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East Jerusalem Education Report
School Year 2024–2025

August 2025

Introduction

As the devastating destruction and loss of life in Gaza persists, the 2024-2025 school year brings mounting challenges for Palestinian educators and students in East Jerusalem. Over the past year, the Israeli Knesset has advanced legislation that threatens to further erode East Jerusalem's already fragile education system—including a bill to bar the employment of teachers with degrees from West Bank universities[1], new restrictions on teachers' freedom of expression, and laws mandating the closure of all UNRWA-operated schools.

These draconian measures come against the backdrop of the municipality's continued failure to resolve severe, long-standing infrastructure shortages in East Jerusalem's schools. Despite a 2023 Supreme Court ruling obligating the state to present a comprehensive plan for classroom construction, an acute shortage remains unaddressed, with no plan presented.

In response to Ir Amim's inquiries, the municipality supplied data indicating that 1,461 classrooms remain missing or substandard in East Jerusalem. The latest work plan within the framework of Government Decision 880--a 2023 government five-year plan to reduce socio-economic gaps in East Jerusalem[2]--includes a projected construction of 1,204 new classrooms. Yet, as of this school year, only 20 new classrooms have been added.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education and the municipality have stipulated that any new school funded under the plan must be what is called an "official school"[3] required to teach the Israeli curriculum.

This exploitation of the classroom shortage, combined with additional harmful legislation (as detailed below) deepens Israeli control over East Jerusalem's education system while undermining Palestinian children's right to study according to their own identity, heritage, and culture.

Ir Amim continues to monitor these developments closely, including the advancement of discriminatory legislation, the municipality's neglect of its obligations, and the broader imposition of Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem's education system. As this report will demonstrate, these combined measures severely compromise the educational rights and future of Palestinian children in the city.

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1 Today 60% of East Jerusalem teachers, according to the Knesset Research and Information Center.

2 Gov. Decision 880 is the second five-year plan for the reduction of socio-economic gaps in East Jerusalem, following Gov. Decision 3790 which was adopted in 2018. Both decisions encompassed a variety of sectors, including education.

3 Official schools: refers to schools run and completely funded by the state and/or local authorities. These schools are under supervision of the Ministry of Education, and their teachers are civil servants or employed by the local authority.

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I. Distribution of Students in Jerusalem's Education System

1. General Student Distribution

Sector	Number of Students	Percentage of overall students
Official (State and State-Religious)	68,811	23%
Ultra-Orthodox	122,047	41%
Arab (Official or Recognized)	**107,289**	**36%**
Total	298,147	

Data Source: Jerusalem Education Report, Academic Year 2024 - 2025

2. Distribution of Palestinian Students

Category	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Arab Education - Official	53,329	38.1%
Arab Education – Recognized but unofficial	54,068	38.7%
School age children not enrolled in official or recognized frameworks (see next table for details)	32,480	23.2%
Total number of children eligible for education in East Jerusalem (ages 3–18)	**139,877**	

Data Source: Jerusalem Municipality, Freedom of Information response, 25/07/2025

Distribution of Students Not Enrolled in Official/Recognized Frameworks	
Enrolled in private institutions whose details are known by the municipal authorities	15,000
Enrolled in schools run by the Ministry of Labor whose details are known by the municipal authorities	800
Dropped out during the last school year	3,000
Aged 3-4 whose parents prefer not to enroll them in an educational institution or who attend a private institution	4,400
Remaining, including those who live in Jerusalem but study in the West Bank and those who study in boarding schools and shelters across Israel (estimate)	9,949
Total number of children outside official/recognized education frameworks	**33,149**

Data Source: Jerusalem Municipality, Freedom of Information response, 25/07/2025

II. Classroom Shortages in East Jerusalem

On January 4, 2023—more than 2.5 years ago—the Supreme Court ruled on a petition (HC 6183/16) filed by the Parents' Association[4] over the classroom shortage in Jerusalem. After hearing the petitioners' arguments, including that of Ir Amim in its capacity as amicus curiae, the Court ordered the state and municipality to submit a phased plan within four months for the planning and construction of the missing classrooms in East Jerusalem's official education system. The ruling stated:

> "If, within four months, the respondents of the government do not reach an agreement with the Jerusalem Municipality regarding the plan, it will be determined by government agencies within an additional two months... **We recall that the differential treatment of East Jerusalem stems from the data presented by the respondents, who acknowledge the significant gaps between East Jerusalem and other sectors**..." (translated from the original Hebrew[5], emphasis added)

After receiving six extensions to the deadline for presenting their plan and following Ir Amim's inquiry to the State Attorney's Office, the municipality and state were granted no further extensions.

4 Parents' Association: This body is the official and budgeted parents' organization in Jerusalem.

5 "ככל שמשיבי הממשלה לא יגיעו להסכמה עם עיריית ירושלים לגבי המתווה בתוך 4 חודשים, ייקבע המתווה על ידי גורמי הממשלה בתוך חודשיים נוספים... נזכיר כי ההתייחסות הנבדלת למזרח ירושלים נובעת מהנתונים שהוצגו על ידי המשיבים, המכירים בפערים המשמעותיים בין מזרח ירושלים לרשויות אחרות..."

