

Rethinking Education in/with Gaza in Times of Failure

Khawla Badwan

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1808-724X>
Manchester Metropolitan University,
United Kingdom
k.badwan@mmu.ac.uk

Youmen Chaaban

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3708-3722>
Qatar University, Qatar
ychaaban@qu.edu.qa

Logan Cochrane

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7321-8295>
Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar
lcochrane@hbku.edu.qa

Abstract

This article is written while witnessing the world's first live-streamed genocide, the genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza. It centres the Gaza Genocide as an *exemplar* of the failures of liberal education systems. At the same time, it positions the Genocide in Gaza as a *catalyst* for rethinking education in/with Gaza to create fairer educational presents and futures. Such rethinking necessitates a new lexicon for education that speaks to current failures and dares to name new possibilities. As such, this article departs from the expiring liberal human capital perspective and proposes a framework with three timely turns that orient education towards the urgently needed work towards justice and solidarity. The framework entails an ontological arrangement towards an *Education for Justice*, an epistemological shift anchored in a *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised*, and an ethical commitment envisaged through *Solidarity Education*. This work speaks to educators across the world, carving a world for an education that attends to human rights, democracy, justice, solidarity, and peace.

Keywords: Gaza Genocide; Education for Justice; Pedagogy with the Dehumanised; Solidarity Education; rethinking education; language



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Introduction

This article is a think piece that responds to Edward Said's call for a "constant re-experiencing of beginning and beginning-again", as a scholarly provocation that requires "self-conscious and situated activity, activity with aims non-coercive and communal" (Said 1975, 379–380). It articulates an alternative vision for education that departs from failing liberal values with their colonial, instrumentalist, individual, data-driven, and profit-oriented mindsets of education, and instead centres education as a moral practice (Jackson 2011) concerned with the betterment of human societies. To achieve this, we learn from Canagarajah (2023, 285) that we need deeper transformations that are much more than institutional changes, directed towards "new dispositions, ethics, spirituality, knowledge, and lifestyles to suit an inclusive social and geopolitical life".

This requires going back to basics to ask: What are the limitations in how education has historically responded to wars and genocides? How can education reckon with the realities of those pushed into dehumanisation, in what Fanon (1986, 109) calls the "zone of nonbeing"? How might education perceive the other when the other is torn into pieces in real time as part of a genocide that is also a "collective crime" (Albanese 2025c)? The questions are daunting indeed. Yet, they are urgently needed for the troubled realities that Gaza has uncovered for the world and for liberal education systems. In what follows, we work with these questions as we rethink education ontologically, epistemologically, and ethically, centring Gaza as a catalyst for heartbreaking times.

This article is written during what Mokhiber (2025) calls a world with "many terrifying 'firsts'": "the first live-streamed genocide", the "first hi-tech genocide", and "the first globalised genocide". It is written with Gaza under bombs and under the illusion of peace, leaving us with "the collapse of the international system that has defined our lives for generations at our own collective peril" (Bayoumi 2025). The liberal order has fallen apart, swinging between lawlessness and the remaking of whatever will be called a new world order. We do not know what this (dis)order will look like, but we know that we are currently working with a dying, expired order. There will be resistance to this realisation since we have normalised protecting dying systems by "putt[ing] them on life support because we fear the void left in their place" (Machado de Oliveira 2021, 15). For now, we remain in agony echoing Hammad's (2024, 60) point that "[t]o remain human at this juncture is to remain in agony. Let us remain there: it is the more honest place from which to speak". With this agony we stand at a steep cliff, with everything we once knew about the language of universal declarations, human rights, international order, liberal thought, civic rights, and social justice.

Indeed, the world order and its (re)making are glued to what the world has allowed to happen in Gaza and to how the world has responded to the daily live streaming of death, destruction, and engineered starvation. The inseparability of Gaza from the rest of the world at this historical moment necessitates the *in/with* combination in our title and the rethinking presented here. In particular, we are concerned with education as an antidote

to “shock events, gaslighting, denial, deflection, and everything else that renews the daily prospect of losing one’s mind” (Komska, Moyd, and Gramling 2019, 148). To position education as the antidote to current failures is to acknowledge that education remains at the forefront of responding to this existential crisis, not only for the international order itself, but for the pillars of democratic education in many parts of the world:

Schools and universities, long viewed as spaces for critical thought, a culture of questioning, and civic development, are being transformed into ideological battlegrounds, reduced to mere appendages of corporate and state power, and subject to state violence. (Giroux 2025a)

Acknowledging the broader impact of Gaza on the rest of the world requires thinking with what Machado de Oliveira (2021, 223) refers to as “metabolic literacies” that force us to see ourselves as “living metabolisms nested in wider metabolisms”. It is the acknowledgement that there is no way from the harms of failing and falling orders, realising the interconnectedness and interdependence that should inform our thinking of education as we move forward with the wounds and moral injuries endured in/with Gaza. It is a vision for education anchored in nesting, being in witness and with-ness with Gaza as an *exemplar* of the failures and dehumanisation of the liberal order, as well as a *catalyst* for rethinking education, all over again. To think with nested ontologies, relational epistemologies, and caring ethics is to challenge the fundamental tenets of liberalism, which centre the individual, rather than the collective, and protect capitalist and statist interests (Joshi, Lee, and Mac Ginty 2014), rather than humanity and society. As we present our rethinking education framework, we unpick the influence of failing liberal thought in education, not only in Gaza but also with Gaza.

