palestinian education system. Education in the oPt should be considered as situated in an emergency since the Palestinian child, attending school in the middle of conflict, does not have safe and regular access to good quality education. The next step is to clarify the meaning of education in emergencies through a thorough analysis of the literature.

## **Chapter Two: Education in Emergencies**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the reasons behind education in emergency programming and why it is applicable to the Palestinian context. While many conventions and declarations have emerged from the United Nations and other international human rights organizations outlining a child's right to education and protection (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948; The Geneva Convention 1949; The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951; The Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights 1966; The Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989), applying these rights in practical terms is not easy even in non-emergency situations and it is even more difficult in times of crisis (Nicolai, 2003). The definition of education in emergencies, its importance, its history and programs will all be discussed below. Issues related to human rights and gender gaps will also be highlighted. The chapter ends with an examination of the case of the Palestinian student and the reasons why their situation is best understood as an emergency situation.

### **Definitions and Background**

The field of education in emergencies has emerged in the last 15 years due to increasing awareness of the effects of conflict on children and their development. According to UNESCO, education in emergencies is needed when there is, "A crisis situation created by conflicts or disasters which have destabilized or destroyed the education system, and which require an integrated process of crisis and post-crisis support" (UNESCO, 1999 cited in Sinclair, 2003, p. 22). In general, education in emergency programming is an attempt to meet the educational needs of children who are prevented from receiving normal schooling as a result of war, conflict or natural disaster (Sommers, 2004). This education is based upon three main principles: the child's right to education, the child's need for protection, and the community's priority for education (Nicolai, 2003, p. 6).

The most important discussion surrounding education in emergencies is the question of whether education can be seen as part of a humanitarian response or be considered as a development issue. During conflict situations, this debate has practical impact on funding; alongside with food, shelter and health many experts consider education as the 'fourth pillar' of any humanitarian response (Sinclair, 2002). Education is not only necessary for development purposes, but it is also one of the basic rights for children in times of war and times of peace.

In practice, most emergency programs already concentrate on primary education (Sommers, 2002). Many concerned with this topic emphasize the importance of this education to meet the needs of children, but who defines such needs? Who sets the priorities? On what basis are decisions made? Do children need to learn about peace building, citizenship, tolerance, nationalism, and protection, human rights, safety, negotiation and resistance? Children's needs are defined exclusively by adults, but according to international law, education in emergencies is rooted in the rights of children, therefore children should have a right to voice their opinion regarding their own education and future (Affouneh, 2007).

When studying the education of Palestinian children in general and girls in particular during conflict, one must listen to children's own stories and understand their needs from their own perspectives. In a study by Abu Baker, et. al. (2004), regarding the impact of conflict on women, this approach has been advocated in order to understand women's narratives of their own experiences and to build an appropriate model to help reduce the impact of conflict on them.

### **Education in Emergency Programming**

Before further discussing the various kinds of emergency programs, the following questions should be considered:

1. What is education in emergency programming?
2. Who offers education in emergency?
3. To whom is it offered?
4. When should it be offered?
5. What kind of education should be offered?
6. Why is education in Palestine an emergency situation?

Bensalah et. al. define education in emergency programming as, "The response to immediate needs, whether at the humanitarian, pedagogical, organizational or infrastructure level" (2001, p. 36). Sinclair suggests some conditions that education programs should meet:

1. Educational programs should meet children's psychological and educational needs.
2. Educational programs should include teachers' training.
3. Educational programs should be gender-sensitive.
4. Educational programs should include life skills for education for (health, safety, and environment).
5. Educational programs should include life skills for education for (peace, conflict resolution, tolerance, human rights and citizenships).
6. Educational programs should use a community - based participatory approach with emphasis on capacity building (2002, p. 29-30).

Triplehorn (2002) writes that the top priority of any education in emergency programming is to provide primary and higher education to youth. He discusses that curriculum should be developed either by reviewing the existing curriculum or developing a new one which will lead to peace-building and recovery. Triplehorn also writes that, during an emergency, parents begin education at an early stage, sometimes before even thinking about food and shelter, which can be regarded as a type of non-formal education. They give their children instructions on how to stay safe and healthy in addition to skills for the future. As soon as possible parents begin to gather their children to form a kind of school as to teach them some basic literacy and numerical skills. He advises organizations (such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNHCR) who offer education in

emergencies to support and build upon these community initiatives. He also talks about the difficulties that a community faces in offering education, such as the lack of resources to rebuild or equip schools.

Referencing a similar point, Nicolai adds that a community gives education high priority at the start of an emergency. She considers the community to be the 'experts in the field,' providing education during the emergency with the help of international organizations (2003). Sinclair (2002) writes about the community's efforts to restart educational activities without any clear resources, sometimes simply depending on voluntary work. Sommers (2002) refers to the role of the community in education, at a very early stage of an emergency, as building "blocks for future educational programs." He also questions the desire of the governments which have emerged from crisis situations to offer education. He refers to international law regarding refugee education as the responsibility of the host government, assisted by UNHCR.

The problem of when to begin education in an emergency is very difficult to pinpoint. Parents and community members may think about education soon after the beginning of the crisis, however, the lack of financial and human resources will limit their efforts for sustainability and quality. For the many reasons mentioned above, several authorities have recommended that education should be established and supported in emergency situations as soon as possible (Jonnessen, 2001; Machel, 1996; Sinclair, 2002; UNESCO, 2001).

The majority of experts expect education in emergency programming to teach children about some of the following topics, depending on the context: health promotion, HIV/AIDS education, peace education, land mine awareness, the environment, human rights, healing, safety, survival, and citizenship.

Many United Nations agencies have been involved in education in emergency programming either during or after a crisis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) supports education for refugees and internally displaced persons. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is responsible for early childhood and primary education, in addition to some programs for secondary education, children not attending schools, as well as girls' education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has a mandate to support education, especially in planning and policy issues. The International Institution for Educational Planning (IIEP/UNESCO) is a unit involved in training people for education in emergency and crisis situations. Many local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) support education in emergency situations. In 2000, a number of United Nations agencies established the Inter Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) so as to coordinate work in an emergency, to exchange data, and to develop guidelines for work in education during and after an emergency (INEE, 2004). Many researchers and experts support the role of the aforementioned agencies but disagree on the role of the community in assisting with education opportunities during a crisis (Aguilar & Retamal, 1998; Sommers, 2002).

## The Tools of Education in Emergency

The question about the type of education to be offered during an emergency has been discussed in detail. Nicolai says that “every emergency is unique; one education approach can never work in all situations” (2003, p. 34). She adds that the nature of disasters, the capacity of the community and the type of existing system are the main factors in identifying the kind of education to be offered. Sinclair compares education in a normal situation with education in an emergency. She says that the difference is in the target groups’ needs so that the skills needed to cope mentally and physically may be given a higher priority (2002).

