



# EDUCATION UNDER OCCUPATION

## Learning to Improvise

Nick King with foreword by Ahdaf Soueif

Discovery Analytical Resourcing

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*"The brutality with which, in 2002, the Israeli Defence Force attacked the population of the fledgling Palestine Authority was shocking even by Israeli standards. Here was a high-tech field army - armoured personnel carriers, tank battalions, attack helicopters, jet fighters - being employed against civilian infrastructure and populations in a manner not seen in the region since ... the last time it had done it, throughout Lebanon in 1982 ...*

*The apparatus of the emerging Palestinian state was carefully fitted up with responsibility for the Al-Aqsa intifada and blasted apart: government offices and police stations ransacked, records destroyed, political figures and policemen assassinated. Civil institutions, commercial premises, agricultural holdings, light industrial workshops all fell together under the spectral catch-all of 'terrorist infrastructure' ... Fundamental social services - such as education - would not escape this onslaught unscathed. "*

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### Summary

- Palestinian struggle for higher education under Israeli military occupation;
- Military occupation, the right to education and international law;
- Development agenda for higher education services.

### Narrative

Much material emerges from Israel/Palestine concerning conflict and loss, but less information is readily available about the real infrastructure of Palestinian society - its local government, education and health services, telecommunications, legal and financial environment - and its current condition. As political and economic arguments edge humanitarian concerns off the diplomatic agenda (for better or for worse), these topics are of increasing importance.

This book is intended to be a catalyst for provoking broader interest in the development requirements of the Palestinian education sector. It is designed to be a concise and accessible primer for general readers exploring the subject or region and who might be persuaded to pursue their specialism further in this area.

A central theme is how the 'situation' (as Palestinians like to call the occupation) is lived as student or university professor, rather than how it is recorded through various official or journalistic media. Where feasible, content is preserved as 'live' dialogue (interviews and testimonies) to capture the nuances of its original presentation, allowing experience to speak for itself.

Inescapable is the pervasiveness of military occupation, or how the formal abstraction of an administrative classification imposes itself in concrete terms on the daily business of teaching and study ... is it possible to develop social policy in the context of hostile and invasive security constraints ?

Further reportage shows how military governance has evolved through operational dictat and the anomalies that these excesses have created in an international juridical context. What is the potential recourse left open to Palestinians living under *ad hoc* martial rule ?

A generation of economic deregulation and market globalisation has fused government policy formation and private sector resources in pursuit of progressive developmental objectives. What should be the response from civil society when confronted with institutionalised neglect of fundamental human rights ?

**Author résumé** Nick King is a freelance analyst who visited Palestine in 2002-2003, where much of the source material for this volume was gathered. During his stay in the West Bank, he spent time as a volunteer with the International Solidarity Movement, as well as travelling independently for research purposes. He holds Masters degrees in Politics and Government (from Guildhall University, London) and International Business (CASS Business School, London) and variously provides analytical support for European initiatives promoting and defending human rights and humanitarian solidarity in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt).

Related papers include a submission to the House of Commons Select Committee enquiry into Development Assistance in the oPt: *The Control That The Network Of Settlements In The Occupied Territories Has Over The Basic Conditions For The Development Of The Palestinian Economy*. The memorandum may be consulted at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmintdev/230/230we17.htm>

**Ahdaf Soueif** is a novelist and journalist who writes in English and Arabic, her cultural and political commentary being widely published in Western Europe and the Arab world. She is also involved in television and radio productions for Arab, British and American broadcast networks. Her literary work has generated international acclaim, her novel, *The Map of Love*, being shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1999. Dr.Soueif is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and a patron of both Index on Censorship and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in the UK. She is also member of Amnesty International and the Committee for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU).

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**Foreword - Education in Jerusalem and Cities of the West Bank - Ahdaf Soueif's account of her visit to educational institutions across the West Bank in 2003.**

### 1. A Generation or Two Ahead

An interview with **Ramzi Rihan**, Birzeit University, considers the ambitions, achievements and constraints of the education sector since the advent of the Palestinian Authority under the ill-fated Oslo accords.

*"Time is a rubber band in this country. Economically we are back to pre-Oslo and as far as political developments go we are back to somewhere around 1995, 1996."* (Ramzi Rihan)

### 2. Higher Education - A Rough Guide to the Landscape

An overview of the structure of the fledgling higher education sector under the Palestinian Authority, the problems and challenges faced, and the development opportunities proposed.

*"The goals of higher education go beyond the economic dimension to include social advancement and scientific and cultural productivity in all its forms."* (Palestine Human Development Report 2002).

### 3. The Impact of Military Occupation on Palestinian Education

The methods adopted by the Israeli military to harass Palestinian students, staff, teachers and educational institutions. Students' own testimonies give vivid impressions of the stress and hardship imposed under a regime of random closure and curfews.

*"... The Israeli occupation army entered the flats at 4:30am. They were scaring students by shouting at them from the stairs, while using dogs to intimidate them. They ordered everyone to leave their flats and stand in the street in their pyjamas."* (An-Najah University undergraduate)

### 4. Restrictions on Academic Freedom

A chronicle of Birzeit University's experiences throughout the period of Israeli occupation, featuring translation of material collated by the University from their records of military interventions in the University's affairs.

*"The University closed without warning for 37 days as a result of activity at checkpoints. The number of students who were arrested attained the highest level in the history of the Faculty: 115. Sixty-two percent of these were freed without being given any notification of the charges under which they were arrested ..."*

### 5. Study by Stealth

The daily struggle to maintain operational viability is revealed in an interview with **Rami Hamdallah**, President, and **Sami al-Kilani**, Director of Public Relations, at An-Najah University, Nablus.

*"During the Israeli occupation, we were put under much pressure by the Israeli administration to change the content of courses, but the faculties and the teachers refused that order, saying that they were prepared to close the university rather than have anybody interfere with what we are teaching."* (Sami al-Kilani)

### 6. Rule by Exception

How Israeli policies appear in the context of international law and the response of the international community to reported infringements of human rights. The appeal to apply cultural and academic sanctions (PACBI Call for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel).

*"The extent to which Palestinian society lives under circumstances unlike those faced by many other people in the world is indicated by the extraordinary number of resolutions tabled at the United Nations focussing on Israel's conduct . . . Nevertheless, Israel has continued to benefit from the fundamental freedoms that human rights conventions protect in its global academic relations."*