

Facts Sheet:

The Reality of accessible Schools in Light of the Genocidal War on the Gaza Strip

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The Genocidal War and Education:

The genocidal war waged by the “Israeli” occupation against the Gaza Strip is still going on since the 7th of October 2023, and the education sector, just like all other sectors, is subject to extensive campaigns of systematic destruction. These destruction campaigns target the educational structure, including schools, universities, cultural centers, libraries, and others. The occupation is working to destroy all aspects of life in the Gaza Strip, to achieve its colonial goals of destroying the components of Palestinian existence, which education plays a pivotal aspect in strengthening.

The Palestinian education sector has always been subjected to systematic targeting and sabotage campaigns, starting with campaigns to Judaize the Palestinian curricula, the campaigns of raids and storming of universities and their closure for long periods, in addition to campaigns to arrest, persecute, and kill students and teachers in schools and universities, and ending with the direct bombing and aggressive destruction that universities and schools are exposed to today.

Since the beginning of the genocidal war, many Palestinian schools in the Strip were subject to storming as well as direct and indirect bombing, while the occupation also fully destroyed many universities and schools by bombing them directly using air strikes and/or artillery. Furthermore, several educational establishments were partially destroyed by artillery bombardment, the bombardment of the surrounding areas, or storming into them. Reports issued by international bodies and the occupation army documented the bombing and destruction of schools that were housing displaced people. According to a report issued by UNRWA, 335 incidents were reported that affected UNRWA buildings and the people inside them since the beginning of the war, including at least 50 incidents of military use and/or interference with UNRWA buildings¹. 155 different UNRWA facilities were affected by these incidents. Most of these facilities are UNRWA schools, and in a report by the Education Group, %44 of UNRWA schools were either directly bombed or damaged.²

1. "UNRWA Situation Report NO. 84 on the Situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem", UNRWA (1 March 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/tu9rkp>.

2. "UNRWA Situation Report NO. 83 on the Situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem", UNRWA (28 February 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/8n3u93>.



The number of schools during the academic year 2023/2022 in the West Bank was 2,383 schools,³ 1,889 of which are public schools, 93 are UNRWA schools and 401 are civil and private schools. In the Gaza Strip, there are 550 schools, 303 of which are public schools, 65 schools are private schools and 182 schools are UNRWA schools. According to the statistics of 2015 issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, there are 7,552 male and female students with disabilities enrolled in public schools in Palestine, at a rate of %73.6 in the West Bank and %26.4 in the Gaza Strip⁴; while the number of persons with disabilities has reached 113,000 in Palestine in 2013.⁵

Figure (1): Number of Schools in Palestine according to their Region and Affiliation for the Academic Year 2023/2022

