LEARNING TO LOVE AND HATE IN GAZA

A qualitative case study exploring the interplay between education and violence in post-Oslo Palestine

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To the people of Gaza —

the toughest, smartest, most dignified I’ve ever known.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

As a foreigner, it wasn't all that normal to have my Gazan doorbell ring at one in the morning. It was even less expected to have a 17-year-old acquaintance show up so late merely to 'hang out' on a weeknight. As a lecturer at Islamic University and Chief of Party for the rebuilding of the American International School of Gaza, I was, however, slowly appreciating that my assumptions as an outsider had little place within contemporary Gazan society. What subsequently transpired in the early hours of that weeknight morning was ultimately the result of relatively simple calculus, as explained to me by my young friend Medo: on the one hand we both had conventional obligations the following day, with me instructing university students, and Medo due in the 11th grade. Yet Medo countered that the streets were largely empty, and in turn it was an ideal time to gather some friends and skateboard through downtown Gaza. As one of the best students in his school, I heeded his judgment. After all, he explained, past midnight was a perfect time to experience the 'other side of Gaza.'

Thirty minutes later we were skateboarding through the temporarily abandoned streets of Gaza City. Just me and three kids from the local high school, seeking out something new, in a place we knew all too well. The high ground to get started was the Brigades (*Sarayya*), a principal downtown landmark that, due to its strategic heights, had hosted an Ottoman fort, an Egyptian army camp, and an Israeli prison in their respective eras – all testaments in their own way to larger Gazan realities. That night, it was merely an empty lot, save piles of sand and graffiti replacing the history long since bombed away. Yet for us its strategic height remained, as did the consequent downslope all the way down to the sea. We could have taken the short route, a mere two kilometers straight west down Omar Mukhtar Street, named for the locally-revered Libyan resistance fighter and analogously marking the front lines between Ottoman and British troops in the First World War. Such a direct path was not our intent that night, however. Instead we sought out side streets, circuitously exploring pretty much everything, deliberately opening ourselves to misadventure as we slowly ambled through town.

One compulsory stop, however, was the open-all-night convenience store, whose florescent lights beckoned us in with the promise of cigarettes. It was under such traditional privilege signs made famous in 1930s America, yet that now illuminated Jawwal mobile logos and the likes of such revolutionary names as 'Hania' and 'Rantisi' that the four of us would catch up on life. Away from the prying eyes of family and neighbors, our impromptu crew would posture, and rant, and outline grand ambitions, spanning from women to revolution. And then after 15 minutes, when there was nothing much else to say, the guys would smile, clearly delighting in a night of freedom, and one last cigarette, before heading out again, curious to discover what else the night had in store.

It wasn't always peaceful, though. Medo was sideswiped by a passing police car, which was alarming witnessing how untroubled both the officers were, as well as Medo's nonchalance after getting hit. 'It's just my legs,' he casually reassured us. The group went on to explain that Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement, *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah)* was in charge, and completely unconcerned with hitting any pedestrians, much less a group of *shabab*, the quasi-derogatory term in Gaza referring to young men typically up to nothing particularly redeeming. More important to them was keeping an eye on everything else transpiring that evening, be it the Resistance (*al-Muqawama)* patrolling the Israeli border three kilometers to the east or the rockets being launched by smaller, offshoot groups that operated under the cover of darkness. It was these latter troublemakers who were rattling not just the geopolitical status quo, but also Hamas' composure. True to form, after skating a bit word had spread and the authorities began to check in on us periodically. 'What are you doing?,' each iteration of police would ask, diligently appreciating that my friends fit the youthful profile of unaffiliated militants emerging

throughout Gaza.[i] Yet after 30 seconds the police would routinely lose interest, assured that we lacked the mettle to launch any rockets.

Not all official encounters were so gruff, however. Continuing on we soon came across the former headquarters of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC, *Al-Majlis al-Tashri'iyy al-Filastini*), the habitually destroyed target of recurrent Israeli airstrikes. The young Hamas sentries stationed outside motioned for us to stop out of interest as much as protocol, as they were obviously eager to augment their nightly routine with a welcomed diversion. 'What's that?,' they hollered. 'A skateboard? Niceee.' In chatting, it was evident that little separated my friends from the young Hamas conscripts beyond a year or two in age and the guards' automatic weapons. The setting was, in a word, jovial to such a degree that as the conversation progressed, the officer overseeing the PLC compound also joined in. And while welcoming us to hang around, he suddenly suggested we leave – a call had gone out over the radio that an unsanctioned rocket had been fired into Israel and Hamas was consequently expecting a retaliatory airstrike. Hence it was best if we stayed away from the oft-targeted PLC building so we weren't 'blown up.'

All for the best anyways – the sun would be rising soon, and we each had full schedules for the upcoming day. I would be bringing more American-style pedagogy to my classes of Gazan university students and Medo would be catching up on high school in the post-Oslo era. What was increasingly clear to me, however, was that he and his friends, even while exceptional students by any official standard, placed little significance in their formal studies. Apparently they found the Palestinian Authority curriculum – one that failed to mention Hamas, nor the volleys of periodic rocket fire in and out of Gaza – largely irrelevant to their everyday experiences. And I must admit my own lighthearted lesson plan for the following morning suddenly rang hollow after having just been ushered along so as not to be the inadvertent victim of an airstrike.

It was because of such experiences, common over my having worked in Palestine for four years, that I became close to the youth of Gaza. Through many varied encounters, including employing recent university graduates, teaching college students, and later rebuilding primary and secondary schools – as well as more informal interactions, such as midnight skateboarding – I remained confident that I not only understood 'Gazan youth,' but was furthermore empowering them by working on the front lines of formal education. 'Because without education there will never be peace,' imparted the esteemed Malala Yousafzai while donating the funds to support some of the very same schools in Gaza (quoted in UNRWA 2014). I was on the right side, I had told myself, helping the next generation of Palestinians advance towards a more satisfying future.

Hence it was quite unexpected when soon after three young men from Gaza – two of whom could have easily been my students – attempted to kidnap and kill me. The details of the episode are unremarkable and largely irrelevant here beyond highlighting the evident reality that my enthusiasm for western pedagogy and its nonviolent rhetoric was not universally appreciated by contemporary Gazan youth. Obviously my efforts to experience and appreciate the more visceral side of their community had similarly only begun to scratch the surface, and there was still much to learn about the relatively opaque

[i] My skateboarding companions are part of the Class of 2000, a soon to be discussed cohort of Gazan youth that at the time matched up with the prime years for independent militancy, per two Hamas experts who follow the issue closely. This includes a Hamas religious scholar in Rafah sent to speak with imprisoned Salafi-Jihadis disclosing that of the 100 militants he spoke with, the oldest was 24. A journalist closely affiliated with Hamas similarly estimated that the average age of independent militants in Gaza was between 16 and 22 (Al-Dajani 2009).

perspectives amassed growing up in Gaza. Hence, I resolved to redouble my efforts opening myself not only to what my would-be assailants might impart, but furthermore what a larger cross section of their entire defiant generation of students could, in turn, teach me. What lessons must young people appreciate prior to embracing political violence, I asked myself, and in my particular case, what path must one walk prior to heading out to 'go get the bald American on Beach Road'?[ii] I was curious to find out.

[ii] Interview from Qasr Al-Hakim Prison, per field interview with SI107 (2012).

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the contemporary world armed conflict remains an ongoing challenge, with the number of state and non-state conflicts steadily increasing over time.[1] Among the various solutions that have been proposed, both by academic and policy stakeholders, education is frequently cited as a key component to averting hostilities. As the United Nations frames it, 'better education' is 'central to preventing and mitigating conflicts and crises and to promoting peace' (UNESCO 2015a: 27). The centrality of formal education is further reflected in the disbursement of approximately $78 billion in educational aid to so-called 'fragile countries' over recent years.[2] Yet despite the popularity of schooling as a conflict-focused intervention, there is little direct evidence to prove that formal education in conflict zones reliably discourages student support for violence.[3] Indeed, more than 60 percent of post-conflict settings – many of them recipients of sustained educational assistance – routinely relapse into violence.[4]

This thesis will subsequently explore what is actually occurring when formal educational programming is introduced in conflict zones and why it routinely fails to reduce support for violence. To do this, it focuses on what is perhaps the most costly, high-profile case of such schooling being introduced amidst conflict for this purpose, post-Oslo Gaza.[5] The research question this thesis addresses, therefore, is the following: Was formal education in post-Oslo Gaza unsuccessful in reducing support for violence, and if so, *why*?[6]

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[1] The number of armed conflicts, both state and non-state, has increased steadily over the post-WWII era. This includes a 40% increase over the last 25 years, resulting in 61 state-based conflicts taking place in 2024 – the highest in 70 years (Davies et al. 2023; PRIO 2025; Strand and Hegre 2021; UCDP 2025).

[2] Of the $191.7 billion in aid disbursed to the developing world over the post-Oslo era, $77.6 billion was allocated for educational overseas development assistance (ODA) to 'fragile countries,' which are listed along with funding definitions by the OECD (2019). *See also* Appendix One.

[3] This includes less than 1% of research in peace and conflict journals conventionally focusing on educational practice in the developing world, and even less on educational practice within conflict (King 2013: 5-6). *See also* Burde et al. 2017 and INEE 2020.

[4] Of the 259 armed conflicts involving one or more state governments since the Second World War, 159 have recurred – a trend that is increasing 'precipitously' over recent years (Gates et al. 2016: 2). This is underscored with most conflicts that restart doing so within 10 years of ending – well within what's known as the 'reconstruction and reconciliation' window that takes place between five and 10 years after a conflict ends (Chauvet and Collier 2007). *See also* Von Einsiedel (2017).

[5] From the Madrid Conference in 1991, to the exchange of letters between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO, *Munazzamat at-Tahrir al-Filasṭiniyyah*) in 1993, to the Oslo II agreements in 1995, the 'Oslo Accords' presented a fundamental change in direction for Palestinian society. At its core, the Palestine Liberation Organization accepted U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) calling for the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict through territorial compromise, while simultaneously recognized Israel's right to exist and renouncing violent resistance (Oslo Accords II 1995). The 'post-Oslo' era generally refers to the years following the Oslo II agreements in 1995, unless specifically discussing education, which is framed by the implementation and tenure of Palestine's inaugural curriculum from the fall of 2000 through 2015, as fundamental changes to American support for Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in 2016 marked a new phase in relations.

[6] 'Formal education' is defined as all curriculum and participation that serves as the basis of the certification process within primary and secondary school, and within this research is synonymous with peacebuilding education, per the Oslo Accords (UNESCO 2013: 27).

To answer the question, a problematic effort in itself underscoring the prevalence of power and control within conflict, this inquiry requires engaging all sides: first reviewing what is known about the relationship between education and violence, and then conversing with both the key parties that helped shape the post-Oslo educational system, as well as most importantly the students targeted by its programming.[7] Relevant stakeholders include the United States Department of State (State Department) as the lead external partner and the Palestinian National Authority (Palestinian Authority or 'PA,' *al-Sultah al-Wataniyya al-Falastiniya*), an interim self-government originally chartered through the Oslo Accords to last five years for the purpose of working with its counterpart, Israel, 'to resolve all of their outstanding differences by peaceful means' (Shlaim 2009: 35).[8] One of the most significant 'peaceful means' was the post-Oslo establishment of an inaugural Palestinian educational system based around nonviolence. This aspiration was enshrined in the Oslo Accords mandating that Palestinian educational programming 'foster mutual understanding and tolerance' and 'contribute to the peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.'[9] The PA obliged and was credited with developing an educational system advocating for a Palestinian state through nonviolent coexistence being its 'major accomplishment' (Nicolai 2007: 83). International donors subsequently supported Palestine's nascent educational system with $3 billion in development assistance as part of the larger $30 billion in multilateral support throughout the post-Oslo era. This investment, which worked out to $2,160 in educational aid per student – up to 24 times the average expended in conflict zones – made Palestinian schoolchildren in the post-Oslo era by far the most heavily subsidized students within 'fragile' states.[10] Yet after record-setting investments in education purportedly making it 'easier to love,' it is important to understand why 30 years later prominent proponents of the Oslo Accords have expressed defeat, with Gazan youth especially reluctant to renounce violence.[11] This directly challenges the widespread functionalist belief underpinning conflict mitigation efforts that formal education is inherently constructive and encourages social harmony, and calls into question the ability of formal educational programming to shape political understandings amidst conflict, even when bolstered with world-leading financial support, as in post-Oslo Gaza (Durkheim 1956, 1973; Parsons 1959).

[7] Applicable scholarship includes the general functionalist foundation underpinning educational development assistance (Durkheim 1956, 1973; Parsons 1959), as well as the more relevant critical peace education and public pedagogy (Bajaj 2008; Freire 1970; Giroux 2001; Reardon 1988; Sandlin et al. 2011; Schubert 1981, 2010) highlighting how students learn about conflict and its relevance to peacebuilding education. This conflict-based framework notably differs from activist approaches whereby critical public pedagogy's primary aim is to achieve an inclusive, participatory, 'radical' democracy (Giroux 2003; McLaren 2005).

[8] The United States and its relevant agencies were widely seen as the 'dominant force within the donor process' (Lasensky 2005: 51).

[9] Article XX11, Oslo II agreement, signed on September 28th, 1995 by Israel and the PLO.

[10] Total disbursed ODA to Palestinian education from 1995-2014 was $2.95 billion (while commitments were $3.08 billion). Per capita aid for students in conflict zones averages ~$16 annually, while it was $191 in Palestine between 2000 and 2014 (OECD 2019; UNESCO 2011a). *See* Appendix One.

[11] Paulo Freire, credited with facilitating the 'conceptual and methodological heart' of peacebuilding education, routinely asserts that education is an act of love, with the ultimate aspiration of establishing a world where it is 'easier to love' (Reardon and Snauwaert 2015: xv; Freire 1970: 38). 'I believe now that Oslo is dead,' Palestinian politician Yasser Abed Rabbo stated in 2018 (quoted in Farrell and Heller 2018). This followed Saeb Erekat, chief Palestinian peace negotiator, indicating that 'the two-state solution is over' (quoted in Landau and Khoury 2017). In a rare 2012 poll only 3% of Gazan youth supported negotiations as the exclusive path forward with Israel, as envisioned by the Oslo Accords (Sharek 2013: 60).

While it is commonly assumed that investing considerable material resources into formal education will mold students and their views on violence, there is currently little to directly demonstrate that such efforts are successful amidst conflict.[12] Building on a long tradition of neglecting students as stakeholders, reviews of educational programs amidst conflict routinely avoid engaging young people and their perspectives directly.[13] This includes wider quantitative reviews of formal education's role in mitigating conflict, textual scholarship analyzing the composition of formal curricula in Palestine, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s own Palestinian educational review, which deliberately limited itself to feedback from 'educational authorities' in order to keep reporting 'more positive.'[14] In contrast to these and broader studies on the role of formal education in mitigating conflict, this thesis is based on a decade of direct experience within the Palestinian educational sector.[15] Drawing on the author's extensive fieldwork engaging young people in Gaza, it focuses on students as central stakeholders, and seeks to establish what impact the formal educational programming introduced from 2000-2015 actually had on students, and whether it influenced their propensity to support violence within an ongoing conflict.

With formal education continuing to serve as one of the primary development tools used to forestall violence in areas of instability, it is imperative that its efficacy in areas of conflict around the globe is better understood. The conventional assumption that schooling is a homogeneous good pacifying students is antiquated and arguably irrelevant amidst the almost 'numberless' narratives competing to interpret and explain contemporary conflict – including stakeholders that deliberately employ education to mobilize violence.[16] By reviewing the direct impact that one of the highest-profile and most costly educational peacebuilding interventions had on students amidst the wider lessons of conflict, greater insight will inform ongoing debates involving education's role in relation to violence, as well as how to more effectively deploy the $3.6 billion in annual educational assistance currently being invested in 'fragile countries,' with particular relevance to the 61 ongoing conflicts around the world.[17]

[12] Influence is routinely assessed with a 'resource container' mentality whereby material or tangible resources alone are given meaningful consideration (Tellis et al. 2000: 31-32). This is very relevant in Palestine where outside stakeholders hold 'preoccupations with material issues' and habitually neglect more nuanced issues like the efficacy of narratives comprising educational programming (Hollis 2019: 130).

[13] As Winthrop Kirk argue, children's perspectives are rarely considered when assessing educational programming as they are routinely viewed as 'innocent, vulnerable, helpless and "in formation"' (2011: 119).

[14] USAID's 2016 case study included interviews with Ministry of Education officials, district officers, school principals, and teachers, as well as USAID and implementing partner officers (USAID 2016a: 1).

[15] This inquiry will benefit from and build upon an initial body of fieldwork first developed between 2009-2013 while the author worked locally within the Gazan educational sector, as specified in the methodology section. Beyond this contextual experience, there was more deliberate research engagement with Gazan youth, which took place between May 2014 and December 2017, as well as supporting interviews with Palestinian students, educators, and relevant policymakers, which continued through August 2024.

[16] As Barthes contends, 'The narratives of the world are numberless' (1977: 79). While there is little consensus on what defines a narrative, Chatman, building from Piaget (1970), argues that narratives differ from 'random agglomerates' of information by instead merely being *structured* around 'discernable organization' (1978: 21).

[17] Annual average ODA disbursed to 'fragile countries' for education over the post-Oslo era (2000-2014) was $3.6 billion (OECD 2019). In 2024 there were 61 state-based conflicts occurring around the world. Notably of these 61 active conflicts, only 11 crossed the threshold of outright war, with 50 matching Gaza's more common status as an intermediate armed conflict whereby students are often still able to attend formal education yet are habitually less willing to accept what are typically contested narratives (Gleditsch et al. 2002: 629; PRIO 2025; UCDP 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between education and conflict remains a significant, yet unresolved question, with existing studies usefully providing general contextualization, while largely overlooking the practical interplay taking place from the students' perspective that this inquiry seeks to answer. To properly engage the research question, it is useful to first review what is known about formal education's role within conflict, which, while ongoing, remains largely speculative. The relevance of addressing this uncertainty is underscored by the formidable scale of formal schooling, which typically comprises 14% of government expenditures and is further supported by $15.7 billion in annual international scholastic aid.[18] Despite this central role, international educational practice nonetheless remains understudied. This is especially pronounced in 'fragile' states, with a mere 1% of peace and conflict studies reportedly focusing on education in the developing world, and even less engagement of learning amidst conflict (King 2013: 5–6). And as conflict persists, so does this imbalance: comprehensive reviews continue to find surprisingly little evidence on how education actually functions or shapes learning in conflict-affected settings (Burde et al. 2017).[19] One predictable justification for the 'dearth of primary-source field research' in relevant security research is explained, in large part, by scholars' continuing 'reluctance to enter the field to conduct interviews' (Bloom 2010: 47). As Arjona and Kalyvas lament, it is often quite difficult to obtain data amidst conflict (2007). Yet even in more accessible areas there seems to be little interest in appraising the educational experiences of youth amidst conflict beyond cursory reviews of national trends or funds expended. Throughout the developing world assessments of educational initiatives are routinely broad in scope and primarily quantitative – highlighting criteria including enrollment and test scores – with negligible attention focused on the substance of educational programming and the larger political lessons students derive from them.[20] As Østby describes it, 'The lack of studies providing evidence about the relationship between educational content and political violence represents a significant research gap' (Østby et al. 2019: 81-82). As stated, students are not even considered educational stakeholders in the learning process by a wide variety of relevant institutions, including the United Nations.[21] This neglects the empirical first-hand perspective needed to highlight *how* and *what* youth are actually learning within conflict.

While holistic studies of education amidst conflict remain rare, there nonetheless appears to be an enduring consensus that countries with more formal education experience less conflict. This includes a seminal body of research that has explored the strong correlation between school enrollment and the likelihood of state-level conflict. In a study of 79 civil wars between 1960 and 1999, Collier and Hoeffler found conflict concentrated in countries with relatively little formal education (2004). A complementary study by Shayo supports the prevailing consensus by concluding that for every year of additional schooling, the risk of civil war was reduced by 3.6% (2007: 28). Conversely, Thyne (2006) and Barakat and

[18] At the outset of the Oslo Accords UNESCO recommended 6% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 20% of public funding be spent on education (Delores benchmark) (UNESCO 2015a). Typically, educational expenses are closer to 4% of GDP and 14% of government expenditures, while education's share of ODA (excluding debt relief) ranges from 8-11%, averaging $15.7 billion annually (OECD 2019).

[19] *See also* INEE 2020.

[20] *See also* Arnove and Torres (2003).

[21] As pointed out by Tomasevski (Sutton et al. 2007: 233) UNESCO, similar to many educational agencies, routinely fails to consider students as stakeholders, preferring instead to view them as passive beneficiaries. This trend has continued with UNESCO repeatedly continuing to list national governments, international partners, the private sector, school authorities, and parents as stakeholders, yet not the students themselves (UNESCO 2015c: 217; UNESCO 2015b: 24). Boyden (2000), Hart (2006), Marshall (1999), and Winthrop and Kirk (2011) all argue that the perspectives of children are habitually marginalized within humanitarian programming.

Urdal (2009) found that as enrollment in primary and secondary education drops, the risk of national conflict increases. The wider study of cross-border conflicts remains limited but, in one of the few reviews examining regional conflict, Østby and colleagues similarly found a strong correlation between lower levels of education and the increased likelihood of conflict (Østby et al. 2009).[22] As a result, 'existing quantitative evidence converges toward a consensus that education has an overall pacifying effect on conflict' (Østby et al. 2019: 47). All of these inquiries are constrained by their quantifiable methodology and theoretical suppositions linking education to conflict mitigation, however, and many questions remain unresolved.

For instance, there is ongoing debate concerning *why* formal education is often associated with less conflict. This is particularly difficult to resolve as much of the relevant research has focused on analyzing large multi-country datasets. Consider Barakat and Urdal highlighting a significant relationship between low levels of education and the likelihood of conflict (2009). Yet as their study analyzes 120 countries over three decades, why this is the case merely speculates that school enrollment competes with other more violent activities. In reviewing '750 five-year episodes' throughout dozens of countries, Collier and Hoeffler similarly surmise that additional schooling might provide more options to avoid violence (2004). Following this conjectural theme, Thyne reviews 172 civil wars over five decades to theorize that greater educational opportunities are an important gesture to wider society, and thus reduce potential grievances (2006). Likewise, large-scale research highlighting low levels of education being associated with higher levels of violence is similarly unsubstantiated. In reviewing 21 countries over 18 years, Østby and colleagues merely suggest a lack of education drives marginalized youth to violence (Østby et al. 2009). After surveying 251 groups over 25 years Kuhn and Weidmann alternatively surmise that less educated people are 'easier to persuade and manipulate' (2015: 551). Shayo, analyzing 32 countries, merely suggests that low levels of education promote 'militaristic attitudes' (2007: 28). Theorizing on such large multi-country datasets, while useful as contextualization, nonetheless fundamentally overlooks the inherent complexity of conflict and how students react to it. Put simply, there remains 'considerable need for systematic individual-level data collection on participants in political violence that can shed light on individual motivations' taking place within conflict (Østby et al. 2019: 82).

Looking beyond quantitative generalizations, it becomes clear that formal education often plays varying roles within different contexts. Collier and Hoeffler theorizing that education holds the potential to increase opportunities to avoid violence, for instance, holds relevance to selected studies (2004). In western Africa both Oyefusi (2008) and Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) conclude that increased education reduced the likelihood of recruitment to a rebel group in Nigeria and Sierra Leone respectively. However, such reasoning often appears irrelevant to other contexts, as the case of Gaza highlights. Within the confines of the Gaza Strip, blockaded since 2007 and, in the words of then-U.N. Undersecretary General John Holmes, a 'giant open-air prison,' educational advancement holds little connection to income or alternative options as the World Bank has called Gazan unemployment the 'highest in the world.'[23] An alternate explanation that poor education is associated with extremist views is similarly undermined by a different body of work that finds that most militants in Palestine are better educated than their surrounding peers. This includes Krueger and Maleckova using polling data to emphasize that support for violence does not decrease as educational attainment increases (2003). Berrebi similarly reviews the biographies of 335 Palestinian militants and highlights that education is positively associated

[22] *See also* Davies (2004) and Mundy and Dryden-Peterson (2011).

[23] Then-U.N. Undersecretary General John Holmes referred to Gaza as a 'giant, open-air prison,' a view echoed by then-U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron, amongst others (quoted in UN News 2009). The 2015 Gazan unemployment rate was estimated at 43% overall, and 60% for youth (World Bank 2015: 6).

with support for violence.[24] Yet as such studies were conducted remotely, why this is the case is once again speculative with explanations being largely anecdotal (2007: 28-29). While quantitative studies can help contextualize wider trends concerning schooling and conflict, to truly appreciate the relationship between formal education and support for violence amidst conflict, it is necessary to look far more closely at the direct impact such programming has on students.

Underscoring the importance of context and further challenging the positive functionalist relationship between formal schooling and conflict mitigation is the emerging focus on the 'negative face' of education. The 'positive face' of education, which is typically embraced by quantitative researchers, views schooling as a means to increase socialization and skill-building. While these aspects of learning hold direct relevance to mitigating violence, they do not provide a complete picture of educational practice within contested environments.[25] The more recently acknowledged 'negative face' of schooling explores an alternative view which, as most prominently argued by Bush and Saltarelli, asserts that 'in many conflicts around the world, education is part of the problem, not the solution' (2000: 33). This contention is generally based on the negative influence formal education generates, including when it is culturally biased (Thyne 2006; Berrebi 2007; Sambanis 2005; Lange 2011, 2012), inequitably distributed (Østby and Strand 2013; Fjelde and Østby 2014; Omoeva and Buckner 2015; Johnson and Stewart 2007), or unable to yield fulfilling employment.[26] Sri Lanka, which experienced a protracted civil war, provides a seminal example of the relevance of 'negative face' education amidst conflict. This includes the ethnic segregation of Sinhalese and Tamil students, with the Sinhalese curriculum featuring the 'glorious but embattled Sinhalese nation repeatedly having to defend itself and its Buddhist traditions from the ravages of Tamil invaders,' while the Tamil curriculum emphasizes deference to the Sinhalese (Nissan 1996: 34).[27] Instead of building a foundation for common understanding, as is assumed to occur through the socialization associated with the 'positive face' of education, the Sri Lankan approach arguably aggravated social conflict that ultimately cost 60,000 lives over a quarter of a century. While the 'negative face' of education is far from universally understood, this increasingly acknowledged capacity of formal education to inhibit peace highlights that educational practice is not uniform in its constructive impact.

To fully contextualize the research question, it is necessary to acknowledge both the 'positive' and 'negative' potential of schooling through more holistic empirical investigations within conflict that focus on *how* and *what* youth are actually learning. This complexity is illustrated by the oft-cited case study of

[24] Violent militancy is routinely found to share a positive correlation with formal education across the geopolitical political spectrum. This includes Gambetta and Hertog (2009) finding that 69% of militants reviewed globally had achieved higher levels of formal education than their respective communities. Only in Southeast Asia was the level of education lower within militant groups than in the general population. Similarly throughout the Middle East it has been recognized that militant movements typically have better educated members than the surrounding population. As first hypothesized by Bueno de Mesquita (2005) and Berrebi (2007), a *selection effect* could explain this trend whereby militant groups screen the pool of potential recruits and select the best educated candidates. *See also* Berman and Laitin (2009), Hoffman (1995), and Munson (1986).

[25] Within the literature that focuses on the 'positive face' of education relative to post-conflict settings, *see* 'shared education' as a model to bridge ethnic division as informed by intergroup contact theory (Allport 1954).

[26] As Choucri (1974) argues, high unemployment amongst educated youth is one of the most violent phenomena a society can face. *See also* Campante and Chor (2012), Lia (2005), and Salehi-Isfahani and Dhillon (2008) for regional examples.

[27] While not as prominent in the Sri Lankan case, the selective use of language in school commonly contributes to education-related violence, as demonstrated with Turkish Kurds (Graham-Brown 1994), non-Nepali speaking minorities (Gates and Murshed 2005), indigenous communities in Guatemala (Marques and Bannon 2003), non-Bengali speaking minorities in Bangladesh (Mohsin 2003), and many other cases.

Rwanda underscoring how even within short-term conflicts it is difficult to untangle pedagogical influences. In acknowledging that Rwandan formal curriculum emphasized the separate origins of the Hutu and Tutsi for over 30 years, Gasanabo contends that formal education contributed to 800,000 deaths during the Rwandan genocide (2004). Des Forges (1999), Mamdani (2001), and Sommers (2006) disagree, pointing out that the majority of militia who carried out the genocide had little connection to formal schooling.[28] Moreover, rejecting the assumption that there exists 'obedient masses' of youth that can be influenced so completely by schooling, Straus argues that many perpetrators made rational decisions to participate in mass-killings, based not on indoctrination but instead on the unique circumstances each faced individually (2006).[29] The Rwandan case study, while not offering a conclusive finding on the role of formal education within conflict, suggests that even in hindsight the drivers of violence often remain opaque, highlighting the complex interplay of various competing factors. It is clear, therefore, that much closer attention is required in order to understand *how* and *what* youth are learning amidst longer, *ongoing* conflicts.[30]

The need for more intensive investigation into the role of education within contested settings is also reinforced by the few studies available that highlight the dynamic nature of learning amidst conflict. As Dicum notes, for students growing up in Eastern Europe during the Second World War to Afghanistan following the 1979 Soviet invasion, the most important educational influences were not formal curricula, but instead 'teacher-student relations, methods of teaching, resource availability, the politicization of school routines' and 'peer relationships among learners' (2008a: 313). More recently in Ethiopia, Liberia, and contemporary Afghanistan, Winthrop and Kirk underscore that students in each context similarly learn from a wide array of factors and present themselves as active rather than passive participants in educational processes, relying on 'creativity, resourcefulness, and imagination' to interpret their surroundings (2008: 658-9). From these isolated studies it becomes more apparent that for young people living amongst conflict, political understandings are not forged exclusively from official narratives and that closer inquiry is needed to fully appreciate how formal education interacts with other pedagogical factors.

Palestine experiencing ongoing conflict over the past 75 years offers a provocative context to explore this issue, albeit not easily. For just as questions involving education and conflict are often siloed from their wider holistic context, so too are numerous areas of inquiry within Palestine's settler-colonial context. As Salamanca, Qato, and others argue, the ongoing nature of the Palestinian occupation influences not only the lived experiences of Palestinians, but also how they are researched. Just as the land is overtaken in piecemeal fashion, so too is its examination whereby smaller issues are often investigated without questioning larger realities rife with structural relevance (Salamanca et al. 2012). And while more focused inquiries certainly have their value, within a settler-colonial context like Palestine it is important to also take a wider view on what is taking place. As Wolfe frames it, 'settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event' (2006: 388). The structural nature of this conflict holds direct relevance to the likelihood that Palestinian students would ever ultimately learn to prioritize peace. Consider, as just one example, how youth unemployment in Gaza routinely hovered around 60% for much of the post-Oslo era (World Bank 2015: 6). This, in itself, is sufficient to undermine the likelihood that young people in Gaza would ever personally experience any advantages of nonviolent state-building. But what is further relevant is that this adversity is, in many ways, by design. As Roy explains, 'Israel's continued dominance

[28] Hilker (2011), King (2013), and Obura (2003) also disagree with the notion that curriculum played a central role in the Rwandan genocide.

[29] For Rwanda, *see* Bush and Saltarelli (2000) and Heyneman (2003).

[30] The Rwandan civil war, 1990-1994, was shorter than the average conflict, which are growing longer and more complex (Einsiedel 2017).

of the economy specifically and of the West Bank and Gaza Strip generally is not accidental. The continuation of (pre-) existing power relations between Israel and the Palestinians and the structures that underlay them is a characteristic feature of the Oslo agreement' (1998: 3-4).[31] So as one looks to Palestine to understand the interplay between education and violence, the larger *structure* that continues to facilitate much of the hardship must also be considered. Neglecting the depth of the settler-colonial context in favor of a narrower outlook is, as Abu Lughod sardonically puts it, 'bullshit.'[32]

While acknowledging the need to do a better job viewing education holistically alongside the larger structural elements of the occupation, many more focused inquiries nonetheless help illuminate how Palestinian youth are learning about conflict. One of the preeminent scholars framing the issue best is Abu Lughod, who argues that while education is foundational to safeguarding Palestinian identity and nationhood, he also criticizes its routine manipulation in alienating Palestinians from their history and lived reality. Reinforcing this, Abu Lughod highlights one of the first curricular reviews for displaced Palestinians in Jordanian, Lebanese, and Syrian schools from 1972. While these students would understand that their country had been 'usurped' after reading the textbooks, they would nonetheless 'remain unaware of the type and nature of the struggle which the Palestinian people waged to prevent the usurpation of Palestine.' Abu Lughod continues on to emphasize that 'the subsequent tribulations of the Palestinians, their attempts to preserve themselves as a community, and the outbreak of the Palestine revolution with specific objectives would remain a mystery if the Palestinian [students] were to rely on the orientation and values of the educational system' in neighboring countries (1973: 96). In turn, this work helps set the stage for greater appreciation of how displaced Palestinian youth were learning *beyond* the formal educational system.

One such pedagogical example of particular relevance to displaced Palestinians is *qussas* (storytelling). As (Lila) Abu Lughod and Sa'di highlight, while 'powerful nations have not wanted to listen... Palestinian refugees of the Nakba generation told their stories over and over, to their children and to each other,' creating through their personal accounts 'holes in the wall' of then 'thundering story of Zionism' (2007: 6, 11). This is supported by Sayigh's extensive work documenting such stories as 'rich sources of national history' that serve as an important compensatory source of civic education to students and adults alike (1998: 57, 2015). Unsurprisingly, such informal discourse did not remain limited to historical storytelling, especially as technological advances have facilitated greater communication. This is witnessed throughout the Palestinian diaspora as contemporary youth have embraced the internet to replace the educational lessons they felt were, at best, discounted, if not outright avoided, within school. As Aouragh recorded when interviewing a young Palestinian woman, Nuhad, in Shatilla, 'We knew songs and stories about Palestine before, but only the basics. Now, every time I am at the internet cafe I surf websites about Palestine. It helps to understand more about Palestinian culture, music, etc., things that I didn't know before' (2008: 90).[33] While such examples old and new do not answer every question about how displaced Palestinian youth learn – especially on matters of wider conflict – they once again suggest that education is not constrained to the classroom.

Relevant educational research within Palestine proper, while also limited, similarly highlights the intriguing potential of qualitative fieldwork to illuminate the dynamic nature of learning within conflict, often beyond formal schooling. Case in point, Apfel and Simon contribute a useful psychoanalytical study of 10 Palestinian children that briefly alludes to their seminal educational experiences growing up amidst

[31] *See also* Roy (1987).
[32] Al-Jana 2002: 11, as quoted in Sayigh (2015: 200).
[33] *See also* Yousef (2022).

violence. Most telling are their recollections watching regional newscasts of the 1991 Gulf War featuring 'the children of Baghdad roaming the streets, looking desolate, hungry, having to wash in the river.' Apfel and Simon in particular remark how the students accumulated such observations outside of formal education, resulting in 'quite detailed knowledge of various aspects of war and danger and politics' that meaningfully shaped growing frustration with their own circumstances (2000: 108-9). In living with a Palestinian family to better understand the influence of media and messaging, Oliver and Steinberg similarly highlight how informal audio and video recordings narrating Israeli violence shape the evolving political views of Gazan students (2005). As Bucaille further notes, such wider influences are often significant while she traces the lives of three Palestinian youths as they 'tilt away from the peace process towards the implacable logic of war' (2004: xix). Yet most poignant are the unique insights of Cossali and Robson interviewing Gazans as they recollect growing up throughout the British and Israeli occupations. While their work is similarly not focused on education, their interviews nonetheless help illustrate how young people in Gaza learned about the conflict they were living amidst. Their interviews hint at not just frustration with often 'useless' formal education, but alternatively where youth went to learn about the world. During the British Mandate this included students visiting their community elder (*mukhtar*) so they could listen to his radio as the news played through the window, to youth striving to get ahold of magazines, books, and newspapers to better inform political understandings during the Israeli occupation of Gaza (1986: 93). Most expressive, however, are the recollected experiences the students had with the conflict directly. As Isam recalls:

> I was a schoolboy in 1967. I remember that I was buying the fruit in the market on the first day of the invasion... We never thought we could lose. The Egyptian radio used to broadcast commentaries like, 'We are prepared for the drastic war, to restore the rights of the Palestinians and to save the Arab World from this parasite which is just a cancer in the Arab body.' Anyway, I was in the market that morning and I saw two Israeli tanks racing through the town. Even then I couldn't conceive of there being Israelis in these tanks. I thought they were Israeli tanks which had been captured by the Egyptians who were just taking up better positions further south! Later that day, Rafah fell. There were Israeli soldiers everywhere. I watched them, standing on a box, looking out of the kitchen window with tears streaming down my face. It wasn't so much that we had been so easily defeated but that we had been so easily tricked. It was an enormous shock and it led me to question everything that I had thought was unquestionable.[34]

Such qualitative clues, while far from definitive, once again hint at learning amidst conflict as a dynamic process playing out from a diverse array of influences, and that by extension support for violence can also be driven by informal educational experiences.[35] The specifics of the interaction between formal and informal educational influences remains opaque, however, underscoring the need for further inquiry.

While education's causal relationship with violence remains ambiguous, this hasn't limited the popularity of educational programming continuing to be employed against militancy. 'Countering violent extremism' (CVE), as one notable contemporary example, has risen in prominence over the last two decades to confront the dramatic rise in deaths attributed to political extremism.[36] To forestall this trend, educational

[34] Isam, as quoted in Cossali and Robson (1986: 113-114).

[35] Hollis (2019) notes how Palestinian students in The Olive Tree Programme would also routinely cite varied sources outside of formal education while arguing against peace.

[36] Violent extremists killed over 20,300 people in 2019, a notable increase when compared to 3,329 annual deaths 20 years ago (Global Terrorism Database 2020).

programming has once again been called upon to play the central role as 'a way of strengthening peacebuilding' through two main thrusts: improving general access to formal education and more narrowly targeting groups likely to be attracted to violence with supplemental educational programming (De Silva 2017: 3). Such thinking often rests on social identity theory, whereby progressive educational programming is assumed to challenge the naive 'us versus them' dynamics that some proponents believe underpin political violence (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008). Yet as mentioned, many high-profile violent extremists targeted by CVE programming are already well educated. Hence, it is of little surprise that CVE-themed educational initiatives continue to demonstrate little empirical success. For instance, Daesh (ISIS, *al-Dawlah al-Islamiyya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham*) militants from across the Middle East and North African region were found to be more educated than their noncombatant peers and presumably uninclined to revisit what they've already learned (Devarajan et al. 2016). As a World Bank review acknowledges, 'there is hardly any empirical evidence' to demonstrate a lack of education being the driver of violent extremism, nor that such 'interventions work consistently across different contexts' (De Silva 2016: 13). This alternatively lends support to cumulative theoretical frameworks, such as Moghaddam's staircase model, in which support for violence emerges not from ignorance, but instead from the accumulation of various lived experiences over time (2005). This framework lines up well with available empirical research underscoring extremist violence routinely being provoked by highly-personal experiences involving mistrust, humiliation, and state-sponsored violence – which conventional educational programming is habitually unprepared to address (UNDP 2017; Mercy Corps 2015; Webber et al. 2017; IEP 2015).[37] Moreover, not only do such efforts consistently fail to mitigate violent extremism, but in more candid case studies additional educational programming has been shown to provoke it. This includes efforts to confront Al Shabab by expanding formal education to 100,000 students living in Somalia, which counterintuitively resulted in 11,000 participants becoming *more likely* to support political violence after completing the educational training (Mercy Corps 2016).[38] As the World Bank acknowledges, there are 'substantial limitations to accurately understand' how education relates to violent extremism, underscoring the need to address this issue with more holistic field research (De Silva 2017: 9).[39]

A final theme of scholarly and practical relevance to inform the research question is the meaningful distinction between formal schooling within *post*-conflict settings, which remains challenging, and educational intervention within active, *ongoing* conflicts, which is altogether more difficult. Formal education is widely praised for playing a beneficial role in helping unify previously conflicted communities around common perspectives, as seen in the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Ireland, Mozambique, Somaliland, and South Africa (UNESCO 2004, 2011a). And while Apple points out that narrating conflict under even such stable circumstances is quite challenging, it becomes exponentially more difficult the

[37] Contextualization of extremist violence appears much more relevant than educational offerings, as 88% of extremist violence over the past 25 years has occurred within wider conflict – with 92% of such violence in response to state-sponsored violence. A mere .6% of extremist violence occurred in countries experiencing neither conflict nor state-sponsored violence, irrespective of educational offerings (IEP 2015: 3). Further inquiry found violent extremism across Afghanistan, Colombia, and Somalia was rooted not in educational limitations but instead correlated with abuse and humiliation – two issues not commonly included in quantitative educational reviews (Mercy Corps 2015).

[38] Al Shabab (*Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahidin*) is a Salafi-jihadist group in Somalia commonly associated with repression, insurgency, and terrorist attacks. As Berrebi (2007) speculates, acquiring greater reasoning skills within formal education can increase student awareness of wider social injustices, provoking increased violence.

[39] This in reinforced by a United Kingdom government-commissioned review that highlighted 'linkages between knowledge, attitudes, behavioral change and armed violence prevention/reduction is frequently asserted rather than demonstrated' (Oxford Policy Management 2016: 15).

more recent the peace (1984).[40] As Chauvet highlights, even in *post-conflict* countries educational programming has a high probability of failure, with schooling being less and less effective the more recent the peace (Chauvet et al. 2010). This nuance, however, is often neglected with the routine conflation of post-conflict and conflict settings throughout scholarship and development practice. While insights are limited and further inquiry is needed, Savun and Tirone simply suggest educational aid often has little documented impact *as conflict continues* (2017).

While relevant field research in conflict zones is incomplete, that which exists often challenges the enduring assumption that merely increasing formal education causes a corresponding reduction in both violence and support for violence. Instead of viewing formal education as operating in a vacuum exclusively through its 'positive face,' and conflating outcomes within *ongoing conflict* with *post-conflict* achievements, greater attention is needed on the contested nature of ongoing conflict and the 'negative face' of education, as well as the agency of students living amidst conflict and their ability to challenge formal educational narratives. As Davies and Talbot argue, students in 'fragile' states are 'much more active and discerning agents than has sometimes been portrayed,' and telling them what they should know about their own contested communities is often not a straightforward solution (2008: 513-4). More holistic empirical perspective is needed to highlight how youth, as active rather than passive participants in the educational process, are actually learning within conflict.[41] Addressing this gap in understanding and illuminating the educational agency of students learning amidst conflict is at the heart of this inquiry. Considering the sheer scale of $15.7 billion in annual educational assistance, with $3.6 billion alone invested into stabilizing 'fragile countries' each year, this uncertainty justifies further qualitative study of an actual program within an actual conflict to better illuminate how all these factors interact.[42]

ARGUMENT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Building from the foundational insights earlier scholarship provides on the nature of learning within contested settings, this research argues that expanding formal education does not definitively lead to a reduction in support for violence, and by contradicting the wider lessons of conflict will instead provoke further animosity.

The argument is guided by a number of assumptions. It assumes, contrary to existing quantitative studies, that *formal education is not uniform and universally consistent with a 'positive face' as previously discussed*; and that *political priorities will foster attempts to influence students with educational practice that undercut the relevance of nonviolent programming.* It also focuses, as many studies do not, on the *features of a conflict environment* – including narratives contesting formal curriculum – that *are likely to reduce or significantly complicate the ability of formal education programs to discourage support for violence.* It further assumes that, contrary to traditional perspectives and practices, *students do not represent a blank page that can be readily filled with content*, and that *they will not necessarily see the*

[40] As Apple (1984) argues, it is never easy to determine what should be taught about adversaries, which is echoed by Ploszajka (1996) and Lieven (2000) questioning if it is even possible – with the best of intentions – to teach about rival societies without either patronizing or pandering.

[41] This deficiency is particularly acute with education programming focused on peace, as Bajaj and Hantzopoulos (2016) note that more empirical studies are needed. Del Felice, Karako, and Wisler (2015) further cite the need for more evaluation of peace education programming.

[42] Education's share of ODA (excluding debt relief) typically ranges from 8-11%, averaging $15.7 billion annually (OECD 2019). Annual average ODA disbursed to 'fragile countries' for education over the course of this inquiry (2000-2014) was $3.6 billion (OECD 2019).

sponsors of the curriculum, and their goals, in a positive light, underscoring the importance of education remaining relevant to the student's circumstances to both establish and maintain credibility.

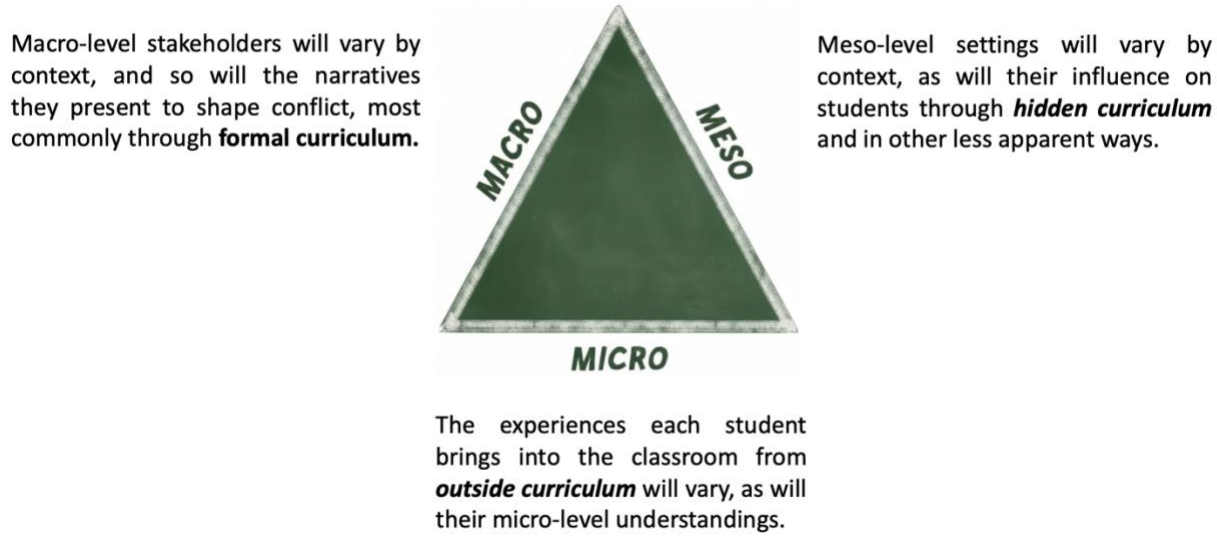

Fig. 1. The three dominant types of curricula amidst conflict and their corresponding levels of emphasis.

Reinforcing these assumptions are themes from several interdisciplinary approaches that help to highlight the complex nature of learning within conflict. The first supporting theme is the politicization of formal education at the macro-level, which in practice amidst conflict traditionally advocates narrow understandings at the expense of wider relevance. The common disconnect between theoretical socialization and the political realities governing schooling routinely undermines formal education's ability to mitigate violence through cultivating shared understandings. This unsettled appreciation of the nuance of education practice as a tool for conflict mitigation is unsurprising, however, as both violence and education remain ambiguous in political thought. Violence is traditionally regarded as the natural state of human beings, while education, and the pedagogy that guides it, is historically associated with the path that leads us away from such 'madness.'[43] As Durkheim argues, deference to structure and order is essential as without it man 'overflows in violence' (1973: 193). It is this fundamental understanding that informed the founding of modern schooling as it is known today: by coordinating the education of rival territories 18th century Prussia 'guarantee[d] the happiness of the state' and inaugurated a longstanding tradition of mitigating violence through the promotion of formal education (Helmreich 1959: 29).[44] The

[43] Pedagogy, translated from Greek to mean child leading, is widely defined as the science and art of teaching (Knowles 1973). *Lira*, the Latin cognate of learn, retains the ancestral meaning of 'furrow' or 'track.' The verb *delirare*, 'to deviate from a straight line' once referred to 'madness' (Mish 1991: 270).

[44] While the link between public education and security can be traced to Martin Luther as far back as 1530, it wasn't until 18th century Germany that schooling became recognizable as it is largely experienced today. Frederick William I was the first to mandate compulsory education in 1717 and, in 1763, his son abandoned religious morality as the principal basis for public schooling. Most notable here was their shared rationale for reform being the pacification of Prussian acquisition of both Catholic and Protestant communities (Helmreich 1959: 29; Melton 2002: 149-99). Further examples followed throughout the world when authority was challenged. This includes the first laws promoting elementary education in the United States in response to Shay's Rebellion (1786-7) and the Whiskey Rebellion (1791-4) (Kaestle 1983), as well as 'eliminating pockets of resistance to the central government'

socialization that lies at the heart of this general understanding comprises the core of the functionalist view that schooling plays a straightforward role in transmitting shared beliefs and, thus, that more education produces greater social stability. As Durkheim describes it, 'Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity: education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity' (1956: 70).[45] By viewing schooling as having a positive impact on society by promoting socialization and a shared sense of identity, formal education supports the widespread view that 'better education' is 'central to preventing and mitigating conflicts' (UNESCO 2015a: 27).[46]

What is often overlooked within this relatively straightforward conceptualization of learning, however, is the inherently political nature of formal education. While functionalism emphasizes the advantages of inculcating shared values through schooling, it gives less consideration to what values should be promoted and how they should be conveyed. In reality, formal curriculum routinely promotes often strikingly partisan perspectives by more narrowly defining '*legitimate knowledge*' (Apple and Christian-Smith 1991: 14). As educational scholars have long argued state-sponsored curriculum is especially potent because it 'announces hierarchy' and 'defines what counts as valid knowledge,' which dominant stakeholders consistently utilize to impose their interests over more vulnerable groups (Bernstein 1975: 185, 138). The 'enormous authority' of prescribing *valid* or *legitimate knowledge* is particularly problematic in conflict zones where schooling is often used by powerful actors as an extension of the 'political battleground,' a reality specifically relevant to Palestine where the 'official script' of formal curricula has historically been labeled 'coercive and manipulative' (UNESCO 2011a: 169; Pappe 2006: 101). As a result formal education and the *legitimate knowledge* it promotes amidst conflict is 'too often' used to 'reinforce the social divisions, intolerance and prejudices that lead to war' (UNESCO 2011a: 3).

The ability of narrow political narratives to successfully mitigate violence is further complicated by the often-coercive nature of schooling. As codified in the first modern textbook, civilizing students towards 'what's right and good' was motivated primarily by fearing the 'hand and rod' (*The New England Primer*, 1777). This early endorsement of corporal punishment underscores the longstanding tradition of formal educational practice being grounded in the authority to dictate *legitimate knowledge* rather than in any inherent opposition to violence. Functionalist views of education largely accept such discipline within the *manifest functions* of formal education, with what Durkheim deems a 'certain need for violence and

in Argentina in the 1880s (Tedesco 1986: 64). As the limits of repression similarly became apparent in France in the 1830s, France mandated comprehensive primary education to cultivate 'love of order' (Gontard 1959: 493 and Pilbeam 1976: 287, as referenced in Paglayan (2022). *See also* Paglayan (2021). Such self-interest was comparably not the exclusive domain of the state, with prominent educators including Francois Guizot (1787-1874), Horace Mann (1796-1859), and Petras Hofstede de Groot (1802-1886) being motivated to enlighten their societies divided by varying beliefs in pursuit of stability. As Glenn notes, 'popular education was not simply, or even primarily, to teach literacy or other skills, but to develop common attitudes and values considered essential to a society in which broader and broader circles of the population were entering public life' (1988: 45). So entrenched was its pacifying influence after 80 years that the prospect of forgoing such public education was already unfeasible, considered by Bushnell as an 'immense' threat to the security of the state (Bushnell 1847: 27, as referenced in Heyneman 2006).

[45] *See also* Parsons (1959) and Parsons et al. (1973).

[46] Functionalist education theory, like modernization theory, has guided international development towards universal standards and meritocracy over the latter half of the 20th century, including in the case of the development of the Palestinian educational system. This is generally supported by what Tellis argues is a 'resource container' mentality in which only material or tangible resources are judged to be influential, and which overemphasizes the importance of educational funding while discounting other qualitative considerations (Tellis et al. 2000: 31-32).

harassment' to learn one's place (1973: 194).[47] As he argues, 'It is by respecting the school rules that the child learns to respect rules in general… Serious life has now begun' (Durkheim 1973: 149). While acknowledged within the theoretical traditions of formal education, for this inquiry the *application* of discipline is most relevant within *hidden curriculum*, which comprises the less formalized lessons students learn through the mere act of attending school rather than more formalized educational objectives.[48] Positioning discipline amidst the pedagogical complexity taking place within conflict zones is especially significant, as it is estimated that a majority of young people in 'fragile' states are subjected to corporal punishment. Notably, this is true in Gaza where studies have found that eight out of ten students are routinely assaulted by teaching staff (Gershoff 2017). While rarely publicized, such candor is directly relevant to whether efforts to discourage support for violence will be successful. As Hyman and Perone (1998) argue, efforts by school officials to discipline students with violence often merely provokes further violence.[49]

It is these fundamental contradictions within educational practice that weaken functionalist approaches to schooling as a means of mitigating conflict. In theory, formal education is assumed to socialize society away from violence and towards civility and common understandings. This 'positive face' of education, including socialization, a shared sense of identity, skill-building, and merit, underpins the functionalist notion that schooling mitigates the intentional behavior that threatens or causes harm, and which conventionally frames violence and fuels conflict (Stanko 2001: 316).[50] But in practice, *legitimate knowledge* is routinely defined to fit with the narrow political views of dominant stakeholders, while the authority of these preferred narratives, like the school system itself, is often violently enforced. It is reasonable to expect that these inconsistencies will compromise the ability of formal schooling to discourage support for violence.[51]

The second assumption guiding this inquiry is that active conflict is inherently complex, and that this will complicate the narrow partisan narratives traditionally promoted by formal educational programming at the meso-level to orient and influence student understandings. To frame the challenges facing formal education amidst conflict in Gaza, this research adopts Gleditsch's conception of intermediate armed conflict that is defined as ongoing violent instability, more influential than minor conflicts of less than 25 annual deaths, while typically less severe than larger war exceeding 1,000 deaths annually (Gleditsch et

[47] Functionalist scholarship categorizes social interactions with students and other unplanned experiences as *latent functions*, while intended or visible functions of education as led by teachers and staff comprising *manifest functions* (Saxe 1970).

[48] According to Vallance, the functions of *hidden curriculum* more specifically include 'the inculcation of values, political socialization, training in obedience and docility, the perpetuation of traditional class structure-functions that may be characterized generally as social control' (1991: 94). *See also* Bowles and Gintis' 'correspondence principle' arguing that formal education mimics work to nurture obedient, docile workers (1976).

[49] As has long been recognized within Developmental Psychology, younger children are highly imitative and prone to absorb induction relatively indiscriminately; thus, when they see a teacher use violence, they will typically mimic the behavior (Bandura 1977; Bandura et al. 1961).

[50] Within peacebuilding violence is often defined as 'the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is,' incorporating both *direct* and *structural* aspects of violence (Galtung 1969: 168). Yet reflecting the partisan nature of formal schooling, this case study will also frame violence around its physical (*direct*) qualities reflecting the more simplistic aims of Oslo stakeholders. *See* Vidino (2010) and White House (2011) for additional examples of post-Oslo policy being focused around physical (*direct*) violence.

[51] Sherrod highlighted that formal schooling is uniquely positioned to influence the values and habits of young people (Sherrod et al. 2002), yet such efforts and cited successes rely on engaging and reflecting on controversial issues (Sherrod et al. 2010), which amidst conflict remain inconsistent and often elusive.

al. 2002: 629).[52] Within intermediate armed conflict students are often technically still offered formal education, yet are habitually less involved and more unwilling to unilaterally accept what are often still contested narratives. Such relative autonomy is highlighted by school enrollment generally being 30% lower in conflict-affected countries, with students more likely to drop out before completing their studies when raised amidst conflict (UNESCO 2011: 132).[53] This widespread reality is underscored in Gaza where 47% of students fail to complete their secondary school studies – including many who do not survive their educational tenures: on average one student was killed per week throughout the entirety of the post-Oslo educational era.[54] Collier, in emphasizing the marginalized roles of formal education and other basic services, subsequently describes conflict as 'development in reverse' (2003: ix).

Facilitating school participation within contested settings is, even under the most ideal circumstances, challenging. The complexity of such contexts is further complicated, however, as, by definition, there are at least two differing viewpoints and accompanying narratives competing for acceptance amidst ongoing conflict. In Gaza this complexity is compounded by the existence of no less than nine different political alignments, each vying, with its own explanations, to frame the wider political reality.[55] It is with this diversity of viewpoints that educational best practice promotes a multi-perspective approach (and the provision of critical thinking skills) to help navigate the complexity of conflict.[56] The 'negative face' of education, however, highlights such multi-perspective approaches are routinely subordinated to dominant political narratives within conflict. With $3.6 billion in international educational assistance committed annually to stabilize 'fragile' states, this inquiry assumes that sponsoring stakeholders and their national partners will have pronounced views over what comprises *legitimate knowledge*.[57] As Hollis observes, within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict 'external actors have played a role in reinforcing some aspects of the narratives of the protagonists and willfully ignoring others… in ways that conformed with their own views of the world' (2019: 132). The result, it can be assumed, is highly partisan curriculum whose relevance is undercut by a failure to adequately balance competing narratives present within the complexities of conflict.

The final assumption guiding this inquiry is that young people do not represent a *blank page* that can be readily filled with content, and that at the micro-level students will not necessarily see the sponsors of formal education or their goals in a positive light. This assumption, building from educational insights amidst conflict, is supported by the longstanding consensus within Developmental Psychology that most young people 12 years of age and older possess sufficient agency to evaluate competing narratives and determine which are most relevant to their own circumstances and political understandings (Adelson and

[52] With at least 25 combat-related deaths annually, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been categorized as an intermediate armed conflict every year since 1955. *See also* Gleditsch et al. (2002) and Btselem (2024a).
[53] Students in conflict-affected countries are more likely to drop out of formal schooling, with only 65% continuing their studies until their final grade, compared to 86% in poorer, more stable countries (UNESCO 2011: 132).
[54] PCBS 2019c. Between September 29th, 2000 and April 30th, 2015, 8,208 Gazans were killed in Gaza by both Israelis and Palestinians. This includes 1,047 Gazan minors killed by Israeli forces – over one per week, on average, for 16 years (while four Israeli minors were killed by Gazans over the same timeframe) (Btselem 2024a).
[55] There are nine different political alignments represented in the Palestinian Legislative Council, as well as numerous less formalized perspectives throughout Gaza.
[56] UNESCO advocates that 'the only way to adequately teach the Arab-Israeli conflict' is to teach different points of view to ensure, above all else, that students understand the complexity of the issue (2012: 49). This is complemented by 'Empowering students to think critically, teaching them to challenge ideas, construct rational thoughts and engage in meaningful debate' to counter violent extremism (De Silva 2017: 17).
[57] In the post-Oslo era, 2000-2014 (OECD 2019). *See* Appendix One.

O'Neil 1966; Adelson et al. 1969; Gallatin and Adelson 1971).[58] This more critical awareness, emergent in the years prior to the presentation of most political narratives in secondary school, underpins the assumption that wider influences are rivalling the *legitimate knowledge* of formal education and that young people are consequently exercising agency to assess and resist explanations that are irrelevant to their experiences.[59]

This assumption is further rooted in the alternative theoretical assertion that formal schooling merely comprises one component of learning, and that an overemphasis on the centrality of school-based programming compromises its inherent potential to promote inclusive understanding.[60] Dewey most famously championed this concern, contrasting the habitual 'mis-education' of formal schooling against the more expansive potential of education that he defined as the 'reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience' (1938: 76).[61] Such orientation is widely associated with constructivist beliefs based around the idea that knowledge is constructed, built from wider experiences that form the basis for the understanding of new information; when new information is encountered it is reconciled against previous ideas and experiences for credibility and relevance, expanding understanding or being disregarded.[62] Piaget describes the interplay as a dynamic 'dance' whereby students reflect on and reorganize new information as a transformative process (1977; Fosnot and Perry 1996). This inherently relatable process of actively constructing knowledge notably differs from functionalist practice within contested communities where – building off numerous complementary theoretical caricatures framing students merely as passive recipients of information — rote schooling is routinely prescribed.[63] In challenging the merits of rote educational traditions, the construction of knowledge holds useful relevance to better appreciate how young people living within conflict acquire

[58] As stated, the limited fieldwork available from active conflict zones highlights students demonstrate considerable educational agency (Dicum 2008a; Winthrop and Kirk 2008). The most substantial advances in children's political understandings take place after 12-13 years of age with the onset of formal operational thinking changing outlooks from concrete, egocentric, and immediate to more mature political reasoning. This continues to improve with more abstract political reasoning occurring between 13-15 years of age (Adelson and O'Neil 1966; Adelson et al. 1969; Gallatin and Adelson 1971).

[59] Framed by Nye (2002) as the 'information revolution,' contemporary youth are often able to access exponentially more information than their predecessors. While relevant educational statistics within contested settings are rare, isolated reviews highlight formal curriculum comprising a small fraction of the information contemporary students 'consume' on a daily basis. Bohn and Short (2012) estimate that less than 0.1% of that daily information originated in textbooks or other written materials. As formal schooling typically experiences greater marginalization within active conflict it is assumed that outside information similarly comprises a strong majority of information 'consumed' by students in contested communities.

[60] Marxism, a pillar of educational critique, has historically highlighted how learning is not limited to formal curricula, emphasizing the significance of *hidden curriculum*, as well as the insight that students at times only reluctantly endure their lessons. For students electing to 'play by the rules' of formal education to optimize their outcomes as opposed to being *blank slates, see* Bordieu's *illusio* (1998).

[61] Dewey criticized an increasing emphasis on 'acquiring' technical achievements such as grades, test scores, diplomas, and certifications as corrupting the inherent core of education and human relations (Schubert 2009). Such 'mis-education' was framed as monotony and constraint prevailing over variety and expansion (Dewey 1938: 37-8).

[62] This is consistent with the wider constructivist assumption that human knowledge is actively constructed and that associations are primarily determined by shared ideas, rather than material forces, that are constructed rather than given by nature (Wendt 1999: 1).

[63] Numerous political theorists have made this assumption including Locke (1841) characterizing the mind as a blank tablet or white paper (*tabula rasa*), while Hobbes cites the unique potential of formal education to support the state by imprinting conformity upon the 'clean paper' of men's minds (Bejan 2010).

and organize information. As argued, formal education plays a limited role within contested settings whereby narrow versions of *legitimate knowledge* are routinely challenged with counter-narratives and wider influences that fits well within a constructivist framework.

More significant differences emerge, however, when reconsidering the political nature of educational practice within active conflict. While constructivist approaches are traditionally oriented towards promoting active participation in stable environments, the 'negative face' of education within contested settings benefits from more critical review. Further contextualization of the often-political nature of formal education amidst conflict is especially useful, as emphasized most prominently by critical theory. Building from a more general focus highlighting oppressive power relations, critical pedagogy in particular narrowly centers itself against the often-parochial nature of formal education common in conflict zones, while also acknowledging the potential of students as active learners to resist it.[64] As McLaren (2015) argues, the main focus of critical pedagogy is highlighting the nature of politics and power within education, a theme that is emphasized repeatedly (Freire 1970; Giroux 1997; Shor 1980). It is this willingness to critically reflect on the political realities underpinning the educational system – in concert with acknowledging the autonomous pedagogical potential of students – that is of greater relevance to organizing this inquiry.[65]

The most prominent voice influencing critical pedagogy is Freire, who, while rarely using the term, nonetheless repeatedly emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the political nature of formal education. In confronting the power imbalance of formal education, Freire most famously draws attention to how dominant stakeholders dictate *legitimate knowledge* by comparing teachers to bankers; in what Freire terms 'banking education,' those who traditionally control the educational system exclusively codify knowledge and deposit information into the empty minds of passive students, both promoting and normalizing narratives that support the prevailing interests of powerful stakeholders (Freire 1970).[66] Challenging this practice, Freire advocates for 'problem-posing education' that emphasizes dialogue, inquiry, and discussion. Freire maintains that horizontal dialogue amongst equals is especially indispensable to discussion, as opposed to 'anti-dialogue' consisting of the imbalanced distribution of information associated with 'banking education' (Smidt 2014). He further argues that for learning to be *authentic* it must move beyond the rote deception and irrational approaches rooted in oppression to more critical, rational, and transformative approaches. In observing and reflecting on what they are learning students subsequently embrace a process of *conscientization* whereby one critically reflects on their world and becomes more conscious of oppressive situations, which becomes *praxis* when occurring together with action 'directed at the structures to be transformed' (Freire 1970: 126).

Building from its foundational relevance, critical pedagogy has continued to progress into a seminal framework to better critique not just the 'negative face' of education, but also more deliberate efforts to promote social harmony within adverse circumstances (for instance, post-Oslo Gaza). As Freire himself frames it, the larger goal of education is to help create 'a world in which it will be easier to love' (1970: 38). While formal schooling's role within critical pedagogy has evolved, it has notably retained its emphasis on personal and social relevance. As Shor emphasizes, critical pedagogy embodies going

[64] Critical pedagogy is most often associated with the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who extended insights from the Frankfurt School's critical theory to education.

[65] While not developing detailed theories on education like Freire, Frantz Fanon shared many of the same critiques of schooling helping maintain systems of oppression. This notably included a focus on colonialism, which holds relevance to contemporary Palestine. *See* Fanon (1952, 1967, 2001).

