



Education key to protecting human rights in Palestine

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Abstract: Education is a fundamental human right, which could transform Palestinian society by empowering marginalised groups like disabled children and girls. Whilst social norms create barriers, Palestinian authorities can play a vital role in creating a more inclusive curriculum and secure learning environment.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, in [Article 26](#), emphasises the significance of education as a fundamental human right. It underscores the importance of providing free and compulsory education in the early stages of a person's life, promoting widespread access to technical and vocational training and facilitating merit-based entry into higher education. Education serves the purpose of fostering the individual's personal development and cultivating respect for fundamental rights and freedoms.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Article 13 affirms the [right to education](#) for all individuals, stressing the necessity of making primary

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education compulsory and free, generalising secondary and technical education, and facilitating access to higher education on an equal basis. It also calls for improving the material conditions of those working in education.

Other international accords, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child ([CRC](#)) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ([CEDAW](#)), also affirm the right to education and ensure equality in curricula, examinations and educational facilities plus the need to combat stereotypical concepts about the roles of women and men in education.

In Palestine, the Palestinian National Authority has taken significant steps to ratify several international treaties, including the UDHR, CEDAW, CRC and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([CRPD](#)). These ratifications are accompanied by efforts to develop educational curricula sensitive to women's rights and aimed at fostering children's understanding of the importance of equality and eradication of all forms of discrimination. Moreover, it is crucial that these curricula are sensitive to the rights of persons with disabilities, given their marginalised status in various aspects. A significant aspect of this effort should focus on increasing awareness among children with disabilities about their rights, as this knowledge is essential for their protection.

Role of education in promoting children's rights

Education is of utmost importance in empowering children and young people, both in schools and universities, as it fosters the development of their self-awareness and social consciousness. Without access to quality and inclusive education, individuals are unable to comprehend their fundamental rights, advocate for them, or discern when these rights are violated. Children acquire knowledge of their basic rights, encompassing the rights to education, healthcare and protection from violence. Additionally, they grasp the significance of respecting the rights of others, enhancing their capacity for empathy and understanding. Most notably, education empowers them to make informed decisions about their future across various aspects of their lives, serving as a pivotal factor in their holistic development.

Educating children about their rights is vital as it empowers them to identify and report instances of abuse, exploitation and discrimination. By imparting knowledge about their rights, children gain the confidence to seek justice and protection. Understanding their rights fosters a sense of agency, enabling them to assert themselves when their rights are violated. This empowerment not only benefits the individual child but also contributes to building a society that respects and upholds the rights of all its members, promoting accountability and inclusivity.

Furthermore, educating children about their rights creates a supportive environment where they feel safe to express themselves and seek assistance when facing challenges or

violations. This proactive approach not only prevents harm but also cultivates a culture of mutual respect and dignity, which is essential for the well-being and development of every child.

Teaching children about human rights is extremely important for several reasons. First, it helps them understand concepts like fairness and equality, which makes them better people and citizens. Second, it helps create societies where everyone has the same rights and freedoms, no matter who they are or where they come from. Third, it helps keep the peace and make sure everyone gets along, because people are clear about what their rights are, and they work to make sure everyone else has them too.

In Palestine, teaching children about human rights is challenging. Although there is increasing discussion on the topic, social norms, especially those concerning women's rights, create significant obstacles. These cultural barriers make it difficult to convey ideas about equality and non-discrimination to young students. As a result, educators face considerable difficulties in promoting human rights awareness among children.

The significance of parental involvement in educating children about human rights cannot be overstated. By embodying the principles of respect for rights and freedoms, parents can serve as positive role models, instilling in their children the values of equality and justice through their daily actions and interactions. Moreover, schools play a crucial role in fostering an educational environment that deepens students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities as individuals within society.

Therefore, it is important for parents and schools to collaborate to strengthen children's education on human rights, particularly principles of equality and non-discrimination, to build a society characterised by mutual respect and justice among its members.

In terms of policy, the Ministry of Education's ongoing efforts to enhance school curricula and incorporate human rights, particularly women's rights, have yet to yield tangible results in reducing school violence or influencing the behavior of teachers, students and staff. For example, in one Palestinian school a child described the school manager as unfit for the role because she did not listen to the student who was being [bullied](#). When he told her that he was being bullied by other students, the manager would ask: 'What is the reason that encourages students to bully you?' and 'How do you know if they really bullied you?' The student was surprised by these questions and how she repeatedly ignored his situation, thus perpetuating stereotypes regarding societal roles and children's rights.

Violence can be greatly reduced and a more inclusive respectful school environment promoted by incorporating human rights into the school curriculum, especially women's rights as well as other pressing issues such as bullying. By empowering children with information on gender equality, promoting strong female role models among students to show that girls have as much potential as boys and encouraging them to challenge harmful stereotypes, education on women's rights reduces violence and discrimination against

women. Similarly, educating students about bullying enables them to identify different kinds of bullying; it encourages respect for diversity and leads to the development of allies who assist in creating a supportive school atmosphere. All this makes it easier for victims not only to admit that they are being bullied but also take appropriate measures. A recent incident occurred in one Palestinian school where a girl tragically took her own life due to bullying. The girl who bullied her faced no consequences, highlighting a critical need for educating the new generation about the dangers of bullying and its potentially life-ending [consequences](#). These curriculum improvements would address immediate problems in schools and help build a future generation that understands the importance of fairness, respect, and living peacefully together.

The persistence of bullying and other forms of aggression in schools indicates that merely introducing human rights education is insufficient. There must be a more holistic approach that includes not only curriculum changes but also targeted interventions, support systems for students and ongoing professional development for educators.

Way forward

Education stands as a powerful catalyst for social transformation and the advancement of human rights. By incorporating curricula sensitive to the rights of women and marginalised groups, such as persons with disabilities, Palestinian educational institutions can play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of equality, respect and inclusivity. International treaties and conventions underline the significance of education as a fundamental human right, essential for the holistic development of individuals and the creation of just societies. Equipping children with knowledge of their rights empowers them to identify and address injustices, fostering a generation dedicated to upholding human dignity and freedoms. Despite challenges, particularly in traditional contexts, collective efforts by parents, educators, and policymakers can drive meaningful change. Promoting human rights education lays the foundation for a future where equality, justice, and respect for all are societal cornerstones. This collaborative approach ensures that every child, regardless of background or abilities, can thrive and contribute positively to their communities and the world.