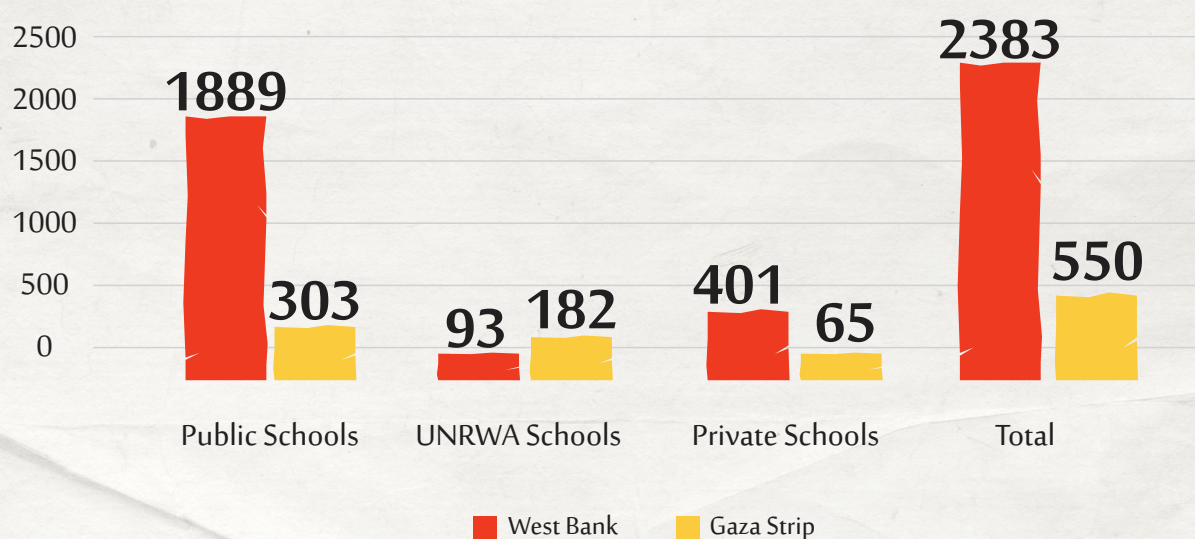
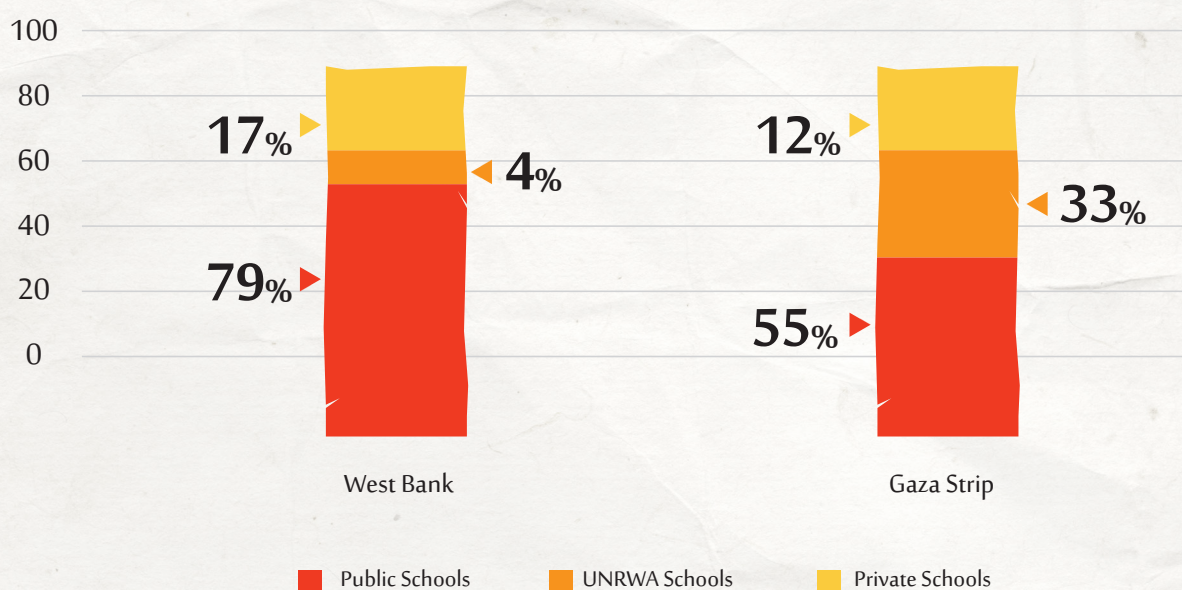