[66] *See also* Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992).

beneath the surface of prescribed *legitimate knowledge* to determine the meaning and personal consequence of any experience (1980). Reinforcing this view, Giroux argues 'knowledge has to connect with the lives of young people so that they can both become self-reflective about themselves and others but also the larger world.'[67] Giroux consequently describes critical pedagogy as an educational framework 'to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action' (2010: 1).

The practical engagement and social emphasis of critical pedagogy has additionally proved to be highly influential to the relevant subfields of both peace education studies and critical peace education – with Freire credited as facilitating their 'conceptual and methodological heart' (Reardon and Snauwaert 2015: xv).[68] While there is no consensus on what exactly constitutes 'peace education,' within educational practice it routinely advocates for students to acquire the skills, values, attitudes, and behaviors needed to support peace (Harris and Morrison 2012; Reardon and Cabezudo 2002).[69] As Bajal and Hantzopoulos describe it, peace education practice is generally focused on employing such traits to dismantle all forms of violence and promoting ways to create and maintain a more peaceful world (2016).

Such abstract aspirations often face considerable challenges in practice, however. This understanding was first acknowledged within Peace Studies, which originally framed peace merely as an absence of violence (*negative peace*). Looking deeper at the root causes behind conflict, Galtung emphasizes the importance of also confronting the underlying drivers facilitating violence to realize more lasting peace (*positive peace*). To achieve this, Galtung demarcates violence into *direct* and *indirect* roles (*structural* and *cultural*) to better navigate the challenges faced, and ultimately promote longer-term peace (1969). Physical violence (*direct*) is conceptually clear-cut, while *indirect* systemic violence (*structural*) and its legitimization (*cultural*) are more nuanced – yet with both holding direct relevance to the 'negative face' of formal education including, as Galtung describes it, the 'brainwashing' of socialization (1990: 293). As Reardon underscores, promoting true *positive peace* requires not merely suppressing *direct violence*, but dislodging all other types of violence – including violence within formal education (1988, 2000).

This more nuanced criterion is a welcomed addition to peace education, which was originally framed as an idealistic pedagogical process that emphasizes democracy, human rights, nonviolence, and understanding (Reardon 1988). Yet like many theoretical approaches optimistically introduced within conflict, practical implementation proved challenging. This adversity is underscored by peacebuilding curriculum, to date, demonstrating little empirical impact (Lister et al. 2001; Whiteley 2005; Kiwan 2008; Hart 2011). As many practitioners admit, successfully promoting pedagogies of peace is incredibly difficult within contested communities (Harris 2003; Lange 2012). While recognizing that more empirical research is needed, significant frustrations have already been noted (Del Felice, Karako, and Wisler 2015; Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016). One of the most relevant critiques of peace education curricula focuses on

[67] H Giroux 2014, personal communication.

[68] Within more stable democratic contexts comparable programming is interchangeably framed as civics and citizenship education, which similarly promote social cohesion as enabled by active and engaging education towards a common set of values or interests within a community (Börhaug 2005; Pérez Expósito 2014; Stitzlein 2015; Straume 2016). *See also* Bajaj and Hantzopoulos (2016), Harris (2003), and Kester and Booth (2010) for peace education scholarship directly influenced by Freire. Johnson and Morris (2010), McCowan (2006), Schugurensky and Madjidi (2008), and Torres (2017) were similarly influenced by Freire while engaging citizenship education.

[69] Bar-Tal (2002), Page (2008), Salomon (2002), and Trifonas and Wright (2012) highlight that no consensus exists on what constitutes peace education.

'universality,' which advocates for the universal principles of peace and equality.[70] It is such widespread idealism found throughout peacebuilding curricula that, while not technically comprising '*cultural violence*,' nonetheless routinely neglects the problematic topics required to forge *positive peace*. This includes criticism of peace education narratives as 'false promises' and 'wishful contents' more focused on emphasizing notional consensus and the common heritage of humanity rather than confronting the *direct*, *structural*, and *cultural violence* facing conflicted communities at the local level (Gur-Ze'ev 2011: 171; Zimenkova 2013: 37).[71] In doing so, such largely idealistic approaches undermine the value of promoting more balanced perspectives within contested contexts – and notably neglect Giroux's criteria that 'knowledge has to connect with the lives of young people.'[72] As Bajaj and Hantzopoulos acknowledge, peace education, though often well intentioned, rarely works out as planned (2016).

In appreciating the limited achievements of conventional peace pedagogies, critical peace education developed as an offshoot of peace education studies to place greater focus on how local perceptions may influence or shape perspectives on peace. This emphasis on the nuanced contextualization of peace and violence has relevantly opened a discussion highlighting how 'universality' within curriculum – often rooted in Western norms of what peace should look like – often fails to effectively engage and empower local communities (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2021). While more empirical work is needed to 'explicate the practice of critical peace education that is particular to specific contexts,' the importance of incorporating community culture and circumstances is already understood, as 'local, historicised knowledge' must be at the core of peacebuilding education (Bajaj 2008: 140; Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2021: 31).[73]

Building from the inadequacy of universal narratives within peacebuilding pedagogies, and the stated importance of localized knowledge, this inquiry assumes that young people growing up amidst conflict will choose to take their educational autonomy well beyond school walls to better 'connect' with their antagonistic circumstances. While a wider view departs from traditional educational theorizing – namely focusing on what happens exclusively in and around schools – it nonetheless offers a more holistic perspective better suited to appreciate the nature of learning amidst contemporary conflict.[74] Building from the traditional importance of formal curriculum and the more nuanced significance of *hidden curriculum*, what was originally described by Schubert and Lopez Schubert as '*outside curriculum*' takes on particular relevance for this approach (1980). *Outside curriculum*, at times referred to as non-school curriculum or out-of-school curriculum, emphasizes 'perspectives students acquire from other curricula' (Schubert 1981: 186). This wider consideration of pedagogical influences was later integrated under the now more widespread term 'public pedagogy,' which originally describing schooling's efforts to promote national identity and citizenship, was increasingly popularized around the location of learning.[75] Later

[70] As commonly promoted, peace education aims to eradicate all types of violence by creating a global culture of compassion, respect, empathy, and equality (Boulding 1988; Galtung and Fischer 2013; Reardon 1988). This approach is often framed as 'universality,' which advocates basing curriculum around the universal or universalist principles of peace, including the 'oneness' of the common heritage of humanity (UNESCO 1974: 2).

[71] This critique of peace education is also common with citizenship education, which is routinely criticized for repressing any content that might be deemed antagonistic (Börhaug 2005; Pérez Expósito 2014; Stitzlein 2015; Straume 2016).

[72] H Giroux 2014, personal communication.

[73] *See also* Bajaj and Brantmeier (2011), Bajaj (2015), and Bajaj and Hantzopoulos (2021).

[74] This notably includes Freire who, even in advocating for nonformal learning and educational reform, nonetheless embraces the structural centrality of schooling.

[75] D'Arvert first describes public pedagogy as educational efforts to develop national identity and citizenship beyond what can be provided by the family or church (Chamberlain 1894, as referenced in Sandlin et al. 2011: 42).

defined by Sandlin, O'Malley, and Burdick as the 'various forms, processes, and sites of education and learning occurring beyond formal schooling,' its focus aims to capture the educational value inhabiting less formalized spaces ranging from the dynamic lessons of social media and social movements, to more mundane community experiences (Sandlin et al. 2011: 1-2).[76] In embracing this wider perspective to assess the significance of diverse pedagogical perspectives, this inquiry is well suited to support the research question. In doing so it will build from related scholarship assessing the relevance of wider circumstances towards peace education programming. This notably includes Vasquez (1976), Salomon (2002), Bajaj (2008), and Wessells (2013) arguing that promoting *legitimate knowledge* irrelevant to the lived reality of students – be it through avoiding antagonistic concerns or promoting 'wishful content' – is not an effective approach to construct *positive peace* amidst conflict. As Schubert originally argues, for educational programming to promote social harmony, it 'must relate to perspectives students acquire from other curricula' (1981: 186).[77]

It is this emerging educational perspective within peacebuilding education that underscores the pedagogical importance of wider community influences: to successfully engage inherently autonomous students on questions of peace and violence educational programming must keep pace with and maintain relevance to the learning that habitually takes place beyond formal curriculum. This inquiry subsequently branches out from critical pedagogy by further embracing the more expansive perspectives of public pedagogy as the most relevant frameworks to engage the research question.

Given this perspective, in concert with the aforementioned assumptions and initial field research that align with such theorizing, it is argued that formal educational programming does not inevitably reduce support for violence – and if deemed irrelevant to the wider lessons of conflict will make it worse. The following section will outline how this argument, and the assumptions that support it, will be tested by engaging directly with students to better understand how the *legitimate knowledge* as defined by Palestine's formal curriculum compares to the wider *hidden curriculum* and *outside curriculum* experienced in post-Oslo Gaza.

METHODOLOGY

To determine whether formal educational programming introduced in conflict zones influences support for violence, Gaza is selected as an ideal case study in that its post-Oslo students have uniquely experienced the creation of an educational system developed deliberately around the intention of promoting peace. While pre-Oslo Palestinian students were traditionally schooled under foreign curricula – most prominently Egyptian or Jordanian – the purpose-built Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE, Ministry of Education) system offers a rare opportunity to evaluate the impact formal educational programming has on violent beliefs independent from historical precedents.[78] With the inaugural educational system bolstered by $3 billion in development assistance – working out to $2,160 in educational aid per student – Palestinian youth in the post-Oslo era were subsequently the most heavily

It wasn't until 1981, however, when Schubert first argued for the relevance of 'perspectives students acquire from other curricula' that the search for educational alternatives began to be formalized (Schubert 1981: 186).

[76] *See also* Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb 1984) and Dawson and Prewitt framing political socialization as 'the developmental process through which the citizen matures politically as they acquire feelings and information from family, peer groups, adult organizations, and media, which help them comprehend, evaluate and relate to the political world around them' (1969: 17).

[77] *See also* Schubert (1986, 2010) and Schultz and Baricovich (2010).

[78] Prior to the Oslo Accords, Gazan students were educated with Egyptian curriculum, while West Bank students were educated with Jordanian curriculum.

subsidized schoolchildren within 'fragile' states, further negating typical concerns over under-resourced programming.[79] These unique circumstances enable the assessment of not only the association between formal education and violent beliefs, but additionally its relevance towards the post-Oslo goal of promoting 'peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples' (Article XX11, Oslo II 1995).

Yet while the conflict mitigation aims of this purpose-built system were unambiguously nonviolent and supported with unprecedented financial assistance, the Gazan case study also highlights the often-competing lessons to be drawn from a contested context. In this case formal education was imposed amidst ongoing hostility, including the siege of Gaza, multiple engagements with the Israeli military, and 8,200 local deaths. As stated, one Gazan student was killed per week, on average, for the entirety of the post-Oslo educational era.[80] This violent reality both undercuts nonviolent narratives as promoted by the PA's post-Oslo formal curriculum and facilitates counter-narratives including those most prominently advanced by Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement, *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah)* attempting to legitimize political violence.[81] Reconciling these diverging influences offers unique insight into how young people are actually learning within contested communities, and starkly illustrates the challenging context often-idealized educational initiatives face when confronted by the chaotic reality of ongoing conflict.

The character of post-Oslo Gaza as a case study, while distinctive, offers wider insights into educational programming intended to mitigate violence in ongoing conflicts around the globe. Gaza is an active armed conflict which, along with 60 other cases around the globe, faces the brutality associated with experiencing at least 25 combat-related deaths annually. Of these 61 active conflicts, only 11 crossed the threshold of outright war, with 49 matching Gaza's more common status as an 'intermediate armed conflict' whereby students are often still able to attend formal education, while habitually less willing to accept what are typically contested narratives (Gleditsch et al. 2002: 629).[82] Each of these 50 intermediate armed conflicts also routinely receive assistance from the $3.6 billion in annual educational aid intended

[79] Total disbursed ODA to Palestinian education from 1995-2014 was $2.95 billion (while commitments were $3.08 billion). Per capita aid for students in conflict zones averages $16 annually, while in Palestine between 2000-2014 it's $191 (OECD 2019; UNESCO 2011a).

[80] In the summer of 2014 alone, it is estimated that 10,000-20,000 tons of ordinance were detonated in Gaza, which roughly correlates to between four and nine 'Hiroshima' atomic weapons (15 kilotons), Maan (2014b). As stated, between September 29th, 2000 and April 30th, 2015 8,208 Gazans were killed in Gaza by both Israelis and Palestinians. This includes 1,047 Gazan minors killed by Israeli forces – over one per week, on average, for 16 years (while four Israeli minors were killed by Gazans over the same timeframe) (Btselem 2024a).

[81] Hamas' counter-narratives, as featured in Chapter Four, are generally influenced by 'political Islam,' which proposes 'political responses to societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations of which rest on concepts borrowed from Islamic tradition' (Denoeux 2002: 61) and referred to more specifically in Gaza as 'National Islamism' (*al-Harakah al-Wataniah al-Islamiya*). National and global Islamist groups share a similar ideology, but strategic goals will often vary. As Mozaffari points out, 'National Islamism embraces movements whose claims are partly articulated by the modern concept of nation,' which differs fundamentally from global Islamism's universal aspiration to liberate all Muslim lands (2007: 27).

[82] In 2024 there were 61 active state-based conflicts around the world experiencing at least 25 battle-related deaths, with 50 categorized as intermediate armed conflicts (PRIO 2025; UCDP 2025). Since 1955, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has traditionally been classified as an intermediate armed conflict, with 1967 and 1973 witnessing over 1,000 casualties at the *regional* level. (The violence of 2023-5, admittedly well in excess of 1,000 casualties, will be treated as a coda to the main focus of this research and addressed in Chapter Six.) *See* Gleditsch et al. (2002) and Btselem (2024a).

to promote peace, as well as the political preferences that habitually accompany development aid.[83] So while no two conflicts are exactly the same, the violence Gaza experiences, in concert with the politically-influenced support it has received in the post-Oslo era, holds wider relevance. As Hollis notes, the only difference separating Gaza from other contested settings is 'the extent' of the attention focused on Israeli-Palestinian conflict (2019: 132). This characteristic, far from separating Gaza from other conflicts, underscores that if such a prominent context receiving unparalleled attention and resources was ineffective at reducing support for violence, there is little reason to presume this approach will succeed in more marginalized settings. Gaza consequently serves as a potent case study that is expected to generate unique insights on the challenges of mitigating violence through educational interventions with implications for the 49 other ongoing intermediate armed conflicts around the globe.

To investigate the efficacy of formal education mitigating support for violence within Gaza this case study initially draws on several standard methodological approaches incorporating scholastic data, development assessments from bilateral and multilateral organizations, scholarship analyzing the composition of Palestinian curriculum, and community polling. This includes engaging available data highlighting that while the Gazan educational sector went through considerable growth of school construction, teacher recruitment, and student enrollment in the post-Oslo era, these conventional metrics do little to clarify whether formal education reduced support for violence.[84] The most seminal gauge of Palestinian education, the *Tawjihi* (Redirection) secondary school exam, is likewise based on rote memorization of less confrontational content and, by its very nature, is antithetical to engaging the more critical questions that this research addresses. General quantitative data available from the PA similarly highlights both the importance of education in contemporary Palestinian society and the scale of the post-Oslo educational intervention, but largely avoids engaging the political dynamics at the heart of the research question.

While only available locally in isolated cases, another common educational criterion are standardized reviews that offer additional perspective on the impact of post-Oslo education. This includes Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Ministry of Education, and the United Nations all performing assessments that highlight, at best, mixed results.[85] The World Bank reviewed this data and deemed the lack of progress 'more than puzzling,' while hypothesizing merely that old and new curricula are 'just not comparable' and that the testing instruments should be redesigned.[86] Crucially, it should be noted that no current or former students were consulted in any of the analytical reviews, nor

[83] Average ODA disbursed to 'fragile countries' for education annually between 2000-2014 was $3.6 billion (OECD 2019).

[84] When the Ministry of Education was founded in 1994 there were 3,367 governmental teachers and 338 schools in Gaza, while by the 2011-2012 school year, those number had risen to 688 schools and 9,950 governmental teachers (PCBS 2019a; PCBS 2019b). Such institutional growth supported a doubling of basic and secondary enrollment in Gaza over the same timeframe from 234,921 to 460,784 students, helping raise both youth literacy from 97.7 to 99.2% and average schooling in Gaza from just over nine years in 2000 to almost 11 by 2012 (PCBS 2019c; PCBS 2019e; PCBS 2019d).

[85] The available TIMSS assessments for 2003, 2007, and 2011 include 3.6% gains in math and -3.4% regression in science, while the PA did not participate in the companion Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (TIMSS 2019). The Ministry of Education similarly administered a national standardized assessment to gauge the impact of the new curriculum, with Arabic scores remaining relatively consistent, while math scores 'plummeted.' This matches up with United Nations assessments highlighting an overall fall in student achievement, with only one in five Gazan students passing standardized tests in Arabic, English, math, and science (World Bank (2006) and Unicef (2011), as cited in World Bank (2014)).

[86] World Bank (2006), as cited in World Bank (2014).

was the widespread violence mentioned that erupted in parallel with the rollout of the new curriculum – even though it resulted in 635 school-aged casualties (Btselem 2024a). The World Bank instead narrowed its review of post-Oslo Palestinian educational progress to interviewing donor staff, ministry officials, and selected principals and teachers.[87] USAID's subsequent 2016 case study, likewise, limited its focus 'almost exclusively on the successes of the programs,' which necessitated avoiding engaging directly with Palestinian students.[88] Contemporary assessments of formal education in Gaza evidently continue the longstanding tradition of prioritizing quantitative reviews and higher-level informants, while largely ignoring student insights on the wider pedagogical influences that are of critical importance to understanding support for violence in conflict zones.

The only additional sources of relevant information engaging education and violence in the post-Oslo era is rather expansive scholarship canvassing Palestinian textbooks for violations of the Oslo Accords and more isolated community polling. Comprehensive reviews of the inaugural Palestinian curriculum against claims of incitement includes Da'Na, who found little to indicate 'hate education' in Palestinian textbooks and Brown who concludes that the curriculum 'does not incite hatred, violence and anti-Semitism' (Da'Na 2007: 146-148; Brown 2001: 1).[89] Existing scholarship specifically reviewing the Palestinian curriculum is a constructive starting point clarifying the partisan nature of *legitimate knowledge* being presented, but notably neglects to consider how it influences students. General polling also helps contextualize how 66.4% of Gazans initially supported the Oslo Accords, while 20 years later only 35% believed a two-state solution was viable (PCPSR 2012). More relevant is a rare 2012 survey which shows that only 3% of Palestinian youth supported further negotiations (and the Oslo framework) as the sole path forward with Israel. However, little insight is offered on why the majority of Gazan youth share this view (Sharek 2013: 60). An Interpeace assessment briefly mentions the frustration facing local youth, including how post-Oslo Palestinian students are 'violently treated as animals' in school along with their desire that the curriculum be 'upgraded and redesigned in a modern way' (2017: 15, 23).[90] Such research, while relevant, nonetheless fails to explore the issues at depth and more directly engage the role of formal education in influencing support for violence amidst the conflict.

To most accurately review the success of formal educational programming in mitigating support for violence, fine-grained case studies are needed that employ suitable research methods with relevant stakeholders. In Palestine, like other 'fragile' states, local participatory research and community engagement are deemed best for evaluating the impact of educational programming (Klees 2010). As Tamari (1994) and Zureik (2003) argue, within the 'fragmented' and 'besieged' Palestinian condition, qualitative research is preferable to quantitative studies.[91] It is equally important for education research within contested contexts to center such participatory engagement around the central stakeholders – students – with what Hart terms a 'children-focused, ethnographic approach' (2011: 24). By embracing participatory research prioritizing young people at the center of educational programming in Gaza, this investigation will be best positioned to answer the research question that earlier studies have neglected.

[87] The World Bank methodology used an Observation Tool and Facility Survey in addition to staff questionnaires (World Bank 2014: 44).

[88] USAID's 2016 case study included interviews with Ministry of Education officials, district officers, school principals, and teachers, as well as USAID and implementing partner officers (USAID 2016a: 1).

[89] *See also* Adwan and Bar-Tal (2013).

[90] Interpeace (2017) uniquely included qualitative interviews and focus groups with youth, yet this only included three sessions and all Gazan fieldwork was limited to Gaza City.

[91] An established body of ethnography work on Palestine highlights the nuances of local lived reality, yet largely neglects the interplay between formal and informal education in violence. *See* Allen (2008), Jean-Klein (2000, 2001), Swedenburg (1989, 1991), and Peteet (1991, 1994).

POSITIONALITY

This student-centered inquiry will benefit from and build upon an initial body of fieldwork first developed between 2009-2013 while the author worked in the Gazan education sector with Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and USAID.[92] While this positionality granted the author unprecedented access to young people in Gaza, it also complicates the methodology in that being *too involved* introduces the potential to influence results. As featured in the Preface, elements of naïveté and notoriety both come into play as an outsider operating within an isolated community like Gaza. Yet as emphasized, this research clearly prioritizes deference to Gazans on how best to engage and understand their community. At the core of this appreciation is the understanding that while such access is invaluable, the author must de-center himself and his unique familiarity with Gaza as it relates to wider fieldwork and analysis. From a data collection standpoint, this partition is facilitated by using local proxies in Gaza for any engagement that might be less candid when speaking with an outsider.[93] Building from this strategic orientation, more formalized research started with desk reviews and contextual discussions in 2013, followed by qualitative conversations with students initially taking place between May 2014 and December 2015. Follow-up discussions with students and complementary interviews with educators and policymakers then continued into 2017, and later extended through May 2025. Building from this access to – and deferential appreciation of – the local community, this research is best positioned to understand the influence educational programming has on youth, as well as how it affects their views on violence. The details of this approach will be outlined in the next section.

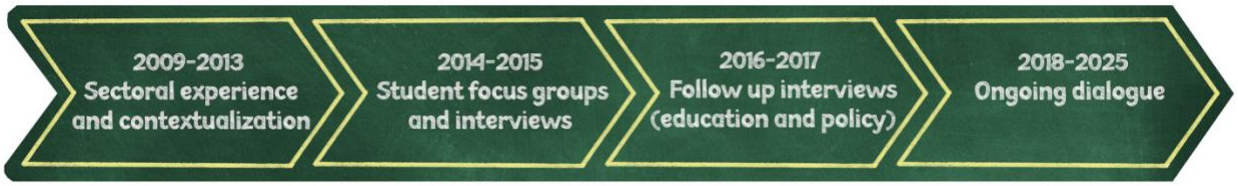

Fig. 2. Research timeline

AREAS OF FOCUS

As a foundation for this research, the thesis first sets out to clarify and contextualize the initial conflict mitigation aims underpinning formal educational programming to support the Oslo Accords, as well as what was being taught. While schooling generally falls under the notional umbrella of conflict mitigation, it is important to acknowledge that the inherent callousness of conflict is often matched by the uncompromising political agendas guiding relevant educational programming. For Palestine's inaugural curriculum, this contextualization will be grounded with the help of archival research and policy interviews that highlight the explicit and implicit priorities of prominent stakeholders guiding formal education in Gaza. As will be explained at length in Chapter Two, with the Oslo Accords codifying Israeli oversight over any development issue and the United States government being the lone stakeholder trusted by both the

[92] This experience includes teaching as a lecturer at Islamic University of Gaza and working as a National Human Rights Officer for the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Gaza), Project Manager for the United Nations Development Programme (Gaza), and Chief of Party for USAID leading the rebuilding of the American International School (Gaza).

[93] The only exception to this deference was any research taking place involving external stakeholders, including, for instance, the United States government.

Israelis and the newly formed Palestinian Authority, the State Department was best positioned to guide development efforts in support of the peace process.[94] While not the only outside stakeholder supporting post-Oslo development, this unique positionality was reinforced by the hesitancy of other bilateral and multilateral stakeholders to take a leading role in such a high-profile initiative and similarly eager to avoid 'messy' issues like education.[95] As Hollis describes it, 'Effectively the Americans then "owned" it' (2019: 135). As a result, the State Department and its subordinate development agency USAID coordinated post-Oslo educational policy along with the PA, which developed and implemented the post-Oslo curriculum. Their shared conflict mitigation goals, as explicitly outlined in the Oslo Accords, generally emphasized that Palestinian educational programming should 'foster mutual understanding and tolerance' and 'contribute to the peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.'[96] However, documenting the specific strategy to mitigate support for violence within post-Oslo education is less straightforward. The inquiry is complicated by the reality that both prominent development stakeholders – USAID (West Bank Gaza) and the PA – were relatively new, being inaugurated locally only after the signing of the Oslo Accords and, thus, lacked the institutional presence to lay out traditional development metrics to guide and evaluate subsequent programming.[97] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasized this situation six years after the inauguration of the new educational programming, pointing out the notable absence of any PA plan or criteria to evaluate the new curriculum, with ensuing approaches being 'arbitrary, ad hoc, and reactive' (2006: 14). USAID's own audit later admitted as much, acknowledging any investments in education over its first decade were 'untethered' from any specific development strategy and were largely subordinated to higher-level political objectives (USAID 2016a: 16; Roy 1996).

As will be highlighted in subsequent chapters, educational practice routinely defers to narrower partisan aims in Palestine, with the PA's 'peace curriculum' (and Hamas' more militant scholastic response) being merely the latest meddling. The influence of political stakeholders and their specific goals will be documented, not with reference to any comprehensive educational plans – which never existed – but instead through interviews with relevant policy actors and supporting archival research. Notable interviewees include the global Administrator for USAID (1993-1999), Mission Directors for USAID - West Bank Gaza (1994-2004), U.S. Consul General for the Occupied Territories (1993-1997), and U.S. Deputy

[94] Per the transfer agreement of 1994, any changes to the Palestinian educational system must be submitted to the relevant Israeli authorities for review. Only if 'at the end of the thirty-day period Israel has not communicated any opposition concerning the proposed legislation, such legislation shall enter into force,' Article VII, Point Five, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1994). T Verstandig 2019, personal communication.

[95] Roy 1996; T Verstandig 2019, personal communication.

[96] As outlined in the Oslo Accords and emphatically endorsed by the U.S. government, does Palestinian educational programming 'foster mutual understanding and tolerance' and 'contribute to the peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples'? Towards that end, does Palestinian educational programming accordingly also 'abstain from incitement, including hostile propaganda, against each other' and 'refrain from the introduction of any motifs that could adversely affect the process of reconciliation'? (Article XX11, Oslo II 1995). Second, and of particular concern to the State Department, is the 'continued viability' of the peace process maintained by investments in the educational programming? And in a directly related query, as featured partner, are the economic, political, and security concerns of the Israeli government satisfied by the educational programming? (Various interviews with State Department officials, Roy 1996: 59). Third, per the concern of the Palestinian Authority (and later echoed by Hamas), have Gazan students adequately embraced their preferred 'traditional' rote-style education to accommodate their political convenience? (N Hovsepian 2015, personal communication). And finally, for USAID's local implementing office lacking a traditional development mandate, does the educational programming at least allow Palestinians to 'realize some tangible benefits' from the peace process? (USAID 1996a).

[97] USAID's West Bank-Gaza office was first opened in 1994.

Assistant Secretary of Near Eastern Affairs (1994-2001) who are most familiar with American involvement in the development of the Palestinian educational sector, as well as numerous local informants to better contextualize the priorities of the Palestinian Authority. Clarifying stakeholder goals is further reinforced by reviewing pertinent documents, which include the Basic (trial) Palestinian Curriculum (1997), First Palestinian Curriculum Plan (1998), USAID Program Strategy for The West Bank and Gaza Strip 1993-1997 (1996), USAID/West Bank and Gaza Strategy Development Process, Internal Draft (1996), and the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities (1994).[98] It is by drawing on these and other sources that this inquiry will provide the clearest possible picture of how high-level stakeholders attempted to mitigate support for violence through the development of post-Oslo Palestinian education, fitting consistently into the larger tradition of politicizing Palestinian education around the narrowing of *legitimate knowledge*.

To determine whether these policy aims were successful in reducing support for violence, the substance of the educational programming itself will also be reviewed to better understand the identity, social norms, and collective sense of purpose that the national curriculum attempted to instill. As Stenhouse argues, 'all educational ideas must find expression in curricula before we can tell whether they are daydreams or contributions to practice. Many educational ideas are not found wanting because they cannot be found at all' (1980: 14). To best ascertain what is considered *legitimate knowledge* within the inaugural Palestinian curriculum, this inquiry partnered with a post-Oslo Gazan Educational Specialist from the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) to scan all formal textbooks from prep school (seventh through ninth grades) and high school (tenth through eleventh grades) curriculum for relevant content, including civics, history, and religion textbooks. While the formal post-Oslo Palestinian curriculum is largely devoid of political substance, several textbooks were identified as particularly relevant to the research question, including *History of the Modern World, Grade 10 (Parts 1 and 2)* and *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11 (Parts 1 and 2)*.[99] These textbooks were translated and analyzed for meaning using critical discourse analysis as educational studies best practice, highlighting both what was included as well as notably what was absent.[100] This review provides both a greater awareness of the wider narratives presented by the PA to mitigate support for violence beyond more commonplace research focused exclusively on incitement, as well as providing supplemental material for focus group discussions and interviews.

Just as the development of the PA curriculum and the textbooks themselves provide a rich foundation to appreciate conflict mitigation efforts in Gaza, so too do Hamas' post-2007 educational changes. By conducting interviews with Hamas educators, pursuing archival research on the development of Hamas' educational platform featuring Education Laws No. 1 and No. 5, and conducting a critical discourse analysis on Hamas' showcased textbook, *National Education, Grade 10*, greater understanding can be gained on how alternative political agendas also employ educational programming in Gaza to support their own partisan aims.[101] As Hamas' educational programming more generally strived to legitimize violence, its

[98] Education Law No. 1 was published by Hamas' Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education in 2013. It and other Hamas education documents play an ancillary supporting role in Chapter Four.

[99] The first four curriculum texts, *History of the Modern World, Grade 10 (Parts 1 and 2) and History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11 (Parts 1 and 2)* were published by the PA's Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education in 2004 and 2005 respectively and are of central relevance to the research question.

[100] Critical discourse analysis is most relevant to analyzing textbooks as its focus is to demonstrate how institutional discourse construes complex realities in selective and reductive ways (Harvey 1996).

[101] HMoEHE 2013a. *National Education, Grade 10* was published by Hamas' Ministry of Education and Higher Education in 2013 (HMoEHE 2013b).

review provides the further opportunity to appraise opposing approaches to better assess formal schooling's relationship with violence from contrasting perspectives.

To answer whether formal educational programming was effective in reducing support for violence – and why – it is essential to directly engage with local students and educators to understand how formal narratives were received, as well as how they were reconciled against the wider lessons experienced growing up in Gaza. The significance of this approach is underscored by the emerging awareness that unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons students experience within school (*hidden curriculum*) and beyond (*outside curriculum*) habitually rival formal curricula throughout the region.[102] The importance of engaging directly with students to gain greater understanding of this process is not a new idea and was emphasized by the original head of the Palestinian Curriculum Development Center – the well-known and widely respected Palestinian scholar, Ibrahim Abu Lughod. Yet this approach remains vastly underutilized within existing reviews of formal education in Palestine (and beyond).[103]

This student-centric research will subsequently highlight the interaction between both formal and informal lessons experienced in post-Oslo Gaza – and how they influenced support for violence – through conversations with a curated selection of the 40,000 students who entered first grade in the fall of 2000 and inaugurated Palestine's post-Oslo peace curriculum – hence termed the 'Class of 2000.' To most effectively engage these students, the author partnered with key informants from throughout the Gazan educational sector that universally suggested recruiting a manageable number (~40) of young people to best communicate the goals of the research, cultivate trust, and facilitate thoughtful, candid conversations.[104] Yet just as important as the depth of the conversations was ensuring that this smaller cohort truly represented its wider generation. In turn, the author worked with the same key informants to cultivate a list of 41 Gazan youth, all between 18 and 23 years old, that best reflect the composition of their peers. This included geographic representation, with no more than 35% of the young people selected having grown up in the more urban and affluent environs of Gaza City to loosely match the residential distribution of the wider enclave (Fig. 3).[105]

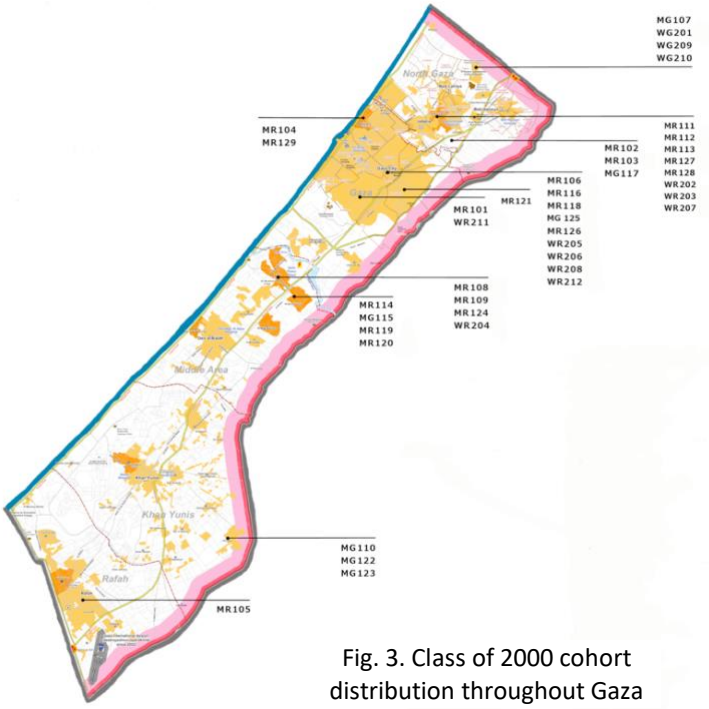

Fig. 3. Class of 2000 cohort distribution throughout Gaza

[102] *See* AbuFarha (2009), Adely (2004), Anderson (2005), Benei (2008), Da'na (2007), and Starrett (1998).
[103] *See* the First Palestinian Curriculum Plan (1998) and Moughrabi affirming that students and teachers were extensively consulted during the development of the First Palestinian Curriculum Plan (1998); Hovsepian (2008: 166).
[104] Local informants helping select cohort participants include relevant specialists from Amnesty International, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Unicef, and other agencies directly familiar with Gazan education.
[105] *See* Appendix Three.

Additional consideration was also given to match larger ideological and socioeconomic composition of the community, including the Class of 2000 cohort containing nine young people from Hamas-affiliated families, 13 from Fatah-affiliated families, and 15 from across the political spectrum being from families living below the poverty line to loosely reflect the 31.8% of Gazans that supported Fatah, the 21.9% that supported Hamas, and the 38.8% poverty rate in Gaza when the Class of 2000 completed secondary school (PCBS 2015; PCPSR 2012). Also important to Gaza society, just under one-third of young people in the cohort identify as native Gazans, while two-thirds descend from families displaced from elsewhere in Palestine, as is the case throughout Gaza with 76% of residents colloquially described as refugees (PCBS 2015). The aforementioned criteria represent only a fraction of the cohort's diversity, however, including the particularly relevant reality that by the end of high school a mere 53% of the Class of 2000 passed the *Tawjihi* national secondary school exam, a widely held community barometer for being a successful student. Consequently half of the interviewees were intentionally selected only after discontinuing their studies prior to completing secondary school.[106] It is with such a representative sample that this research set out to understand not just those youth who are outspoken, politically active, and more readily available to outside researchers, but instead the larger, diverse community they are drawn from as well.[107]

Key informants were then subsequently consulted on the best ways to most effectively engage members of the cohort, including prioritizing candor and the personal safety of interviewees.[108] Local guidance was clear in advising that selecting conscientious proxies from the Class of 2000 itself would be the most successful approach for data collection to ensure that the young people were comfortable and that all discussions were as candid as possible.[109] In turn, two proxies, one female (WR211) and one male (MR126), were recruited from the Class of 2000 and subsequently led youth engagement with their peers.

One of the approaches that was promoted by key informants in Gaza was to invite cohort members to small focus group discussions comprising three to five people from the same general area to recreate what Morgan characterizes as 'a lively conversation among friends or neighbors' to 'produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group' (1988: 22, 12).[110] Towards this end, proxies were onboarded not only on data collection, but importantly all aspects of the inquiry to ensure they were comfortable with the entire research endeavor to help set the tone for such candid and 'lively' conversations. This training also included sharing a series of talking points designed in coordination

[106] Forty-six percent of the students in this research cohort completed the *Tawjihi* exam, roughly representing the 53% of their peers in the wider Gazan community that passed the exam at the same time (PCBS 2019c).

[107] The only notable concern with the cohort's representation is gender, as 70% are male and only 30% are female due to challenges in finding young women who fit the demographic criteria that were also available to participate. Yet this was balanced out within the analysis and presentation, as quote selection and survey polling more closely represent the 50/50 gender balance present throughout Gaza.

[108] As will be clarified within the ethical considerations discussed at the end of the methodology section, all student participants remain anonymous throughout the research project and are only referenced by a coding or pseudonym of their choosing.

[109] Starting from the first interviews inspiring this inquiry taking place at Qasr Al-Hakim prison in Gaza in 2012, key informants advised that proxies be used to conduct selected local interviews to avoid compromising the conversations. And while no proxies are without their own biases, key informants were confident that the proxies selected to engage the Class of 2000 were both without prejudices, which was confirmed when reviewing interview and focus group data. For more information *see* Appendix Four.

[110] Per local norms, all focus group discussions and subsequent interviews were segregated by gender, with the female proxy convening female-only group discussions and the male proxy convening male-only group discussions. This approach is also endorsed by Hollis, as embraced by The Olive Tree Scholarship Programme cultivating discussion and understanding between Israeli and Palestinian students (2019).

with a local Unicef Educational Specialist describing the overarching goals of the research to better understand what the students learned inside and outside of school growing up in post-Oslo Gaza, as well as specific questions to ask, as appropriate.[111] The proxies then sat for their own focus group discussion centered around growing up in Gaza so they could first appreciate the process as a participant, prior to convening their own sessions with their peers in the Class of 2000. When comfortable, the proxies then organized a series of guided focus group sessions at the Tamer Institute in Gaza City, and later in more impromptu settings in outlying areas of Gaza, from May 2014 through December 2015.[112] After a brief orientation, these sessions began with open-ended questions asking about lessons from inside school, including both formal and *hidden curricula,* and later experiences with *outside curriculum*. While additional information, including sample textbooks, was available for reference, these foundational discussions typically 'snowballed' into boisterous conversations with little help needed, notably driven by the student participants themselves.[113] These discussions and subsequent follow-up interviews then continued on a case-by-case basis throughout 2016 until all 41 cohort members had been given an opportunity to share everything they deemed relevant to assessing the impact on schooling and their subsequent views towards political violence.

While student insights are essential to evaluating the success of post-Oslo curriculum in mitigating violence, it is also important to consult other relevant perspectives on Gazan education to ensure as comprehensive a view as possible. Thus, a series of supporting key informant interviews were conducted to better understand local educational practice, which include engaging with educational specialists from Al Azhar University, the American International School Gaza (AISG), IUG, UNDP, Unicef, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which has been supporting education in Gaza since 1950 (UNRWA 2025). Building from the significance of wider public pedagogy schooling only represents a fraction of the educational exposure young people will experience growing up. This is further compounded by the previously mentioned reality that 47% of the Class of 2000 did not successfully complete secondary education. Thus, to comprehensively explore the experiences of Gazan youth, meaningful efforts need to be made to include the experiences of those increasingly outside of formal education. Informants familiar with alternative forms of community-based education were also consulted to better understand students from the Class of 2000 who pursued less conventional trajectories, including representatives from Islamic outreach groups (*da'wa/ da'wat*), the Hamas Student Association (*Kutla Tulabiyya*), and other relevant local stakeholders.

Beyond reviewing the narratives presented to Palestinian youth through their textbooks and engaging with Gazans directly to document their impressions of formal educational programming, it is important to analyze student perspectives against the research question within a larger framework. This first includes translating and analyzing all interview and focus group discussion notes to allow major themes to emerge.[114] The results were then confirmed to align with the prevailing themes from the student sessions, as observed by the proxies who convened the focus groups, and acknowledged that no additional issues were absent. This data was then organized around the importance given to each

[111] In coordination with M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist (2013-4).

[112] Focus group sessions with current and former students were first collected from May 2014 through December 2015, which then typically transitioned into more intensive and often ongoing interview sessions over subsequent years.

[113] Copies of both PA and Hamas textbooks were available to reference during focus group discussions and interviews, as needed.

[114] All interview and focus group discussion translation was overseen by Unicef staff from Gaza to ensure its accuracy to the local context.

pedagogical influence by the students themselves. For instance, the structure of Chapters Three and Four are organized around formal, *hidden*, and *outside curricula* – yet notably the sub-themes within each of these sections are all derived exclusively from the most prominent perspectives student interviewees emphasized during interviews and focus group discussions. These collective perspectives were then reviewed, first to appreciate how and what the students were learning about the conflict, and then later compared with the original aspirations grounding the educational programming. Reflective of the partisan nature of schooling, this includes directly engaging the stakeholder goals that initially justified the educational intervention. Curriculum content and student feedback are then subsequently analyzed against more specific near-term goals, including avoiding the *cultural violence* of incitement and supporting the viability of the peace process, as the Class of 2000 proceeded through basic and secondary school (2000-2009). As is central to the spirit of the research question, the analysis will then reexamine students' perspectives towards mutual understanding and violence while entering high school as more critically aware adolescents over the long-term (2010-2015). By contrasting these partisan goals against the complexity of conflict and the students' ability to increasingly navigate their understandings independently, the inquiry will outline how an overreliance on functionalist traditions fundamentally compromised the educational intervention. Such insights will then be reviewed against relevant scholarly criteria, including critical peace education and public pedagogy, highlighting exactly why support for violence endures in post-Oslo Gaza.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

It is important to reflect on the very real ethical concerns of pursuing this research, both personally and for those in the Gazan community. Swedenburg once described two 'unavoidable risks' in pursuing fieldwork in Palestine: that one might obtain 'a heroic aura' for working within a frontline site, and that the researcher might become 'contaminated with the "terrorist" or "antisemitic" reputations' of their informants (1995: 25-6). Yet after four years of foundational work within the Gazan educational sector and extensive subsequent engagement with all corners of Palestinian society this inquiry remains acutely aware that any local research requires considerable thought. Such attention is reflected in the author having received pre-approval by the Hamas-run Ministry of Interior for this project – at a time when no outside academic research was formally being allowed in Gaza – as well as having been vetted as a Gazan field researcher for the United Nations Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This grounding helps ensure that the research is perceived as independent of any outside agenda, facilitating buy-in amongst the community, and maximizing the chances for success.

The ethical concerns with regard to the community, however, are no less weighty. Fox opined that fieldwork is an assertion of power and authority, a statement this endeavor appreciates on matters of security as well as scholarship (1991). As Faier points out – vividly recounting the killing of a Palestinian woman during her fieldwork and the litany of rumors competing to explain it – personal information and appearances within Palestinian society are both of great importance (2002: 193). Even mere confusion can seriously hurt people. Consequently, studies like the one that this thesis conducts require unqualified attention to informants, and their place within the community, be it perceived locally or abroad. To help address these concerns, and per the advice of the Hamas-run Ministry of Interior and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, the names of interviewees and any unique identifiers, including addresses and phone numbers, have not been electronically recorded at any point without explicit consent. Additionally, all young people involved with this research remain anonymized throughout this inquiry, with quotations attributed to students utilizing pseudonyms of their choosing. This furthermore includes not contextualizing any student quotes with biographical information that might divulge their identity, which, while not ideal from an analytical perspective, is necessary when considering the limited

size of both the Class of 2000, as well as this conflict's long history of assassinating those who advocate for Palestinian Resistance (*al-Muqawama*). [115]

As many respondents share very personal experiences while participating in this research there is the further responsibility to impartially respect larger truths, no matter their composition. Greenhouse wrote that fieldwork in unstable places requires engagement 'with the world as it is,' be it with 'life-affirming creativity' or the 'mark of death' (Greenhouse and Mertz 2002: 29). To similarly respect the lived experiences shared by local informants, this inquiry will convey the cumulative reality 'as it is,' no matter where on the political spectrum it is found.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Following this introduction, **Chapter Two** steps back to review how educational programming employed to mitigate conflict amidst contested communities is not a new approach. This contextual review will highlight the limited successes that earlier efforts have achieved in Palestine, and how resistance to the imposition of *legitimate knowledge* has been building over time. The chapter will then highlight how this concern was clearly understood by educators in the initial design of the post-Oslo curriculum, but was subsequently overruled by political stakeholders who prioritized conventional educational programming.

Chapter Three builds from the wider contextualization to more narrowly consider the practical significance of the Palestinian Authority's inaugural peacebuilding curriculum. While acknowledging it is less vitriolic than traditional regional curricula, its functionalist emphasis on rote acceptance of a highly constrained framing of Palestinian nationalism stands in sharp contrast to Gazan reality. To interrogate this divergence, the inaugural curriculum will be reviewed using critical discourse analysis, and complemented with candid insights from Gazan students on how it influenced their views towards the Palestinian Authority's prescribed nonviolent approach to nationalism.

While peace-building narratives contrasted against the violent realities of conflict make the Class of 2000 quite provocative from a research perspective in Chapter Three, this inquiry also yields further insights from Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007 and its ensuing changes to formal education attempting to legitimize violence. **Chapter Four** subsequently focuses on the experiences of Gazan youth with Hamas' contrarian educational prerogatives as a competing aspect of the case study to compare both sides the argument, as well as better assess the larger general significance of formal education within conflict.

Building from the two diametrically opposed, yet nonetheless functionally similar efforts to shape the educational development and political understandings of the Class of 2000 in Chapters Three and Four, **Chapter Five** will review the impact formal curriculum had on support for violence, and analyze why its influence is increasingly challenged by wider pedagogical perspectives.

Chapter Six will finish with concluding reflections on how Gazan youth actually learn within conflict, what formal educational programming in post-Oslo Gaza highlights about the relationship between formal education and violence amidst contemporary conflict, and outline constructive areas for further inquiry.

[115] The only material attributed directly to named individuals is from expert interviews and publicly available information, i.e. unrestricted social media postings.

CONCLUSION

With educational programming serving as one of the primary tools to forestall violence in areas of instability, it is imperative to better understand the ability of formal education to effectively engage students amidst the often-competing perspectives of contemporary conflict. Wider quantitative reviews emphasize the positive correlation between formal education and peace, while qualitative reviews, when available, hint at the more nuanced interplay of factors influencing violence locally. There remains a notable absence of holistic studies bridging this divide and specifically engaging efforts to mitigate violence with formal education. This research, based on the expansive body of qualitative fieldwork gathered between 2014 and 2015, and reinforced by supporting interviews conducted through May 2025, will address this gap and engage the interplay between formal curriculum, *hidden curriculum*, and *outside curriculum* as it pertains to support for further violence amidst conflict. In demonstrating that the process of learning amidst conflict is inherently complex, requiring local relevance to maintain pace with competing perspectives, a unique contribution will be made to critical peace education, public pedagogy, and wider conflict mitigation efforts. In the end, readers may or may not agree with Gazan youth and their developing perspectives on violence, but at the very least a more informed awareness of education's role amidst conflict will be appreciated, helping reimagine one of the most widely utilized, yet poorly understood, approaches to conflict mitigation.

CHAPTER TWO – CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

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To fully appreciate the challenges facing contemporary efforts to mitigate support for violence in Gaza, it is important to consider this case study within its wider context. Recent hostility, for instance, is merely the latest iteration of a much longer arc of seemingly persistent conflict in Palestine. Systematic efforts to organize formal education for partisan ends are similarly not a new development. The first half of this chapter subsequently reviews the longstanding tradition of organizing Palestinian schooling around the enduring goal of mitigating violence (Section A). The latter half of the chapter then narrows more specifically on the instability leading up to the post-Oslo era, and the difficulty political stakeholders faced developing educational programming to explain it (Section B). By emphasizing both the complex nature of the conflict, as well as the repeated failure of earlier efforts to narrate it, this chapter will contextualize the considerable challenges facing formal educational programming in the post-Oslo era.

A. A CONTESTED HISTORY

Gaza, put simply, has a long history with conflict. Originally celebrated by Pharaoh Thutmose III as 'flourishing' as early as 1500 BC, its abundance was underscored in the 13th century when Syrian geographer al-Dimashqi described it as 'so rich in trees it looks like a cloth of brocade spread out upon the land' (Le Strange 2010: 41). The strategic location facilitating its prosperity as a coastal crossroads between Africa and Asia ultimately served as a mixed blessing, however, as it tethered sovereignty to larger geopolitical trends. Nearly every regional power over the last two millennia would occupy Gaza, including the Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans, French, British, and Egyptians, who, in one of the first recordings of the name, referred to it as *Ghazzat*, the 'prized city.'[116] The only historical tradition more consistent than the community being overtaken is its seemingly routine restoration, which is notable considering it subsequently became one of the most conflicted communities on the planet. The Mongols leveled Gaza, as did the Bubonic Plague; Alexander the Great attacked it, and so did Napoleon. It's no coincidence that the city's crest features a phoenix rising – an ongoing narrative of enduring relevance to Gazans of all ages.

Similarly relevant to Gaza's character is the nuanced culture of Palestine, which by the early 20th century reflected the wide diversity of peoples it had encountered. As the Ottoman Empire lost control over the territory in 1918 more than 700,000 people resided between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, including 560,000 Arab-Palestinians, as well as longstanding minority communities of Bedouins, Christians, Druze, and Jews (League of Nations 1921; Furani and Rabinowitz 2011). Over the ensuing decades the number of Arab-Palestinians continued to grow, first to 860,000 in 1931, which later rose to 1.3 million by the close of the British Mandate in 1948. Yet with ongoing Jewish immigration their overall majority had nonetheless shrunk from 80% to 68%.[117] What had been coined as the 'Holy Land' (*al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*), long grounded in diverse pastoral traditions, was becoming more crowded.

The founding of modern Israel in 1948 brought further changes as huge waves of Arab refugees were displaced from the now defunct British Mandate, either by force or threat of violence, resulting in three geographically distinct groups of Palestinians. The first is the 12% of Palestinians who remained in lands lost to Israel in the 1948 war (*Falastiniyyu al-Dakhil*). These 160,000 Palestinians constituted, at that time, 16% of the population of the newly established state of Israel. By the post-Oslo era, the population of

[116] Gaza's etymological origins have more recently settled into 'the invaded' or 'the immune' (Katzenstein 1982).
[117] In 1931 Palestine had an Arab-Palestinian population of 861,211 (Abu Sitta 2004: 12). On the eve of 1948 the population had risen to 1.9m, with 68% being Arab, including Bedouin (UNSCOP 1947).

Palestinian-Israelis had grown to 1.4 million, representing just under one-fifth of Israel's population (Rabinowitz 1993; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics 2010). The second group consists of those refugees who fled historical Palestine, later representing 50% of a diaspora numbering six million Palestinians living in Jordan, Lebanon, and other countries throughout the world (*Falastiniyyu al-Shatat*). The final group comprises those Palestinians that have remained either in Gaza or the West Bank since the founding of Israel, or were internally displaced to these 'occupied territories' during the ensuing violence from elsewhere in Palestine (PCBS 2015).[118] Without delegitimizing the first two groups of Palestinians residing within Israel or third countries, it is this final group of 4.4 million Palestinians living within the occupied territories, or the 38% of the global diaspora residing in the State of Palestine, that is the primary focus of this research when referencing Palestinians.[119]

1948-1987

The Palestinians ending up in Gaza and the West Bank, like other groups within the diaspora, faced ongoing challenges. First came the instability and violence leading up to the War of 1948, and then the war itself, with Palestinians ultimately losing control over the majority of their communities through a seminal national experience known as the *Naqba* (Catastrophe). The lands of '48' as they have become colloquially known were overtaken by Israeli forces, while Gaza and the West Bank were occupied by the Egyptian and Jordanian militaries, respectively.[120] The Arab League subsequently inaugurated the 'All Palestine Government' in 1948 to theoretically represent lands both lost and (arguably) held, yet operating under official Egyptian protection from the outset – and being relocated to Cairo mere months later – such efforts remained more symbolic than operative (Gelber 2006: 177-8). The Palestinians, only recently freed from Ottoman and British control, were being overtaken anew on multiple fronts.

Palestinians attempted to recover from their Catastrophe over ensuing years, both by emphasizing their 'Right of Return' (*al-Awda*) and by organizing around the growing belief that they, as an autochthonous people, were uniquely positioned to best defend their nationalist cause.[121] Towards that end, Palestinian students and young professionals living abroad established Fatah, an acronym formally known as the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (*Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini*), as well as numerous smaller groups including the Arab Nationalist Movement (*Harakat al-Qawmiyya al-Arabiyya*) in the 1950s to join already established organizations including the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS, *al-Ittihad al-Aam li-Talabat Filastin*).[122] It was not until 1964, however, when the Arab League consented to the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO, *Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniya*) as a unified body representing Palestinians that the various political factions, including Fatah, began to coalesce into wider significance.[123] This seminal consolidation of national stakeholders continued on

[118] For simplicity, East Jerusalem is assumed here to be a part of the West Bank.

[119] The United Nations General Assembly approved Palestinian statehood for the occupied territories on November 29th, 2012.

[120] For more information on the estimated 10-15,000 Palestinians killed and the further 750,000 displaced during the *Naqba*, *see* Khalidi 2020.

[121] The Palestinian 'Right of Return,' codified by U.N. Resolution 194, stated that Palestinians who were expelled from their homes anywhere in historical Palestine have the right to return to where they were living, or if not choosing to return have the right to resettlement and compensation.

[122] Fatah began resistance work in 1959 and joined the PLO in 1964, yet was only declared a national political party in 1965 (Hamid 1975: 98).

[123] Following a decision at the Arab League, the PLO was created at the First Palestinian National Congress in Jerusalem in 1964. In 1974 the Arab League upgraded its status, formally recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

throughout the decade, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP, *al-Jabhah al-Sha'biyyah li-Tahrir Filastin*) joining the PLO in 1968 and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP, *al-Jabhah ed-Dimuqraṭiyya li-Taḥrir Filasṭin*) following in 1969 – notably the same year Fatah assumed formal leadership of the PLO.

The reluctance of Palestinians to leave their future in the hands of outsiders was further reinforced in 1967 when Gaza and the West Bank were overtaken during the Day of the Setback (*Yamn an-Naqsa*). Following the quick dispatch of Arab forces by what Israel termed the Six Day War, Palestinians increasingly questioned the victory their regional neighbors had long proclaimed would be theirs and began to view indigenous resistance more favorably. Thus, after two decades of occupation, displaced Palestinians and the youth of the *Naqba* generation mobilized their nascent nationalist groups towards armed struggle to liberate historical Palestine. Underscoring this reorientation were wider cultural changes, including the introduction of self-sacrifice as a core theme of Palestinian identity. One notable example of this change occurred in 1968 when, following the Day of the Setback, Palestinian Resistance increased cross-border raids from Jordan, which Israel promptly countered. With opposing forces advancing on Al Karameh refugee camp, Palestinian fighters clutching explosives famously detonated themselves against oncoming Israeli tanks. While losing three times as many fighters in the battle, Palestinians nonetheless saw this sacrifice (*fida'i*) as so iconic that the Palestinian national anthem's lyric 'my country, my country, my country' was replaced with 'sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice' (AbuFarha 2009: 43). It was such seminal experiences, and the deeply inspiring narratives recounting them, that reinforced Palestinians' increasing embrace of all avenues of national resistance. As celebrated novelist Ghassan Kanafani summed up the emerging national sentiment, 'paintbrush, pen, gun – they are all tools of self-defense.'[124] In turn, Palestinians were increasingly basing their nationalist identity less on celebrating what they possessed, and instead centering their focus around what they, as a stateless people, would fight to reclaim (Hollis 2019: 54-6).

While ad hoc nationalist resistance efforts and their accompanying narratives were welcomed by Palestinians, larger developments nevertheless continued to dictate the course of events. This notably involved the 1973 October War (*Harb October*) and additional efforts from regional stakeholders to shape the conflict, including the forced exile of then-Chairman of the PLO Yasser Arafat and other senior members of Fatah from Jordan and Beirut in 1971 and 1982, respectively. With PLO leadership increasingly displaced from Palestine and its neighboring states, a vacuum of sorts consequently developed. And while Fatah belatedly attempted to follow groups such as PFLP and DFLP in developing an institutional presence within the occupied territories, the absence of its senior leaders nonetheless created an opening for new stakeholders to act. The first of two noteworthy constituencies that inherited newfound influence within their communities were activist youth, who, while certainly not new to Palestinian politics, lacked the institutional clout to confront the larger reality of the occupation. Islamist organizers, however, had been establishing themselves in Gaza for decades, with, for instance, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood (Muslim Brotherhood, *Jama at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) operating locally since 1946, which was followed by the more recent establishment of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Islamic Jihad, *Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin*) in 1981 (Hroub 2006). Thus, with the majority of PLO leadership in exile an organizational opening was created for Islamist alternatives to increasingly question what had been Fatah's near exclusive emphasis on quasi-secular resistance.[125]

[124] Fadl al-Naqib, as quoted in Coffin (1996: 1).

[125] Demant cites the 'incapacitation of the Middle Eastern state' through economic, military, and political failure as providing 'Islamists a point of entry' (2006: 138-9).

The reemergence of youth and the rise of Islam as a political influence in Gaza occurred at a time of notable frustration with the occupation's increasingly untenable status quo. While organized resistance had largely been subdued by the 1980s within historical Palestine, community exasperation continued to simmer over the brutality of the occupation, frustration with the PLO's political priorities, and the further perception that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was being diplomatically sidelined. Thus, when four Palestinians were killed by an Israeli Defense Forces vehicle in north Gaza on December 7th, 1987, the situation quickly escalated out of control. Starting with the death of a young Palestinian man protesting at the funeral the following day, 42,355 'incidents of rebellion' ensued over the subsequent six months. This collective uprising, widely known as the *Intifada*, marked a new era of community-based resistance whereby new stakeholders would emerge as increasingly influential.[126] Aside from activist youth playing a central role amidst this unrest, the *Intifada* also provided the impetus for the Muslim Brotherhood to question its long-standing focus on religious outreach and corresponding policy of nonviolence. Acknowledging the need for a more active role within the Resistance, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood consequently established the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in December 1987, which was followed in 1991 with the establishment of Qassam (Battalions of Martyr Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, *Izz ad-Din al-Qassam*) as the more-formalized military wing of Hamas (Gunning 2008). And while the brutish nature of the occupation continued throughout the *Intifada*, the composition and nature of Palestinian Resistance against it continued to evolve, with contemporary youth and Islamist stakeholders playing increasingly active – and violent – roles in determining Palestine's future.

ENDURING LESSONS IN CONTROL

The adversity experienced by Palestinians throughout the 20th century was, notably, not confined to military and political affairs. One of the most affected areas of Palestinian society was education, which, like other occupied communities, lost its sovereignty over formal schooling. However, as introduced in Chapter One, the ability to dictate *legitimate knowledge* through even strict command of formal education in no way guarantees its wider acceptance. Educational control, put simply, is not a new concept for Palestinian students.

Throughout the 18th and 19th century Palestinian education traditionally comprised an amalgamation of *Katateeb*, the community-based teaching method whereby Palestinian children learned to recite the Quran, and Ottoman basic education, which 'opened for them a window, albeit narrow' to wider topics (Doumato and Starrett 2007: 10). Yet even within informal *Katateeb* gatherings, a standard of discipline was established early on, often with unforgiving intensity. As recounted by Abu Tawfiq, a student from north Gaza, in 1947:

> Sheikh Ali and Rasheed used to teach the Quran. They'd put us under a sycamore tree and make us memorize verses from the Quran. We didn't have pens and books though. We used to write on bits of wood and metal with reeds which were sharpened and dipped in ink. The teacher would make us write a verse, rub it out and then write another. He was so strict that we didn't dare ask to go for a piss — so we just did it in our trousers. By the end of the lesson there was quite a pool![127]

[126] *Intifada*, stemming from the word *Intafada* (to react in rejection), is now colloquially defined in Palestine as 'collective uprising' (Beitler 1995).

[127] Abu Tawfiq, as quoted in Cossali and Robson (1986: 2).

As an increasingly interconnected world brough changes to the region in the latter half of the 19th century, including direct challenges posed by foreign rivals, the Ottoman Empire pursued reforms (*Tanzimat*) that included modernizing public education as a key element of national security (Gettleman and Schaar 2003: 80-84). These educational reforms were emphatically applied to Palestine, a key Ottoman territory, with the Governor of Jerusalem, Tevfik Bey, enthusiastically applauding the expansion of public schooling in 1897 as a means of producing what he characterized as loyal 'machines.'[128] As Pappe notes, in the 19th century Ottoman leadership had identified public schools as 'key institutions for the future of the Empire,' as it sought 'to counter the influence of private missionary establishments' and other pedagogical influences that were emerging throughout Palestine (2006: 68). These private educational initiatives included the founding of the American Christian Friends school in 1889, the Muslim Garden of Learning school (*Rawdat al-Ma'arif*) in 1908, and the Constitutional School in Jerusalem (*Al-Madrasa al-Dusturiyya*) in 1909.[129] The latter institution and its founder, Khalil al-Sakakini, adopted a number of reformist educational concepts that had been promoted in America and Europe, among them religiously-integrated schools, the inclusion of arts and sports, and perhaps most radical of all, eschewing customary hierarchy in favor of a more equal interaction between students and their teachers. Such local experimentation was seen, unsurprisingly at the time, as 'constituting a vanguard of social progress in the region' (Ben-Bassat and Ginio 2011: 70). Also notable were Anglican schools similarly educating Christian and Muslim students together – directly challenging Ottoman practice that encouraged their division (Ben-Bassat and Ginio 2011: 57-8). Predictably, such innovations were not universally welcomed. From the era of Sultan Hamid, up through the supposedly less authoritarian era of the Young Turks, any promotion of independent thinking or political agency was promptly met with a further loss of educational autonomy. This included a surge of Palestinian nationalism in 1913 that was directly countered with 'new centralizing decrees that gave [Ottoman administrators] direct supervision over the school system' (Pappe 2006: 60). As a leading intellectual Sulaiman al-Bustani argued in 1908, 'The best means to diminish ethnic fanaticism is to make learning Turkish compulsory' in all Palestinian schools (Ben-Bassat and Ginio 2011: 156).

These restrictive tactics, while persistent, were nonetheless unsuccessful. As Pappe recounts, despite the 'fanatical zeal for Turkification,' pedagogical efforts to unify Palestinian youth under Constantinople's leadership were largely ineffective (2006: 60). Journalist and teacher Bulus Shahada concluded at the time in one of the first critiques of Palestinian schooling that the Ottoman curriculum was simply full of 'megalomania, vainglory, and hypocrisy,' and suggested that 'One should shut them away… in order to prevent them from misguiding the minds of adolescents' (Ben-Bassat and Ginio 2011: 69). Hence, when faced with biased curriculum most meaningful civic education simply went underground. As highlighted by the case of Umar al-Salih al-Barghuthi, this 14 year old student withdrew from the Constitutional School and subsequently organized an informal club (*nadwa*) where he delivered 'lectures in the natural and social sciences in order to plant the seeds of the scientific way of thinking in some souls' – guided notably not by Ottoman instruction or its factional local equivalent, but instead by a personal motto emphasizing both national 'struggle and pleasure' (*al-ijtihad wa al-istimta*) (Ben-Bassat and Ginio 2011: 64-5). Ottoman authorities habitually attempted to curtail such independent learning with Sultan Hamid's 1882 circular that 'henceforth nothing whatsoever can be allowed to be printed without previous authorization,' to 1901's prohibition against 'cyclostyle' machines used to reproduce handwritten notices, and 1905's mandate that every locally printed product had to be reviewed by the Ottoman-appointed Director of

[128] Rezan 1993, as referenced in Ben-Bassat and Ginio (2011: 68).

[129] Palestine had 45 private schools comprising a variety of pedagogies in 1926, one of the most important being Gaza College (Anderson 2005: 98).

Education.[130] It is such attempts to regulate information, and the youthful curiosity resisting such control, that would become a commonplace national tradition of independent learning. In the prophetic words of a noted 1911 editorial, Palestinian youth should not believe existing Ottoman narratives and instead learn to 'cleanse the earth' (*tunazzif al-ard*) of such 'despotic' pedagogical perspectives.[131]

The ensuing dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and 1918 establishment of a British Mandate in Palestine resulted in many dramatic local changes. It is important to acknowledge, however, the strict control of information under Ottoman administration notably endured.[132] As Miller points out, Mandate authorities similarly aspired to utilize formal education to 'maintain social order and to transmit what seemed to them universal values' (1985: 97). This included, for instance, curriculum stressing the hygienic importance of keeping one's bedroom windows open at night to Bedouin students who nonetheless slept either in tents or in the open air (Tibawi 1956: 80). More troubling than imposing cultural irrelevancies, however, was the narrow political lens applied to more pertinent current events. A dismissive Palestinian critique noted that while the Mandate curriculum contained geography and history, its content and tone were international in nature rather than highlighting the national character of Palestine. 'The Arab boy or girl was taught far less about the history of his nation and the geography of the Arab countries, the argument went on, than the average Iraqi' (Tibawi 1956: 88). As Dr. Khalil Totah testified in 1937 to a Royal Commission, Arab education in the British Mandate 'is either designed to reconcile the Arabs to this policy (of establishing a Jewish national home) or to make education so colourless as to make it harmless and not endanger the carrying out of that policy.' The Assistant Director of the Department of Education, George Antonius, similarly testified to the Royal Commission that Mandate education was not oriented around student needs but instead its 'rigid and inelastic' nature was merely a further manifestation of the 'lack of contact between the Government and the Arab population' (Tibawi 1956: 205). Such disdain was reinforced by Humphrey Bowman, the head of Mandate education, in viewing Palestinians as so 'primitive' as to be unable to take a leading role in educating their community, while Jewish communities were alternatively 'mature' enough to manage their own schooling (Pappe 2006: 75).