Writing this article has not been easy. We write about education in/with Gaza without knowing what the future holds for Gaza and what else the world (dis)order might allow to happen as we head towards what Hedges (2025) calls the last chapter of the genocide, with ongoing threats of ethnic cleaning. We also write without knowing what the new order for education will look like as we continue to witness education becoming a site of the state’s biopower and necropolitical governance. Nonetheless, we write as humanities scholars bringing together the disciplines of applied linguistics, education, and public policy in an attempt to articulate an alternative framework for education in a failing liberal order, while holding the crumbs of what remains and insisting on an education for justice and solidarity, alongside the Dehumanised.

In what follows we start by outlining the known of the very unknown regarding the impact of the ongoing genocidal campaign on education in Gaza, while linking current events in Gaza with education in the rest of the world. In particular, we write about education in the West, understood in relation to the entanglements of *colonial powers*, ideas, and interests, rather than as a geographical referent. We use the terms “West” and “Western” to focus on actions and influence connected to the colonial empire of the United States and its allies in many parts of the world, including the geographical non-

West. Not all countries in the geographical West adopted the same position on the Gaza Genocide, and not all arms sales suppliers to Israel are based in the geographical West. Similarly, many people and movements in the geographical West and non-West continue to resist the colonial violence in Gaza, in the West Bank, and in other parts of the world. Through this section we highlight the interconnectedness of the different forms of violence that affect education in the world today. The sections that follow aim to present a framework for rethinking education in/with Gaza grounded in three inter-related turns:

1. An ontological turn that marks a departure from *Education in Emergency* to *Education for Justice*.
2. An epistemological turn stretching Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* towards a *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised*.
3. An ethical turn from Intercultural Education to *Solidarity Education*.

In the first turn, we draw on critiques of the field of education in emergencies to problematise the conflicting roles of education as a reproduction of domination but also as a site of liberation (Couch 2022; Hajir 2024). Bringing these debates to the context of education in Gaza, we call for an ontological turn towards an *Education for Justice* that dares to name the failures of the liberal order while being able to present an alternative vision anchored in just reparations. In the second turn, we explore the potentialities of learning alongside the Dehumanised in Gaza, uncovering the limitations of current educational structures and pedagogies. We conclude with an ethical turn to *Solidarity Education*, offering a vision for an education that hospices the expiring order of the liberal human capital perspective and moves forward with a perspective that centres justice and solidarity.

Education and Violence: Grappling with the Unknown

It is hard to identify a starting point to contextualise the educational challenges in Gaza whose history spans across decades of occupation, frequent bombings in 2008–2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021 (Al Jazeera 2022), a brutal siege that “put the population on a diet” since 2007 (BBC News 2012), and more recently one of the most intense bombardments in history (Scientists for Global Responsibility 2024). According to a recent report by Education Cluster, Save the Children, and the UN Children's Fund (2025), 100% of school buildings in North Gaza are either directly hit or damaged; the figure for the Gaza governorate is 92.8% of its total school buildings, and the figure for Rafah in southern Gaza is 91%. It is not easy to determine the exact number of the affected children and teachers, but the recent estimate according to a report by Garb (2025) in Harvard Dataverse points towards the disappearance of at least 400,000 Palestinians, half of them children. This report, alongside an earlier estimate of 186,000 or even more deaths according to a Lancet study (Khatib, McKee, and Yusuf 2024),

demonstrates the severity of the unknown when it comes to the loss of life because of the Israeli genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

It is hard to find a name for all this unfathomable death, especially when the war crimes in Gaza continue to be surrounded by discourses of denial and dehumanisation. That said, we use a range of words to describe what shall remain indescribable for years to come. We use the term “genocide” as adopted by the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security (April 2024), Amnesty International (December 2024), Human Rights Watch (December 2024), Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) (July 2025), and the UN Commission of Inquiry Report on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (September 2025). We also note the ruling of the International Court of Justice on the plausibility of the genocide (January 2024), the conclusion of B’Tselem, an Israeli Human Rights Centre, that Israel is committing genocide in the Gaza Strip (September 2025), and the backing of the International Association of Genocide Scholars’ resolution on Israel’s actions in Gaza meeting the legal definition of the crime of genocide (September 2025).