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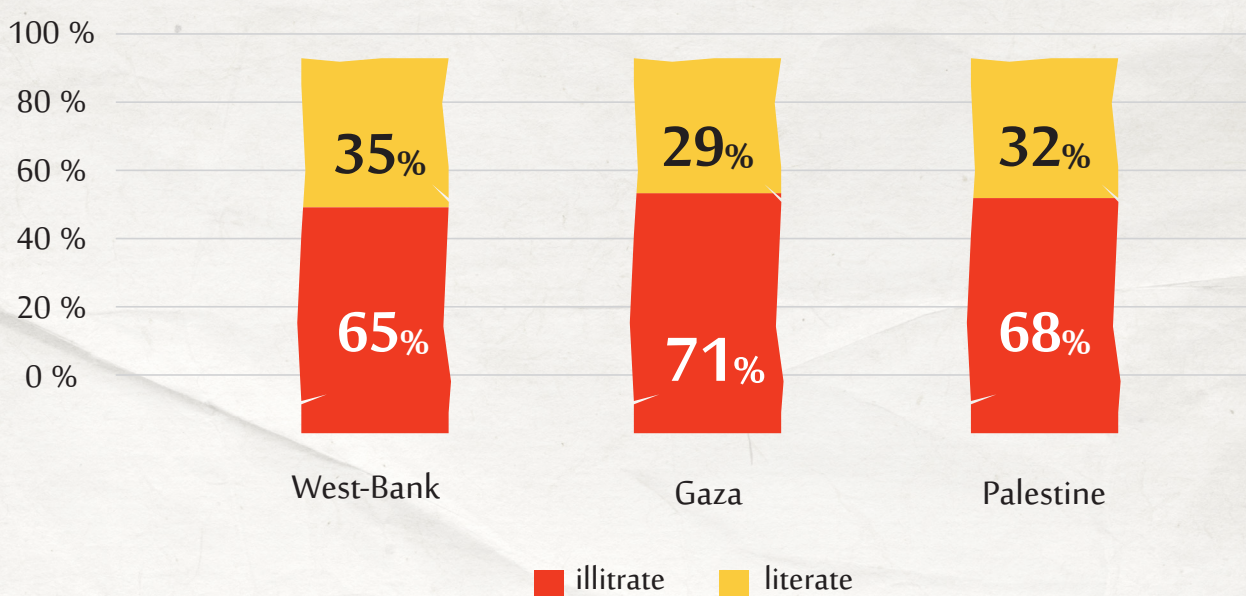
3. "PCBS: 3141 martyrs from school students, and 130 from school teachers and administrators since the beginning of the war against our people" Wafa (13 November 2023). Website: <https://n9.cl/s51yl>.

4. "In numbers... Statistical Indicators related to Education" Palestine Economy Portal (13 July 2015). Website: <https://n9.cl/ex77g>.

5. "PCBS issues a press release on the occasion of the International Disability Day, 2013/12/03" The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (3 December 2013). Website: <https://n9.cl/tmnhf>.

Illiteracy rates among persons with disabilities reached around %32 in Palestine in 2017, as illiteracy rates among males have reached %20 and %46 among females. Illiteracy rates in the West Bank among persons with disabilities have reached %35, while Illiteracy rates in the Gaza Strip have reached %29. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics also indicated that %46 of children with disabilities within the age group 17-3 years are not enrolled in the education sector, with the rate in the West Bank being %51 and in the Gaza Strip %43.⁶

Figure (3): Illiteracy Rates among Persons with Disability according to Region in Palestines for the year 2017



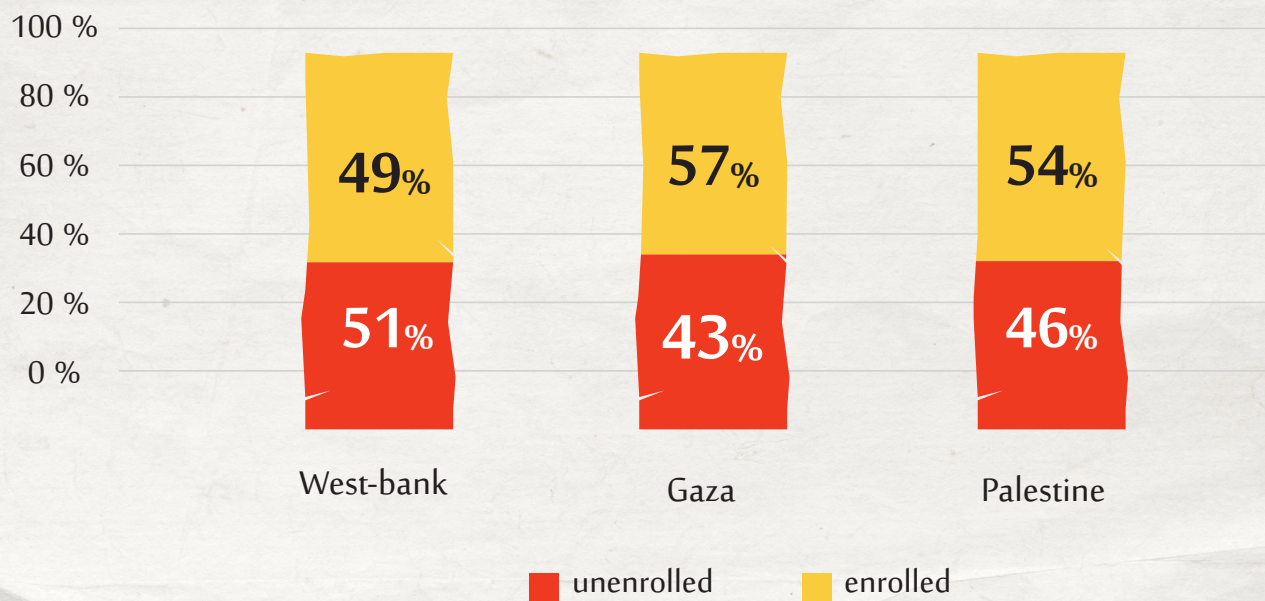
The lack of accessibility in schools, and the lack of inclusiveness in the environment surrounding persons with disabilities reduce the rate of their access to education. The rate of accessibility in school buildings is low. There are %25 of persons with disabilities who need adaptations in school buildings to complete their education, and %24.2 of persons with hearing disabilities need adaptations inside classrooms.⁷ Statistics also indicate that %76.4 of persons with disabilities do not use public transportation due to the lack of accessibility that enable them to use it.⁸