Considering such British contempt, along with a mere 32% of Palestinian children being enrolled in Mandate schooling, it is little surprise that alternative pedagogical approaches continued to flourish.[133] As Anderson points out, the low enrollment rate within formal education, in concert with the dramatic political developments of the 1920s and 1930s, reinforced the significance of Palestinian children listening to their parents talking, reading local newspapers, and absorbing the larger community dissatisfaction taking place beyond the school environment (2005: 97-99, 196). Other community members went further and began producing unsanctioned educational materials, including developing and publishing their own clandestine textbooks. As was becoming routine, such independent learning was assiduously restrained. In one telling case, *The History of Palestine* was prohibited from schools because it contained the sentence 'Sir Herbert Samuel endeavored to make the Arabs see the Jewish point of view as regards Zionism and failed.'[134] To further underscore the dynamic at play, Herbert Samuel, then High Commissioner of

[130] Circular FO 195/1412, issued by Governor Ra'uf on September 6th, 1882. Furthermore in 1894 there was already a list of banned books, including Milton's *Paradise Lost*. By 1901 'cyclostyle' machines were being prohibited due to their ability to reproduce handwritten notices, and by 1905 every locally printed product had to be reviewed by the Director of Education (Büssow 2011: 468-9).

[131] *Filastin*, July 22nd, 1911 as referenced in Ben-Bassat and Ginio (2011: 64).

[132] As highlighted by Abu Lughod, Palestinian education only received 2% of the British Mandate budget, while the majority of funding went to the army and policing, reflecting its priorities at the time (1973: 103).

[133] By 1944, only 32% of Palestinians aged 5-14 were enrolled in school, versus 97% of Jewish children (Government of Palestine 1925: 13-14).

[134] *The History of Palestine* by Dr. Khalil Totah and Umar Salih Barghuthi.

Palestine, had an Arab teacher fired merely for not standing when he entered the same Ramleh café on a school holiday (Tibawi 1956: 198). While the Mandate's purported role was providing 'tutelage' to the Palestinians through advice and assistance, the lessons derived from its schooling were as coercive as anything experienced under Ottoman administration.[135] Those outside of the formal education system were similarly not free from Mandate restrictions, as alternative forms of information and political expression were habitually criminalized including, for example, the publishing of adversarial news stories being punishable by a month's incarceration.[136] At its core, the British Assistant Director of Education encapsulated the issue best when he contended that 'Any nation capable of managing its own educational system was fit to be independent. If the Arabs, he argued, were deemed to need mandatory rule, then education was the first service to be managed on their behalf, not the first to be handed over to them' (Tibawi 1956: 207). The subjugation of Palestinian education under the maintenance of British order, much like earlier Ottoman administration, was clear to all, with Pappe describing Mandate schooling simply as a 'coercive and manipulative tool' (2006: 101).

As difficult as things were for Palestinian students cultivated to be 'machines' within sprawling empires, the end of the British Mandate in 1948 brought little liberation to their education. This was first evident with Palestinian youth falling under Jordanian and Egyptian administration as each took control of the West Bank and Gaza, respectively. At the outset, Palestinian educators renewed their pleas for local management over the schooling of their students. Such calls were, however, consistently denied by Jordanian and Egyptian administrations, as well as their United Nations partners. For instance, the Jordanian government, like the Ottomans and British before them, embraced formal education primarily as an 'an indispensable mechanism for captivity' (Qato 2018: 18). This is clearly highlighted within the third grade geography textbook, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (*al-mamlaka al-urduniyya al-hashimiyya)*, that guides the reader on 'fantastical' journeys throughout the Palestinian landscape that nonetheless downplay any references to Palestinian identity. And while there were isolated references in the textbook to Palestine being 'occupied and plundered by foreigners,' as well as the desire to 'reclaim the land and rid it of its vandals,' such emphasis was seemingly only included to support the larger narrative that consistently reframes Palestine as part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. As the textbook clearly asserts within its text and footnotes, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's borders 'include all of Palestine.'[137] For local and displaced Palestinian students being forced to memorize the Jordanian textbook in the West Bank, the lesson was clear that their land, once again, belonged to others.

For local and displaced Palestinian students falling under Egyptian administration in Gaza, there was little improvement. While the Egyptian government resisted integrating Palestinian students directly into its educational system, it nevertheless saw common cause with external partners to once again control the composition of Palestinian education that was viewed largely as a security issue.[138] In Gaza this at times awkward approach included utilizing Egyptian curriculum, which while not relevant to Palestine or its people, was more convenient for external stakeholders than alternatives promoting the Palestinian cause. As Tessir, a former teacher in Gaza raised on the Egyptian curriculum, explains, 'The problem is that we follow the Egyptian syllabus, and the curriculum is designed by the Egyptians and not Gazans. Much of

[135] Article 22 of The Covenant of the League of Nations, as referenced in the preamble of The Palestine Mandate (League of Nations 1922, 1924).

[136] British Press Ordinance Law (1993) and British Defense Regulations (1945).

[137] Durra et al. 1950: 52, 63, as referenced in Qato (2018: 27, 26).

[138] Egyptian authorities largely viewed Palestinian refugees as a security threat to their administration, insisting that every Gazan student, no matter their qualifications, be admitted into secondary school for 'security reasons' (United Nations correspondence from 1958, as quoted in Kelcey 2019: 30).

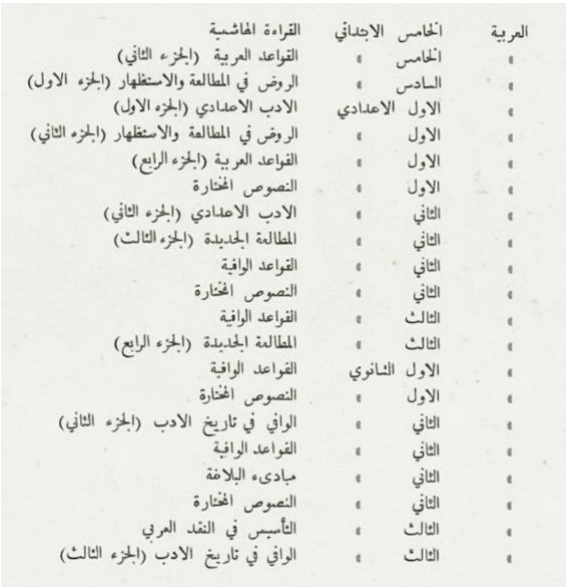
the material that's used in the schools is very old and hasn't been changed for years. There's no discussion on the way Gazans live, our social problems or anything that relates to our lives... They were useless' (quoted in Cossali and Robson 1986: 93). Acknowledging this amidst growing concerns that the Egyptian authorities sought to utilize schooling to increasingly promote government propaganda, humanitarian stakeholders in Gaza advocated for the United Nations to, at a minimum, run the schools (Kelcey 2019). In turn a dubious partnership developed whereby outsiders were both administering schools and providing curriculum that, while different from Jordan's territorial ambitions, nonetheless similarly provided little educational empowerment to Palestinian students as it pertained to their lived experiences. Yet this was not problematic for stakeholders like the United States needed to fund the schooling, as its stated priority was that all programming 'must be operated so as to stimulate the resettlement of refugees in every way possible,' precluding their return home.[139] If anything, non-Palestinian curriculum administered by non-Palestinians was quite convenient for all stakeholders involved in Gaza, except, of course, the Palestinians.

Yet as observed under Ottoman and British eras, Palestinian students and teachers were not passive participants within their continuing educational occupation. As Qato argues, the early Hashemite efforts to reorient Palestinian students around Jordanian nationalism ultimately failed. This was literally illustrated by students having scribbled devil horns over photos of the Jordanian king in their textbooks, as well as etching themselves into anodyne drawings of their homeland throughout the curriculum. And while scribbles in student textbooks are not uncommon, the endurance of Palestinian identity remained unbowed in wider practice as well. This is highlighted best by the Battle of Karameh when, 18 years after the Jordanian textbooks were first used to educate displaced Palestinians, the youth not only demurred this imposed identity, but furthermore rushed headlong into battle against the overpowering might of the Israelis forces in defense of their (real) nation (Qato 2018: 28). While there can be many reasons for such actions, loyalty to the Jordanian crown is presumably not among them. The dynamic nature of educational practice extended to Gaza as well, with Egyptian administrators facing constant challenges. For instance, noted poet (and teacher) Mu'in Bseiso was fired from his job by UNRWA in 1957 after penning a poem critical of Israel and the King of Jordan. Central to his dismissal was the popularity of the poem (amidst other instances of students and teachers protesting) being disseminated on the radio throughout Gaza (Kelcey 2019). As Bseiso himself emphasizes, 'In your classroom, the chalk is a sword, and your hand writes the alphabet of revolt' (attributed quote). Put simply, just because outside stakeholders were administering schooling in Gaza didn't mean they were leading the education of its youth. As Tessir, the Gazan teacher frustrated with Egyptian education, recalls, 'I thought that it must become a priority of ours to rely on our own resources rather than waiting for the government' (quoted in Cossali and Robson 1986: 93). Hamdi, another UNRWA teacher laboring under Egyptian administration, reinforces this resolve:

> When I think back over this period, the thing that sticks clearest in my mind is just how enthusiastic we all were — teachers and pupils. I suppose for the refugees who had lost all their possessions, there was nothing else but to learn. But I also think that there was a very strong sense that we were taking things into our own hands and building our own future... Even with almost non-existent facilities, hardly any schools had chairs, blackboards or text books, we always managed to make the most of things.[140]

[139] Memorandum of a conversation at the U.S. Department of State, as quoted in Kelcey (2019: 31).
[140] Hamdi, as quoted in Cossali and Robson (1986: 11).

While Jordanian and Egyptian administration was advancing over the occupied territories following the dissolution of the British Mandate, Israel was similarly taking full control over the lands of '48.' This included the nascent Israeli state promptly building upon the imperial framework it inherited to once again prohibit anything 'likely to endanger the public peace,' which served as the legal basis for suppressing information, expression, and ultimately Palestinian education over the years ahead (Jacobsohn 1993: 175-6). Case in point, following the Six Day War Israel issued a tide of intentionally wide-scope military orders linked to public safety inexplicably banning over 6,000 books – including more than 100 textbooks. Such orders were often largely redundant, however, as every book already required a permit to import, publish, and indeed merely possess. Furthermore, anything deemed 'politically significant,' including items as arbitrary as stone carvings, numbers, symbols, paintings, and maps could likewise result in a 10-year jail sentence, while independent discussion was similarly discouraged with Military Order 50 threatening five years of incarceration for 'telling, providing, or giving information to anyone.' Information – at its most basic level – was effectively criminalized for Palestinians living under Israeli administration.[141] So too would be school, which was declared a direct 'threat to security' by Israel's Deputy Attorney General in 1980 (Hovsepian 2008: 98).[142] Military Order 101 subsequently prohibited gatherings of 10 or more people, in effect outlawing any unsanctioned classes, which was later bolstered by Order 854 subsuming the entirety of the Palestinian educational system. All matters, from student enrollment to school management, were subsequently placed under Israeli control, underscored by Palestinian teachers routinely being required to submit loyalty pledges.[143] In the words of then-Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army Lt. Gen. Rafael Eytan, the ostensible strategic goal of having the Palestinians 'scurry around liked drugged roaches in a bottle' was evidently in full effect (quoted in Shipler 1983).



العربية	الخامس الابتدائي	القراءة الهاشمية
»	الخامس »	القواعد العربية (الجزء الثاني)
»	السادس »	الروض في المطالعة والاستظهار (الجزء الاول)
»	الاول الاعدادي	الادب الاعدادي (الجزء الاول)
»	الاول »	الروض في المطالعة والاستظهار (الجزء الثاني)
»	الاول »	القواعد العربية (الجزء الرابع)
»	الاول »	النصوص المختارة
»	الثاني »	الادب الاعدادي (الجزء الثاني)
»	الثاني »	المطالعة الجديدة (الجزء الثالث)
»	الثاني »	القواعد الوافية
»	الثاني »	النصوص المختارة
»	الثالث »	القواعد الوافية
»	الثالث »	المطالعة الجديدة (الجزء الرابع)
»	الاول الثانوي	القواعد الوافية
»	الاول »	النصوص المختارة
»	الثاني »	الوافي في تاريخ الادب (الجزء الثاني)
»	الثاني »	القواعد الوافية
»	الثاني »	مبادىء البلاغة
»	الثاني »	النصوص المختارة
»	الثالث »	التأسيس في النقد العربي
»	الثالث »	الوافي في تاريخ الادب (الجزء الثالث)

Fig. 4. Israeli Military Order 50 listing many of the 103 Palestinian textbooks prohibited by decree.[144]

[141] Military Orders 50, 101, 107, 854, and 1079 in the author's possession. *See also* Ramsden and Senker (1993).
[142] Israel's then-Deputy Attorney General, Yoram Bar-Sela, testified to the Israeli High Court of Justice on July 14th, 1980, 'Where there are schools, there will be demonstrations, raising of flags, and therefore a threat to security' (Hovsepian 2008: 98), citing the Washington Post (November 19th, 1980).
[143] Military Orders 50, 101, 107, 854, and 1079 in the author's possession. *See also* Ramsden and Senker (1993).
[144] The first of 103 textbooks banned by Military Order 50, which declared 'it is prohibited to educate in any school in the area with any books listed,' including 12-month imprisonment for titles including *Outside Reading, Arabic*

CHILDREN OF STONES

The uneasy interplay between Israeli occupation and frustrated Palestinian students, never far from daily life, persisted well into the 1980s. It was during 1987's outbreak of the *Intifada*, however, when youth and schooling took on an even more prominent role within the conflict. With the majority of PLO leadership still in exile and outside communication curtailed as violence escalated, it was younger Palestinians who took on more active leadership roles managing volunteer committees and leading early resistance efforts (Swedenburg 1991: 168-78). Epitomized by 20 year-old Hatem al-Sisi who was shot and killed while protesting at a funeral (and later declared the first martyr of the *Intifada*), the increasingly proactive Children of Stones (*Atfal al-Hijara*) drove many of the aforementioned 42,355 strikes, boycotts, and disobedience campaigns – all while enduring over 1,000 casualties – reaffirming the prominence of youth within Palestinian society and its wider political deliberations.[145]

Such youth activism – and the students leading it – were habitually met with Israeli disdain, as many partisan commentators at the time deemed Palestinian schools as a 'breeding ground for unrest' and a 'severe security threat' (Brinkley 1989; Kretzmer 1989: 8). In turn, 1,200 Palestinian educational facilities were officially shuddered for as long as four years, barring 320,000 primary and secondary students from formal education. Yet those more closely following local developments understood that the longstanding strategy of restricting how youth learn in Palestine was untenable. As an Israeli Defense Commander at the time privately acknowledged, Palestinian youth 'have discovered their power. They will never forget it' (USDIA 1988: 9).

This concern proved prescient as further pedagogical restrictions imposed on Palestinian communities were not well received, and it was within such a constricted context that educational innovation once again thrived. Beyond the aforementioned role of newspapers and family discussions, as well as the storied techniques of hiding books in floors and freezers, Hanieh recounts how more sophisticated covert approaches quickly developed. This included clandestine papers (*nashrat*) playing a prominent role in educating the wider community about what was happening, while 'secret underground classes' would be held in teachers' homes and other unconventional locations to overcome school closures.[146] During the *Intifada*, for instance, outside observers estimated that 45,000 informal committees were established throughout the occupied territories to address educational gaps, as well as additional community needs.[147] A mere four months after the outbreak of the *Intifada* neighborhood committees were already offering regularly scheduled classes in homes, mosques, and churches for students from preschool to high school, as well as some areas offering continuing education for adults in, for example, foreign languages, to utilize the abundant time available due to the Israeli curfew (Brinkley 1988a). These informal approaches to education were, of course, not welcomed by Israeli authorities who subsequently patrolled Palestinian neighborhoods reiterating the 10-year penalties for hosting unsanctioned classes 'to intimidate people so that they would not receive pupils in their houses' (Nassar and Heacock 1990: 199). Yet informal schooling persisted without pause, featuring 'Popular Education' (*Al-Taʿlim al-Ahly*) that encouraged 'individual and collective awareness so as to achieve emancipation by using educational

Grammar, Literature for Prep School, Reading and Analysis, Selected Literature, Complete Grammar, Complete History of Literature, General Grammar, and Principles of Arabic Criticism (Military Order 50), in the author's possession.

[145] *See* Barber (2001, 2008), Gordon, Gordon and Shriteh (2003), Jean Klein (2000), and Peteet (1994).

[146] During the Israeli occupation it was common for any nationalistic items to be confiscated, including maps, literature, and anything else including the word 'Palestine' (Moughrabi 2001; Hanieh 2011).

[147] Nassar and Heacock (1990: 199), citing the New York Times (1988: 16).

resources and activities for organizing and mobilizing the population to challenge the occupier and confront its policies' (Alzaroo 2005: 138). It was this approach that highlighted the central crux facing occupation administrators: as Palestinian poet and educator Husain Jameel Bargouti points out, 'To close schools was tempting to the Israeli state apparatus, since a center of the uprising would be crushed; but the closure of schools meant a further liquidation of the Israeli state apparatus itself, of which the school system had been a cornerstone' (Nassar and Heacock 1990: 113). As Nassar and Heacock speculate, the military authorities may indeed have been prompted to reopen many Palestinian schools earlier than they planned out of a concern that the success of Popular Education 'potentially rendering the society educationally independent and giving it a radical form and content' (1990: 199).

Not willing to cede control of formal schooling, subsequent administrative approaches to suppress Palestinian education included Israeli authorities simply incarcerating students. As is well codified within Israeli jurisprudence Palestinians may be detained administratively without charge for six months, renewable indefinitely.[148] One common approach during the *Intifada* was for Israeli authorities to merely show up at schools on exam days when every student was conveniently required to attend. This anecdotally served the dual purpose of allowing Israeli forces to arrest whichever students they were interested in detaining, as well as more generally discouraging students from sitting for exams required to proceed to the subsequent grade. 'It happened all the time,' explained a Palestinian teacher who grew up during the *Intifada*, underscored by several hundred Palestinians typically being detained administratively.[149] And in appreciating that Palestinians were habitually learning beyond the classroom, further attempts were made to curtail learning even after students were incarcerated. As Qazzaz outlines, Israeli jails banned pencils and paper in an effort to suppress education in the early years of the occupation. 'Only after very long and hard hunger strikes did the prisoners win the battle and were gradually able to use pens, pencils, paper, books and newspapers, as well as receive a certain amount of carefully censored radio broadcasting' (Qazzaz 1997). Incarcerated Palestinians consequently established libraries, literacy classes, language courses, and awareness-raising sessions in Israeli jails to prepare themselves for, among other things, the General Secondary Examination (Alzaroo 2005: 138). As Imad recalls his experiences after being abducted from school and subsequently jailed for eight years:

> Almost everything I know now I learned in prison. Take politics. A prison life ensured that we all got the theory and the practice! The practice came through the long hard struggle against the prison authorities. At the four prisons I was sent to, we were in continuous disputes with the governors over conditions and privileges. We had hunger strikes and dirty protests, but every time we achieved our demands we were transferred to a new prison and had to begin from the beginning again. Books were a very precious commodity in all the prisons. Usually the authorities only allowed in literature on Islam so we had to reproduce all the political books which were smuggled in from the outside. We read the books during the day and at night the prisoners near the door copied them using the light shining underneath from the corridor lamps. We used pens hidden in a special place near the door. There was a lot of pressure to finish copying or reading because there was always someone else waiting to read it. After anyone read a book they held a little seminar in which they discussed it for hours with their comrades. We read

[148] Military Order 1651 and the Unlawful Combatants Law have been widely used to detain people in the West Bank and Gaza respectively.
[149] Field interview with SI205 (2014). *See also* Btselem (2024b).

> about everything — Marx, existentialism, psychology, economics. We were a very cultured bunch.[150]

Throughout Palestinian society, students enrolled in formal schooling, learning informally, or even incarcerated continue to demonstrate that dictating *legitimate knowledge* habitually fails to control understandings of the conflict. As isolated scholarship from the *Intifada* and the years that followed hints at, Palestinian students' 'quite detailed knowledge of various aspects of war and danger and politics' was generally gleaned not from formal education, but instead wider pedagogical perspectives (Apfel and Simon 2000: 108-109).[151] In the words of AbuFarha, 'With an official education system that did not teach Palestinian history, Palestinians mainly turned to informal education to learn about their history from their parents and grandparents, fellow inhabitants of their villages, and local and national cultural representations to learn and understand their history and make sense of the present' (2009: 27; Hollis 2019: 47, 85; Volkan 2006).[152] While the dynamic nature of informal educational practice was clear to those Palestinians living and learning amidst occupation, such lessons were not, however, always appreciated by outsiders.

B. NEW PARTNERS, OUTMODED APPROACHES

While the United States held an active interest in the Middle East throughout the latter half of the 20th century, it is reasonable to acknowledge that the particulars of Palestinian education were not a pressing matter of state in the early 1980s. With the 1978 Camp David Accords reinforcing regional stability the nuances of Palestinian life under Israeli administration were largely marginalized as a matter of foreign policy concern.[153] Case in point, a now declassified assessment from 1985 commented that even the 'collapse' of a longer-term solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would not in itself generate serious threats to American priorities, as the status quo was 'preferable' to the 'wrenching compromises over territory and sovereignty that would be necessary' to achieve a durable peace agreement (USCIA 1985: 1). The following year a subsequent U.S. government review underscored that the only reasons for continuing to pursue peace at all were relatively minor, including ensuring that the United States remained uniquely relevant to guiding regional political developments and alleviating the Palestinian issue as a rationale regional stakeholders could point to for their own inaction against terrorism (Fuller 1986). And with peace in the Middle East largely marginalized as a political priority, Palestinian schooling was simply not a prominent issue within U.S. foreign policy discussions at the time.

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[150] Imad, as quoted in Cossali and Robson (1986: 144).

[151] Apfel and Simon contribute a useful psychoanalytical study of 10 Palestinian children over several years in the 1990s that recounts the significance of the students watching the news on television and recalls the significance of seeing 'the children of Baghdad roaming the streets, looking desolate, hungry, having to wash in the river' after the 1991 Gulf War. The connection that they were similarly influenced by observing more localized Palestinian suffering is not a difficult leap to make. In general, Apfel and Simon credit the students' 'quite detailed knowledge of various aspects of war and danger and politics' gathered outside of formal education, which is telling (2000: 108-109). *See also* Oliver and Steinberg (2005).

[152] The same was true with expressing information, with sometimes the simplest approaches often being the most meaningful for Palestinians, such as publicly eating watermelons and hanging laundry to dry in red, black, and green sequencing. Other techniques of expression, such as mimeographed leaflets during the first *Intifada* (Brinkley 1988b) or tagging graffiti to announce strikes or other operations was less nuanced, but fundamentally atypical as well (Haddad 2009).

[153] The Camp David Accords, formally known as the Framework for Peace in the Middle East, was a 1978 agreement brokered by the United States between Egypt and Israel.

American perspectives appeared to shift, however, with the *Intifada's* unexpected outbreak of violence in 1987. An initial U.S. government assessment at the time highlighted that the 'unrest in the occupied territories will not dissipate in the near term as long as underlying Palestinian grievances are not addressed.' Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) commanders cited in the review argued from first-hand experience that 'the protests have gained too much momentum for harsh tactics to be effective and that Israel should adopt nonviolent measure' (quoted in USCIA 1988a: 2-3). Two months later the U.S. Department of Defense agreed, with their subsequent analysis concluding 'The IDF is the most powerful military force in the region, with the capability of defeating any combination of Arab forces arrayed against Israel… Israeli soldiers have not, however, been adequately trained or equipped to deal with large-scale civil disturbances' (USDIA 1988: 1). Due to its orientation towards external threats, the Israeli military was subsequently facing 'one of the most severe challenges of its 40-year existence' and was 'not able to guarantee a permanent return to the status quo ante in the Occupied Territories.' In turn, the relatively 'low-cost' occupation of the West Bank and Gaza had become considerably more expensive, with policing alone costing Israel in excess of $100 million for each month the *Intifada* continued. As the IDF's Chief of the General Staff acknowledged at the time, 'There is no chance of reaching a solution through military force,' with the entire military leadership believing that the uprising required a political approach to mitigate the potential for 'a much higher level of violence' (USDIA 1988: 8-11).

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency at the time similarly acknowledged that while the prospects for a peace settlement were 'dim' over subsequent years, 'nevertheless, violent clashes between Palestinians and Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since December 1987 have underscored the volatility of the Palestinian problem and the potential for more serious regional tension if a negotiating process is not established' (USCIA 1988b: iii).[154] In response, the American government consequently began to push quite aggressively for just such a process. Following the arguable success of the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the corresponding apex of American regional power, the United States co-hosted the Madrid Conference with the Soviet Union in 1991 to set the stage for bilateral talks between Israel and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to finally address what the Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council termed the 'bleeding sore of the region' (Fuller 1986: 3-4).

While most stakeholders remained realistic about the limited chance of reaching lasting peace, it was also clear that such a process offered near-term advantages to both the Israelis and Palestinians. Israel would benefit by tempering the violence of the *Intifada*, while the Palestinians would alternatively welcome a roadmap towards greater independence. If such an arrangement would further allow PLO leadership a return to relevance from its ongoing exile, many traditional powerbrokers were eager to support such engagement as an opportunity to reclaim their waning influence. In turn, from the Madrid Conference in 1991, to the exchange of letters between Israel and the PLO in 1993, to the Oslo II agreements in 1995, the 'Oslo Accords' presented a fundamental change in direction for Palestinian society. At its core, the PLO accepted U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, and in turn recognized Israel's right to exist, while simultaneously renouncing violent resistance.[155] Correspondingly, Israel recognized the PLO as the representatives of the Palestinian people, and worked with the organization to create the Palestinian Authority as an interim self-government originally chartered to last five years, while both parties 'undertook to resolve all of their outstanding differences by peaceful means' (Shlaim 2009: 35). Further

[154] In addition to the 'dim' likelihood of peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, intelligence assessments at the time also acknowledged that 'even under optimal conditions tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbors would likely to last long after a formal end to the conflict' (USCIA 1988b: 36).

[155] U.N. Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) call for the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict through territorial compromise. The acceptance of the Resolutions by Arab elements indicates their recognition of Israel.

details were scarce and hard decisions were largely deferred, and faith was placed instead, in the words of the Nobel Committee's ensuing endorsement, with those 'who have a wider view.'[156] While considerable challenges remained it was, however, a rare moment of local optimism. Such elusive progress similarly provided the international community an 'historic opportunity' to 'shape' peace in the Middle East, including – as it so often does with conflict mitigation – a dramatic escalation of educational programming (USAID 1996b: ES, 1).

EDUCATION AND THE OSLO ACCORDS

Education, like most issues in Palestine, has endured a long and ongoing tradition of politicization. As stated, one of the often-unsung realities of occupation is routinely being denied the right to educate students independently. Irrespective of such prohibitions, and in the absence of any conventional representative governance, Palestinian schools had nonetheless developed into de-facto 'national institutions' (Bruhn 2006: 1126). It was within these islands of self-anointed sovereignty where Palestinians habitually accessed not just the tools comprising formal education, but also the space to consider and develop what it meant to be a Palestinian. One of the most tangible legacies of this hard-won autonomy was in 1986 when the Lutheran-Anglican private schools of Ramallah first experimented with developing these informal discussions into a formal Palestinian curriculum. Their goal was to help manifest local educators' desires to design, supervise, and implement a national curriculum that truly represented their society. Bolstered by the nationalistic zenith of the *Intifada*, the nascent curriculum project received widespread community support. In appreciating its significance, the PLO formally requested assistance from UNESCO to formalize this effort in 1991, which ultimately served as the original template for further development (Taraki 1990).

With the Oslo Accords establishing the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE, Ministry of Education) four years later – and with it the responsibility for organizing and integrating all schools in the occupied territories – initial efforts to define Palestinian identity were presented with a unique opportunity for formalization through controlling what Benei describes as 'the most important manifestations of the state in people's lives' (2008: 21).[157] One of the first actions the Ministry of Education took was building from the earlier work of the Lutheran-Anglican-UNESCO partnership to develop a more comprehensive national curriculum. The Ministry consequently established the Curriculum Development Center (CDC) in 1995, notably headed by the aforementioned Palestinian scholar Ibrahim Abu Lughod, to lead in drafting the new educational program, which subsequently invested considerable effort into defining what it meant to be Palestinian. Yet at inception the CDC faced a number of problems, including how to bridge an educational divide that had separated local and outside perspectives for over a century. 'What Palestine do we teach?,' inquired Abu Lughod. 'Is it the historic Palestine with its complete geography or the Palestine that is likely to emerge on the basis of possible agreements with Israel? How do we view Israel? Is it merely an ordinary neighbor, or is it a state that has arisen in the ruins of most of Palestine?' (Moughrabi 2001: 7). A year later the CDC finally coalesced around a relatively dynamic answer, comprising three core elements of cultural nationalism (*watani*),

[156] Nobel Committee 1994a. In response to criticism that awarding the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize to stakeholders in the Middle East was premature, the Nobel Committee replied: 'Critics of this year's choice of laureates have said that the Nobel Committee is so distant from the conflict that it cannot understand it. Perhaps. Probably only those who live in the midst of the conflict know what that means. On the other hand, solutions may be easier to see for those who have a wider view' (Nobel Committee 1994b).

[157] *See also* Gellner (1983) and Eickelman (1992), both of whom argue for the significance of educational systems in bolstering nationalism.

political nationalism (*qawmi*), and international matters (*dawli*) (CDC 1997: 61-67). These three cooperative components emphasized pluralism within a larger context and went to great lengths to avoid stressing either an Islamic focus or the 'otherness of non-Palestinians.' Instead, the core elements framed Palestinian identity through largely innocuous Palestinian, Arab, and international themes (Brown 2007: 128). Yet it was the novel approach of stressing the need for students to become critical thinkers, underscoring the centrality of 'creativity and experimentation' to navigate these interconnected modules, that was the true innovation. According to his close associate Edward Said, the brutality of Abu Lughod's experiences attempting to start Open University in Beirut in the 1980s was perhaps the most important of his life, teaching him 'even the best of institutions could be undermined by mediocrity and the brutish instability of politics and society in the Middle East.' Abu Lughod and the CDC subsequently promoted the theories of Dewey and Freire, stressing that if students were to successfully navigate 'the real dynamics of power, both as they affect those who have it, and those who do not,' they must critically engage with the wider world around them (Said 2001a). In a marked departure from rigid regional traditions, fellow CDC committee member Ali Jarbawi underscored at the time that 'curricular decisions should not be for educators alone' as the privilege of determining *legitimate knowledge* should be expanded to the wider community (Nicolai 2007: 84). As Brown described them, the ensuing CDC recommendations were 'the most radical reform proposed by an official body since universal education was introduced' (2003: 208). While the challenge of defining Palestine and other questions remained unresolved, the intrinsic approach of empowering students and their communities to debate their own answers was at the core of the CDC's 600-page plan.

DEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT

Owing to the 'historic' nature of the Oslo Accords (Lasensky 2005: 44) – and the understanding that 'large-scale international aid would be required' (USAID 1996b: ES)— numerous donor states and development stakeholders 'enthusiastically backed the peace deal,' pledging their largely unspecified support (Shearer and Meyer 2005: 167).[158] Most relevant to the development of the Palestinian education sector was the subsequent arrival of USAID, which, while having little local presence prior to the Accords, was nonetheless the only development stakeholder that possessed both resources – and equally important a close relationship with the Israeli government – to drive development trends over the ensuing years.[159] This principal development role was an awkward fit at the outset of the Accords, however, as an already overextended USAID maintained no physical presence in the occupied territories, and possessed little institutional familiarity with Palestinian education.[160]

USAID, like many foreign assistance agencies, routinely encounters numerous competing challenges that are often difficult to reconcile. To understand the complexities facing USAID's engagement with post-Oslo Palestine, it is useful to appreciate its own institutional development. First established with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, USAID became the leading international humanitarian and development

[158] Lead Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath and former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres both cited American financial assistance to Egypt and Israel at the time as an important precedent (Lasensky 2005: 44).
[159] E Abington 2019, personal communication; B Atwood 2019, personal communication; T Verstandig 2019, personal communication; Roy 1996.
[160] In a telling note of foreshadowing, the most tangible experiences the U.S. government had with Palestinian education up to this point was threatening to curtail funding to UNRWA in the 1950s unless Jordanian and Egyptian programming for Palestinian students employed a pedagogy of resettlement (Qato 2018: 28; Kelcey 2019).

arm of the U.S. government.[161] Through 2025, the agency had been charged with three often diverging responsibilities: providing development assistance, humanitarian assistance, and political-strategic assistance in support of U.S. foreign policy.[162] The marriage of these often-competing roles is highlighted by USAID's recent mission statement aspiring 'to end poverty… while advancing our security and prosperity.'[163] The complexity of such diverse mandates was further complicated by its administration. While the executive branch, and more directly the Secretary of State, is given wide latitude in how they choose to structure foreign assistance, oversight is traditionlly shared with the U.S. Congress, which has often determined the shape of USAID's programming strategy through its budgetary powers.[164] On the eve of the Oslo Accord, this ad hoc approach resulted in USAID being governed by 33 independent statutory goals, 75 priority areas, and 337 listed objectives spread out over 125 countries. Both the Hamilton-Gilman Task Force (1989) and the State Department's Interagency Task Force to Reform AID (1992) concluded that the agency was overburdened with an unfocused mandate and too many objectives, echoing the earlier Carlucci Commission (1983) review that U.S. foreign assistance was 'broken.' As the Assistant Comptroller General for National Security and International Affairs Frank Conahan testified to the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee (Foreign Affairs Committee) at the outset of the Accords, 'The proliferation of foreign aid objectives that the agency is supposed to accomplish has seriously diluted its ability to satisfactorily accomplish any of them' (quoted in USGPO 1993b: 55). Conahan went on to argue that the United States lacked a comprehensive and coherent strategy for development assistance, with no government entity ensuring efforts are coordinated or even consistent, and generally not taken seriously in executive branch decision-making (USGPO 1993b: 59). As one Congressman from the Foreign Affairs Committee sardonically remarked at the time, 'the farther you move [politics] away from aid the better off you are' (quoted in USGPO 1993b: 21).

While the understanding that U.S. foreign assistance required widespread reform was well known at the time, there was still ample interest in continuing to employ it in support of foreign policy goals. As acknowledged by the Foreign Affairs Committee at the time, 'international walking around money' was needed for 'political relationship building' across the world (quoted in USGPO 1993b: 20). This was codified repeatedly, including in 1992 by the President's Commission on the Management of AID Programs underscoring that foreign assistance was ultimately subordinate to U.S. foreign policy objectives (USGPO 1993b: 20). In turn, the Appropriations Bill of 1993 included language specifically mandating that USAID was required to support the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. As Lasensky clarified, 'First and foremost, U.S. assistance would be oriented towards implementing the Oslo Agreement and keeping the process moving' (2005: 45). USAID formally opened an office in the occupied territories the following year.

[161] Following Executive Order 10973 on November 3rd, 1961, USAID was established under State Department Delegation of Authority No. 104.

[162] In 2025, USAID was formally dissolved following Executive Order 14169, which suspended most foreign assistance, led to the termination of most of its programming, and resulted in the agency's absorption into the State Department.

[163] USAID's mission statement, as revised January 2014 and current through much of this inquiry, was 'to end extreme poverty and to promote resilient, democratic societies while advancing our security and prosperity.'

[164] The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 states that 'under the direction of the President, the Secretary of State shall be responsible for the continuous supervision and general direction of ... assistance programs,' which continued with the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 when the USAID Administrator was again placed under the direct supervision of the Secretary of State.

As introduced, an already overextended USAID had no direct presence in the occupied territories prior to the Oslo Accords and possessed little arguable expertise to guide the development of Palestine's inaugural educational system. But as the development agency was always quick to point out, it has supported Palestinian communities since the 1970s. In recognizing that a strengthened Palestinian economy would complement regional progress made following the 1978 Camp David Accords, the U.S. government began channeling foreign assistance to private volunteer organizations in Gaza and the West Bank. As is important to clarify, however, U.S. development assistance to Palestinian communities from 1975 to 1987 averaged less than $7 million each year, comprising less than .001% of the annual U.S. foreign assistance budget at the time (Nakhleh 1989: 112, 118). The nuances of Palestinian development were simply not a priority before the Oslo Accords, and indeed remained more of an aspiration even with political pressure to support the peace process. This was underscored by USAID dispatching two officers to the region as required by legislative mandate – but no more – with neither based in the occupied territories (USGPO 1993a: 74).[165] As USAID acknowledged at the time, 'Even under the best scenario, A.I.D.'s staffing capacity for the West Bank and Gaza program will remain very limited,' restricting programming to areas that are the 'least staff-intensive' (USAID 1992: 19). This lack of depth was reflected in strategy planning that was often expansive in scope, while neglecting specific details. USAID-Israel's initial 1993 strategy for the occupied territories merely declared that 'human capital and institutional strengthening is an essential requirement for progress in both the productive and social sectors' of Gaza and the West Bank, which included education, health care, and basic infrastructure' (USAID 1992: 1). By 1994, however, the 'highly volatile political environment' resulted in constant changes, including revising USAID's focus around six areas and six strategic objectives – none of which featured education.[166] This was echoed in 1996 with Secretary of State Warren Christopher prioritizing supporting the private sector, job creation, and investments in critical infrastructure, while curtailing the funding for education and training that had been to some degree available in earlier years (U.S. State Department 1996). One locally-based charity head remarked at the time, 'There is more interest in investing in buildings than in the people who use those buildings.'[167] As USAID's own review later concluded, any investments it made in education over the decade following Oslo were 'largely untethered to a larger sector strategy' (2016a: 23).

Acknowledging that the process was driven more by political priorities than technical rigor, USAID Administrator Brian Atwood conceded that it was 'never a question that the development program was influenced by the political requirements of the Oslo Accords.'[168] As key insiders claimed at the time, anything of arguable significance would be organized at a higher political level, while 'lower-level development decisions, which are relatively unimportant, are left to AID.'[169] Within that narrowed

[165] As the USAID strategy document from 1996 highlights, 61 positions were required to adequately staff the West Bank Gaza mission, yet were 'significantly lower' due to 'bare bones' budgetary support (USAID 1996b: 59).

[166] Roy 1996: 68; USAID's revised 1994 strategy focused on six areas: the private sector, housing, health, democracy and governance, and water and municipalities, while featuring six strategic objectives: 1) small and medium producers increase the sustainable and marketable production of goods and services; 2) Palestinian public and private sectors plan for and provide improved housing for low and moderate income groups; 3) Palestinians plan for and provide preventive and public-health services which promote appropriate roles for the public and private sectors and which can become sustainable; 4) Palestinians establish democratic and legal institutions to strengthen accountability; 5) [Palestinians pursue] improved [water] quality and more sustainable use of water resources; and 6) municipalities assume expanded responsibilities and perform their functions in an effective accountable, and responsive manner (Internal USAID document 1995). *See also* USAID's 1996 strategy plan, which also neglects to outline any specifics for educational programming (1996b).

[167] Interview with a private volunteer organization official in Gaza City (quoted in Roy 1996: 72).

[168] B Atwood 2019, personal communication.

[169] Interview with a senior-level official from the State Department (quoted in Roy 1996: 64).

purview, USAID staff in Gaza and the West Bank believed that their supporting efforts should at least 'contribute to improving the plight of Palestinians' and help them at least realize some 'tangible benefit,' while also demonstrably 'supporting the peace process.' [170] As Roy argues, American aid to the occupied territories was conceived as part of a peace-making process in which larger priorities will always supersede Palestinian development. In turn, assistance was 'designed as a political tool used to secure a desired political end. Success and failure, therefore, are not measured as much (if at all) in developmental terms as in political-strategic terms' (1996: 75).[171]

The prioritization of such 'political-strategic' ambitions over traditional development metrics was reinforced repeatedly by relevant stakeholders active within the Oslo Accords. State Department officials at the time cited the 'continued viability' of the peace process as being 'of almost singular political importance to the United States,' with the only other relevant priorities being the economic, political, and security concerns of Israel.[172] This emphasis is reinforced by declassified State Department cables from the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv underscoring the 'Fundamental U.S. policy objective in the Middle East is to achieve stability by promoting lasting peace among the peoples of the region' (U.S. State Department 1992: 2).[173] While acknowledging the consistent emphasis on prioritizing the 'continued viability' of the peace process, greater nuance is also useful to gain a full understanding of the policy objectives at play. One of the rare sources of documented insight at the time is from the testimony of the Foreign Affairs Committee hearings overseeing development funding for the Oslo Accords. In framing the issue, the Chairman of the Committee, Lee Hamilton, queried if the inverse relationship between 'opportunity in the territories and the appeal of radicalism' was accurate. Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East Edward Djerejian replied, 'Absolutely.' When pressed why the United States should fund the Oslo Accords, Djerejian explained the 'basic thrust of our policies' is to 'attack the root causes of terrorism.' If successful, they will 'deter the growth of extremism, be it of a religious or secular cloak, and reduce terrorism' (quoted in USGPO 1993a: 82-3). Little else was outlined at the start of what would become the largest peacebuilding education program in history. Yet in many ways such a vague strategy was unsurprising as, in the words of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Toni Verstandig, 'basically everyone involved was drinking from a firehose.' The early days of the Oslo Accords, as she recalls, was a 'very messy time.'[174] In lieu of specifics, the U.S. approach seemed to embrace the familiarity of material solutions above all else. 'The only formula you need to worry about is this,' recalled Palestinian negotiator Omar Dajani, as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State drew a big dollar sign on the blackboard. 'Just tell us how much' (quoted in Lasensky 2005: 54).[175]

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[170] An internal USAID memo, acknowledging how little control they had over strategy, simply stated 'Our goal, then, is: Palestinians realize tangible benefits of the peace process' (USAID 1996a).

[171] As Lasensky describes it, 'When aid was on the agenda, it was usually in terms of how to use aid pledges to move the negotiations forward, rather than how to assess the impact of aid on the ground and whether results correlated with the full range of U.S. objectives.' Lasensky further notes, Middle East envoy Dennis Ross rarely mentions the issue of foreign assistance in his personal account of the peace process, *The Missing Peace* (2005: 49).

[172] Various interviews with State Department officials (Roy 1996: 59).

[173] The only other objective listed in the embassy cable was the caveat 'Central to U.S. policy is our enduring commitment to the survival and security of the state of Israel,' including security assistance to give it the confidence for 'its active participation in the Middle East peace process' (U.S. State Department 1992: 2).

[174] T Verstandig 2019, personal communication.

[175] As confirmed by Professor Omar Dajani (O Dajani 2021, personal communication). According to National Security Council Assistant for the Middle East Bruce Riedel, in 2000 President Clinton proposed $35 billion in aid as a solution to address unresolved issues within the Oslo Accords (Lasensky 2005: 53).

As disconcerting as this ambiguous approach was, equally troubling was the sway it would have over other more established development stakeholders. This was due not to the strength of the American development plan – as essentially, it did not have one – but instead because most other stakeholders lacked the unique positioning of the United States, which relevantly 'had trust' with both the Israelis and Palestinians early on in the process.[176] Such deference was cited as far back as a decade earlier, with intelligence estimates highlighting that while the European Community sought to support a peace process, they 'remain reluctant to take initiative independent of the United States' (USCIA 1985: 12). As Lasensky describes it, 'Even though the United States was not delivering the lion's share of the aid, Washington remained the dominant force within the donor process' (2005: 51).[177] One candid example of this leverage includes the World Bank, which acknowledged the dynamics governing the Oslo Accords. As Roy recounts a World Bank informant clarifying their institutional position, 'Because of the importance of the Palestinian aid program to the United States and because of the importance of the United States to the Bank, our future success depends in large part on whether we can please the United States, especially in this part of the world' (quoted in Roy 1996: 65). This was particularly true when it came to more nebulous forms of development, where, for instance, 'donors didn't want to take the leap into messy things like education.'[178] In turn, the USAID Administrator and U.S. Consul General at the time confirm that both the Embassy and USAID Mission were encouraged to 'use their influence' to guide educational programming in a more moderate direction aligned with American foreign policy priorities.[179] Hence, while the United States possessed little direct development experience in Gaza and the West Bank prior to the Oslo Accords, its prioritization of the peace process motivated traditional development stakeholders to follow a largely extemporaneous approach to Palestinian schooling.

The Palestinian Authority, as a central stakeholder in its own development programming, similarly lacked leverage to dictate its direction. This was not by choice, as developing the educational sector was a 'major priority' for the PA, but its chronic need for external funding influenced the dynamics (USAID 2004: 1).[180] While the Palestinian Authority had many sources of operating revenue, including taxes and its own commercial dealings, the continued flow of foreign assistance was 'an ever-present concern' for the PA who saw external support as a necessary step to avoid 'total collapse' (Lasensky2005: 48, 56). With such funding dependent on the Palestinians remaining compliant with both the spirit of the Accords and rigorous donor agreements, the PA was situated in a very vulnerable position that did not easily facilitate outward criticism of its own development programs, including education.[181] As one State Department official 'deeply involved in the peace process' clarified at the time to Roy, 'The Israelis are our allies and we are here to support them. The Palestinians are the weaker party and they just will have to take it on

[176] T Verstandig 2019, personal communication.

[177] While internal USAID documents claim they – along with the European Union – were the largest donor to the education sector through 2004, they also acknowledge there were no attempts to quantify support provided (USAID 2004: 15).

[178] T Verstandig 2019, personal communication. This is further reinforced by Robert Davidson, Education Officer for USAID's West Bank and Gaza Mission during the early years of the Oslo Accords, highlighting how both USAID and other donors were reluctant to fund PA educational programming as it was deemed risky and prone to fraud (USAID 2004: 12, 16).

[179] American efforts to this end included meetings with the EU representative, the World Bank mission chief Terje Larsen, the United Nations Secretary General representative, and Consul Generals from France, the U.K., and Japan, amongst others (B Atwood 2019, personal communication; E Abington 2019, personal communication).

[180] *See* Plucknett (2006), as an example.

[181] *See* the PLO Commitments Compliance Act of 1989, Middle East Peace Facilitation Act of 1993, and Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995 highlighting the requirements for Palestinian stakeholder to remain in compliance with the Oslo Accords (USGPO 1990, 1993c, 1994).

the chin. They have to do what we tell them. It's not fair but that's the way it is' (quoted in Roy 1996: 62).

This was not altogether distressing to the PA when it came to educational programming, however, as it focused on more pressing concerns – like operational financing – as well as counterintuitively sharing a preference for more passive forms of schooling. As the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State describes it, when Arafat returned from exile he wasn't in a strong position to 'take gambles' on anything, especially education, and was happy to embrace rote-style education to help shore up his political support.[182] The Palestinian leaders heading the PA subsequently overruled the radical 'student-centered' approach its own experts at the CDC had promoted, deeming it 'politically and practically unviable,' while deeming traditional approaches more appropriate for Palestinian society (Nicolai 2007: 85). With the renowned Director of the CDC having 'stepped aside' with his return to academia, the Ministry of Education promptly 'ignored' his recommendations and subsumed the quasi-autonomous CDC, with its new head Dr. Salah Yassin officially declaring the Abu Lughod plan as 'too ambitious and cannot be implemented' (Hovsepian 2008: 171). Instead, the newly reorganized CDC enthusiastically returned, in the wording of Hovsepian, to the 'poor models of other Arab states,' directing greater emphasis on rote platitudes, going as far as to decree 'faith in God' as the intellectual basis of the entire curriculum.[183] The Palestinian Authority's ensuing goal, to be clear, was no longer to encourage a generation of critical thinkers but instead to cultivate partisan loyalty amongst the next generation of Palestinians. Yet the Ministry of Education didn't dare to push partisan rhetoric too aggressively as, once again, the 'Palestinian Authority had nearly no resources of its own' and was 'heavily dependent on international aid and collaboration to make and implement reforms, complicating the process of developing a coherent, indigenous education policy' (Abu Saad and Champagne 2006: 1045). The end result was a PA that openly prioritized its own partisan interests, and those of its donors, ahead of educating Palestinian youth.

The imbalanced dynamics governing the peace process, as noted, increasingly facilitated specific American concerns, which, above all else, continued to stress the importance of avoiding incitement in Palestinian curriculum. As the U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem and 'point man' for the Oslo Accords Edward Abington described it, 'Almost from the time the PA was established in the summer of 1994, U.S. representation, including myself, began pressing Palestinian officials, from Arafat on down, to revise the school curriculum and schoolbooks to remove inflammatory and anti-Israeli language and to promote reconciliation.'[184] USAID Mission Director Larry Garber furthermore 'tried to gain the cooperation of other donors to keep provocative passages out of textbooks for the sake of the peace process.' As summarized by the head of USAID, Brian Atwood, 'there is no question that the U.S. tried to assure that the textbooks were not provocative.'[185]

In addition to the earlier diplomatic emphasis that Palestinian educational programming 'abstain from incitement' and 'any motifs that could adversely affect the process of reconciliation' was continuing pressure from outside advocacy groups convinced that Palestinians would nonetheless use the curriculum

[182] T Verstandig 2019, personal communication.
[183] Hovsepian interview with Abu Loghod in 1997. After submitting the CDC report Abu Lughod 'stepped aside' to teach and write, while many key members of his CDC team 'simply left.' The civil society network which operated in the First *Intifada* was 'professionalized' and simply collapsed (N Hovsepian 2015, personal communication); Curriculum Development Center (1998: 7).
[184] E Abington 2019, personal communication.
[185] B Atwood 2019, personal communication.

to teach their children to hate.[186] After normalizing the inclusion of Zionist narratives in earlier Jordanian textbooks, with what Da'na describes as pedagogical reinforcement 'intended to internalize defeat and control over the Palestinians,' the idea of a sovereign Palestinian identity being featured in PA schools would, for many outsiders, simply not be tolerated (2007: 147). In turn, Israeli activist groups such as the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace continued to lobby the highest levels of American power, ultimately convincing several U.S. Senators to repeat the claim that Palestinians were teaching that 'There is no alternative to destroying Israel.' While unproven, the ploy successfully helped pressure the White House to ensure American, European, and World Bank financing would continue to be used as leverage to suppress nationalist themes within Palestinian textbooks (Moughrabi 2001: 6-11).[187] Such unrelenting advocacy demonstrated repeatedly that *any* educational materials prioritizing Palestinian identity at the expense of Israeli narratives would be met with considerable consequences (Brown 2003; Moughrabi 2001).[188]

In the end, after the Ministry struck down the progressive recommendations of its own experts, while simultaneously submitting to unrelenting outside pressure, the final 1998 curriculum was largely diluted of any contentious material. The revised textbooks, for example, avoided mentioning exiled Palestinians even as they represent half of Palestinian society and remain a seminal part of the national narrative.[189] Controversial topics, be they involving national, social, or religious issues, were often merely alluded to with loose framing, or simply not mentioned at all (Brown 2007: 134). Instead, the PA employed less aggressive narratives within its textbooks, familiar enough to cultivate domestic political support, yet without alarming outside stakeholders. As Brown underscores, while the curriculum was new, it once again merely emphasizes that 'national identity depends on loyalty to authority' (2006: 241). This conventional approach was further reinforced with the sheer scale of the material, with its rote recitation required to graduate, ensuring there was subsequently little unstructured space for students to appraise the narratives as presented. The Ministry of Education had, in turn, taken the open educational format Abu Lughod had initially primed for discussion and replaced it with the least thoughtful version of political rhetoric that empowered little beyond the importance of the PA and the yet unproven triumph of the peace process.

With technical dissent essentially outlasted, the Ministry of Education moved forward over the ensuing two years to finalize what was optimistically framed as a working education system, with extensive school construction built around the new Palestinian curriculum. This new coursework, while unimaginative, was nonetheless acknowledged as representing the 'first unified Palestinian curriculum and, importantly, the first time that control of the Palestinian curriculum has passed into Palestinian hands' (Nicolai 2007: 87). In turn, Palestinian society widely anticipated this first tangible experience with perceived sovereignty amidst an otherwise frustrating experience within the Oslo Accords (Avenstrup et al. 2005). With the start of the 2000-2001 school year the Ministry of Education subsequently introduced the new curriculum into Palestinian schools, starting with first and sixth grades. While implementation was to be gradual, those

[186] Article XX11, Oslo II (1995).

[187] This report is echoed by the recollection of Larry Garber, USAID Mission Director, who sought changes from the PA and other donors after Nathan Brown reviewed Palestinian textbooks and found some passages were indeed provocative (B Atwood 2019, personal communication).

[188] E Abington 2019, personal communication.

[189] As the CDC was exploring what it meant to be Palestinian within educational programming, the PA was also focusing on legally defining citizenship as another key aspect of Palestinian identity. Yet its best attempts at clarifying who exactly was Palestinian was described simply as 'blurred.' Palestinian jurist Anis Kassim expressed frustration that 'Palestinian citizenship is still not clear in the minds of the Palestinian policymakers.' Hence the question of 'Who is a Palestinian?' remained officially unresolved (Butenschøn et al. 219-220).

students entering first grade in the fall of 2000 – the Class of 2000 – were poised to become the first Palestinians in history to be educated exclusively under the nation's own curriculum.

CONCLUSION

While the ultimate significance of the Palestinian Authority's inaugural curriculum remains to be demonstrated, it is evident that post-Oslo educational programming is merely the latest political intervention attempting to narrate ongoing conflict in Gaza. Building from earlier Ottoman, British, and Israeli efforts to aggressively enforce a narrow explanation of a complex history (Section A), the Palestinian Authority and its primary American partner similarly subordinated formal education to their larger political goals (Section B). The stated aims have been updated – ensuring educational programming 'fosters mutual understanding and tolerance' and supports the 'continued viability' of the peace process – yet nonetheless remain consistent with the longstanding priority of utilizing formal education to mitigate local support for violence.[190] The more dramatic change, however, was supporting this traditional approach with $3 billion in scholastic assistance, resulting in one of the most costly educational peacebuilding interventions in history. The ability of such material clout to overcome historical precedent and mitigate student support for violence will be explored in the following chapter.

[190] Article XX11, Oslo II (1995); Roy 1996: 59.

CHAPTER THREE – NONVIOLENT NARRATIVES AMIDST CONFLICT

Contemporary Gaza, much like its longer modern history, remains contested as rivals struggle to shape the conflict, as well as narratives explaining it. So while prominent Oslo stakeholders actively promoted formal education as a tool to shape nationalist views around the nonviolent concept of a two-state solution, many contrasting perspectives remained relevant. Thus, an exploration of the Palestinian Authority's inaugural curriculum amidst wider competing influences is fundamental to answering if and why formal education was unsuccessful in reducing support for violence in post-Oslo Gaza.

This chapter consequently reviews the failure of the PA's inaugural curriculum and its stakeholder-led narratives to incorporate wider aspects of the Palestinian experience, as well as its impact on students and their views towards violence. This first includes reviewing the widespread regional tradition utilizing *cultural violence* in formal education to legitimize *structural* and *direct violence*, and the corresponding emphasis Oslo stakeholders placed on avoiding such incitement within 'their' curriculum (Section A). The chapter then briefly reviews the complex and often violent nature of nationalist narratives contesting Palestinian history to highlight that, while the PA curriculum successfully avoided incitement, its sanitized content facilitated irrelevance and exposed it to criticism on those, as well as other, grounds (Section B). Following this contextualization, the chapter will then highlight insights from the Class of 2000 appraising *their* experiences with *legitimate knowledge* as presented within PA formal curriculum (Section C), *hidden curriculum* and other school-level experiences (Section D), and *outside curriculum* influencing personal understandings (Section E). In doing so, the chapter begins to highlight how the interplay between these various forms of curricula undercut the ability of the PA's educational programming to mitigate support for violence amongst students from the Class of 2000.

A. THE 'NEGATIVE FACE' OF REGIONAL CURRICULA

Aspirations that formal education shapes the political understandings of youth are by no means unique to Palestine. The development of modern formal education, as previously discussed, is widely associated with its use as a tool of socialization and means of generating common understandings, and further plays what Gellner describes as the *key role* in the historical construction of national identities. Nationalism is 'not the awakening' of a national self-conscious, but instead 'it invents nations where they do not exist' (1964: 169).[191] And because school typically constitutes the earliest and most frequent contact with the state, as Halliday argues, formal education is often a 'central means' of promoting the identity at the core of this intervention (2005: 87; Hollis 2019: 3-4). Yet to paraphrase Anderson, while schooling is acknowledged as a driver of nationalist beliefs, it is far from the only source of 'Palestinian-ness,' and regional efforts to shape shared understandings through education often say more about partisan priorities than what students actually learn (2006).

At the height of the Palestinian Authority's efforts to advance a nation-building project centered on the concept of a two-state solution, the PA similarly embraced formal education as a political tool. This was based on schooling being credited with having a significant impact towards shaping national identity in neighboring Egypt and Israel, as well as the PA's own Curriculum Development Center citing formal education as having played a positive role in the construction of national identity in numerous post-

[191] *See also* Helmreich (1959), Tröhler (2012), and Tröhler and Maricic (2023).

conflict settings (Eickelman 1992; Hollis 2019: 78; Sinclair 2002).[192] Developing the nascent educational sector around an inaugural curriculum was subsequently declared the 'strongest card' the quasi-independent PA could play to promote nonviolent nationalism in the post-Oslo era, a strategy only reinforced with Palestine maintaining a 95% school enrollment rate – at the time the highest in the Middle East and North Africa – as well as a longstanding cultural tradition of valuing education (PCBS 2019c).[193]

What is important to recall, however, is the heterogeneous and often poorly understood nature of formal education. Far from socializing youth as the 'positive face' of schooling assumes, regional educational practice is rife with political narratives and incitement comprising *cultural violence* that legitimizes *structural violence*. A recent ninth grade science textbook in Saudi Arabia, for instance, frames a simple physics problem not as a neutral equation but as an opportunity to promote militant nationalism highlighting F-16, Typhoon Eurofighter, and Lockheed jets attacking Yemen within Saudi's Operation Decisive Storm. 'The leader of the Typhoon Eurofighter is flying at 2000 km/hr,' the question begins. 'The pilot then remembers he is fighting for the homeland, so he increased the speed of his fighter to the maximum limit of 2495 km/hr in 40 seconds. Please calculate the acceleration of the jetfighter' en route to bomb Sanaa, the physics curriculum asks.[194] Pakistani science texts similarly embrace belligerence, asking 14 year-old students to calculate the time it would take to hit a person with a brick if dropped from a 45-ft building. It doesn't specifically mention Indians in the question – that is left for the social studies texts that instruct students to 'acknowledge and identify forces that may be working against Pakistan,' as well as provide pictures highlighting 'India's evil designs on Pakistan' (Ahmed 2009: 1). The United States, while not in the region, per se, nonetheless facilitated the 'Alphabet of Jihad Literacy' in similarly utilizing Afghan curriculum to foment a particularly militant form of nationalism there, amongst other examples (Burde 2014: 53-6).

Partisan narratives within formal education, while often critical of external rivals, are similarly not above disparaging domestic opponents. The Egyptian Ministry of Education, for instance, rephrased the Prophet's relations with the traditional 'nonbelievers' of Mecca (*kuffar Quraysh*) to the more generic 'opposition.' Such a change, while small, was perceived locally to demonize any challenge to authority, akin to placing the Prophet and Egyptian leadership within the same hierarchy against the aforementioned 'opposition' (Adel 2014). The Pakistani government also routinely employs rhetoric of heroes and villains throughout its curriculum, notably with the latter not merely comprising foreigners but also 'anyone who disagrees with its policies' locally (Benei 2005: 151). Such nationalist ploys embracing the 'negative face' of formal education are an enduring reality within regional educational practice.

Parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict have by no means been free from this acrimonious practice common throughout regional schooling.[195] Antisemitic content has been particularly widespread within formal curricula, including Syrian textbooks claiming that Jews are 'condemned to God's torture' and must be pushed out of the Islamic world (Landis 2007: 177, 186). Egyptian textbooks similarly portray Jews as 'uniformly duplicitous, traitorous, and antagonistic to all people' (Toronto and Eissa 2007: 39). The Saudi

[192] Nonformal educational programming was similarly embraced to influence nationalist views in the post-Oslo era. Initiatives including Seeds of Peace and Parents Circle-Families Forum, while based around direct contact, reinforced the general impression that education bolstered peaceful, civically minded youth. For intergroup contact theory, s*ee* Allport (1954).

[193] As Bar-Tal argues, 'When a leader says something, not everyone is listening. But when we talk about textbooks, all the children, all of a particular peer group, will be exposed to a particular material…. This is the strongest card' (as quoted in Akram and Rudoren 2013: 1).

[194] In the author's possession.

[195] For demonizing 'the other' through narratives, *see also* Hollis (2019: 55).

curriculum takes this a step further, with a tenth-grade textbook aspiring for the day when the 'Muslims will fight the Jews, and… kill all the Jews' (Sennott 2002: 1). For their part, Israeli stakeholders also employed formal curriculum to hone combative nationalist narratives. Textbooks for Jewish students in the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, typically mentioned gentiles exclusively in the context of pogroms and the Holocaust, while Arabs and Palestinians were described more aggressively – an approach that endures through contemporary schooling. Descriptions of Palestinians in Israeli textbooks have habitually included the words bloodthirsty, colored, dirty, immoral, inferior, killers, robbers, sick, unenlightened, and vengeful (Bar-Tal and Zoltak 1989). Textbook maps indicating 'hazards' requiring 'purification' have furthermore cited 'swamps, soil erosion, and Arabs' (Nasser 2013: 149). A more exhaustive study examining 30,000 pages from state-issued Israeli textbooks found 49% of the references to Palestinians were explicitly negative, while references in government-funded Orthodox textbooks were disapproving 73% of the time (Adwan et al. 2014: 8). An earlier study of 1,700 Israeli children's books in the post-1967 era similarly found 520 with humiliating or negative descriptions of Palestinians, including 270 books that described Palestinians as 'evil' (Cohen 1985). Israeli textbooks, alternatively, describe their nation as 'a young country surrounded by enemies, like a little lamb in a sea of seventy wolves' (Adwan et al. 2014: 9).

The enduring contempt found throughout regional education practice explains, in part, why the particulars of Palestinian education received so much attention during the drafting and implementation of the Oslo Accords. As discussed in Chapter Two, significant political pressure was applied to ensure that post-Oslo Palestinian textbooks eschewed such prejudice (Da'na 2007: 147; Moughrabi 2001: 6-11). Formally, this led to the Oslo Accords understandably requiring that education 'abstain from incitement, including hostile propaganda,' and 'refrain from the introduction of any motifs that could adversely affect the process of reconciliation' (Article XXII of the Oslo II Accords). At the outset of the Accords the Israeli government was admittedly indifferent towards further aspects of PA schooling, with the Israeli Prime Minister at the time, Yitzhak Rabin, stating that he had 'no objection' to those who want to 'waste' their money on Palestinian education.[196] As early optimism over the peace process faded and the development of the Palestinian school system advanced, however, hawkish political stakeholders developed a greater interest in how politicizing formal education might serve their political interests. The Israeli army, for instance, began to formally criticize the PA textbooks' systematic 'fanning the flames of hatred and violent revenge to destroy the country,' as did then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who stated that 'Palestinian education and propaganda are more dangerous to Israel than Palestinian weapons' (Harel 2002; quoted in Haaretz Service 2004). Benjamin Netanyahu, who was re-elected Prime Minister five years after Sharon's comment, similarly echoed the criticism asserting that Palestinian 'hate education poisons them against Israel and lays the ground for continued violence, terror and conflict' (quoted in Lazaroff 2013). Yossi Kuperwasser, then-Strategic Affairs Ministry Director-General, simply characterized Palestinian students as being 'relentlessly fed a rhetorical diet that includes the idolization of terrorists, the demonization of Jews, and the conviction that sooner or later Israel should cease to exist' (quoted in Harkov 2013).

While the region is rife with xenophobic educational traditions, the high-profile nature of the Oslo Accords precipitated greater attention and numerous subsequent inquiries ensuring everything possible was done to avoid incitement within PA educational programming. Independent researchers exploring the inaugural Palestinian curriculum, however, habitually observed little to indicate 'hate education' (Da'na 2007: 146-148). A comprehensive report, originally commissioned by the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, found that examples of demonization in PA textbooks were 'very rare.' To paraphrase a Hebrew University researcher investigating the issue, PA curriculum is freer of negative stereotypes than

[196] B Atwood 2019, personal communication.

both the Jordanian and Egyptian textbooks, with the Israeli research team being surprised at how moderately their country was presented within the curriculum (Adwan and Bar-Tal 2013). Brown sums it up in stating that 'the Palestinian curriculum is not a war curriculum: while highly nationalistic, it does not incite hatred, violence and anti-Semitism,' and incendiary statements attributed to Palestinian textbooks erroneously cite earlier Egyptian and Jordanian textbooks (2001: 1). In response to such consistently mundane assessments, Kuperwasser reluctantly acknowledged that 'there was little official vitriol' within the PA curriculum (quoted in Harkov 2013).

