

Call to save the education system in Jerusalem

The education system in Jerusalem has come under renewed threat with news that the education department at the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem has recently attempted to implement plans to force all non-Public schools to purchase all teaching materials and books from Israeli education department in the municipality.

Background: There are four main supervising bodies in the education sector in Jerusalem: the Islamic Waqf, the Municipality/Israeli Ministry of Education, UNRWA and the private sector. Following the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, the Israeli education ministry made numerous attempts to impose the Israeli education curriculum on the Palestinian schools in the city which led to strikes that continued until 1976. As a result of these strikes, which saw the Municipal schools almost empty, the Municipality agreed to teach both curriculums; the old Jordanian and the new Israeli.

By 1980 most of the Palestinian schools in the city were teaching the Jordanian curriculum, albeit with modifications to the history, geography and civic studies subjects. This continued until 1994 when the PA began to develop a Palestinian curriculum to replace the Jordanian one, which was fully in place by 1998 and now after so many years of progress Israel plans to turn the clocks back on the education system by imposing their curriculum once again on the Palestinian citizens of Jerusalem.

In addition to this control mechanism the Municipality has also overseen deliberate neglect of Palestinian education in Jerusalem. In 2001 the High Court obligated the Ministry of Education and the Municipality of Jerusalem to provide education for every Palestinian child who is a resident of the city, yet as of 2010 the Municipality has only fulfilled half of its commitments to the Palestinians with over 1,000 more classrooms needed. There are 87,624 Palestinian children in Jerusalem from ages 6-17 according to the Israeli central bureau of statistics with the incoming head of the Knesset education committee, Danny Bar-Giora noting that 83,295 students are in the Arab education system in Jerusalem leaving 4,329 children in East Jerusalem that either do not or cannot go to school. These figures though do not reflect the reality on the ground relating to unregistered children, of the age of entry into school in the city, with Palestinian sources placing the figure closer to 9,000. This is part of a comprehensive war of Judaization on the Palestinian Jerusalemite population which includes the legislation of various laws which aim to forcibly transfer and displace the indigenous Palestinians in Jerusalem. Recent legislation such as the loyalty law, the law which considers Jerusalem a national priority and the capital of the Jews all over the world, the Nakba law, the law against incitements and other discriminatory laws have had a hugely negative impact on Palestinian society in Jerusalem.

The education system is the key to social development in all societies and Israeli control over the narrative only perpetuates the Palestinian community's poverty in the city and encumbers chances for social change. By keeping Palestinian standards of education down, the state can slow the pace of organised political resistance, or better yet, stifle it altogether. The supervising bodies show little concern for the Arab schools under their