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Shadow Report of Disabled Women and Girls (Palestinian Civil Society Institutions, 2017).

Figure (4): Percentage of Children with Disability among the age group 17-3 who are not enrolled in schools, according to region, in Palestine for the Year 2017



The access rate of persons with disabilities to education is low and is threatened to decrease significantly as the occupation continues to systematically destroy school buildings and misuse their buildings for military reasons, and this in turn threatens to reduce the access of students with disabilities - with various types of disabilities - to education in general. The number of schools that are accessible to specific types of disabilities is limited, and with the continuation of the war, the number of accessible schools, which is already low, and after many of these schools were fully or partially destroyed, this will threaten the right of persons with disabilities to education, and with the increase in the percentage of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip after the war due to intentional injuries, the access of persons with disabilities to education becomes threatened. The risk of canceling an entire academic year for students in schools and universities in the absence of a clear horizon for stopping the genocidal war threatens the educational and professional future of students, and this is a deliberate policy practiced by the occupation.

The Reality of Education During the War: Facts and Numbers

About 608 thousand male and female students are enrolled in the schools of the Gaza Strip, 294 thousand students of which are enrolled in public schools, meaning that %48.3 of students enrolled in the education sector are in public schools.⁹

The number of martyrs among school students has exceeded 5379 martyrs, while the number of wounded has reached 8888 students¹⁰; this increases the possibility of a rise in the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in schools due to injuries.

386 school buildings were subject to recurring destruction; 25 schools were completely destroyed, 113 schools were severely damaged, 125 schools were moderately damaged, and 123 schools were slightly damaged.

44 UNRWA schools were directly bombed/targeted, and 40 schools were destroyed.

21 private schools were directly bombed, and 21 schools were destroyed.

162 school buildings were directly bombed, which represents %28.8 of the total schools in the Gaza Strip (so far).

97 public schools were directly bombed, 90 public schools were destroyed, 43 were moderately destroyed, and 16 public schools were subjected to possible destruction.

%45 of schools used as shelters for displaced citizens were directly bombed or destroyed.

At least %55 of the schools in the Gaza Strip will require either comprehensive reconstruction or re-building and major repairs.¹¹

There are no accurate estimates of the amounts required to rebuild and repair schools, however, a report issued by an international organization mentioned that the required amount is 100 million US Dollars¹², and this number is subject to increase and doubling.

9. "PCBS: 3141 martyrs from school students".

10. "The Ministry of Education: 5424 students were martyred and 408 schools were bombed and sabotaged since the beginning of the aggression"

11. "Verification of Damages to Schools Based on Proximity to Damaged Sites" Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster (10 February 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/5vg8p>.

12. Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster Flash Appeal (23 October 2023). Appeal Link: <https://n9.cl/rslqq>.

Accessible Public Schools in Light of the War

Persons with disabilities are deprived of accessing education for many reasons, including poverty, as unemployment rates among persons with disabilities have reached %37 ;%19 in the West Bank and %54 in the Gaza Strip.¹³ At the same time, weak participation in education leads to an increase in the rate of poverty and a decrease in the participation rate of persons with disabilities in the labor market. Also, the decline in inclusion in the surrounding environment for persons with disabilities and the lack of compatible transportation is a factor that directly affects their limited involvement in various sectors, including education.

The education sector in Palestine is not considered sufficiently compatible with the requirements of persons with disability, added to that, due to the existence of the occupation, the limited number of accessible schools are being subject to destruction. During the war on the Gaza Strip, many of these schools were bombed directly or destroyed partially. This resulted in the destruction of the accessibility adaptations either completely or partially in these schools, in addition to the digging of the streets and schoolyards making access to them extremely difficult, which will double the enormous difficulties that persons with disabilities will face in accessing and returning to education.

As part of a study on education and vocational training for persons with disabilities carried out by the Stars of Hope Society, a random sample was taken from public schools in the Gaza Strip that receive persons with disabilities to examine their attitudes regarding education and vocational training. Considering these schools receive persons with disabilities, they are at least minimally adapted. The sample included 35 public schools, and this paper provides a cross-sectional comparison between the schools within the sample of the previous study and a special report issued by the Education Group in Palestine¹⁴, showing the destruction of public schools through satellite images, in addition to relying on a group of other press reports. Furthermore, the study was also based on primary sources, including testimonies of residents in the Gaza Strip from residents of areas adjacent to schools or those who have information about them to document the damage. Specifically, this fact sheet addresses the conditions of 35 compatible public schools in the Gaza Strip.

The sample of the vocational training study included students in the ninth, tenth, and twelfth grades. Therefore, the schools were distributed according to the educational stage as follows: %71.4 were secondary schools, %28.6 were basic schools, %97.1 of the schools in the sample were regular schools, while %2.9 of them were vocational schools, with one accessible vocational school, and the study relied on public schools as the study community.

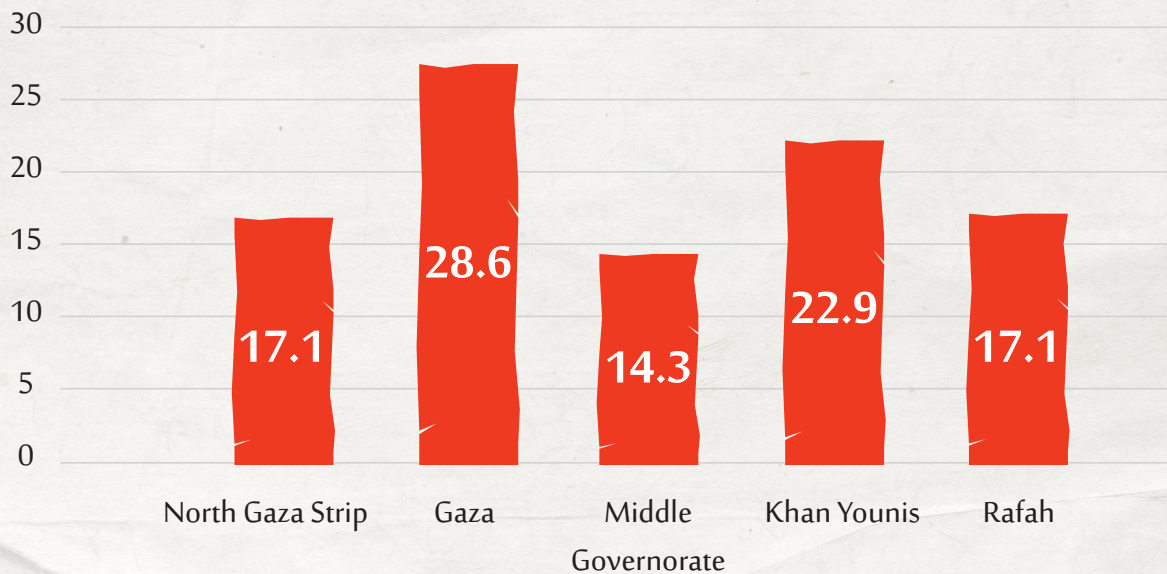


13. "PCBS issues a press release".

14. "Verification of Damages to Schools".

The schools included in the vocational training study sample were distributed among the governorates of the Strip at different rates as shown in Figure (5) below. %17.1 of schools included in the study sample are located in the northern governorate, %28.6 are located in Gaza, %14.3 are located in the Middle Governorate, while %22.9 of the schools are located in Khan Younis Governorate, and %17.1 of the study sample is located in Rafah Governorate.

