

Israel introduces legislation to tighten control over Palestinian schools

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In this file picture, Palestinian children attend the first day of school in the Israeli-occupied West Bank city of Ramallah. (Photo via Twitter)

Tel Aviv, June 2 (RHC)-- The Israeli Knesset (parliament) has introduced two bills that would bring Palestinian educational centers and staff in the 1948-occupied territories under stricter scrutiny from the regime's so-called security and intelligence apparatus.

One of the bills, proposed on Wednesday, would require the Israeli education ministry to conduct background security checks on potential teachers, according to Hebrew-language media outlets. If passed, the legislation would authorize a committee, after conducting a hearing, to rescind the appointment of a teacher or dismiss a school staff member if they "identify with a [so-called] terror organization" or express support for the armed struggle of an adversarial entity. It also requires potential teachers to prove they have no "affinity for terrorism."

The second legislation sets more stringent guidelines that would make receiving a teaching license much harder. The licensing of schools would be dependent on whether they accommodate "the fundamental requirements of the Israeli school system."

The Israeli Ministerial Committee for Legislation approved both bills earlier this week.

According to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) said the move is a step towards reinstating the supervision of the Palestinian school system in occupied lands, which Israel's 'internal security service' Shin Bet used to carry out. The practice was discontinued in 2005.

Last month, Israeli military forces demolished a donor-funded Palestinian primary school in the central part of the occupied West Bank, in a flagrant violation of Palestinian children's right to education.

Witnesses and local officials said the Israeli military raided Beit Ta'mir village, located six kilometers (3.7 miles) southeast of Bethlehem, on May 7 and demolished Challenge 5 School. They said dozens of Israeli soldiers cordoned off the area around the school, and a bulldozer flattened it shortly afterward.

The school, which was built of makeshift materials, was attended by 66 Palestinian students. It was demolished in 2017 before it was rebuilt in the same year.

Israeli forces have delivered demolition orders to 58 schools in the West Bank, including East al-Quds, according to the Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA).

It warned in a statement that the violations affect children, teachers and school buildings, highlighting the need that concerned institutions and the relevant United Nations agencies to assume their role and responsibilities in pressuring the regime to stop the policy of demolishing schools.

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