

Senate Statement on Scholasticide in Gaza, Palestine:

Senate notes

1. That SOAS issued, on 15 December 2023, a statement expressing horror over “the near total destruction of the higher educational sector in the Gaza Strip” and “calling for an immediate ceasefire to prevent any further loss of civilian life.”¹ The ceasefire of October 2025 is hugely welcomed, even if it is only the beginning and not the end of negotiation and rebuilding.
2. That UN Special Rapporteurs expressed in April 2024 grave concern over scholasticide in Gaza, defined as the systemic obliteration of education through the arrest, detention or killing of teachers, students and staff, and the destruction of educational infrastructure. ‘It may be reasonable to ask if there is an intentional effort to comprehensively destroy the Palestinian education system, an action known as “scholasticide”.’² Since then all of Gaza’s universities’ facilities have been destroyed,³ and more than 97% of Gaza’s schools were damaged or destroyed.⁴ More than 17,085 school students, 739 schoolteachers and staff, 1,261 university students and 226 academics and university staff were killed in Gaza between October 2023 and August 2025.⁵
3. That the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry released, on 10 June 2025, a report on the Israel military’s deliberate and systematic destruction of cultural, religious, and educational institutions and sites in Gaza.⁶
4. That the systematic destruction of the educational sector in Gaza has been repeatedly cited as evidence that Israel has been committing a genocide in Gaza, including by Amnesty International (December 2024);⁷ B’Tselem (July 2025);⁸ the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (August 2025);⁹ and the UN Commission of Inquiry’s genocide report (16 September 2025).¹⁰ Indeed, the Commission stated that attacks on education “were aimed at causing irreversible harm to Palestinians in Gaza by destroying elements of the Palestinian people’s identity and erasing Palestinian culture from Gaza”.¹¹

¹ <https://www.soas.ac.uk/about/news/statement-dr-refaat-alareer-and-higher-education-sector-gaza-strip>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/un-experts-deeply-concerned-over-scholasticide-gaza>

³ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-06-07/gaza-lost-generation-of-students-academic-say/105379150>

⁴ <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/verification-damages-schools-based-proximity-damaged-sites-gaza-occupied-palestinian-territory>

⁵ Chandni Desai, Sundos Hammad, Ahmed Abu Shaban & Abdel Razzaq Takriti, “Scholasticide and resilience: The Gaza Genocide and the struggle for Palestinian higher education”, *Curriculum Inquiry*, 9 October 2025, DOI: 10.1080/03626784.2025.2558520

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/israeli-attacks-educational-religious-and-cultural-sites-occupied>

⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/>

⁸ https://www.btselem.org/publications/202507_our_genocide

⁹ <https://pchgaza.org/voices-of-the-genocide-a-report-by-the-palestinian-centre-for-human-rights-on-the-israeli-occupations-perpetuation-of-genocide-targeting-the-palestinian-existence-the-gaza/>

¹⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds>

¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds> (at p. 57).

5. That in July 2025 the Presidents of three universities in Gaza called upon the international academic community to show effective forms of solidarity including, working for “a sustainable and lasting ceasefire” and “an end to all complicity with this genocide”; “mobilisation to support and protect Gaza’s higher education institutions”; the “recognition of scholasticide as a systematic war on education”; and supporting the efforts of Palestinian academics in Gaza “to continue teaching and conducting research”.¹²
6. That there has been a legitimate concern that Israeli universities may be contributing to the violation of Palestinian rights by cooperating with the Israeli military industrial complex, and thereby supporting apartheid.¹³
7. That genocide has been denied by the Israeli government, while the UK government’s former Foreign Secretary stated on 1 September 2025: ‘Israel must do much more to prevent and alleviate the suffering that this conflict is causing. As per the Genocide Convention, the crime of genocide occurs only where there is specific “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.” The (UK) Government has not concluded that Israel is acting with that intent.’¹⁴
8. But that the International Association of Genocide Scholars resolved on 31 August 2025 that Israel’s policies and actions in Gaza meet the legal definition of genocide in Article II of the United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948).¹⁵ Likewise, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry determined on 16 September 2025 that Israel has committed a genocide in Gaza.¹⁶
9. That a call was issued in May 2025 by the Black Flag Action Group and signed by over 1400 academic staff of Israeli HEIs, recognised academics’ own role in crimes against humanity and insisted on making Palestinian suffering central to its objections to the war.¹⁷
10. That in May 2024, Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel released a report on “Repression of Palestinian Students in [36] Israeli Universities and Colleges”.¹⁸
11. That in some countries (including Norway, Belgium, Spain, Ireland, Netherlands, Italy and Brazil), some universities and scholarly bodies (including the European Association of Social Anthropologists, the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, and the Middle East Studies Association) have called for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions.¹⁹

¹² <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2025/7/14/an-open-letter-from-the-presidents-of-gaza-universities>

¹³ See, e.g., Maya Wind, *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom* (Verso 2024).

¹⁴ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/49215/documents/262248/default/>

¹⁵ <https://genocidescholars.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/IAGS-Resolution-on-Gaza-FINAL.pdf> SOAS scholar Nimer Sultany also wrote about the threshold for genocide in May 2024: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14623528.2024.2351261#d1e206>

¹⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds>

¹⁷ <https://academeblog.org/2025/06/09/an-urgent-call-to-the-heads-of-academia-in-israel/>

¹⁸ <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/11116>

¹⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/sep/13/universities-around-the-world-cut-ties-with-israeli-academia-over-gaza-war>

12. That organisations in the cultural and artistic sphere have also called for a boycott of Israeli institutions that are “implicated in genocide and apartheid against the Palestinian people”;²⁰ and several European states have argued for exclusion of Israel from the Eurovision contest.
13. That the European Commission recently proposed to the Council of Europe a suspension of certain trade-related provisions of the Association Agreement between the EU and Israel.²¹
14. That SOAS, as a higher education institution, is committed to social justice and opposed to all forms of racism and discrimination, such as Anti-semitism and Islamophobia, as stated in our Charter on Racism, Antisemitism and All Forms of Cultural, Ethnic and Religious Chauvinism.²² The university has held events and released statements that challenge both Islamophobia and Anti-semitism²³ and has expressed shock and extreme sadness at the terrorist attack at the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in Greater Manchester on 2 October 2025.²⁴
15. That the implication of the values in our new 2026-2030 strategy dictate that in our teaching and research, we seek to understand the root causes of long-standing injustice and recognise the contextual factors that give rise to it; that there is a need to apply a universal standard to all war crimes and crimes against humanity; and that as an academic body we share a responsibility to show unequivocal and meaningful solidarity with academics and universities internationally.
16. That this responsibility is heightened in the context of Palestine after the International Court of Justice’s ruling on 19 July 2024 that Israel’s occupation since 1967 is “unlawful”; that it violates the Palestinian people’s fundamental right to self-determination; that Israel’s policies “amount to annexation” and have violated the fundamental prohibition on acquisition of territory by force; and that Israel has breached Article 3 of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which prohibits apartheid and racial segregation.²⁵
17. That this responsibility is further heightened in the context of Palestine after three orders of provisional measures by the International Court of Justice, in January, March, and May 2024, warning of the risk of genocide and requiring action to prevent this risk of genocide.²⁶

²⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/sep/08/film-pledge-israeli-institutions-palestinians>; <https://artistsforpalestine.org.uk/a-pledge/>

²¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_2112

²² <https://www.soas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/discrimination-charter.pdf>

²³ <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/cop/event/islamophobia-intensification-of-racism-against-muslims-in-the-uk/>, <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/cop/event/the-politics-of-antisemitism/>, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/about/news/soas-statement>, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/soas-pledges-stand-against-antisemitism-without-ihra-definition>

²⁴ <https://www.soas.ac.uk/about/news/soas-statement-manchester-synagogue-terrorist-attack>

²⁵ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf>

²⁶ <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>

Senate resolves

1. To protect those academics who teach about genocide, and who name scholasticide in Gaza, in line with scholarly and legal evidence.
2. To call for substantial international support for maintaining the ceasefire.
3. To call on the UK government to impose a full arms embargo on Israel as a form of meaningful material pressure to promote an enduring ceasefire.
4. To commit to developing initiatives and partnerships to support the continuation and rebuilding of the higher education sector in Gaza.
5. To express solidarity with academics and universities in Palestine, who have all been affected by scholasticide.
6. To call upon Israeli academic institutions to support the international rule of law, to speak up against scholasticide in Gaza, and to allow free speech for voices opposing genocide in Gaza.
7. To commit to refraining from partnerships with academic institutions that are instrumental to the commission, or support, or enablement of scholasticide.