Within the wider regional tradition of politicizing *legitimate knowledge*, Palestine's inaugural curriculum was alternatively deemed benign, taking partisan pedagogy in a novel, nonviolent direction. It is important to appreciate once again, however, that such prosaic narratives were not presented within a vacuum: cumulative efforts to define Palestinian nationalism had been ongoing for decades, and contemporary curriculum promoting the merits of nonviolence was merely one viewpoint joining an already diverse discussion taking place throughout Palestine. To better understand this dynamic debate, the next section will briefly review the highly contested evolution of Palestinian nationalism, underscoring the challenges facing formal narratives prior to reviewing the content and impact of the PA's inaugural peace curriculum.

B. THE ONGOING FIGHT TO DEFINE PALESTINE

Palestinian nationalism is a contentious topic, and there are competing perspectives on the narratives that should be employed to shape its nature and substance. While defining who and what comprises Palestine is nuanced even for those identifying as Palestinian, there are others who wholeheartedly disagree. 'There was no such thing as Palestinians,' Golda Meir famously contended in 1969. 'It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist' (quoted in Fabian and Schiff 1977: 15). As an obviously contested question, scholars have often debated the country's history. Some have argued that Palestinians emerged at various points throughout recent history, primarily after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.[197] Others, alternatively, cite evidence that nationalist movements were springing up in 'Filastin' as early as 1670 (Gerber 1998: 563). What is without doubt, however, is that Palestinian nationalism began to mature alongside the larger Arab nationalist movement of the late 19th and 20th centuries as its citizens increasing embraced what Khalidi describes as the 'overlapping identities' of being both Palestinian and Arab (1997).[198] This is reflected in the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN, *Harakat al-Qawmiyyin al-Arab*), or what Baumgarten frames as the first face of Palestinian nationalism, that dominated Arab politics in the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s (2005). Its leadership largely viewed the struggle as a wider regional effort, with the promotion of Arab identity as central to collective action. However, Palestinians generally remained largely committed to both Arab and discrete nationalism. Unlike many Arab nationalists, Palestinian nationalism consistently rejected Arab rule in emphasizing its own sovereignty. The dual approach continued until 1967 and, to a lesser degree 1973, when Israel's defeat of regional forces undermined the Arab nationalist movement. This prompted the Palestinian nationalist movement to reconsider its strategy more pragmatically. 'Palestinian people believe in Arab unity,' the Palestinian National Charter of 1968 stated, 'however, they must, at the present state of their struggle safeguard their Palestinian identity,' which gradually emphasized actions independent of larger Arab associations.[199] Hence, Palestinian nationalism would

[197] *See* Lewis (1999), Pipes (2000), and Gelvin (2009).
[198] Four separate nationalist societies are recorded in the public record as early as 1914 (Kayyali 1978: 33).
[199] Article 12, Palestinian National Covenant (Palestine National Council 1968).

increasingly be centered around defining and preserving itself in its relationship against Israel, as it struggled to maintain both territorial integrity and its unique cultural identity.

As Palestinians increasingly looked inward to sustain their 'spectacular' irredentism, as Mayall once referred to the unyielding aspirations of Palestinian nationalism, the merits of different domestic approaches were increasingly tested for relevance.[200] Above all else, nationalists in Palestine desire to 'matter,' argues Geertz, even if such aspirations required new orientations (1963).[201] This led to Fatah representing the second face of Palestinian nationalism whereby 'Palestine would be liberated by Palestinian action, with Palestinian refugees taking matters into their own hands' (Baumgarten 2005: 32). In positioning itself as a nationalist movement, the appeal to wide swaths of Palestinian society was instinctive both inside of Palestine and throughout the diaspora where frustration was building against regional mistreatment. The ensuing 20 years subsequently marked the iconic heyday of Palestinian Resistance whereby armed confrontation against Israel, and complex relations with Arab states, were routinely tested until Fatah ultimately acknowledged that it would not fulfill its rhetoric of armed liberation – and that negotiating for an independent state alongside Israel through the Oslo framework was comparatively the best path forward.

Unsurprisingly, renouncing armed resistance and ceding claim to huge swaths of territory (as central pillars of the Oslo Accords) were not welcomed by all Palestinians. It was also not coincidental that frustration with Fatah and its compromises in the 1990s also marked the start of the third phase of Palestinian nationalism, Islamic Resistance, as led most prominently by Hamas (Baumgarten 2005). Islam, ever present in modern Palestinian society, had increasingly influenced a greater degree of political activity since the late 1970s and, while not traditionally having achieved the same notoriety as the PLO or Fatah, was nonetheless well positioned as a viable alternative to what many viewed as earlier secular failures to liberate Palestine.[202] What was being formed was referred to locally as 'National Islamism' (*al-Harakah Alwataniah al-Islamiya*). National and global Islamist groups share a similar ideology, but strategic goals will often vary. As Mozaffari points out, 'National Islamism embraces movements whose claims are partly articulated by the modern concept of nation,' which differs fundamentally from global Islamism's universal aspiration to liberate all Muslim lands (2007: 27). The 1987 Hamas charter, for example, considers nationalism to be 'part and parcel' of the religious ideology comprising the Islamic Resistance Movement. Article six highlights this concern, emphasizing its aim to 'raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine,' while notably omitting any territorial ambition beyond its traditional borders (Hamas 1988). The growing enthusiasm for National Islamism in Palestine was, however, challenged by the residual clout of quasi-secular political groups, such as Fatah, and external stakeholders endeavoring to maintain relevance. For example, the Oslo Accords creating the PA was fundamentally built around redefining Palestinian nationalism as a nonviolent project of state-building within a two-state paradigm of a relatively secular nature. Support for such an approach was not universal, however, and Palestinian

[200] Mayall once referred to Palestinian nationalism as the 'spectacular exception,' whereby most actors would use nationalism tactically. Yet where the Palestinians had no realistic chance of securing an independent state, its irredentism was unequivocal, claiming the entirety of Israel (1990: 59).

[201] Nationalist efforts are animated by two motives: the desire to be recognized as responsible agents whose wishes, acts, hopes, and opinions 'matter,' as well as their desire to build a successful modern state, per Geertz (1963), as referenced in Hutchinson and Smith (1994: 30).

[202] Israel also implicitly encouraged the rise of Hamas in Gaza throughout the 1980s and 1990s as it sought to divide Palestinian nationalism, including, for example, the formal permitting of Islamic University of Gaza, while denying applications for secular alternatives (Reuter 2004; Kifner 1996). *See also* Raz (2023).

nationalism fractured into two distinct camps: those largely secular factions favoring nonviolent state-building and those supporting traditional armed resistance, albeit with Islamic overtones.[203]

This schism between competing forms of nationalism continued through the signing of the Oslo Accords and their implementation over ensuing years. Bolstering this division were those who resented the victimization narrative recurrently represented by the martyrdom (*istishhad*) of the First *Intifada*, as well as in the peace negotiations it produced. Hamas increasingly incorporated these concerns in its rhetoric. As the infamous 'Engineer' Yahya Ayyash argued in 1990, Palestinians had 'paid a high price when using slingshots and stones.' Instead of passive tactics like diplomacy and concessions Palestinians 'must increase the pressure and the cost of the occupation' (quoted in Reuter 2004). Hence, while post-Oslo Fatah renounced violence in 1993, Palestinian bloodshed continued, notably including the formative killing of 29 Muslim worshippers in Hebron by a Zionist settler. Hamas insisted that if Palestinian civilians were not safe, then neither would Israelis, vowing revenge against not just Israeli soldiers, but also civilians. So as the world celebrated the peace accords in 1993, Palestinians detonated their first suicide bombers as a declaration of resistance.[204] Hamas and other groups, including Islamic Jihad, subsequently embraced not merely dying as a martyr (*shaheed*), but a preference for *choosing* to die for Palestine as 'willing' martyrs (*istishhadiyeen*) as they renewed the 'old call for the liberation of Palestine' (Hroub 2006: xvi). Unsurprisingly such a divisive strategy at this seminal time both fueled National Islamism within Gaza and simultaneously widened the ideological schism that was increasingly factionalizing Palestinian society between two nationalist visions: one working exclusively through nonviolent diplomacy and the other promoting armed confrontation.

Further complicating this widening division was the perceived absence of peace dividends within the occupied territories in the post-Oslo era. While the PA was created in 1994 to manage increasing autonomy and benefit from what would be achieved during its five-year framework, progress was limited. As the U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem overseeing the Oslo process recalls, Palestinians 'saw little change for the better,' with the President of the Palestinian National Authority Yasser Arafat and other American officials deeming progress to have been 'unsatisfactory.'[205] By the fall of 2000 Palestinians were chafing under continued settlement expansion, an unfulfilled promise to release all political prisoners, and general exasperation in the face of unrealized independence. The occupied territories were *Zahaq*, as Allen frames it, or in other words 'fed up and frustrated' (2008: 473). And, as Shlaim notes, without addressing such frustrations 'there [could] be no end to the conflict' (2009: 208). Consequently, when then-leader of the Likud party, Ariel Sharon, visited Al-Aqsa Mosque as a campaign ploy in 2000, the provocation released a torrent of anger that quickly escalated into the Second 'Al-Aqsa' *Intifada*.

What followed was an outpouring of cyclical violence that was notably more punishing than the first *Intifada*. Reflecting the rejection of nonviolent resistance, the ensuing years became marred by unprecedented acts of Israeli and Palestinian aggression, creating what Allen describes as 'missiles and gunfire' appearing to 'rain from the sky' (2008: 453). The hostilities between 1999 and 2003 resulted in

[203] Palestinian support for the Oslo Accords at their initiation was estimated by Zogby (2013) and Shikaki (2002) at 61% and 66% respectively.

[204] When Palestinians re-initiated suicide attacks is open for interpretation: Pedahzur (2005) and Shay (2004) argue that suicide attacks began in April 1993, while Hafez (2003) cites September 1993, and Pape (2005) April of 1994.

[205] As Abington recalls, 'Arafat and other Palestinian leaders had complained to me and others that they were losing popular support among Palestinians who saw little change for the better, while at the same time, Israel was continuing its settlement policies, fragmenting the West Bank with checkpoints that hampered movement of people and goods and making more difficult movement of people and goods between Gaza and the West Bank' (E Abington 2019, personal communication).

over 4,000 casualties and the devastation of the Palestinian economy.[206] A student who had grown up between Gaza and the West Bank at the time summed it up as the 'total destruction' of what little had been achieved over the early years of Oslo, further complicating an already challenging political environment.[207] As with many active conflicts, Palestine in the autumn of 2000 was both aggressively contested and prone to violence – portending the serious challenges facing both the PA and the nonviolent narratives it would soon be introducing within its educational programs.

C. THE PA PRESENTS ITS FORMAL NARRATIVES

Contemporary Gazan youth, like their predecessors, have witnessed diverging aspects of the conflict play out throughout their young lives, and thus are intimately familiar with competing perspectives on Palestinian nationalism. This complicates the introduction of an entirely new educational narrative attempting to explain such complex history, requiring closer review of the PA's inaugural curriculum.

As discussed earlier, the Class of 2000 was born at the height of efforts to support nation-building around the concept of a two-state solution. With formal education being perceived as the most effective tool to shape nationalist views, the Oslo Accords subsequently established the Ministry of Education, and later the Curriculum Development Center (CDC), to take the lead in drafting an answer to the question of what it meant to be Palestinian. While the CDC and its Director Abu Lughod framed Palestinian identity as a discussion, and preferred, instead, to empower students to answer questions for themselves, the PA was not interested in such 'radical approaches.' It consequently prompted the Ministry of Education to redirect its emphasis away from promoting independent thinking and instead stress a more traditional hierarchical approach, reinforced with rote learning and 'faith in God' as a means to hone the students' 'social and moral values.'[208] As highlighted by the internal PA struggle over even nonviolent content, determining *legitimate knowledge* is often contested and highly political. [209]

Following the direction of the Palestinian Authority, the Ministry of Education ultimately produced what was deemed a 'very selective' national curriculum that, at least technically, promoted the Oslo Accords and its framework towards a two-state solution.' [210] In doing so it further promoted both the centrality of

[206] The costs of the Second *Intifada* included 4,173 casualties within Israeli and Palestinian territories (Btselem 2024a) and, according to an estimate by the World Bank, the destruction of between 28-33% of the Palestinian economy between 1999 and 2003 (2004: ix).
[207] Field interview with SI205 (2014).
[208] Curriculum Development Center 1998: 7. In the PA's own banal wording, education will be 'the basis for social and moral values, and democracy: Education shall be the cornerstone for building a Palestinian society with strong commitment to ethics, principles, and openness to global culture' Developmental Principle Number three of the PA Ministry of Education's Five Year Plan (Palestinian Authority MoEHE 2000). Hovsepian describes the PA's educational goals as 'so general' that 'they lack a clear roadmap for implementation' (2008: 140).
[209] The PA's efforts to control *legitimate knowledge* similarly expanded beyond formal curriculum. While the PA's Basic Law states that 'freedom of opinion is guaranteed to every Palestinian who has the right to express his opinion freely, orally, in writing, in photography or drawing in mediums of expression and information,' further efforts curtail that freedom. The PA's Press Law, for instance, requires four copies of every book must be forwarded to the Ministry of Information prior to distribution for review, with Article 8 prohibiting 'publishing anything that may instigate violence, fanaticism, and hatred or invite racism and sectarianism' (Najjar 1997: 41-103). All of Edward Said's writings were notably banned under this regulation due to his criticism of the PLO and the Oslo Accords. More recently, internet traffic is routinely filtered to prevent Palestinians from accessing information critical of the PA (Abu To'amah 2003; Pina 2005; York 2012).
[210] Field interview with M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist (2013).

the PA and the 'continued viability' of the peace process, as advocated by the United States government (Roy 1996: 59). Yet, as discussed, the PA curriculum was advanced prior to political settlements having been secured, with nationalist narratives still openly contested.[211] Such concerns were marginalized, however, as prominent stakeholders clearly prioritized their own interests ahead of the educational needs of Palestinian students. Thus, it is only by speaking with the students directly that their impressions of the PA curriculum, and its relevance within the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict, can be fully appreciated.

THE CLASS OF 2000 SHARES ITS THOUGHTS

While formal education is traditionally perceived as playing a central role in socializing nationalist narratives, including in post-Oslo Palestine, extensive research carried out between 2014 and 2025 suggests that the PA's national curriculum was unsuccessful in achieving this outcome with respect to the Class of 2000.[212] For Gazan students the inaugural curriculum had two core weaknesses: an excess of rote material, not apparently intended to facilitate empowerment but instead compliance, and secondly, a blatant partisan bias exclusively prioritizing nonviolence over all other considerations. Both characteristics subsequently contributed to the PA's inaugural curriculum being of practical irrelevance to young Palestinians growing up within Gaza's larger contested reality.

The first weakness is introduced Basel, a student from the Class of 2000, who describes his PA secondary education as 'the worst educational experience' he's ever been through. As he explains:

> The problem was I'm not a person who knows how to memorize. I've always relied on understanding things. As long as I understand something, I can appreciate it, because when I study something I search for other aspects and put the pieces together to create a story that makes sense in my head. But in high school you have memorize the textbooks from cover to cover. And look how many topics you have. You're guaranteed to develop mental problems.[213]

As fellow student Bilal points out, 'It's impossible to focus on your studies, maintain a good academic level, and have a normal life of extracurricular and social activities. To try and do so in high school is surely to be fucked in the ass just like me, even though I was actually a good student.'[214] Abu Bashir, another Gazan youth, surmises that the whole approach was based around the metric of testing students 'not on their actual abilities but rather on their ability to memorize.'[215] Bilal concurs, clarifying his experience that the whole Palestinian educational system is built around the premise that 'no matter how smart and truly educated I am, I would not be someone if I did not first and foremost memorize the curriculum by heart.'[216] Members of the Class of 2000 repeatedly offer similar observations, including Odai recalling 'the

[211] The most relevant competing form of nationalism, as Chapter Four will discuss, is Hamas' National Islamism, including the call to 'conquer evil, crushing and defeating it, so that the country may return to its rightful place, and the call my be heard from the minarets' (Hamas Charter, Chapter Two, as quoted in Hroub 2006: 26).
[212] This included many guided focus group sessions being organized at the Tamer Institute in Gaza City, as well as more impromptu settings in outlying areas of Gaza, from May 2014 through December 2015. Such foundational discussions typically 'snowballed' into subsequent follow-up interviews that continued on a case-by-case basis throughout 2016 until all 41 cohort members had been given an opportunity to share everything they deemed relevant to assessing the impact of Palestine's inaugural curriculum and their views towards political violence.
[213] Field interview with MR106 (2014).
[214] Field interview with MR106 (2014).
[215] Field interview with MR116 (2014).
[216] Field interview with MR109 (2014).

curriculum being so condensed' it doesn't allow 'any space to breathe.'[217] Gazan students repeatedly emphasize that they were overwhelmed by the sheer scale of rote material.

Such common student experiences are supported by existing reviews noting early on that the extent of the PA curriculum was, and remained, problematic. One survey conducted by the Ministry of Education highlights that its curriculum, even while ignoring wide swaths of Palestinian life, was nonetheless still 'too long' (2008: 33). This reality is acknowledged by Nicolai, who cites the 'enormous' pressure created by the scale of the curriculum, with one teacher admitting it was 'very difficult fitting it all in' (2007: 88).

Further compounding the challenges facing students and teachers alike was a wider educational system not yet capable of supporting even more forgiving lesson plans. One notable concern at the time was Gaza operating with an estimate 250 schools less than it needed.[218] This shortfall was rooted both in recurring violence against school facilities, as well as demographic pressures – with the number of primary and secondary school students in Gaza growing by 92% over the post-Oslo era. To address this shortfall students were divided into shifts, with 82% of government schools and 88% of UNRWA schools running separate morning and afternoon sessions to accommodate the surplus of students.[219] Yet even with curtailed hours each class still averaged 36 students (Unicef 2010).

The challenge of presenting an abundance of rote materials within half-day schooling was further complicated by habitually under-supporting teachers. As noted by several institutional reviews, Gazan teachers were already inadequately prepared for the rigors of classroom life – a phenomenon that dates back to the lack of teacher trainings offered under both British and Israeli administration (Assaf 1997: 53). Yet even with local administration PA teachers made limited progress, remaining heavily reliant on rote learning. As the World Bank cynically points out, 'teaching methods courses can be unduly academic' in Palestine (2001: 82). The result was often, as Hovsepian describes it, an educational system being led by 'low quality personnel' who, having 'no idea what education entails,' emulating the 'poor models' found throughout the region.[220]

Ultimately, even those teachers dedicated to educating their students to the best of their abilities were often overwhelmed. As Issa Saba of the Ca'anan Institute acknowledges, teachers who promote activity-based learning and other engaging approaches as best practice will often give up. 'In the last half of the year, when they realize they still have to finish two thirds of the book, all that is over' (Nicolai 2007: 89). As Nicolai concurs, an abundance of rote material packed into half-day sessions leaves under-supported teachers with 'no space' to maneuver (2007: 87). The PA curriculum might have been introduced with high hopes, acknowledges the Unicef's then-Educational Specialist in Gaza, but this optimism neglects the reality on the ground. 'When you have so many students at so many levels take so much energy and so much time. It's not realistic. Teachers are put in unbearable conditions. You can't teach shit in those classes.'[221]

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[217] Field interview with MR120 (2014).

[218] At the time Gaza had 677 schools, which Gisha (2012) estimated was inadequate with 250 additional schools already needed, in addition to a further 190 needed for population growth in the coming years, totaling 440. *See also* Nicolai (2007: 95).

[219] Gazan schools would also routinely operate on triple shifts during times of especially violent conflict as vulnerable schools closed and their students were accommodated elsewhere, per field interview with M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist (2013).

[220] N Hovsepian 2015, personal communication.

[221] Field interview with M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist (2013), supported by sample class size data, 61.9% of which were between 41-50 students (UNISPAL 2006).

Reflecting on the PA's goal to use its curriculum as 'the cornerstone' for building Palestine, Nehal, a Gazan student, asks:[222]

> Did I learn anything? I don't think they gave me information to begin with. That wasn't the focus. Instead they merely taught us the Oslo Accords in a paragraph to memorize and of course didn't teach us for a minute what it was all about. 'Remember this to fill in the paper. Remember this to fill in the paper.'[223]

In addition to students challenging the abundance of rote material in the PA curriculum was their further criticism that the blatant political bias of textbooks resulted in their irrelevance to understanding the larger developments they were experiencing in Gaza. However, this disconnect wasn't always immediately obvious to students. Falastine acknowledged that while in school she initially didn't think the lands of 1948 were occupied but, instead, 'just far away.'[224] Watan similarly spoke of learning about Solomon's Temple (*Haikal Sulaiman*) in her textbook, admitting 'I used to feel it was out there, and *yalla* let's go visit it.'[225] But eventually competing influences chipped away at the idealistic narratives presented in the PA curriculum. Bilal subsequently describes the formal lessons as 'rather naive,' adding that 'it was full of dates and information that would be stuffed in our brains, yet it'd be irrelevant. For example, they used to always sing praises glorifying the stupid PA.'[226]

Eshraq makes similar observations: for her, 'the textbooks always tend to 'beautify' the image of the political leadership, despite all the flaws and negativities the leadership has, which lead to the political and economic deterioration of the state and the people.'[227] Meera shares this criticism, noting that the curriculum emphasizes the political origins of the PA as far back as the 1960s, but 'completely omits' more relevant contemporary issues, including violence committed against Palestinians, refugees, or the Oslo Accords in any constructive detail.[228] Watan reiterates their frustration with this narrow celebration of PA narratives, explaining, 'In school I used to think there was independence from what we studied, but later I'd ask what independence are they talking about?'[229] 'They used to focus so much on peace, tolerance, and human rights,' observes Odai. 'Yet you want to talk about the right to security and life while we have invasions every day? Are you trying to fool me? I lack those things – how could I believe in them?'[230] Mohammed elaborates on this common frustration, underscoring wider student concern:

> There was no connection between the reality we lived and the educational topics the PA curriculum used to promote. It was if there were two separate worlds. Coursework in school was detached and out of context… There are things related to politics that reflected the ideology of the ruling party that hid the facts and polished the image of the PA. It was trying to spoon feed us the 'state building, independence and peace' jargon and did not strive to challenge us. And as we grew up, we were like 'What is this stupid

[222] Developmental Principle No. 3 of the PA Ministry of Education's Five Year Plan (Palestinian MoEHE 2000).
[223] Field interview with WG201 (2014).
[224] Field interview with WR203 (2014).
[225] Field interview with MR113 (2014).
[226] Field interview with MR109 (2014).
[227] Field interview with WR206 (2014).
[228] Field interview with WR205 (2014).
[229] Field interview with MR113 (2014).
[230] Field interview with MR120 (2014).

shit? Independence? Really?' They tried so hard to force us into absorbing what they wanted.[231]

Summarizing the experience of many students, Watan admits that 'Generally I don't remember anything from the PA curriculum. There's no connection between me and it. It was detached from reality. This is why nothing sticks in your mind.'[232]

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Students denouncing their textbooks, even criticism as unanimous as that expressed by the Class of 2000, is not a rare phenomenon. It is useful, therefore, to again compare their views with outside assessments. However, as previously discussed, comparison with independent reviews is confounded by most external parties being preoccupied with incitement. Historical accounts, for instance, were widely panned by students and teachers as inaccurate and irrelevant. But scholarly reviews prioritized an altogether different focus. The Georg Eckert Institute (2003), for one, declared that historical accuracy in PA textbooks as 'not problematic,' while Brown deems the history texts 'fairly coherent,' noting that they are 'not based on any active or hostile denial of other versions of history' (2001: 10). A comprehensive review of PA textbooks sponsored by the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land also emphasizing incitement similarly found none, yet notably retracted its own assessment due to wider political pressure again underscoring the almost singular importance of incitement to many prominent stakeholders (Zeveloff and Jeffay 2013).

Consequently, to more fully interrogate the accuracy of student criticisms of PA curriculum, critical discourse analysis was undertaken of prominent textbooks featured in the post-Oslo era. This review was performed in partnership with the Class of 2000, with its findings not only supporting the complaints expressed by students, but also dramatically reinforcing their concerns over the partisan nature of the inaugural curriculum – and notably its blatant lack of wider perspectives that might invite challenges to the PA's state-building narrative.

The inherent bias found throughout the PA curriculum is best highlighted in tenth and eleventh-grade history textbooks, which, including global revolutions and modern Palestinian history, comprise the pedagogical zenith of lessons most relevant to narrate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet, as student critiques suggest, the PA curriculum is shockingly biased in coverage of revolutions, violence, and political diversity. The tenth-grade history textbook, for example, explores the American, Cuban, French, Indian, and South African revolutions – most of which mysteriously end without anything more inflammatory than 'clashes' – often going to great lengths to emphasize diplomatic approaches that took place. The American Revolution, for instance, was apparently successful primarily due to the three Philadelphia conferences that vaguely discuss boycotts, governance, and the raising of an army. The account, without further elucidation, then inexplicably jumps, a sentence later, to the conclusion of the peace accords in Paris. Not one casualty was mentioned.[233] The same textbook similarly speaks extensively on how India achieved independence through peaceful resistance, with little exploration of the messier aspects of the

[231] Field interview with MR112 (2014).

[232] Field interview with MR113 (2014).

[233] Coverage of the American Revolution focused on grievances leading to an increasing number of protests, which merely 'clashed,' leading to the expulsion of the British soldiers from the colonies. It concludes by highlighting how the United States became a 'perfect beacon of hope' *History of the Modern World, Grade 10,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2004: 16).

conflict, nor its millions of casualties.[234] The Cuban revolution, to the textbook's credit, does acknowledge that Castro led an armed resistance against the ruling Cuban government, attacking patrols and police stations from mountain hideouts until the country had been liberated.[235] Such candor is rare, however, as evident in coverage of South African history, which many Gazan students consider as the closest analogue to the challenges facing Palestine. In its review, the textbook explains the half-century long struggle for civil rights by recounting the story of Nelson Mandela's incarceration, release from prison, and election as president. While the tactic of refusing to carry government IDs is mentioned in passing, once again, there is little acknowledgment of the chaotic, conflicted nature of the struggle that cost 35,000 lives.[236] The tenth-grade grade history textbooks appear to correctly identify that anti-colonial movements are of particular relevance to Palestinian nationalism. But the discussion of these subjects is so denuded of substance as to be rendered effectively meaningless.

Students from the Class of 2000 were habitually unimpressed with these suppressed curricular offerings. Medo laments that 'It wasn't learning, per se,' but 'more like kid's stories.'[237] Abu Bashir explains, in his view, that 'Shortening the revolutionary lessons and history in the way they're presented in the PA textbooks misleads my understanding of it and encourages an inability to seek clarifications about the details of the revolutions and the experiences of the people who led it. On a personal level, it instilled a defeatist belief and reinforced distrust in my ability to lead for change in my community. It's brainwashing.'[238]

More directly relevant to Gazan youth, but equally biased, is the coverage of the modern history of Palestine in the eleventh-grade textbooks, which offers little similarity to even the most benign narratives. For example, the *Naqba* of 1948 and *Naqsa* of 1967 – the two defining events of modern Palestine – are inexplicably not mentioned by name in the curriculum. There is brief reference to the War of 1948, and the killings that took place in three villages, but at no time are references made to what Pappe describes as the 'mass killing and butchering of thousands of Palestinians [who] were killed ruthlessly and savagely by Israeli troops,' nor the subsequent depopulation of 500 villages in 1948 (2006: 197). Instead the textbook merely buries the violence committed against 'some' villages below the psychological, and implicitly nonviolent tactics, that led to one million Palestinians departing their homes.[239] A non-critical trend, which quickly becomes evident, continues throughout the entirety of modern history: the only Palestinian casualties discussed over seven decades of conflict were two incidents – one in 1956 where a joint Israeli-French campaign killed 49 Palestinians villagers in the Suez Crisis, and the Sabra and Shatila massacres, where blame was placed largely on Lebanese militia.[240] At no time is the killing of a Palestinian at the hands of Israeli forces clearly discussed in PA textbooks beyond vague and isolated references to

234 Misra (2008) cites up to 10 million Indian casualties. More conservative estimates place the number of casualties at no lower than hundreds of thousands.

235 *History of the Modern World, Grade 10*, Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2004: 72).

236 Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2004: 72-3). According to the South African Human Rights Commission it is estimated that 35,000 South Africans died under apartheid and during the transition to democracy from 1990 through 1994. For further discussion of South African history presented in textbooks, *see* Cross et al. (1998).

237 Field interview with MR126 (2014).

238 Field interview with MR116 (2014).

239 'Zionist forces used different methods to clear the Palestinian lands of its indigenous people. Some of those methods included a psychological war through radio that belonged to Hagana that were used to spread rumors. In addition to the murderous operations committed against 'some' villages in Deir Yassin, Tantura, Lod, and others, which led to the expulsion of nearly one million Palestinians inside and outside Palestine' *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2005: 38).

240 *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2005: 41, 79).

assassinated Palestinian leaders, which appear intended to highlight their political legacy, while focusing little attention on how they were killed and by whom.

تصاعدت وتيرة الأعمال العسكرية بين الفلسطينيين والقوات الصهيونية، إثر انتهاء الانتداب البريطاني على فلسطين، وإعلان اليهود قيام دولتهم بتاريخ ١٥ أيار عام ١٩٤٨م. وإزاء هذا الموقف قررت الحكومات العربية إرسال قواتها إلى فلسطين لمساندة الشعب الفلسطيني في الدفاع عن أرضه، ومنع إنشاء دولة يهودية فيها.

وقد أوضح عبد الرحمن عزام الأمين العام لجامعة الدول العربية الأسباب التي حملت الحكومات العربية على التدخل العسكري في مذكرة بعث بها إلى الأمين العام للأمم المتحدة، جاء في الفقرة السادسة منها:

Fig. 5. The core curricular discussion of the Palestinian *Naqba*, although not referred to by name.[241]

On the Palestinian side, there is similarly little discussion of protecting one's homeland, be it in actions or rhetoric, even as one of the predominant narratives of Palestinian history. As enshrined in its 1988 Declaration of Independence, defending the land with 'epic tenaciousness' and 'steadfast endurance' – and it alone – provides the foundation of national identity and national spirit.[242] Hence it is a notable exclusion when a decade later little connection to such tenacity was retained within Palestine's inaugural curriculum. The introduction to eleventh-grade history textbook does include one reference to Palestinians historically 'defending the land,' but this sole reference quickly gives way to a larger and more abstract narrative framing the conflict as an earlier struggle between Arabs and Jews.[243] Even as Palestinian history texts cover the formation of the PLO, there is similarly little mention of its factional background or violent history.[244] The most comprehensive examination of national resistance is merely a brief reference to Fatah's first military operation prior to its formal founding in 1964, as well as passing reference to Al Karameh, a 'milestone of Palestinian resistance,' without any supporting context or statistics.[245] True to form, an event so central to Palestinian history it led to the re-writing of the Palestinian national anthem failed to earn more than a footnote in the PA's *History of Modern Palestine*.

What is similarly telling is the coverage of the PLO Charter in the PA curriculum. The history textbooks merely list what is currently politically expedient – the enshrined centrality of the PLO – without mentioning the more controversial aspects of the Charter that were omitted within the Oslo Accords, including armed resistance and the goal of liberating the whole of Palestine.[246] Moreover, it places inordinate emphasis on the PA's denunciation of terrorism and other violent acts, and stresses that it has

[241] 'The military actions between Palestinians and Zionist forces escalated upon the end of the British Mandate over Palestine and the Jews declaring the establishment of their state in 1948. Regarding this, Arab governments decided to send their troops in to help the Palestinian people and to stop the establishment of a Jewish state on their land' (*History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE 2005: 33).

[242] 'With epic tenaciousness in terms of place and time, the people of Palestine fashioned its national identity. Its steadfast endurance in its own defense rose to preternatural levels, for despite the ambitions, covetousness and armed invasions which deprived that people of an opportunity to achieve political independence, and which were prompted by the allure of this ancient land and its crucial position on the intersecting boundaries of powerful nations and civilizations, it was the constancy with which the people adhered to the land that gave that land its identity and which imbued its people with the national spirit' (Salah 1988).

[243] *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2005: 33).

[244] *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2005: 47).

[245] *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2005: 64).

[246] *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2005: 46).

taken upon itself the responsibility to force all of its members to maintain a commitment to nonviolence.[247] While the Declaration of Independence retains the 'ambition to achieve the goal of liberation,' Palestinian rights cited within the curriculum are merely 'protected under the umbrella of a democratic system based on freedom of opinion, freedom of politics, and the respect of minority rights, social justice, equality' and other platitudes with little relevance to contemporary Gaza.[248]

Perhaps most relevant to the Class of 2000, and at the same time equally disheartening to the students, is the textbooks' coverage of contemporary history, including the First and Second *Intifadas*, as well as the rise and fall of the Oslo Accords. Exemplifying the habitual disconnect between the PA curriculum and wider events is the First *Intifada*, which for many Palestinians and scholars alike is centered around the Children of Stones (*Atfal al-Hijara*) – the young people whose activism driving strikes, boycotts, and disobedience campaigns formed the backbone of the uprising.[249] Yet instead of highlighting this, the textbooks alternatively emphasize the success of the PLO's 'secret' leadership, and how it marshaled disparate efforts into a guided movement from afar. Such conceit is confounded on the subsequent page, with the textbook celebrating the PLO's reaction to the *Intifada* with an interview being given to foreign media (*Le Monde*), and only subsequently republished within Palestine (Palestine the Revolution Newspaper). In the interview Arafat stressed that 'there is one certainty – there is communication between the Palestinian territories and the leadership of the PLO' in Tunisia.[250] No further 'certainties' are listed in the textbooks, nor is there mention of the over 1,000 young activists who were killed at the time.[251]

كانت الانتفاضة مثالاً رائعاً للتضحية والصمود الفلسطيني في وجه الظلم والعدوان، وجسدت وحدة الشعب الفلسطيني في أروع صورها، حيث تم تشكيل لجنة المتابعة العليا للقوى الوطنية والأسلامية وتوحيد المواقف والجهود للمقاومة الفلسطينية ومنذ اندلاع الانتفاضة حاولت إسرائيل بكل الوسائل تدمير البنية التحتية للانتفاضة لوقفها، فقد عمدت إلى اجتياح المدن الفلسطينية، وحصار الرئيس الراحل ياسر عرفات واغتيال العديد من القيادات الفلسطينية، ومنها: أبو علي مصطفى أمين عام الجبهة الشعبية، والشيخ أحمد ياسين قائد حركة المقاومة الإسلامية (حماس).

Fig. 6. The extent of curricular coverage of the Second *Intifada*.[252]

[247] *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2005: 87).
[248] *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2005: 84).
[249] *See* Barber (2001), Gordon et al. (2003), Jean Klein (2000), and Peteet (1994).
[250] *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE (2005: 80-81). Field interview with M Rezeq, then-Unicef's Gazan Education Specialist (2013).
[251] *See* Barber (2001, 2008), Gordon et al. (2003), Jean Klein (2000, and Peteet (1994).
[252] 'The *Intifada* was a great example of Palestinian sacrifice and steadfastness in the face of injustice and aggression. It embodied the unity of the Palestinian people in its most glorious form. As a result, a Supreme Follow-Up Committee of the national and Islamic forces was formed to unify positions and efforts for Palestinian resistance. Since the outbreak of the *Intifada*, Israel attempted by every means to destroy the infrastructure of the *Intifada* in order to stop it. Accordingly, Israel resorted to incursions into Palestinian cities, the siege of the late President Yasser Arafat, and the assassination of many Palestinian leaders, including Abu Ali Mustafa and Sheikh Ahmad Yassin' (*History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE 2005: 91).

After detailed coverage of the Oslo Accords in response to the First *Intifada*, and fawning profiles of Fatah leadership that led to it, the textbooks are once again consistently uncritical as to why the peace process collapsed and culminated in the Second *Intifada*. In particular, there is little context or statistical support of the two sentences citing 'Israel's continuous policy of assassinations, arrests, and the rejection to release prisoners' that 'led to the Palestinians to a state of hopelessness and frustration with the inefficiency of the peace process that they had resorted to achieve their national goals.'[253] Similarly, the Second *Intifada* – spanning five seminal years of primary school for the Class of 2000, as well as the general destruction of Gaza – only warrants five sentences emphasizing Palestinian leadership, while failing to acknowledge the larger consequences experienced by the wider Palestinian community. Not one statistic is mentioned, nor are explanations provided about when or why the Second *Intifada* ended. The only conclusion that is included is the end of the textbook itself, which unceremoniously finishes with a final entry in 2005 citing the current strife as derived simply from 'the lack of clear vision regarding the core issues.'[254] In response, Medo summarizes the view of many in the Class of 2000 declaring:

> It's a fucking joke. Not only this but the entire curriculum that the PA has devised. Never have I seen a single student care for such information, not even the ones about our own *Intifadas*, *Naqba*, and *Naqsa*. It's useless not knowing how we have been systematically terminated, and incarcerated like rats in our own lands, because we live it every day. And this is why personally I've noticed that more and more people over the past five years have been challenging the educational sector in Palestine.[255]

While engaging with students from the Class of 2000 to understand the influence of their textbooks, one particularly notable word kept arising during discussions: their description of the PA curriculum as '*Tajheel*.' This disparaging quip essentially means to intentionally teach someone the wrong information or make sure they're uneducated so that they can be led. Bilal states quite specifically that teachers in school 'would mislead us or blindfold us from important information on resistance, boycotting, Israel, the Palestinian division, the Balfour Declaration, and the history of Palestine. They used to intentionally mislead us or under-educate us so we can be led.'[256] In looking back on her own experiences as a student in the Class of 2000, Esraq, herself now a teacher, shares 'I don't ever recall the PA curriculum aimed at building a generation with a sense of nationalism, a generation that truly understands what nationalism

[253] 'The rigidity between the Palestinian and Israeli sides following the Camp David summit, in addition to Israel's attempt, with the support of the USA, to impose a solution on the Palestinians away from the legitimacy of U.N. resolutions, in addition to Israeli's lack of commitment in implementing its commitments regarding the national rights of the Palestinian people as stated in the Oslo Accords, and Israel's continuous policy of assassinations, arrests, and the rejection to release prisoners – all of those are factors that led the Palestinians to a state of hopelessness and frustration with the inefficiency of the peace process that they had resorted to achieve their national goals' (*History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE 2005: 91).

[254] 'The negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis continued with American and Egyptian and European sponsorship in Sharm, 1999, but did not lead to any significant results because of the contrasting positions between the two sides on the freeze of settlements and withdrawal, which led to a quick deterioration of the peace process, in addition to the lack of clear vision regarding the core issues,' (*History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE 2005: 91). There are brief references to the separation wall in 2002, the death of Arafat in 2004, and the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, but all merely in passing with no depth nor context (*History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11,* Palestinian Authority MoEHE 2005: 92-94).

[255] Field interview with MR126 (2014).

[256] In Arabic the verb is '*tajheel*' – to intentionally teach someone wrong information or to make sure they're uneducated so they can be led (Field interview with MR109 2014).

is, beyond merely singing the national anthem in the queue every morning just because they have to.'[257] Other students not only agree with these pointed critiques of the PA curriculum, but vent cumulative frustration as they recount their experiences. For example, Orub shares her aggravation at the PA curriculum failing to provide an honest presentation of both the conflict and Palestinian nationalism:

> The PA curriculum presented the Palestinian Cause (*al-Qadiya*) as a humane cause, which is a beautiful thing, but they emptied the Cause of its content and context… But as I grew up I learned that this was oversimplified and only a fraction of the bigger story. There was a purposeful avoidance of other liberation movements – the textbooks only talked about Fatah. There was no left movements, no Hamas, or anything no matter if they agreed or disagreed with them. The PA curriculum over-exaggerated the Declaration of Independence in 1988 as if it was a big step towards liberation, but in reality it's a step of no significance. The Oslo Accords, for example, was also portrayed as a positive thing and it's the fruit of the Palestinian struggle, which is of course because the PA put together the curriculum. Why would we expect to see any criticism to Oslo? Instead, the PA curriculum was very intense. It focused on inundating students with information that was extremely dry and did not correspond with the reality that we lived at any level. We used to memorize all of this, but we were not attached to the Cause and we had no idea what happened. The PA curriculum was merely a platform for preaching.[258]

These critical impressions of the PA curriculum are surprisingly widespread across all sub-groups of the Class of 2000, with 39 of the 41 core cohort members actively expressing them. Alternatively, two members endorse the PA curriculum, praising its extensive and accurate coverage of political groups in Palestine. This view is not supported by the content analysis of the PA textbooks, however, and their minority view might be regarded merely as factional enthusiasm (as both interviewees are proudly Fatah and supportive of the PA). The prevailing perspective is more consistent with that of Hamoud, who opines that 'PA curriculum from a technical perspective is good. It builds the basics. But on other topics they're not objective – it's not what we're supposed to be taught.'[259] Amar declares, with a look of disgust during the interview, that 'the PA curriculum has got nothing to do with anything. End of the line.' He then snuffs out his cigarette in frustration.[260]

The implications of this feedback are significant for both the PA curriculum and the widely perceived ability of formal education to mitigate conflict. While the PA successfully avoided including any *cultural violence* in its textbooks that might incite its readers, omitting any acknowledgment of the wider *direct* and *indirect violence* students also experienced compromised its relevance to those living amidst conflict in Gaza. As numerous students emphasized repeatedly, the *legitimate knowledge* featured within the PA curriculum has no connection to their lived reality and was consequently ignored. This directly challenges functionalist assumptions affirming the ability of formal education to mitigate support for violence amidst conflict.

[257] Field interview with WR206 (2014).
[258] Field interview with WR212 (2014).
[259] Field interview with MR104 (2014).
[260] Field interview with MR124 (2014).

D. 'DISCIPLINE BEFORE EDUCATION' AND *HIDDEN CURRICULUM*

Further challenging the significance of formal education in promoting nonviolent state-building was the *direct* and *indirect violence* found throughout the larger school environment, which students from the Class of 2000 repeatedly understood as consequential. Be it the rigid sense of structure and discipline, teachers applying their own individualized approaches, or interactions with fellow students, *hidden curriculum* was, while not widely acknowledged, nonetheless far more influential than formal narratives in educating post-Oslo youth. To better appreciate the significance of the Gazan school environment and the lessons it imparted in relation to the PA's nonviolent focus, it is illuminating to note the welcome Medo experienced when attending a new school:

> The first day of high school one of my classmates showed up without the school uniform as we used to get away with that on the first day in primary school. And as we were queuing for the morning assembly, Haider, the principal showed up, grabbed the microphone, and started screaming 'You animal son of animal!' The kid didn't know he was targeted – none of us did. Yet soon enough the principal (who apparently had previously won boxing championships) jumped off the podium, walked up to the kid, and started kicking him in the stomach until he vomited. Then he grabbed him by the neck and dragged him off to the office asking him 'Where do you think you are coming to school without a uniform? Where do you think you are? Paris?' I went home in total shock and told my mom 'I don't think I can survive this school.'[261]

Violent experiences like this were not rare: nearly half of student interviewees shared stories directly experiencing or witnessing corporal punishment in school.[262] The tone was often set early and endured throughout formal education. 'I don't recall school being fun – especially in Rafah,' Ahmed notes. 'Imagine waking up at five in the morning every day, walking a few kilometers to find a cab to get a ride to the school, and only then to arrive late and being smacked around. And then you would cry the first and second class, and then curse the school and the Principal and the Ministry [of Education] the rest of the day.'[263] Abu Bashir recalls arriving late to school and being relatively fortunate: 'I was punished and swallowed enough abuse for the entire country. But at least I was beaten up quietly (no one knew about it) unlike other people who were beaten up in front of the entire school and humiliated in front of their friends and their teachers. The level of humiliation is so unnatural.'[264] Indeed, more typical for the Class of 2000 was to have such discipline made into a larger demonstration. 'Two kids would hold you and the teacher would beat you,' describes Anas. 'Violence was the worst I could remember about school. It made us hate ourselves.'[265] This regional tradition (*falaga*) often consisted of a 'stick with a rope being used to tighten your bare feet so the students can't move – then the teacher would instruct two kids to hold the stick up while the teacher hit the bare feet with another stick. And if the kids refuse to hold the stick up, the teacher would do it to them too,' explains the lead field researcher organizing outreach on child punishment for Save the Children Sweden. 'It's a really sad process whereby many friendships were

[261] Field interview with MR126 (2014).
[262] Forty-one percent of interviewees shared stories of witnessing or personally experiencing corporal punishment (*falaga)*.
[263] Field interview with MR105 (2014).
[264] Field interview with MR116 (2014).
[265] Field interview with MG122 (2014).

destroyed and bullying and retribution was encouraged. Yet it certainly reinforced the authority of the teachers. It's illegal, yet endemic.'[266]

It should be noted that for much of the scholastic tenure of the Class of 2000 corporal punishment was not technically illegal in Palestine. Article 39 of the Child Law 2004 affirms that the state will 'foster the dignity of the child' and further 'aim at prohibiting all forms of violence in schools,' while article 42 protects children from violence. But these laws did not explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in government schools, a policy that remained in place until 2010 when a decree was passed down from the Ministry of Education outlawing *falaga*. Yet even after its formal prohibition in government schools, as well as its longstanding embargo in UNRWA facilities, corporal punishment remained widespread across the majority of primary and secondary institutions in Gaza. The lead researcher further explains how it was very common to have 'teachers hide their sticks, sweep away all the evidence,' and say 'shhhh' to the students prior to outside inspections investigating corporal punishment. The students apparently 'hate it, because they want them to fix it, but they know the inspectors will only be there for one or two days and they'll have to face the consequences once they're gone.'[267] At virtually all levels of education teachers and staff continue to endorse corporal punishment, and cover each other from repercussion.[268] There is likewise little pressure from families to challenge this approach as it is often employed against the students at home as well, with one of the most comprehensive studies in Gaza explaining that nearly 100% of the 679 parents surveyed admitting to inflicting physical or verbal aggression against their children.[269] Abuse, candidly, is a predominant reality for Gazan students.

What most upsets the Class of 2000, however, is not the periodic illegality of *falaga*, but instead its relatively baseless application, often with little understood reason. 'I remember the English teacher used to ask me what is the meaning of a certain word. So I would answer. And he would ask again until I gave a wrong answer,' recalls Anas. 'It always seemed as if he would ask until you made a mistake to find a reason to beat you.'[270] Yousif expands on this scenario, sharing that 'Some of the teachers would pick on the students for no good reason,' leaving a lasting impact. 'Once in sixth grade an English teacher walked in and said put your homework on the table. He came to me and saw that everything was in order. Yet then he instructed me to show him my fingernails (which are required to be kept short) and used it as an excuse to have me join the other students in the hallway preparing to be beaten (for not finishing their homework). So I was beaten too, and from that point on I lost my respect for teachers.' When queried further, Yousif shares, 'That was in sixth grade, but until now I wish I could see the teacher again and tell them how I feel about them. "You have shaken me and created a psychological complex within me and because of you I see all teachers the same – I see them all like you." I would tell him "You are no good as a teacher. You probably do more harm than good."'[271]

The larger lessons absorbed from such practices were often even more significant. Amar expands on the prevailing dynamic within school, explaining:

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[266] Field interview with SI204, the lead field researcher for the Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution and Save the Children Sweden (2014).
[267] Field interview lead field researcher (2014), Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution and Save the Children Sweden.
[268] *See* Krezim (2015).
[269] PCDCR 2007
[270] Field interview with MG122 (2014).
[271] Field interview with MR118 (2014).

> I used to hate teachers. All of them. And there are no exceptions. My problem with them was probably not that they were incapable of teaching, but rather the nature of the relationship between the teacher and the student: Fear. You had to fear your teacher. You had to listen to everything they said. They used to always tell us a teacher is like your father in the school. And then my father would come to school and would say '*Ik sir wa eghna bin ja bir*.'[272]

This traditional Palestinian expression roughly translates as 'you break their bones and we'll apply the cast,' emphasizing that teachers often have full permission to control the students with as much violence as they wish. As Amar recounts, 'teachers take that and fly with it. And then each one of them becomes your guardian. They tell you how to dress, they tell you how to talk, what to listen to, and who to be friends with. And for me personally I have no ability to learn from people like that.'[273] But many students did learn from these dynamics, including the contradiction of promoting nonviolent curriculum while simultaneously employing corporal punishment in class. 'The teacher would be talking about how violence is bad, but then he would hit you. Yes we learned early on that there is a difference between the theory and the application.'[274]

Others learned more direct lessons from these experiences. Ahmed sums it up succinctly, recollecting, 'My teacher yelled at me and slapped me across the face and my principal beat the shit out of me all because I wanted to keep sitting in the front row. I hated myself, yet didn't know what I'd done to deserve such beatings. I wanted to kill them.'[275] As many Palestinian educators share, the rubric of 'discipline before education' (*al-Tarbiyah Qabl al-Taleem*) is a common refrain reinforcing the priorities of formal schooling in Gaza.[276]

The violent discipline enforced throughout Gazan schools is by far the most common insight shared by students, but notably not the only lesson appreciated from *hidden curriculum*. While many teachers and staff would demand conformity and submission, others are lauded by interviewees for pursuing more inclusive approaches. 'One of the most influential sources of education is school,' confesses Asem. 'But that was not related to the PA curriculum' he studied. 'The thing that was more influential were the teachers, who spoke about real experiences informally, as well as the national anniversaries that were celebrated in school.'[277] This appreciation is echoed by Mohammad, recalling his own experiences learning from teachers forsaking their formal lesson plans:

> One of the experiences that impacted me the most is the first day of each new school year when the huge number of students would get to meet with their new teachers. The teacher would often ask the students about their names. And through their last names he would be able to identify your original village that your parents were expelled from into the Gaza Strip, and whether they were expelled in the *Naqba* of '48 or the *Naqsa* of '67! This deep knowledge of the land that we've never seen in our lives and this rooted

[272] Field interview with MR124 (2014).
[273] Field interview with MR124 (2014).
[274] Field interview with MR118 (2014).
[275] Field interview with MR105 (2014).
[276] While ministries 'of education' are common throughout the world, ministries of 'discipline and education' (*Wazarat al-Tarbiyah wa-al-ta'lim*) are far more common regionally, hence highlighting the foundational importance of discipline to prepare the students for the secondary task of learning (Field interview with M Rezez, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist 2013).
[277] Field interview with MR125 (2014).

> belonging in that manner gave me a feeling of pride and drove a need to possess such understanding.[278]

Such unofficial lessons were not universal for the Class of 2000, but when experienced they were consistently appreciated by students. Abu Alsa'ed was one student who felt particularly fortunate. As he recalls his experience, 'Teachers always spoke about the Cause and what's happening all around. I didn't feel like a gap between school and reality. There was one teacher who used to give us a special (unauthorized) class on Palestine every week, and through him I learned a lot.'[279] As Alah similarly shares, the reason one teacher was her 'favorite' was because – like many other students – she appreciated honesty. As she explains, by acknowledging 'the shame of the Oslo Accords' and other unpleasant realities 'this one teacher, by being honest, made all the difference to me – much more important than anything from the textbooks.'[280]

Reinforcing the value in resisting the brute hierarchy of Palestinian pedagogy are students consistently sharing the significance of a softer, more inviting approach to education. 'I enjoyed school,' shares Za'eem. 'I remember the math teacher and used to love him. He used to ask us in the middle of the class, 'Do you feel like studying today or do you want to play?' Just the idea that he would give us the space to choose was beautiful and likeable.' [281] While this 'choice' wasn't genuine, per se, its contrast in style from more rigid approaches was both disarming and very significant for the students fortunate enough to encounter it. In the words of Nehad, to be 'treated more like friends' opened school into a larger world of possibilities.[282] Echoing such sentiment, Mohammad discloses that while he had many nice friends, 'it was the schoolteachers [that] made us love school':

> For example, a math teacher in sixth grade treated us with respect and compassion, which made us love his topic. And our English teacher used to give us quizzes, and those who got high grades would get presents. And a present for a child from a teacher has a great value. I also loved English. My teacher had a special way of sharing knowledge that was creative and not spoon-feeding.[283]

Time and time again, the Class of 2000 reinforces that when educators would take an interest and be engaging within school, it would have a powerful impact on the student. Ahmed shares that the oud player, Shafik Omar, organized a singing contest in his Rafah area school. 'I sang 'All kids of my neighborhood,' a political song. And I was honored and was very happy. This was one of the rare moments that I felt joy in school. It impacted me in a big way and helped me become a performer. I finally had something to love.'[284]

More engaging teaching styles, when encountered by students, were universally appreciated. However, while interviewees were enthusiastic about such approaches, they were not encouraged on a large scale. As a Gazan teacher, Shireena, recalls when leading a class of fourth graders a decade earlier, both students from the Class of 2000 *and* their teachers were expected to tow an authoritarian line:

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[278] Field interview with MR112 (2014).
[279] Field interview with MR102 (2014).
[280] Field interview with MG117 (2014).
[281] Field interview with MR121 (2014).
[282] Field interview with WG201 (2014).
[283] Field interview with MG115 (2014).
[284] Field interview with MR105 (2014).

> To get the kids' attention, I decided to have an activity with them. I asked them to push their desks to the sides of the room to make more room for us to sit on the ground in a circle. It worked really well. Kids were engaged, and as far as I saw it was a successful class. But apparently what happened next was they asked the following teacher if they could do the same set up in her class. She was basically really pissed – that the kids asked, that I had suggested it in the first place, and that the whole approach lacked etiquette. She went to the administration and reported me for disturbing *her* class. Parents also called in to complain. 'If they are to learn they need to be attentive – this is why desks were created,' one complained. Only the kids celebrated what I did. No one else got it. There was a norm, and if you don't follow the norm you disturb the teaching process, you add pressure to other teachers to be creative, and apparently 'creativity' is a luxury we, as Gazans, cannot afford. People don't want to deal with that. It's really a sad reality.[285]

In addition to the powerful influence teachers had on students when presenting more informal lessons was the meaningful role fellow students often played in learning and exploring what it meant to be a Palestinian. Falastine shares that the most memorable lessons she took from school were from fellow students. While she 'hated' the Hamas Student Association as 'they used to look at us with contempt,' the most powerful political lesson she learned in school was during an Independence Day (PA) celebration when one courageous student went up on stage and asked what they were celebrating. 'I don't understand what independence you are talking about. We are still occupied and besieged.'[286] As Mohammed similarly recalls:

> School was the most important phase and it impacted me in a positive way, in the sense that my interaction with a wider base of people, be it students who are older than me, or my constant interactions and debates with people who are interested in social, political, and cultural matters. This interaction constantly had a positive influence on me, and that was one of the most significant elements that left its influence on me.[287]

Asem concurs, noting formal schooling merely 'contributed to forming my basic skills and nothing beyond it.' Instead, it was the 'student activities that the school administration mostly considered unlawful' to be 'most important' in influencing his understandings of the world.[288] As has been noted previously, in Palestine and beyond, 'the most relevant processes happening within the educational system are not necessarily preplanned and thought out, [but] rather these processes develop and are articulated within this intellectual and social space created by the school.'[289]

As the Class of 2000 repeatedly reinforces, rigid application of formal and *hidden* curricula does little in itself to cultivate nationalism within students. Esraq explains that these conventional approaches – including being forced to line up to sing the national anthem each morning – don't build a sense of nationalism. Instead of being 'spoon-fed,' she argues, students 'need to practice it' if they are to meaningfully embrace such lessons:

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[285] Field interview with SI205 (2014).
[286] Field interview with WR203 (2014).
[287] Field interview with MR112 (2014).
[288] Field interview with MR125 (2014).
[289] N AbuFarha 2013, personal communication, a comment echoed in Adely (2004), Anderson (2005), and Da'na (2007), amongst others.

> Nationalism and belonging to the homeland is not something to be taught. Instead it is something to be felt. Before holding a gun, you just have to know why you should defend your land! You have to understand the relationship between the land and its people. We have to know who we are, what the land means, without being forced. Yet as I am now a teacher I see it just as when I was in school – students don't sing the national anthem and they don't pay attention to it even though they are forced to hear it every morning.[290]

The combative, dynamic structure of the school environment in Gaza consequently serves as a powerful contrast to the rote platitudes of nonviolent curriculum. While any discourse that might be framed as *cultural violence* was excluded from formal textbooks, students simultaneously experienced wildly aggressive forms of *direct* and *indirect violence* within the classroom. Such blatant contradiction underscores the often yawning gap between functionalist educational theory and practice: while formal education is commonly associated with civility and the 'positive face' of education, it in no way guarantees that students will acquire nonviolent orientations from it.[291] The often-violent lessons students learn from *hidden curriculum*, alternatively, is something that Gazan students repeatedly emphasize as tremendously meaningful to their wider understandings.

E. THE INFLUENCE OF *OUTSIDE CURRICULUM*

Beyond formal educational designs and less structured school experiences, the wider conflict in Gaza was never far removed from student life and habitually influenced the developing political awareness of the Class of 2000. Eman underscores this reality by recalling her routine of waiting to see if school would convene each day:

> As a kid I grew up with invasions happening once or twice a week, and it mainly happened in the middle of the night. We would then stay up to see if the occupation forces left by 6:00, and if so we would go to school by 6:30. But if they stayed until 6:30 then we knew there was no school that day. That impacted our education a lot.[292]

Other students similarly shared that if they smelled burning tires when they awoke, they knew there would be no school due to protests or violence, and would promptly go back to bed.[293] Even if school was in session, however, that in no way normalized the educational experiences of the Class of 2000. Merely getting to and from school in southern Gaza was often daunting, as Ahmed recounts:

> I remember I used to take three or four different roads to get to school, depending on the situation. Sometimes there would be shooting from the observation towers. Other times there would be Israeli jeeps blocking the main roads. And since first grade I used to always run with the kids of the neighborhood. Whatever route they took, I took with them. And when the soldiers shoot, you don't think you just run. And the thing is you either make it or you don't.[294]

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[290] Field interview with WR206 (2014).
[291] While functionalists acknowledge ancillary *latent functions* within education, including social interactions with students and other unplanned experiences, the negative aspects of violence are not emphasized (Saxe 1970).
[292] Field interview with WR204 (2014).
[293] Field interview with SI106 (2014).
[294] Field interview with MR105 (2014).

Fig. 7. The beginning of the fall school term in the al-Sheiaeiya neighborhood of Gaza City after a three-week delay due to damage from a large-scale Israeli offensive. Ashraf Amra/ APA, 2014.

Fig. 8. Profane messages left for students after Israeli soldiers withdrew from a Beit Hanoun school for girls they had commandeered during an incursion. Marco Longari/ AFP, 2014.

Leaving school to go home in north Gaza, Ibrahim recalls, was often equally challenging:

> I remember when I was in fifth grade I was returning home from school and the Jews were on top of Al Kashif mountain with a tank. The tank was very far away, but there was a guy who was still cautiously hiding a bit while looking at it. I remember him as he was two years older than me in school. They shot him. He flew two meters backwards, landing right next to me. That shocked me, and instilled fear in me until this moment.[295]

Even reaching school safely offered little reprieve to the Class of 2000 from the surrounding conflict. Ibrahim continues to explain how he was lucky at his school, as it was 'far away from the borders so the tanks could not reach it.' He describes how it was normal to arrive at school only to find a mortar or a broken fence or broken windows, or even being in class and hearing 'massive explosions that would repeat until the windows would shatter.' But he reiterates that he was fortunate at his school as 'nothing would happen there,' while the schools in the east fared 'much worse.'[296] Ayah echoes the relative nature of violence for students in northern Gaza, recalling the nuisance of having an Israeli airstrike bomb the police station next door to her elementary school. 'All the rubble ended up in our school playground, so the principal cancelled recess. So we'd remain in the class, eat in the class, study in the class, play in the class. It was a big inconvenience.'[297] Ahmed was likewise nonchalant about the ubiquitous nature of violence in southern Gaza. 'When the Jews were still occupying the Philadelphi Line, I was in school nearby. A bullet came through the class one day and hit my classmate Sa'ed's hand,' he shares casually while reflecting the disturbing sense of normalcy associated with the fusion of violence and education in Gaza.[298] For many students anything less severe than death was often merely an 'inconvenience.' Ibrahim, who spoke of being thankful for only broken windows and mortars in class, was otherwise quite scared for his peers closer to the border. His friends at Jabaliya Martyrs School, for example, 'had it bad,' as he explains 'tanks would surround it. The Resistance would be around it, and they would clash. Many people at school would die.'[299] Less-lethal violence, however, was merely a normalized part of the daily school routine for the Class of 2000.

The influence of such incidents is not hard to imagine. Bullets and mortars flying through classrooms, while textbooks present prosaic aspirations devoid of context, provides a powerful counter-perspective. To more fully appreciate how such experiences influenced the Class of 2000's views on nonviolent nationalism, it is useful to listen to the cumulative frustration Odai experienced growing up periodically losing friends from school:

> Mohammad Sura was my classmate. He would sit next to me. When he was killed I was in Netzarim throwing stones at the settlers. I went home that day and was shocked to learn that Mohammad had been killed. He wasn't just my classmate, he also always used to come to my neighborhood to play. We were good friends. He had his own presence and even teachers missed him. For a long time I used to sit and watch the video when he was killed and just cry. The school environment was depressing for at least one year and a deep fear was instilled in me that if it happened to him it could happen to me. One day

[295] Field interview with MR103 (2014).
[296] Field interview with MR103 (2014).
[297] Field interview with WR211 (2014).
[298] Field interview with MR105 (2014). The Philadelphi Line or Philadelphi Corridor is a 14 km buffer zone, first established in 1979 and formalized in 2004 under its current name, running along the Egyptian-Gazan border.
[299] Field interview with MR103 (2014).

> after he was killed we went out in a demonstration just before the funeral and there was this rebellious kid named Khamis Asus. We were throwing stones at Israeli soldiers and they withdrew and left their jeep behind (because we showered them with stones). Khamis got excited and entered the jeep, celebrating their withdrawal and pulled out a box of gas canisters. Not long after more soldiers returned and opened fire over the entire scene. Khamis was shot 41 times, which didn't kill him, but left him disabled. It impacted me to see him like that. I was only 12 and felt depressed and regretful that we agreed that he would go in the jeep. And my hatred towards the Jews increased 3000 times. My school attainment was zero as a result of all I went through. All I wanted was revenge. If there were any Jews around me, I wanted to hurt them so bad, as much as they hurt my friends. After that, there was another invasion where two men who used sell me falafel every day after school were killed. Following that I had a friend Mohammad. We were at a funeral and there was a pipe bomb and it blew off his toes. And after that he no longer played football with us, nor walked properly. Shit like this kept happening to me.[300]

If there were any lingering questions concerning the relevance of the PA's nonviolent state-building curriculum within the Gazan context, the wider reality – both within and beyond the school community – dispelled any remaining student doubt. The direct observations of the Class of 2000, reinforced by the experiences of family and friends, cumulatively underscores the insignificance of nonviolent aspirations amidst ongoing conflict. Bilal, for one, recalls his first interaction with the siege and the questions it raised in his mind:

> I remember being aware of the Palestinian Cause since I was little after we used to travel back and forth through Beersheva to visit my Bedouin relatives. We used to cross a lot of Israeli checkpoints staffed by male and female soldiers, armed and whatnot. In the beginning I used to only see this on TV. But when I saw it before my eyes it was intimidating, and then I started understanding the reasons behind the humiliation we live in Gaza. It turned out we live in a prison. We don't go out without permission, and we don't come back without permission. Those situations leave their impact on people's dignity and pride, and then they start looking for answers: Who are these people? What do they want? Why are they searching us? Why are they yelling at my dad? Why am I not allowed to get out of the car and use the toilet until a woman soldier said it was ok?[301]

Crossing the border was rare for members of the Class of 2000, who typically led more isolated and confined childhoods inside Gaza, until the Second *Intifada* often made the realities of occupation more personal. There were few respondents who failed to share encounters from this seminal time in elementary and prep school. However, the evolving account of one student, Mohannad, captures the widespread significance outside influences routinely had on numerous students. As he vividly recalls his first direct exposure to the occupation when he was in sixth grade:

> I didn't know Israel existed until that point and I didn't have reason to hate it. I only knew about Israel from the Second *Intifada* – when I was 11. For six months we didn't go to school. Instead we'd go to demonstrations every day, while the Jews used to invade homes and blow them up. We had a neighbor, Moahmoud Aissa. I used to love him a lot.

[300] Field interview with MR120 (2014).
[301] Field interview with MR109 (2014).

