

## **Urgent Call for University Action on Gaza: Actively Engage with the ICJ Ruling - Demand Immediate Ceasefire and Re-instatement of UNRWA Funding**

As concerned members of the University of Adelaide, University of South Australia, and Flinders University, we are deeply committed to upholding human rights principles and write to urgently address the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza. As of February 19<sup>th</sup>, 29,092, people are reported killed and estimated 8,000 missing, presumably dead, under the rubble. Sixty percent are women and children. Close to 70,000 people are reported to be injured.

The Scholars Against the War on Palestine (SAWP) campaign has highlighted the scholasticide taking place in Palestine, which has reached unprecedented levels in Gaza. Up to Day 125, Israel has bombed every university in Gaza, as well as 370 schools. These attacks have resulted in the documented loss of 231 educators, 95 University Professors and scientists, and 4,237 students.

Israel initiated its systematic retaliation attacks on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, with the bombing and destruction of the Islamic University of Gaza. Tragically, the university's president, renowned scientist Dr. Sufyan Tayeh, was killed along with his family on December 2<sup>nd</sup> following the bombing of his house. Subsequent attacks targeted the University College of Applied Sciences and Technology on October 19<sup>th</sup>, Al-Azhar University on November 6<sup>th</sup>, Al-Quds Open University on November 15<sup>th</sup>, and Gaza University on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023. On January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the IOF destroyed Al-Israa University, marking the destruction of the last remaining university in Gaza. Over the period, 90% of schools and 60% of libraries have also been damaged or destroyed.

In addition, over 80% of people facing famine or catastrophic hunger worldwide are in Gaza. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provides lifesaving aid to two million Palestinians, but it's critical work cannot continue without sustained contributions from countries worldwide. However, based on a six-page dossier from the Israeli government that 12 out of 13,000 UNRWA workers were involved in the October 7<sup>th</sup> attacks, many countries including Australia, have paused critical funding. It has now come to light that this decision to pause funding was made without sighting any evidence of the allegations and a recent investigation by Channel 4 (UK) found no evidence for the Israeli allegations against UNRWA.

The International Court of Justice landmark ruling on January 26<sup>th</sup> 2024, has stated that Israel and all 153 state parties to the 1948 Genocide Convention must "take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip". Australia's decision to freeze UNRWA funding, based on unevidenced allegations, is not upholding the ICJ ruling and may be deemed as complicity in genocide.

Four Norwegian universities have suspended ties with Israeli universities. In October 2023, RMIT terminated its relationship with Elbit Systems and its subsidiaries.

Given the urgency of the situation, we call upon our universities to also take immediate action:

1. Terminate all partnerships with Israeli academic institutions directly or indirectly involved in supporting or enabling acts of scholasticide.

2. Affirm solidarity with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling, demanding Israel take measures to prevent acts falling within the scope of the Genocide Convention.
3. Cease all collaborative activities with Israeli partners contributing to such genocidal acts until the ICJ case is resolved.
4. Issue a statement endorsing the Australian government's plea for an immediate ceasefire.
5. Advocate for the urgent reinstatement of UNRWA funding.
6. Demand the immediate release of Israeli and foreign hostages currently detained in Gaza, along with all Palestinian hostages abducted from Gaza and arrested across Palestine, who are presently held under arbitrary detention in Israeli camps and prisons.
7. Implement measures to safeguard the well-being of our students and staff affected, directly or indirectly, by the current situation.

Our universities must demonstrate leadership and endorse these critical actions, while urging the Australian government to reinstate funding to UNRWA without delay. The decision to freeze UNRWA funding based on unsubstantiated allegations undermines international law and may be construed as complicity in genocide.

As educators and researchers, we have a moral obligation to speak out against injustices and uphold principles of international law. We have a particular responsibility to address the scholasticide in Gaza and historic Palestine, advocating for the protection of educational and research institutions, as well as the students, staff, and faculty who are part of them.

The world is watching, and our institutions must take a stand against the mass suffering of Palestinians, particularly women and children. We urge our universities to act on this matter urgently and uphold principles of justice, human rights, and the rule of law.

### **Supporting information:**

[Scholars against war](#)

[ReliefWeb: Israel kills dozens of academics, destroys every university in the Gaza Strip](#)

[ReliefWeb: Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel](#)

[Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor](#)

[International Court of Justice press release](#)

[Channel 4 investigation](#)

[Friends of Birzeit University](#)

[Haaretz, Opinion As Gaza's Lives and Homes Are Destroyed, So Is Its Higher Education](#)

[+972 magazine investigations](#)

[The Conversation: The war in Gaza is wiping out Palestine's education and knowledge systems](#)

## SIGNATURES

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