Yet, Howse (2025) points towards the limitations of the term and its inability as a legal name to signify the moral abyss associated with the joy of killing enacted by soldiers filming themselves as they celebrate with delighted selfies amid what is left of homes, schools, universities, and hospitals. Howse concludes that it is “more than a genocide” and argues for the need to add the term “legicide” to refer to “destroying the whole notion of legal limits in war—as well as the mass destruction of the moral lives of soldiers, their souls and consciences”.

Focusing on education in Gaza, in addition to the word “genocide”, we use the term “educide” to combine education and genocide in one word. The term not only refers to the physical damage to educational infrastructure but also includes the death of teachers, children, young people, and the severe deprivation of learning opportunities (Alousi 2022; Rabaia and Habash 2024). Educide has longstanding devastating consequences such as displacement, trauma, ruptures of the social order, identity erasure, and the loss of human capital (Iriqat et al. 2025). It is more than the deliberate killing of education. It is going further to inflict conditions of cultural annihilation while intentionally restricting or prohibiting conditions for knowledge production.

To accentuate the intensity of erasure and elimination that accompanies the genocidal attacks on education, Palestinian scholar Karma Nabulsi coined another term, “scholasticide”, to refer to “acts that entail systemic destruction, in whole or in part, of the educational life of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group”, asserting “how important education is to the Palestinian tradition and the Palestinian revolution” (Ahmad and Vulliamy 2009). Giroux (2024) works the term harder as he argues that turning Gaza into a killing zone through Israel’s state terrorism is not just about inflicting extreme inhumanity against the Palestinians, but is also part of an ideological war on education that stretches from Gaza to the West. Therefore, he argues that there

are two deeply interconnected forms of scholasticide: structural (in Gaza) and ideological (from Gaza to the West). In its violent structural form, scholasticide refers to erasing the memory of the Palestinians through attacking the very fabric of Gaza and every site of culture, heritage, and knowledge, going beyond bombing schools and universities to libraries, museums, mosques, churches, council archives, publishing houses, cultural centres, media outlets, playgrounds, farms, landmarks, and recreational spaces. In its ideological form, scholasticide is violence in different shapes, including organised forgetting, historical amnesia, dispossession, dissent crushing, and genocide cover-up (Giroux 2024). On the dangers of scholasticide, Giroux (2024) warns that “scholasticide is the canary in the coal mine, signalling an imminent and grave threat to academic freedom, free speech, critical education, and democracy itself”.

This leaves us with the overwhelming question: What is it that we are dealing with on the subject of rethinking education in/with Gaza amid the ruins of the liberal order? Certainly, we are dealing with legal frameworks as described in *The Anatomy of Genocide* (2024) by Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, whose language of law provides a lexicon for naming scholasticide as an act of genocide (article 35 in Albanese 2024). In addition, we are dealing with incalculable death, with still emerging figures. We are also dealing with a situation of global entanglement, with Gaza, because of Gaza, for Gaza, against Gaza, unable to project a future for education, democracy, rights, liberties, and different types of freedoms, including the freedom of inquiry and free speech without Gaza. It is a world with a liberal order that is benefitting from what Albanese’s (2025b) recent report calls the “economy of genocide”, which names the involvement of far too many corporate entities including universities that now operate in “genocidal mode” (article 90) as part of a “joint criminal enterprise” (article 91). Added to this, we acknowledge Albanese’s (2025c) latest report that marks the Genocide in Gaza as a collective crime enabled through “the direct participation, aid and assistance of other States”. Through this entanglement and the recognition of being nested within violent structures, we write with metabolic ontologies from an educational context shaped by genocide and connect it to global contexts of education characterised by struggle and denial. Many of these contexts continue to be governed by political surveillance and state propaganda responding to Gaza with an assault on the language of rights, law, history, and truth-telling—forms of language that were imagined to hold the very basic lexicon for a language of education in the 21st century.

In the next sections, we draw upon critical works that highlight the importance of the ontological, epistemic, and the ethical in rethinking education in/with Gaza. These dimensions form the conceptual framework through which we reckon with the Genocide in Gaza, confront the conditions and recognise the complicity that made it possible, and act in response through justice and solidarity.

The ontological speaks to being and surviving under liberal structures that enabled, legitimised, and profited from the Genocide in Gaza. We take our first turn towards

Education for Justice that restores life and dignity to those who have been denied humanity. The epistemic recognises struggles over knowledge as struggles over power and requires a turn towards a *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised* that learns with those who are rendered nonhuman within colonial and imperial systems. The ethical takes these two dimensions, binds them, and turns them towards *Solidarity Education*, which insists on justice and solidarity. The three turns should be read not as isolated acts but as interconnected reckonings within a broader framework for education.

This framework exposes education's complicity with structures of inequity, injustice, and failure. It speaks to the Genocide in Gaza as crises of ontology, epistemology, and ethics for all of humanity. In this sense, the three turns emphasise the inseparability of the future of education in Gaza from education for the rest of the world. For humanity to recover, we need to realise the interconnectedness of our struggles for an *Education for Justice*, a *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised*, and *Solidarity Education*.

All of this leaves us with this overwhelming question of how to respond to education worlds that are breaking and broken in a liberal order that has descended into disorder, with structures governed by the language of human capital amid the erasure of a language that names injustices and dares to imagine just presents and futures. Attempting a response to this question demands a daring and caring conceptual approach that stretches language beyond its limits in order to respond to Mavronicola and Pinto's (2025, 905) recent call for

the need to turn to more diverse and materially informed words, tools, and paradigms for naming, preventing, and standing in solidarity against abuses, in Palestine and elsewhere, that go beyond penal responses and directly engage with broader political and ethical conceptions of justice.

We take this call for new language, new tools, and new paradigms for imagining reparation and justice seriously as we envisage alternative possibilities for education, anchored in the three turns presented below. In doing so, we affirm the centrality of language to transformational thought prior to concrete action, which is likely to take different shapes in different localities and temporalities.

Turn (1): From Education in Emergency to Education for Justice

Before turning away from Education in Emergency (EiE), we start by turning towards it, to justify the turn we make later. Education in Emergencies goes back to the post-World War II era, marking global commitments to education for all and drawing on sub-fields such as refugee education, peace education, and comparative education. The field is heavily implicated in the work of international agencies in areas related to humanitarian work and development and paved the path for new discourses for education that frame it as a "pillar of humanitarian aid" (Versmesse et al. 2017, 538). However, evidence of the militarisation of aid reflects how EiE programmes are often aligned with military objectives, particularly in contexts such as Afghanistan and Iraq

(Novelli 2010), raising troubling questions about whether these interventions genuinely prioritise education or serve as tools for soft power projection and geopolitical control. Such questions resulted in pressing calls for innovating profound ways of rebuilding education, rather than merely reinstating education in ways that risk the maintenance of the status quo pre-conflict (Pigozzi 1999).

The calls for rebuilding, rather than reinstating education, are calls for challenging the role of Western interests, epistemologies, and involvements while acknowledging the role of the West in the (re)production of conflict. This form of rebuilding necessitates alternative types of education for justice and peace. Commenting on this, Paulson (2019, 34) warns that the substantial increases in levels of education at a global level have not reduced armed conflicts, which have continued to increase in recent years. Her appraisal of the role of education in global peace building points to the finding that “in the absence of theoretically informed pathways for change, both EiE work and SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals] can fail to specify how education must change to build peace and justice”. Similarly, Barakat, Bellino, and Paulson (2024) argue that the urgency of delivery characterising work in EiE can enable blind spots, including a lack of insight into education’s complicity in structures of inequity, injustice, and failure. Novelli and Kutan (2024, 416) go further by suggesting that this failure is not simply a consequence of rushed action in urgent circumstances but is a deliberate avoidance that insists on refusing to address the inherent neo-colonialism of a field “implicated in systems of violence and oppression, by design or by default”. This manufactured avoidance is linked to many reasons. First, the reliance of the field on funding from governments and organisations implicated in the very conflict that creates the educational crisis positions many actors within the EiE community in a paradoxical situation that sustains oppressive structures on the one hand and seeks to mitigate suffering and provide a form of education on the other. This positions these individuals as what Rothberg (2019) calls “implicated subjects”. Second, the adoption of technocratic solutions in the field, often under pressures from funders and aid organisations, means overlooking socio-political complexities in favour of universal norms, standardised curricula, and measurable outcomes. Such an approach reproduces liberal peacebuilding paradigms that continue to be isolated from the needs of affected communities (Zembylas and Bekerman 2013) and that fail to name the root causes of the struggle that resulted in the educational crisis in the first place. We argue that this technocratic approach sits well within what de Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2015) refer to as the soft reform space that leaves the hegemonic ontological foundation of dominance and violence unexamined and unaffected. Commenting on the imperial entanglements of international education, Novelli and Kutan (2024, 416) make a call of timely significance to this discussion on rethinking education in/with Gaza:

[T]his is not a resignation letter. It is instead a call for action and self-critical reflection. A call for more holistic analysis of education issues in conflict-affected contexts that understand and explore the political economy of education in all its complexity; and the necessity of teaching that to a new generation of researchers and practitioners so they

become subjects rather than objects of others' agendas ... A call for the construction of new relationships with grassroots movements in conflict-affected contexts and bottom-up research that starts from the questions and the challenges that oppressed communities face, rather than the needs of powerful aid agencies and institutions.

We respond to this call, not by resignation, but by a turn away from the violent ontological structures of EiE, and towards a “system walkout” (de Oliveira Andreotti et al. 2015) in the direction of *Education for Justice*. The walkout is not defeat, but an opening to challenge existing global structures of coloniality and oppression and their authoritarian forms of conflict management, which “upheld themselves for so long that they qualify as post-conflict governance” (Hajir 2024, 436). These forms constitute a structure beyond reform, demanding new alternatives designed carefully, critically, and ethically to avoid the reproduction of old violences or new ones. By centring justice as the primary aim—and rejecting approaches that depoliticise or neutralise emergency contexts—we call for new forms of governance and radically reimagined visions of education in regions devastated by state terrorism, military occupation, and apartheid systems. *Education for Justice* rejects the normalisation of a return to Gaza as a space of managed deprivation: under siege, under blockade, subjected to repeated bombardment, exposed to ongoing genocidal violence, threatened with ethnic cleansing, and trapped in cycles of occupation layered upon occupation. Education cannot serve as a tool for restoring an unjust “normal”; it must instead become a vehicle for dignity, resistance, and collective liberation.

As we write, we see the liberal order in turmoil, in conditions that risk the “creation of a world without civilians, where everyone and everything is either a target or collateral damage” (Albanese 2025a). If we are serious about the role of education in saving what can be saved in the world, we need a bolder vision for education that goes beyond understanding peace as the absence of violence and conceives of peace as the presence of justice (Paulson 2019). Education continues to operate within a pedagogy of cause and effect (Biesta 2013) that does not speak directly to, or learn explicitly from, theories of justice. To ensure that the future of education stays in witness to Gaza, we need an *Education for Justice* that responds both to the events in Gaza and to a world shaped with Gaza, acknowledging the failures of the past, the ruins of the present, and the risks for the future. By naming future risks, we do not indulge in pessimism or the death of hope. Rather, we see in this act a defiant form of hope, agreeing with Octavia Butler (2000, 165) that “the very act of trying to look ahead to discern possibilities and offer warnings is in itself an act of hope”.

The world remains in desperate need of a future of education that stems from reparative justice and works towards justice. This is more than a change of vision or philosophy; it requires a substantial change that necessitates new ontological structures for education in the post-liberal era. The work is overwhelmingly challenging but urgently needed, not only for Gaza, but also for the future of education in the world. We need an education that can name what justice looks like, refusing to accept the failures and dehumanisation

that the liberal world normalised in Gaza. The world is in desperate need of an education that knows how to ethically and critically engage with the political and socioeconomic realities of the settler-colonial context in Palestine. This is an education of historical precision and accountable witnessing that enables students to become critical thinkers and active citizens, able to name the failures of liberal peace, which tends to prioritise “statebuilding [rather] than peacebuilding” and seeks to protect “institutional aspects of peace accords” rather than the “more people-centric issues such as human rights protection” (Joshi, Lee, and Mac Ginty 2014, 384).

Education in Palestine, as in many parts of the world, has been guilty of failing to focus on justice and accountability. Given its reliance on foreign aid, it has been placed under the shadows of surveillance and branded as an educational reform. In their analysis of the educational policy in Palestinian universities, Jabali, Hamamra, and Ayyoub (2024, 22) criticise the prevalence of educational policies that focus on grades over critical thinking in Palestine. They conclude their appraisal by calling for a re-evaluation of education that nurtures critical thinking for a “a more informed, democratic, and ethically responsible society”. The path towards an *Education for Justice*, especially in Palestine, is difficult, especially as we witness ongoing calls for *deradicalising the Palestinians* while granting Israel complete impunity for its crimes against humanity in one of the gravest injustices of modern history. In his commentary on deradicalisation, Tabba (2024) explains that

“*deradicalization*” would also entail Palestinian institutions parrot Israeli discourse on the conflict and police Palestinians in public life to prevent them from challenging Israeli interests. This “*deradicalization*” would take place under some sort of international supervision that manages Palestinian affairs until Palestinians become “*deradicalized*”.

The deradicalisation calls are political instructions to attack memory and to erase all notions of justice and accountability to the victims. They are likely to be mandated and operationalised through the politics of aid that dominate the discourses, design, and delivery of Education in Emergency. Such policies and politics risk the acceptance of mass killing, occupation, and genocide as legitimate state responses that can be neutralised in post-genocide contexts through colonial and colonising education/aid that reproduces a politics of negative peace, with no links to justice. This form of education is an attack, not only on Gaza but also on the very principles of education as a “liberating force—indispensable for a society where informed judgment, civic courage, and critical agency are essential to upholding the ideals of freedom and justice” (Giroux 2024). Indeed, *Education for Justice* requires vigilance, constant learning that does not settle for easy fixes to iconic struggles for justice. These learnings are particularly urgent as conflicts increase globally and as many peoples remain neglected and largely forgotten, including in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Congo, Haiti, Kashmir, Mali, Myanmar, Palestine, Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, among many others.

By nature, *Education for Justice* disobeys neutrality and insists on recognising past injustices and failures in the curriculum as very basic indicators of progress towards

what Paulson (2019, 36) calls “reparative, historical and epistemic justice in education”. It also requires “different companions” (Phipps 2019, 8), working collaboratively, ethically, and creatively. This form of education necessitates not only different ontological structures but also alternative pedagogies, with a renewed and unprecedented commitment to the ethics of solidarity, as we explain next.

Turn (2): From a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to a *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised*

We start with Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, discussing its relevance while articulating where it falls short, as we justify a turn to a *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised* that combines both reparative and epistemic justice. It is not easy to settle with the term *the Dehumanised*. We use it, not to accept it but to wrestle with it, twist it, reject it, disobey its implications, and challenge its normalisation. We use it to name the failure and to confront the dehumanisation of the Palestinian people in Gaza. The Dehumanised, therefore, becomes a lamentation that signals the grave failure of international systems that were put in place to create charters for protection, such as the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It is used in conjunction with a mandatory with-ness to negate the dehumanisation through linking our own humanity to those denied humanity, in an act of collective struggle, against the collective denial and enforced erasure imposed on the Palestinian people.

International systems of rights and obligations have failed. They failed to protect and failed to prevent. As a result, the Palestinian people in Gaza are pushed into the zone of nonbeing (Gordon 2007, 10), in a position of below-Otherness that is not only geographical, but is also existential, linked to an ever-expanding necropolitics (Mbembe 2003, 11), rooted in gangster capitalism (Giroux 2023), with its machinery of death that thrives on the silencing of those harmed by it and the complicity of those who benefit from its power. This form of capitalism is also embedded in education through what Giroux (2023) refers to as moral blindness, historical amnesia, and racial and class hatred. A *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised* is a response and an action in the face of the damaging impact of gangster capitalism on education. It seeks to undo the moral damage through wake work (Sharpe 2016) that renews our commitment to racial justice. It is a pedagogy that refuses the death of the Dehumanised through insisting on living with them through moral with-ness that reaffirms what Butler (2021, 64) calls “our relational obligations as an interdependent global community”.

The bombs that destroyed schools, the weapons that caused the highest number of child amputees in the world (TRT World 2024), and the weak bodies and malnourished generations of children are all connected to a web of international complicity and failure in a joint venture of profitable mass killing. This moral injury in the face of global powers cannot be expected to be repaired, let alone healed, without a different understanding of the role of pedagogy in the remaking of life in bombed schools. The reparative and epistemic justice work is no longer the sole responsibility of the

dehumanised teacher and the dehumanised students in the destroyed educational infrastructure. It is also the responsibility of education globally, which needs this urgent reckoning to recognise its role in enabling this violent dehumanisation under claims of political impartiality that remain anchored in moral indifference and selective humanity in normalising societies. This leads us to admit that our pedagogical tools are no longer capable of doing this task, and hence the need for a pedagogy that is based on principles of ethical entanglements that seek to turn on its head the basic premise of neoliberal education that aims to eradicate collective responsibility.

Thinking from the perspective of with-ness in relation to Gaza, we move beyond Freire's notion of liberation, which he situates most prominently within the minds of the oppressed through critical and liberating dialogue. Our starting point is that Freire's work has been foundational for generations of educators seeking transformative praxis. At its core, critical pedagogy aims to challenge oppression and disrupt hegemony and unexamined truths that privilege oppressors and sustain domination and social injustice (Freire 1970; Giroux 1997). It emphasises the active engagement of learners as knowledge co-creators who are encouraged to critically examine their social contexts and the power relations that define them. Central to this work is the view that this pedagogy enables the oppressed to reflect on their conditions, which can lead to action and then independence (Freire 2007). In addition, this pedagogy highlights the need for revolutionary leadership that facilitates the process of coming to know the reality critically as a task of knowledge recreation (Freire 2007). While relevant in many contexts, the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* falls short in the context of education in/with Gaza in many ways. For example, teachers in Gaza cannot be expected to perform the role of heroic liberators of the oppressed minds while also being subjected to obliterated classrooms, historical erasure, and sanitised curricula. The enormity and intensity of grief and loss they share with their students bring epistemic contributions that are too heavy to bear and too daunting to be grasped through critical pedagogy alone. Indeed, a critical pedagogy rooted in a "language of critique" and "rhetoric of empowerment" (Zembylas 2013) is no longer sufficient where educational spaces are abolished, and the humanity of its communities is denied. This is not to undermine the crucial roles played by Palestinian teachers and educational leaders, but this is to caution against problematic narratives of heroic resilience that can further contribute to the maintenance of structures of violence and oppression. We are reminded by Shwaikh (2023, 1) that "resilience expectations may impose supernatural coping mechanisms on communities struggling with adversities, romanticise them as exemplary in enduring injustices, obscure their humanity, and normalise (structural) violence they continue to experience or reduce its severity".

To this end, as we move from a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to a *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised*, we need a new language that does not impose expectations of resilience and liberation through critical dialogue and instead to think with Palestinian languaged realities that speak of Palestinian epistemological contributions and worldviews. Palestinian scholar Devin Atallah (2023) speaks of *decolonial love* as attending to "our

own waters, our changing seas, our wells and springs, even when dry and dirty”. He theorises it as a form of love that is revolutionary, indigenous, and synonymous with the word “presence” in the land, for the land, with the land. Similarly, Palestinian scholar Malaka Shwaikh comments on the importance of understanding the history and language of *sumud* (Arabic for steadfastness), which differs from resilience. She describes *sumud* as “an act of resistance initiated by Palestinians to resist the Israeli colonial project ... a politics of refusal in which one refuses to let a strong political party decide their fate”.

In addition to the need for a new language, a *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised* challenges the pathologisation of the other’s mind that tends to be prominent in post-conflict education discourses. Commenting on this, Versmesse et al. (2017) warn against the danger of pathologising children and using education as a way to fix their mindsets and their views of the world. They present an example of teaching Palestinian young people about peace when their daily experience of walking to school entails the humiliation of crossing checkpoints. These children, like many other children in Gaza and the Palestinian territories, do not lack the critical ability to comment on their realities, nor do they need traditional peace programmes. What they truly need is international commitment to put an end to the injustices of 78 years, through a resolution that brings a just peace and an end to Israel’s brutal occupation. The education they need should be linked to a liberatory form of education that we all need, an education that attends to the grave human rights violations and the normalised violence of this failing world order. It is an education that does not ask “what’s wrong with you?” but instead asks “what’s happened to you?” (Helbich and Jabr 2022) in an attempt to bring civic courage, collective memory, and work towards a form of reparation that looks back to move forward (Sriprakash 2023).

A *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised* is a decolonial commitment that centres the lived experiences and the struggles of the Dehumanised. It is a pedagogy that challenges the erasure of memory and the overlooking of Palestinian struggles for liberation, not only from Israel but also from the entanglement of colonial powers that supported the Genocide in Gaza. This is a pedagogy for the world, of the world, and to the world. It offers the risky education of the event (Biesta 2013), a form of education that is not only needed for the Palestinian people in Gaza but is also needed for the rest of the world to digest the moment and the existential crisis it carries for everything we worked for and chose to believe in, within a liberal order and/or beyond. This pedagogy is an antidote to the chronic crisis of times characterised by numbness, denial, dehumanisation, failures, and heartbreaks. It is a pedagogy that embodies hard and challenging work that

- epistemologically admits the historical injustices against the Palestinian people in Gaza,
- ethically lives up to the challenging task of using metabolic literacies to trace our entanglement in the connected web of gangster capitalism,

- morally seeks to make amends, carrying wounded pasts and lost presents into futures that work with new reparative tools, and
- emotionally recognises the deep layers of collective traumas and moral injuries, and the role of education therein.

Indeed, it is a pedagogy that does not settle for standardised interventions and traditional pedagogies. At its core, it is a pedagogy of reckoning.

Turn (3): From Intercultural Education to Solidarity Education

Tannen (1986, 43) asserts that “the fate of the earth depends on cross-cultural communication”. However, decades of cross/inter-cultural communication projects have continued to fail to prevent wars, previous genocides, and the ongoing Genocide in Gaza. Recent developments in decolonial, critical, and intercultural education have also failed, as we witness the academic silence amid the intellectual ruins (Badwan and Phipps 2025). Functionalist tendencies to culture and education cannot cope with the ongoing intensity of failure and dehumanisation. Models of simplified cultural dimensions, acculturation patterns, and justifications of difference fall short in the face of the complex web of gangster capitalism and settler colonialism. Developments in “posthuman” thinking and new materiality have failed to force us to see our interconnectedness and entanglement, as bombs continue to travel across the world. Our theories of justice continued to mainly speak of past injustices, waiting for current injustices to become safer to be discussed or developed as part of an old or new decolonial praxis. With all this failure, Gaza sits in rubble, completely cut off from the world.

What kind of world should we educate for as we think with Gaza in rubble? Brown (2018) asserts that “[t]he question of what kind of world you want to live in asks you to become responsible to and for a world that you didn’t build, where the terms of entry are not fair and can be hard”. Indeed, *Solidarity Education* is an education of responsibility to oneself, to one another, and to the world. It is a form of education that is beyond neoliberal notions of measure, progress, attainment, and human capital. We need to admit that many educational arrangements, while fostering the language of diversity, inclusion, and equality, have simultaneously overlooked, and sometimes eroded or attacked, the very basic principles of solidarity with the oppressed, the marginalised, the racialised, and the minoritised. It is our collective responsibility to educate better and be better for a future of goodness through/for education.