Figure (5): Distribution of Schools withing the Study Sample for Vocational Tranining Based on Governorates in the Gaza Strip

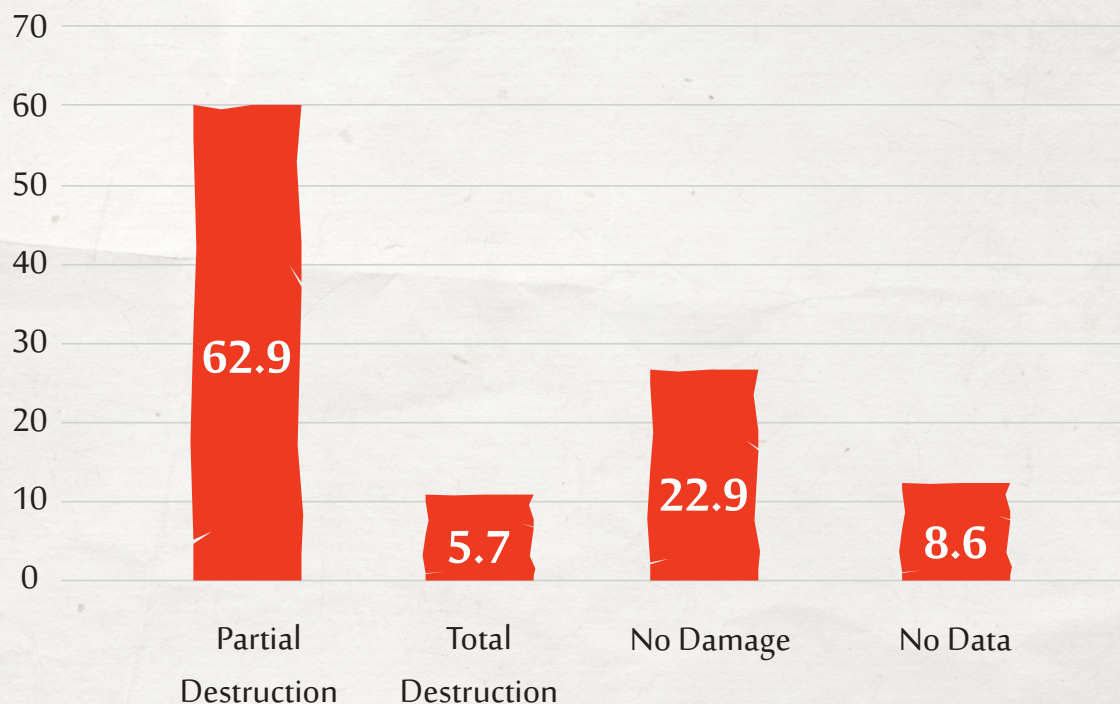


With the continuation of the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, the education sector, including school buildings compatible with the requirements of persons with disabilities, was systematically destroyed by the occupation, and this necessarily reduced the percentage of accessible schools capable of receiving students, especially students with disabilities, after the war. A large number of these schools were completely or partially destroyed, and therefore a large part of the available adaptations were severely damaged due to the destruction they sustained.

The following figure shows the percentage of damage to schools as a result of the ongoing genocidal war in the Gaza Strip. %62.9 of the accessible schools were partially destroyed, while the percentage of schools that were fully destroyed was %5.7. Only %22.9 of the study sample had buildings that were not damaged, while there is no information available about %8.6 of schools. The following figure shows the percentage of destruction according to the extent of the damage.



Figure (6): Percentage of Destruction of the Schools within the Sample of the Vocational Training Sample



The above figure indicates that around %68.6 of accessible schools included in the study sample were subject to destruction, either partially or completely, and this percentage is subject to increase with the continuation of the war. The rate of schools that were subject to partial damage was the highest, as it reached %62.9. This means that most schools in the study sample were subject to either direct or indirect damage. The schools that were destroyed were distributed across the governorates of the Gaza Strip, as shown in the following table:

Table (1): Distribution of Destroyed Schools According to Governorate

Governorate	Partial Destruction	Total Destruction	No Damage	No Data	Total
North Gaza	%14.3	0	%2.9	0	%17.1
Gaza	%17.1	%5.7	%2.9	%2.9	%28.6
Middle Governorate	%14.3	0	0	0	%14.3
Khan Younis	%17.1	0	0	%5.7	%22.9
Rafah	0	0	%17.1	0	%17.1
Total	%62.9	%5.7	%22.9	%8.6	100

The above table shows that %14.3 of the schools of the North of Gaza were subject to partial destruction, while %22.8 of the schools in Gaza Governorate were subject to partial or full destruction, and the rate of complete destruction reached %5.7, while the rate of partial destruction in the Middle Governorate reached %14.3 and %17.1 in Khan Younis. All schools that were fully destroyed were in the Gaza Governorate.

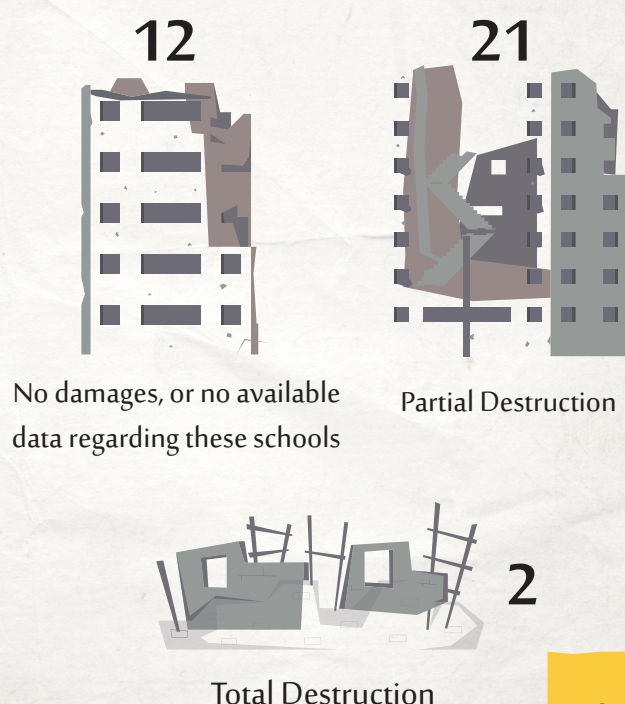
Moreover, results indicate that %45.7 of secondary schools which were part of the study sample were subject to partial destruction, compared to %17.1 of secondary schools. %5.7 of the totally destroyed schools were secondary schools, and the only vocational secondary school in the sample was one of the schools that were partially destroyed. Students with disabilities enrolled in this school see that their school was highly compatible with their requirements, which reached to around %63 according to their opinion.

In light of the difficulties that the education sector in Palestine witnesses in general, with the decrease in the budget allocated to this sector, and the crisis related to the salaries of public school teachers, in addition to the decline in the funding of the UNRWA and the destruction on around %44 of its schools¹⁵, either partially or totally, %26 of which are accessible schools¹⁶, the process of reconstruction will require serious effort and huge funding, and the building of more compatible schools. Many schools will also need to repair the accessibility adaptations due to the raids carried out by the occupation army on a number of schools and the destruction of their courtyards. This requires working on a comprehensive reconstruction plan, especially with the increase in the number of persons with disabilities due to injuries, a high percentage of whom are children.

The right to education is of great importance in empowering individuals in general and is often essential for entering the labor market, and with the decrease in the access of persons with disabilities to education and work, they fall into cycles of poverty and marginalization more than others. Because of the importance of providing inclusion components for the access of persons with disabilities to education, the destruction campaigns launched by the occupation against schools will lead to exposing their access to education to great danger and will threaten their future.

It is important to monitor the effect of the genocidal war on students in general, and on students with disabilities in particular, and on their ability to learn after the end of this war, as well as the ways in which the assistive devices, including talking computers and other basic tools that are necessary for their inclusion in education, so that accessible schools are built and students with both old and new disabilities are qualified to reengage in the education process.

Figure (7): The Number of Schools according to the Incurred Damage from the Total Sample



15. Ibid.

16. Position Paper: A War without Human Rights: Humanitarian Interventions and International Aid: Do They Respond to Palestinian Priorities? The Social and Economic Policies Monitor (AlMarsad) and the Stars of Hope Society for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities, (December 2023). Website: <https://n9.cl/z8j63>.

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