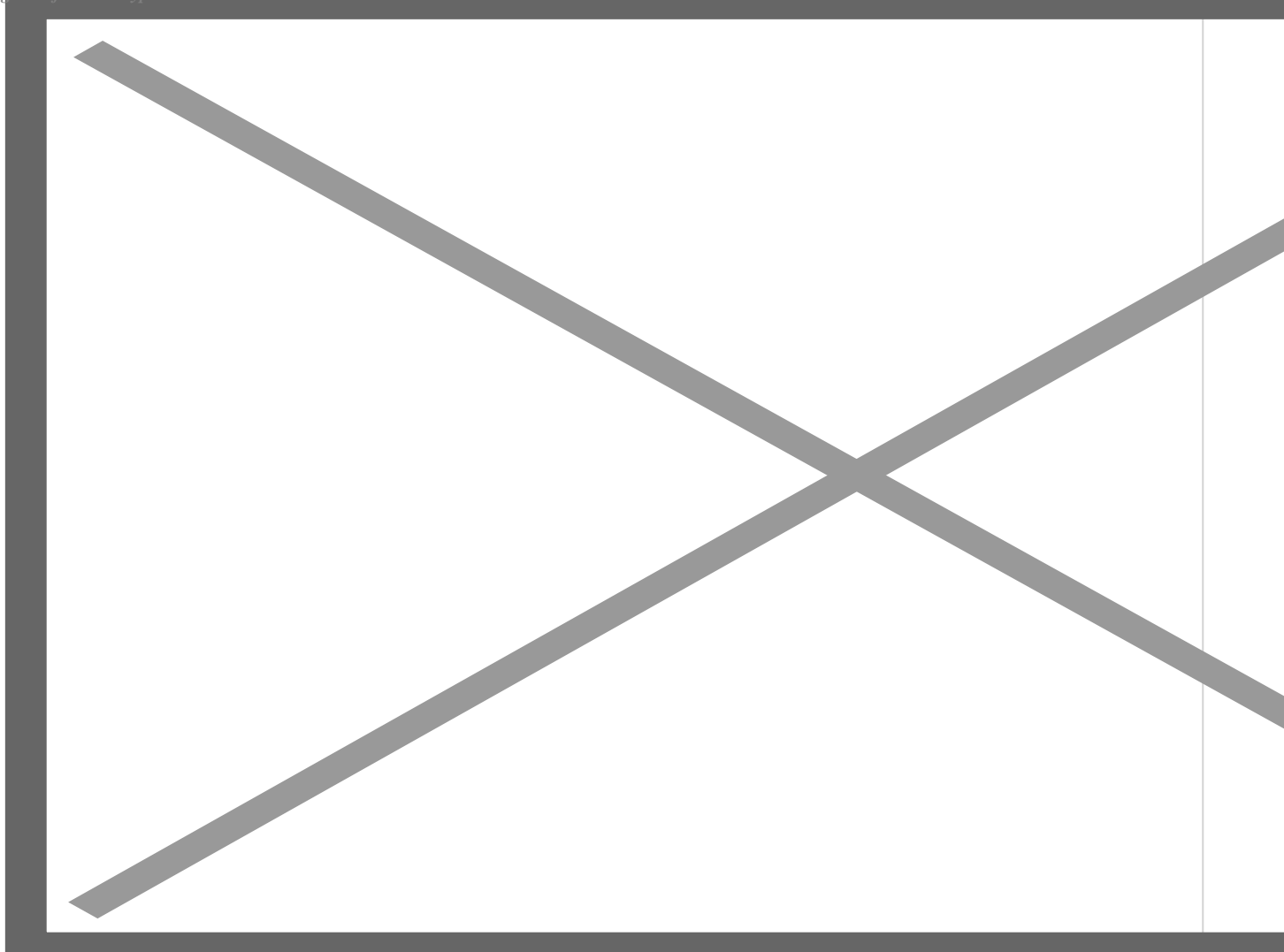


Gaza schools in ruins: Education Ministry slams transformation from joy to genocide

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Israeli troopers seen mocking Palestinian students, sitting behind desks in one of the only

schools left undamaged in the Gaza Strip.

Gaza City, September 9 (RHC)-- The Palestinian Education Ministry has strongly criticized Israeli military forces deployed in the Gaza Strip after they published a photograph on social media showing soldiers sitting behind desks in one of the only schools left undamaged in the besieged coastal sliver.

“What little left of Gaza’s schools; that is, the ones the Israeli occupation hasn’t already destroyed, are now the content of mockery for its soldiers,” the ministry said in a post on X on Sunday.

“How can anyone enjoy depriving children of their fundamental right to education?”

This comes as Israeli soldiers have no reservation for mocking Palestinians during their offensives on Gaza, frequently posting their photographs and videos to social media.

Earlier this year, a video showing Israeli soldiers documenting the extensive destruction in Gaza while mockingly playing a pro-Zionist song in the background sparked a backlash on social media.

The video, widely shared on March 14th, showcased the widespread destruction in a Gaza neighborhood, featuring flames, fire, and collapsed buildings, accompanied by background music with lyrics containing haunting phrases.

Many users condemned the Israeli soldiers’ actions as “inhumane” and “cowardly,” while others urged international intervention.

Meanwhile, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini has underscored the significance of education and that children must be safeguarded in schools.

“Education cannot be taken away. Children and their learning must be protected, always,” he wrote in a post on X.

According to Palestine’s Education Ministry, more than 630,000 students have been denied their right to education in Gaza and will not be returning to school, as the ongoing Israeli genocidal war on the territory disrupts schooling for a second year.

The ministry noted that 58,000 students were supposed to join the first grade and start school on Monday, but they couldn’t as a result of the Israeli bombardment campaign.

At least 39,000 students were unable to take their high school exams, it said, adding that more than 25,000 children, including over 10,000 students, have been killed or wounded in Israeli attacks.

The Palestinian Education Ministry further highlighted that some 90 percent of 307 public school buildings have been destroyed.

The human rights monitor, Euro-Med, says Israel has bombed at least 16 schools used as shelters in one month.

Out of Gaza’s 2.2 million population, approximately 700,000 children and young people were enrolled in schools and universities in 2023. As part of its educational response in Gaza, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) launched the Back to Learning program on August 1st.

The first phase included psychosocial support activities, focusing on arts, music and sports, and raising awareness of the risks posed by explosive ordnance.

In the second phase, the focus has shifted to informal learning activities, which include lessons in reading, writing and mathematics.

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