Solidarity Education offers disturbing encounters that can enable us to confront the pressures that insist on the death of “the commonness of humanity” (Morrison 2017, 110). It is an antidote to failure, dehumanisation, ignorance, moral blindness, and political indifference. It is an education of existing relationally to one another, with commitment to action beyond witnessing and recognising (Hammad 2024). It is an education where “[n]o one is exempt. Everyone has to do the work” (Kubanyiova and

Shetty 2024, 2–3) in the quest for conscious awakening (Giroux 2025b). *Solidarity Education* is an education of with-ness that complements the need for an *Education for Justice* and a *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised*. The Palestinian children and young people in Gaza need to learn about the different solidarity paths that were carved at cost, or otherwise, by millions around the world who joined a global movement for justice and peace in Palestine. They need to know that while they were bombed, starved, maimed, and dehumanised, many people refused to remain silent in the face of the live-streaming of genocide and genocidal language that sought to normalise the elimination of an entire people with complete impunity, as international law becomes unenforceable. The children and young people in Gaza deserve to believe in humanity, just as people in the rest of the world do. The protesters, campaigners, educators, and authors, among many others, also deserve to know that the Palestinian people in Gaza can see their solidarity acts and risky work. *Solidarity Education* is a way to reconcile our inter-dependence and connectedness against the enforced separation brought into our lives through necroborders and necropolitics (Mbembe 2003). Solidarity entails working with metabolic literacies, realising our capacity to feel, care, act, work together, and be human in the face of the violent web of colonial interests and genocidal economies.

We learn from Orwell that totalitarianism is “a threat not just to liberty and human rights but to language and consciousness” (Solnit 2021, 268). We, therefore, assert our right and our duty to restore the language of law, truth-telling, and morality through *Solidarity Education*. This form of education offers a solid ethical basis for new ontological and epistemological arrangements and for a type of education that is needed for *rethinking* education in/with Gaza. Through this rethinking, our theories of justice, our practice of solidarity, and our pedagogy of labouring together against the normalisation of genocide can enable a clearer path for Sustainable Development Goal 16 that promotes peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Conclusion: From the Rubble

What are we educating for? Education, after all, is an act of living and becoming, and in circumstances of death and destruction, education peaks its head once more to reassert its right to life, and to living. We agree with Busbridge (2025, 82) that “[w]hen the bombs fall and the buildings crumble, there can be no imagination, only survival”. We do not respond to the bombs with an imagining, but with an urgent act of reckoning that starts with an overwhelming realisation: We have failed to prevent the Gaza Genocide, and we have failed to witness Gaza as many choose to sit with intellectual rubble (Badwan and Phipps 2025), engulfed by silence. As we wrestle with this failure and dehumanisation, Palestinian educators in Gaza refuse to give up on education because to educate is to be fully present on the land. We see children attending class in makeshift tents and university students joining online classes, coordinated mainly through initiatives with universities in the West Bank (Dader et al. 2024). Palestinian educators work hard to rebuild and return to some level of normality, without settling for the word

normal. As they do this, they need educators from the rest of the world. We are reminded by Barghouti (2025) that “a phoenix needs sunlight to resurrect itself, and in our case, that sunlight is blocked by dark, heavy clouds of complicity. Principled and strategic solidarity is crucial to dissipate these clouds so we can rise to our inevitable emancipation.”

Like Gaza itself, education in Gaza needs liberating, just as education for the rest of the world needs rescuing, especially for a world that has turned education into a system of complicity through claims of neutrality. Ziadah (2025) critiques this silence and explains how it evades moral and political responsibilities, facilitates the murdering of Palestinians with Western weapons, perpetuates systems of oppression, and positions education as “above society”. Indeed, the three turns we present here highlight the inseparability of the future of education in Gaza from education for the rest of the world, echoing Howse’s (2025) argument that “[n]ot only the Palestinian people will require recovery from this genocide—this more than genocide—but humanity itself”. Our struggles for an *Education for Justice*, a *Pedagogy with the Dehumanised*, and *Solidarity Education* are interconnected. We need this realisation so that one day in the very far future, we might be able to look back at this historical moment of sheer significance and sheer failure and declare that we struggled together with compassion through language and education. This article on *rethinking* education in/with Gaza is an urgent reckoning to rescue the past tense of the far future of this very present:

Past Tense

One day that’s not here yet
we will use the past tense
announcing the fall of this evil.
We shall teach our children
how humanity survived,
how our memory, history,
language, order, and hope
had miraculously made it
through all the travelling bombs.
And we shall hold them dear,
and hold them tight.
One day, the past tense
of the very far future
that speaks of this present
shall become victorious.
Until we write in the past tense,
we sit in the present,
struggling together
in com-passion
against this forced amnesia.
We struggled together,
some of us shall say,

with the heaviest use,
and the hardest use
of the past tense

Khawla Badwan, 3 March 2025

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