> They assassinated him. They also assassinated our neighbors Abdullah Aqel and Fareed Meit – he was Hamas. I also loved those two very much because they treated me really well. For this I hated them.[302]

Three years later Mohannad, then in eighth grade, continues to describe what life was like in his neighborhood when an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, was kidnapped:

> The day they announced the kidnapping of Shalit the Jews started shelling different places. Around two in the morning a helicopter was hovering so close to where I lived the palm fronds outside my house were blown straight down. And then they started shooting, but we didn't know who was the target. They hit my uncle's house next door. I was so scared. And then they shot at us with two rockets. I was so scared I froze, and I couldn't move. And this is where feeling *heqked* started.[303]

Heqked is a term loosely comprising both anger and hatred that is mentioned consistently by members of the Class of 2000 as they recollect experiences that shaped their understanding of the world. This is largely unsurprising, as, in one egregious example two years later, Mohannad similarly recalls the sudden influence Operation Cast Lead had on him and one of his high school friends, Mohammaed Al Sayed:

> My friend Mohammaed used to work in one of Hamas' sites. He became a martyr with the first Israeli strikes in 2008. I ran to Shifa hospital looking for him among the shreds of the dead. I turned over 200 corpses and couldn't find him. I was happy, as I thought he didn't die. But later his death was confirmed. I couldn't bear the news, and I cried to death and collapsed. Since then, and up until now, I wish to avenge his death.[304]

The idea of a 15 year-old crawling over 200 bodies in a hospital morgue invites suspicion of hyperbole and, like many shocking accounts within this research, is difficult to confirm. In this case, however, it is widely understood that more than 300 people were killed and 1,000 injured on the first day of Operation Cast Lead – many of whom were indeed 'piled up' at Shifa Hospital. With Mohannad's recollection underscoring the overpowering experiences within active conflict, peace narratives taught in school are dramatically overmatched. This reality is further reinforced by his fellow students from the Class of 2000, with 35% of interviewees volunteering detailed stories of having friends or family members killed during their formative years in school. But such aggregate insights are not limited to observing the adversity of others. The random experience Mamoosh shares highlights the profound impact even the most routine incidents can have on a student's educational pathways growing up amidst active conflict:

> I was studying all night for my math exam when the Israeli army invaded Khazaa again. I had been studying until seven in the morning, when a tank stopped at the door to my house and they called for everyone who was below 40 and has a *hawiya* [identification card, indicating the person is 16 years or older] to come out to the street. I was the only man in the house as my dad was not around. So I went out to the street and was arrested.
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> They took us to a road by the border, and there they strip-searched us. My hands were cuffed and eyes blindfolded, while I was kept completely naked. The temperature was 43

[302] Field interview with MG115 (2014).
[303] Field interview with MG115 (2014).
[304] Field interview with MG115 (2014).

degrees [43°C / 109°F] that day and at the time the Israelis were giving their own citizens warnings not to go outside due to the rising temperature. We were kept from nine in the morning until six in the evening under the sun. We asked for water, so they brought us water at three. Big black gallons of water were placed under the sun from three until seven. The water was boiling hot. I will never forget. Some of the people started fainting out of dehydration. Some people asked the Israeli officer to drink the water. So he would come to ask them to open their mouths, but instead of helping them drink, he would just poor it on their chests. I thought if I actually drank I would be more thirsty after, so I didn't bother asking.

Then we were taken to Kerem Shalon [border terminal] in a small vehicle. I remember I was placed on my stomach, and two people were seated on top of my back. The vehicle was made of metal, which led to skin burns all over my body. It took us an hour to get to our destination, when I got dressed again. Then they took nine out of 180, including those who used to work for the Resistance. I was among them. They stripped us naked (again) and started torturing us, from nine in the evening until five the following afternoon. They brought female officers to dance on top of us while singing. They were asking me questions and I had no idea what they were saying. With the heat of the sun, and the severity of the beating, parts of my skin were peeling off.

And then I was taken to the intelligence. They spoke to me in Arabic and asked 'What do you do in your life? Do you know this person? Who prays in the mosque?' I refused to give them any information. In my mind I was thinking they can't possibly do more than they have already done, so why give them anything? I had read a leaflet that was distributed by the Resistance about blackmailing and recruitment with Israel and I knew how to deal with these people. I was questioned by two – one would ask and the other would hit. My body became numb from the amount of beatings I endured.

Later they took me to a second officer and he asked me 'Where do you live?' I said on the borderline. And here he started blackmailing me. He said, 'I want your number.' I answered that I don't have one. He said, 'Surely you have.' So I responded, 'So then what's my number?' He didn't respond. Then he asked 'What do you think about me getting you a mobile? We will help you and you will help us. And we'll make everything in your life easy.' And he kept talking and talking. And I said 'I oppose working with you. We're honorable people and you know what, all Palestinians are honorable. And if there are people who collaborate with you, it's only because you blackmail them. And even if my life was so complicated, I would not put my hand in some pig's hand like you.' There was a lot of talking. I can no longer remember. The officer then said 'This kid is a bag of dirt. Take him out of here.'

Only then the officer who took me out told me there was a resemblance between my name and someone they were looking for, and only then they realized I was the wrong person. But at the time I lost my ability to feel anything or be impacted. They dropped me and another guy seven kilometers away from the camp, and then said, 'In five minutes if you don't disappear we're going to shoot at you.' A minute passed and then they started shooting.

> I finally made it back home, fell asleep, then woke up and studied for my exam. I passed, but unfortunately didn't get the percentage needed in *Tawjihi* to enroll in Engineering, and my dream was shattered. My desire to study was gone.[305]

CONCLUSION

While formal education has routinely been employed as a tool to indoctrinate students with political narratives (Section A), in Gaza it was largely inconsequential to the Class of 2000 and its evolving understandings of the surrounding conflict. While the PA's inaugural curriculum was expected to promptly usher in a new era of nationalism predicated exclusively around nonviolent state-building, Palestine's complex history requires wider, often violent perspectives to adequately explain the ongoing conflict (Section B). The PA curriculum, in oversimplifying this reality by prioritizing the avoidance of *cultural violence*, was unsuccessful in both resolving these tensions and cultivating *positive peace*. Instead of embracing the idea of two states for two people, as vaguely promoted within PA textbooks, the Class of 2000 related more to the *direct* and *indirect violence* underpinning *falaga* and the ongoing Israeli determination to 'teach Gaza a lesson.'[306] This was highlighted by the frustration that students consistently expressed with the irrelevance of the PA's formal curriculum (Section C), the brutality of *hidden curriculum* contradicting more prosaic textbook instruction (Section D), and the wider experiences of *outside curriculum* overwhelming everything else with the visceral lessons of active conflict (Section E). Underscoring the cumulative interplay between these three forms of curricula is the consistent killing of Gazan students, which became so routine that a tradition developed leaving the deceased students' picture or similar tribute (*ijlal*) on their desk for the remainder of the school year.[307] As Bilal recalls this morbid custom, 'One of our classmates always used to joke and tease teachers and students. He was walking in a street when Israel bombed it, and he became a martyr. This impacted us so much. So we wrote on his desk letters and things like 'God bless you' or 'Rest in peace – heaven is better than Gaza.'[308] Reflecting on such grim rituals, Unicef's then-Gazan Educational Specialist succinctly states 'These are quite simply the lessons youth learn growing up in Gaza.'[309] In reviewing such insights, this chapter has subsequently contrasted the often-idealized notions framing schooling as an all-powerful tool against the austere realities of educational practice that, in this case, directly challenge its ability to mitigate support for violence amidst ongoing conflict. The following chapter will further consider whether *pro*-violence educational programming is any more consequential in shaping the propensity of Gazan students to support or engage in violence.

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[305] Field interview with MG110 (2014).

[306] Israeli spokesperson Mark Regev explained that 'We want to teach Hamas a lesson. I think we want Hamas to understand that firing rockets at Israeli civilians is going to hurt them much more than it's going to hurt us' (NPR 2008). In 2014 then-Israeli Minister Yisrael Katz urged the Prime Minister to 'Teach Hamas a lesson they will never forget,' which was echoed by Benjamin Netanyahu proclaiming, 'if they forget this lesson, they will learn it again the hard way' (Ynet 2014). This rhetoric gained further traction beyond Israel, with Egyptian journalist Muhammad Hassan al Alfi arguing, 'We should teach [Gaza] a lesson like Israel did' (Al-Alfi 2014).

[307] As stated, between September 29th, 2000 and April 30th, 2015 8,208 Gazans were killed by both Israelis and Palestinians. This includes 1,047 Gazan minors were killed by Israeli forces – over one per week, on average, for 16 years, while four Israeli minors were killed by Gazans over the same timeframe (Btselem 2024a).

[308] Field interview with MG110 (2014).

[309] Field interview with M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist (2013).

CHAPTER FOUR – INCITEMENT AND OTHER ARGUMENTS FOR CHANGE

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With Gazan students unable to reconcile the Palestinian Authority's idealistic state-building narratives against the wider conflict, alternative outlooks became increasingly relevant for the Class of 2000. Political Islam, as the region's most prevalent counter-narrative to largely secular governance, was one such viewpoint.[310] Reviewing this approach, as represented by Hamas' National Islamism and its comparatively pro-violence explanations of the conflict, allows this inquiry to appreciate partisan instruction from a wider perspective. Specifically, would Hamas' willingness to address the conflict's *direct* and *indirect violence*, which the PA strenuously avoided, contribute to resolving lingering questions from the Class of 2000 as it reconciled its larger political understandings? Or, alternatively, would the Islamists' own partisan biases – and rhetoric condemning the 'rape of the land' – also prove problematic?[311] Engaging these uncertainties reinforces this research by further contextualizing the limits of functionalist educational tradition and its inability to both mitigate and prescribe violence. Yet to appreciate if formal education was also unsuccessful increasing support for violence when contrasted with wider experiences, it is imperative to once again engage students and their perspectives directly.

This chapter subsequently explores the wider use of formal education to challenge secular narratives with Islamic-themed counter-narratives (Section A), as well as Hamas' more specific efforts to reform Gazan education around its more militant arguments promoting National Islamism (Section B). With this foundation, the chapter then reviews student perspectives on Hamas' curricular reforms (Section C), as well as the lessons they learned from exposure to both the *hidden curriculum* of the school environment (Section D) and the *outside curriculum* found throughout the wider community under Hamas administration (Section E). By detailing the cumulative lessons derived from Hamas' counter-narratives employing a similarly functional framework, Chapter Four will highlight that incitement, like efforts to mitigate violence, faces constant pressure from wider influences.

A. NATIONAL ISLAMISM'S RISE AS A COUNTER-NARRATIVE

The 20th century was a time of considerable transformation within the Middle East, frustrating many who believed their interests were being neglected and prompting wider desire for change. In response to what the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al Banna, deemed the 'crushing weight' of modern society, political Islam became for many an increasingly plausible alternative to secular governance. It aspired, in the words of Denoeux, 'to provide political responses to societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations of which rest on concepts borrowed from Islamic tradition' (2002: 61). Yet while founded to challenge the perceived failure of more contemporary leadership, political Islam often embraced the same functionalist assumptions within its attempts to politicize formal education. As illustrated in Chapter Three, secular schooling routinely narrows *legitimate knowledge* around a dominant political narrative, a tradition political Islam was quick to continue. This is unsurprising, with religion – like formal education – often being concerned with reinforcing and preserving social unity: as Durkheim observed, religion is merely another 'unified system of beliefs and practices' that, like education, encourages conformity (1954: 47). Yet in doing so, political Islam merely reinforces the partisan nature

[310] Political Islam comprises 'political responses to societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations of which rest on concepts borrowed from Islamic tradition' (Denoeux 2002: 61).

[311] The rape of the land (*al-Ard al-Moughtasaba*) and the implicit need to protect (her) honor from the Zionists has become an increasingly common Gazan re-framing of the traditionally secular nationalist Palestinian fight to reclaim lands lost in 1948 and 1967.

of formal curriculum and – in similarly inviting criticism from students – underscores the limited influence of *any* functionalist approach to learning amidst conflict.

To contextualize this issue, it is useful to first detail how political Islam, originally developed out of strong frustration with more secular narratives, habitually frames *legitimate knowledge* around its own more narrow partisan perspectives. In Afghanistan in the early 1980s, for instance, a backlash against the 'politically neutral' multilateral education offered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees led to its replacement with more militant educational content as favored by local Islamic stakeholders (Centlivres and Centlivres-Dumont 1988: 89; Burde 2014). Pakistani public schooling has similarly experienced a rise in resistance to more universalist curriculum: diverse religious figures such as Ram and Buddha previously described in local curricula as being 'nonviolent and full of mercy and love' were omitted – along with references to Christianity – and have largely been replaced with themes emphasizing the centrality of Islam within Pakistani nationalism. As a seventh-grade textbook maintains, 'Prior to the advent of Islam peoples of the world were in a bad state. The rulers were permanently engaged in pleasurable pursuits. Superstition and ignorance were everywhere' (Saigol 1995: 242). Many textbooks increasingly argue that Pakistan was born the day the first Muslim set foot in country, including Jamaat-e-Islami founder Maulana Maududi and his contemporaries, who were described as founders of the ideology of Pakistan (even though they played no direct role in the pre-independent history of the country) (Haqqani 2010: 150). Iran, a key supporter of Islamic parties in Gaza over recent years, also actively narrowed its curricular focus around Islam within post-revolution formal education. The progression is reflected in 'Welcome to the Second Grade,' with the 1979 version of the textbook showing a homeroom teacher wearing a pink headscarf and blouse, with little mention of God or Islam. The same textbook, revised three years later and re-titled 'In the Name of God the Forgiving and Kind, Welcome to Second Grade,' pictured the teacher wearing the tight-fitting *maghnaeh* (fitted hood), and featured her talking almost exclusively about God's importance and the centrality of worship to coming endeavors during the school year. The updated 1987 version shows the teacher now covered with a full-length black *chador* (a large piece of cloth wrapped around the head and body only leaving the face exposed), along with two columns of children converging into a single mass. The young girls are featured in full-length *chadors* and the boys with raised fists chanting 'We with faith in God, with purity and honesty, with gainful knowledge, with hard work, sacrifice, and thrift, independence, freedom, and the Islamic Republic do defend' (Malekzadeh 2011). Saudi Arabia, rarely overshadowed in its promotion of Islamic-themed pedagogy, similarly shuns nuance when defining *legitimate knowledge*. As an eighth-grade textbook explains, 'The Apes are the people of the Sabbath, the Jews; and the Swine are the infidels of the communion of Jesus, the Christians' (Berstein 2012).

These provocative instances of Islamic-themed curricula are, of course, not meant to portray the larger role of Islam in contemporary education. Examples of education balancing Islamic traditions with more secular forms of contemporary learning are prevalent throughout the region. Tunisia and Turkey are but two examples highlighting often pragmatic educational compromises achieved to reflect the needs of diverse communities.[312] The more ardent regional examples presented here are meant merely to highlight that political Islam, like secular-nationalist tradition, routinely embraces formal education to

[312] Tunisia and Turkey both highlight the often-dynamic interplay taking place between Islamic and secular education throughout the region. For instance, in an attempt to sideline Islamic education in 1964 the Tunisian government closed Zaitouna, which as a mosque and the oldest Islamic university in North Africa, once rivaled Al Azhar as a center of Islamic learning. The Turkish government similarly curtailed religious education in 1997. Yet both attempts ultimately failed as local communities emphasized the importance of balancing Islamic education alongside secular schooling (Amara 2012; Ozgur 2012: 27).

promote more narrow political narratives. As Hefner points out, Islamic education isn't altogether different in that its neither timelessly traditional or medieval, but rather liable to many of the same missteps that continue to compromise partisan pedagogical tradition (Hefner and Zaman 2007: 3-4).

The evolution of political Islam as a pedagogical influence in Palestine, much like the wider region, often directly followed larger political developments. Contextually, Gaza throughout much of the 20th century was considerably more politically moderate than it is today. The first Palestinian Communist party was established in the 1920s, two decades prior to the establishment of domestic Islamist parties, and in the difficult decades to follow it was the Palestinian Left that remained 'in the forefront of the struggle.' Secular governance continued to lead Gaza through the challenges of the 1950s and 1960s with nationalist and Marxist campaigns of liberation strongly influencing Palestinians. As a result, nascent Islamist movements in Palestine were largely sidelined and Islam, as a means of mobilization, was 'relegated to the back seat' as mainstream political movements remained largely nonreligious (Hroub 2006: 5, 84). With the comparative failure of secular resistance efforts and the subsequent emergence of Islamic factions as central players during the First and Second *Intifadas*, however, National Islamism began to command a stronger presence locally. Such progression continued, with Islam's influence in Gazan politics becoming more prominent following the death of PLO Chairman Arafat in 2004 and, more notably, Israel's unanticipated withdrawal from Gaza the following year. In the words of one Palestinian student recalling Gaza's newfound autonomy after outlasting direct occupation – with the active participation of Islamic factions – 'People thought the windows of heaven had opened.'[313] It was within such a novel environment that elections were called to replace the leaders of both the PLO and the Palestinian Authority. Mahmoud Abbas, long seen as an Arafat confidant, won easily as both Hamas and Islamic Jihad boycotted the 2005 presidential ballot. With the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006, however, Hamas participated as a political party for the first time and surpassed expectations, with voters in Gaza casting both protest votes against what was seen as a corrupt and ineffectual Fatah movement, as well as those who legitimately supported a greater role for National Islamism in Gaza.[314] By capturing a clear majority of 74 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections Hamas had managed to 'eclipse all other secular factions, leftists and nationalists allied together,' and became the leader of the Resistance that 'had been controlled almost entirely by secular forces since the days of the British Mandate in the 1920s' (Hroub 2006: 147).[315] With its victory, however, Hamas also inherited a diverse array of independent constituencies with little tradition of blind loyalty.

Recognizing the challenges that it faced administering Gaza, Hamas promptly signaled its desire to consolidate its electoral gains through more moderate administration. While Hamas' Political Bureau publicly chastised its secular rivals to accept the 'new realities,' referring to the 'Islamic choice' that Palestinians had made when they elected Hamas, the new government notably never called for the larger 'Islamization' of Palestinian society. In a nod to its diverse political constituency, Hamas merely claimed Islam as both a 'frame of reference,' while specifically avoiding approaches associated with Islamic law (Hroub 2006: 86, 143). Hamas official Taher Nunu went further, clarifying 'We made a decision not to

[313] Field interview with SI105 (2014).

[314] Hamas had turned down a similar opportunity in 1996 with the stated concern that such elections were a direct result of a peace process they felt was fundamentally flawed. Yet under the argument that the Second *Intifada* had 'killed off' the Oslo peace process, they were subsequently willing to participate in the 2006 elections in the framework of civil law, as opposed to an Islamist movement (Robinson unpublished).

[315] Notably, 'somewhat religious' and 'not religious' voters comprised 50% of those casting ballots for Hamas in 2006 underscoring the frustration many secular voters had with the status quo (Gunning 2008: 165-166; Roy 2011: 24). Hamas won 44% of the vote in the 2006 elections, resulting in 74 seats and control of the Palestinian Legislative Council (Hroub 2006: 147).

Islamize society after we took power. Of course we call the people to Islam. But we do not force them. We are a civilian government with civilian laws' (quoted in ICG 2011). A unity government was eventually formed between Fatah's President Abbas and the Hamas-controlled Palestinian Legislative Council the following spring. Yet with international sanctions being applied against the democratically elected Hamas, systematic pressure for a re-vote, and concern that a coup was being orchestrated, factional fighting erupted in June 2007. Fatah having renounced violence a decade earlier, however, and contrasted by Islamist militants who had been leading the Resistance against Israeli occupation over the preceding years, resulted in Hamas holding an innate advantage. With President Abbas declaring a state of emergency and dissolving the unity government on June 14th, Hamas promptly secured logistical control over Gaza to match its electoral legitimacy. The violent retributions that occurred over the ensuing days, however, meant that in addition to 161 casualties, the fabric of Gazan society was irreparably torn. As one young Gazan at the time recalls, the inter-faction violence was 'no less significant than any Israeli military operations launched against us.'[316] Numerous Fatah officials and their affiliates subsequently fled to the relative safety of the West Bank, and an uneasy détente resulted with two parallel governments suddenly existing a mere 40km from each other.

With Gaza subsequently under Hamas' exclusive control, punitive measures were increasingly applied externally to pressure the territory into compliance. This includes Israel declaring the Gaza Strip a 'hostile entity' and, with the support of partnering nations, organizing its quarantine. What had begun in 1991 with Israel instituting a policy requiring permits to cross into Israel during the First *Intifada* had become absolute against Hamas administration. Where 26,000 Palestinian workers had crossed into Israel daily in 2000, that figure dropped to 100 seven years later. This isolation was further applied to trade, with 10,000 trucks exporting goods annually in 2005 contracting to 85 two years later (Gisha 2012). Gaza had become, as previously described by then-U.N. Undersecretary General John Holmes, 'a giant, open-air prison.'[317]

The outside pressures Gaza was experiencing were, regrettably, not exclusively border restrictions. The Israeli policy of 'cutting the grass' purportedly to diminish potential threats first provoked 2008's Operation Cast Lead (*al-Rasas al-Masboub*), which resulted in the killing of 1,417 Gazans and the destruction of 6,200 homes (PCHR 2015).[318] This routine continued six years later with Operation Protective Edge (*al-Jurf al-Samed*). According to OCHA (2014) figures, Israel fired 5,830 missiles, 16,507 artillery and tank projectiles, and 3,494 naval shells into the Gaza Strip, comprising an estimated 10-20,000 tons of explosives and placing it on par with the bombing of Hiroshima (Ma'an 2014b). Over two thousand Palestinians were killed, while nearly 20,000 residences were either destroyed or severely damaged (OCHA 2014). And owing to the ongoing blockade of Gaza, only a fraction of rebuilding supplies was allowed into Gaza following both assaults.[319]

Amidst such external coercion, domestic pressure was also notable with Hamas' supporters continually questioning what the faction was accomplishing while in control of Gaza. With resistance being one

[316] Field interview with SI105 (2014).

[317] Then-U.N. Undersecretary General John Holmes referred to Gaza as a 'giant, open-air prison,' a view echoed by then-U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron, amongst others (quoted in UN News 2009).

[318] A common metaphor used by those within the Israeli defense establishment for operations to diminish threats in Gaza, 'cutting the grass' refers to a task that 'must be performed regularly and has no end' (Bronner 2012).

[319] Following Operation Cast Lead, a mere 41 truckloads of rebuilding materials were allowed into Gaza over the following year (UNDP 2010). Relief arriving in Gaza following Operation Protective Edge was similarly a fraction of that needed (Reuters 2014).

prominent political theme for Hamas, rocket fire into Israel did at times increase (IDF 2015). But for every attack Hamas coordinated against Israel, they discouraged similar efforts from smaller groups as they exerted control over Gaza. Brig. Gen. Miki Edelstein, then-head of IDF's Gaza Command, underscored this reality by calling Hamas the new 'border police' as it complemented the work of the IDF on the opposite side of the fence (quoted in I24 2013). Acknowledging that it had little to offer its more conservative supporters in confronting Israel directly, it correspondingly focused on one issue it could control: domestic policy. As the promotion of Islam remained a core principle of both Hamas leaders and their disciples, formal and informal policy reforms were soon being considered to facilitate a more prominent role for Islam in Gaza. Actual implemented changes were initially minimal with Hamas merely updating one law, amending a 1936 statute criminalizing adultery to include all sex outside marriage. While some originally claimed that 'there is no middle ground with Hamas,' closer review highlights the group had instead continued to develop in a more pragmatic direction (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010). As underscored by its progression away from the militancy of the Hamas Charter in 1988, to its introductory memorandum of 1993, to Hamas' electoral platform in 2006, the faction continued to move further into the 'realm of realistic politics' as it balanced the needs of Islamism, nationalism, and day-to-day governance (Hroub 2006: 142-143).[320] This resulted in Hamas' early administration of Gaza being, as Roy describes it, 'not super Islamist nor dogmatic,' with its actions instead 'driven largely by civil imperatives' (2011: 188). While resisting fundamental changes to wider Gazan society – and the pushback such reforms would elicit – Hamas nonetheless still faced considerable expectations to promote Islam from its supporters. A convenient solution, as employed repeatedly by partisan stakeholders over numerous contexts, was to implement educational reforms – which Hamas embraced with uncompromising zeal.

B. THE 'HAMASIZATION' OF GAZAN EDUCATION

As is important to underscore, Islam has long played an established role in Gazan educational practice, with *Katateeb*, the community-based teaching method whereby children learned to recite the Quran, providing the core of 19th century Palestinian education. Yet while durable well into the 20th century, the advent of more modern forms of schooling gradually replaced Islamic education with secular offerings. Thus, even as National Islamism increased in everyday relevance throughout the 1980s and 1990s by the end of the 20th century Palestinian education had nonetheless become fundamentally secular, with 99% of governmental, private, and UNRWA schools officially eschewing more overt forms of Islamic education.[321] This displacement would not endure, however, as the rise of National Islamism within post-Oslo Gaza increasingly looked to reform educational practice. One early signal foreshadowing this ambition was from Islamist groups criticizing the 'corrupting of children's minds' stemming from the absence of an 'Islamic point of view' within PA educational programming, as argued by Islamist group Hizb-ut-Tahrir in one of the most pointed critiques of the inaugural Palestinian curriculum. The development of the PA textbooks 'was deliberate and planned to teach our Muslim children the seeds of secularism to become secular the way infidel colonialists want them' (Hizb-ut-Tahrir-Palestine 2004: 11). Others community stakeholders correspondingly echoed that 'there should be more emphasis on proper Islamic behavior' in the national curriculum (Nicolai 2007: 92). As Brown acknowledges, the growing tension over the role of Islam in education was very real, with PA textbooks clearly showing 'signs of unresolved debates or uneasy compromises' on such matters (2001: 23). Instead of resolving this disconnect, however, Oslo stakeholders either expressed little concern or chose to move in a less-compromising direction. In the alarming rhetoric of PA General Intelligence Service, Islamists had

[320] Gellner argues that Muslim society will over time eschew the 'traditional' and 'ecstatic' forms of religion for more 'rational,' modern forms (Soares and Osella 2009: 3).
[321] Field interview with SI201 (2014).

'infiltrated the Ministry of Education' whereby they troublingly began to gain 'influence over the students.' The reaction was unyielding, with PA officials advocating for the strict reconsideration of any teacher who either 'belongs to Hamas or is engaged in [their] student or social activities' (IDF 2002: 1). The luxury to embargo Islamist involvement in schooling would not last, however. Hamas' electoral platform emphasizing the 'great importance of education' and legislative success in 2006 provided both the mandate and wider administrative latitude to implement its promise that 'Islam of course will be the core of the Palestinian education philosophy' (Hamas 2006).

One of the first modifications Hamas subsequently made to Gazan education was amending the traditionally secondary role of religion class in government-run schools. As had been the norm throughout modern history, religion classes in Gaza merely required a passing mark to satisfy the course requirement, and notably were not included in calculating students' cumulative scores for the year. For the Class of 2000, however, such grades were not only included, but after 2008 prioritized with supplemental credit awarded to students expressing a greater interest in Islam.[322] A second and more publicized change to Gazan education introduced *futuwwa*, elective paramilitary courses in resistance that provided weapons training to 16 year-old boys, yet which notably took place away from school grounds (Akram 2013). Such changes were largely uncontroversial locally, however, as to Gazans equating religion class with Arabic or math courses was not necessarily something Christian or Muslim families found disagreeable.[323] *Futuwwa* similarly matched Hamas' longstanding rhetoric on resistance that had helped drive their pluralistic voter base in 2006.

Further subsequent changes, however, proved more contentious. This includes mimicking earlier partisan efforts to narrow the availability of information contrary to Hamas' preferred narratives. The banning of newspapers was one early step, with Fatah-affiliated Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda and Al-Ayyam newspapers promptly prohibited in Gaza.[324] Books, long a valued source of information in Gaza, soon followed. For instance, in 2007 the Hamas-run Ministry of Education banned *Speak Bird, Speak Again*, an anthology of Palestinian folk tales narrated by women with mild sexual inuendo, and destroyed 1,500 copies of the book. This incident was later followed with Hamas prohibiting *A Banquet for Seaweed*, *Chicago*, and *Election Day in Sabana*, the latter being a French children's book about a crocodile who saved the village from a lion, only to later threaten the village itself.[325] As then-Director-General of the PA's Ministry of Education Sheikh Yazid Khader stated, 'This new generation is unable to distinguish between what is harmful and what is beneficial, so we have to protect them from these harmful influences' (quoted in Prusher 2007).

Another subsequent, if less outwardly visible, pedagogical reform comprised the replacement of the majority of teaching staff in Gazan schools. With a factional strike (*Istinkaf*) declared in response to Hamas' takeover of Gaza in 2007, 10,000 public sector teachers from 282 government-run schools employed by the PA were instructed to stay home for what ultimately became an absence of more than a decade. This resulted in Hamas promptly hiring 4,000 mostly underqualified replacement teachers, typically prioritizing younger teachers that could be easily influenced or inexperienced applicants who

[322] Field interview with SI201 (2014).

[323] Religion classes are traditionally separated in Gaza, with Muslim students attending courses on Islam, while Christian students study Christianity (Field interview with SI201 2014).

[324] This can be assumed to be a response to the PA's earlier restriction of Hamas-affiliated Falsteen and Al-Risalah in the West Bank.

[325] *Election Day in Sabana* includes a crocodile, whose green color is commonly associated with Hamas, while Fatah routinely brands itself in yellow, which in this case is associated with the lion (Brown 2012: 5).

shared their beliefs, compounding the challenges facing an already overwhelmed educational system.[326] For a variety of reasons several thousand veteran educators nonetheless decided to continue teaching, yet were similarly told to return home if their positions were influential enough for Hamas to prefer ideologically compatible replacements.[327] One important aspect within this extensive organizational restructuring was to further introduce the promotion of educators from the immediate community, a new development locally. While Gaza remains a relatively small place, traditionally teachers have been widely dispersed throughout towns and refugee camps, which, to at least a symbolic extent, helped harmonize the community. Hamas' approach broke from this tradition, however, and actively encouraged locally-based teachers and administrators that could integrate school with the surrounding community. A common approach, for example, was the utilization of neighborhood Imams as school administrators who notably encouraged students and their families to attend their neighborhood mosque with the lure of better marks in school.[328] This expansion in scope of pedagogical authority did not garner the attention of more visible or politically provocative changes, but to those at the school level it was perceived as significant.

An additional area where Hamas implemented religious reform within education was within its efforts to transform the general school environment. Two of the more brazen changes involved *tahjeeb* (requiring all female students to cover their heads) and *ta'neeth* (gender segregation). While the proposed requirement for all female students to wear the *hijab*, for example, was new to Gaza and lacked the wider community support to become official policy, significant numbers of students and their families acceded to the approach, deeming resisting the informal policy 'not worth the cost.'[329] *Ta'neeth*, however, was achieved with Education Law No. 1, stating that all students and teachers in government schools would now be separated by gender, whereas prior to 2013 classes were traditionally coeducational until fourth grade.[330] The larger school environment was consequently being reshaped while the Class of 2000 progressed through its secondary education, with secular schooling in Gaza increasingly incorporating the influences of an ascendant National Islamism, characterized by Hamas' dual educational goals of 'believing in God and taking pride in his religion and his homeland.'[331]

As governmental schools began to incorporate Hamas' administrative changes, wider secular curricula were similarly garnering attention. Hamas was quick to focus on UNRWA curriculum, which serving just

[326] As noted by several institutional reviews, Gazan teachers were habitually unprepared for the rigors of classroom life – a common phenomenon that stems back to the lack of teacher trainings offered under both British and Israeli administration (Assaf 1997: 53). Yet even with local administration teaching quality made limited progress, remaining heavily reliant on rote learning. As the World Bank cynically points out, 'teaching methods courses can be unduly academic' in post-Oslo Palestine (2001: 82).

[327] Relevantly, Hamas later called on all teachers 'loyal to the nation and with live consciences' to refuse to teach UNRWA curricula, which 'contaminates the minds of our dear students,' Education Ministry spokesperson Mu'tasim Al-Minawi (quoted in Miller 2014).

[328] OCHA representative Hamada al Bayari (Wikileaks 2008). Field interview with SI201 (2014).

[329] Field interview with SI201 (2014).

[330] UNRWA and private schools, being largely independent, remained coeducational (Omar 2014).

[331] Education Law Part 5 outlines Hamas' goals for education, including: Point 1. Preparing the student to have a nationalist personality committed to the Palestinian Arabic and Islamic culture and to be brought up believing in God and taking pride in his religion and his homeland, Palestine, within its historic borders. And to know his history and roots within his Arabic and Islamic surroundings; Point 3. Educate students to know their rights and responsibilities and to emphasize the love of their homeland and their sense of belonging and duty towards it based on human principles and values; Point 4. Train students to obtain objective, analytical skills and develop his personality to enable them to be criticize, analyze, plan, and create; Point 9. Develop the students' sense of citizenship to achieve national and social harmony' (HMoEHE 2013a).

under half of the students in Gaza, plays a major role in Gazan education. As orientation, UNRWA's larger regional mandate requires it to teach local curriculum that the agency chooses in Gaza to interpret as the PA national curriculum in concert with supplemental additions including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Hamas-run Ministry of Education, however, increasingly accused UNRWA of promoting 'inappropriate' material in its curriculum 'meant to brainwash Palestinian students and convince them to accept the Zionist enemies while they continue to kill our people' (Ma'an News Agency 2014a). Motesem al-Minawi, speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Education, argued at the time that the UNRWA curriculum does not match the 'ideology and philosophy' of the local community. 'There is a tremendous focus on the peaceful resistance as the only tool to achieve freedom and independence,' he protested, claiming that the curriculum is 'not dedicated to human rights but to domesticate the psyche of the Palestinian pupil, fostering negative feelings toward armed resistance' (quoted in Miller 2014). Lacking the capacity to replace UNRWA's considerable annual education expenditure, however, Hamas had little substantive short-term recourse beyond merely noting its objection.[332] And while it was not feasible to overhaul the national education system unilaterally, Hamas did, however, take symbolic steps to compel the character of educational programming, including issuing 2013's Article Five stipulating that Gaza's education system is obliged for students to 'develop a patriotic personality and adhere to the Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic culture.'[333] This was further manifested through Article 13, which introduced a new locally-devised supplementary civics curriculum (*tarbiyah wataniya*) into government schools for eighth, ninth, and tenth grades, influencing an initial 55,000 students. Notably the Hamas civics books fundamentally challenged the existing PA curriculum, displacing the exclusive emphasis on nonviolent diplomatic endeavors, for instance, with a more antagonistic narrative highlighting militancy and heroism within the Palestinian Cause. The Hamas supplement furthermore introduced a critique of Zionism, framing it as an inherent part of every Jewish person's identity – a wildly speculative claim that promoted a religious conflict that the existing PA curriculum strenuously avoided at all costs (Omar 2014). To further reinforce such changes, Hamas implemented Article 43 of the new education law which prohibited private schools and UNRWA-run facilities from 'receiving donations or aid aimed at normalization with the Zionist occupation or propagating any Zionist activity,' which fundamentally outlawed much of the existing secular curricula for the vast majority of Gazan students.[334] While the ability to implement such a prohibition – or its 10-year prison sentence – was doubtful over the near-term, at a minimum it highlights that the secular education system the Class of 2000 first enrolled into prior to the Second *Intifada* was markedly different than the increasingly 'Islamified' system it graduated from 12 years later.[335]

[332] UNRWA routinely spent in excess of $100m annually providing educational services to Gazan students in the post-Oslo era (2015).

[333] HMoEHE 2013a

[334] Article 43 states '1) It's prohibited for public, private, foreign and international educational institutions to A) receive aid or assistance that aims at normalizing with the Zionist occupation, B) promote or encourage any activity with the Zionist occupation, 2) Without violating or breaching any greater penalty mentioned in any separate law everyone who violates the first provision is considered a felony offender to honor and integrity and will be sentenced with up to a maximum of 10 years in prison. The offending educational institution is to be fined 20,000 JD or its local equivalent' (HMoEHE 2013c).

[335] Article 43 doesn't define what normalization is, and Article 56 further allows for the deferral of educational reforms, so practically speaking the issue can be deferred, as convenient. Merely codifying the prohibition, however, illustrates the strength of the prejudice against it (HMoEHE 2013c).

C. HAMAS FORMALIZES ITS COUNTER-NARRATIVES

The contrast between conventional PA schooling and more antagonistic Islamist reforms in post-Oslo Gaza were, at first glance, quite conspicuous. To truly appreciate the significance of such modifications locally, however, it is once again important to speak with young people affected by the changes. While such amendments were quickly deemed 'dangerous' by outside stakeholders, to the Class of 2000, if anything, they ultimately proved to be of more symbolic importance rather than having any formative impact.[336] This appears rooted in part because the Class of 2000 had already entered prep school (seventh grade) by the time Hamas officially taken power and were completing secondary school by the time its new curriculum was introduced. A second equally sensible, and for this inquiry much more significant, explanation is that even when counter-narratives were increasingly encountered, students found Hamas' updated arguments often overcompensated for the blatant political gaps left unresolved by PA education. At first, however, it is important to note that many students from the Class of 2000 were admittedly excited to disrupt formal education and include more candor reflective of their daily realities. Mahmoud, for one, welcomed any changes away from the 'abundant failure' of nonviolent approaches featured in the PA curriculum.[337] Others from the Class of 2000 similarly applauded revisions that encouraged discussion of the realities of occupation more openly. In the enthusiastic words of one former student, Watan, 'I'm not aware of every change Hamas has made to the curriculum, but I know what they added aimed at raising the awareness of the current generation and to emphasize the importance of the painful experiences we've had over the past few years… I believe that we should have the freedom to learn about the hardships that we've been through by ourselves.'[338] It was such an elemental consideration that led many students, often from diverse political and religious backgrounds, to an initial embrace of a more representative educational approach that Hamas first appeared to offer.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Probing deeper with critical discourse analysis, Hamas' ensuing efforts to change the tenor of formal educational narratives in Gaza did yield dividends. According to students from the Class of 2000 this notably included updating their curriculum with current events, which as mentioned, are conspicuously absent in the decade-old PA curriculum.[339] Many students were also equally pleased that the Hamas texts actually attempted to define both what and notably where Palestine is – another issue the PA curriculum had consistently avoided. Yet the most significant inclusion in the Hamas textbooks was the forthright willingness to acknowledge the enduring pain of occupation and the subsequent relevance of armed resistance. As stated in Chapter Three, PA textbooks often went to great lengths to avoid referencing the daily reality of many Palestinians for fear of being accused of incitement, as well as presumably wanting to avoid drawing attention to their own larger failings. Hamas, on the other hand, embraced such narratives as part and parcel of their political existence. In turn, its civics text enthusiastically encouraged students to 'Research and document the crimes of the occupation,' including 1994's 'Ibrahimi Mosque Massacre' where 29 Palestinians were killed. Its tone in depicting 'Israeli Baruch Goldstein, a criminal thug, committed a bloody massacre when he shot worshippers inside the mosque while performing morning prayers in the middle of Ramadan' as an 'ugly crime' is telling.[340] So too is its subsequent

[336] A senior Israeli official who tracks incitement, Yosef Kuperwasser, described the textbooks as a 'blunter expression of a dangerous message of hate' (Akram and Rudoren 2013).
[337] Field interview with MR127 (2104).
[338] Field interview with MR113 (2014).
[339] In particular, *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11 (Part 2)*, Palestinian Authority MoEHE 2005.
[340] *National Education, Grade 10*, HMoEHE 2013b: 9.

endorsement from Gazan students. As Ayah explains it, 'The PA tries to promote peaceful coexistence and it's not in their interest to show the depth of the conflict we have with Israel.' Alternatively, 'the students witness so many incursions and invasions and obviously they're not coming out of the blue. Of course it's useful to discuss the hardships of occupation.'[341]

نشاط (٢)

❖ أبحث في جرائم الاحتلال في البلدة القديمة في الخليل وأوثقها.

مجزرة المسجد الإبراهيمي

في ٢٥-٢-١٩٩٤ ارتكب المجرم السفاح "باروخ جولدشتاين" مجزرة دموية نكراء حيث أطلق النار على المصلين داخل المسجد وهم يؤدون صلاة الفجر في منتصف شهر رمضان مما أدى إلى مقتل وإصابة العشرات منهم، الأمر الذي أدي إلى اندلاع هبة جماهيرية شملت كافة الأراضي الفلسطينية والعربية والإسلامية استنكاراً وتنديدا بالجريمة البشعة، ما دفع المقاومة الفلسطينية للرد بسلسلة عمليات نوعية في العمق الصهيوني.

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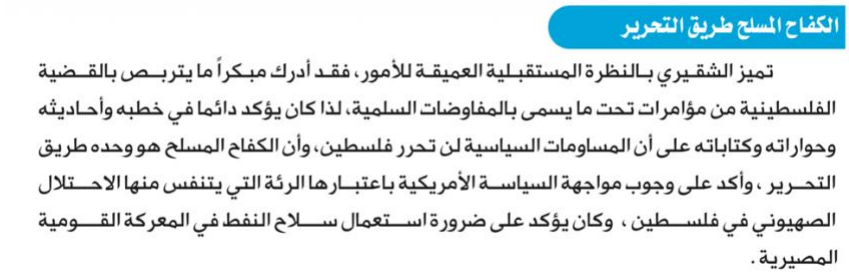
Fig. 9. Hamas curriculum citing settler violence in Hebron.[342]

Repeatedly emphasizing the hardships of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict set up the curricular contention that 'resistance and armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine,' which the Hamas text emphasizes at every opportunity.[343] One notable instance of this approach is the inclusion of the founder of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Ahmed Shukeiri, in their curriculum (whom the PA textbooks hesitate to mention). The Hamas civics book, on the other hand, highlights under the heading 'Armed Resistance – the Path for Liberation,' that 'Shukeiri had a deep vision for the future. He realized early on the conspiracy against the Palestinian Cause and what is called 'peaceful negotiations.' Therefore, he always emphasized in his speeches, talks, dialogues and books that political compromises will not liberate Palestine and armed resistance is the only way for liberation.'



الكفاح المسلح طريق التحرير

تميز الشقيري بالنظرة المستقبلية العميقة للأمور، فقد أدرك مبكراً ما يتربص بالقضية الفلسطينية من مؤامرات تحت ما يسمى بالمفاوضات السلمية، لذا كان يؤكد دائما في خطبه وأحاديثه وحواراته وكتاباته على أن المساومات السياسية لن تحرر فلسطين، وأن الكفاح المسلح هو وحده طريق التحرير، وأكد على وجوب مواجهة السياسة الأمريكية باعتبارها الرئة التي يتنفس منها الاحتلال الصهيوني في فلسطين، وكان يؤكد على ضرورة استعمال سلاح النفط في المعركة القومية المصيرية.

Fig. 10. Hamas curriculum highlighting the PLO's foundation in resistance.[344]

[341] Field interview with WR211 (2014).

[342] 'On February 25th, 1994 an Israeli Baruch Goldstein, a criminal thug, committed a bloody massacre when he shot worshippers inside the mosque while performing morning prayers in the middle of Ramadan, which led to the murder and injury of 10s of them. As a consequence, popular protests erupted throughout Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic world in condemnation of this ugly crime. It also led the Palestinian Resistance to carry out a series of operations targeting the heart of the Zionist entity' (*National Education, Grade 10*, HMoEHE 2013b: 9).

[343] *National Education, Grade 10*, HMoEHE 2013b: 22.

[344] 'Armed resistance – the Path for Liberation. Shaqiri had a deep vision for the future. He realized early on the conspiracy against the Palestinian Cause and what is called ''peaceful negotiations.'' Therefore he always

Populist changes like these candidly engaging with what many Gazans were experiencing on a daily basis were widely welcomed by students.[345] As Medo put it, students 'will be influenced by what Hamas added much more than [nonviolent curriculum] and that's because these wars that they learned about in the Hamas curriculum are wars that they survived. But they can't relate to things like civil rights, freedoms, independence, and secular governance,' which are less relevant to the more immediate challenges facing students in Gaza.[346] It was such forthright arguments, further reinforced by mandating free and compulsory education through age 16, that were often, and in many cases still are, applauded by the Class of 2000.[347]

Not all curricular changes were deemed helpful by student interviewees, however. An unsettling and oft-criticized theme within the Hamas textbooks (as well as the earlier PA curriculum) is a persistent narrowing of objective reality and options available to address it. One of the most evident examples involves visualizing Palestinian territory, which remains a relevant, yet deeply contentious issue. Case in point, the most up to date map of Palestine in PA history books is antiquated and wildly idealistic, featuring nonexistent roads connecting Gaza and the West Bank and outdated settlement activity. And while this should be an obvious opportunity for Hamas to provide more accurate information to students, the most prominent map in their subsequent textbook similarly ignores the bifurcated reality of the country – and Israel altogether. Student interviewees were understandably not impressed. 'I prefer the obsolete PA map because the Hamas map is even more unrealistic,' shares Ayah. 'Promoting that Israel does not exist does not help Palestinians. Instead it helps explain why students today can't tell the difference between Palestinians in [the lands of] '48 and the West Bank because of the little information we were given. We weren't taught anything about the settlements… And the roads connecting the West Bank and Gaza? Totally misleading.' When Ayah was asked how she would improve the map, she explains 'If it were up to me, I would teach the children the map of historical Palestine and illustrate exactly what we lost and exactly what Israel controls because it's vital to deal with facts and not emotions, so we can better understand.'[348]

emphasized in his speeches, talks, dialogues and books that political compromises will not liberate Palestine and armed resistance is the only way for liberation. He also emphasized the necessity of countering the American policy as the lung that the Zionist occupation breaths. And he also emphasized the importance of using the weapon of oil and the fateful battle of nationalism' (*National Education, Grade 10*, HMoEHE 2013b: 25).

[345] The Class of 2000's enthusiasm for Hamas' embrace of tangible episodes of violence in its textbooks is regionally not unique. The analogous popularity of ISIS' *Management of Savagery* (*Idarat al-Tawahush*), part of the group's official curriculum and widely shared online, is another example often credited to its relatability amidst conflict (McCants 2006). As Weiss and Hassan highlight, ISIS' more 'practical' curriculum is credited as 'genius' as it remains directly relevant to less-idealized contexts youth often encounter (Weiss and Hassan 2015: 41).

[346] Field interview with MR126 (2014).

[347] HMoEHE 2013a

[348] Field interview with WR211 (2014).

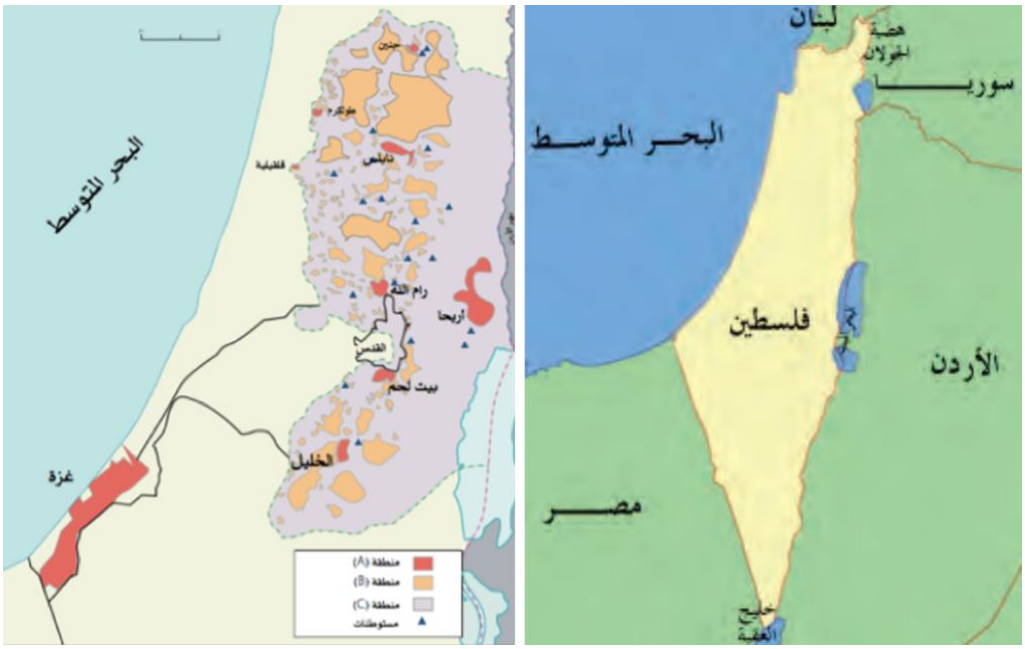


Fig. 11. The PA's 'Map of Areas of Palestinian Self Governance' (2005), and
Fig. 12. Hamas' 'Palestine' (2013).[349]

An additional omission upsetting to students was, similar to the PA texts, the narrowing of the larger spectrum of approaches available to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Relevant to its own biases, the Hamas text essentially displaced several issues of note from their textbooks that had previously received at least cursory coverage in the PA texts, including nonviolent resistance and the Oslo Accords.[350] While many would argue that neither of the topics were accurately portrayed in PA curriculum, much less critiqued, nearly all students queried believed that no matter how local or how violent the conflict, a wider perspective – including understanding the widely disparaged Oslo Accords – is essential to best appreciate the larger Palestinian reality, as well as the full range f approaches available moving forward. As Ayah further explains it, 'What is most important is to ensure that the student understands all of their political options and is able to decide which approaches to support. Omitting factual information about either type of resistance or avoiding the mention of political parties and their principles, does not serve the student nor the Cause.'[351]

Echoing such concerns over reforms to the PA curriculum was similar frustration with how religion was manipulated within Hamas-administered instruction. Defining Palestine in the updated textbooks, for instance, was widely welcomed by interviewees. Presenting it merely as a 'state for Muslims stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea' – and consequently disenfranchising the estimated 50,000 Christians in Palestine – was, however, widely denounced by interviewees. 'I believe that students should understand or learn that a majority of Palestinians are Muslim, but there is a Christian minority that needs to be respected and that the laws should be secular to safeguard and protect their civil rights,' argues Ayah (who is Muslim).[352] Such 'Islamification' of the civics text is further highlighted by various additional changes ranging from mundane municipal geography to resistance. Haifa, for instance, was

[349] Palestinian Authority MoEHE 2005: 90; *National Education, Grade 10*, HMoEHE 2013b: 7.
[350] Refugee issues abroad (*shatat*) was a further notable omission (Omar 2014).
[351] Field interview with WR211 (2014).
[352] Field interview with WR211 (2014).

extensively cited in the Hamas text as a Palestinian city with extensive roots back to 'the Islamic conquest and Omar bin Al Hitab, may God bless him, in 640.'[353] This type of historical candor was largely welcomed by students traditionally frustrated with the PA habitually avoiding curricular controversy, including considering Palestinian heritage and identity within Israel's modern borders. Yet as with defining Palestine, these perceived improvements were accompanied with their own shortcomings. For instance, even though the Hamas text acknowledges that Islamic sites are 'rare' in Haifa, while further acknowledging the local religious diversity, unsettlingly it is still unilaterally declared as an 'Islamic city' solely of 'Islamic identity.'[354] Students likewise welcomed the aforementioned expansive entry on Ahmad Shukeiri, the founder of the PLO, who notably was one of several cross-factional leaders profiled in Hamas textbooks – contrasting with the sparse references to non-Fatah leaders in the PA textbooks. (Ahmed Yassin's history as the founder of Hamas was, for example, profiled in PA textbooks merely with one sentence citing him generically as a 'Palestinian leader.'[355]) Many students, however, were also disappointed such biographies neglected the complexity of their leaders who largely represented the wide diversity of Palestine. For instance, instead of acknowledging that the founder of the PLO was an avowed secularist at least once in his multi-page Hamas textbook profile – the predominant approach was instead to emphasize any connection he held to Islam, including featuring 'his request to be buried in Abu Obaida Ibin al-Jarrah Cemetery, which contains many of the graves of the leaders of the Islamic expansion.'[356] While much can be said about Ahmed Shukeiri, the arguable significance of emphasizing his burial at an Islamic cemetery is decidedly not among it. A trend is quite apparent within the Hamas curriculum where no matter the topic, an Islamic context will have been imposed upon it to the detriment of a wider perspective. This is further evident in matters of resistance as events were often framed through their relation to Islam, if not renamed altogether. Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9, known locally as *al-Rasas al-Masboub* (Cast Lead) was renamed *Harb al-Furqan*, a traditional Islamic term connoting the Prophet's victory over his adversaries, while 2012's Operation Pillar of Cloud (*al-Amoud al-Sahab*) became Stones of Baked Clay (al-*Hejaret al-Sejjeal*), another Islamic theme. As Bilal critiqued, '*Tayeb*, this puts Islam in a negative frame because it made people learn region in the wrong way,' equating such politicization of religion to 'brainwashing.'[357]

Most significant to many interviewees, however, was the reframing of the struggle for Palestine from reclaiming a homeland – as a more straightforward matter of justice – to the new Hamas curriculum grounding the movement around *Ard ar-Ribat*, the Quranic term for the lands of Palestine. The secular nature of national resistance, while fading over time since its founding in the 1920s, was pedagogically reframed around Islam, underscoring 'the rape of the land' (*al-ard al-mughtasaba*) and the need to protect (her) honor from the Zionists (Omar 2014). Such a fundamental change was similarly reinforced by a wider Islamic focus, often prioritizing religion above any other standard. While European settlement was framed as 'colonization,' for example, the Islamic Conquest of Spain in the eighth century was deemed a 'liberation.' Interviewees further note how the Hamas textbook promoted liberation exclusively as a means to defend the 'religious rights of Muslims in Palestine,' while any reference to the inclusion of other beliefs, including the Palestinian Christian community, were omitted. As Falastine flatly assails this bias, 'What is this crazy shit they try to teach us? All of these changes are also wrong.'[358] It was such aggressive

[353] *National Education, Grade 10*, HMoEHE 2013b: 17.
[354] Haifa was cited as an 'Islamic city' solely of 'Islamic identity' primarily due to the presence of Al Istiqlal Mosque, *National Education, Grade 10*, HMoEHE 2013b: 16, 18.
[355] *History of Modern Palestine, Grade 11*, Palestinian Authority MoEHE 2005: 91.
[356] *National Education, Grade 10*, HMoEHE 2013b: 26.
[357] Field interview with MR109 (2104).
[358] Field interview with WR203 (2014).

religious narration that, while originally welcomed against the prosaic tone of the relatively secular PA textbooks, was so overdone that it consequently appears more biased than empowering to many of the students who reviewed the changes.

The Islamic emphasis Hamas promoted in its civics curriculum, while ridiculed by Gazan students, notably echoed longstanding criticism of religion within formal education. Traditionally, religious education in school was 'very easy and soft,' explains Orub. 'Talking about forgiveness, the life of the Prophet – there was a lot of repetition, a lot of recycling of stories. There were no modern issues discussed and a lot of the topics were taken for granted, where no questioning was encouraged nor allowed.'[359] Watan similarly criticizes how Islamic education in school habitually 'lacked the human side of our religion – it was merely a narration of stories, particularly invasions, and repetition was the mantra.'[360] The common word used throughout the interviews was *musallamat* – how issues were taken for granted without dialogue. 'In religion class we wouldn't talk about anything,' argues Ayah. 'We did not discuss or learn about any differences between Islamic scholars. We did not discuss issues that could cast doubt. Religion class was like a long list loaded with repetition. It was a routine that did not evoke any critical thinking nor any potential doubt.'[361] Like many others, Orub challenges the rote approach to religious education: 'I think it'd be beautiful if people could question, for example, the existence of God, because questioning is the road to true knowledge and realization. Yet the Islamic curriculum did not give us the space to do so.' Instead, 'Religion was molded in one shape. For example, the *hijab* is a must, instead of asking the question, 'Is *hijab* a must or not?''[362] It was for such reasons that many students found little relevance between Islam and Islamic instruction in school.[363] 'Religion is not well taught,' declared Bilal. 'Just memorize this *hadith* and those versus and stories and *suras* and in the end we don't apply any of this in our lives.' [364]

Aside from a familiar absence of classroom discussion, many students also openly challenged the unconvincing quality of Islamic programming in school, as well as the overall institutional indifference with ensuring its accuracy. 'The sheiks teaching religion, especially in school, taught me so many wrong things,' laments Eman. 'A lot of it was *israiliyat*. Some of the things they taught us were superstitious and just made up shit.'[365] *Israiliyat*, described by members of the Class of 2000 as material taken from the Quran without context – and hence untrustworthy – was merely the Islamic iteration of a wider tradition of formal education narrowing programming to the point whereby students often felt that they were missing out on larger realities, and receiving distortions of the truth. 'I don't remember anything useful I learned from school, or anything that was 100% correct,' likewise recalls Ayah. '*Yanni* I wish I came out of school without any knowledge rather than graduating with incorrect and misleading knowledge that you discover every single day.' When queried if this included religious lessons in school under Hamas, she elaborates:

> I found out yesterday that *al-sirat al-mustaqim al-fatiha*, the straight path verse, is not for all Muslims and believers. We were taught it was something that all Muslims would have to go through and how hard the test is and how scary the punishment for those who

[359] Field interview with WR212 (2014).
[360] Field interview with MR113 (2014).
[361] Field interview with WR211 (2014).
[362] Field interview with WR212 (2014).
[363] As many Islamic students in Gaza would share, the knowledge of deeper understanding holds greater merit than mere recitation. *See* Al-Kafi, vol. 1.
[364] Field interview with MR109 (2014).
[365] Field interview with WR204 (2014).

> fail it. When I learned about this in school I took it for granted that it was true, and up to this moment I'm discovering many things I similarly took for granted because I learned them in school and am still discovering how wrong they were.[366]

Mohammed echoes this frustration, bluntly arguing, 'Lots of the things that we learned were false. On religion, what was the stupid poison they taught us in textbooks? I personally was ready to tear the religion book in two parts.'[367] Consequently, as Eman notes, teaching all the 'misguided stuff' meant many 'graduated from school totally confused. Especially when it comes to Islamic faith and its translation into life practices.'[368] To which Hamed adds, 'religious education that we studied was a big part of my life, but that had no impact on the way I interacted with society. Education was only for the exams.' As a result, he and his friends 'lost religious consciousness. We stopped liking school. And our ethical and academic standards deteriorated because school had no role beyond its fences.'[369]

The formal narratives presented in the Hamas textbooks offered, in the views of the Class of 2000, a mixed outcome. Acknowledging the violent reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, amongst other notable PA omissions, was widely appreciated, while the recurrent framing of diverse issues through equally simplistic 'Islamic' and militant paradigms was unnerving to many. 'It is good changes are being introduced, but they should not blind us from everything else around us,' as Mahmoud puts it. 'What Hamas did with the curriculum is the 'Hamasization' of it, where context is purely religious and any window to stimulate independent thinking is closed. It's dangerous when school becomes a playground for factional muscle-flexing.'[370] It is lessons like this that taught students from the Class of 2000 that healthy skepticism is required towards all partisan narratives, be they from Hamas, the PA, or the next argument for change.

D. FURTHER LESSONS WITHIN *HIDDEN CURRICULUM*

A second lesson once again appreciated by students from the Class of 2000 was the violent nature of classroom instruction, amongst other consistencies, which endured under Hamas administration. Abu Shokaf begins by describing the often-awkward transition to Hamas instructors, explaining, 'When the internal division (*al-khassim*) happened and the new teachers arrived, it became very hard to adjust to them since they lacked experience and we could not respect them.' This inexperience – and the contempt it invited – was, however, quickly replaced with the all too familiar emphasis on the importance of authority. As Abu Shokaf continues:

> One day soon after a teacher came to us and said, '*Ya shabab* today we want to talk about a situation in Gaza.' The teacher said, 'The decisiveness of the internal clashes is an honor to Palestine. This is the purification of the Gaza Strip.' I did not fathom what he was talking about and so I said, 'I came here to be educated, not to be delayed. I'm not here to swear allegiance to you.' After two days, I received an order to go to Internal Security. They told me, 'Why would you talk to your teacher this way? Why would you object?

[366] Field interview with WR211 (2014).
[367] Field interview with MR112 (2014).
[368] Field interview with WR204 (2014).
[369] Field interview with MG123 (2014).
[370] Field interview with MR127 (2014).

> You're not allowed to object to your teacher and you're not allowed to incite students against authority.'[371]

Such lessons of control, commonplace under the PA, were once again habitually reinforced within Hamas-administered schooling. Hamoud, in particular, underscores how the religious emphasis in school offered little reprieve from corporal punishment. 'My school belonged to the Hamas movement and by default the teachers were religiously conservative. The school environment itself was religious. So you would have a mosque for prayer and you're obligated to pray. They would beat up those who did not pray.'[372] This experience was matched by Alah, who notes that even in his traditionally secular public school religious subjugation was violently enforced after it was placed under Hamas control. As he explains flatly, 'In government high school everyone who didn't pray was hit.'[373] Even on isolated matters Hamas teachers would often go out of their way to employ religious punishment collectively. Mohnnad shares how even though he considered himself a good student, his 'life changed' in high school as Hamas-affiliated teachers both employed *falaga* individually, as well as declared *yukfor* against the entire class to 'condemn all of us.'[374] *Yukfor*, or invoking God's wrath, is commonly cited as the worst thing one can do in Gaza – and notably a criminal offense – to underscore authority and the enduring centrality of fear within formal education, albeit with Islamic undertones. And while such experiences were deeply traumatic for many students, Hamed describes the subsequent infuriation as many teachers nonetheless dispensed violence casually:

> I used to hate teachers in school because the first thing they would do in the morning was check homework. And those who didn't do their homework would be beaten up. And as you know in the morning it gets really cold and the stick that they use *ma sha Allah* was taller than me. Each teacher used to name the stick – like 'The Scorpion.' The Arabic teacher named his stick 'Nancy' because he used to mock the guys who used to like Nancy Ajram at the time. After he would beat the children up, he would ask them, 'So how is Nancy? Hot, right?' He means our hands after we were slapped. And of course, there wasn't any swearing word that I didn't use against him – in my head.[375]

What was treated with even greater seriousness, however, was when political narratives were questioned. One student, Ayah, shares that September 11th, 2001 had arisen in conversation one day during class, and how she commented that Osama bin Laden was her enemy for declaring responsibility. In response, she was labeled an apostate (*murtadd*). As Ayah explains, 'I remember a religion teacher asking, 'Are you Christian?,' even though I was wearing the *hijab*. They labeled me an infidel (*kafir*) and said I was 'very much affected' by human rights and democracy discourse and the foreigners' jargon. This conversation actually happened between me and my Arabic teacher and she considered me an infidel and dismissed me.'[376] Such political dynamics, while common within PA education, were similarly widespread within Hamas-run schooling. Ahmed, for example, spoke of returning to school after a three day break commemorating the death of a Hamas leader. 'I had lots of candy that day. So I was throwing it to other students so they wouldn't bug me. However, the kids from Hamas' Student Association thought I was

[371] Field interview with MR119 (2014).
[372] Field interview with MR104 (2014).
[373] Field interview with MG117 (2014).
[374] Field interview with MG115 (2014).
[375] Field interview with MG123 (2014). Nancy Ajram, born in 1983, is a Lebanese pop singer widely known throughout the Middle East.
[376] Field interview with WR211 (2014).

distributing sweets because of the assassination [of the Hamas leader] and I was beaten up by the religion teacher because of it.'[377] The violent politicization of the school experience consequently endured for many students, if albeit under a new factional theme. Yousif's encounter, while uncomfortable, is not unique:

> In eighth grade a teacher discovered that I have speaking skills so he invited me to a meeting with the Islamic student body. My father objected and said the teacher is trying to recruit me: 'These people only care about the interests of their political party and will suck your energy and your abilities and they might turn you into a radical that would hate his own mother and father.' At the time they used to invite people into their sessions and tell them, 'If your own father prevented them from coming tell your own fathers that they are no good but God is and going to the meetings is upon God's request.' So the next day I went to school and the teacher asked why didn't I go to the session, and I said I only want to focus on my studies. He said, 'As you like, but what you've done is not right.' I didn't actually pay attention to what that meant at the time until the end of the year when he marked me down. I went to speak to him and he explained that my 'school activity and participation in class was very weak. And we've learned that during recess you discourage kids from praying.' The following year he was also my teacher, so I asked my dad to transfer me to another class where he wouldn't be my teacher – and he did. When the teacher saw me and asked why I had changed classes, I told him, 'Because you aggrieved me last year – you were not just to me.' A few days later I was surprised that teachers were swapped and again he became my teacher. I checked and there were no alternatives but to stay in his class. Then the next day he walks into his class and says we have a quiz. He picked five kids – including me – and said if you score anything below the full mark you will be punished. We objected but he didn't respond. Obviously none of us scored the full mark and so he asked us to go in front of the class (where people are punished – because they have to humiliate you). So we went up and he asked how we would like to be punished. I was so embarrassed. I was the top student – the first in the class – and he hit me. I cried that day, not only out of pain, but because I knew I didn't deserve it. And then he instructed me from then on to always sit in the back (where the worst students no one cares about sit). So before every class I would hope that the Earth would open up and swallow me.[378]

The controlling influence of Hamas teachers, as mentioned earlier, was by design not limited to the classroom, nor aimed only at secular students. Hamed, for instance, shares that even after memorizing 14 chapters of the Quran prior to high school – his 'great accomplishment' – a Hamas teacher left an even greater impact on his understandings of the world around him. As Hamed explains, 'He always orchestrated a lecture for me about going to his mosque after school instead of the mosque I used to attend. I was in eleventh grade and largely aware, and when I finally learned that he was affiliated with Hamas I'd get really annoyed when he'd come to talk to me. I had a feeling that he's manipulating my mind.' Hamed continues on to describe how the teacher would sit next to him on their bus trip to Khan Younis each day, whereby the teacher would talk to him 'nonstop.' 'He would always use the fact that I'm a special student and that he cared that my best interests should be a priority… But when he found out that I memorized the Quran in Osama Bin Zeid Mosque – he told me they are not true believers, while at his mosque they conduct fun activities and can help with anything – even money – as he knew at the

[377] Field interview with MR105 (2014).
[378] Field interview with MR118 (2014).

time that my family was going through a financial crisis.' It was this 'suffocating' experience that Hamed clarifies was, even more than memorizing the Quran, the 'most influential' educational experience of his young life. [379]

While Hamas' efforts to expand educational authority beyond the classroom played out, it is also important to underscore how its wider authority was often reinforced within the school environment. To illustrate this phenomenon Yousif shares how celebrating a national holiday in high school under Hamas rule taught him a profoundly blunt lesson he will not soon forget:

> In ninth grade my school wanted to hold a commemoration ceremony for Arafat's death, so they put chairs in front of the school gate. All of a sudden three jeeps from [Hamas'] Executive Forces arrived and surround the area with officers with batons. So we presumed they were there to protect the event. But to our surprise, they started breaking the chairs and beating the students. Some of the kids had their hands and arms broken. Some of them had their legs broken. We ran away and they started chasing us. So not only had they broken up the assembly, but then chased us down to a fruit store, where I was hiding with other students. The vendor tried to calm the police down, but they wouldn't be calm and told the vendor, 'These kids are the ones who want to ruin the country.' They arrested two of us, and the policeman hit me on my back and yelled for me to 'Get the hell home.' When I arrived home I found the bruises on my back. So you want a learning experience? Here's a learning experience for you: When you're hit by a baton you don't feel it right away – the pain hits you later on. And later on I thought school is not a place to learn – it's a place for political polarization. And I decided not to study, not to be the top student, and started hating going to school.[380]

It should be noted that not all formal educational experiences administered by Hamas were resented, however. Orub celebrates that, for her, schooling under Hamas was very empowering. Yet paralleling earlier experiences under PA administration, the value of her formal education was derived not from rote memorization or the cultivation of partisan loyalty, but instead the encouragement of more critical development. As Orub explains, 'The teachers we had did not stick to teaching the textbooks. If anything they constantly criticized the curriculum and did not follow the teaching plan. They often fused the topics with other methods like theater and open debates and contests, music, drawing – it's a place where I grew to believe because of this type of activities.' Orub continues, elaborating on how this also included promoting leadership development in engaging wider realities, which honed her political understanding: 'My teachers supported discussions and debates and gave us the opportunity to take the lead and play the role of the teacher and that significantly played a role in building my personality and building my self-confidence.' Summarizing the issue, Orub underscores she was empowered 'because of the nature of the school I enrolled in, and not because of the curriculum.' [381] As Nagham agrees, under Hamas, 'School helped me form my religious ideology' primarily because 'the religion teacher used to tell us stories and things *outside* the formal textbook.'[382]

Just as parallels are evident between the partisan nature of formal curriculum issued by the PA and Hamas, so too are similar lessons gleaned from *hidden curriculum* within the school environment. While students

[379] Field interview with MG123 (2014).
[380] Field interview with MR118 (2014).
[381] Field interview with WR212 (2014).
[382] Field interview with WR202 (2014).

continue to express profound exasperation against the controlling – and often violently enforced – hierarchy of partisan classrooms, empathetic and independent teaching styles were once again celebrated. Such lessons under Hamas, much like those experienced with the PA, reinforce both the complexity of formal schooling amidst conflict, as well as its partisan limitations.

E. THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF *OUTSIDE CURRICULUM*

As Hamas' educational reforms were unable to resolve persistent concerns over the irrelevance of formal schooling amidst ongoing conflict, many members of the Class of 2000 continued to look to the wider community for answers. The enduring importance of alternative sources of information, in particular family, *dawaween* community groups, and local mosques, highlights that *outside curriculum* remains an influential check against even locally-based partisan narratives for students growing up in Gaza.

FAMILY

As students struggled to make sense of the wider conflict's unanswered questions, family proved to be highly informative to many interviewees. This relevance was repeatedly underscored in that household members could often narrate the stark reality the Class of 2000 was experiencing free from partisan prejudice. When Bilal first left Gaza as an elementary school student, for instance, he recalls reconciling his own untrained confusion with his father's knowing guidance:

> I remember the first time I saw soldiers at the Erez crossing. I felt their hatred. They had weapons I'd never seen before. They spoke a different language. I felt like they were from another planet, staring at everything around me. There was hatred – maybe envy, maybe intimidation. I don't know what I felt. It's a feeling of instinct. On the way, my dad told me 'Don't talk to them and sit quietly.' He was giving me guidance on how to deal with the situation. He was teaching me how you have to be a professional in knowing how to obtain permission to cross the border.[383]

For many in the Class of 2000, such guidance proved far more relevant than the often abstract instruction they memorized in school. Abu Alsa'ed shares his recollection of how it was his parents' explanations during the 'hard days of fear' that got him through the worst of the conflict. 'My father used to tell me about Israel. And he explained that he had to work for our enemy who took our land. And he educated me on the prisoners and the crimes Israel committed during the first *intifada* and beyond.'[384] 'My mother had a big role,' similarly explains Mohannad. 'When she would be watching TV she would cry. And then when I would ask her why, she would explain things to me, which made me hate Israel. And when I started reading a lot on the internet, I used to ask my mother about Palestine and that's basically what educated me on the Cause.'[385] At other times it was students directly witnessing the ad hoc actions of parents that resulted in the most memorable guidance. Medo recalls the trauma of Hamas militants arriving at his home wanting to 'empty their bandoliers into the knees of my brother,' as was happening to other *Fatah*-affiliated forces throughout Gaza. Yet he emphasized watching 'my mom's determination in dealing with the masked militants taught me a lesson in life not to fear if the battle was unequal. If he was taken he'd now be paralyzed or dead. And that's why I learned that if you give up that you're definitely a loser, but if you stand tall you might just have a chance to win, or to prove a point, or even one day get your

[383] Field interview with MR109 (2014).
[384] Field interview with MR102 (2014).
[385] Field interview with MG115 (2014).

inalienable rights.'[386] Such observations repeatedly proved influential to Gaza students. As Eman shares, she won't soon forget about how her mother 'pulled out the corpse of a young martyr from the street into our house and hid it so the Israeli army would not take it.'[387] While numerous lessons can be derived from such observations, what is more certain is that the largely theoretical narratives comprising formal curricula are hard-pressed to rival such parental direction.

Siblings were often also cited by interviewees as being a significant source of credible knowledge for understanding the surrounding conflict. Majd, for one, shares the importance of acquiring experiential learning from his older brother Mohammad and his friends. 'I always used to listen to them talk about things I knew nothing about. Things I didn't hear about in textbooks. So when I started being influenced by my brother, I was forced to search for the things I want to talk about. He speaks from a personal perspective in his analysis of things. He talks about things as he sees them, not as he's told to talk about them. I followed his lead.'[388] While the experience of family members holds obvious value to Gazan students, at times their innocence was also powerfully influential. Ahmed recalls observing the simple act of his younger brother discarding his 'beloved' toy soldier action figure. 'He threw it away because he was scared that if the Israelis saw it they were going to hurt him. He threw it away even though he really loved it. It was merely a small toy, but at the time it could have indicated political affiliation and resistance, and for that, without hesitation, you would be wiped off the map.' This 'little kid developing a rational logic on how to act around them' taught Ahmed a poignant lesson on the stark brutality of conflict that he still recalls nearly a decade later.[389] Such familial insights were, in turn, reshared widely between those connected to the Class of 2000. As Arafat clarifies his motivation in subsequently helping educate his own siblings, 'It's the right of the children to learn in a way to protect themselves and their beloved ones – especially in a world where the authorities fail to protect them.' [390]

While the guidance from individual family members was repeatedly cited as being influential to student interviewees, the holistic nature of household pedagogy was ultimately more responsible for educating most Gazan students about the challenges they were facing in the post-Oslo world. Basel, like many interviewees, summarizes the importance of relatives in helping him learn to survive after gaining little perspective within formal education. 'Our educational process is like being in a plane and someone asks you, 'Do you know how to fly?' You say no, and they tell you 'Just jump.' So you take their word for granted, you jump, and halfway through you start flapping, but you don't fly. And that's what happened with me.' Yet while formal education left Basel woefully unprepared, his family's efforts rescued him. 'My dad taught me a little, my mom taught me English, my aunt taught me Arabic, my brother taught me math. If I relied on our what our educational system taught us, I guarantee I'll be just as dead as the person who jumped out of the plane after taking someone else's advice for granted. But I always depended on my family, and this is why I maintain a level better than other students.'[391] Janine agrees, emphasizing that family constituted her 'most significant source of learning and education' throughout her youth. 'They contributed an essence, building my current personality because they were the ones who instilled reading and writing within me, and encouraged self-expression and participation and different social and cultural activities. Their factional experience left a big impact on my decision not to be affiliated with any political party. I believe strongly that family is the biggest factor in building an

[386] Field interview with MR126 (2014).
[387] Field interview with WR204 (2014).
[388] Field interview with MR101 (2014).
[389] Field interview with MR105 (2014).
[390] Field interview with SI105 (2014).
[391] Field interview with MR106 (2014).

individual's life,' in her case playing 'the most significant positive factor in building who I am.'[392] When asked, other students similarly reinforce how family best narrated the wider conflict – often quite personally. As Orub explaines 'My knowledge and awareness of the Palestinian Cause is primarily owed to my family because my father suffered a lot.' After being arrested, imprisoned, and nearly assassinated, it was 'all of these experiences that together shaped [her] understandings more than anything else.'[393] As Esraq puts it, 'I have good knowledge of Palestinian politics – and its enduring challenges – because I was raised in a family that lived it.'[394]

While family routinely offered the Class of 2000 valuable lessons on how to best live within conflict, like all pedagogical influences in Gaza it must be clarified that such guidance did not come without familiar frustrations. This was most personally reinforced by interviewees citing their families often violently complementing the rigidity of formal education at the expense of wider curiosity. 'Families use violence with their children not because everyone is violent, but instead because punishment is something you use as a teaching method,' clarified field staff behind the most comprehensive study to date on physical abuse of Gazan youth. 'If I die I don't want my kids whining about not having breakfast' was a consistent 'norm' as fathers are preparing their children for their death.'[395] Such grim lessons echo earlier student comments like 'you break their bones and we'll apply the cast' ('*Iksir wa eghna bin jabbir*'), colloquially highlighting that discipline at home often reinforced more formalized approaches in school no matter what faction is in power.[396] Students, however, did not always appreciate the advantage of such strict discipline. As Ayah further explains the balancing act between school and home, 'Here's the thing – I had to get through school only to gain some liberty to do other useful things in life… To be able to go out, to visit community organizations, to leave the house. I knew if I didn't do well in school my family would suffocate me with restrictions and generally intervene in my life. Hence, I'd often study, not because I would understand what I was learning or had a passion to excel. Instead, it was merely a commitment tied to my freedom to follow my own path, which to this day remains my approach away from my family.'[397]

DAWAWEEN

Beyond the guidance from immediate family, another esteemed source of political understanding for the Class of 2000 was the diwan (*dawaween),* or local council comprising extended family and area elders entrusted with guiding or otherwise influencing the welfare of those connected to it. As Alah explains, 'The factions teach you about the plight of Palestine, sure, but they also teach you more about their own political needs. I learned more from my *diwan* than from any faction or movement.'[398] Such lessons, while at times brief, often made profound impressions. Za'eem echoes the feelings of many students when he declares that 'Palestine was sold out by the big leaders who were paid a big price for it. And the people just get pieces. I know this because that's what I was told by the men from the neighborhood (*hara*).'[399] A further case of learning about the larger political context (and her Palestinian identity) comes from Eman, as she recalls hearing stories about her grandfather from her local *diwan*:

[392] Field interview with WR208 (2014).
[393] Field interview with WR212 (2014).
[394] Field interview with WR206 (2014).
[395] PCDCR SCS 2007
[396] Field interview with MR124 (2014).
[397] Field interview with WR211 (2014).
[398] Field interview with MG117 (2014).
[399] Field interview with MR121 (2014).

> Resistance stories are told about this person and that. Sure this is pretty common. But when I hear stories about my grandfather and his rifle… It's a different story because it's someone who is related to you. And then you know deep down inside that at least one person you know didn't give in. I know stories about our neighbors and other people throughout Gaza and every time we gather together they tell us the story once, twice, 10 times. And up to this day they tell the stories, like how the occupation army invaded and how the Arab forces joined in during the *Naqba* of '48, and how there were young people from our village who actually killed Israeli soldiers in a trap. They told us that our grandfather had a rifle at the time as I think he was in the Communist Party. Regarding the invasion of our village, Kokaba, I learned how it happened on May 14th, 1948. People started leaving. They tried to hang in there as much as possible. A couple of young people had rifles and would go and clash with the army even beyond the borders of our village, regardless of their small numbers. And my grandfather was one of them. That's not only what my grandmother shared – I also heard the same thing from the community elders. How before fleeing, the Arab forces entered our village with airs of appreciation – as my grandmother said – as if they had exterminated the Israeli army. (A lot of bullshit talking.) Some of the Arab forces were good, and some were bad. She told us about one Egyptian officer, Nasser, who was really good, and one was really bad. And after some time the Arab officers came to them and told them to leave. They clarified that this was not a request – it was an order. And then the Israeli army started bombing them along the beach even though they were already fleeing.[400]

Such lessons, individualized to the student by their family and neighbors, struck a powerful chord for members of the Class of 2000 positioned to hear them. As Eyad summarizes, 'School and textbooks did not contribute to teaching me anything, but reality and life circumstances did. I was particularly aware of the reasons behind the conflict from my family, and from the stories my grandfather used to tell me. I used to sit with my elders and listen and learn about what they said about Palestine.'[401] Ramy similarly echoes how his more mature neighbors were instrumental in explaining 'firsthand how the Jews forced them out and took over their land. We learned from this how we have rights and entitlements and we should never give up.'[402] It was narrative lessons like these imparted from the collective memory of the wider community, that, while not universally available to all students, nevertheless proved a significant source of understanding to the Class of 2000 as it struggled to understand the contemporary conflict around them.

MOSQUES

In addition to family and *dawaween*, one further source of information noted by students from the Class of 2000 are neighborhood mosques. With Gaza being home to more houses of worship than schools, it is of little surprise that a plurality of interviewees spoke on the educational significance of their local mosque.[403] Interviewees loosely comprised their enthusiasm around the less violent approaches of mosque-based education and the centrality of political discussions. Watan emphasizes the former as he

[400] Field interview with WR204 (2014).
[401] Field interview with MG107 (2014).
[402] Field interview with MR111 (2014).
[403] While students from the Class of 2000 enrolled in one of 700 schools operating in Gaza, this was contrasted with the availability of 822 mosques and three churches in the same communities (PCBS 2015).

explains that for him, 'It's a place where I feel comfort and where I can be myself because people in the mosque don't care what you wear or how you look or where you live or your level of education. In the mosque we're all equal, which helped me grow out of my aggressive nature and to look to the world from a positive perspective.'[404] Such benign experiences stand in sharp contrast to the violent nature of formal education (under both the PA and Hamas) and are further supported by what little ancillary research exists locally. The most extensive field study to date found that local mosques were the only significant pedagogical influence on Gazan students that did not register as a source of violence. In the words of the lead field researcher, 'Mosques were practically the only place in the children's daily lives, including school, work, and home, that weren't cited as violent by the kids.'[405] An Observer (*Raqib*) from a local mosque's outreach arm (*da'wa*), Amjad, similarly laughed out loud at the prospect of corporal punishment within their educational programming, explaining within 'family' study groups (*osra*) 'you should provide very good hospitality to members such as drinks, cakes, refreshments, jokes, funny stories, and feelings. There is no way you can force anyone.'[406] Instead, if students fail to progress, they are simply downgraded to lower groups to keep everyone at comparable levels (or ushered out of the system altogether). As Saady, a student from the Class of 2000 active in *osra* discussions, explains, mosque education in Gaza largely shuns coercive approaches like violence. Instead, learning is organized around appeal, including 'incentives to motivate youth to attend and to retain their attendance. For example, entertainment and cultural trips,' which most students 'favored compared to regular school activities.' As Saady further highlights the contrast with the hierarchical nature of Gazan schooling, each osra 'address the students as the future leaders who should behave like responsible men – not like boys.'[407] Mosque education subsequently struck a notably different chord for young people in Gaza that was dutifully appreciated by many students from the Class of 2000, Islamist and secular alike, highlighting the encouraging potential of less rigid forms of instruction.

In addition to a less abusive environment, student interviewees also underscore how the civic nature of mosques in Gaza typically cultivates more political debate than was observed within formal education under either Hamas or the PA. Mohannad recalls how he used to go to his mosque every Thursday for a lecture by the General Commander Marwan Aissa 'who told us about torture in prisons, assassinations, and settlements. He spoke to us about armed resistance, and its role in national liberation… and with all of my senses and joy I used to listen to him, which helped me build my intellect about the Cause.'[408] Such politically relevant lessons hosted in mosques were not rare for the Class of 2000. At other times mosques would play a unique pedagogical role amidst the ongoing challenges of conflict when other perspectives were closed off. In the absence of more formal information, Ramy describes learning the 'most significant' news of his youth, and how it maintains significance to him years later: 'One of my best friends was martyred in 2012. I was 18 at the time. I couldn't see him and we couldn't hold a funeral for him (or my 17 other friends killed at different times and different places) because the war was still ongoing. You know how I heard the news? From the mosque loudspeakers.'[409] True to form, amidst routine violence and the subsequent cancellation of formalized public services, mosques typically remained amongst the most resilient information providers amidst conflict. Epitomizing this approach, for instance, was the Dar al Quran al Karim al Sunna *osra* group suggested by those close with the Class of 2000 as a contrast to the habitual breakdown of formal education amidst conflict. As highlighted by the group's update during

[404] Field interview with MR113 (2014).
[405] PCDCR SCS 2007
[406] Field interview with SI103 (2014).
[407] Field interview with SI102 (2014).
[408] Field interview with MG115 (2014).
[409] Field interview with MR111 (2014).

2014's Operation Protective Edge, despite the violence that consumed the Khazaa Mosque and its surrounding community, 'recitation sessions did not stop on even the hardest days of the war.' In the *osra*'s own words, 'As much as the Zionists *haqked* destroyed the homes of God we will teach our children the Quran under the rubble or on top of it.'[410] It is such enduring relevance, from longer-term discussions to more immediate updates, that underscores the centrality of the mosque within *outside curriculum* for students from the Class of 2000.

Fig. 13. Dar al Quran al Karim stressing that *Osra* will never be cancelled.[411]

As with all perspectives and sources of information, it should once again be underscored that students from the Class of 2000 remain critical of all arguments – including from mosques. While counterintuitively more open to discussion and less violent than formal education, many students nonetheless learned to remain skeptical of factional agendas compromised the information as presented. Hamoud, for one, shares how his mosque played the 'biggest role' in his education growing up as he recalls it 'polished all of my understandings and formed in me a factional awareness.' Questions over bias arose as Hamoud matured in secondary school, however. 'I was very committed to my mosque until *Tawjihi*, when I started to question the close-minded and narrow awareness it was promoting. I started to question why I did not have social engagements with anyone besides the affiliates from Hamas.'[412] Odai echoes the same concern, albeit from a more extreme perspective, revealing, 'I was committed to my mosque visits for a long time. But when I went… it was mostly about induction. I stopped going because I started hating families that never hurt me in any way. Because in the mosque they used to tell us this person is a liar, that person is indecent, that one works for the intelligence service – and all of these people are traitors (*jawasees*). Don't talk to them, don't play with them, and if you happen to bump into them beat the shit out of them.'[413] Asem similarly shares his concern over factionalization by acknowledging 'how every mosque administration is affiliated with a political party, and how they try and implant in you the seeds of political and religious thoughts that interest only them. And as a result you have people with political

[410] Dar al Quran al Karim al Sunna – Khan Younis Facebook page, September 4th, 2014.
[411] Dar al Quran al Karim al Sunna – Khan Younis Facebook page, September 4th, 2014.
[412] Field interview with MR104 (2014).
[413] Field interview with MR120 (2014).

orientations and behavior that operate within the framework of that given party.'[414] Anas further substantiates this disconcerting trend with his personal experiences endeavoring to become a *hafiz*, memorizing the Quran, in Khan Younis:

> I used to memorize the Quran in a mosque that belonged to Islamic Jihad. Yet in the mosque they'd tell us we'll liberate Al-Aqsa. This was all emotional mobilization and based on the wrong understanding of religion. The first verse of the Quran, after all, starts with *ikra* – reading and not just reciting, but reading with understanding and educating – and following that verse are the verses of *jihad*. However, we'd go directly to *jihad*, skipping the first verse. But do these people have the human awareness and the right religious awareness? No, they don't. But still they'd tell us, 'We have the right education, and everyone else doesn't.' It was very evident that their lessons were very biased towards one side of the Palestinian Cause. They taught us to mock other political parties and what they offer. And I used to learn a lot from that and do the same. What led me to disagree with them was my constant questioning. They taught us to have absolute obedience, without asking questions. What kind of organization is that if you're not allowed to criticize its members and correct its mistakes?[415]

Such critique was quite common among student interviewees, with many both acknowledging the arguable advantages of mosque-based education over formal schooling, while also learning to retain skepticism towards the factional agendas routinely sponsoring such partisan perspectives. As Saady describes it, mosque education provides 'some welcomed opportunities to discuss social issues and individual duties towards his society and his group.' Yet he also cautions that students must also remain vigilant not to embrace factional narratives framing 'the "other" as the devil.'[416] Such understandings of mosque pedagogy, while at times appreciated by interviewees, typically also left students seeking additional perspectives.

While the Class of 2000 was largely consistent in celebrating organized guidance outside of school within Hamas-administered Gaza, be it at the household or neighborhood level, the wider personal observations of conflict, however, remain predominant. Much the same as their experiences under PA control, the most powerful lessons students gleaned were often from their own empirical observations. As Eman emphasizes growing up living between a mosque and its cemetery in Khan Younis, the most potent training for her was not so much formally organized by traditional stakeholders, as personally observed:

> When I was young life used to be normal. The area across the street was full of plants and flowers. But when the Second *Intifada* broke out, every time there was a martyr they would take him to Azadeen Qassam Mosque near our house for the martyr's prayer. Then they'd bring him to the cemetery across the street. So up until this moment I still remember the smell they put on martyrs. It would fill the air with the fusion of the smell of gun powder (from shooting guns) and soil (because of people marching and stirring up the dust). The whizz of the bullets would break the sky, mixed with the sound from the announcement cars circling, and then we would also see the pictures on TV from the time they take the person out of the hospital until then place them in the grave next to our house.

[414] Field interview with MR125 (2014).
[415] Field interview with MG122 (2014).
[416] Field interview with SI102 (2014).

> During the three wars there were many funerals that went by, but the one thing I can never forget are the death bags. One day our neighbor was bombed, and there were many cars going back and forth underneath our house picking up bags with dead people and taking them to the mosque and then returning to bury them across the street. Most of them were little kids, sealed up in white bags. They lived in a big building. It was wiped out. Everyone in the family died except two or three. Those [Israeli] people never have enough. And we are supposed to just be silent and say enough is enough – let me just live? Because effectively they won't stop, at any level, and you want to live your life? Here you are, living in a camp, not at a checkpoint, and not living among them, and yet they come for you. So do not expect any room for a normal life as long as they're around. They're not interested in you living. Regardless of whether you live or die these people are obsessed with killing. I felt like I was living at the door of a slaughterhouse.[417]

CONCLUSION

The rise of National Islamism in Gaza, and its increasingly active role in formal education, originally offered Gazan youth a welcomed counterbalance to address the discursive weakness of PA narratives. Yet as the Class of 2000 quickly recognized, such counter-narratives are, in this case, merely a continuation of factional convenience whereby *legitimate knowledge* remains narrowly defined along partisan lines (Section A). True to form, after gaining control over Gaza Hamas promptly embraced functionalist tradition with its educational reforms, actively introducing *cultural violence* into the wider educational system (Section B) and its own civics curriculum prioritizing political aspirations over practical relevance (Section C). As with the PA's secular state-building narratives, however, the Class of 2000 remained largely unimpressed by these reforms as the updated narratives once again failed to explain the wider complexity of post-Oslo Gaza. Instead, the enduring *direct violence* from the school environment (Section D) and wider community (Section E) reemphasized the pedagogical importance of *hidden* and *outside curriculum* as students developed their political understandings. 'I'm not satisfied with the whole educational system,' shares Watan. 'Hamas tried to fill in the ideological gap in the PA curriculum by emphasizing the religious narration, which is a good thing, but they were wrong in doing it at the expense of more general knowledge.'[418] Hamoud agrees, voicing his concern that the Islamic-themed formal education 'does not bring out a religiously conservative person as much as it actually creates Daesh-like [brainwashed] people.'[419] While Hamas' educational reforms are, in many ways, more consistent with the ongoing conflict in Gaza, its failure to demonstrate wider relevance to the Class of 2000 once again underscores the limits facing functionalist educational tradition amidst contemporary conflict. Or put another way, just as the PA was unsuccessful in reducing support for violence, so too was Hamas in cultivating militancy on its own partisan terms.

[417] Field interview with WR204 (2014).
[418] Field interview with MR113 (2014).
[419] Daesh, whose followers were later described as 'brainwashed,' per field interview with MR104 (2014).

CHAPTER FIVE – ASSESSING IMPACT AND UNDERSTANDINGS

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INTRODUCTION

As established, schooling in conflict zones is often a far more contentious process than the simple socialization and skill-building commonly associated with the 'positive face' of formal education. For over a century repressive attempts to appropriate Palestinian schooling have routinely been made to promote partisan agendas at the expense of wider awareness and student empowerment. Prescribing one version of *legitimate knowledge* to rationalize a context like Gaza, however, is rife with questions as competing explanations and wider events actively contest it. This intuitive dynamic helps explain youthful curiosity consistently challenging such limiting narratives, and why assuming the Class of 2000 would embrace nonviolent explanations of the surrounding conflict was always a questionable proposition. While the post-Oslo educational system may have subsequently been developed to serve as the latest 'cornerstone' for creating a more pacified society, student skepticism interpreting the surrounding conflict complicated such lofty ideals.[420]

Building from the qualitative insights outlined in Chapters Three and Four, this chapter subsequently analyzes the research question in greater depth. Specifically, was formal education in post-Oslo Gaza unsuccessful in reducing support for violence, and if so, *why*? To resolve the question, this analysis embraces the tangible partisan goals underpinning the more general aim of mitigating violence within the case study. Over the near-term, these objectives include narrowing formal curriculum away from incitement and promoting more passive perspectives within an expanded educational system (Section A). Yet in acknowledging that peacebuilding is fundamentally an ongoing process, the success of longer-term stakeholder goals including promoting mutual understanding and confronting radicalization will also be measured (Section B). Beyond answering these initial questions, this chapter will then assess the more nuanced question of why support for nonviolence faded over time. This includes reviewing PA curriculum against relevant technical standards as it attempted to promote mutual understanding (Section C) and the wider pedagogical influences driving radicalization (Section D). In doing so, this chapter will underscore that support for violence is largely determined beyond school walls, and in contradicting such wider influences, the PA's partisan programming often merely provoked further anger.

A. NEAR-TERM SUCCESS

As outlined throughout earlier chapters, formal schooling is often an inherently political endeavor, with educational programming routinely shaped at the highest levels around partisan criteria. For instance, while the larger aspiration of post-Oslo programming was to deliver 'peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples,' the specific educational goals purportedly supporting this ambition instead highlight the prioritization of more immediate political aims (Article XX11, Oslo II 1995). For the Palestinian Authority and its principal partner USAID these objectives are subsequently framed as near and long-term, with the near-term encompassing the first decade of peacebuilding curriculum presented from 2000 to 2009. The most relevant goals for educational programming to mitigate support for violence over this initial phase, as documented in the contextual overview, are twofold: refraining from including incitement in PA curriculum and supporting the continued viability of the peace process as led by its principal stakeholders.

[420] Developmental Principle No. 3 of the PA Ministry of Education's Five Year Plan (Palestinian MoEHE 2000).

More specifically, the first near-term objective of the Oslo Accords, as endorsed by both the Palestinian Authority and the United States government, stipulates that PA formal education 'abstains from incitement, including hostile propaganda' and that its curriculum 'refrain from the introduction of any motifs that could adversely affect the process of reconciliation.'[421] As underscored, external stakeholders applied considerable pressure on the PA to ensure that national narratives or descriptions of the conflict excluded any *cultural violence* that could be associated with incitement.[422] Acknowledging the arguable success of such coercion, there is little to suggest that its textbooks ultimately included any content that could reasonably be assumed to promote violence. As Adwan (2001), Brown (2001, 2007), Da'Na (2007), Moughrabi (2001), and Nicolai (2007) point out after reviewing early iterations of the curriculum, and as Adwan and Bar-Tal more recently conclude, examples of incitement in contemporary Palestinian textbooks are 'very rare,' with little to indicate 'hate education' (Adwan et al. 2014: 6; Da'Na 2007: 146-148).[423] Summarizing the issue, Brown states simply that the inaugural PA curriculum 'does not incite hatred, violence and anti-Semitism' (2001: 1).

Reinforcing such findings, this research similarly observes nothing within PA textbooks that could be expected to incite violence. Critical discourse analysis of six semesters of Palestinian history and student feedback in Chapter Three both consistently underscore the prosaic nature of post-Oslo curriculum, with no instance cited that could be categorized as incitement or hostile propaganda adversely affecting reconciliation. Instead, this inquiry highlights what appears to be a deliberate strategy throughout the inaugural curriculum to avoid provocation, including de-emphasizing past trauma and neglecting any contentious issue that was yet to be addressed within the Oslo Accords. This approach is best embodied by PA curriculum never explicitly attributing a Palestinian death to Israeli forces within any of its textbooks.[424] As Orub explains, the curriculum 'spoke about everything except historical Palestine and modern politics.' Instead she describes encountering '20,000 pages' exclusively promoting 'peace and resolutions.' Like most students, however, she later clarifies that 'of course all of it was a stupid lie as you find yourself in the middle of a war.'[425] Technically, however, the inaugural Palestinian curriculum indeed avoids the *cultural violence* of incitement – including 'hostile propaganda' or any 'motifs that could adversely affect the process of reconciliation.' [426]

The second relevant near-term goal, as outlined in the Oslo Accords and reinforced in stakeholder communications, concerns whether educational programming contributes to 'peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples' through encouraging the 'continued viability' of the peace process and the centrality of its principal stakeholders.[427] Assessing such aims is relatively straightforward over the near-

[421] Article XX11, Oslo II (1995).

[422] B Atwood 2019, personal communication; E Abington 2019, personal communication. *See also* Brown (2003) and Moughrabi (2001).

[423] Notably, the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, which sponsored the Adwan and Bar-Tal's 2013 study, disavowed it after its release – underscoring the considerable political pressure surrounding the issue of Palestinian incitement (Zeveloff and Jeffay 2013).

[424] As discussed in Chapter Three, PA history books include vague and isolated references to assassinated Palestinian leaders, which clearly appear intended to highlight their political legacy, while focusing little attention on how they were killed and by whom.

[425] Field interview with WR211 (2014).

[426] Article XX11, Oslo II (1995).

[427] Article XX11, Oslo II (1995); Roy 1996: 59. As recounted during the drafting of the Oslo Accords, educational programming should support 'traditional approaches' that reinforce the central role of both the Palestinian Authority and the United States government within the peace process and the political sphere in general (N Hovsepian 2015, personal communication; Roy 1996).

term, with the development of a nationally-managed school system being a notable achievement of the post-Oslo era and widely welcomed by Gazan society. As stated, the years paralleling the rollout of the inaugural curriculum were painful to many Palestinians, with the Second *Intifada* giving way to further conflict and widespread economic stagnation. Alternatively, the establishment of a purportedly sovereign educational system over the early years of the peace process was widely touted as the 'major achievement' of the post-Oslo era (Nicolai 2007: 83), with then-Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad celebrating the education sector as 'successfully exceeding' expectations (quoted in Sama 2012). Examples commonly cited to reinforce such claims include there being twice as many schools and three times as many teachers when the Class of 2000 graduated secondary school as compared to pre-Oslo Gaza.[428] This institutional growth subsequently accommodated a near-doubling of student enrollment over the same timeframe, helping increase average schooling in Gaza from nine years in 2000 to almost 11 by 2012.[429] The expansion of basic and secondary education further supported higher education, with 40,734 students graduating from Palestinian universities in 2016 as compared to 3,032 at the start of the Oslo Accords (PCBS 2020).[430] In further emphasizing that 'every one of its schools boasts a Palestinian flag flying, and every blackboard had nationalist slogan,' the PA was finally able to legitimize its ongoing state-building efforts with tangible results that touched nearly every family in Gaza.[431] As Unicef's then-education lead in Gaza further clarifies, 'What else could the PA possibly show off?!'[432]

The influence of the PA's post-Oslo educational rollout is further supported by interviewee reflections acknowledging the early significance many young people associated with formal schooling. This can be attributed to both the novelty of a new national educational system, which many students initially 'loved' and were 'excited for,' as well as the enduringly privileged place Palestinian society traditionally associates with formal education.[433] Falastine recalls the feelings of many young Gazans, emphasizing 'As a kid I thought education and curriculum is interconnected with my future… It's just important. You can't fail.'[434] Shireena, a Gazan teacher, reinforces such commitment, underscoring, 'Education is traditionally the only thing that can't be taken away from Palestinians. Of course students are expected to take it very seriously when they're young.'[435] Such reverence, even if ultimately fleeting, emphasizes the unique positioning formal education initially held over the near-term, supporting both the PA and the early viability of the peace process it was promoting.

As outlined, formal education played a meaningful role promoting peace in Gaza over the near-term not merely by avoiding the *cultural violence* of incitement but furthermore by bolstering the legitimacy of the PA's state-building efforts at a time when there was little else to celebrate. While the Oslo Accords initially outlined an interim five-year window for negotiations, the inability to make progress on outstanding

[428] In 1994 there were 3,367 governmental teachers and 338 schools in Gaza, while by 2012 those number had risen to 9,950 and 688 respectively (PCBS 2019a, 2019b).
[429] Enrollment in basic and secondary education in Gaza rose from 234,921 in 1994 to 460,784 in 2012 (PCBS 2019c). Mean years of schooling for Gazans increased from 9.14 in 2000 to 10.82 in 2012 (PCBS 2019d).
[430] In comparison, the per capita percentage of Palestinians awarded associate and bachelor degrees in Gaza and the West Bank in the latter years of the post-Oslo process is higher than the U.S. and many other developed countries (PCBS 2019c; NCES 2015).
[431] Palestinian MoEHE 2001: 22, as referenced in Nicolai (2007: 92). Prior to the Oslo Accords, nationalist symbols were routinely prohibited throughout Gaza and the West Bank, including in schools where such nationalism was routinely deemed a 'threat to security' (Hovsepian 2009: 98).
[432] Field interview with M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist (2013).
[433] Field interview with MG115 (2014), reinforced by general focus group content (2014).
[434] Field interview with WR203 (2014).
[435] Field interview with SI205 (2014).

issues resulted in the peace process continuing well beyond the May 1999 deadline – an extension that arguably would have been even more challenging without the reassurance of pro-peace narratives being taught in newly-built schools for outsiders and Gazans, respectively. Post-Oslo educational programming consequently achieved two of its stated goals mitigating student support for violence by avoiding direct curricular incitement and helping maintain the viability of the peace process over the near-term. And while these partisan objectives are far more modest than the initial fanfare first suggested, they nonetheless highlight the functionalist potential of formal education to engage students amidst conflict. As student interviewees routinely emphasized, there was a real 'excitement to go to school' and an 'excitement to learn' amongst Gazan students in the early days.[436]

B. LONG-TERM FAILURE

While the PA and its institutional partners were able to demonstrate influence and achieve results within the near-term, Oslo stakeholders faced considerably more challenges over subsequent years as Gazan students increasingly engaged with alternative perspectives that challenged their preferred narratives. This divergence is reinforced by clarifying that, in this case study, the near-term coincided with the Class of 2000 attending elementary school (first through sixth grades) and prep school (seventh through ninth grades). As Gazan students would not have been exposed to more substantive secondary school curriculum and the wider experiences that often accompany adolescence over this preliminary phase, it is essential to also appreciate their perspectives as they mature politically. While notionally open-ended, initially framing the longer-term from 2010-2015 is especially relevant to the research question as additional stakeholder goals, including fostering mutual understanding and mitigating radicalization, fundamentally take place within the wider critical awareness of secondary school.[437] Consequently, it is important to review how functionalist approaches, so influential in achieving partisan goals over the near-term, often wane over time as students navigate increasingly complex perspectives amidst conflict.

The primary stakeholder objectives situated over the longer-term include Palestinian educational programming fostering mutual understanding, as well as mitigating radicalization.[438] And while employing nebulous concepts like 'tolerance' and 'radicalization' is often straightforward to politicians and policymakers operating at a distance, both achieving and evaluating such objectives on the ground is a more complex endeavor. For instance, an original underlying tenet of the Oslo Accords was that educational programming 'fosters mutual understanding and tolerance' between Palestinians and Israelis.[439] Yet this was not reinforced with any specific metrics or strategic plan. As detailed in earlier chapters, educational programming was 'untethered' from any organized strategy and instead largely subordinated to political priorities (USAID 2016a: 16; Roy 1996). Acknowledging this technical weakness, one useful approach to begin assessing the success of cultivating tolerance is by framing qualitative insights from earlier chapters against quantitative markers of how Gazan youth regard empathy and outsiders. For example, as the Class of 2000 was completing its secondary education the World Values Survey highlights nearly nine out of 10 Gazan youth, aged 15-24, believing it is important to 'help people,' while eight out of 10 similarly cite tolerance and respect for others as being important qualities to

[436] General focus group content from November 2014.
[437] Within cognitive development research, while younger ages (7-9) are important for developing perceptions of race and social class, secondary school often has a greater impact on wider understandings of history compared to both earlier and later in life (Oesterreich et al. 1995: 196-197; Devine-Wright 2003: 13).
[438] Article XX11, Oslo II (1995) and USGPO 1993a: 82-3.
[439] Article XX11, Oslo II (1995).

celebrate in young people.[440] This promising insight is further reinforced by the majority of Gazan youth emphasizing that nonviolent pathways are preferred, with economic growth cited as the most important priority for Palestine by three times as many respondents as those youth preferring to strengthen military capabilities.[441] These benign aspirations are additionally supported by 84% of young people emphasizing their desire to live in secure surroundings and 'avoid anything that might be dangerous.'[442] On its face, post-Oslo youth appear to prioritize tolerance over terror, per se, which consequently suggests progress towards longer-term educational objectives including mutual understanding.

As outlined in Chapters Three and Four, however, such underlying aspirations do not often equate to specific political understandings. Complicating the issue are deep-seated fears forged at the local level, with polling citing half of Gazan youth also being anxious over upcoming attacks, and two out of three living in fear of the next war.[443] Looking closer at this apprehension, disturbing trends emerge with direct relevance to the promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding. One notable concern is how this larger fear of violence is unsettling Gazan youth and helping manifest a profound mistrust in everyone except those closest to them. For example, as the Class of 2000 was finishing high school and entering post-secondary life, only one-in-five respondents thought people can generally be trusted, with 69.9% of Gazan youth explaining that they need to be 'very careful' relying on others.[444] This issue is especially pronounced towards outsiders, including eight out of 10 youth not trusting people from other countries and nearly nine out of 10 (88.2%) suspicious of anyone identifying with other religions. Underscoring this concern, both of these metrics are trending higher for post-Oslo students than older generations not educated under PA curriculum.[445] Such misgivings cast further doubt not only on formal curriculum's ability to shape understandings amidst conflict, but also the lessons Gazan youth are ultimately learning. As Meera replies when asked what she and her fellow students thought about the Holocaust and other instances of Jewish adversity throughout history, her reply was absolute: 'Whatever happened to them, they deserved it.'[446] This condemnation was not isolated, with Eman admitting she 'doesn't have a problem if we wipe them off the face of the earth,' while Ramy simply asks, 'What's not to hate?'[447] To state the obvious, the PA's inaugural curriculum was not wholly successful in cultivating mutual understanding and tolerance amongst the Class of 2000 over the longer-term.

The second stakeholder goal, also based over the longer-term, was to mitigate radicalization amongst Gazan youth. And like cultivating mutual understanding, this latter objective and its evaluation were extremely ambiguous, with then-Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East Edward Djerejian planning to 'attack the root causes of terrorism,' which then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Toni Verstandig clarifies includes combating radicalization as the underlying priority of post-Oslo educational programming (quoted in USGPO 1993a: 82-3).[448] Under most standard circumstances, assessing such a vague objective is 'not easy,' yet in Gaza it is contextually even more challenging (El-Said 2015: 92). This includes even defining who is a 'radical,' as 70% of territory's residents traditionally belong to active militant groups or are associated with a faction that only renounced political violence under considerable

[440] Inglehart et al. 2014: V16
[441] Inglehart et al. 2014: V140, V60
[442] Inglehart et al. 2014: V72
[443] Inglehart et al. 2014: V185, V184, V183
[444] Inglehart et al. 2014: V24
[445] Inglehart et al. 2014: V107, V106
[446] Field interview with WR205 (2014).
[447] Field interviews with WR204 and MR111 (2014).
[448] T Verstandig 2019, personal communication.

pressure.[449] Consequently, comparing youth and their political views against wider orthodoxy elucidates little within this context.[450] Instead, this analysis begins with a more simplistic characterization – as embraced by Oslo stakeholders – that radicalization is primarily defined through one's support for political violence.[451] In turn, it is useful to highlight that while formal schooling expanded dramatically in post-Oslo Gaza, support for violence failed to decline. For example, at the outset of the Oslo Accords 41.2% of Palestinians 18-22 years old endorsed armed resistance against Israel (PCPSR 1994).[452] This was largely accepted within functionalist thinking, however, as this preceding generation both grew up amidst the violence of the First *intifada* and, most notably, was educated under vitriolic and often antisemitic regional curricula.[453] More disruptive, however, is the dramatic rise in support for political violence amongst students educated exclusively within post-Oslo schooling. This includes 39 of 41 student interviewees from the Class of 2000 endorsing armed resistance against Israel. These unsolicited views, offered by 95% of respondents within this smaller qualitative case study, nonetheless correspond with the wider 97% of contemporary Gazan youth who similarly categorized resistance as legitimate when surveyed by local civil society.[454] Underscoring this indictment against PA peacebuilding curriculum is the further realization that support for violence, being especially high amongst post-Oslo students, is of less significance to the wider community. When including non-students in contemporary polling support for armed resistance amongst Gazans drops by nearly half (52.9-56.7%), suggesting that the PA's formal curriculum played an active role in actually *promoting* violence (PCPSR 2012, 2013, 2015). As Eman emphasizes her enthusiasm for political violence after twelve years studying the PA's nonviolent curriculum, 'Can you imagine watching rockets flying from Gaza through the sky and then looking at the TV and see them falling all while there are a bunch of reporters covering the incident? That scene? It's now one of the happiest things in life.'[455]

While student affirmations and complementary polling cast doubt on formal schooling's unilateral ability to prevent radicalization, it is also useful to consult with relevant experts most familiar with the Gazan context. This includes Dr. Basem Naim, a senior member of Hamas' political bureau and former government minister who managed several agencies in Gaza, including the Ministry of Youth and Sport. When asked to assess whether the PA's educational programming mitigated radicalization amongst Gazan youth, he countered bluntly that 'It's impact is zero.'[456] The resident expert on radicalization, however, is Abu Mohamed, a high-level Hamas official responsible for managing Internal Security in Gaza and widely acknowledged to both track and recruit Palestinian youth oriented towards violence. 'Look around,' Abu Mohamed commands during an interview. 'Did they manage to stop the Palestinian people from fighting

[449] As of 2014, there were in excess of 600,000 Gazans that belonged to political organizations that have been designated as terrorist groups by the U.S. government, in addition to a further 500,000 who were members of militant groups that only reluctantly renounced violence (PCPSR 2013). *See* Public Notice 2612 in the U.S. Federal Register (USGPO 1997).

[450] *See* Granovetter (1978) for threshold metrics.

[451] *See* Vidino (2010) and White House (2011) highlighting the centrality of violence within U.S. policy towards radicalization.

[452] Pre-Oslo survey respondents ranged between 18-22 years-old, roughly comparable in age to the Class of 2000 at the time of their interviews (PCPSR 1994).

[453] As stated, prior to the fall of 2000 students and Gaza and the West Bank were educated with Egyptian and Jordanian textbooks, respectively.

[454] Of youth polled, 76% supported various forms of armed resistance, while a further 21% supported public resistance. Only 3% of youth polled supported negotiations alone (Sharek 2013: 60).

[455] Field interview with WR204 (2014).

[456] B Naim 2023, personal communication.

for their lands and rights, resisting the occupation? This is what they call 'radicalization.' Did we stop? Of course not. We are even stronger and better positioned now than we were 25 years ago.'[457]

While Gaza witnessed many educational accomplishments throughout the post-Oslo era, reviewing specific stakeholder objectives over time highlights more nuanced results. Acknowledged successes include avoiding incitement within the inaugural curriculum and rapidly expanding the scale of the educational system in Gaza. And while both functional achievements were meaningful to external and local audiences respectively over the near-term, the PA and its partners did not achieve their larger ongoing goal of mitigating support for violence. Instead of cultivating mutual understanding and combatting radicalization over the longer-term in Gaza, the PA's educational programming is instead associated with Gazan students being more apprehensive towards outsiders and increasingly supporting political violence. In turn, the focus of this analysis will orient itself less towards whether formal education successfully reduced support for violence – as it didn't – but instead, *why*? This question will be addressed at length over the following sections.

C. WHY MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING FAILED

While the PA's inaugural educational system achieved many accomplishments over its initial 15-year phase, it is evident that cultivating mutual understanding amongst post-Oslo students was not one of them. From the 70% of Gazan youth skeptical of relying on others, to the 80% not trusting of outsiders, to nearly 90% being suspicious of people identifying with other religions, the question then becomes why.[458] Building from insights presented within earlier chapters, this research continues to establish that PA schooling failed to achieve this stakeholder goal largely due to its overreliance on functionalist traditions, while simultaneously neglecting the complex pedagogical interplay taking place within the conflict. In revisiting the inability of PA curriculum to cultivate mutual understanding, this section will take on a more systematic review of the failure. This includes reiterating that the limitations of partisan curriculum were clearly understood by Oslo representatives, as well as plainly evident when reviewed through peace education, critical peace education, and more commonplace categorizations including indoctrination and propaganda. In doing so, why post-Oslo schooling failed to cultivate mutual understanding (and alienated youth towards violence) over the longer-term will be demonstrated.

As outlined in Chapters Two and Three, Oslo stakeholders were hardly ambiguous about their willingness to employ Palestinian schooling in support of their larger political goals. For the PA and the State Department, this comprised the promotion of a peace process that underscored the centrality of both stakeholders, while downplaying any competing perspectives. And while educational practitioners consistently advocate for acknowledging the wider complexities of conflict, there was little tolerance for such views within post-Oslo programming.[459] As Edward Abington, the 'point man' for the Oslo Accords underscores, the U.S. government actively 'pressed' Palestinian officials to ensure that formal curriculum excluded *any* provocative content, which complemented high-level PA preferences that 'traditional approaches' exclusively promoting its own factional perspectives be taught.[460] The result was an

[457] Field interview with SI207 (2023).
[458] Inglehart et al. 2014: V107, V106
[459] UNESCO advocates that 'the only way to adequately teach the Arab-Israeli conflict' is to teach different points of view to ensure, above all else, that students understand the complexity of the issue (2012: 49). This is complemented by 'Empowering students to think critically, teaching them to challenge ideas, construct rational thoughts and engage in meaningful debate' to counter violent extremism (De Silva 2017: 17).
[460] E Abington 2019, personal communication; N Hovsepian 2015, personal communication.

education system that exclusively defined *legitimate knowledge* around nonviolent state-building, while neglecting any viewpoint that complicated its narrative – including PA textbooks basically never mentioning a Palestinian being killed by an Israeli over the course of the then-50-year conflict. This obvious bias was appreciated by Oslo practitioners, from Ibrahim Abu Lughod founding the Curriculum Development Center to then-USAID Educational Officer Robert Davidson acknowledging that such a 'risk adverse policy' was merely relinquishing responsibility 'to explain to students the reality of living under an oppressive regime' to alternative perspectives (USAID 2004: 16). Yet as underscored throughout this research, such concerns were consistently 'ignored' as partisan stakeholders routinely chose political expedience in formalizing idealized narrations of an obviously complex and ongoing conflict (Hovsepian 2008: 171). As Mohammed reiterates the widely held view from students within the Class of 2000, 'There was no connection between the reality we lived and the educational topics the PA curriculum used to promote… And as we grew up, we were like "What is this stupid shit?"'[461]

PEACE EDUCATION

To analyze the significance of this disconnect, there are several more-formalized frameworks that help illustrate why such 'stupid shit' failed to cultivate wider mutual understanding within Gazan students. Traditionally, one of the most conventional approaches to promote peacebuilding is peace education studies, which aspires to provide students with the skills, values, attitudes, and behaviors needed to work towards comprehensive peace (Bajaj 2008; Harris and Morrison 2012; Reardon 1988; Reardon and Cabezudo 2002).[462] Building from his originally warning that conflict is fueled by nationalist 'flames of hatred and suspicion,' Dewey provides the foundation for peace education studies by instead urging that curriculum should present a more 'sympathetic understanding of the social situations of the present in which individuals share' (1923: 516; 1916: 217). As Wehrenfennig, Brunstetter, and Solomon reiterate, peace education remains fundamentally centered around moving away from delegitimization and towards tolerance (2015). This includes not merely avoiding the incitement traditionally associated with Dewey's 'flames of hatred,' but further building capacity for mutual understanding and tolerance through developing the skills and values to be open and respectful to different cultures (1923: 516; Kester 2008; Reardon 1988).

As highlighted in Chapters Two and Three, cultivating mutual understanding and tolerance amidst active conflict is, for numerous reasons, quite challenging. To moderate the difficulty of this approach, peace education practice routinely attempts to minimize the scale of such differences by alternatively emphasizing mutual aspirations. Yet identifying shared interests between rival combatants is often very difficult. One conventional solution routinely prescribed by outside stakeholders is to highlight the shared hopes of wider humanity, with seminal texts habitually promoting 'global peace' and 'international understanding' (Boulding 1988; Galtung and Fischer 2013; Reardon 1988). This approach is often framed more specifically as 'universality,' whereby curriculum reinforces the common heritage of humanity and 'the absolute necessity to create a unified and peaceful world within this framework of oneness and diversity without resort to conflict and violence' (OSCE 2009: 49). The more abstract and idealized focus on universal equality, inclusion, and respect has subsequently become a conventional mainstay within peace education practice and offers general relevance to assessing the limitations of the PA's efforts to

[461] Field interview with MR112 (2014).

[462] Citizenship education, often framed as increasing the feeling of political efficacy in one's own political power, i.e. 'I can make a difference,' offers little direct relevance to increasing mutual understanding (Schulz el al. 2008; Van der Ploeg and Guérin 2016: 11).

mitigate student support for violence in Gaza (Fountain 1999; Harris and Morrison 2012; Lum 2013; Reardon 1988).

With its emphasis on the nonviolent platitudes of state-building, the PA's inaugural curriculum in many ways stays true to the centrality of 'global peace' within peace education, while similarly avoiding the nationalist provocation that Dewey originally cautions against. Yet in avoiding any potential forms of incitement and instead promoting a more generic form of peace, students from the Class of 2000 routinely express frustration at the PA curriculum largely neglecting their local contexts (and notably sidestepping both Palestinian and Israeli experiences).[463] As Orub describes her weariness with nonviolent state-building narratives in school, 'I used to feel sad when I'd learn about history. Learning it did not generate any revolution inside of me,' as the curriculum 'was extremely dry and did not correspond with the reality that we lived at any level.'[464] Janine reinforces this critique, arguing, 'There was no connection between the reality we lived and the educational topics the curriculum used to promote. It was if there were two separate worlds. Classes in the school were detached and out of context.'[465] Or put more succinctly, 'It isn't a real national curriculum,' describes one former teacher, with her student, Medo, adding that the PA curriculum was 'more like kid's stories.'[466]

Frustration amongst the Class of 2000 with their aspirational peacebuilding curriculum having 'nothing to do with anything' is a complaint increasing discussed across peace education scholarship.[467] While students shared few criticisms against avoiding *cultural violence* or encouraging empathy within a curriculum, the greater concern, as Dewey also emphasizes, arises when such neutral approaches are featured at the expense of the 'actual realities of contemporary life' (1958: 4). As Dewey argues, for schooling to be successful in cultivating peace, it must also add to 'the meaning of experience,' while neglecting 'the connections and continuities of the activities in which we are engaged' will lead in the opposing direction (1938: 76-7).[468] This pervasive shortcoming is underscored by scholarly critiques highlighting a practical tendency to pre-design educational materials irrespective of the local context in concert with the additional precaution of omitting any content that might be deemed antagonistic (Hart 2011).[469] Recognizing that such peacebuilding curriculum is removed from the 'actual realities' of conflict, it is of little surprise that peace education practice has traditionally demonstrated little empirical impact in confronting the general rise in violence over recent decades (Lister et al. 2001; Whiteley 2005; Kiwan 2008).[470] As Bajaj and Hantzopoulos acknowledge, though often well intentioned, idealistic peace education programming often doesn't work out as planned (2016). Far from engaging the more challenging *direct* and *indirect violence* Galtung outlines as essential to cultivating lasting *positive peace*,

[463] As discussed in Chapter Three, PA curriculum was extremely narrow, eschewing large swaths of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In speaking with Gazan students throughout this inquiry not one shared something they had learned about Israel from the PA's formal curriculum.
[464] Field interview with WR212 (2014).
[465] Field interview with WR208 (2014).
[466] Field interview with M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist and MR126 (2014).
[467] Field interview with MR124 (2014).
[468] While peace education curricula routinely emphasizes the universal principles of peace, it does at times also suggest that implementation is context specific. This includes the advice that peace education programming be further tailored around each community's 'unique characteristics, needs, and challenges' (Danesh 2011: 59).
[469] This includes criticism of citizenship education routinely repressing any content that might be deemed antagonistic (Börhaug 2005; Pérez Expósito 2014; Ruitenberg 2010, 2011; Stitzlein 2015; Straume 2016).
[470] As stated, the number of armed conflicts has steadily increased since both peace studies and peace education became academic disciplines in the post-WWII era, with 61 state-based conflicts taking place in 2024 – a record high (PRIO 2025; UCDP 2025).

conventional peace education programming routinely neglects the fundamental concerns facing conflicted communities – and is unsuited to either cultivate or accurately assess the promotion of mutual understanding within the Gazan context (1969).

CRITICAL PEACE EDUCATION

Building from such developing criticism and Dewey's earlier emphasis on engaging the 'actual realities' students face, critical peace education emerged as a conceptual framework for problematizing these concerns (Dewey 1958: 4).[471] First advanced by Wulf (1974), critical peace education importantly highlights the significance of *direct* and *indirect violence*, be they based in discourse, structures, or social action (Tirfonas and Wright 2012). Within this focus is the further relevance of critical peace education rejecting the more universalized aspirations common throughout conventional peacebuilding curriculum, while instead prioritizing how local perceptions, often shaped by violence, may influence perspectives on peace (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2021). By underscoring the importance of 'local, historicized knowledge to inform strategies,' critical peace education echoes Freire's assertion that for schooling to be *authentic* it must be 'concerned with reality' and not limited to theoretical isolation (Bajaj 2008: 140; Freire 1970: 64). In recalling that one Gazan student was killed weekly, on average, over the sixteen-year educational tenure of the Class of 2000, the violent nature of Gaza's local 'reality' is obviously very meaningful.[472] As Salomon reinforces this concern, to be 'effective' in contexts like Israel and Palestine peacebuilding curriculum must critically engage with the wider context, including *direct violence* (2002: 9).[473]

A second core theme of critical peace education is the importance of engaging with larger structural issues affecting students (Bajaj 2015; Bajaj and Brantmeier 2011).[474] This emphasis includes Wintersteiner arguing that for peacebuilding education to be effective, it must move beyond exclusive ideologies and instead address social structures that often perpetuate *indirect violence* (2015). Highlighting the relevance of this assertion is the very composition of the Oslo Accords, and its ongoing influence on PA schooling. For instance, not only does Israel have the codified right to block any changes to the Palestinian educational system – an unreciprocated amenity – but the PA also willingly prioritizes Israeli preferences over domestic concerns.[475] Underscoring this structural dynamic, President Abbas once promised an

[471] Ayers offers a relevant list of more general pedagogical criteria to better appreciate if classroom experiences are active enough to keep pace with a rapidly changing world, including 'Is the work linked to student questions or interests' and 'are problems within the classroom and the larger community, part of student consciousness?' 'Are there opportunities for discovery and surprise? Are students actively engaged with primary sources and hands–on materials? Is productive work going on? Is the work linked to student questions or interests? Are problems within the classroom and the larger community, part of student consciousness? Is my work in the classroom pursued to its far limits?' (1993: 94-96).

[472] PCBS 2019c. As stated, between September 29th, 2000 and April 30th, 2015, 8,208 Gazans were killed in Gaza by both Israelis and Palestinians. This includes 1,047 Gazan minors killed by Israeli forces – over one per week, on average, for 16 years (while four Israeli minors were killed by Gazans over the same timeframe) (Btselem 2024a).

[473] Educationalists generally agree that context matters (Paulson 2011: 179). For further perspectives underscoring the importance of local contextualization within civics and peacebuilding curriculum, *see also* Bajaj (2008), Dewey (1938), Freire (1970), Lauritzen and Nodeland (2017), Salomon and Nevo (2002), Vasquez (1976), Wessells (2013), Schubert (1981, 1986), Schultz and Baricovitch (2010), Wibben and Donahoe (2020), and Zembylas and Bekerman (2013).

[474] Curiously, even the 'culture of peace,' as defined by the United Nations, acknowledges the importance of engaging the structural root causes of violence – an aspect often neglected by peace education practice even when citing the definition as a basis for peacebuilding action (United Nations General Assembly 1999).

[475] Per Article VII, Point Five of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, any changes to the Palestinian educational system must be submitted to the relevant Israeli authorities for review. And only if

audience of Jewish-Israeli students that he would change 'everything' they didn't like in the PA curriculum – an offer he has never made to Palestinian students actually using it (quoted in Omar 2014). As critiqued by Unicef's then-Gaza Educational Specialist, the underlying power dynamics governing the Palestinian educational system are 'chickenshit,' further describing the PA's proclaimed autonomy over its own schooling as 'an exercise in self-deception.'[476] Yet as discussed in Chapters Three and Four, Palestinian educators also routinely exercised structural authority over students. As Falastine describes it, 'You feel as if there is always a hierarchy over you.'[477] And for those who challenge that authority, or correct a teacher, or express a fraction of creativity, or even just wear red on Valentine's Day, 'it would be as if they were cursed by God. And I know because I was cursed by God.' As Anas describes the *falaga* used to enforce such hierarchy, it's basically teachers 'finding a reason to beat you.'[478] To more fully assess the impact of peacebuilding education amidst conflict it is imperative to also consider the significance of such structural dynamics that represent and often perpetuate *indirect (structural) violence*.

As argued by critical peace education, it is only by engaging the *direct* and *indirect violence* of conflict within its curriculum that peacebuilding programming has the greatest likelihood to achieve the 'solidarity and tolerance' envisioned within the Oslo Accords (Wehrenfennig et al. 2015). Yet as outlined in Chapter Three, while PA textbooks arguably embrace nonviolent solutions in advocating for state-building, no other critical peace education criteria are satisfied during this review. As repeatedly underscored by the Class of 2000, the PA's nonviolent state-building narratives largely neglect to critically engage with the 'actual realities of contemporary life' (Dewey 1958: 4). This notably includes the curriculum ignoring *direct violence* within the conflict, amongst other relevant local experiences. 'I didn't enjoy school because school is detached from reality,' emphasizes Mamoosh. 'There was a massive gap between textbooks and real life. For example, civic education was teaching human rights, humanity, and peace in a time when the *Intifada* was on fire.'[479] Amar reinforces this point, recalling 'There is a huge gap between what we learn in school and reality. What I see in reality is assassinations and war.'[480] But beyond omitting such *direct violence*, students were quick to highlight the curriculum's further connection to *structural violence* underlying the ongoing conflict. As Orub angrily reflects, 'Are they fooling us?... So why don't you talk in *your* national curriculum about the shit happening in reality and the PA failure in resolving the conflict?'[481] Fellow student Abu Bashir answers this question, contending that 'The educational process in Palestine was designed by donor countries... they are the reason behind its weakness.' Continuing his critique against the *structural violence* of the Oslo Accords, he simply frames the larger post-Oslo dynamic as 'international pimping.'[482]

While acknowledging such critiques is rare, a further hallmark of critical peace education is appreciating the importance of empirical appraisal (Bajaj 2015; Bajaj and Brantmeier 2011). As Zembylas and Bekerman argue, critical review is essential to help peacebuilding curriculum avoid becoming 'part of the problem it is trying to solve' (2013: 198). Gazan students, as embodied by the Class of 2000, are generally very vocal on such matters and are perfectly willing to facilitate such evaluation. Yet as underscored, Oslo

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'at the end of the thirty-day period Israel has not communicated any opposition concerning the proposed legislation, such legislation shall enter into force' (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1994).

[476] 'It wasn't a real national curriculum,' described M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist, categorizing any such arrangement that lacks absolute power to control national curriculum as inherently 'chickenshit' (2013).

[477] Field interview with WR203 (2014).

[478] Field interview with MG112 (2014).

[479] Field interview with MG110 (2014).

[480] Field interview with MR124 (2014).

[481] Field interview with WR212 (2014).

[482] Field interview with MR116 (2014).

stakeholders habitually avoid engaging directly with Palestinian students and their experiences to keep evaluations 'more positive.'[483] As a result, by uncritically upholding functionalist assumptions that ground the PA's educational programming, Palestine's inaugural curriculum fails a further criterion of critical peace education and, as Gur Ze'ev cautions, unintentionally promotes further violence (2011).[484]

INDOCTRINATION

While appreciating that PA educational programming fails to satisfy the scholarly criteria of critical peace education is helpful in highlighting its irrelevance to post-Oslo Gaza, to underscore why so many students ultimately rejected mutual understanding it is also useful to underscore the extent of its weakness against more common critiques. For instance, one persistent explanation for Gazan students not embracing peace is because Palestinian schooling indoctrinates hateful beliefs. As then-U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton contended, the PA's 'textbooks don't give Palestinian children an education, they give them an indoctrination' (quoted in Lappin 2007).[485] Similar criticisms have routinely been levelled at Palestine's inaugural educational system throughout its implementation, often with little support and almost always in association with the promotion of violence. Yet in considering the PA curriculum's failure to satisfy critical peace education's criteria for presenting a balanced perspective, notably including the absence of *direct* and *indirect violence,* the standard for indoctrination deserves renewed consideration. As highlighted by UNESCO, 'the only way to adequately teach the Arab-Israeli conflict' is to provide different points of view to ensure students understand the complexity of the issue for diverging stakeholders (2012: 49). Lacking such content, the closest Palestinian curriculum comes to fostering mutual understanding is decreeing – at length – that peace, diplomacy, and state-building are the strongest path forward for Palestine. Such arguments are, however, often highly biased towards promoting the Palestinian Authority rather than cultivating wider understanding as envisioned by the Accords. As Esraq from the Class of 2000 complains, 'The textbooks always tend to 'beautify' the Palestinian Authority 'despite all the flaws … And this is why in the end students graduate from school without learning or understanding about politics.'[486] Terms including *tajeel* (misleading someone so they remain uneducated and more easily manipulated) and *musallamat* (taken for granted without discussion) are repeatedly lamented by student interviewees, including Bilal who remains frustrated that the educational system 'intentionally mislead us or under-educated us so we can be lead.'[487] 'Did I learn anything?,' Nehad reflects again. 'I don't think they gave me information to begin with. They taught us the Oslo Accords in a paragraph to memorize. They didn't teach us what it was all about. "Remember this to fill in the paper. Remember this to fill in the paper."'[488] In prioritizing rote partisan narratives, the PA not only fails to cultivate the skills that are essential to meaningfully debate peace, but ultimately frames its inaugural curriculum around teaching 'something that is true or universally accepted regardless of evidence to the contrary,' otherwise known as

[483] USAID's 2016 case study includes interviews with Ministry of Education officials, district officers, school principals, and teachers, as well as USAID and implementing partner staff (USAID 2016a: 1).
[484] For further perspectives on self-reflexivity within peace education, *see also* Bajaj (2008), Bajaj and Brantmeier (2011), Cremin (2016), Diaz-Soto (2005), Kester and Cremin (2017), Trifonas and Wright (2012), and Zembylas and Bekerman (2013).
[485] In a prepared statement to a Special Hearing of the United States Senate, Clinton, then a committee member on the U.S. Armed Services Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities overseeing terrorism, further claimed 'We are seeing children being indoctrinated to yearn for *shahada* — or martyrdom. And according to the evidence presented here, this is a clear strategy by the Palestinian Authority' (USGPO 2003: 54).
[486] Field interview with WR206 (2014).
[487] In Arabic the verb is '*tajheel*' means to intentionally teach someone wrong information or to make sure they're uneducated so they can be lead, per field interview with MR109 (2014).
[488] Field interview with WG201 (2014).

indoctrination (Arthur 2003: 37). Earlier criticism of PA textbooks indoctrinating Palestinian students is, in a paradoxical sense, technically correct. Yet instead of promoting an assumed allegiance to hate and violence, the rote curriculum 'closes the mind' around the inevitability of nonviolent state-building in what could most accurately be termed 'peace indoctrination.'[489]

PROPAGANDA

A second politically charged term of ongoing relevance to Palestinian schooling is propaganda. Like indoctrination, PA curriculum is routinely labeled as violent or antisemitic propaganda.[490] This concern goes back to the initial drafting of the Oslo Accords when avoiding 'hostile propaganda' that 'could adversely affect the process of reconciliation' was codified within the Accords.[491] Yet emphasis is traditionally placed almost exclusively on the term *hostile*, while *propaganda* is of lesser concern towards the promotion of mutual understanding. As discussed, the PA's focus on nonviolent state-building narratives successfully precludes incitement and other more blatant forms of *cultural violence* within the curriculum. Cultivating mutual understanding over the longer-term, however, arguably places additional significance on the role of propaganda, and its potential to erode trust in *all* narratives advocating for peace.