Some tools developed as part of education in emergency programming may be considered non-formal education that, in the long term, can lead to the establishment of formal education, as shown in the table below. Such tools include education kits developed by different UN-based organizations. Davies considers these tools as, "...an example of normalization" (2004). Some of the advantages are that education kits can be prepared beforehand so that they are ready to be used in emergency situations. They can be distributed, very quickly, to teachers and children in crisis situations. They should provide children with all the materials they need to begin learning anywhere: inside schools, under trees, or in their home. Some of the perceived disadvantages to these kits are that they cannot meet the different needs of each emergency and that they may send conflicting messages about the meaning of education.

Emergency Education Tools

Tool	Producer	Objectives	Notes
RECREATE	UNESCO	To help children express and cope with conflict situations	
Teacher Emergency Package (TEP) or School in a Box	UNESCO & UNICEF	To help teachers provide children with basic literacy, numeracy and life skills	It contains all the basic materials that children need to use and teachers to teach
School in a suitcase	UNESCO	To help children provide learning skills especially with their families	

Sinclair (2002) summarizes the requirements for what she considers as good practice for education in emergency programming:

1. The inclusion of all children either in formal or non-formal education.
2. Education should contain skills for peace-building, health protection and safety.
3. Education should contain recreational activities.
4. Education should care about girls.
5. Education should contain cultural activities.
6. There should be access to a library.

Sommers (2002) mentions some reservations about education in emergency programming, such as:

1. The majority of these programs offer education just for the primary stage.
2. The education programs usually offer education in camps for refugees and internally displaced children while the urban refugees and the displaced in cities may receive no assistance.
3. The evaluation of these programs is very difficult and sometimes does not exist.
4. There is a gender gap in these programs.

One of the main principles of education in emergency programming is that it should address gender equality by ensuring that all girls and boys have access to the same quality of education during an emergency situation. This is important because often, during emergencies, gender roles change between men and women and boys and girls, creating new educational needs. For example, schools are often at a distance and are not easily accessible and the journey to and from school places girls at considerable risk. In other instances, impoverished families may prioritize boys' education and not have the money to pay for girls' schooling (INEE, 2008). Additionally, during a conflict boys may be at risk of recruitment into fighting forces, while girls may be targets for rape and sexual assault (UNESCO, 2006). Many factors are responsible, some of which exist in non-emergency situations and others which are specific to crisis situations:

- Limited resources in the family which often means that boys' education is prioritized over girls' education.
- Sexual violence.
- Early marriage either for security reasons or for protection.
- Low quality of education during crisis, where the offered programs can not meet girls' needs (Please see UNESCO, 2006).

In the vast majority of cases, girls have fewer education opportunities than boys during an emergency and this should be addressed from the outset.

### **The Case of Emergency Education in the oPt**

The following facts are necessary in order to better understand the ways in which the Occupation and the Second Intifada have created an emergency situation for the Palestinian student:

- Of the 13.9 million refugees in the world, nearly three million are Palestinian refugees, the largest displaced population, second only to Afghans (United States Committee for Refugees & Immigrants, 2008).
- Palestinian refugees constitute the longest running displaced population in the world (United States Committee for Refugees & Immigrants, 2008).
- Over 5,300 Palestinians have been killed, between September 2000 and May 2008, from fighting due to the Second Intifada (B'Tselem, 2008a).

- Nearly 1,600 Palestinian minors were in the custody of Israeli security forces during the first five months of 2008 (B'Tselem, 2008b).
- About 1 million people, or 35% of the Palestinian population, are students (Taylor, 2002).
- No new schools were built for Palestinian students during the Occupation between 1967-1994 (UNESCO, 2003).
- During Operation Defensive Shield, 166 schools were taken over, 47 damaged and 11 destroyed (Taylor, 2002).
- Between 2001-2004, a military checkpoint obstructed passage to Birzeit University (near Ramallah) (Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, 2007) in late 2002, Bethlehem University and al-Najah University (Nablus) were both under siege (MoEHE, 2008), and in 2003, Hebron University was closed for six months and the Palestine Polytechnic University was closed for three months (Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, 2007).

The previous statistics illustrate the emergency situation that Palestinian students find themselves in as they seek out and exercise their right to an education.

During the Second Intifada, education in emergency programming was implemented. A remedial project, initially begun in the Hebron district, involved the distribution of self-learning worksheet projects by teachers to students under siege. Lessons were then broadcast over the television, into the homes of trapped students. Similar programs were implemented in the districts of Jenin, Nablus, Rafah and Tulkarem (UNICEF, 2004b). Another example employed includes the teaching of injured children at home or in the hospital, which is a program implemented by the Ministry of Education.

Overall, many students have lost access to proper schooling due to curfews and closures, and so their right to education has been denied. Schools are not safe spaces for Palestinian children in general and for girls in particular. It is difficult to decrease violence in children's lives when children are surrounded by violence on their way to and from school and inside their schools; in fact, the whole education system has become fractured due to fragmentation and militarization.

## **Chapter Three: Methods**

### **Introduction**

The last two chapters provided a background and review of education in emergency programming and the Palestinian context. This chapter describes the approach adopted for the research design. It begins by presenting the research questions, the data collection methods, the questions of the research, the sample and ends with an analysis of the data process.

### **The Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to:

- 1- Identify Palestinian children's reflections on the impact of the Israeli Occupation on their lives and education.
- 2- Examine Palestinian girls' perceptions of this impact and their understanding of their own experience.
- 3- Identify the differences between boys' and girls' experiences by listening to their voices.
- 4- Prepare an action plan to reduce the impact of the conflict on girls' education based on their real needs.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were asked to the participants in the study:

- 1- From their perspectives, what is the impact of conflict on children?
- 2- What is the impact of the conflict on girls in general and their education in particular?
- 3- How do girls see their experience as different from the boys?
- 4- How do schools deal with the conflict?
- 5- What are the priorities of education during the conflict?
- 6- What are the subjects that children need at school that are not offered?
- 7- What are the procedures to reduce the impact of conflict on children, and girls in particular, that could be taken by the Ministry of Education, schools, parents and the international community?

### **The Research Design**

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study due to the objectives of the research, as it intends to concentrate more on the interpretations and meaning of the data rather than measuring it. This research attempts to increase the understanding of girls' education in conflict from the perspective of the participants themselves. It is vital to listen to the voices of the oppressed and how they express their own suffering in their own words. A

child-focused approach was used in collecting the required data. This approach is important as Hart emphasizes that it enables the researcher to understand the complexity of the effects of conflict on children's lives and education from their own experiences and by collecting more evidence from their voices, as he states, "conflict changes young people's lives in many ways that must be understood if education is to be relevant meaningful and productive" (2006, p. 10). This kind of approach is expected to help in building more powerful educational programs to meet children's real needs as they see them.

Child-focused research respects children's ideas, experiences, needs and aspirations (Hart, 2006). It concentrates on children's beliefs about the meaning of their experiences by gathering accounts from different perceptions and perspectives. The role of the researcher is to enable children to participate in the research as fully as they wish, sharing their views safely and to their own satisfaction. This approach assumes that each child's experience is unique, so this can help us to understand the differences between boys' and girls' experiences from their own perspectives and to analyse any gender gaps.

### **Data Collection Method**

Data collection relied primarily upon empirical research. It was initially planned to collect data through focus group discussions with students, teachers and parents from Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron. Only one focus-group discussion took place with 20 teachers from Ramallah and the collected data was very poor due to the following reasons:

1. The teachers were not interested in the discussion because they felt that the research would not result in change, and they were scared of being in danger due to their opinions.
2. The schools were so busy and were concerned about the timing and collection of data.
3. The pressure of work inside the schools.
4. Teachers were not allowed to leave their schools.
5. Teachers were on strike demanding an increase in their salaries; many times the meetings with teachers were cancelled due to the strike.
6. The restrictions on movement, for example the researcher had to obtain permission to be able to attend Qurtoba School in Hebron.

The second data source was desk research on the impact of armed conflict on children.

Due to difficulties in collecting data through focus groups, the researcher modified the original plan using the following methods:

A survey was the main method for collecting the required data. A structured questionnaire was prepared, focusing on the main issues related to the impact of the Occupation and armed conflict on girls' education (see Annex 2). In order to collect the data, open-ended questions were used so that students would feel comfortable fully

expressing themselves and their points of view. The process for collecting data went through several stages:

- Choosing target schools most affected by the conflict,
- Meeting the head teachers to arrange a suitable time and choosing a class,
- Explaining the aim of the research to the students;
- Distributing the questionnaire and giving the students half an hour to answer the questions; and
- Putting the students into small groups to discuss the questions and to ask one of them to give a brief presentation on their responses.

The second method of collecting data was semi-structured interviews. The researcher interviewed school counselors, head teachers and the head of education section in Hebron. A case study of Qurtoba School in Hebron was prepared and an interview with the head teacher of the school was also conducted.

The final method of data collection was a focus group with educators. The main aim of this focus group was to discuss the findings of the study. It also aimed at helping the researcher to prepare practical recommendations to reduce the impact of conflict on girls' education.

Several data collection strategies were used during this study; using more than one method, also known as triangulation, has many advantages. Greenhalgh and Taylor claim that triangulation can improve the validity of the research through different ways of collecting data which, "should touch the core of what is going on rather than just skimming the surface" (1997, p. 2).

## **Sample**

In this research, a targeted, non-random sample was used to reach well-informed individuals in order to collect suitable data. The target group was children in grades nine and ten (15-17 years old) in areas considered to be more affected by the conflict. The importance of this age group is due to many reasons: firstly, in this age group, boys and girls are more aware of their surrounding circumstances and its impact on their lives; secondly, the rate of dropout increases among girls and boys for early marriage and for work, respectively; and thirdly, boys and girls at this age move from childhood to young adulthood.

Despite the fact that the research concentrates on girls' education in particular and their right to education and protection, the sample was distributed by gender. The main aim of the research is to understand the gendered perceptions experienced by boys and girls from their own experiences, expressed in their own words.

The following table shows the distribution of the sample by area and gender:

<b>Area</b>	<b>School 's name</b>	<b>Male participants</b>	<b>Female participants</b>
Nablus	Al Salahiya School		33
Nablus	Amer Ibn Alas School	29	
Ramallah	Al Jalazon School		30
Ramallah	Al Hashimeya School	27	
Hebron	Qurtoba School		17
Total	136	56	80

The schools in Nablus and Ramallah are secondary schools, one for boys and one for girls, while in Hebron, Qurtoba School is a mixed school. The director of each district (Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron) recommended these schools as an example of schools most affected by the Occupation. The children enrolled in these schools have similar backgrounds since all of them are either from poor areas, camps or living near a checkpoint or settlement.

Permission from the head teacher of each school was given to the researcher. One class was chosen and the researcher spent one hour with the children. The aim of the research was discussed and a promise of confidentiality was given. It was observed that girls were more helpful and enthusiastic with the research, while boys were unruly and difficult to work with.

A random sample consisting of 20 teachers from each area was selected, but for the reasons mentioned above, the focus group meetings stopped after the first meeting. Instead, interviews with head teachers and counselors were conducted.

### **Interviews**

A semi-structured interview was one of the methods used for collecting data in this research. As this is a flexible tool to collect the data, the framework of the main ideas gave more space for the interviewees to talk freely. Interviews were conducted with the head teacher of each school and the counselors, and the aim of the research was explained to them and the flexibility of the interviews was also mentioned.

### **Limitations of the Research**

The schools in the sample were chosen from three different areas in the West Bank. No schools were chosen from the Gaza Strip. The size of the sample could be considered small, but there was no intention to generalize the findings of the research. The purpose of the research is to understand children's experiences from their own perspective.

## **Data Analysis**

Although the researcher's intention was to delay the data analysis until the collection of data was carried out, this process initially started after visiting the first school through reviewing the information gathered and using it to frame data collection for the next school. Interviews were originally conducted in Arabic and, after translating all the children's answers into English, a content analysis of the questionnaires and interviews was prepared.

A code system was introduced to facilitate the work with each respondent. The researcher then organized the data into subjects and sub-subjects until different themes emerged from the data. The researcher did the same with the questionnaires. In reporting the findings, the researcher organized the report depending on the themes and opinions of different people from each school. The researcher selected quotations from different respondents and interviewees to reflect the similarities and differences in views and opinions.

This chapter has offered a brief description of the tools, objectives and questions of the research. The limitation of the research and the procedures for analyzing the data obtained were also mentioned. The following chapter presents the findings of the collected data.

## Chapter Four: Findings

### Introduction

This chapter introduces the main findings from the interviews and the questionnaires, while categorizing the findings according to several emergent themes. The following are the primary themes expressed: experiences of violence; the impact of violent experiences on children; the impact of conflict on girls; the schools' reactions to the armed conflict and the Occupation; education priorities in times of conflict; and recommendations to the MoE, parents and the international community. Each theme and the associated issues that surfaced will be examined in relation to the data by means of quotations from the participants. The data analyzed below represent the opinions of children, both boys and girls from different schools. Additionally, the findings from interviews and focus group meetings with educators, counselors and officials will be presented. Lastly, a case study of one of the schools researched, Qortoba School, will be presented followed by recommendations made by the students.

### Experiences of Violence

Many students have witnessed the death or injury of a family member or friend and, sometimes, during school hours, their teachers and/or classmates. A girl from Al Jalazon Camp recounts:

*They [the soldiers] beat up my father in front of us. My little brother and I were crying and shouting loudly.*

Another girl from Nablus describes her own similar experience:

*My brother was shot dead by the soldiers when they had attacked our house. I have been crying every time I remember him. They also arrested my other brother and he is still in prison until now. My mother cries everyday, which makes our life so sad.*

A girl from Al Jalazon Camp explains her suffering from being injured in the leg after being shot at by soldiers on her way to school. The soldiers came later to her house to take her. Her mother tried to prevent them from taking her, so they beat her on the head. As a result, the mother has been suffering from paralysis. Now the girl is looking after her mother and the entire family. This event has not only had a physical and psychological impact on the girl but has also changed her role from a teenager who needs someone to look after her, to an adult who looks after her siblings and ill mother. These actions indirectly affect the girl's education, as not much time is left for her to study which in turn decreases her ability to concentrate on her future.

One girl from Nablus expresses her anger and sadness at the injury of her friend:

*On my way to school with my best friend, we suddenly faced soldiers coming from the corner of the street. They fired at us and my friend was injured. They [soldiers]*

*prevented anybody from taking her to the hospital and she was bleeding for two hours until finally they allowed the Red Cross to take her to the hospital.*

Many girls share how they feel witnessing such violence, but are helpless to do anything about it. The journey to school is no longer a safe journey since girls face unexpected and chronic danger.

During the research project, unknown persons vandalized Al Jalazon School at night. Windows were broken, and doors and computers were destroyed. The girls attending the school were scared and worried. School was suspended for one day and no one was allowed to talk about the incident. One girl explains:

*We don't know who attacked the school; some of us think that the soldiers did it, while others related it to the conflict between Fatah and Hamas. At school we [were] not allowed to talk about it.*

Another girl describes the same incident:

*The Occupation is enough; we don't need this kind of violence between each other. Attacking our school is a crime; we just want to learn, we don't care about politics. In school we don't talk about Fatah and Hamas, we just want to learn.*

A girl from the same school considers leaving the school because she is terrified and feels threatened by what happened.

It is important to mention that Al Jalazon School is the first government secondary school built in a camp and funded by the German government, so the girls do not need to go to Ramallah for secondary school. Before building this school, many girls left school after grade nine because their parents did not want them to travel to Ramallah's schools. The parents were scared that their girls would face abuse or violence from either Israeli soldiers or from male members of the community. The local community donated the land and the German government built the school in order to help the girls continue their secondary education. The MoE agreed to build this school to prevent the girls from leaving school at an early stage.

Despite the community's reaction to keep their girls at school, the attack on the school by unknown people left the girls feeling insecure, affecting their interest in their education. In instances like this, teachers and parents are unable to provide a safe place for their girls and are also unable to guarantee the safety of the school. So, in addition to the threat of Israeli soldiers and the military occupation, a new danger emerges related to the internal conflict. This type of conflict is more painful for the girls, because any harassment or threats committed by the local community feel more shameful and insulting, whereas enduring any humiliation from the Occupation can be seen as a kind of resistance.

Another girl from the same school mentions her wish that all the Palestinian parties would just disappear. She says:

*I wish there were no [political] parties, so we can live in peace where all of us are just Palestinians. We can then concentrate more on freeing our land from occupation.*

Boys talk about witnessing the same kind of traumatic events, and many of them also experience these events firsthand, in addition to members of their family. The following male student from Ramallah says:

*They [Israeli soldiers] attacked my house and beat me up; they arrested me for one month for throwing stones at them. Since that day, I can't see properly from my left eye.*

Another student shares:

*The soldiers stopped me at Qalandia checkpoint, where I was trying to escape from the queue; they kicked me and shouted at me. They ordered me to stand in a small room for three hours and every soldier that came into the room was swearing at me and attacking me.*

Many male students talk about their own experiences of being injured, arrested or beaten by soldiers. One student says:

*I was shot in my leg and I stayed in the hospital for two months. Then they invaded my house to arrest me and damaged everything in the house.*

The above gives an example of how Palestinian girls' and boys' right to protection and dignity are violated by the Israeli army.

In Nablus, boys talk about two different types of traumatic events. The first is related to the Israeli Occupation, while the other is related to the internal conflict between Hamas and Fatah. One student mentions:

*During the armed conflict between Hamas and Fatah, an armed group came to my uncle's house; they took my cousin and shot him dead. As a result we went to the suspected group's houses and we set fire to their houses and we attacked their property.*

For all these children, violence has penetrated their homes, their classrooms, and the roads in between.

### **The Impact of the Violence on Children**

Nearly all children talk about suffering from psychological problems since they have witnessed the death or injury of one of their relatives or neighbors. They feel scared, terrified, depressed, and hopeless all the time. This is verified by a previous study which

documents that 93% of Palestinian children report being exposed to violence at home and 45% in schools (Dolan, 2006). Students are unable to concentrate, unable to sleep at night and unable to eat regularly. One girl from Nablus says:

*I became very nervous, scared, and unable to eat, I hated my life. I lost interest in school.*

Another girl concurs:

*I felt hopeless; I failed in my exams since I can't concentrate. I was ill for a long time. I wish I could sleep safely without thinking and hearing the sounds of shooting.*

Students also speak about the disruption to their school system and school work:

*We lost many days in the school year. The head teacher changed the daily time tables, and she shortened the school day. My grades became very low. I was unable to study. I just wanted to listen to the news.*

*I was scared all the time, crying without reason, I stopped going to school for a while. When I went back, I repeated the year. I could not concentrate on school work.*

The head teachers at the male schools talk about the high percentage of illiterate students. While the researcher was conducting the research some male students refused to participate since they were unable to read and write properly. Also, while analyzing the data, it was noticed that many boys were unable to understand the questions properly, and their answers were unclear and poorly written. This can be seen as an indirect impact of the Occupation since in their early school years they may have missed many days of school due to curfews and closures between 2000 and 2002 (the interviewed children were eight-years-old when the Second Intifada erupted, which means that they may have lost out on foundational reading and writing opportunities). This problem has accumulated over the years with no intervention and, although the children are still in school, they are unable to read and write at their appropriate levels.

It is interesting to note the differences when boys and girls were asked to write their names, nicknames or to leave the questionnaire blank. Many girls wrote their real names or left it blank, while boys wrote nicknames related to the conflict such as "Hero," "Yaser Arafat," or "the Oppressed." In the Nablus area, the majority of the children (boys and girls) did not write their real names while in Ramallah many of them wrote their real names. This is explained by the role Nablus has played in the recent Intifada, with ongoing curfews, sieges and targeted killings perpetuated by the Israeli army. Hence, youth are scared to reveal their true identities; while in Ramallah, there has been less danger, comparatively.

Other forms of disruption to schooling are related to the economic situation. Many girls mention the impact on their families' finances. Their fathers have lost work due to the closures and sieges. One girl states:

*My father lost his job. We live in poverty. I could not buy the school uniform. Life became so hard. I have to study more to be able to find a job later to support my family. I want to graduate and have a degree.*

Other girls mention the importance of education to improve their lives and how they concentrate on studying as a way for a better future. Despite focusing on their education, many face difficulties in achieving their goals. The following girl from Al Jalazon Camp shares:

*I want to study and go to the university but we have a low income. My father needs to choose between sending me or my brother to the university and of course he will choose my brother.*

The above is very important, since despite all of the despair and obstacles preventing a better future, girls are looking for a positive change in their lives through education. This could possibly explain the high percentage of girls' achievement in schools. Girls are more interested in school when it becomes a tool for change.

As for boys, many talk about their feelings of fear and sadness, yet also express their hatred and anger against the Occupation. They have lost interest in school and, as a consequence, have lower achievement rates. The following boy says:

*I have low motivation for my studies, I hate school, and I hate the soldiers, especially the ones at the checkpoints. They humiliate me every day on my way to and from school. My test results are very low.*

*We have lost the hope for life; I am scared of walking in the street while the soldiers are around. There is nothing to live for.*

Boys also talk about their reaction to the Occupation's violence by choosing to be more aggressive. The following student says:

*I want to kill the soldiers that martyred my brother. I think more about revenge and I don't care about school any more. I am not scared of them, only girls are frightened by the soldiers.*

*I hate the soldiers, they took our house and now we have moved to another house on the other side of the Wall. I need to learn how to shoot to be able to defend my home.*

*I decided to throw stones at the soldiers. Sometimes I skip school to do that [throw stones]. I want to get rid of them [soldiers]. I want to free my home.*

Violence generates violence, and children are surrounded by it everywhere they go. The desire of the children to use violence can be seen as a coping mechanism to respond to continuous feelings of fear, disappointment, and helplessness. One boy talked about his own experience of suffering from violence inside his family, as his father beats him regularly. Now, he is less confident and has lost interest in his life. Within the school system, instances of violence against the children were witnessed as well, contributing to a vicious cycle of violence that bleeds into the everyday life of children, affecting their lives inside and outside of school.

### **The Impact of the Conflict on Girls**

Boys and girls agree that their freedom of movement is denied as a result of closures, roadblocks, and curfews and that their school achievement has also been negatively affected. Boys and girls mention that girls appear more scared and worried than boys when witnessing the death or injury of a family member. The data shows that although boys are in more physical danger than girls, girls tend to suffer silently because they are often not allowed to express themselves and are not allowed freedom of movement. As a result, girls suffer from psychological problems more than boys, due to the Occupation practices coupled with cultural norms. This is confirmed by a previous study which revealed that 54% of children suffered from severe, 33.5% from moderate and 11% from lesser levels of post-traumatic stress disorder. Additionally, it was reported that girls were more at risk, as 58% of them suffered from severe trauma (Qouta, Punamaki, & El Sarraj, 2003). Boys mention that girls need their protection since it is believed that they cannot protect themselves. Despite the fact that girls are more interested in education, boys have better chances to access education due to mobility, as compared to girls:

*The soldiers were outside Balata Camp while I was at school. When going home, the soldiers stopped me and all the other children. They prevented us from going back home. I was scared, the same as all the other girls and boys. The boys suggested that we could go another way, but the problem was that we needed to climb over the houses to be able to reach home. The boys did that but the girls stayed for a couple of hours until the soldiers allowed us to enter the camp (Female student from Nablus).*

*My brother stays outside the house more than me. My family is worried about me all the time. I need to choose what to study in the nearest university or college. I can't study in another city or country. So I need to choose the subject under these conditions, and it may not be what I am interested in. My parents say that they are scared of sending me far away due to the checkpoints and closure, but I think it is also the cultural norm that girls should be under the supervision of their families (Female student from Al Jalazon Camp).*

*Girls are more scared than boys. The situation affected my school results. I was unable to concentrate on my studies. Boys are better than girls since they can throw*

*stones at the soldiers. This helps them to express their anger against occupation (Female student from Nablus).*

*Girls and boys are not equal. Girls are more affected than boys. My father lost his job due to the closures so we don't have enough money for all of us. My brother still takes his pocket money as before, but I need to save and not to ask for clothes or any other sort of expenditures. It is not fair (Female student from Al Jalazon Camp).*

Many girls mention the fact that due to their families' worries, they are not allowed to move freely while boys are given more of a chance to move around and to access school. So in addition to the similar challenges and dangers that girls and boys face, girls must contend with restrictions imposed upon them by the society. Another observation is the difference related to meeting girls' and boys' needs, as girls see poverty, due to the political situation, as affecting them more than boys. Girls even see themselves as more vulnerable than their brothers.

Boys tend to concentrate on the perceived weaknesses of girls, and the males' role of protecting females:

*Girls are very sensitive; they cannot stand the Israeli Occupation's pressure. They are very frustrated and hopeless. We should protect them (Male student from Ramallah).*

*Girls are more subjected to depression than boys. They are arrested [in terms of not being allowed to leave their houses] inside their houses, a lot of restrictions on their movements. They are subjected to abuse and humiliation by the soldiers at the checkpoints (Male student from Ramallah).*

*Boys and girls are subjected to different kinds of abuse, violence and torture. The Israeli military humiliates us all the time at the checkpoints. They swear at the girls. Girls are more affected since they are unable to continue their education due to that. Their right to education has been denied (Male student from Ramallah).*

*Life is so boring for girls (Male student from Nablus).*

*Boys are in more danger than girls, but girls are more terrified and scared. Their rights to freedom and education have been denied (Male student from Nablus).*

*During the military invasion of Nablus, both girls and boys were in danger and their lives were threatened. But the difference is that boys have more freedom to run and escape than girls (Male student from Nablus).*

The above statements made by boys, show how girls are perceived to be suffering to a greater degree. The boys are critical of girls' experiences, describing how girls are affected differently. On the one hand, boys are aware of how girls' right to education has

been denied and on the other hand, they are also aware of the restrictions on girls due to the conservative culture.

### **Schools' Reactions to Reduce the Impact of Armed Conflict and Occupation on Children**

The majority of boys and girls believe that the head teacher and teachers cannot do anything to decrease the impact of the conflict on them. Many of them talk about more violence inside the schools:

*Our head teacher can't do anything, they just think about administrative work and not about how we feel (Male student from Ramallah).*

*The head teacher and the teachers are useless; they do not want to do anything. They cannot protect themselves, how can they protect us? (Male student from Nablus).*

A few girls mention the role of school in providing counseling for them and the importance of the counselors at schools. Others criticize the head teacher's reaction when their school was attacked:

*The school was suspended for one day. The next day when we came back, we were asked not to talk about the incident and to forget about it. It was impossible for us to do that since we were scared and we wanted to know everything to be able to protect ourselves (Female student from Al Jalazon).*

*Once there was a big problem between two groups at school, one group is from Fateh and the other from Hamas. The head teacher sent us home and closed the school for few days until the children calmed down. The head teacher asked for the support of the representative of each group in the city (Male student from Nablus).*

The data shows that children have stopped seeing their teachers and head teachers as positive role models and this influences their respect towards them. The head teacher wants the children to be silent and not to express their feelings. This might be a good indicator that teachers and head teachers have not been trained to deal with conflict situations and emergencies. This negatively affects boys' and girls' feelings of security, and specifically leads to girls' insisting on their need for counseling.

### **Education Priorities during a Conflict Situation**

Asking children about the priorities of education during a conflict situation and about their needs for new subjects that may help to reduce the impact of the conflict on their lives, they all suggest new subjects such as sports, arts and languages. Girls concentrate more on strategies and activities to reduce their stress, while also stressing their need for counseling. Boys, however, want to learn more about the conflict and Palestinian history. These differences reflect the gendered separation that boys and girls internalize as they

grow up to be young men and women. Girls focus on activities which allow them to express themselves and experience freedom of movement because their current experience involves feelings of containment and control. These feelings are not simply perpetuated by the Occupation, but also by a patriarchal society. Boys, since they already have access to the public sphere, express their interest in carrying on the 'male' traditions of discussing politics and history, as this is what they see continuing on around them. Children are merely reacting to or complying with society's gendered social roles:

*We need to learn new things such as internet, drama, and swimming. We are fed up with the routine of school work. They [teachers] cancelled the PE classes during the Intifada. It is better if they can reduce the exams (Female student from Nablus).*

*I want to learn first aid, to be able to help injured people. I want to learn how to swim but in a closed pool especially for girls. The school, they should teach us how to swim. School is the only place that we go, so this will be a great chance if we can learn new things (Female student from Al Jalazon).*

*I want to learn more about historical Palestine. I want to learn Hebrew to be able to talk to the Israeli soldiers in addition to playing football, swimming and music (Male student from Nablus).*

*The subjects should be optional. I will choose to do more art. I would like to learn horse riding. We need many things... (Male student from Ramallah).*

The data shows that all girls insist on having more fun inside their schools through play and sports activities. Many studies emphasize the need of children in education in emergency situations to have the opportunity of recreational and extracurricular activities. Art therapy could be another option to help girls address their negative feelings. Schools have an important role in responding to the needs of girls since many do not have any other place to go aside from their homes. School is often the only place where they can have fun and enjoy themselves, in addition to their home environment.

It is clear that boys and girls are equally threatened by the violence of the Occupation and the Second Intifada, and that such violence has had an egregious effect on the Palestinian education system. Additionally, it is clear that children's experiences of such violence is gendered, producing varied responses from boys and girls, to similar offenses.

### **Educational Counselors in the Governmental Schools**

In the school year 2005-2006, there were 617 education counselors; the majority of them have undergraduate degrees in related areas. The number of counselors has increased significantly during the last five years. As documented by the MoE (2007), many children suffer from psychological problems as a result of the continuous conflict and this highlights the importance of the role that counselors play in assisting the children to develop coping strategies. Returning to the number of counselors in the government schools and relating it to the number of students, it can easily be seen that the ratio

difference between students and counselors is massive. The ratio is 243:1 in general and 907:1 in the schools that share counselors. Each counselor works in at least two schools, indicating that more counselors are needed than are available. This is confirmed by the fact that more than 40% of students do not have counselors in their schools (MoE, 2007). There is no difference between girls' and boys' schools on this issue since the whole school system is in short supply of counselors despite the growing need for them. This clearly affects students' social and emotional development.

The main tasks of the educational counselors in the school are:

- To deal with psychological, emotional, social and behavioral problems;
- To address the normal developmental needs (academic and psychological) of children;
- To change students' behaviors positively;
- To maintain students' mental health.

When counselors talk about more violence in the schools, they mention two kinds of violence. The primary form of violence is the violence perpetrated between children and against their teachers, while the other form is the violence of teachers against children. Violence is clearly considered to be one of the main problems at schools.

Another core issue is that children are showing a greater disinterest in school. Many of them have left school either for early marriage (girls) or for work (boys). In Hebron some boys have left school for early marriage. The counselors talk about the impact of the Israeli Occupation on the financial aspects of the family, which directly affects the children's lives as a reason for leaving school. Many children have to work after school to help their families make ends meet. This indirectly affects their education and spirit.

The counselors mention the need for more extracurricular activities as a solution to the violence inside schools and as a way for children to express themselves, especially in girls' schools. This could be seen as a tool for recreation, which is the only way for girls to express themselves in a conservative society.

The counselors also mention the importance of the relationship between schools and parents. They state that there is a problem when parents are asked to attend meetings and only a few attend, which increases the gap between schools and parents.

The counselors concentrate on the vision of the education system. They think that the education system is not meeting the needs of the children and cannot satisfy them. Many challenges are faced by the children and they are not prepared to handle them, such as the continuing conflict and poverty. The counselors note the differences between girls and boys in the school system; while boys experience more violence inside their schools, girls are suffering from withdrawal and feelings of hopelessness.

## **Focus Group with Educators**

A meeting with educators took place after analyzing the data collected from children, head teachers and counselors. The findings were presented at this meeting. A discussion was opened and notes were taken to be used in this report. Only ten people were able to attend this meeting. The following points were emphasized by the participants:

The children talk about their needs better than anybody else. Specific mechanisms should be taken to ensure meeting their needs.

The main problem is the Israeli Occupation with its checkpoints, roadblocks, closures and different forms of violence against children in general and girls in particular. The Occupation is negatively affecting all facets of life for Palestinians, which is directly and indirectly affecting the lives of girls. There should be a solution to end the Occupation and to improve children's lives and girls' education.

The role of the MoE is vital in providing better training programs for teachers so that they are able to deal with violence and conflict situations. The MoE should improve the quality of education to keep girls in school. The vision for education should be revised to meet the challenges faced by children and to meet their needs within the existing conflict.

Trained counselors are needed to support children in order to cope with violent situations and express their anger in a more productive way. Education should be for protection, recovery, survival and about human rights. The counselors should have more freedom to implement such programs.

## **The Case of Qurtoba School**

Qurtoba School was established in 1971. Qurtoba School is a government school which lies in front of Beit Hadasa, an Israeli settlement in Hebron. It is an elementary school that was initially built for girls, but now is mixed in grades 1-4. Al-Shuhada Street, which is the main road to Qurtoba School, is closed to Palestinians all year and the students need permission to go through the settlement outpost in the street leading to the school. As part of the Oslo Accords, and after a massacre instigated by a settler at the Ibrahimi Mosque in 1994, Hebron has been divided into two different areas, H1 (solely Palestinian) and H2 (Palestinian and settler). Al-Shuhada Street connects the two areas of the city. The school is in the H2 area and this makes it difficult for the students to move freely to and from the school.

The girls cannot reach the school easily. Forty girls must pass through a checkpoint everyday and face different types of humiliation from soldiers. Twenty-nine girls must pass through a cemetery on their way to school and face different types of danger in order to avoid the outpost of Beit Hadasa. In taking the route through the cemetery, girls are put at risk for sexual assault and rape. The head teacher has mentioned that there have been accounts of drunks and drug users attacking the girls, trying to obtain sexual favors, or offering unwanted sexual comments. The girls are frightened and, due to cultural

attitudes and societal pressure, are worried about telling their parents, though some have told the head teacher.

There are now 119 children at the school, 87 of them are girls and 32 are boys. The number of teachers is 16.5 (including part-time teachers). The ratio of students per teacher is 7:2, which on the surface appears desirable, but actually highlights the low student retention rate of the school. Many students have left because of the difficulties facing them on a daily basis in their journey to and from the school.

For safety reasons, the Head of Education in the Hebron district did not advise the researcher to go to the school alone, so he arranged for Qurtoba School's guard to accompany the researcher. Analyzing the data collected from the interview with the head teacher of the school, the completed questionnaires of the girls from grade nine in the school and the analysis of a report written by the head teacher (Shareef, 2008), the following was revealed:

The settlers harass the children and the teachers on a regular basis in order to force them to leave the school so that they may illegally occupy the building and add it to their property. The head teacher says that before she was appointed the number of girls in the school was 80 since many had either dropped out or moved to another school to avoid the daily attacks from both the soldiers and the settlers. The head teacher works very hard with peace activists to provide protection for the girls and to encourage them to stay in the school, as one girl says:

*We don't want to leave the school for them. We will die inside the school and not allow them to take it. Many times we were late to school in the morning. Their dogs attacked us.*

The girls and teachers of this school face not only the Israeli soldiers' attacks, but they are also targets for harassment by the individual settlers living in the Hebron area. Even the presence of international observers does not help to protect the children. (Annex 3 contains photos of the girls being pelted with stones and eggs by the Israeli settlers).

The teachers and students of the school are attacked everyday during the school year from the settlers of Beit Hadasa. The settlers regularly throw stones, eggs and rubbish at the children and their teachers. The settlers swear at them and force them to stand at the checkpoint for many hours so that they are unable to reach their school on time. The girls and their teachers are harassed and abused by the Israeli soldiers, as the following girls share:

*On my way to school, the soldiers at the checkpoint threw stones at me, and I was injured on my back. They also swore at me.*

*Once I was in school and at the end of the school day, the soldiers closed the checkpoint and we were not allowed to leave the school. My little brother in grade*

*two was lost. He left school and we were scared. We found him in the cemetery crying.*

The settlers have also humiliated the teachers. One example is when they order them to memorize their identity card numbers as a condition for passing through the checkpoint. Girls share:

*The settlers came to our school and they started to shout, kill the Palestinians! Kill the Palestinians! They threw stones at us and some girls were injured.*

*They threw eggs at us, they insulted us. They attacked our teachers in front of us.*

The girls and their teachers face everyday at least one, if not all three, of the types of checkpoints: flying checkpoints in Alrmeelah Hill where they stop cars from passing to the old city of Hebron. They check identity cards and stop children from passing. The second type is Al Daboya checkpoint which prevents Palestinians from passing through to Al-Shuhada Street and Al Karnita checkpoint at the other end of Al-Shuhada Street. The third one is a metal detector on Al-Shuhada Street where everybody must to pass. This one is the most trying since it is very crowded and often the soldiers prevent the children from passing through to their school.

As a result of this situation, nearly all the girls suffer from psychological problems, as mentioned by the head teacher and according to the girls' own words. It goes without saying that the school system has been negatively affected.

The newly appointed head teacher has taken some steps to decrease the impact of the situation on the girls such as reducing the school hours so as to prevent any interaction with the settler children. Additionally, the break time has been cancelled. The head teacher has not been able to expand the buildings of the school, despite the fact that many classes are small, unsuitable and overcrowded. No extracurricular activities can take place after school hours due to the complexity of movement. The girls are unable to have physical education classes since the settlers can see and harass them.

Despite the fact that these procedures might provide more safety to the girls of the school, they inadvertently and negatively affect the quality of education. So the head teacher and the girls talk about the urgent need for counseling to assist the children and increase their coping strategies. The girls insist on their need for learning English and Hebrew to be able to talk with the international supporters and the settlers. They also insist on their need for counseling as they suffer on a regular basis from the settlers' abuse. So far, the head teacher has built a high wall surrounding the school so the girls can have physical education classes without disruption from the settlers, yet the girls are still sitting in small classrooms since they cannot extend or build any more.

There appears to be no end to the violations endured by the students of Qurtoba School. The following are some of the more recent incidents that have befallen the children and their school:

- On 26 March 2008 soldiers' dogs attacked the school and scared the children.
- On 12 March 2008 the settlers tried to damage the wall of the school.
- On 17 December 2007 soldiers attacked the secretary of the school.
- On 25 November 2007 the children spent hours during an open day to create a garden and, at night after they left, the settlers destroyed it and took out all of the plants and flowers.
- On 6 August 2007 the settlers set fire to the school.

### **Recommendations of Children to the Ministry of Education, Schools, Parents and the International Community to Decrease the Impact of Conflict**

Many boys and girls wrote about the violence inside their schools and within their families and communities, and asked their teachers and parents to stop assaulting them. Many girls asked their parents to treat them equally, just as their brothers, while some boys asked their parents to stop forcing them to go to school.

#### Summary of the girls' recommendations:

- 1- Schools should eliminate some subjects such as math and science, and cancel the general exam (*Tawjihi*). The girls asked for schools to arrange trips and to add more extracurricular activities. The MoE should provide transportation for girls going to and from school.
- 2- Parents and teachers should allow girls to talk more and express themselves, while also listening to them and respecting their opinions. Parents should treat boys and girls equally.
- 3- The international community should either leave Palestine alone or bring peace.

#### Summary of the boys' recommendations:

- 1- Schools should arrange trips, treat children respectfully, and stop beating children. They should raise children's awareness towards the impact of the Occupation and armed conflict on their education. They should stop the internal conflict.
- 2- The international community should no longer interfere in the region. If the international community does wish to remain, they must find a solution for the conflict and stop Israel from killing Palestinians, bring peace to the region, and conduct more research in order to understand the internal conflict.
- 3- Parents should stop beating their children and not force them children to go to school

## Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

The main aim of this research is to examine the perceptions of Palestinian girls concerning the impact of occupation on their education and lives, and also to highlight the violations of their right to education by the Israeli military forces. It is vital to identify their needs to improve the quality of their education. The importance of this research is to illustrate and understand the views of both boys and girls, but especially those of girls.

The data described in the last chapter highlights the main impact of the Occupation on girls' lives and education. The violation of their right to education is clear and not surprising since many reports and previous studies have mentioned a similar impact (Save the Children, 2002; 2004; UNICEF, 2004a; 2004b; 2004c). What is significant about this research is the girls' understanding of their suffering and how boys and girls have been affected differently. The voices of boys and girls themselves in the previous chapter demonstrate the levels of trauma they experience daily and the urgent need for a solution. The girls suffer from psychological problems, carrying with them feelings of hopelessness and anger which may irreversibly affect their present and future. The data show that boys and girls see their experiences differently, an example being how boys think that girls are more affected by the Occupation since their movement is more restricted. Boys think that girls are more scared and this leads to increasing negative feelings since they stay at home and are not allowed to move freely. This confirms assertions that men and women, girls and boys experience conflict differently (UNESCO, 2006).

Palestinian girls' right to education is threatened due to closures, curfews and increasing poverty. In the Palestinian case, as in many other cases around the world during conflict, families prioritize boys' education and the role of girls shifts to concentrate more on the family. The data collected provides enough evidence to demonstrate how girls' right to education, play, childhood, and cultural activities has been violated by the occupying force.

A report prepared by Amnesty International (2005) discusses the challenges that Palestinian women face in order to establish their rights. Three main challenges are mentioned: firstly, women as Palestinians are living under Israel military occupation that controls their lives. Secondly, women are living in a patriarchal society and thirdly women are treated unequally and subjected to discriminatory laws and practices. The second and third points explain why male participants are proud to be boys and many girls wish that they had been born as boys. Much evidence is given from the data to confirm the above three assumptions. This means that efforts should be made to assist girls to deal with all these challenges.

Due to closure and curfews, and as a result of the deterioration in the quality of education, boys are less interested in education and many of them are illiterate, while girls think of education as a path to a better future. Despite this fact many girls are denied their right to education during the conflict.

## **Transcending the Violence**

It is difficult to avoid violence and violent solutions, when one is constantly surrounded by violence. This is especially true for children (Nicolai, 2006). In the Palestinian case and as the collected data show, children suffer from exposure to different types of violence in all aspects of their lives and have been affected negatively. Boys and girls face different types of violence; while boys are directly attacked by soldiers, teachers, or their parents, girls are often subjected to psychological violence and control. Freire (1970) discusses the impact of the oppressed being subjected to violence on a regular basis by the oppressor. As the oppressed, in this case children, internalize violence on a daily basis, violence then becomes their own coping strategy and is perpetrated in an on-going cycle.

A powerful comment was made by a girl from Qurtoba School, where she stated that the checkpoint on her way to school does not mean anything to her and it is part of her daily life. If one day the checkpoint disappeared, she would consider it strange. This means that conflict has become part of a 'normal' life for this girl. This violence has eked its way into all facets of life, as children, teachers and parents practice different forms of it. When asked why he is so aggressive, one boy answered that he wants his teachers to notice him, to listen to him. In the girls' case it is rather worse, as the data shows that girls are not allowed to speak up and to discuss important issues happening inside their schools, like in the case of the attack at Al Jalazon School.

Children must learn how to process their anger in more productive ways, as well as learn how to cope with stress and sadness. Many boys and girls express their need for a better education which also meets their spiritual needs. Children need to be respected and treated equally inside their homes and schools. Children need opportunities to have fun, to draw, to dance, to play, or to just be children. Extracurricular activity programs should be developed to help them spend their time in positive ways so that they are able to purge feelings of negativity (Halstead & Affouneh, 2006) and focus on constructive methods of coping.

## Recommendations

It is hoped that these recommendations might lead to a positive impact on girls' lives and education:

1. New programs must be introduced to meet the needs of girls. These efforts must be at both the school level and at the extracurricular level.
2. A formal education in emergency program, specific to the occupied Palestinian territory, must be developed in order to ensure each child's right to education. This programming must also address the specific needs of Palestinian girls during an emergency.
3. The quality of education offered in the occupied Palestinian territory must be improved. While boys and girls have equal access to schooling and gender parity has been achieved at all levels of education, there must be a greater stress placed upon the quality of education offered to children.
4. A review of the Palestinian curriculum must take place so as to meet the needs of children and develop their personalities and skills accordingly.
5. Additional counselors must be hired in order to meet the mental health needs of students, especially in schools directly affected by the mechanisms of the Occupation (i.e. those in close proximity to checkpoints, the Wall, settlements, etc.).
6. Existing counselors must receive frequent and appropriate trainings, especially on topics related to children and conflict. Trainings must seek to provide instruction on how to support children and allow them to express their anger and frustration, while also reflecting upon their experiences. Additionally, schools must also assist in cultivating stronger communication between counselors and parents.
7. Counselors must have more authority inside schools and be empowered to introduce appropriate and beneficial programs and projects for children.
8. Schools must introduce more extracurricular and physical activities for children, especially girls, such as art and art therapy, swimming classes, and physical education activities.
9. More schools must be built for girls, especially in marginalized, militarized, and Occupation-affected areas, in order to reduce dropout rates.
10. Remedial education programs must be introduced in conjunction with formal education in order to fill in the gaps resulting from the conflict.

***To sum up, Palestinian girls have the same right to life, education, protection and fun that any girl in the world has... BUT who will guarantee these rights?***

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Annex no.1

*The Statement of International Laws of Children Rights*

<b>Year</b>	<b>International law</b>	<b>Statement</b>
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights	“Everyone has the right to education”
1949	Fourth Geneva Convention	“The occupying power shall, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of the children”
1966	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms”
1989	Convention on the Rights of the Child	“States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity....and shall make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means”

## Annex no.2

Translation of the questions asked to the participants in Arabic:

1. Personal information (optional)
2. Have you or any member of your family being attacked or detained, injured or killed due to armed conflict and internal conflict. Please describe it in detail.
3. How has this experience affected you, psychologically, emotionally, educationally and economically?
4. Please mention one example of how the experience affected your studies and achievement.
5. Do you think that conflict affects boys and girls differently?
6. Are there any issues that girls affect girls and not boys?
7. How does the conflict affect girls specifically (emotionally, socially, economically and their education)?
8. How do schools react to the conflict and deal with emergency situations? Please mention specific examples?
9. What are the subjects at school, that you need to study, that could help to decrease the impact of the conflict on you, and girls in particular?
10. What are your recommendations to the Ministry of Education, parents, schools, and the international community to decrease the impact of the conflict on your education?