



United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتنمية والعلم والثقافة

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IMPACT AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE GAZA STRIP/PALESTINE IN ALL ASPECTS OF UNESCO'S MANDATE

DRAFT RESOLUTION

Submitted by: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen

Supported by: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, China, Comoros, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palau, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Somalia, South Africa, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Uzbekistan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The General Conference,

Keeping in mind the fundamental principles of UNESCO enumerated in the Preamble to its Constitution, and the International Law as well as the International Humanitarian Law including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, and other relevant international instruments and declarations, and the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Additional Protocol I thereto of 1977, as applicable, as well as relevant customary international law,

Recalling the provisions of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and the related Protocols, the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,



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Reaffirming UNESCO's key role in ensuring education for all, protecting the cultural, historical, and natural heritage of humanity, and in facilitating the free flow of ideas,

Also recalling 217 EX/33 and 217 EX/34,

Having examined document 42 C/COM.APX/DR.2,

Further recalling resolution A/ES-10/L.25 of the United Nations General Assembly, adopted on 27 October 2023,

Reiterating the urgent need for immediate action to guarantee protection from further damage and harm to cultural heritage in Gaza, in compliance with the relevant UNESCO Conventions, and *demanding* the immediate cessation of any attack on or further harm to civilians, especially children, women, youth, teachers, and education workers as well as schools, colleges, and universities, and the upholding of the right to education, in full respect of resolution 2601 (2021) of the United Nations Security Council,

Recalling global commitments for the United Nations Security Council resolution 2222 (2015) on the protection of journalists, media professionals, and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict, and condemning the continuous killing of journalists as well as the destruction of media and press centres,

Reiterating concerns by various UN bodies about the recent deteriorating situation in Gaza and its impact on all fields of competence of UNESCO which harmfully affects, *inter alia*, the free and sustained movement of personnel and humanitarian relief and education material, and noting with deep concern the interruption of energy and full electricity blackout since 11 October, impacting the water supply as well as communication and other fundamental activities related to the fields of competence of UNESCO,

1. *Invites* the governing bodies of all relevant UNESCO conventions and intergovernmental programmes, facilitated by the Director-General and the Secretariat, to assess the deteriorating situation in Gaza and develop measures to address its repercussions across UNESCO's fields of competence;
2. *Requests* the Director-General to urgently prepare a programme of emergency assistance for Gaza including an Action Plan with immediate implementation and, to that end, to continue mobilizing all relevant partners, within UNESCO's fields of competence;
3. *Also requests* the Director-General to establish a special account of extrabudgetary funds, in conformity with the financial regulations of UNESCO, for the reconstruction of Gaza in its fields of competence and calls upon Member States and donors to contribute to this account;
4. *Further requests* the Director-General to actively monitor the situation in Gaza to ensure direct UNESCO participation in the implementation of relevant actions within its mandate and to organize an information meeting, prior to the 219th session of the Executive Board, to provide Member States with an update on this matter within the fields of competence of UNESCO;
5. *Asks* the Director-General to strengthen the UNESCO antenna in Gaza City in order to address the needs in its fields of competence;
6. *Also asks* the Director-General to report to the Executive Board at its 219th session on the implementation of UNESCO's emergency assistance program for Gaza and decides to include this item in the agenda of the General Conference if the situation necessitates it.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

I. Introduction and background

The United Nations General Assembly, in its tenth emergency special session on 26 October 2023, adopted a major resolution on the recent crisis in Gaza “Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations.” The resolution expressed “grave concern at the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and at its vast consequences for the civilian population, largely comprising children, and underlining the need for full, immediate, safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access”. The General Assembly demanded that all parties “immediately and fully comply” with obligations under international humanitarian and human rights laws, “particularly in regard to the protection of civilians and civilian objects.”

It also demanded the “protection of humanitarian personnel, persons hors de combat, and humanitarian facilities and assets, and to enable and facilitate humanitarian access for essential supplies and services to reach all civilians in need in the Gaza Strip.”

On 24 October 2023, the United Nations Secretary-General has recalled that in Gaza “the level of civilian casualties, and the wholesale destruction of neighborhoods continue to mount and are deeply alarming.” He expressed that he is “deeply concerned about the clear violations of international humanitarian law that we are witnessing in Gaza.”

In the field of education, Resolution 2601, adopted unanimously on 29 October 2021 by the United Nations Security Council, states that Member States should prevent “attacks and threats of attacks against schools” and “ensure the protection of schools and civilians connected with schools, including children and teachers, during armed conflict as well as in post-conflict phases”.

On the 27th of October 2023 UNESCO called for “an immediate halt to strikes against schools” in Gaza, expressing grave concern “about the impact of the hostilities in the Gaza Strip on students and education professionals.” UNESCO further noted that “more than 625,000 pupils and more than 22,500 teachers in the area are in an extremely vulnerable situation.”

Describing the recent deteriorating situation in Gaza, UNESCO has declared that “Since 7 October, more than 200 schools have been damaged -around 40% of the total number of schools in the Gaza Strip – about forty of them very seriously, according to UNICEF data.”

UNESCO explained that “Among the many civilian victims in Gaza were 38 employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the main provider of education in the Gaza Strip. The vast majority of these staff were teachers and educators.” Recent data by UNRWA shows that as of 30 October 2023 “67 UNRWA colleagues have been killed and at least 22 injured.”

UNESCO further explained that many of UNRWA’s 183 schools in Gaza, which welcomed nearly 300,000 pupils at the start of the last school year, have now been converted into shelters for the population. Recalling that “UNRWA’s nearly 13,000 staff are on the front line, carrying out vitally important work to help schoolchildren, education professionals and all those affected by the disaster. They must be able to continue their work and be protected from the fighting.”

In the field of culture, the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols (1954 and 1999), provides for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict, and Resolution 2347 adopted in 2017 by the United Nations Security Council “deplores and condemns the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, inter alia destruction of religious sites and artifacts, as well as the looting and smuggling of cultural property from archaeological sites, museums, libraries, archives, and other sites, in the context of armed conflicts”.

Unfortunately, the current destruction and eradication of culture and heritage in Gaza is yet to be determined, since all efforts are now being concentrated on saving human lives in Gaza.

Reflecting on the recent events in Gaza, on 31 October 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed that reports of the killing of a number of Palestinian journalists were “deeply concerning. Journalists were civilians and should not be targeted. Military personnel who targeted journalists needed to be held to account.”

Furthermore, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) recalled on the 31st of October 2023 that “The Committee to Protect Journalists says that 32 journalists have been killed thus far since the start of the hostilities.”

On 28 October 2023, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed that “The bombing of the telecommunications infrastructure places the civilian population in grave danger.” He further explains that “Ambulances and civil defense teams are no longer able to locate the injured, or the thousands of people estimated to be still under the rubble. Civilians are no longer able to receive updated information on where they can access humanitarian relief and where they may be in less danger. Many journalists can now no longer report on the situation.”

In light of the recent extreme deterioration of the situation in Gaza, UNESCO’s immediate action is of vital importance to effectively deliver its mandate in the above-mentioned fields of competency.