Formally defined as a 'massive orchestration of attractive conclusions packaged to conceal both their persuasive purpose and lack of sound supporting reasons,' propaganda holds obvious relevance to post-Oslo Palestinian educational practice (Sproule 1994: 8). With this concept often oversimplified as 'organized persuasion,' the distinction between persuasion and propaganda is a meaningful one (DeVito 1986: 239). Pratkanis and Turner disentangle the two approaches, arguing persuasion is based on 'debate, discussion, and careful consideration of options' to discover 'better solutions for complex problems,' while propaganda is more 'manipulation of the mob by the elite' (1996: 190-1). As outlined in Chapter Three, the abject lack of critical discussion within PA curriculum not only neglects educational best practice, but moreover fails to satisfy the criteria of 'careful consideration of options.' In further acknowledging the considerable political pressure applied to influence the development of the post-Oslo educational sector by 'elite' stakeholders in Chapter Two, the PA's inaugural curriculum is more accurately categorized as (off-white) propaganda.[492]

Designating the PA's state-building curriculum as peace indoctrination or propaganda alone does little to clarify its impact on cultivating mutual understanding, however. It is additionally important to assess the efficacy of educational programming to achieve its aims. As Thorton and Taithe note, the purpose of such efforts is 'to convince, to win over and to convert' (2000: 2-4). Qualter similarly emphasizes that for these narratives to be effective, they 'must be seen, remembered, understood, and acted upon,' which often involves being 'adapted to particular needs of the situation and the audience to which it is aimed' (1962: xii). Yet while the PA curriculum was often acknowledged, as documented throughout Chapter Three, its

[489] 'Closing the mind' is commonly used as an informal shorthand for describing indoctrination. As Taylor argues, indoctrination is 'a complex system of teaching in which actors with authority contribute to the production or reinforcement of closed-mindedness' (2016: 3).

[490] For example, Senator John Kennedy recently stated 'The Middle East will never experience peace until Palestinians stop teaching their kids to hate Israel, and American dollars should not fund this anti-Jewish propaganda' (Kennedy 2021: 1).

[491] Article XX11, Oslo II (1995).

[492] While all propaganda offers a one-sided presentation of an argument, 'white propaganda' truthfully states its origins. 'Grey propaganda' is ambiguous in origins and intent, while 'black propaganda,' alternatively, claims to be from a more favorable source to disguise its origins (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 16-26).

arguments were rarely acted upon in any meaningful capacity as the Class of 2000 largely deemed them irrelevant to the 'particular needs' of their situation. As Mohammed questions the relevance of the PA's nonviolent narratives he was taught in school amidst the wider ongoing violence in Gaza, 'State building, independence and peace… Really? They tried so hard to force us into absorbing what they wanted.'[493] Reinforcing this critique, former student Mahmoud clarifies, 'Generally I don't recall anything specific from the curriculum. There's no connection between me and it. It was detached from reality... This is why nothing sticks in your mind.'[494]

Further complicating efforts to cultivate mutual understanding and tolerance was the alienating nature of the biased curriculum: post-Oslo students not only failed to 'act upon' nonviolent state-building arguments, but members of the Class of 2000 were often deeply offended by what they saw as fundamentally flawed presentations of *legitimate knowledge*, resulting in many students being actively repelled against *any* nonviolent narratives. In reflecting on the larger theme of peacebuilding narratives, Mahmoud groups them all together as an 'abundant failure.'[495] Amar similarly criticizes such arguments as having 'nothing to do with anything. End of the line.'[496] While educational programming is, as previously noted, not exclusively responsible for the Class of 2000's support for political violence, patronizing students and discounting their perspectives did little to promote the more meaningful pedagogical discussions that are central to cultivating a more durable *positive peace* (Galtung 1969). As is well established within Developmental Psychology, denigrating understandings – especially those visceral lessons experienced amidst conflict – tends to reinforce them, making students more resistant to counterarguments and inhibiting meaningful dialogue.[497] Medo underscores this dynamic, emphasizing once again the widely held perspective that the PA's peacebuilding education is 'a fucking joke' – which is why 'an increasing number of young Palestinians have been challenging' such unrealistic narratives.[498]

Building from student insights and supplementary polling highlighting deep distrust amongst Gazan youth towards both outsiders and nonviolence, it is clear that Oslo stakeholders did not achieve their long-term goal of cultivating mutual understanding. Why this happened is rooted directly in the enduring functionalist assumption that political narratives can simply be prescribed. In prioritizing stakeholder concerns towards *cultural violence*, while neglecting the wider complexities of conflict, the PA blatantly disregarded the *direct* and *indirect (structural)* violence that remains central to the lived experiences of Gazan youth. As Bilal underscores, 'Just look at the number of murders and assaults on our rights... they do not feel us, why should be feel them?'[499] With its partisan curriculum subsequently viewed as peace indoctrination and 'condescending' propaganda, PA schooling not only failed to cultivate mutual understanding, but routinely alienated the very students it hoped to engage.[500]

[493] Field interview with MR112 (2014).
[494] Field interview with MR113(2014).
[495] Field interview with MR127 (2014).
[496] Field interview with MR124 (2014).
[497] *See* McGuire (1961) highlighting that to change an established opinion, 'attitude inoculation' is more successful with a weaker, diluted approach than a stronger, more robust argument.
[498] Field interview with MR126 (2014).
[499] Field interview with MR109 (2014).
[500] General focus group content from November 2014.

D. WHY 'RADICALIZATION' THRIVED

While a lack of curricular relevance compromised formal schooling's ability to promote mutual understanding, its partisan bias also emboldened independent learning that further compounded support for violence. Appreciating the nuance of this issue helps illuminate the final educational priority of Oslo stakeholders that young Palestinians not become radicalized to take violent *action* against peace. This implicit emphasis of post-Oslo educational programming was stated more explicitly by the State Department on the eve of the peace process. When pressed by the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee why the United States should fund the Oslo Accords then-Assistant Secretary of State Edward Djerejian emphasized such efforts will 'deter the growth of extremism' (quoted in USGPO 1993a: 83). This aspiration was further clarified by then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Toni Verstandig later explaining that combating radicalization was indeed an underlying priority of the peace process, and in particular post-Oslo educational programming.[501] Yet to untangle the cumulative relationship between education and radicalization in Gaza, it is important to follow not only the Class of 2000's alienation away from formal narratives, but further review why students found alternative perspectives to be of greater utility – and how these wider influences guided subsequent action.

While categorizing radicalization is traditionally a simplistic exercise in partisanship, surveying the pedagogical influences that drive it in Gaza requires greater objectivity.[502] Underscoring this necessity is 'cognitive radicalization' – routinely framed as a cumulative learning process involving numerous influences and phases.[503] One of the first factors grounding this process in post-Oslo Gaza is the reality that while the inaugural Palestinian curriculum disregards many contemporary pedagogical standards for effectively educating students about their surrounding conflict, its less partisan lessons did routinely empower students with the basic proficiencies to seek out their own answers.[504] As the Class of 2000 consistently acknowledges, while the PA curriculum is irredeemably biased on partisan matters, it does routinely promote the fundamental skills that facilitate wider learning. Hamoud frames the dynamic from his time in school, explaining 'Palestinian curriculum from a technical perspective is good. It builds the basics. But on other topics they're not objective.'[505] Meera similarly acknowledges that while she does not subscribe to textbook explanations of the conflict, her 'knowledge accumulation' from coursework including Arabic and English was helpful in honing her 'general intellect.'[506] As Ayah describes the elementary value of PA schooling, 'They essentially only taught me how to unlock the knot (*afek al-khatt*) – nothing more, nothing less.'[507] Building from the recurring acknowledgement that formal education merely provided the Class of 2000 with the basic skills to learn beyond the school setting, it is important to consider what happens as students seek their understandings elsewhere. As Amar emphasizes, 'Students need to learn how to search and understand any topic that comes to mind. Because otherwise

[501] T Verstandig 2019, personal communication.
[502] Classifying radicalization is often a highly subjective endeavor, frequently defined through prejudicial framing such as being labeled 'undemocratic.' *See* Sedgwick (2010).
[503] Compared to the often-cursory use of the term radicalization, assessing the cognitive pathways to violent extremism requires greater nuance incorporating multiple cumulative dynamics over time. For more information on cognitive radicalization, *see* McCauley and Moskalenko 2008.
[504] As outlined, educating students in contexts like Gaza requires teaching different points of view and critical thinking skills to both appreciate and navigate the complexity of conflict (UNESCO 2012; De Silva 2017).
[505] Field interview with MR104 (2014).
[506] Field interview with WR205 (2014).
[507] Field interview with WR211 (2014).

I don't see how we could learn anything' about the conflict, as in this regard 'our whole educational system is quite hopeless.'[508]

***CULTURAL VIOLENCE*?**

With the biased and often unpersuasive composition of PA curriculum driving student curiosity elsewhere, the conventional understanding is that Gazan youth will be merely 'taught to hate' somewhere else.[509] As then-Israeli Strategic Affairs Ministry Director-General Yossi Kuperwasser describes it, Gazan youth are 'relentlessly fed a rhetorical diet that includes the idolization of terrorists, the demonization of Jews, and the conviction that sooner or later Israel should cease to exist' (quoted in Harkov 2013). This includes the *cultural violence* of Hamas' 2013 supplementary civics texts (*tarbiyah wataniya*) and other formal counternarratives outlined in Chapter Four that deliberately contest the PA's nonviolent approaches to resolve the conflict. For example, Hamas' curricular emphasis on Israel's 'bloody massacre' of Muslims and framing the Palestinian Cause as a religious struggle against Zionism embody what Kuperwasser terms a 'blunter expression of a dangerous message of hate' that drives radicalization (quoted in Akram and Rudoren 2013).[510] Complementing Hamas' formal curriculum are informal narratives, including the 'Son of Hamas' Baha Yassin's Abu al-Ezz cartoon, imploring 'Stand up, West Bank. Protect your honor and your children.' To which the rape victim replies, '*Walah*, I would have loved to, but I don't have a permit' (Fig. 14). And while such provocative examples are convenient in highlighting the 'negative face' of education available both formally and informally in Gaza, as underscored in Chapter Four they also ultimately represent little pedagogical significance to local youth. 'Having different points of view is good,' reasons Mahmoud as he recalled his time in school. 'But they should not blind us from everything else around us.'[511] As Ayah further explains, while she's 'thankful' that such confrontational content presents a 'context that is consistent with the occupation we live within,' students still need to 'look elsewhere' to *fully* understand the conflict.[512]

Fig. 14. Informal counter-narratives challenging mutual understanding.[513]

[508] Field interview with MR124 (2014).
[509] For background on accusations that Palestinians are being 'taught to hate,' including from Israel's then-Permanent Representative to the United Nations Danny Danon citing examples not included in PA curriculum, *see* Mansour (2015).
[510] *National Education, Grade 10*, HMoEHE 2013b: 9; Omar 2014.
[511] Field interview with MR127 (2014).
[512] Field interview with WR211 (2014).
[513] Cartoon drawn by the 'Son of Hamas' Baha Yassin and published on Hamas-affiliated Ar-risalah newspaper's Twitter account.

PUBLIC PEDAGOGY

With Gazan students being largely unmoved by gratuitous incitement, understanding their cognitive radicalization towards violence requires more structured analysis. And while frameworks like critical peace education usefully highlight how an exclusive focus on nonviolent narratives within formal curriculum is irrelevant to life amidst conflict, it is less suited to highlighting the wider pedagogical influences students embrace as they 'unlock the knot,' which is best engaged through the wider lens of public pedagogy.[514] Building from the 'various forms, processes, and sites of education and learning occurring beyond formal schooling' as Sandlin, O'Malley, and Burdick define public pedagogy, this analysis critically engages public pedagogy to further interrogate both the sources of information and their importance to students as they interpret the *direct* and *indirect violence* surrounding them (Sandlin et al. 2011: 1-2).[515]

To assess the significance of public pedagogy in post-Oslo Gaza, selected interviewees with an expertise in Palestinian education were invited to develop an inventory of pedagogical factors that have had the most meaningful impact on Gazan youth over the past two decades.[516] When a list of the 15 most significant influences was finalized students from the Class of 2000 were subsequently asked to scale their personal experiences, answering the question, 'How would you rate the educational importance, on the scale of 1-10 (lowest to highest), of the following influences for you growing up in Gaza?'[517] The resulting student feedback, matching up well with earlier insights, is consistent in its dismissal of formal instruction. While a strong majority of the Class of 2000 valued learning and expressed strong senses of curiosity to understand the conflict, the PA's inaugural curriculum was scaled at a mere 1.1 out of 10. This extremely low score was only just ahead of teachers, who after being accused of physical abuse by 41% of student interviewees, were similarly rated -0.4 out of 10. The two most prominent aspects of formal education being ranked so poorly once again reinforces doubt over schooling's ability to define *legitimate knowledge*, and otherwise shape political understandings amongst Gazan youth. Instead, the largely negative experiences students encountered with formal and *hidden curriculum* often incited the first signs of anger and hatred (*heqked)* within the Class of 2000, setting the stage for wider independent learning.

Beyond emphasizing frustration with partisan narratives and corporal punishment, scaling pedagogical influences alternatively highlights how Gazan youth are actually learning about their surrounding reality. According to the Class of 2000, the three most influential perspectives for understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are reading books unrelated to formal curriculum (7.8 out of 10), exchanges within social media (7.8 out of 10), and personal experiences amidst the larger outside world (8.9 out of 10).[518]

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[514] S*ee also* Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb 1984) and political socialization (Dawson and Prewitt 1969).

[515] This conflict-based framework differs from activist approaches whereby critical public pedagogy's primary aim is to achieve an inclusive, participatory, 'radical' democracy (Giroux 2003; McLaren 2005).

[516] Educational specialists consulted include representatives from the Islamic University of Gaza, the Hamas-run Ministry of Education, Unicef's Gaza field office, and selected Gazan youth.

[517] The top 15 influences selected include books (personal), community centers, employment, family members, mosques, outside life experiences, political factions, newspapers, radio, school (overall), social media, summer camps, teachers, television, and textbooks. The specific question asked was: *'Ala meqiyas* 1-10 *(men al-aqal ta-thiran ela al-akthar ta-thiran) Keifa toqa-yiem al-ahahmmiyya at-taleemiyya lelmo'atheerat at-taliyyah at-taliyyah ala' marahil nodje shakh-siyyatek fi qeta' ghazzah*?'

[518] This is reinforced by polling highlighting that personal and familial perspectives are increasingly important to Gazan youth as they complete secondary school, especially compared to more institutionalized narratives. For instance, while only 36.6% of Gazan youth have confidence in the press, 68.8% trust people they know personally and 95.7% trust family (Inglehart et al. 2014: V110, V104, V102).

To better illustrate the impact independent learning has on both appreciating and participating in violence, the nuance of the Class of 2000's wider pedagogical pursuits will be outlined here in greater detail.

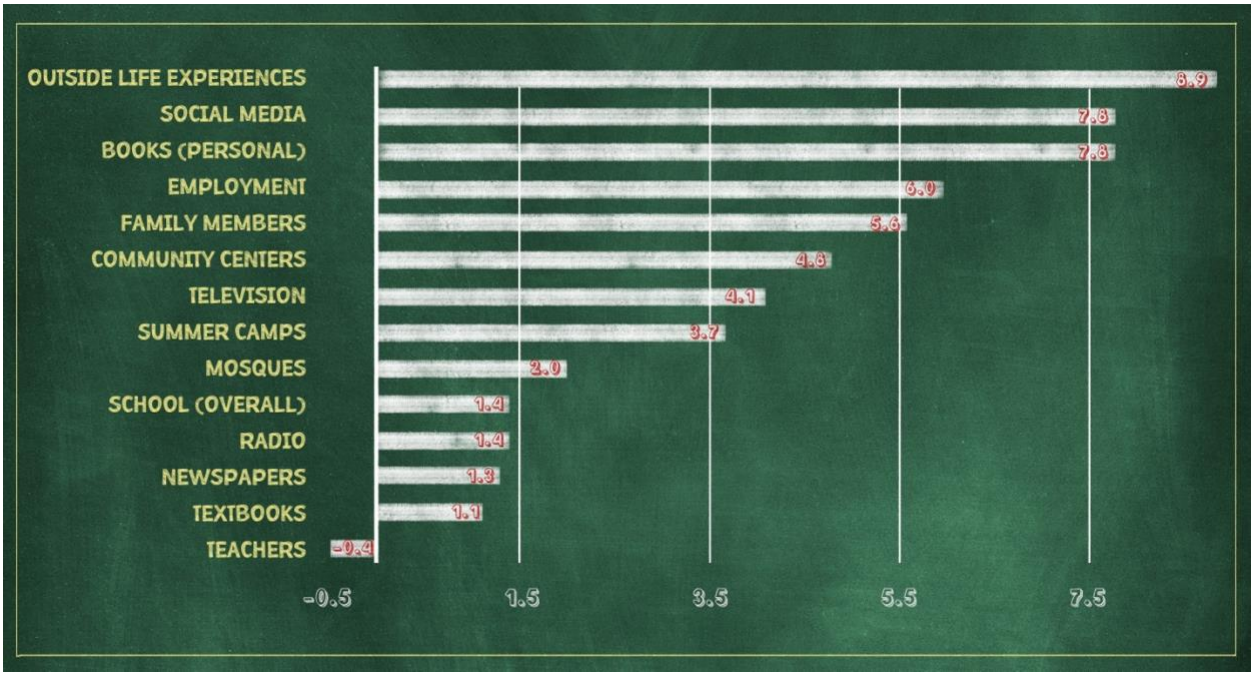

Fig. 15. The scaled significance of the top educational influences for youth growing up in Gaza, 2000-2015, as rated by student interviewees from the Class of 2000.

INFORMAL READING

Two pedagogical alternatives habitually cited by students from the Class of 2000 as meaningful for making sense of the conflict are outside reading and social media. Informal reading is especially insightful as it underscores that book learning as a medium is not the concern Gazan students have with formal education, but instead the biased content of the partisan curriculum. Noha, for instance, shares how she 'didn't want to be an uneducated person. Books let me know about the world, the history, so I can empower myself.' When queried if similar understandings were available from formal Palestinian curriculum, she clarifies, 'No – I needed other books to make me cultured.'[519] Ahmed similarly describes how he simply added 'unofficial texts' to his coursework when formal curriculum failed to satisfy his curiosity. 'In ninth grade I started searching for answers outside school. I loved learning about geography and civic education, as they used to tell us more about history and heritage. Yet these things were banned in school… and so we used to buy them from libraries outside the school. It was more of a bonus topic not counted in our overall academic record.'[520] Ayah, along with many other students, challenges the limiting pedagogical focus of the PA, questioning, 'Why don't we read more? I mean at school they never asked us to read things outside of the curriculum. They never emphasized the importance of reading.' When prompted on how reading has increased her understanding of 'many things [she] normally wouldn't think about,' Ayah elaborates:

[519] Field interview with SI206 (2015).
[520] Field interview with MR105 (2014).

> In school we were taught that our conflict with Israel has to do with who existed on the land first. The Canaanites and I don't know who. But there is a book that I read that left a question mark in my head. The book is the memoirs of Golda Meir. The lady says that the Jews effectively came to the land and that their entitlement is a result of their efforts (and not of course resorting to a historical reference that the land was uninhabited because she is not prepared to justify such logic). 'Now that we're here let's finish our project,' she argues. After that I started reading the memoirs of Moshe Dayan and Ben-Gurion and other Israeli leaders and, if it weren't for my own curiosity, I would never know anything.[521]

Beyond historical contextualization, many students from the Class of 2000 specifically looked to informal reading to better comprehend the *direct* and *structural violence* they were experiencing. Mamoosh, for one, was profoundly troubled by what he describes as the 'Khazaa Massacre' of March 8th, 2002. 'The Israeli army invaded from one in the morning until sunrise. Eighteen people were killed. I was 13 at the time, and that really was a formative experience.' When asked how he made sense of it, he shares that 'It was from here the phrase "Know your enemy" gained significance in my life. Consequently, I started reading anything I could find about Zionism and massacres and how Israel operates… books were the more serious and more beneficial approach at the time.'[522] Interviewees continuously cite such significance, underscoring how informal reading expanded their understanding not merely through addressing *direct violence*, but also the *structural violence* that reinforces it. As Majd explains, books were an important source of information, building first from 2012's Operation Pillar of Defense and later, relevantly, helping him analyze the larger logic of the Oslo Accords:

> The war of 2012 happened when I was in eleventh grade. I felt it was much fiercer than the first war, maybe because my awareness was different. At the time I was reading whatever I could find about the content of the Oslo Accords that was glorified in school, which helped me realize that it's a big lie and a fuck up for the entire Palestinian people. I also understood from my reading that there were things in Oslo that were not implemented on the ground – things that would have served the interests of the Palestinians, like the airport, and the port, and other things that had significance that would lead to statehood. Yet after signing the Accords I now understood they took what they wanted and gave us the finger.[523]

While independent reading outside of school is not universally relevant for every student interviewed in Gaza, the cultural reverence Palestinians traditionally hold for literature clearly endures in the post-Oslo era.[524] This practice, long irrepressible under earlier occupations, continues to play an outsized pedagogical role for the Class of 2000. The exceedingly low scaling associated with PA textbooks should, consequently, not be attributed to a lack of student curiosity or willingness to study, but instead the inadequacy of formal answers. As Meera quotes Haruki Murakami, her favorite Japanese author, 'Closing your eyes isn't going to change anything. Nothing's going to disappear just because you can't see what's going on. In fact things will even be worse the next time you open you eyes. That's the kind of world we

[521] *My Life* by Golda Meir (1975), field interview with WR211 (2014).
[522] Field interview with MG110 (2014).
[523] Field interview with MR101 (2014).
[524] The literacy rate for Gazan youth in the post-Oslo era, similar to earlier patterns, remains at 99.0%, well above the global youth average of 89.3% (UNESCO 2011b).

live in. Keep your eyes wide open. Only a coward closes his eyes.'[525] This 'passion for informal reading – *away* from school,' is, as Mohammed describes it, consistently celebrated by student interviewees as a constructive, insightful approach to empower one's understanding of their often-violent reality.[526]

SOCIAL MEDIA

A second pedagogical influence helping Gazan youth develop their understandings of the wider conflict, scaling 7.8 out of 10 in an enumerative tie with independent reading, is social media (*mawaqi al-tawasul al-ijtima'i*). The significance of social media for the Class of 2000, and Gaza more generally, is underscored by its quick embrace. While Gaza lacked internet access for the first decade of the post-Oslo era, amongst other technical challenges, social media penetration quickly surpassed global averages – with Gazan youth especially interconnected.[527] One of the rare surveys reviewing early online activity in the post-Oslo era similarly found that as students from the Class of 2000 were finishing secondary school, 62% of local youth were obtaining their news from the internet, while 65% conversely had never read a physical newspaper.[528] Amar highlights this generational change by framing how most of his information, originally gleaned from television like his parents, grew significantly when access to more information became available online. 'The internet was something new. And ever since it became accessible, I became fully reliant on it... I basically spent my life on the laptop.'[529] Notably for this inquiry, however, is how the internet challenged the primacy of formal education. 'I used to read and search the internet... for independent research beyond the textbook,' Eyad explains.[530] As Abu Shokaf clarifies, being online empowers students to discuss 'things that mattered – things that were *prevented* in school.'[531]

While numerous types of content are readily available online, the Class of 2000 consistently emphasizes that more confrontational information involving violence – often circulated by other students – was especially significant. This includes routinely engaging content involving both *direct* and *structural violence* that were neglected within formal education. One expressive example underscoring the relevance of social media to reconcile the *direct violence* the Class of 2000 experienced was coverage of 2014's Operation Protective Edge (*al-Jurf al-Samed*). As Abu Bashir recounts the experience, 'Local media did not know what was happening and did not educate the masses on the details in an appropriate manner. Young people were the main source of information via the internet and social media. Updates like these were the source of hope, fear, knowledge, and doubt all at the same time.'[532] While the content and style of such information is understandably varied, one poignant example is Mahmoud Ismael live-tweeting an attack on the isolated Khazaa neighborhood that ultimately killed 123 people.[533] 'They died

[525] Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*, as posted online by WR205 on May 17th, 2014.
[526] Field interview with MR112 (2014).
[527] The first Palestinian internet provider was not established until 2005 (World Bank 2012). In 2013, 46.6% of Palestinians had access to the internet (World Bank 2015b). Active social media penetration in Palestine in July 2014 was 33%, higher than the global average of 27% (Statista 2015).
[528] One survey of Gazan youth aged 15-29 illustrated that 65.1% had never read a physical newspaper or magazine, while alternatively 62% of those polled had followed the news on the internet the previous day (Sharek 2013: 72). This is reinforced by polling highlighting that 83.8% of post-Oslo youth in Gaza don't read newspapers on a regular basis, while over half follow the news on television (69.8%), via the radio (58%), and via the internet (52.7%), Inglehart et al. 2014: V217, VV219, V220, V223.
[529] Field interview with MR124 (2014).
[530] Field interview with MG107 (2014).
[531] Field interviews with MR116 and MR119 (2014).
[532] Field interview with MR116 (2014).
[533] PCHR 2015

on top of each other,' Mahmoud updated his followers, as he narrated one relative being killed while trying to save another. As the violence continued, so did the updates: 'Home I was sheltering in with 50 others was bombed. I don't know what happened to them but my shoes soaked in their blood' (Fig. 16). In sharp contrast with the biased and outdated narratives presented within formal schooling and more centralized news sources, such contemporaneous updates offer nearly instantaneous, unfiltered insights on the conflict. And while such postings are often fleeting, their influence on political understandings for Gazan students routinely endures. Looking back on Ismael's seminal posts, Medo recalls how 'His tweets turned me to stone. I learned that I was right all along – this is not about ending the so called "terrorism" and rockets fired from Gaza, but rather an ongoing ethnic cleansing operation. And that didn't take that many tweets to come across. And it took even less tweets for me to realize that my death can be easier than surviving this horror.'[534]

Fig. 16. Mahmoud Ismael's tweets describing the *direct violence* taking place in Khazaa, Gaza.

In addition to students utilizing social media to navigate *direct violence*, the Class of 2000 also embraced the medium to address more *structural* aspects of the conflict – often with an irreverent, youthful candor that would not be tolerated in school. One of many instances shared online was the casual, yet pointed post from Ali Karaka, a Palestinian comedian, who quipped, 'A friend of mine told me about two groups of children trained by the PLO. The first group was trained on the use of weapons. And the second was trained as musicians in the camp and for representation in public events. As I recall the story the first group survived the Sabra and Shatilla massacre and the second one didn't.'[535] Such straightforward skepticism towards nonviolence similarly led to further discussion not merely questioning peace, but openly mocking any efforts towards this end. Highlighting this type of discourse is the instructional diagram from the *faux* 'Fatah Commission for Mobilization and Organization,' which was posted widely

[534] Field interview with MR126 (2014).
[535] General focus group content from November 2014.

on social media by the Class of 2000 (Fig. 17). In advising what fellow Gazans should do with the Palestinian President's proposal to end the conflict with open-ended diplomacy, the illustration underscores the potency of online expression to both question the structural dynamics of the conflict and starkly challenge formal schooling's ability to exclusively define *legitimate knowledge*.[536]

Fig. 17. One of many structural critiques of the Oslo Accords found online. [537]

In contrast to the frustration many students felt towards formal narratives advocating ongoing dialogue, all interviewees encountering the *faux* diagram celebrated its relevance, with Abu Bashir arguing, 'This is a very accurate and detailed diagram illustrating what we should do with every decision taken by the President. I agree with it 100% ... The PA logic to end the occupation is practically wasting more time and resources while Israel expands its settlements at the expense of Palestinian land.' Alternatively, he explains 'What is logical is for protesters to be out in the streets, and for the PA to be dismantled, and for the occupation to take responsibility for the people whose land and future were ripped off. It's the only description I have for our situation. As a result, fuck the President and fuck his project.'[538] Medo echoes this sentiment, describing the diagram as 'bad-ass' as it 'basically illustrates my feeling towards the PA's

[536] President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas.
[537] 'What do you do with the President's proposal to end the occupation at the UN? Step 1: Soak it in water. Step 2: Fold it up. Step 3: Lay on your left side. Step 4: Insert it carefully into your anal cavity,' per numerous social media accounts from the Class of 2000.
[538] Field interview with MR116 (2014).

approach to ending the Israeli occupation. Whatever shit they have been doing, it's not working. So I say let's go ahead and shove the entire PA up the same place.'[539]

While not all students from the Class of 2000 were uniformly active online, the near universal endorsement of comparable discussions is notable. Whereas 95% of students surveyed deride the PA's formal curriculum, no comments were recorded during field interviews or noted on social media that criticize online debate. Instead, informal discussions are routinely praised as a 'good idea' and widely encouraged by students in Gaza.[540] As Falastine describes it, the internet provides the 'space to use our abilities and freedom without the constant guidance that often restricts discovering new things, like in school. At least that's how it was for me and my friends.'[541]

VIOLENCE OUTSIDE SCHOOL

The final pedagogical influence of note for the Class of 2000 – demonstrating consistent significance well beyond all other perspectives – are outside life experiences. Scaled at 8.9 out of 10 by Gazan students, the lessons observed beyond school walls once again challenge the official narratives offered within formal textbooks. For example, while the inaugural PA curriculum avoids any explicit mention of Palestinian casualties amidst its narration of the ongoing conflict with Israel, 35% of student interviewees conversely cite the pedagogical significance of personally losing a friend or family member to violence over the post-Oslo era. This seminal contrast both underscores the salience of *outside curriculum* to influence understandings, as well as provides a unique framework to highlight the final stages of the Class of 2000's evolution *towards* violence, or as it is more commonly known, radicalization.

As introduced, supporting political violence is, for Gazan students, typically the culmination of a long and reflective process. To better illuminate this progression, and underscore the significance of *outside curriculum* within it, this analysis utilizes Moghaddam's staircase framework as an interpretive scaffold to highlight the specific stages (or floors) that post-Oslo students experienced as they transcend cognitive, and later, 'behavioral radicalization.'[542] Building from the mistrust and humiliation students recount from school throughout Chapters Three and Four, it is unsurprising that many members of the Class of 2000 increasingly questioned the legitimacy of the system they were living in. These early stages of cognitive radicalization, as originally influenced by formal and *hidden curriculum*, provided the foundation for first reflecting on the legitimacy of political violence.[543] Yet as suggested, this process typically didn't advance into behavioral radicalization, or act on these aggravations, until wider experiences with state-sponsored violence both confirmed earlier frustrations and increasingly served as a catalyst for further violence – namely, *direct action*.[544]

[539] Field interview with MR126 (2014).
[540] MR127 Facebook post and subsequent discussion, October 4th, 2014.
[541] Field interview with WR203 (2014).
[542] Cognitive radicalization generally refers to the process of adopting extremist or militant beliefs, whereas behavioral radicalization denotes the translation of such beliefs into observable actions (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008; Horgan 2009).
[543] Within Moghaddam's model, disillusionment with propaganda-laden curricula and abusive teachers would initially emerge on the ground floor, as experiences of perceived injustice (Moghaddam 2005: 162).
[544] Within the staircase model, *direct action* is used to describe the final stage of radicalization, where individuals move from beliefs and justification (cognitive radicalization) into violent action (behavioral radicalization) (Moghaddam 2005). *See also* Cross and Snow (2011).

The following section will consequently serve as an assemblage of pedagogical perspectives, emphasizing *outside curriculum* to highlight its outsized influence in catalyzing the Class of 2000 towards violence. Yet documenting specific pathways to radicalization within an ongoing conflict is an extremely delicate proposition. Instead of confronting each interviewee about their support for, and participation in, political violence, this research merely noted any pedagogical explanations shared during data collection on why each student ultimately concluded political violence was preferable to more passive options. But true to this inquiry's student-centered methodology, the following section was both reviewed and endorsed by many of the students themselves to ensure it accurately illustrates the common educational pathways taken by members of the Class of 2000 through their perceived radicalization.[545] In featuring such progression, this section will subsequently emphasize that *direct action*, much like more passive support for violence, is rooted less in any formal indoctrination and instead driven largely by the wider cumulative lessons experienced growing up amidst conflict.

THE ASCENT TO VIOLENCE

An enduring assumption underpinning the wider tradition of conflict mitigation is that young people are inherently unrestrained, to be civilized through formal schooling. Such associations are especially prominent within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whereby younger Palestinians are habitually accused of being 'born to hate.'[546] Yet one of the first perspectives repeatedly offered by student interviewees in Gaza was how unprepared they were for the violent nature of the world.[547] As stated, the Class of 2000 was born at the high-water mark for Palestinian optimism alongside the advent of the Oslo Accords. Many students correspondingly recall rather prosaic views of Israel from their youth. Ahmed recounts his first experience with Israel being grounded in innocence rather than any inherent animosity as he crossed the Israeli-controlled Rafah border while in second grade. 'That was the only time I traveled in my life. I was very thirsty, and there was an Israeli female soldier standing across from me. She could hear me telling my mom that I wanted water, but my mom didn't have any water. So the soldier brought me water, and I liked her. And that first memory stays with me until today.'[548] For other kids born and raised in Gaza, the wider conflict was similarly a non-issue during their early years. As Za'eem recalls, 'Growing up, I never hated Israel' as he simply had 'nothing to do with it.'[549] Mohanned, too, shares how until sixth grade he 'didn't know Israel existed and certainly didn't hate it.' It was only later that 'the anger started.'[550]

[545] The following section does not suggest a uniform or universal trajectory for all students in post-Oslo Gaza, but rather a pattern repeatedly articulated across interviews. And while amalgamating comments in this fashion is a delicate process open to misinterpretation, this section was organized in coordination with relevant key informants in Gaza, including the proxies used to interview militant members of the Class of 2000, to ensure this approach accurate reflects what was both shared during data collection and lived growing up in post-Oslo Gaza.
[546] Accusations that Palestinians are 'born to hate' are commonplace within the rhetoric surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *See*, for example, Christians United for Israel.
[547] This is further supported by the aforementioned World Values Survey highlighting that more than eight out of 10 Gazan youth initially believed that tolerance, respect, and 'helping people' were important qualities to possess (Inglehart et al. 2014: V16).
[548] Field interview with MR105 (2014).
[549] Field interview with MR121 (2014).
[550] Field interview with MG115 (2014).

Ground Floor: Perceiving Injustice [551]

Such early innocence often reliably gave way for many students, however, when encountering the larger realities of conflict. As Eyad recounts his initial impressions, 'What I knew about Israel was that it was a good thing, and a source of income for families. It opened the gates for life.' Yet he continues to explain how watching the Second *Intifada* unfold on television as a seven-year-old first transformed his appreciation into apprehension. 'I remember the constant fear I had that they might take me or my dad as we used to see it on TV.'[552] Bilal similarly describes his emerging animosity as he continued to make sense of the conflict. 'My feelings when I was little were idealistic. But when I grew up I started going out in the street. I started feeling Israel's influence on my life, on my studies, on my travel, on the national reconciliation, on the three wars we've had to endure over the past six years. And then I thought fuck – it isn't illogical to be upset.'[553] It was such nascent insight shared consistently by student interviewees that disliking Israel, contrary to any inherent belief, was often initially rooted almost exclusively in the personal risk it presented. As Mamoosh reasons, 'Since prep school my awareness was forming around the threat of the enemy – not hate because I hated Israel – but instead the danger it imposes on us.'[554]

At this stage, injustice is registered primarily as disruption, rather than moral outrage or any political grievance. Students largely describe their early awareness shaped less by ideology than by fear, uncertainty, and the immediate risks imposed on everyday life – conditions that would later give way to deeper frustration as escape and avoidance proved impossible.

First Floor: Growing Frustration [555]

The conflict presents a danger to everyone in Gaza, yet as younger students the Class of 2000 was particularly eager to avoid it.[556] Majd, for example, underscores how fighting was in no way desirable, explaining, 'I was in eighth grade during Cast Lead. I was very scared. I don't remember being that scared before. Of course we had no school and we stayed home… waiting to die.' As the experience settled out his reaction wasn't anger, but instead 'a burning desire just to leave.' Yet he also 'realized that the idea of giving up and just living my life is simply not possible because I have no other nationality and I'm not allowed to travel, not from Erez, not from Rafah. It's just like being born in a prison and inheriting your father's charges and you're sentenced for life.'[557] While the desire to escape the conflict altogether was an appealing, if unavailable, option for many students so too was merely avoiding the violence. Contrary to the assumption that Gazans naturally choose to participate in violence, students from the Class of 2000 are quick to emphasize that picking up arms is not a prerequisite for harm. Many interviewees specifically cite their seminal second grade experience learning about the 2001 killing of Eman al-Haju, a four-month-old girl from central Gaza, and the profound role it played influencing their emerging political understandings. As Ahmed explains, 'Eman al-Haju is someone all Palestinians know and can relate to. Why do we relate to her? Simply because when she was killed there were no rockets at the time. We had

[551] On the ground floor of the staircase model, individuals experience injustice and begin to develop initial feelings of deprivation and exclusion (Moghaddam 2005: 162).
[552] Field interview with MG107 (2014).
[553] Field interview with MR109 (2014).
[554] Field interview with MG110 (2014).
[555] The first floor of the staircase model reflects the mounting frustration that arises when people see no viable or legitimate options to address the injustice (Moghaddam 2005: 163).
[556] These aspirations are additionally supported by 84% of young people emphasizing their desire to 'avoid anything that might be dangerous' within the World Values Survey (Inglehart et al. 2014: V72).
[557] Field interview with MR101 (2014).

no military power and yet she was still killed.'[558] The lack of distinction between active combatant and passive civilian amidst the ongoing conflict – and their inability to escape it – is a lesson all students were comprehending very clearly, engendering deep frustration.

Second Floor: Anger and Blame [559]

Evoking their earlier innocence, students from the Class of 2000 are explicit in stating that even after recognizing the indiscriminate and often unjust nature of the conflict, there remains little innate desire to fight. As Ahmed continues, 'I want to live and save whoever is left of us, and give them education, and a proper dignified life. But I'm really afraid this will never happen.'[560] Basel similarly echoes this fleeting optimism, idealizing a world where 'people meet you like you meet them, so if you're smiling, they'll smile back. And if you're grumpy they might be grumpy too.' Yet he quickly qualifies this hope, noting that he and his peers are 'surely not going to smile back' when living under constant threat.[561] As frustration deepens, anger becomes increasingly directed at its perceived source. Abu Alsa'ed expands on this shift, emphasizing, 'I swear to God, we are tired. But deep inside I don't want the earlier days [of long-suffering diplomacy] to return – because with it comes the Jews taking whatever they want and doing whatever they want.' [562] In turn, many students describe how their earlier goodwill gradually receded, creating space for more openly militant interpretations of Israel as the primary cause of their suffering. Bilal articulates how this moral narrowing takes shape through cumulative loss, explaining:

> Just looking at the number of murders and assaults on our rights – let alone if you knew these people who died and if they meant something to you or were related to you or studied with you – every time one of your people dies a part of the human inside you dies too. This is why it's no longer possible that I would feel sad for the death of any Israeli, whether they die in an attack organized by the Resistance or some other way. They do not feel for us, why should we feel for them?[563]

At this stage, anger and blame are not yet synonymous with participation in violence, but they mark a critical emotional and moral reorientation – one in which empathy becomes increasingly selective and responsibility for suffering is firmly externalized.

Third Floor: Justifying Violence [564]

As empathy slowly faded from the Class of 2000 so too did any lingering faith in nonviolence as a viable path towards peace. Looking around at a conflict whereby one classmate was being killed, on average, every week, many students were instead focusing on how to avoid being 'wiped from the map,' as Ahmed puts it. [565] 'So what should we teach ourselves?,' inquires Basel. As he continues:

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[558] Field interview with MR105 (2014).
[559] In the second floor of the staircase model, frustration escalates into anger, which is directed against those perceived to be responsible for injustice and repression (Moghaddam 2005: 163-164).
[560] Field interview with MR105 (2014).
[561] Field interview with MR106 (2014).
[562] Field interview with MR102 (2014).
[563] Field interview with MR109 (2014).
[564] The third floor of the staircase model involves the justification of violence (Moghaddam 2005: 164).
[565] As stated, between September 29th, 2000 and April 30th, 2015, 1,047 Gazans under the age of 18 were killed by Israeli forces – over one per week, on average, for 16 years (Btselem 2024a). Field interview with MR105 (2014).

> The Knesset tells them it's ok to kill the Palestinians because they're terrorists – the Knesset that promotes the idea of expelling us from our homeland. That's their education. So what should we teach ourselves? The massacres that were committed against us, or the wars that they keep launching against us, where we stand helpless, without borders, without ground, naval, or air defenses, under the world's gaze?[566]

The imbalanced nature of the conflict is a recurring theme for students in Gaza, including Majd who continues to struggle with the inequity he's observed. This includes the wholesale bombing of Gaza after the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier, which originally led Majd to propose that Gaza just 'send him back.' But 'then I realized the crazy number of prisoners we have in Israeli jails. And because of one soldier – *yanni* not an innocent civilian – they led a war against us. Why? Why do they imprison and kill us? And commit all of these crimes against us and we don't get to do anything about it?'[567] Reconciling such questions became deeply personal for many students in the Class of 2000. As Bilal openly deliberates:

> We're like a kid who is bullied in school, and no one is doing anything about it. It all comes down to this kid. He will start thinking how to win, how to defend himself, how to save himself. He surely will try to enroll in defense courses, or maybe carry a knife, or maybe talk to someone stronger to beat up his bully. Look at our situation and you'll see the similarity. Israel has an army that it calls 'defense' even though it's killed thousands of us. And look at our weapons that don't compare to anyone else's weapons, not even Hezbollah, yet we're the terrorists. How could a little kid intimidate a bodybuilder, especially if the bodybuilder was the instigator?[568]

Student interviewees subsequently reflect on how the passive responses they've observed haven't worked to Gaza's advantage, and how more aggressive approaches are needed. 'We were oh lord so stupid,' continues Bilal as he recounts Palestinian history. 'The Jews came, so we ran away. Then the Arab armies rallied, so we stayed. UNRWA came to give us coupons, so we begged. We were led all our lives.' And as Gazans voiced their frustration through democracy, outsiders promptly 'closed down not just the borders but the country, and turned our lives into hell. *Tayeb*, so no matter what we do we have no control over our destiny.'[569] Frustration with the failure of a wide variety of more passive approaches that are perceived to have led Palestine to its current predicament consequently encouraged many students from the Class of 2000 to seek out new, more assertive approaches. As Ramy concludes, 'Look what they do to us. Do you expect that we will keep our heads low? Of course not. The collective awareness now is better than our ancestors who ran away from their villages. Today we understand that we have to stick up for ourselves with every means possible. We *have* to fight back.'[570]

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[566] Field interview with MR106 (2014).

[567] Field interview with MR101 (2014).

[568] Hezbollah (Party of God, *Ḥizbu 'llāh*) is a Lebanese Shia Islamist political party and paramilitary group. Field interview with MR109 (2014). Notably, many senior Israeli figures, including Ehud Barak, Moshe Dayan, Leah Rabin, and Yitzhak Shamir have all endorsed this conclusion, admitting if they had been raised in Gaza they would fight back in similar fashion (Israel Broadcasting Authority 1998; Lyons 2024).

[569] Field interview with MR109 (2014).

[570] Field interview with MR111 (2014).

Fourth Floor: Supporting the Cause [571]

Where the third floor reflects on the moral and strategic legitimation of violence, the fourth marks a further shift toward identifying with those who enact it. At this stage, violence is no longer debated as a reluctant necessity, but increasingly understood by many young people as an effective and meaningful response to an otherwise inescapable condition. Such stark theorizing is consistently cited by interviewees from the Class of 2000 as the initial grounding for more 'radicalized' activism. Contrary to the nonviolent arguments of post-Oslo schooling that were quickly deemed irrelevant to the wider conflict, more militant reasoning was often solidified with repetitive and often deeply personal empirical reinforcement. Confrontational support for the Cause thus emerges not from ideological indoctrination, but instead accumulated experience and repeated empirical reinforcement. Eman, far from unique, expands on how such observations drove her to support political violence:

> No one taught me to hate. Things just happen, and experiences accumulate. Every time you suffocate and your life gets complicated because of something that happens it all leads back to the occupation. This is all in addition to the death scenes that you've seen in your life and the people you've said goodbye to, whether you know them or not. Look, you've lost people. There's a bunch of shit in your life that can't go normal. There are places you're not allowed to visit, there are people you're not allowed to see, there are things that are not for you. You pay money for every little thing in your life, be it water, electricity, or food. And this money that you pay ends up serving them. You pay them so that they will shoot you and shell you. You can't get a job because of these people. Every source of pain in your life is directly or indirectly caused by them. It's all part of a constant pattern, where only the dates and times change. I don't think there is a life worse than this. Your life is at risk effectively all the time, which is no way to live. Ultimately you've got nothing to lose in the end, so why not fight back?
>
> I've also never heard about any place on earth that was colonized and liberated out of the blue or just through talks. And to be honest the act of resistance has proven to be effective in many cases, and you can count Gaza as one of those cases. If someone tells me that the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza happened because of the 'Road Map' (*Kharitat al-Tariq*) I'll say no my dear, occupation does not care about the Road Map or any other agreement. Look at Oslo – isn't that an agreement? How much did they implement of it, except the parts that served their interests? And the rest of it constituted a double *Naqba* for the Palestinian people. The occupation, if it did not feel pain by the acts of the resistance inside the Gaza Strip, would not have left. When you annoy them on a daily basis and when threaten the lives of their people it's only natural that they'll think a million times on their actions. In the last war they evacuated the settlements bordering Gaza. If these guys were able to deal with that situation even partially they wouldn't leave. But they did, because such actions impact them. Which is also why they left Gaza. Without such pressure they would still be in Gaza. In Gaza they lived a life of either direct

[571] The fourth floor of the staircase model reflects intensified loyalty to one's community and to movements perceived as defending it (Moghaddam 2005: 164-165). In the Palestinian context, this is most clearly represented by the aforementioned 'Cause' (*al-Qadiya*).

> war or slow war. Never a safe life. The fact that we can at least pain this occupation is meaningful.[572]

For many students, however, endorsing political violence did not immediately translate into active involvement. The move from communal support to *direct action* represented a distinct threshold – one involving heightened personal risk and the acceptance of potentially irreversible consequences. It is at this juncture, where belief becomes behavior, that the fifth floor of the staircase is most clearly realized.

Fifth Floor: Direct Action [573]

Deliberative support for and participation in *direct action*, like that shared by Eman, became increasingly widespread amongst Palestinian students who have grown up amidst ongoing violence in Gaza. Majd further explains, 'Look at me – I was born and lived my entire life under siege. And in the past six years I've suffered through three wars, each dirtier than the one before. What we do in martyrdom and resistance is not out of a love for violence and death, but rather a lack of options in the face of Israeli violations.'[574] As Orub and Ibrahim similarly conclude, 'All of the experiences together shaped my realization and strong attachment to the importance of armed resistance,' concluding 'what was taken by force has to be regained by force. Negotiations will not succeed.'[575] Consequently, Ahmad encapsulates the feelings of many in Gaza, concluding 'We should do something no matter how small – but we can't stay watching.'[576]

BEYOND THE STAIRCASE

While the fifth floor captures the transition from cognitive to behavioral radicalization, it does not mark an endpoint in young people's political development. For many members of the Class of 2000, participation around and within political violence neither suspended critical reflection nor extinguished skepticism towards the status quo. Instead, direct engagement with political violence often generated new forms of learning that prompted individuals to reassess, distance themselves, and even abandon the very factions they had previously defended (literally and figuratively). Thus, although radicalization is often presented as a largely unidirectional path stressing the difficulty of deescalation, student narratives from Gaza reveal the persistence of independent judgment even at its most advanced stages. In this sense, radicalization among Gazan youth is better understood as adaptive and experiential rather than linear or dogmatic.

For instance, while anger towards both Israel and the Palestinian Authority are well documented by the Class of 2000, it is also important to underscore that Gazan students undergoing 'radicalization' are similarly not often swayed by factional indoctrination. If anything, those closest to organized *direct action* in Gaza appreciate that partisan bias is pervasive amongst *all* political stakeholders – including those proclaiming to lead resistance efforts. For many students this lesson was learned well in advance of

[572] Field interview with WR204 (2014). The 'Road Map' was a phased 2003 plan launched by global stakeholders aimed at achieving a two-state solution through parallel Israeli and Palestinian obligations.
[573] The top floor of the staircase model represents the point when individuals embrace violence as the only remaining option and typically engage in *direct action* (Moghaddam 2005: 165).
[574] Field interview with MR101 (2014).
[575] Field interviews with WR212 and MR103 (2014).
[576] Field interview with MR128 (2014).

formally joining resistance efforts. This includes Medo who describes his ensuing frustration with factional groups fighting not just on behalf of Palestine, but also against other Palestinians:

> I was leaning towards Hamas in prep school – mainly for the Resistance. I cheered for Qassam. I cheered for the martyrs and armed resistance. My friends and I had a burning fire within us. But then during the internal clashes Hamas attempted to come after my brother because of his job with the PA security forces. They wanted to empty their bandoliers into his knees like they were doing to his colleagues throughout our neighborhood. And as the proverb goes, throughout the whole experience 'my heart was in my ass.'[577]

Not only did such experiences cause Medo to abandon his direct support of Hamas, but further question the sincerity of political leadership in Gaza. Ahmed expresses similar concern at the vast divide between factional rhetoric and daily life for the general public, questioning, 'Why should we die when the leadership always sells us out… Leaders decide to have war, while the people are the ones who pay the price.'[578] As highlighted by earlier scaling, the Class of 2000 is extremely distrustful of the PA's nonviolent narratives – rating the significance of their inaugural curriculum at 1.1 out of 10 as compared to 8.9 out of 10 for wider pedagogical experiences. Yet amongst these wider perspectives, student interviewees are adamant that *all* partisan rhetoric – as encountered inside and outside school – should be met with skepticism. Factional narratives, including Fatah's endorsement of nonviolent state-building and the more vitriolic promises from Hamas' *political* wing, were rated -7.1 out of 10. To be clear, students in Gaza were asked to rank pedagogical significance on a scale of 1-10, yet the average rating of *all* factional narratives was negative seven. Interviewees similarly voiced how their scorings would drop even further if the educational utility of political groups was considered independent of the lessons learned from their corresponding resistance operations.

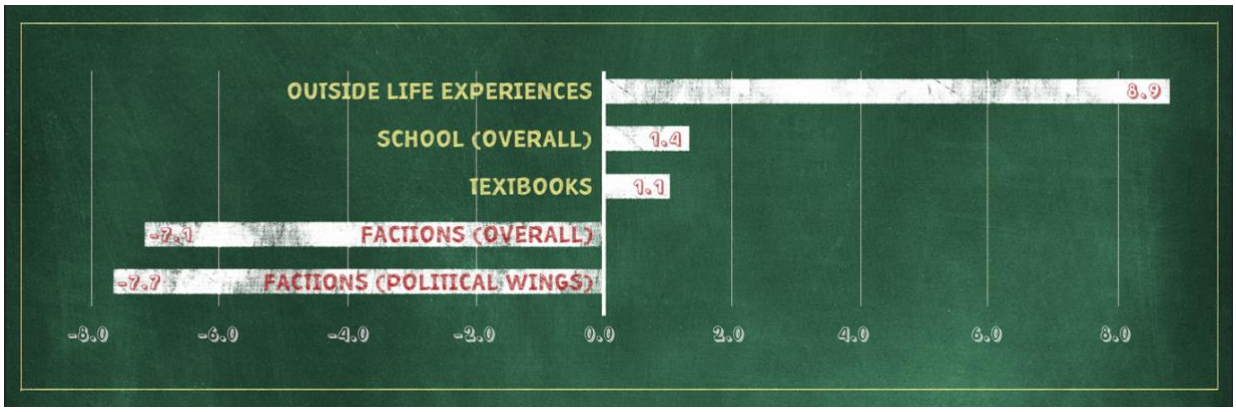

Fig. 18. The scaled significance of the educational influence of Palestinian factions compared to other experiences for youth growing up in Gaza, 2000-2015, as rated by students from the Class of 2000.[579]

[577] Field interview with MR126 (2014).

[578] Field interview with MR105 (2014).

[579] As the then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist clarifies the prevailing thinking for many Gazan students, there are always 'goofy factions' sharing information and making arguments, but 'we completely differentiate between the political wings and the military wings with all the factions. The politicians are not to be trusted.' Instead it is Hamas' military wing that retains credibility when it comes to understanding the conflict. 'Qassam doesn't fuck around. They tell you about what is happening and it's always true. We expect the Israelis who really want to know what is going on will even check with Qassam to figure out what is going on. I don't believe it unless Abu

As Medo describes it, 'Neither party is interested in the people's wellbeing. They only want control over what is remaining from Palestine. They want to implement their agenda regardless of what the people think or want.'[580] While political violence is increasing accepted amongst Gazan students as a strategic necessity, frustration with the factions most commonly associated with it has increased as well. Perhaps best summarizing the widespread, if conflicted, perspective is Amar, who struggles with the dichotomy:

> Armed resistance is a logical answer to an illogical question: How did we get here? I want to know why even if we are sons of bitches and sick people we still don't have the right to stay alive, but instead are deprived of everything we could possibly do or even wish to do? Surely I want to kill anyone that tells me I'm a terrorist or prevents me from traveling or even tells me when to talk to my friends over Skype. Or stops me at a checkpoint for seven hours and then sends me back because he does not like the way I speak or the way I look at him. At the same time I don't want a bearded son of a bitch to come and use me or ride on my back and then tell me that having long hair is *haram* and I'm not allowed to talk to women. We're pawns on a chessboard. One step moves us forward, and another brings us back.[581]

While many students from the Class of 2000 chose to 'wipe [their] hands' of Hamas out of frustration, others reluctantly participate in their activities not because they are in complete agreement with the faction, but instead because it merely represents the shortest path to *direct action*.[582] And for many youth political violence is now prioritized above all else. As Ayah describes it, 'To be honest and clear I choose resistance above all other issues. I know what I'm saying sounds odd, but if I had to choose between Fatah and ISIS, I choose ISIS because I would allow my liberty to be restricted and I'll do whatever to get by. But I'm not ready to allow a government to sell the country out and hand it to the occupation.'[583]

The frustration many students from the Class of 2000 express towards factional directives and their underlying conceit notably also includes many former and active militants aligned with formal resistance efforts. Like other non-aligned interviewees growing up amidst ongoing conflict, these fighters habitually experienced pedagogical journeys fraught with violent lessons leading them towards *direct action*. Yet surprisingly, these young militants also acknowledge an inherent skepticism against *all* factional narratives. Alah shares how his journey to Islamic Jihad started with a 'cool' teacher willing to contextualize the PA's formal curriculum. By explaining the 'shame of the Oslo Accords' and how the Israelis would fake historical claims to the land this teacher made 'all the difference – much more than anything in textbooks.' This especially resonated with Alah's experiences outside of school, including the confiscation of his family's land in 2000, the killing of his relatives in 2003, and 'sneaking over to listen' to the local *diwan* at his neighbor's house. This accumulation of informal instruction eventually led Alah – as a 14 year-old – to volunteer with the Resistance, when, during the Second *Intifada*, he helped assault and disable an Israeli tank.[584] Watching the Israelis subsequently 'destroy the whole neighborhood purely

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Abaida says it,' highlighting the credibility of Qassam's spokesperson in matters of conflict (Field interview with M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist 2013).

[580] Field interview with MR126 (2014).

[581] Field interview with MR124 (2014).

[582] Field interview with MR126 (2014).

[583] ISIS, also known as Islamic State or Daesh*,* is a Salafi-jihadist group commonly associated with repression and terrorist attacks. Field interview with WR211 (2014).

[584] During the height of the Second *Intifada* Alah was asked to bring a package from point A to point B. Yet as his contact failed to show, Alah followed through dropping the package off at point C – which happened to be an Israeli tank that later blew up (Field interview with MG117 2014).

out of revenge' further reinforced his understanding of the importance of defending one's community, leading him to formally join Islamic Jihad as a border sentry (*murabet)*. Yet at 22 years-old Alah had grown disillusioned and abandoned his affiliation with Islamic Jihad as he 'disagreed with the organization,' preferring to live his life 'away from the factions.'[585] Such conclusions were echoed by Mohannad who shares his skepticism of the sincerity of factional resistance. 'Islamic Jihad tried to recruit me. A guy gave me a bag containing two bombs and asked me to hold it. After a while he came back and, in seeing I had done a good job, spoke to me about joining the movement. But from the way he spoke I could tell he didn't really care about liberation – he just wanted to be a leader. So I rejected the whole thing.' Mohannad continues to clarify, however, that he remains actively looking for further ways to fight as it's the 'best option' to defend Palestine.[586] Ahmad similarly echoes such adaptive resistance, arguing Islamic factions 'don't represent the right path,' but that he reluctantly supports them as they currently represent the strongest choice to fight back.[587] This frustration with factions similarly includes those that continue to serve as members of the Resistance. Khaled shares that even after joining Qassam, Hamas' most elite forces, he's always looking for better opportunities to pursue *direct action*. As he explains:

> Through all of my efforts I've found that Hamas has the quickest and most effective framework for me to fight. Yet if I found a better party than Hamas then I would join them, because I recognize many of their defects, first as a government, and secondly when it comes to questionable application of religion and politics. But until then, I will continue to fight under Hamas – and fight anyone who tries to prevent me from resisting.[588]

ASSESSING RADICALIZATION

As is evident from student declarations, the process of 'attacking radicalization,' much like other pedagogical objectives in post-Oslo Gaza, was wholly unsuccessful (USGPO 1993a). This was not altogether unforeseen as formal education is routinely theorized to be insufficient to prevent radicalization (Ghosh et al. 2016). What is more surprising, however, is the deleterious role PA schooling evidently played within this process. While evaluating formal education's impact on radicalization through a scholarly lens is far from straightforward, contrasting its composition against technical best practices once again highlights the routine weakness of the PA's inaugural curriculum.[589] This is underscored by UNESCO arguing that to prevent violent extremism formal education must 'be bold enough to address the learner's real grievances,' be they more immediate or structural (2017: 55).[590] UNDP reinforces this approach, emphasizing that 'to successfully prevent violent extremism [education] must as far as possible instill critical thinking' to navigate such varied perspectives (2017: 39). In neglecting these criteria, PA curriculum fails to confront student radicalization just as it fails to meet the more generalized standards of critical peace education.

The failure of PA curriculum to comprehensively address the wider context of conflict does not mean formal education was merely irrelevant to radicalization, however. As argued, functionalist assumptions

[585] Field interview with MG117 (2014).
[586] Field interview with MG115 (2014).
[587] Field interview with MR128 (2014).
[588] Field interview with MR114 (2014).
[589] *See* El-Said (2015).
[590] The Global Counter-Terrorism Forum further argues that to successfully combat radicalization, addressing the trauma of violence is relevant within educational programming (GCTF 2014: 4).

over the primacy of formal curriculum discount the very real lessons of *hidden* and *outside curricula* amidst conflict. The question, therefore, is to determine if PA schooling inspired violent extremism within the wider holistic interplay between formal, *hidden*, and *outside curricula*. One criterion for assessment, central to evaluating *authentic* education and radicalization alike, is if formal schooling was *transformative* in inspiring students to take *action* (Freire 1970; Qualter 1962; Cross and Snow 2011).[591] While the reasons young people embrace violent extremism are often highly personal, three common themes are reinforced through post-Oslo schooling:

One of the most common reasons driving young people to participate in political extremism, with direct relevance to the Class of 2000, is a lack of trust in official narratives. As highlighted by research in numerous contexts experiencing violent extremism, a majority of militants (75%) polled cite a lack of trust in public officials as a primary impetus for joining an extremist group (UNDP 2017). While such data is not specifically disaggregated in Gaza, this motivation clearly holds significance to post-Oslo students who routinely criticize the formal narratives presented by the PA as 'shit.'[592] As stated, only two members of the Class of 2000 interviewed for this case study trusted nonviolent narratives as presented within formal curriculum.[593] More common amongst Gazan students were criticisms against the partisan nature of PA textbooks, which were habitually framed as *tajeel*, or to misleading someone so they are more easily manipulated. In challenging the trustworthiness of the PA, Odai rhetorically asks: 'Are you trying to fool me?'[594] It is because of this cynicism, Medo reminds us, why 'more and more people are challenging the educational sector in Palestine.'[595] Ayah, in agreement, merely adds, 'We've heard enough lies.'[596]

A second theme commonly associated with driving violent extremism is abuse and humiliation. Underscoring this concern is research highlighting that young people who are abused or otherwise humiliated within conflict zones are especially prone to violent extremism (Mercy Corps 2015; Webber et al. 2017). This issue is particularly relevant to Gazan schooling where educational hierarchy is routinely enforced through corporal punishment and other callous forms of *hidden curriculum*. As underscored, 41% of student interviewees shared unsolicited experiences of how corporal punishment was the 'worst thing' they recall about school, supported by complementary research highlighting that eight out of 10 students in Gaza are routinely assaulted by teaching staff (Gershoff 2017).[597] In turn, it is not difficult to appreciate how school-centered violence, or 'discipline before education' (*At-Tarbiyah Qabl At-Teleem*) as it is know, provokes violent aspirations amongst students.[598] As Hyman and Perone (1998) posit, efforts by school officials to discipline students with violence often merely provokes further violence. For the Class of 2000, the practical effect of this widespread educational practice is relatively straightforward: After teaching staff 'beat the shit out of me,' explains Ahmed, 'I wanted to kill them.'[599]

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[591] Freire's (1970) *reflection and action* parallels Qualter's (1962) 'understood and acted upon' criteria for authentic persuasion, while *direct action* is a core component of radicalization for Cross and Snow (2011).
[592] Field interview with MR112 (2014).
[593] Field interviews with MR119 and WR207 (2014).
[594] Field interview with MR120 (2014).
[595] Field interview with MR126 (2014).
[596] General focus group content from November 2014.
[597] Field interview with MG122 (2014).
[598] While ministries 'of education' are customary throughout the world, ministries of 'discipline and education' (*Wazarat al-Tarbiyah wa-al-ta'lim*) are far more common regionally, hence highlighting the foundational importance of discipline to prepare the students for the secondary task of learning (Field interview with M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist 2013).
[599] Field interview with MR105 (2014).

A final driver of extremist violence is its contextualization within wider conflict. As more generalized research highlights, 88% of extremist violence has occurred within ongoing conflict – with 92% of such violence in direct response to state-sponsored violence (IEP 2015: 3). This holds meaningful relevance to the Class of 2000 as many of their most significant pedagogical experiences in school were shaped by the larger conflict. This includes witnessing the *direct violence* of hundreds of schools being damaged or destroyed, as well as over 1,000 of their fellow students being killed.[600] As mentioned, the death of students became so routine in post-Oslo Gaza that a tradition developed around leaving the deceased students' pictures or similar tribute (*ejlal*) on their desk for the remainder of the school year. And while arguments can be made that such violence is not technically incorporated within PA schooling, it is important to note that student participation is a core component of formal education – and clarify that any adversity experienced en route to or at school are firmly grounded within the *structural violence* of the post-Oslo era.[601] As codified within the Oslo Accords, Israeli control over Palestinian schooling and larger security affairs is absolute.[602] These underlying realities, when taken together with senior Israeli officials routinely boasting of 'teaching Gaza a lesson' with overwhelming violence, underscore the Class of 2000's widespread belief that violence against the educational system is merely another wider aspect of inculcating obedience within *hidden curriculum*.[603] Positioning Palestinian schooling within the conflict, argue many Gazan students, is not anomalous, but instead by design.[604] As Abu Bashir theorizes, 'What I think is the entire architecture of the educational process in Palestine was designed by outsiders to fulfill their agendas… But we know you will never be a free man literally as long as someone is twisting your arm.'[605] In turn, many students from the Class of 2000 were quick to point out how such experiences profoundly influenced their views towards extremism. 'Imagine all this violence… How many radicals would it generate? How many terrorists? How many Resistance fighters? How many suicide bombers?,

[600] While there is no definitive count of Gazan schools damaged or destroyed by state-sponsored violence over the course of the post-Oslo era, as a sample 300 educational institutions were damaged or destroyed by Israel in Operation Pillar of Defense and 80% of schools were damaged or destroyed in Operation Swords of Iron (UNOHCHR 2024). As stated, between September 29th, 2000 and April 30th, 2015 1,047 Gazan minors were killed by Israeli forces (Btselem 2024a).

[601] As stated, 'formal education' is defined as all curriculum and participation that serves as the basis of the certification process within primary and secondary school (UNESCO 2013: 27).

[602] Per Article 7, Point 5 of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, any changes to the Palestinian educational system must be submitted to the relevant Israeli authorities for review. And only if 'at the end of the thirty-day period Israel has not communicated any opposition concerning the proposed legislation, such legislation shall enter into force' (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1994). And per Annex 1, Article 2, Point 1A, Palestinians being limited to a police force are not allowed to have any armed forces, while Annex 1, Article 1, Point 7 highlights that nothing within the Oslo Accords shall derogate Israel's security powers (United Nations 1995).

[603] According to Vallance, the functions of *hidden curriculum* more specifically include 'the inculcation of values, political socialization, training in obedience and docility, the perpetuation of traditional class structure-functions that may be characterized generally as social control' (1991: 94).

