

Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza

FOBZU BRIEFING NO. 3

SUMMARY

Established by formal mandate by the independent non-profit public universities in Gaza: Al Aqsa University, Al Azhar University, and the Islamic University of Gaza, the Emergency Committee of Universities Gaza coordinates immediate relief efforts, academic partnerships, and long-term rebuilding strategies for the higher education sector in Gaza.

The mission of the Emergency Committee complements the individual initiatives, campaigns, and roles of each member university and the wider higher education sector in Palestine, providing a collective framework for mobilising international support, ensuring that responses are aligned with the priority needs of Gaza's higher education system while preserving institutional autonomy.

The Emergency Committee's key priorities include securing financial support for Gaza's public universities, their faculty and students; ensuring the continuation of teaching in Gaza and securing the commitment of the international academic community for the rebuilding of destroyed infrastructure. The member universities of the Emergency Committee have now established discipline-focused subcommittees in order to target support for specific priority faculties.



"The future of our young people in Gaza depends upon us, and our ability to remain on our land in order to continue to serve the coming generations of our people."

Unified Emergency Statement by Palestinian Academics and Administrators of Gaza Universities

RESPONDING TO THE CALL FROM PALESTINIAN ACADEMICS AND STAFF

The Emergency Committee was established in response to the Unified Emergency Statement by Palestinian Academics and Staff of Gaza Universities issued by over 150 faculty and administrators urging the international community to:

1. Resist the campaign of scholasticide in Palestine;
2. Work in partnership with Palestinian faculty to rebuilding their demolished institutions;
3. Refuse all initiatives that 'bypass, erase, or weaken the integrity' of Gaza's existing universities.

Core Purpose

- Mobilising material support, financial resources and international academic partnerships to ensure that universities in Gaza can continue teaching and research.
- Ensuring international assistance is provided in partnership with Gaza universities in order to maintain the integrity of the higher education system in Gaza.
- Securing commitments from international organisations and academic institutions for the rebuilding of Gaza's existing universities.

Key Priorities for Support

In June 2024, the Emergency Committee issued a list of urgent priority needs of higher education institutions in Gaza:

- Public pledges to rebuild Gaza universities
- Immediate support for online instruction, including volunteer lecturers, online hosts for teaching and technical support, and provision of essential IT equipment
- Student scholarships for students those who remain in Gaza and those in exile, delivered in partnership with Gaza universities
- Exile student support
- Faculty fellowships for academics who remain in Gaza and those now in exile
- Research cooperation in partnership with Gaza universities

The work of the Emergency Committee is facilitated by Fobzu and international colleagues.



Isnad Program: Emergency Scholarships for Students in Gaza

The Isnad Programme is a scholarship initiative launched in August 2024 by the charitable organisation Taawon in partnership with the member universities of the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza to support the resilience of higher education in Gaza.

- Isnad was set up as a direct response to the financial devastation caused by the war, which left most students unable to pay tuition fees.
- The programme aims to raise \$16,000,000 to provide 30,000 scholarships to 15,000 students over two semesters. Since Gaza's public universities rely on tuition fees to pay faculty and staff, Isnad enables universities to continue to function despite the crisis.
- It is the first collective scholarship programme of its kind dedicated to supporting the resilience of the public higher education sector in Gaza.

Subcommittees of the Emergency Committee: Medicine and Education

The member universities of the Emergency Committee have established joint subcommittees in order to act as unified channels for coordinating support efforts in areas of strategic priority. The **Medicine and Medical Sciences Subcommittee** and the **Education Subcommittee** have now been formed and are working on building partnerships to strengthen the resilience of Gaza's higher education sector. The Medicine and Medical Sciences Subcommittee focuses on sustaining medical education, securing resources, and fostering partnerships with international institutions to support faculty and students of the medicine and medical sciences faculties at the Islamic University of Gaza, Al Azhar, and Al Aqsa universities. The Education Subcommittee works to promote international partnerships to support education faculties in Gaza. Further subcommittees are now being established in other disciplines which require urgent support.

Recommendations



Strengthening the Isnad Programme

- Urgently mobilising funding for tuition and faculty salaries to sustain Gaza's universities.
- Expanding Isnad to support more students and staff for additional semesters.



Expanding International Partnerships

- Universities should establish partnerships with Gaza's higher education institutions, responding to the call for support in order to support them at this critical time.



Enhancing Global Advocacy for Gaza's Higher Education

- Encourage academic unions, student groups, and faculty associations to work alongside Gaza's universities in their efforts to sustain higher education in Gaza and preserve the future of this vital pillar of Palestinian civic, cultural and economic life.
- Demand protection for Palestinian higher education institutions at global forums.

Appendix I – Member universities of the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza

The Emergency Committee represents the independent public non-profit universities in Gaza. Between them and their affiliated technical colleges, they represent more than 83% of Gaza's enrolled students and the faculty.

Gaza's universities are regulated by the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education and the Higher Education Council, which set national curriculum standards and academic policies. They are overseen by the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission (AQAC), a semi-autonomous body that regulates academic standards through self-assessment, peer review, and external examination. AQAC is a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE), ensuring that Palestinian universities align with global academic benchmarks.

Gaza's universities fall into four main categories, aligned with the broader Palestinian higher education system. Public (Not-for-Profit) Universities are fully independent, relying on tuition fees and limited external funding. Governmental (Not-for-Profit) Universities are governmentally administered but academically independent, receiving partial Palestinian Authority (PA) funding while still depending on student tuition. Private (For-Profit) Universities are a smaller sector, sustained by private investment and charitable contributions. UNRWA-Administered Colleges provide vocational training and higher education opportunities specifically for Palestinian refugees.

1. Al Aqsa University

- Founded originally as a teacher training college in 1955, then renamed Al-Aqsa University in 2001.
- Affiliation: Governmental, academically independent but governmentally administered with partial PA funding, still reliant on tuition fees.
- International Networks: Union of Arab Universities, Union of Francophone Universities, Mediterranean Universities Union.
- Faculties (12): Education, Arts and Humanities, Applied Sciences, Media, Business Administration, Physical Education, Fine Arts, Computer and IT, Engineering, and Health Sciences.
- Student Enrollment: 27,000 students.
- Faculty & Staff: Over 440 faculty members and 1,300 staff.



2. Al Azhar University

- Founded in 1991 as an independent, fully autonomous, public not-for-profit institution.
- International Networks: Union of Arab Universities.
- Faculties (12): Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Engineering and IT, Science, Agriculture and Environment, Arts and Humanities, Education, Economics and Administrative Sciences, Islamic Jurisprudence, Law, and Psychological Health.
- Academic Programmes:
 - Undergraduate: 77 majors.
 - Postgraduate: 33 master's programmes and 5 doctoral programmes in Chemistry, Environmental Science, Administrative and Financial Science, Law, and Psychological Health.
- Student Enrollment: 15,000 students.
- Faculty & Staff: Around 500 faculty members.

3. Islamic University of Gaza

- Founded in 1978 as an independent, fully autonomous, public not-for-profit institution.
- International Networks: Association of Arab Universities, Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World, Community of Mediterranean Universities, International Association of Universities.
- Faculties (11): Arts, Science, Engineering, Medicine, Nursing, Education, Commerce, Sharia and Law, Usul al-Din, Information Technology, and Health Sciences.
- Academic Programmes: Over 130 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
- Student Enrollment: 20,000 students.
- Faculty & Staff: Around 400 faculty members.

Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza

Contact Information

For partnership inquiries and support:

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