To date, the state has failed to provide the court-mandated plan for the construction of the required classrooms in East Jerusalem. In the absence of this plan, Ir Amim filed a Freedom of Information request with the Jerusalem Municipality in order to obtain the data found in this report. The response was delayed with the municipality only providing the requested information on August 27, after multiple follow-ups. The data revealed that the number of missing and substandard classrooms in East Jerusalem currently stands at 1,461. The municipality also stated that the 2024–2028 five-year plan includes the construction of **1,204 new classrooms**. However, only **20 new classrooms** were opened in the past school year.

III. Student Dropout

In past years, the municipality has provided Ir Amim with an exact number of students who dropped out. This year, they have only provided an estimate, approximating that around 3,000 students dropped out of recognized formal education frameworks during the course of the school year.

According to the municipality's response, "some of them stopped studying, and some may have turned to other frameworks—their details are recorded with the municipality's Education Administration." (Translated and lightly edited from the original Hebrew[6])

Category	Number/ Percentage of Students
Pupils in official/recognized schools (including preschool and kindergarten)	107,397
Pupils in official/recognized schools (excluding preschool and kindergarten)	84,872
Dropouts (estimated)	3,000
Dropout rate (including kindergartens)	3%
Dropout rate (schools only)	4%
Total pupils in official/recognized schools & kindergartens	**107,397**

Source: Jerusalem Municipality, Freedom of Information response, 25/07/2025

According to the data provided by the municipality, each school year sees similar dropout rates. This number is significantly higher than the known rates in other areas

6 "חלקם הפסיקו ללמוד וחלקם ייתכן שפנו למסגרות אחרות – הפרטים שלהם קיימים במנח"י"

within Israel.[7] The municipality added that their Arab Education Department is currently operating programs to support students at risk and those in danger of dropping out. These programs are in the framework of Government Decision 880.

IV. Legislation Harmful to East Jerusalem's Education System

Under the cover of the war, Israel's extreme right-wing government has continued its dangerous policies and actions. This year, they have continued to propose and advance legislation that erodes every dimension of democracy, including further harm to the education system in East Jerusalem.

1. Closure of UNRWA Schools

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established by the United Nations in 1949 to address the needs of Palestinian refugees following the 1948 War. The agency operates in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, as well as in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. It provides economic assistance, health services, and education. In late 2024, the Knesset enacted two laws aggressively targeting the organization's operating abilities.

The first, the **Law for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities in the State of Israel** prohibits any activity of UNRWA within areas under Israeli sovereignty and was intended to shutter the agency's operations in East Jerusalem (which according to Israeli law is under Israeli sovereignty). The second, **the Law for the Cessation of UNRWA's Activity**, prohibits state authorities and public officials from maintaining "any contact" with the agency or its representatives. The prohibitions on UNRWA's activity in East Jerusalem, and on any contact with it or its representatives, went into effect on January 30, 2025.

The proposed laws were ostensibly submitted in the wake of October 7 and following Israel's claims of UNRWA employees in the Gaza Strip having taken part in the Hamas-initiated attack. However, efforts to prohibit UNRWA's activity in East Jerusalem and to even shut down the organization began much earlier. Right-wing organizations have been running a years-long campaign—amplified by Israeli politicians—for the closure of the agency, on the grounds that it allegedly reinforces the Palestinian refugee status

7 Recent student dropout rates are calculated based on the percentage of students dropping out from grades 7–12. According to sources from the Central Bureau of Statistics, total dropout for these ages stands at 1.9% in the Jewish sector and 2.2% in the Arab sector in Israel. The rate cited here is not limited to grades 7–12 (no age-specific breakdown was provided), so it is likely even higher, since dropout increases with each year of study, particularly at the upper-secondary level.

and undermines the image of Israeli control and sovereignty in East Jerusalem.

In April 2025, following the legislation, police stormed UNRWA schools in the middle of the school day to distribute closure orders. The following month in May 2025, Israel shut down the seven educational institutions operated by the agency: three schools in the Shuafat refugee camp, additional schools in Wadi Joz, Sur Baher, and Silwan, and a vocational center in Kufr Aqab. According to Ir Amim's data, approximately 1,100 students were enrolled in these seven institutions. Two weeks after the closure of the schools, in a discussion held in the Knesset Education Committee's Subcommittee, a Ministry of Education representative reported that only about 50 students transferred to recognized schools, while the rest continued studying through remote learning.

The three schools that were closed in the Shuafat refugee camp, located beyond the Separation Barrier, were the only official school facilities in the camp. Most of the other schools in the area are recognized but unofficial schools operating in buildings that were converted into schools but fail to meet basic standards. An insufficient proposal—to establish a school in the camp using portable structures —was never implemented. As stated during a discussion in the aforementioned Knesset subcommittee: the municipality submitted a plan, however the required state-funding was never received. Any plan to transfer the camps' students to schools outside the camp would be especially difficult, since it would require them to cross a checkpoint and sit in hours of traffic on a daily basis.

Al Bustan Association Silwan

Similarly, for students in the other now-closed UNRWA institutions, resuming their studies in schools located far from their homes requires a transportation system, which is already problematic in many neighborhoods.

Moreover, older students who studied under the Palestinian curriculum face added hardship if forced to switch to the Israeli curriculum taught at municipality-operated schools just as they reach, or near, their matriculation exams.

2. Legislation Targeting the Palestinian Curriculum

Throughout the year, further legislative bills sought to link the Palestinian curriculum in East Jerusalem with terrorism. These bills are being introduced and promoted by representatives of Otzma Yehudit ("Jewish Power"), the Religious Zionism party, as well as Likud members of the Knesset. In the Knesset Education Committee and in its Subcommittee on "Curricula in East Jerusalem," numerous discussions were held by the subcommittee chairs—MK Amit Halevi and his successor MK Avihai Boaron (both from the far-right wing of Likud)—aimed at undermining the Palestinian education system in East Jerusalem.

In early November 2024, the Knesset passed the **Law for Prohibition on Employment of Teaching Personnel and Withholding Budget from Educational Institutions due to Identification with Acts of Terrorism or a Terrorist Organization (Amendments), 5785–2024**, which became known as the "Law for the Persecution of Teachers." This law grants sweeping powers to the Minister of Education to prohibit the employment of a teacher and to revoke funding from schools. The law poses a serious threat to freedom of expression and freedom of employment for teachers in general, and particularly within Arab society.

In July 2025, the Knesset Education Committee approved the **Bill to Prohibit Employment of Teachers Holding Academic Degrees from the Palestinian Authority** for its final readings. The final vote to pass the bill was postponed just days before the Knesset's summer recess, due to the coalition crisis with the ultra-Orthodox parties. According to the bill, Israeli educational institutions – including those in East Jerusalem - will be barred from employing teachers holding degrees from West Bank universities. According to recent data, 2/3 of teachers employed in municipal and recognized but unofficial schools in East Jerusalem received degrees from Palestinian academic institutions.

The bill infringes upon constitutional rights, including Freedom of Occupation, and will severely damage the teaching workforce in East Jerusalem. A commitment made during the discussions—to advance teacher training in Israeli institutions to prevent a shortage of teachers—has yet to be fulfilled.

V. Implementation of the Education Chapter in the New Five-Year Plan (Government Decision 880)

In August 2023, Government Decision 880 was adopted to reduce socio-economic gaps in East Jerusalem. This decision approved the implementation of the second five-year plan for East Jerusalem, covering the years 2024–2029.

As is evident by the provisions of the five-year plan and its budget allocations, the central goal of the Ministry of Education, the Jerusalem Affairs Ministry, and the Jerusalem Municipality is to increase the number and proportion of students enrolled in schools teaching the Israeli curriculum.

This goal is highly concerning due to the right of East Jerusalem's children to study according to their identity, heritage, and culture. It is further troubling given the acute classroom shortage in East Jerusalem, especially since the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality have made clear that any new school funded under the plan will be an official municipal school, exclusively teaching the Israeli curriculum.

According to the Jerusalem Municipality's response to Ir Amim's Freedom of Information request, 22,966 children in East Jerusalem currently study in schools teaching the Israeli curriculum—about 27% of the children eligible for education in East Jerusalem aged 6–17. The director of the Jerusalem District at the Ministry of Education, speaking before the Knesset Subcommittee on Curricula in East Jerusalem and its Oversight, reported that as of May 2025, 39 out of 100 schools in the official system operated entirely on the Israeli matriculation track during the 2024–2025 school year. Another 36 schools offered both the Israeli curriculum in some classes and the Tawjihi (Palestinian matriculation) track, while 25 remained solely on the Tawjihi track.

The work plan approved for the 2024–2025 school year amounted to 114 million NIS—nearly the full budget planned at the start of the five-year plan (which was set at 120 million NIS for each of the five years) and nearly twice the budget for the 2023–2024 school year, which stood at approximately 62 million NIS following cuts to the program's budget due to the war.

To date, no response has been received to the Freedom of Information request Ir Amim sent to the Jerusalem Affairs Ministry, which is responsible for implementing the entire five-year plan. As a result, data regarding the implementation of additional sections in the education chapter—those that could be applied for the benefit of the population alone, rather than for further imposition of Israeli sovereignty, such as Hebrew instruction, dropout reduction, individualized support, and informal education—are not currently available. The Jerusalem Affairs Ministry has also not presented annual

reports on the program's progress status, nor provided implementation reports to the government, despite its requirement to do so.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that, according to the director of the Jerusalem District at the Ministry of Education, speaking before the Knesset Subcommittee on Curricula in East Jerusalem and its Oversight in May 2025, all programs relating to the education chapter of the five-year plan are being fully funded. According to the municipality's response to the Freedom of Information request, as noted above, the Jerusalem Municipality's Arab Education Department operates programs for students at risk and in danger of dropping out under the five-year plan, supplemented with municipal funding. This includes social workers in schools, dropout prevention coordinators, and tailored programs.

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