[604] As mentioned in Chapter Three, in December 2008 Israeli spokesperson Mark Regev explained, 'We want to teach Hamas a lesson. I think we want Hamas to understand that firing rockets at Israeli civilians is going to hurt them much more than it's going to hurt us' (NPR 2008). In 2014 Minister Yisrael Katz similarly urged the Prime Minister to 'Teach Hamas a lesson they will never forget,' which was further echoed by Benjamin Netanyahu proclaiming, 'If they forget this lesson, they will learn it again the hard way' (Ynet 2014). This rhetoric gained further traction beyond Israel, with Egyptian journalist Muhammad Hassan al Alfi arguing, 'We should teach [Gaza] a lesson like Israel did' (Al-Alfi 2014).

[605] Field interview with MR116 (2014).

Bilal asks. 'Well, *akeed* Israel surely knows this, yet they maintain their same strategies, their same hatred, and their same humiliation.'[606] As Ebaa reaffirms, 'Against such assaults, we're all turned into fighters.'[607]

In reviewing the educational experiences of the Class of 2000, it is subsequently clear that there is considerable interplay between formal schooling and violent extremism in Gaza. As outlined, Post-Oslo schooling's partisan presentation of the conflict, violent enforcement of institutional hierarchy, and wider grounding within state-sponsored violence match up well with commonly associated drivers of violent extremism. In appreciating these influences, as well as how Gazan students accurately framed them against a lack of viable alternatives, the violent trajectories of the Class of 2000 appear as a largely *rational* response to the formal and informal lessons learned growing up amidst conflict in Gaza.[608] Building from these cumulative understandings, the pivotal criterion is if formal schooling in Gaza was *transformative* in encouraging violent extremism, the consistent answer is yes – in routinely alienating Gazan students away from state-building and towards the relative utility of violence.

The counterproductive influence of PA schooling driving young Gazans towards violence is reinforced by those closest to the issue. As Dr. Basem Naim, the former Hamas minister and high-ranking official, explains, 'Of course lying is no way to engage radicalization. That would never work. This whole approach is very naive and silly. You can't just copy paste something from New York and try and implement it here in Gaza. If you try to teach young people in Gaza about democracy and human rights, they will point to the rubble and say "This is the result of your words."' In inquiring if such contradictions – as facilitated by PA schooling – were *transformative* to Gazan youth, Dr. Naim looks no further than his own son who fought and died alongside Qassam as a 17-year-old. As he reflects on the PA's nonviolent curriculum to combat such radicalization, he simply adds 'The young people know they are being lied to.'[609] Reaffirming this perspective is Hamas' Head of Internal Security, Abu Mohamed, arguing 'that this debate somehow is more political than realistically reflecting the reality on the ground.' As he continues, 'Our youth are well educated about this conflict. They know history and they know the roots of this occupation. You can't identify radicalization as you wish and try to impose it to a different community. And you can't control the will of people.' In expanding on the PA's focus on nonviolent education, Abu Mohamed clarifies, 'The effect of the curriculum is limited, as it's not the only tool. If you ask people to be peaceful and then have them killed day and night it will backfire.'[610]

[606] Field interview with MR109 (2014).
[607] Field interview with SI203 (2014).
[608] Support for violence amongst the Class of 2000 aligns with the sociological criteria for evaluating behavior as rational in that it is goal-oriented, reflective, and consistent, whereby irrational behavior is random, impulsive, conditioned, or adopted by imitation. Furthermore, responding to incentives, which the Class of 2000 routinely does, indicates the strongest level of rationality (Berrebi 2009: 169-70). For assessing if someone is rationally capable of evaluating risking their own life, i.e. the high-risk activity often inherently tied to radicalization, Appelbaum and Grisso's medical criteria is uniquely relevant. Specifically, militants interviewed within this inquiry routinely 1) understood the relevant information, 2) appreciated context and the risks and benefits of action, 3) reasoned their way to a conclusion, and 4) communicated their choice (Appelbaum and Grisso 1998).
[609] B Naim 2023, personal communication.
[610] Field interview with SI207 (2023).

CONCLUSION

Building on earlier insights that formal curriculum was of limited significance to Palestinian youth growing up in Gaza, Chapter Five set out to more thoroughly analyze the relative failure of formal education to reduce support for violence in the post-Oslo era. This included first framing stakeholder goals as distinct near-term and longer-term objectives. Over the near-term the inaugural Palestinian curriculum was found to have achieved its initial aims, notably by avoiding the *cultural violence* often associated with incitement and routinely featured in regional textbooks. Post-Oslo educational programming was similarly successful in rolling out a widely anticipated inaugural Palestinian educational system that, as a rare accomplishment, legitimized both the Palestinian Authority and the 'continued viability' of the peace process beyond its interim phase (Section A). Yet in prioritizing near-term political objectives, Oslo stakeholders placed little corresponding focus on longer-term goals and correspondingly failed to cultivate mutual understanding or mitigate radicalization (Section B). With these more straightforward matters noted, the chapter then focused on the central question of *why* formal schooling failed to mitigate support for violence over the longer-term. This included underscoring that by neglecting many of the violent realities Gazans are forced to confront every day, students gradually abandoned state-building narratives as well as any associated encouragement for mutual understanding (Section C). In deeming such *legitimate knowledge* to be irrelevant to life amidst conflict, students from the Class of 2000 subsequently embraced wider perspectives whereby they increasingly found not only more meaningful explanations for the conflict, but potent arguments driving radicalization (Section D). In both neglecting to present relevant explanations of the conflict and the wider influence of public pedagogy, formal schooling not only failed to mitigate support for violence over the long-term, but routinely provoked it. As Falastine summarizes her widely held understanding, by attending PA schooling 'I wasted 10 years of my life and that lesson will stay with me forever.'[611]

[611] Field interview with WR203 (2014).

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

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INTRODUCTION

Regrettably, armed conflict remains an enduring challenge around the world with few straightforward solutions available.[612] To help confront this stubborn dilemma international stakeholders and their national partners routinely embrace formal education to help mitigate support for such hostilities. This approach is based within the prevailing functionalist assumption that the socialization and skill-building of schooling is positively associated with less violence, warranting the $3.6 billion in educational assistance that is channeled to 'fragile countries' annually.[613] Yet within the 61 armed conflicts currently taking place globally little is fully understood about how youth are actually influenced by such traditions. To address the ambiguity, this research set out to utilize Palestinian students as a case study to better understand the often-opaque process of employing formal schooling to shape political understandings amidst conflict – and whether these efforts meaningfully shape attitudes on the ground. Specifically, this thesis set out to answer if formal education in post-Oslo Gaza was indeed unsuccessful in reducing support for violence, and if so, *why*?

After over four years of field research engaging directly with Gazan students and their various curricula a consistent perspective was observed whereby the traditional centrality of formal education was largely misplaced. For example, while the inaugural Palestinian curriculum successfully avoids incitement and other forms of *cultural violence*, as prioritized by more universalist approaches to peacebuilding, such tepid offerings were ultimately found to be unconnected to the wider Gazan context as lived by students. Skepticism towards formal education was particularly evident on any matters of a political nature, whereby partisan narratives featured in textbooks were routinely accused of factional bias, manipulation, and perhaps most disconcerting to their respective sponsors, irrelevance. Supporting such feedback were commonly 'disappointed' student views of intellectually 'degrading' Palestinian curriculum that deliberately misrepresents *direct violence* and the *structural violence* that reinforces it within this settler-colonial setting.[614] In doing so, this research confirms its first assumption that formal schooling in post-Oslo Gaza is not exclusively associated with the 'positive face' of education, and that partisan meddling undercut the relevance of nonviolent programming to engage otherwise interested students.

Further compromising formal education's ability to mitigate support for violence was *hidden curriculum,* which routinely comprising corporal punishment, was described by Gazan students as the 'bad memories from school.'[615] A majority of interviewees from the Class of 2000 recall *direct violence* as a core feature of their scholastic tenure – purportedly aimed at reinforcing hierarchy above all other considerations – with several students specifically underscoring how such 'violence was the worst.'[616] Contrary to the 'positive face' of schooling commonly assumed to comprise formal education, the students of Gaza alternatively endured more callous lessons that dramatically undermined nonviolent narratives, as presented by the PA's inaugural curriculum. Such pedagogical experiences, in concert with more militant

[612] As outlined in Chapter One, the number of armed conflicts throughout the world has been steadily increasing over the post-Second World War era, with 61 state-based conflicts taking place in 2024 – the highest in 70 years (Davies et al. 2023; PRIO 2025; Strand and Hegre 2021; UCDP 2025).
[613] Average ODA disbursed to 'fragile countries' for education annually over the post-Oslo era was $3.6 billion (OECD 2019). *See* Appendix One.
[614] General focus group content from November 2014.
[615] General focus group content from November 2014.
[616] Field interview with MR105 (2014).

counter-narratives most prominently presented by Hamas' *National Education*, confirm the second assumption that the features of a conflict environment significantly complicate formal education's ability to shape understandings towards violence (HMoEHE 2013b).

Finally, the influence of formal curriculum, while never absolute and routinely compromised by the adverse realities of educational practice, was further diminished as Palestinian students reconciled unanswered questions through their wider pedagogical perspectives amidst conflict. As one student, Asem, reflects on the true direction of education in Gaza, 'Perhaps my cognitive and political orientation was influenced not by the formal lessons that then followed me outside, but instead the outside world that accompanied me into school and shaped my evolving intellect.'[617] Similar to periodic clues from conflict zones around the world, public pedagogy in Gaza routinely informs student understandings that directly challenge *legitimate knowledge* as ascribed by partisan stakeholders, which helps explain why support for violence not only increased over the post-Oslo era – but notably doubled without any meaningful factional instruction. As Janine recalls, 'Textbooks did not reflect the political reality I lived. In my opinion they did not impact my cultural and cognitive and political beliefs. If anything, they actually contradict most of what I believe.'[618] In documenting such perspectives, this research underscores the third assumption guiding this inquiry that students do not represent a *blank page* that will passively accept content, as presented.

In considering such insights, this research concludes that post-Oslo formal education not only failed to mitigate support for violence in Gaza but furthermore compromised wider nonviolent engagement by alienating students towards more violent perspectives through its partisan bias. The following section highlights such conclusions, as well as their scholarly and policy implications.

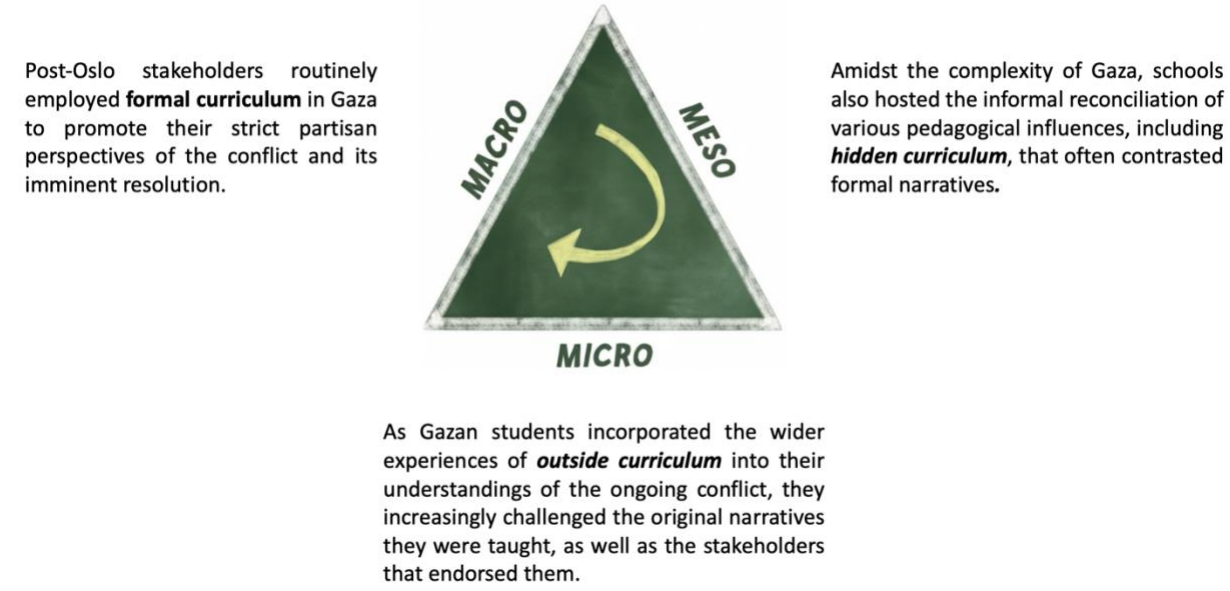

Fig. 19. The interplay between different types of education in post-Oslo Gaza.

[617] Field interview with MR125 (2014).
[618] Field interview with WR208 (2014).

ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION

The findings gathered in this research, generally confirming the inquiry's theoretical framework, offer numerous scholarly contributions towards its core focus within education, as well as ancillary disciplines interested in better understanding the efficacy of schooling in mitigating support for violence in and around conflict.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Building from educational assistance as a traditionally neglected area of International Relations, this research usefully underscores its partisan nature and practical limitations. As stated, while comprising one of the preeminent conflict mitigation tools within foreign aid little attention has traditionally been dedicated towards interrogating the political nature or questionable efficacy of educational assistance amidst conflict. By examining the partisan development and practical implementation of peacebuilding education amidst conflict, this case study diverges from liberal convention that education promotes mutual understanding. Alternatively, it supports the realist contention that the exchange of ideas (as well as goods, services, and technology) traditionally embraced as a straightforward means to mitigate conflict is often 'merely the velvet glove concealing the iron hand' (Ferguson 2004: 24). Be it the partisan aims justifying its funding or the coercive nature of its development and application, the PA's peacebuilding curriculum was ultimately a straightforward lesson in hard power.

Appreciating the political nature of educational programming, as well as its punitive enforcement, is of course not new to International Relations. Marxist scholars have long recognized the repressive political potential of formal curriculum, as well as the more insidious nature of the school environment supporting it (Althusser 1971; Bowles and Gintis 1976). From the formation of *legitimate knowledge* to *hidden curriculum*, Gazan students and their experiences in the post-Oslo era would clearly recognize the use of formal education to legitimize power over subordinate groups and support such critiques. Yet underscoring the coercive nature of formal education and its partisan intent is merely one aspect of this case study. Disputing functionalist and Marxist assumptions that students passively endure schooling as taught, the Class of 2000 vocally resisted educational programming as its bias became increasingly apparent. While theorists routinely assume that students will either 'play by the rules' or be swayed by 'material capabilities' and 'tangible assets,' Gazan students were quick to underscore their autonomy (Mearsheimer 2001: 55; Waltz 1979: 113).[619] The Class of 2000, for instance, was uniformly unmoved by the quantitative clout of $3 billion in record-breaking education assistance in forming their political understandings.[620] As Medo so eloquently puts it, 'Fuck you. It's not about the facilities – it's all about the will to learn.'[621] Instead, students in Gaza resoundingly argue against the perceived power of decreeing formal educational narratives through material resources (or rules) amidst the complex realities of conflict, as well as the assumption that students will passively accept them. As Hollis argues, with Palestinian students 'checkbook diplomacy doesn't work' (2019: 142).

[619] For students electing to 'play by the rules' of formal education to optimize their outcomes as opposed to being *blank slates*, *see* Bordieu's *illusio* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

[620] During the 1990s, development assistance to Palestinians was 'going well beyond' other comparable contexts, with per capita aid often comprising 15% of all economic activity (Clawson and Gedal 1999: 23). Measured against their economy, Palestinians became the highest per capita recipients of international development assistance in the world' (Lasensky 2005: 50).

[621] Field interview with MR126 (2014).

Alternatively, this case study clearly illustrates that post-Oslo youth in Gaza are employing the wider availability of information to critically challenge the centrality of formal educational narratives. In doing so, this research generally supports the liberal perspective that states do not possess the only tools of educational significance, and that a wider range of non-hierarchical influences increasingly shape contemporary understandings and actions through complex and diverse interdependencies (Keohane and Nye 1998). Furthermore, it bolsters the associated perspective that with the wider availability of information – by some estimates compounding at 60% annually and what has been dubbed the 'information revolution' – influence now resides less in the ability to produce and transmit information than in creating and maintaining the credibility needed to attract an audience (Nye 2008: 99).

Building from such findings, this research generally supports constructivist beliefs based around the idea that knowledge is constructed, built from wider experiences that form the basis for the understanding of new information.[622] In documenting how young people living within conflict acquire and organize information, this research underscores the construction of knowledge whereby students reflect on and reorganize information as a transformative process (Piaget 1977; Fosnot and Perry 1996). As argued, formal education continues to play a preliminary role within contested settings, whereby schooling presents ideas and norms endorsed as *legitimate knowledge*. But instead of 'playing the game,' as some theories suggest, Gazan students actively challenge the credibility of formal narratives and those stakeholders endorsing them. This thoughtful autonomy, thriving under the most adverse of circumstances, adds to this case study's unique contribution to International Relations whereby states and higher-level institutions should no longer be seen as the only rational stakeholders.

CRITICAL PEACE EDUCATION

While not prominently featured within International Relations, this case study builds from the construction of knowledge in further reinforcing critical pedagogy and its more specialized derivative, critical peace education. While constructivist educational perspectives are traditionally oriented towards promoting active participation in more stable settings, the 'negative face' of schooling as featured by Palestinian educational practice and Gazan students' corresponding tradition of actively resisting it are more uniquely aligned with critical pedagogy (Freire 1970; Giroux 1997; Shor 1980). In embracing a process of *conscientization* whereby the Class of 2000 observed, reflected, and became more conscious of their oppressive situation, this case study – and its cohort taking action to challenge the status quo – robustly supports critical pedagogy's perspective on learning amidst contested communities (Freire 1970: 126).

Continuing from the wider theoretical support of critical pedagogy, this research further underscores more specialized efforts to promote peace through critical peace education. Discounting the superficial nature of universalized peace education, critical peace education instead reinforces Freire's assertion that for schooling to be *authentic* it must move beyond theoretical isolation and instead be 'concerned with reality' (Bajaj 2008: 140; Freire 1970: 64). As Gazan students were clear in emphasizing the importance of acknowledging both *direct violence* and *structural violence*, this research strongly supports the core emphasis of critical peace education and Galtung's foundational work promoting *positive peace* (Bajaj 2015; Bajaj and Brantmeier 2011; Galtung 1969; Salomon 2002; Wintersteiner 2015).

[622] This is consistent with the wider constructivist assumption that human knowledge is actively constructed and that associations are primarily determined by shared ideas, rather than material forces, that are constructed rather than given by nature (Wendt 1999: 1).

In addition to supporting the central contention of critical peace education that local and structural realities must be incorporated into educational programming to genuinely promote *positive peace*, this research goes further in highlighting the limited role of formal education within the wider pedagogical influences of active conflict. While critical peace education, as well as conventional functionalist thinking, continues to presuppose a significant role for formal schooling as students assess their surroundings, the Class of 2000 underscores the alternative importance of public pedagogy within this evolving process. As emphasized by student interviewees, the Class of 2000 habitually questions the relevance of formal education, be it from the PA or Hamas, rating its usefulness a mere 1.1 out of 10, while outside experiences are valued as considerably more influential at 8.9 out of 10. This contrast, as underscored repeatedly within the case study, adds unique insights to this evolving understanding, with direct relevance to wider academic discussions on how to best engage students amidst adverse circumstances. Specifically, it emphasizes that in guiding their own education development both inside and outside the classroom, students are, as much as anyone, active stakeholders (Davies and Talbot 2008; Winthrop and Kirk 2008). In turn, if civics and peacebuilding curriculum hopes to be effective it must remain relevant to the wider pedagogical perspectives available to contemporary students (Bajaj and Brantmeier 2011; Bajaj 2015; Gur Ze'ev 2001; Salmon 2002; Schubert 1986, 2010; Schultz and Baricovich 2010; Wintersteiner 2015).

RADICALIZATION

A final scholarly contribution from this research involves the unsettled debate between education and violence, with particular relevance to radicalization. As has been previously discussed, the enduring assumption that political violence is equated with a lack of educational empowerment remains remarkably durable. And while earlier research has found militants to be wealthier and, most relevant to this inquiry, better educated than the populations from which they came, this debate remains largely quantitative and lacks the depth needed to more convincingly illustrate the nuance at play behind wider trends (Russell and Miller 1977; Gambetta and Hertog 2009; Ferracuti and Bruno 1981; Clark 1983; Weinburg and Eubank 1987). Selective monographs on radicalization, alternatively, routinely remain narrow in focus and arguably prejudicial. As El-Said underscores, appreciating the push and pull of radicalization is 'not easy' (2015: 92). Yet because the perception of violence as a reflexive reaction to ignorance persists in many academic discussions, this research helpfully moves beyond such limited views to highlight the evolution towards hostility from a more holistic perspective. As Straus (2006) argues, many actors make rational decisions to participate in violence not based on ignorance, indoctrination, or isolation but instead because of the unique circumstances they faced *locally*. As the Class of 2000 emphasizes, the common drivers of violent extremism including dishonesty, abuse, and the wider conflict itself were much more significant in provoking further violence than anything they were told to believe. In exploring such phenomena at greater depth this case study provides rare insight into the rationalized perspectives of young people disclosing how wider educational perspectives led to their near universal support for political violence, as well as often embracing higher risk options to achieve their political goals (otherwise known as radicalization). Ongoing debates involving education and political violence would be well-served by considering such local experiences rather than merely hypothesizing on the understandings of those who are conveniently labeled 'radicals' from afar.

In providing such intimate insights into how political understandings are constructed amidst conflict, the Class of 2000 has made a unique contribution to several academic disciplines. In challenging the functionalist assumption that schooling plays a central role in informing largely passive students, this research alternatively reinforces the relevance of critical peace education and public pedagogy in peacebuilding. As Freire underscores, for education to *authentically* create 'a world in which it is easier to love,' it must be 'concerned with reality' as lived by young people amidst conflict (Freire 1970: 38, 64).

Neglecting such perspectives, as Gazan students remind us repeatedly throughout the research, will merely promote further violence.

POLICY CONTRIBUTION

While the academic contributions from this inquiry offer meaningful additions to better illuminate how young people learn amidst conflict, also notable are the direct insights this research offers policymakers habitually inclined to employ educational programming to mitigate violence amidst conflict. As highlighted within this case study, facilitating larger amounts of formal education, in itself, produces no direct reduction in violence. If anything, greater exposure to prosaic content clearly provoked students who felt they were being politically manipulated amidst a more violent reality. Such findings will come as little surprise to those familiar with regional educational practice, as dictating political narratives traditionally commands little influence unless such descriptions are tethered to the wider circumstances facing local communities.[623] Going back to the founding of Israel in 1948, the State Department acknowledged that 'the value of the information program is dependent upon basic American policy. We are judged by our actions in the political field, notably the Palestine issue.'[624] And with the availability of information continuing to increase, there is little reason to believe this will change moving forward. As Douglas Lovelace, the former Director of the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College, argues, conventional ideational campaigns are increasingly unlikely to 'win' any converts, while 'physical events, whether intended or incidental, typically play determining roles in the ways wars of ideas unfolds' (Echevarria 2008: iii). It is neglecting such understandings that largely explains why the United States and its partners – at the height of their regional power and bolstered by record-breaking investments in educational programming – were roundly unsuccessful in convincing the Class of 2000 that diplomacy and state-building were more relevant to their future than further violence.

OCTOBER 7th

It is unfortunate that such concerns were not heeded, either during the development of post-Oslo programming or amidst the ongoing collapse of the peace process, as history once again repeats itself.[625] For instance, throughout this inquiry and beyond Gazan youth have been vocalizing their frustration with the failings of the Oslo Accords for all who would listen. As repeated time and time again, students from the Class of 2000 would stress that no Palestinian would consider Gaza as a post-conflict setting, deeming this framing merely as more *structural violence*.[626] Frustration stemming from such routine neglect continued to build, and gradually turned to exasperation with expanding annexations in the West Bank, provocations at Al-Aqsa Mosque, Palestine's marginalization within the Abraham Accords, and the ongoing siege of Gaza.[627] Consequently, interviewees from this inquiry and many of their militant peers chose to confront these issues directly on October 7th, 2023 with Operation Al-Aqsa Flood (*Tufan al-*

[623] A majority of respondents polled throughout the Middle East routinely emphasized that U.S. approaches in the region – including the Oslo Accords – are judged according to evidence, not purported values. *See* zogbyresearchservices.com for relevant polling over time.

[624] U.S. Public Affairs Officer Armin Meyer, as cited in Vaughn (2004). *See also* Moraff (2011).

[625] In merely the latest incident of policymakers not listening to relevant stakeholders, the U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan boasted of deescalating the crisis in Gaza and bringing unprecedented quiet to the Middle East – mere days before October 7th (Sullivan 2024).

[626] General focus group content from November 2014.

[627] The Abraham Accords are a series of bilateral agreements normalizing relations between Israel and Bahrain, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates – notably without Palestinian participation.

Aqsa).[628] As Fanon would frame it, the youth of Gaza 'shakes the world' as they challenged the prevailing premise that Israel alone has the sovereign right to state violence (2001: 44). Expanding on this thinking the former Hamas minister, Dr. Naim, explains that the intolerable status quo could only be altered through violent resistance: Learning from 'the history in Vietnam, in Somalia, in South Africa, in Algiers. At the end there are not peaceful NGOs who will come and say, "Sorry we have bothered you for some years and now we are leaving and please forgive us." They are so brutal and bloody that they will not leave except with the same tools they are using' (quoted in Scahill 2024). After four days of pushing back, the carnage had taken the lives of 1,055 Israelis, including 314 soldiers and 741 civilians, with 252 others brought to Gaza as a combination of prisoners and hostages.[629] In a completely predictable response, the Government of Israel then declared Operation Swords of Iron (*al-Suof al-Hadidya*) as 'an uncompromising war to destroy Hamas' military capabilities and topple its regime in the Gaza Strip.'[630] Towards this end, the Israeli military unleashed over 70,000 tons of ordinance in Gaza that has, 20 months into the war, killed at least 61,800 Palestinians (whose bodies have so far been recovered), while estimates go as high as 309,000 deaths with casualties assumed to be under many of the 300,000 damaged and destroyed homes.[631] Notably, things are so bad that most Gazans simply refer to this phase of the conflict as The Genocide (*Harb al-Ibada*). As Zainab, a teacher who has so far survived the war in Gaza City, laments, 'It's like a nightmare you don't wake up from.'[632]

Yet for all the violence unleashed on Gaza through Swords of Iron, there is very little to suggest that this approach will do much to pacify the conflict. Over its first year Israel announced the killing of 20,000 Hamas militants out of an estimated 30-40,000 fighters it maintained at the start of the war (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2024b; Pape 2024). In response to the brutality, however, Hamas has remained the most popular political party in Gaza by a 10-point margin and there is little to indicate comprehensive surrender anytime soon. Prior to October 7th, roughly half of Gazans (51%) supported armed resistance, while that number understandably fluctuated between 36% and 56% over the subsequent year of fighting (PCPSR 2024a). Yet what is more relevant than polling the entire community is narrowing in on the perspectives of those young men most likely to embrace *direct action* against Israel. And while no updated polling is available locally during the second year of the war, anecdotal insights suggest that the 80% of Gazans having a family member killed or injured, in addition to much of the rest of their lives being destroyed, has created so much anger that Hamas can 'easily recruit thousands of young fighters' to replace those it has lost in battle (PCPSR 2024b).[633] Mohammad Baghdady, a Gazan security expert closely familiar with both Hamas and other Palestinian factions, further describes the ongoing dynamic fueling this resistance:

[628] The assumed participation of interviewees from the Class of 2000 was confirmed through a field interview with SI107 (2024). For the specific justifications on why Hamas attacked Israel on October 7th, *see Our Narrative* (Hamas Media Office 2024).

[629] Additionally, 68 foreign nationals were also casualties from the attack on October 7th (United Nations Human Rights Council 2024). For more detailed information, *see* Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2024a).

[630] As described on the Israeli Knesset website, the only goal listed for Operation Swords of Iron is to topple Hamas, with no mention of rescuing the hostages (Israeli Knesset 2024).

[631] For ordinance used in Gaza, *see* Euromed (2024). For Palestinian casualties, *see* AJLabs (2025), PCBS (2024), and Jamaluddine et al. (2025) highlighting that for every direct killing in conflict, there are on average four additional indirect deaths, totaling an estimated 309,000 deceased Gazans. For damage to housing, *see* UNDP (2024), UNOSAT (2024), and World Bank et al. (2025).

[632] Field Interview with SI205 (2025).

[633] Field interview with Mohammad Baghdady (2024).

> Earlier this year there were limited protests against Hamas as people are exhausted with the war. However, the support of the community in general for Hamas is still there, and there's still a category of youth (20 to 25 years old) willing to fight against Israel, not necessarily with Hamas, but with anyone that gives them the chance. This new category is different from what Hamas used to recruit before. Before the war, Hamas' system of recruitment was based on strict selection criteria and ideological background. The new category now basically comprises those guys who have lost family members, their homes, are being starved, see no other option, and want to join. They were born and raised in the blockade and don't know what normal living standards mean. Israel, in a way, created this hopeless generation over the past two decades, with nothing to live for they are literally pushed to the edge in this war. How hard do you think it would be to recruit someone who has lost his home and his family, has no food, no money, no health care, and no hope for the future? And don't forget that he could die at any moment from a random airstrike. I hear this a lot. People's risk tolerance is now insanely high. So why wait to die?[634]

As then-U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken himself acknowledged at the end of his tenure supporting the war, 'Indeed, we assess that Hamas has recruited almost as many new militants as it has lost,' admitting that Operation Swords of Iron was merely 'a recipe for an enduring insurgency and perpetual war' (2025).[635] Baghdady echoes this sentiment from Gaza, underscoring, 'If you continue the war without a lasting solution and then resume the blockade, with no rebuilding, no opportunities, and no access to basic necessities, I guarantee you that the number of Hamas fighters will double, with a majority of them shaped by this war. Who do you think is fighting now in north Gaza, or in Rafah? Many are the new recruits provoked by this war. [636]

Similarly troublingly are the tenuous plans, when discussed at all, to pacify Gaza over the longer-term through education. Repeating explanations that could have been uttered by any of the foreign powers occupying Palestine over the last 150 years, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu once again cites 'teaching children to be terrorists' as both a cause of October 7th and the solution moving forward. 'The real thing we want to see is genuine de-radicalization,' Netanyahu declared. 'They have to stop teaching their children to become terrorists... They have to stop teaching and indoctrinating a whole generation on the annihilation of Israel' (quoted in i24 2024a). Expanding on this thinking, Netanyahu's 'Day after Hamas' plan subsequently calls for the 'de-radicalization' of the Gazan educational system (Magid 2024). The guiding principles for this approach include 'purifying the educational system' through disbanding UNRWA – one of the largest and most liberal educational providers in Gaza – and reforming Palestinian curriculum to highlight 'the existence of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people' (Horev et al. 2024). And while no further details have been offered, loosely reminiscent of post-Oslo American planning, partisan stakeholders have nonetheless celebrated the approach. Commenting on the draft plan, Tzachi Hanegb, the Director of the Israeli National Security Council, frames it as 'brilliant' (quoted in i24 2024b).

[634] Field interview with Mohammad Baghdady (2025).
[635] This is reinforced by Israeli defense officials estimating that Hamas has already replaced the fighters it lost in battle through recruiting new volunteers and has re-established it's 40,000-strong force in Gaza (Kubovich 2025).
[636] Field interview with Mohammad Baghdady (2025).

Fig. 20. The Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, Arieh King, mocks the 're-education' of kidnapped Gazans as they're blindfolded and held in the back of an armored personnel carrier while being lectured on Beitar Jerusalem, infamously the 'most racist football club in Israel.'[637]

Of course, those familiar with this issue understand it won't work. Secretary Blinken was clear in stating that the American government has 'long made the point to the Israeli government that Hamas cannot be defeated by a military campaign alone – that without a clear alternative, a post-conflict plan and a credible political horizon for the Palestinians, Hamas, or something just as abhorrent and dangerous, will grow back' (2025). But as Mike Casey, formerly one of only two State Department officers explicitly focused on Gaza during the war, explains, 'The more informed you become on this issue, you can't avoid realizing how bad it is.' Yet every potential approach that Casey and his colleagues would propose to address the problems in Gaza was routinely overruled, with the White House simply saying, 'Well, the Israelis have another idea.' In the end Casey laments, 'We don't have a policy on Palestine. We just do what the Israelis want us to do' (quoted in Gedeon 2024).

Asking members of the Class of 2000 about this longer-term proposal to re-educate Gaza is unfortunately not possible as most of the cohort is now in hiding, currently fighting, or already deceased. Building from their previous criticism, however, it can be assumed that they would first ask where this plan would take place after the entire educational system in Gaza has been obliterated in what the United Nations has deemed 'scholasticide.'[638] Yet much more problematic for former and future students is *how* the

[637] For more information on Beitar Jerusalem, the 'most racist football club in Israel,' *see* The Economist 2020.

[638] Over the course of Swords of Iron, at least 261 teachers, 95 professors, and 17,000 school-aged children have been killed in Gaza, as well as 80% of schools and 13 libraries being damaged or destroyed (Unicef 2025; UNOHCHR

education system was destroyed, with casual, yet seemingly calculated, indifference. As highlighted by IDF soldier Y.S. Barber's viral TikTok clip from his deployment during the war, 'For all those asking why there are no education in Gaza. Oops. We've had a missile fall on them. That sucks.'[639] Perverse pedagogical influences like this have clearly been noticed by Gazan youth, in addition to many more visceral experiences that accompany watching 28 of their friends and fellow students be killed each day, that have scarred lessons of war into the next generation of Palestinians that no textbook will erase (Unicef 2025). As Zainab, the teacher in Gaza City that has been homeless for well over a year, sardonically opines on Netanyahu's plans, 'I don't think it will work out.'[640] Consequently, re-educating any Gazans that survive will likely be no different following October 7th than it was in the post-Oslo era – with the exception that the optimism of the early 1990s has been replaced with the wonton destruction of 2024, unprecedented starvation in 2025, and a future complicated by unbridled rage.[641] So while the former head of Israeli military intelligence General Aharon Haliva claims that Palestinians need to experience such callous lessons as a 'message for future generations,' the Class of 2000 would explicitly disagree (quoted in Channel 12 2025). As Gaza veteran and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Chris Hedges accurately recognizes, 'Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are being radicalized right now. And we're going to hear from them. And it's not going to be good' (quoted in Robinson's Podcast Clips 2025). New approaches are desperately needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While acknowledging the absurdity of Israel's day-after plans for 're-educating' Gaza, it is nonetheless unlikely that educational assistance will relinquish its central role within conflict mitigation anytime soon. In turn, the student perspectives underpinning this case study offer numerous insights that can help improve the efficacy of subsequent programming, in Gaza and beyond.

As stated, one of the most common reasons driving young people to participate in political extremism, with direct relevance to the Class of 2000, is a lack of trust in official narratives (UNDP 2017). In turn, one of the paramount recommendations from this research is that the *legitimate knowledge* presented within formal curricula must be honest. Addressing both the PA and Hamas, Abu Bashir implores those managing education to 'stop lying to us.'[642] And central to this is acknowledging the *direct violence* that typically surrounds schooling amidst conflict. If peacebuilding education is applied amidst active and ongoing conflict, it is imperative that programming move beyond the theoretical socialization of 'a unified and peaceful world,' and instead recognize the violent and often dynamic complexity facing local communities (Danesh 2011: 59). Such an approach is based less as a principled obligation and instead more as a pragmatic imperative to retain relevance, as underscored by the relative appeal of militant curricula in Chapter Four (Weiss and Hassan 2015; Omar 2014). Emphasizing this point, Bilal recalls a teacher telling his class they 'have to forget' witnessing the brutal death of their classmate as the 'best blessing [they] could have is forgetfulness because it wouldn't be possible to have a normal life by constantly

2024). For more on the term 'scholasticide,' first formulated by Palestinian political theorist Karma Nabulsi in 2009, *see* Hajir and Qato 2025.

[639] As posted by the y.s.barber account on TikTok, as featured in Reel.Israel (Zeteo 2024).

[640] Field Interview with SI205 (2024).

[641] While updated data collection in Gaza is rare, in 2024 1.2 million children in Gaza were estimated to be in need of mental health support to address their anger and aggression (as well as anxiety, fear and depression) (Khaled and Shurafa 2024). Notably, at the same time 85% of Gazans blamed Israel or the United States for their suffering, while only 8% faulted Hamas (PCPSR 2024).

[642] Field interview with MR116 (2014).

remembering these catastrophic disasters.'[643] Yet ignoring such violent experiences often does little to erase the significance of such experiences. As Bilal continues, even after suppressing any mention of violence within the classroom the students still 'turned into monsters' anxious to 'burn Israel down.'[644] And complementing the importance of acknowledging *direct violence*, is the corresponding utility of openly discussing *structural violence* that frames the conflict. As Abd underscores, 'All of the curriculum had so many things that were unnecessary, while there were many necessary things that were neglected with only bits of information... It was all so silly.'[645] Suppressing *direct* and *structural violence* and replacing it with prosaic narratives might be tempting policy, yet it is often little more than 'good-natured disorientation,' as Gur-Ze'ev describes it.[646] To avoid such 'false promises,' responsible peacebuilding alternatively needs to be *more* 'traumatic' and arguably 'dangerous' than most policymakers appear comfortable with to effectively engage the challenge (2011: 171). As many peace education theorists acknowledge, violence is a legitimate part of the journey that will ultimately bring about *positive peace*.[647] Reinforcing the counterintuitive lesson, Gazan students were routinely impressed by both the candor and relevance of Hamas' military spokesperson Abu Ubeidah and then-U.S. President George W. Bush, who, while markedly different politically, were both straightforward in their acknowledgement of violence. 'At least they're honest,' was a common refrain, while universalist peacebuilding narratives triggered outright hostility, reflecting deep resentment toward what many saw as being lied to under the guise of reconciliation.[648]

The youth of Gaza, along with their peers in contested communities around the globe, are anything but *blank slates*. By failing to engage them candidly – or even consider their relevance as stakeholders, which many politicians and technocrats continue to openly deny – is merely ceding a rare path towards potentially constructive political engagement to other uncertain and often far more subversive influences.[649] The prevailing policy goal should consequently not be to avoid violent or opposing narratives in contested places, but instead to engage the larger reality critically and work within such contextualization to present the most productive arguments possible. In the words of a Gazan educator who grew up teaching the Class of 2000, 'You must always be honest with students. If not, they'll never believe anything you say.'[650]

A second widely acknowledged driver of violent extremism is abuse and humiliation (Mercy Corps 2015; Webber et al. 2017). As the Class of 2000 painfully recalled, abuse under the guise of school discipline was experienced by forty-one percent of interviewees. And as underscored by student insights and previous work in this area, abusing students – especially for no discernable reason – only begets more violence.[651] 'I enjoyed my childhood,' added Eyad, 'but I did not enjoy the teachers and the school itself.

[643] Field interview with MR109 (2014).
[644] Field interview with MR109 (2014).
[645] Field interview with MR108 (2014).
[646] *See* Galtung who describes how 'peace,' as a phrase, is widely exploited to advance policies regardless of their relevance or efficacy to actually promoting peacebuilding (1969, 1990).
[647] *See* McLaren (2005) and Pappe (2006).
[648] Field interview with M Rezeq, then-Unicef Gazan Education Specialist (2013).
[649] UNESCO, similar to many educational agencies, routinely fails to consider students as stakeholders, preferring instead to view them as passive beneficiaries (UNESCO 2005; UNESCO 2015a: 217).
[650] Field interview with SI205 (2014).
[651] As outlined in Chapter One and long recognized within Developmental Psychology, younger children are highly imitative and prone to absorb induction relatively indiscriminately; thus, when they see a teacher use violence, they will typically mimic the behavior (Bandura 1977; Bandura et al. 1961).

Teachers used to beat us. And they made us stubborn and opponents and it generated hatred.'[652] As many Gazan student similarly explained, this is often where the *heqked* started.[653]

Alternatively, when Gazan classrooms were more welcoming, students universally celebrated the change. This was highlighted by interviewees emphasizing the success of teachers resisting the structural pressures of Palestinian schooling and instead enticing students with a softer style. As Mohammad explains it, when educators abandon punitive hierarchy and engage students with 'respect and compassion' it made us 'love' school.[654] Building from this more accommodating approach is the complementary utility of promoting more adaptable, critical learning styles. As highlighted, one of the few scholastic achievements of the post-Oslo educational system was empowering student interviewees to 'unlock the knot' to better engage the more expansive lessons of public pedagogy. None of this, of course, is new. Anchoring Abu Lughod's original plan for Palestine's inaugural educational system was an emphasis on 'creativity and experimentation' to help interpret the complexity of the Palestinian context.[655] As Eisner elaborates, true teaching 'requires artistry' whereby education 'is able to exploit opportunities as they occur,' an especially appropriate approach amidst the unpredictability of conflict (1994: 163). While this more adaptive style was formally rebuffed by partisan stakeholders administering the Oslo Accords, renegade teachers employing more independent techniques produced consistent dividends that directly added 'meaning' to student understandings of the conflict, including engaging events taking place beyond the classroom (Dewey 1938: 76). As Nehad describes it, discussing the conflict 'more like friends' opened schooling to the 'larger world of possibilities' that true peacebuilding education aspires to facilitate.[656]

A final driver of extremist violence is its contextualization within wider conflict. As more generalized research highlights, 88% of such violence occurs within ongoing conflict – with 92% in direct response to state-sponsored violence (IEP 2015: 3). This is an issue that, once again, is intimately familiar to the Class of 2000. The phrase 'teach Gaza a lesson' remains ubiquitous in Israeli rhetoric and deed, and in turn it is important to be clear what this type of pedagogy produces.[657] Just as students who witness violence in the classroom are primed to repeat it, the same is obviously true with state-sponsored violence. For instance, over the course of 16 years the Class of 2000 observed 1,047 of their fellow students killed, and as explained at length throughout this research, support for violence consequently doubled (Btselem 2024a; Sharek 2013).[658] And now with Operation Swords of Iron killing more than 17,00 school-aged children over 20 months of carnage, thousands of Gazan youth are consequently keen to pick up arms

[652] Field interview with MG107 (2014).
[653] As introduced in Chapter Three, *heqked* is a term loosely comprising both anger and hatred that is mentioned consistently by members of the Class of 2000 as they recollect experiences that shaped their understanding of the world.
[654] Field interview with MG115 (2014).
[655] Hovsepian 2009: 164, citing Abu Luhod's curricular plan submitted to the PA, September, 1996.
[656] Field interview with WG201 (2014).
[657] As outlined, 'teaching Gaza a lesson' is familiar rhetoric for the Class of 2000. This includes Israeli spokesperson Mark Regev explaining that 'We want to teach Hamas a lesson. I think we want Hamas to understand that firing rockets at Israeli civilians is going to hurt them much more than it's going to hurt us' (NPR 2008). In 2014 then-Israeli Minister Yisrael Katz urged the Prime Minister to 'Teach Hamas a lesson they will never forget,' which was echoed by Benjamin Netanyahu proclaiming, 'if they forget this lesson, they will learn it again the hard way' (Ynet 2014).
[658] PCBS 2019c. As stated, between September 29th, 2000 and April 30th, 2015, 8,208 Gazans were killed in Gaza by both Israelis and Palestinians. This includes 1,047 Gazan minors killed by Israeli forces – over one per week, on average, for 16 years (while four Israeli minors were killed by Gazans over the same timeframe) (Btselem 2024a).

(Unicef 2025). As Mohammad Baghdady explains, 'I've talked to everyone throughout Gaza – people who have lost everything – and I can tell you support for armed resistance has not only increased, but it has rather been proven to everyone that this is the only way.'[659] While discouraging state-sponsored violence is beyond the purview of these recommendations, at the same time it is important to reiterate at every opportunity that gratuitous violence (inside or outside of school) does not ultimately teach youth merely to cower in fear – but instead quite the opposite.

AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

While great care was invested ensuring the youth of Gaza were able to articulate their experiences accurately within this case study, it is important to acknowledge that a lone class of students from an isolated region of Palestine is merely one of many perspectives within contested communities. In turn, further fieldwork investigating educational practice is suggested in Palestine and additional areas of conflict. Most relevant is appreciating whether Gazan students in the post-Oslo era are a national outlier, or representative of a larger trend amongst Palestinian youth. Further inquiries with Palestinian students of all ages in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel, as well as their displaced peers throughout the region, would help illuminate whether formal curriculum was equally irrelevant in more contemporary and other less-violent national contexts.

It is similarly important to continue expanding understandings of educational practice beyond Palestine to more fully appreciate if differing styles of schooling are more successful narrating the dynamic and often-violent nature of conflict. With 'considerably less' than one percent of the $5 trillion invested in foreign aid traditionally evaluated for longer-term impact over the past five decades, as well as little direct assessment of conflict-based schooling, the reality is that much remains unknown (Riddell 2014: 5).[660] Wider efforts to better appreciate the intricacies and efficacy of such educational efforts amidst conflict – most notably by speaking to those purportedly being helped – would be a constructive next step.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Reflecting on this endeavor, I often think of Nelson Mandela, who famously asserted that 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.'[661] It is a common refrain often embraced without question, in this case to help justify billions of dollars invested in Palestinian education, amongst other peacebuilding efforts around the globe. This certainly was my understanding when I first arrived in Gaza 15 years ago. And true to form, with every interaction I would zealously promote my liberal outlook that if we only engaged with each other and learned together our conflicts would naturally fade away. Highlighting this credulous mentality was a quintessentially American commencement speech I delivered to new graduates at (the Hamas-administered) Islamic University of Gaza, celebrating our enlightened potential to overcome all that divides us. It was a wonderful memory, yet one now marred by the university's recent destruction by American weaponry.[662]

[659] Field interview with Mohammad Baghdady (2024).
[660] Empirical research on education practice in conflict-affected contexts remains extremely limited, traditionally comprising less than 1% of research in relevant journals. *See also* Burde et al. 2017 and INEE 2020.
[661] As stated during a speech at Madison Park High School in Boston on June 23rd, 1990.
[662] Islamic University of Gaza was destroyed on October 10th, 2023 by Israeli airstrikes. For footage, *see* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNZzufcyplg

Now it goes without saying that my innate optimism certainly influenced this research, both in initially assuming best intentions and doubting the harsh realities that were shared with me. To that point, I will always be grateful for the patience of the entire Gaza community as it endured what must have seemed like ludicrously naive questions about the peace process. But at the same time, I remain thankful for this preliminary orientation, which ultimately sharpened my understanding around the realities of growing up in Gaza. For instance, every harsh truth I encountered was met with skepticism, whereby I needed to be convinced of its veracity. The first time I heard of a student being punched in the face by a teacher, I didn't believe it. Nor did I fully accept what would become the first of many times hearing about the Israelis attacking a school without cause. It all just seemed too much to comprehend. Yet as days in Gaza became years, and one story became 1,000, the absurdity of the situation gradually wore down my cheery western predisposition. Ultimately, early concerns that my proximity to local students would influence this research proved largely unfounded. In candid reality, if anything, the students changed me.

When I hear Mandela's quote now, my thoughts go directly to the students of Gaza who starkly challenge such conventional wisdom.[663] While agreeing that education is a weapon, they critically believe it was merely another threat aimed squarely at them. 'Everything I was taught was a lie,' proclaims Ebaa, while adding she only started to learn when she graduated 'to the street.'[664] The Class of 2000 consequently shuns partisan perspectives amidst conflict, preferring the relative advantages of the wider pedagogical world. I, in turn, aspire to continue learning from the Class of 2000 and their conflict-based peers as they navigate the realities that surround them. The 'beautification' of the PA textbooks and other political aspirations would have been convenient, if true, but for my Palestinian students and the rest of us operating amidst conflict the real lesson is to learn from wider experience.[665] Go to Gaza, embrace students as stakeholders, and don't hesitate to talk to people who might have tried to kidnap you – because like me, you might just learn much of what you were taught about the world was wrong.[666]

[663] Gazan students interviewed within this project do, however, generally agree with Nelson Mandela's more nuanced approach whereby nonviolence is merely one tool, which, balanced with political violence, best promotes peace over the longer-term. *See* Landau (2012).
[664] Field interview with SI203 (2014).
[665] Field interview with WR206 (2014).
[666] As introduced in the Preface and Chapter One, considerable effort was made to engage the three young men who attempted to kidnap the author of this research in 2011. While two of the three assailants contributed their insights to this inquiry, contact was lost after October 7th. But further efforts will certainly follow.

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APPENDIX ONE – POST-OSLO DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Total educational ODA to the developing world: Commitments (Disbursements)[1]

1995 – 2017 All ODA donors:	$211,171,893,539 ($191,725,977,000)
1995 – 2017 Annual ODA average:	$9,181,386,675 ($8,335,912,043)
2000 – 2014 All ODA donors:	$149,987,454,536 ($134,016,692,000)
2000 – 2014 DAC ODA donors:	$107,635,574,364 ($99,512,649,000)
2000 – 2014 Average ODA from all donors:	$9,999,163,636 ($8,934,446,133)

Total educational ODA to fragile countries: Commitments (Disbursements)

1995 – 2017 All ODA donors:	$86,981,020,715 ($77,664,164,000)
1995 – 2017 Average ODA from all donors:	$3,781,783,509 ($3,376,702,783)
2000 – 2014 All ODA donors:	$60,784,518,270 ($54,127,640,000)
2000 – 2014 DAC ODA donors:	$38,774,871,429 ($36,364,510,000)
2000 – 2014 Average ODA from all donors:	$4,052,301,218 ($3,608,509,333)

For context, annual per capita educational ODA to students in fragile countries in 2000 is estimated at $6.88 ($6.88).[2]

Total educational ODA to West Bank-Gaza: Commitments (Disbursements)

1995 – 2014 All ODA donors:	$3,081,568,890 ($2,953,155,000)
1995 – 2014 DAC ODA total:	$1,238,205,762 ($1,111,732,000)
1995 – 2014 Average ODA from all donors:	$154,078,445 ($147,657,750)
2000 – 2014 All ODA donors:	$2,867,059,845 ($2,738,646,000)
2000 – 2014 DAC ODA donors:	$1,065,066,205 ($938,593,000)
2000 – 2014 Average ODA from all donors:	$191,137,323 ($182,576,400)

Annual per capita educational aid to students in the West Bank and Gaza averaged $174 ($166) in the post-Oslo era, totaling $2,260 ($2,160) over the course of their primary and secondary education (2000 – 2012).

Total ODA to West Bank-Gaza: Commitments (Disbursements)

1995 – 2014 All ODA donors:	$26,683,914,097 ($25,406,219,194)
1995 – 2014 DAC ODA total:	$17,797,345,872 ($17,592,377,845)
1995 – 2014 Average ODA from all donors:	$1,619,284,497 ($1,534,104,836)

Total per capita ODA to residents in West Bank-Gaza 1995 – 2017: $8,569 ($8,238)

2000 – 2014 All ODA donors:	$24,289,267,450 ($23,011,572,547)
2000 – 2014 DAC ODA donors:	$15,818,043,109 ($15,613,075,082)
2000 – 2014 Average ODA from all donors:	$1,334,195,705 ($1,270,310,960)

United States' ODA to West Bank-Gaza: Commitments (Disbursements)

1995 – 2014 Total ODA:	$7,939,336,454 ($7,415,935,000) – 29% of the disbursed total
2001 – 2014 Total ODA:	$7,432,017,454 ($6,908,616,000) – 30% of the disbursed total
2001 – 2015 Educational ODA:	$202,933,650 ($176,512,000) – 6% of the disbursed total [3]

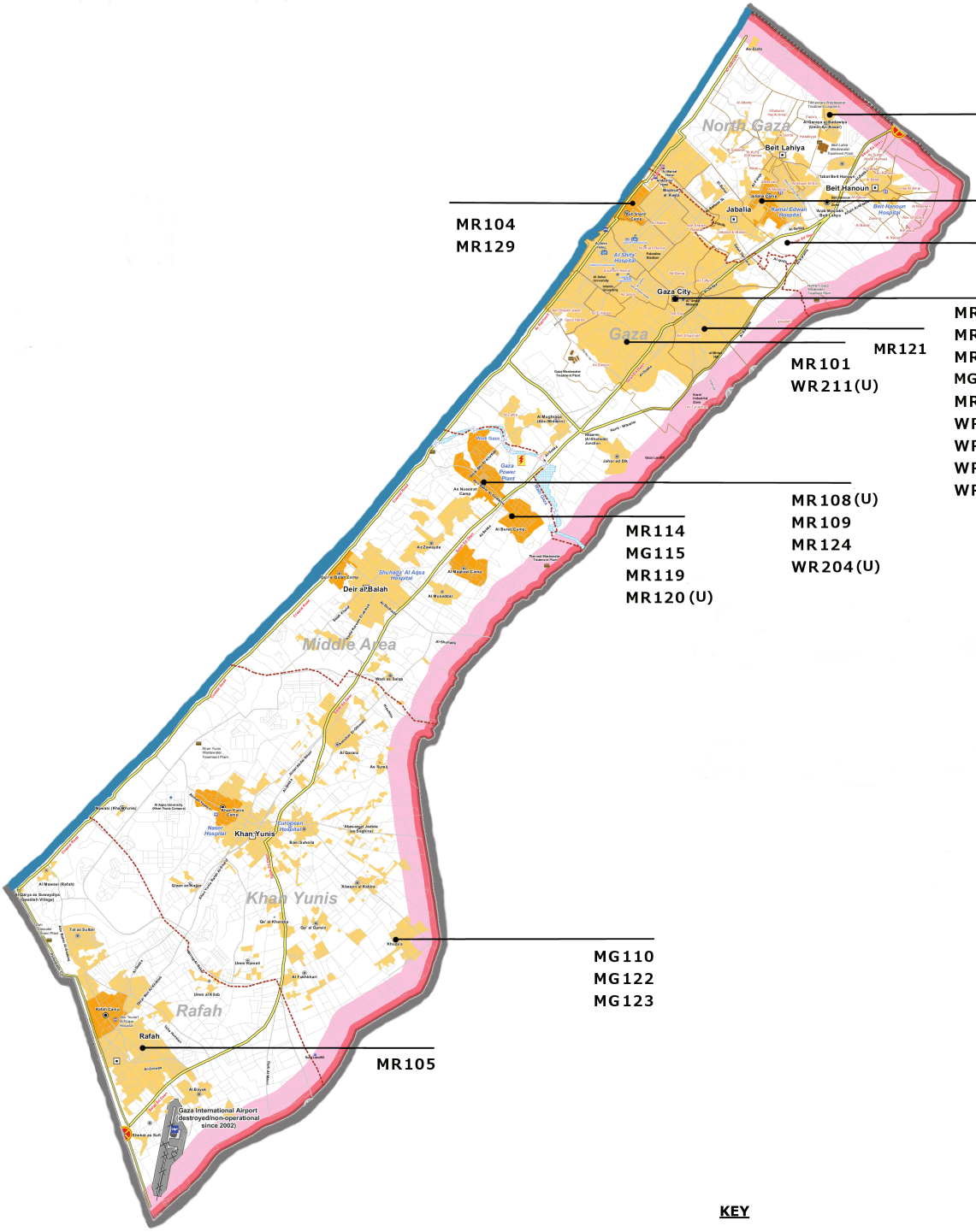
[1] All data listed is in 2017 US Dollars (OECD 2019). Official Development Assistance (ODA) is official financing with a grant element of at least 25% to promote the welfare of developing countries. For countries included in the developing world and fragile states, *see* OECD 2019. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) typically represents wealthier donor countries. [2] In 2000, there were 3,053,335 people in Gaza and the West Bank, including 907,128 primary and secondary students. This ~30% ratio is applied to approximate the general number of students in fragile (developing) countries. [3] Notably, this does not include $3,508,630,000 that the United States provided to UNRWA between 1992 – 2014, with a significant amount directly and indirectly supporting education in Palestine. *See* UNRWA (2015).

APPENDIX TWO – AN EDUCATIONAL TIMELINE OF THE CLASS OF 2000

YEAR (AGE)	GRADE LEVEL	REFUGEES	NATIVE GAZANS	CURRICULA	NOTABLE EVENTS
1994 (born)	40,000 (100%)[1]	26,960	13,040	Egyptian (1959 - 99)	The Oslo Accords begin implementation
1995 (1 year)	Family reunification brings 30,000 returnees to Gaza	→ ↓	↓		
1996 (2 years)					
1997 (3 years)	Nursery school	Early childhood education is often a private for-pay service in Gaza		Mixed ECD	Development of the new PA educational system
1998 (4 years)	Kindergarten			Mixed ECD	
1999 (5 years)	Kindergarten	↓	↓	Mixed ECD	
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL[2]		UNRWA schools	PA schools		
2000 (6 years)	First grade (m)	19,719 (93.9%)	17,837 (93.9%)	Palestinian	Roll-out of PA curriculum
2001 (7 years)	Second grade (m)	19,719 (93.9%)	17,837 (93.9%)	Palestinian	Second *Intifada*
2002 (8 years)	Third grade (m)	19,719 (93.9%)	17,837 (93.9%)	Palestinian	Second *Intifada*
2003 (9 years)	Fourth grade (m)	19,719 (93.9%)	17,837 (93.9%)	Palestinian	*Second Intifada*
2004 (10 years)	Fifth grade (m)	19,719 (93.9%)	17,837 (93.9%)	Palestinian	Second *Intifada*
2005 (11 years)	Sixth grade (m)	19,719 (93.9%)	17,837 (93.9%)	Palestinian	Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, yet control of border continues
PREP SCHOOL[3]					
2006 (12 years)	Seventh grade (m)	NA	19,702	Palestinian	Hamas elected
2007 (13 years)	Eigth grade (m)	NA	19,702	Palestinian	Post-election siege
2008 (14 years)	Ninth grade (m)	NA	19,702	Palestinian	Post-Shalit siege
		↘	↙	In tenth grade refugees and non-refugees merge into (Hamas-run) government schools	
HIGH SCHOOL[4]					
2009 (15 years)	Tenth grade (m)	37,809 (95%)		Palestinian	Op. Cast Lead (IL)
2010 (16 years)	Eleventh grade	34,880 (87%)		Palestinian	
2011 (17 years)	Tawjihi preparation	27,120 (68%)		*Tawjihi* prep	Soft roll-out of Hamas educational changes
		↓		21,037 students in Gaza passed 2012's *Tawjihi* exam	
TERTIARY					
2012 (18 years)	University	Less than 21,037 (<53%)		BA/BS	Op. Pillar of Cloud (IL)
2013 (19 years)	University	Less than 21,037 (<53%)		BA/BS	Anti-election coup (EG)
2014 (20 years)	University	Less than 21,037 (<53%)		BA/BS	Op. Protective Edge (IL)
2015 (21 years)	University	Less than 21,037 (<53%)		BA/BS	Students graduate into a job market with 50-68% youth unemployment (and no ability to leave)

[1] The first year the PCBS kept statistics (1997), 37,239 children were born in Gaza. Including the addition of 30,000 returnees of various ages through Oslo's family reunification scheme, the initial size of the Class of 2000 is loosely estimated to be 40,000, with 67% assumed to be refugees following more general trends. [2] Enrollment numbers for basic education were, at the time of this research, not disaggregated publicly by year. [3] Specific numbers of students transferring from UNRWA to government schools throughout prep school were requested, yet unavailable. [4] Enrollment numbers may appear higher due to the inclusion of older students held back for poor performance, a common occurrence beginning in 10th grade. To this point, by the end of 2011 12.8% of Gazans 6–17 years of age had discontinued school, suggesting 5,120 students dropped out prior to the *Tawjihi* exam. This rate climbs to 32.2% at 18+, suggesting up to 12,800 could have dropped out prior to sitting for the *Tawjihi* exam (or not passed it), consistent with 2012's 21,037 successful *Tawjihi* results. *Tawjihi*, or 'redirection' in Arabic, represents the final year of high school when 12th graders prepare for their final exam of the same name in either Science, Social Science, or *Azhari* (Islamic specialization). *See* PCBS (2015, 2019c, 2020). ECD = Early Childhood Development, (EG) = Egypt, (IL) = Israel, (m) = mandatory enrollment.

APPENDIX THREE – THE CLASS OF 2000 COHORT DISTRIBUTION



41 STUDENT INTERVIEWEES

MR101 Majd
MR102 Abu Alsa 'ed
MR103 Ibrahim (T)
MR104 Hamoud
MR105 Ahmed
MR106 Basel (U)
MG107 Eyad
MR108 Abd (U)
MR109 Bilal
MG110 Mamoosh
MR111 Ramy
MR112 Mohammed (U)
MR113 Watan (U)
MR114 Khaled
MG115 Mohannad
MR116 Abu Bashir
MG117 Alah
MR118 Yousif (U)
MR119 Abu Shokaf
MR120 Odai (U)
MR121 Za'eem
MG122 Anas
MG123 Hamed
MR124 Amar
MR125 Asem (U)
MR126 Medo (U)
MR127 Mahmoud (U)
MR128 Ahmad
MR129 Hisham
WG201 Nehad (T)
WR202 Nagham
WR203 Falastine (U)
WR204 Eman (U)
WR205 Meera (U)
WR206 Eshraq (U)
WR207 Hanan (U)
WR208 Janine (U)
WG209 Basma
WG210 Um Mohammed
WR211 Ayah (U)
WR212 Oruba (U)

KEY

MG - Male Gazan
MR - Male refugee
WG - Female Gazan
WR - Female refugee
(T) - Completed *Tawjihi*
(U) - Attended university

APPENDIX FOUR – NOTABLE INTERVIEWS

	Interviewee/ pseudonym	Role	Anonymity	Identifier	Method	Format	Notes
	Group 1: Contextual interviews (expressing little saturation between American and Palestinian perspectives)						
2012, 2024	Multiple interviewees	Convicts, Qasr Al-Hakim Prison	Yes	SI107	Via proxy	Semi-structured	Notes
2013	Dr. Nasser AbuFarha	Specialist in Palestinian radicalization	No	NA	Email	Semi-structured	Transcript
2015	Dr. Nubar Hovsepian	Specialist in Palestinian education	No	NA	Email	Semi-structured	Transcript
2019	Brian Atwood	USAID Administrator (Global)	No	NA	Email	Semi-structured	Transcript
2019	Larry Garber	USAID Mission Director (WBG)	No	NA	Via proxy	Semi-structured	Notes
2019	Toni Verstandig	Deputy Assistant Secretary of State	No	NA	Telephone	Semi-structured	Notes
2019	Ed Abington	U.S. Consul General, Jerusalem	No	NA	Email	Semi-structured	Transcript
2021	Professor Omar Dajani	Palestinian Authority negotiator	No	NA	Email	Semi-structured	Transcript
2014	Professor Henry Giroux	Specialist in critical pedagogy	No	NA	Email	Semi-structured	Transcript
2023	Dr. Basem Naim	Hamas Minister (Heath and Youth)	No	NA	Telephone	Semi-structured	Notes
2023	Abu Mohamed	Hamas Head of Internal Security	Yes	SI207	Via proxy	Semi-structured	Notes
	Group 2: Gazan students, teachers, and other local perspectives (expressing total saturation)						
2014-5	Majd	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR101	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Abu Alsa 'ed	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR102	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Ibrahim	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR103	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Hamoud	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR104	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Ahmed	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR105	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Basel	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR106	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Eyad	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MG107	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Abd	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR108	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Bilal	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR109	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Mamoosh	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MG110	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Ramy	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR111	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Mohammed	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR112	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Watan	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR113	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Khaled	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR114	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes

2014-5	Mohammed	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MG115	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Abu Bashir	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR116	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Alah	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MG117	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Yousif	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR118	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Abu Shokaf	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR119	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Odai	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR120	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Za'eem	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR121	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Anas	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MG122	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Hamed	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MG123	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Amar	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR124	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Asem	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR125	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Medo	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR126	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Mahmoud	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR127	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Ahmad	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR128	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Hisham	Gazan cohort student	Yes	MR129	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Nehad	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WG201	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Nagham	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WR202	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Falastine	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WR203	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Eman	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WR204	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Meera	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WR205	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Eshraq	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WR206	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Hanan	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WR207	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Janine	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WR208	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Basma	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WG209	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Um Mohammed	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WG210	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Ayah	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WR211	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014-5	Oruba	Gazan cohort student	Yes	WR212	Via proxy	Focus Group	Notes
2014	Arafat	Gazan student not in the main cohort	Yes	SI105	Via proxy	Semi-structured	Notes
2014	Rami	Gazan student not in the main cohort	Yes	SI106	In person	Unstructured	NA
2015	Noha	Gazan student not in the main cohort	Yes	SI206	Email	Semi-structured	Notes
2014	Saady	Osra student	Yes	SI102	Via proxy	Semi-structured	Notes
2014	Amjad	*Da'wa* Observer (*Raqeeb*)	Yes	SI103	Via proxy	Semi-structured	Notes

2014	Ebaa	Gazan youth leader	Yes	SI203	In person	Semi-structured	Notes
2013-4	Maha Rezeq	Unicef Gazan Education Specialist	No	NA	In person	Semi-structured	Notes
2014	Shireena	Gazan teacher	Yes	SI201	In person	Semi-structured	Notes
2014	No alias listed	Field researcher, PCDCR and STC	Yes	SI204	In person	Semi-structured	Notes
2024-5	Zainab	Gazan teacher	Yes	SI205	WhatsApp	Semi-structured	Notes
2024-5	Mohammad Baghdady	Gazan security expert	No	NA	WhatsApp	Semi-structured	Notes
	Group 3: Uncooperative interviewees						
2019	Edward Djerejian	U.S. Assistant Secretary of State	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA