

SCHOLASTICIDE: WAGING WAR ON EDUCATION FROM GAZA TO THE WEST

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ABSTRACT

This paper exposes the multifaceted brutality of Israel's relentless war on Gaza, emphasizing not only the military violence but also the calculated structural, ideological, and political assault on dissent and education. It demonstrates how Israel's actions — indiscriminate bombings of civilians, including women and children, schools, and cultural institutions — are not merely condemned as war crimes but as acts of genocide by international bodies. The deliberate destruction of Gaza's educational and cultural infrastructure is part of a broader effort to annihilate Palestinian history and identity, a process defined as 'scholasticide'. The paper also reveals the global reach of this conflict, as academic freedom and critical inquiry are increasingly repressed, particularly in the United States, echoing a larger trend of intellectual and cultural erasure. It issues an urgent call for global resistance against this systematic obliteration of education, memory, and freedom.

KEYWORDS: Gaza, Palestine, scholasticide, genocide, human rights violations, academic freedom, war crimes, international law, education, Israel, settler-colonialism

State Terrorism in the Age of Killing Zones

What sets Israel's war on Gaza apart is not only its violent military operations, marked by the indiscriminate killing of women and children, but also its relentless assault on dissent, criticism, and even the mildest opposition to its internationally condemned human rights violations and war crimes. Israel's ongoing and brutal military campaign, coupled with its 'policies of extreme inhumanity against the Palestinian people', is inextricably linked to a state-sanctioned effort to legitimise and normalise its actions in Gaza (Sussman 2024). This includes waging an ideological war of censorship and defamation against any challenge — no matter its source — to what Kenneth Roth, co-founder of Human Rights Watch, condemns as 'Israel's system of apartheid' (2024), and what Aryeh Neier, Holocaust survivor and co-founder of Human Rights Watch, describes as 'genocide against Palestinians in Gaza' (2024).

The full scope of Israel's assault on Gaza is revealed through its relentless military actions, characterised by indiscriminate violence against women, children, the elderly, and non-combatants. According to the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, the scale of destruction imposed on Gaza is not only devastating but ethically unimaginable. Since the start of the war, and as of the end of November 2024, Israel has reportedly dropped over 25,000 tons of explosives on the Gaza Strip, a force equivalent to two nuclear bombs. This means that the destructive power of the explosives dropped on Gaza in just over two months exceeds that of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima (HuMedia 2023). According to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the use of such highly destructive bombs in residential areas constitutes a war crime.

The consequences of these bombings were tragically displayed on 10 August 2024, when Israel bombed the Tab'een School in Gaza, a distressingly common occurrence. The school had provided shelter to nearly 2,500 people fleeing demolished areas, many of whom were children. The Israeli bombs targeted a prayer hall at dawn, where hundreds were praying. According to an investigation by Euro-Med Monitor, 'over 100 Palestinians were killed, including several [entire] families'. The bombs' immense destructive power reduced victims' bodies to shredded and burned remains, leaving numerous others with severe injuries (Countercurrents.org 2024). CNN reported that Fares Afana, director of Ambulance and Emergency Services in northern Gaza, stated that all those targeted 'were civilians — unarmed children, the elderly, men, and women' (Nasser et al. 2024), Euro-Med Monitor found no evidence that the school 'was being used for military objectives' (HuMedia 2024). Despite the documented evidence of Israel's ongoing killings, abductions, forced starvation, and torture of Palestinians, including children

(Cleland 2023), Netanyahu and his cabinet members have astonishingly claimed that Israel has ‘the most moral army in the world’ (Shupak 2024).

Israel has killed over 40,000 Palestinians. *Save the Children* reports that ‘more than 15,000 children are estimated to have been killed by Israel’s relentless assault on the strip [while estimating] that up to 21,000 are missing’ (Mahdawi 2024). The overall number of deaths may be vastly understated. Rasha Khatib, Martin McKee, and Salim Yusuf, three health officials, stated in *The Lancet*, a prestigious peer-reviewed British medical journal, that as a result of deaths caused by indirect rather than direct violence it is likely that the actual number of deaths is closer to 186,000 (Khatib et al. 2024). Andre Damon writing on the *World Socialist Web Site* observes that Israel is waging a war of extermination against the Palestinian people and its aim is to not only ‘... massacre tens of thousands but also to destroy all aspects of civilization in Gaza, contributing to the deaths of tens of thousands through malnutrition, communicable diseases and lack of healthcare’ (2024). The egregious horror of this violence is underscored by its engagement in acts of profound brutality, including the bombing of schools, the torture of prisoners (United Nations Human Rights 2024), the use of starvation as a weapon, and the targeting of hospitals and a large part of Gaza’s health facilities, among other barbarous policies.

Such acts have been condemned as genocide by legal groups like the Center for Constitutional Rights, over 50 governments including South Africa, and various United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations (Imray 2024). Additionally, the International Criminal Court (ICC) considered a request by the court’s prosecutor, Karim Khan, to issue arrest warrants against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for committing ‘war crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip’ (Corder 2024). Khan also requested similar arrest warrants for two leaders of Hamas. Consequently in May 2024 the ICC issued warrants for the arrest of two leaders of Hamas and Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant for ‘war crimes’ and ‘crimes against humanity’.¹

As Jewish scholar Judith Butler points out, Israel’s far-right leaders have been both public and unapologetic about their eliminationist plans following the Hamas attack on October 7th. Their goal has been systematically to undermine ‘the livelihood, the health, the well-being, and the capacity [of the Palestinians] to persist’ amidst Israel’s vengeful and disproportionate military assault (Goodman 2023). After the surprise Hamas terrorist attack, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant called for a complete siege of Gaza, declaring, ‘There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed. We are fighting human animals, and we act

1 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/05/1149966>

accordingly' (Karanth 2023). Some Israeli ministers have called for the dropping of an atomic bomb on Gaza (Kingsley 2024).

In a statement that defies moral and legal boundaries, Israel's finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, claimed that 'no one in the world will allow us to starve 2 million people, even though it might be justified and moral in order to free the hostages' (Guardian Staff and Agencies 2024). Smotrich's remark not only trivialises the suffering of millions but also overlooks a critical fact: the deliberate starvation of civilians is unequivocally a war crime. This is the language of fascist politicians who speak with the weight of corpses in their mouths and blood on their hands. Such dehumanising rhetoric doesn't merely target Hamas fighters; it extends to the entire population of Gaza, effectively labeling all Palestinians as terrorists and less than human. By dehumanising an entire group, this rhetoric facilitates and legitimises Israel's oppression of all Palestinians, justifying the denial of basic human needs and the commission of war crimes.

The ultimate aim of Israel's war in Gaza appears to be the eradication of any possibility of a Palestinian state and the eventual expulsion of Palestinians from their land. This is evident in the 'complete siege' taking place in Gaza, and Netanyahu's explicit opposition to the future existence of a Palestinian state. Given Israel's current assault on Gaza, which has nearly obliterated the daily survival prospects of its inhabitants, this aim becomes clearer. Sharon Zhang underscores this point by noting that Netanyahu has explicitly stated his intent 'to quash any hope of the existence of a Palestinian state in its entirety' (2024). She writes:

Advocates for Palestinian rights have said that this has been Israeli officials' plan all along, as Israeli forces slaughter Palestinians en masse in Gaza while working to erase evidence that Palestinians ever existed in the region. However, this is one of the clearest statements yet from Netanyahu himself amid the current siege, suggesting his confidence that he will be able to carry it through with help from allies like the U.S. (2024)

In a number of articles, Kenneth Roth has written eloquently about Israel's violations of International law (2024). He argues that none of Hamas's actions, however horrific, justify Israel's violation of the laws of war. He states that 'that the Israeli government has repeatedly violated international humanitarian law in ways that amount to war crimes'. He points to Israel's attack on civilian structures including schools, museums, and libraries. He cites *Haaretz's* claim that 'Israel has created 'kill zones' where soldiers shoot anyone who enters, armed or not' He points to Israel's destruction of hospitals, its torture of detained Palestinians and how some detainees 'have died in military custody [while others] have reportedly needed to have their limbs amputated due to injuries sustained from prolonged handcuffing. He argues that the Israeli government has

‘imposed enormous obstacles to the delivery of aid, particularly food — a policy that amounts to using starvation as a weapon of war’.² What Roth makes clear and what many Western nations have ignored is that Israel is a rogue state guilty of horrendous war crimes and has repeatedly violated international law.

War crimes do more than destroy bodies; they erode morality, memories, and the deeply rooted habits of public consciousness. The brutality of Israel’s military actions in Gaza is painfully evident in the images of children’s bodies, torn apart amidst bombed mosques, hospitals, and schools. These atrocities are often justified by a discourse of dehumanisation and self-defense — a state-sanctioned narrative as morally appalling as the suffering it enables, particularly among the most vulnerable. What is frequently overlooked, especially by mainstream media, is that Israel’s war on Gaza is not just a physical assault but an attack on history, memory, and cultural institutions. This erasure is a calculated effort to obscure its war crimes, brutal violence, and history of settler colonialism, all cloaked ‘under the security of the blanket of historical amnesia’ (White and Ballas 2024).

Scholasticide as a Structural and Ideological War

Genocide manifests itself not only in the creation of ‘kill zones’, where soldiers indiscriminately shoot Palestinians and in the use of lethal force against non-military targets such as hospitals and schools but also in the systematic destruction of Gaza’s entire intellectual, cultural, and civic infrastructure (Roth 2024). This calculated erosion seeks to eliminate the very fabric of Gaza’s society, extending beyond physical violence to the obliteration of its historical and cultural identity (Gaza Academics and Administrators 2024).

The ongoing and increasingly meticulous documentation of Israel’s war crimes not only exposes the horrific realities on the ground but also sheds light on the broader implications of these violations. The unfolding crisis extends beyond the immediate brutality and physical destruction in Gaza, revealing a deeper, insidious form of violence that transcends the battlefield. This violence is rooted in an ideological agenda that legitimises such barbarism while systematically attacking any form of education and criticism that seeks to expose it. This assault manifests as both a soft and a hard war on education, history, critical inquiry, and any viable movement of dissent. Karma Nabulsi of the University of Oxford called this ‘war on education’ a form of scholasticide and argued that it would affect generations of Palestinian children (Bhabha et al. 2024). At the heart of this war on dissent and education are repeated attempts

2 All of the quotes in this paragraph are from Roth (2024).

by Israel's right-wing government to dismiss all critiques of Israel's war on Gaza as a form of antisemitism. For example, when the war on Gaza is occasionally contextualised and historicized in reports, the Israeli government and its defenders swiftly weaponise the charge of antisemitism against critics, especially Palestinians, but also Jews. Historian Ilan Pappé highlights how this accusation is wielded by Israel's far-right government to silence not only critics of the war but any narrative that exposes its five-decade-long campaign by 'occupational forces to inflict persistent collective punishment on the Palestinians... exposing them to constant harassment by Israeli settlers and security forces and imprisoning hundreds of thousands of them' (2023).

The expansive, indiscriminate, and staggering violence unleashed on Gaza by Israel demands not only a new vocabulary but also a deeper understanding of the politics of education and the education of politics. It also requires a redefined comprehension of what constitutes a war crime, coupled with a mass international movement resisting the far-right Israeli government's deliberate and brutal attacks on the Palestinian people and their quest for freedom and sovereignty. Additionally, it is crucial to recognize that this violence, in its multiple forms, includes a less visible form of violence that is often overlooked. This form of violence, frequently obscured by the genocidal slaughter and annihilation unfolding in Gaza, is the violence of organised forgetting — the systematic erasure of dangerous memories, histories, and collective remembrance.

This is the violence of 'scholasticide'. This type of violence seeks to erase the Nakba from history, to destroy institutions that preserve the memory of the forced removal of 700,000 Palestinians from their land, and to enforce historical amnesia as a means of preventing future generations from learning about Palestinian resistance against colonial violence, dispossession, and erasure that has persisted for decades. Isabella Hammad, British-Palestinian author, rightly expresses outrage on how the pedagogical incubators of soft scholasticide work to condemn Palestinian protesters and cover up crimes of genocide. She is worth quoting at length:

Israel's war in Gaza targets not only memory, knowledge, and critical inquiry but also extends to the destruction of educational institutions where history exposes past crimes and the movements for liberation and resistance. This is a war waged not just against bodies but also against history itself — against memories, legacies of cruelty, schools, museums, and any space where a people's history and collective identity are preserved and transmitted to present and future generations. This assault on historical consciousness, remembrance, critical ideas, and the enduring history of settler colonialism represents a form of ideological violence that strategically underpins the tangible, bloody war that destroys Palestinian lives and the institutions safeguarding vital memories. In this context, the concept of 'scholasticide'

emerges, signifying the deliberate destruction of educational spaces that pass on essential knowledge, memories, and values, becoming a central element in Israel's broader war against the Palestinian people. (2024)

As a form of historical, political and social amnesia, scholasticide works through what Rob Nixon calls 'slow violence' — a gradual, incremental, and often less visible form of harm. In this context, scholasticide manifests through verbal contortions marked by diversions, lies, fear, threats, and intimidation. Language, images, and sensationalised tsunamis of hate across various media outlets and platforms are used to distract people from the crimes taking place in Gaza. As a result, scholasticide works to normalise the bloody war on Gaza and suppress free speech. However, it is crucial to recognise that scholasticide also takes on a more brutal and immediate expression in what I call the 'savage structural violence of scholasticide'. This form of scholasticide targets the destruction of schools, universities, and museums while systematically repressing dissenting scholars, students, and others. It involves real weapons of mass destruction, attacking not just bodies and minds but also the institutions that sustain intellectual life.

In what follows, I will analyse the brutal structural violence of scholasticide taking place in Gaza, where educational institutions are systematically targeted and destroyed. I will then examine the ideological violence of scholasticide, characterised by the suppression of free speech and academic freedom, increasingly enforced through state mechanisms of surveillance, job losses, and other punitive measures, including detention. These two forms of scholasticide are not isolated; they reinforce each other, serving a larger project of imposing a repressive state in Israel. This analysis will also reveal how these practices signal a broader, insidious trend in the West, where censorship, repression, and various forms of pedagogical terrorism are aggressively deployed to suppress dissent and critical thought, leading to a brutal global trajectory of intellectual and academic oppression. These two forms of scholasticide — ideological and structural — are deeply interconnected. The ideological assault on free speech and academic freedom lays the groundwork for the physical destruction of institutions essential to critical education as a practice of freedom and liberation. In this way, the ideological forces of scholasticide act as a precursor and precondition for the eventual annihilation of the very foundations of emancipatory education.

Scholasticide in Gaza

Israel's brutal war in Gaza not only targets bodies but also attacks the preservation of history, knowledge, and critical thought. By destroying educational institutions, it aims to erase narratives of past crimes and

Palestinian movements for liberation. This is a war against history itself — against memories, legacies of resistance, and the institutions that safeguard a people's collective identity for future generations. The repression of historical consciousness and the history of settler-colonialism is a form of ideological violence that fuels the ongoing conflict devastating Palestinian lives and erasing vital memories. This deliberate destruction of educational institutions, spaces, and history, known as 'scholasticide', is central to Israel's broader war against the Palestinian people. Chandni Desai, writing in *The Guardian*, describes scholasticide as an act of ethical savagery and pedagogical repression, noting: 'It obliterates the means by which a group — in this instance, Palestinians — can sustain and transmit their culture, knowledge, history, memory, identity, and values across time and space. It is a key feature of genocide' (2024).

The structural violence of scholasticide in Gaza since the horrific October 7th Hamas attack is undeniable and practically unthinkable. The world has witnessed Israel's deliberate targeting of schools, universities, and other cultural sites in Gaza. As Sharon Zhang notes, 'It is a war crime to target civilian infrastructure in war, but Israel has a long history of flagrantly violating international law with impunity — including targeting educational institutions that preserve Palestinian history, identity, and culture' (2024). According to the UN, 90 percent of Gaza's schools have been destroyed, and all 12 universities have been bombed, damaged, or reduced to rubble. Chandni Desai reports that 'approximately 90,000 Palestinian university students have had their studies suspended; many will be driven to forced displacement through genocide, as Gaza has become uninhabitable' (2024). It gets worse. UN officials and the Palestinian ministry of education report that Israeli military operations have killed at least 5,479 students, 261 teachers, and 95 university professors in Gaza, including deans, university presidents, award-winning physicists, poets, artists, and prominent activists (Hedges 2024).

Schools in Gaza faced significant challenges even before the war, including overcrowding, double shifts, a shortage of buildings, and restricted access to construction materials and school supplies. As Stephen McCloskey highlights, 'in June 2022, Save the Children reported that 80 percent of children in Gaza were 'in a perpetual state of fear, worry, sadness, and grief' (2024). The war has only exacerbated these issues, leaving Gaza's youth to grapple with repeated traumas, mental health crises, and the constant threat of death or injury. These hardships are compounded by extreme poverty, continuous violence, forced displacement, and inadequate health care.

Moreover, the brutal realities extend beyond the battlefield. It is well-documented that many children held without charge in Israeli detention centers have been subjected to physical, sexual, and mental abuse. Save

the Children has collected testimonies from children that reveal increasing levels of violence, particularly since October 2023, when stricter rules were implemented that block visits from parents or lawyers. Some children have reported broken bones and beatings, highlighting the severe abuse occurring in these detention centres. Amid such a dire humanitarian crisis, Palestinian children and their parents are left with an agonizing choice: 'between dying of exposure, disease, bombs, starvation, infectious disease, or leaving' (Hedges 2024). This grim reality underscores that the destruction of Gaza's education system is part of a broader campaign by Israel to render the region unlivable.

Israel's war on education and culture extends further, targeting the very fabric of Gaza's identity. The bombing and destruction of numerous libraries, archives, publishing houses, cultural centers, activity halls, museums, bookstores, cemeteries, monuments, and archival materials illustrate a systematic effort to erase Palestinian heritage (Desai 2024). Various news outlets and social media have provided stories and images confirming that Israeli soldiers are not only destroying but also stealing archeological artifacts. In one particularly egregious instance reported on social media, stolen artifacts from the Gaza Strip were openly displayed in a small showcase in the Israeli parliament, known as the Knesset (*Palestine Chronicle* Staff 2024).

Israel's policy of scholasticide, aimed at destroying Palestinian education, especially its less violent methods, are not limited to Gaza. They also extend to students, faculty, and other critics of the war within Israel. Israeli scholar, Professor Maya Wind, argues that Israel's universities have become centers of military research, propaganda, and repression (2024). She makes clear that Israeli universities have become increasingly militarised, leading to what John Armitage calls in another context 'the militarization of knowledge, namely, in the militarization of the facts, information and abilities obtained through the experience of education' (2006: 221). Wind amplifies this point by noting that 'academic disciplines, degree programs, campus infrastructure, and research laboratories service Israeli occupation and apartheid'. She is worth quoting at length:

Hebrew University, among others, are training intelligence soldiers to create target banks in Gaza. They are producing knowledge for the state. . . which is state propaganda, or legal scholarship to help thwart attempts to hold Israel accountable for its war crimes, such as the case brought to the ICJ by South Africa. And they are, in fact, actually granting university course credit to reserve soldiers returning from Gaza to their classrooms. So, Israeli universities are deeply complicit in this genocide. (2024)

Writing in *The New York Review of Books*, in addition, Neve Gordon and Penny Green reported that Shalhoub-Kevorkian, a Palestinian

citizen of Israel, who is the Lawrence D. Biele Chair in Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was arrested for signing a petition titled 'Childhood Researchers and Students Calling for Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza' (2024). She was one of many Palestinian educators intimidated by the far-right Netanyahu government for criticizing the war (Wind 2024). The reach of Israeli state censorship and punishment also includes Jewish faculty members such as the renowned Professor Peled-Elhanan subjected to a disciplinary hearing because she sent messages on a staff WhatsApp that was deemed supportive of Hamas.

Gordon and Green also noted that 'in the three weeks following Hamas's attack, well over a hundred Palestinian students in Israel, nearly 80 percent of them women, faced disciplinary actions for private social media posts that supported the end of the siege on Gaza... expressed empathy with Palestinians in the Strip, or simply included memes about suffering Palestinian children' (2024). Attempts by the Israeli state to destroy education in Palestine is part of a broader project to destroy any vestige of a liberation movement in Palestine. Wind notes this is obvious not only in terms of the repression of Palestinian critics in Gaza and Israel, but also in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. She states that Palestinian universities are routinely raided by the IDF. She adds:

Student activists and organizers in over 411 Palestinian student groups and associations that have been declared unlawful by the Israeli state are routinely abducted from their campus, from their homes in the middle of the night. They are subjected to torture. They are held in administrative detention without charge or trial for months. And so, what we're really seeing is a systemic attack of the Israeli military and the Israeli military government on Palestinian higher education, and particularly on Palestinian campuses as sites of organizing for Palestinian liberation. (Goodman 2024)

Conclusion

What stands out regarding Israel's policy of scholasticide is not only the visceral killing, suffering, and terror inflicted upon the Palestinian people in Gaza but also the calculated effort to obliterate institutions that preserve Palestinian history, educate current and future generations, and forge links between the past and a future of freedom and justice. This is not just an assault on memory; it is an attack on the very essence 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 through mass resistance.

It is crucial for critical educators and anti-war activists to acknowledge that this war on education in Gaza parallels the ongoing assault on

higher education in the United States and other authoritarian regimes, revealing a disturbing global alignment in the attack on intellectual freedom and historical truth. The strategy of scholasticide is both a violent structural project and a calculated ideological and pedagogical effort to silence dissent within and outside of higher education, particularly dissent that holds Israel's genocidal war and its apparatuses of ideological indoctrination and repression accountable.

The horrors unfolding in Gaza represent the extreme endpoint of a broader, insidious campaign aimed at crushing dissent across universities in the United States, Europe, and beyond, including nations like Hungary. In the U.S., schools and cultural institutions may not be bombed, but they are systematically defunded and turned into fortresses of academic repression. Books are banned, student protesters face police brutality, faculty are purged, and history is whitewashed.

In elite institutions like Northwestern University and Columbia University, distinguished academics are facing punitive actions for criticizing Israel. Professor Steven Thrasher, chair of social justice reporting at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, was suspended 'merely for participating in a Gaza solidarity protest' (Goodman 2024). At Columbia University, Professor Katherine Franke is facing termination after appearing on Democracy Now! in January 2024 'to discuss a chemical attack on pro-Palestinian student activists at Columbia' (Goodman 2024). These are not isolated incidents — it's getting worse.

Faculty are being restricted from teaching certain content in the classroom, while political appointees — often cronies — are being installed to dictate campus policies. Furthermore, an increasing number of bills are being introduced to curtail the freedom to learn, teach, and conduct research. Right-wing billionaires are withdrawing funding from so-called 'woke' universities, accusing them of being too lenient in silencing students, faculty, and staff who criticise Israel's war in Gaza. As Maryam Alaniz notes in *The Bullet*, the actions of university administrators, politicians, and others targeting pro-Palestinian demonstrators 'are meant to stoke fear among the defiant students, faculty members, and workers who have been standing up against the inhumane genocide in Palestine' (Alaniz 2024). These attacks are part of a broader, modern-day McCarthyism that is spreading across campuses, stripping away even the most fundamental right to protest.

In Florida, leaders of its twelve public universities were 'instructed... to screen certain courses for 'antisemitism or anti-Israeli bias. They were told to conduct 'a keyword search of all undergraduate-and graduate-course descriptions and syllabi for the following words: Israel, Israeli, Palestine, Palestinian, Middle East, Zionism, Zionist, Judaism, Jewish, and Jews' (Petit 2024). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP)

has strongly condemned this political interference in higher education, highlighting the grave threat it poses to academic freedom:

Political interference in US higher education has reached an alarming level. In a number of states, including Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, Republican majorities in the legislature, alongside Republican governors, have made explicit their intention to reshape colleges and universities. They have passed bills seeking to marginalize, and even criminalize, teaching and research on issues of race and gender. In doing so, they subvert the possibility that, as a site of free inquiry, the university can serve the common good. Instead, these efforts seek to compel institutions of higher education to reinforce racist and white-supremacist interests. (AUUP 2024)

Numerous organisations outside of higher education are actively working to silence dissent against Israel's war in Gaza. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) wields immense power in suppressing criticism of Israel's policies and actions in Gaza, as well as efforts to support Palestinian freedom and sovereignty. AIPAC has aggressively lobbied U.S. Congress members to punish students, faculty, and universities that criticise Israel. They have launched a relentless campaign to quash the 'growing dissent in Congress against Israel's war on Gaza' (Harb 2024).

This pattern of behavior is not new. In 2006, AIPAC falsely accused Representative Betty McCollum of being antisemitic and a supporter of terrorism because she voted against H.R. 4681, a bill that imposed egregious and immoral 'restraints on aid to Palestinian people' (McCollum 2006). Since then, particularly in response to mass protests against Israel's actions in Gaza, AIPAC has targeted academic institutions and other organisations critical of Israeli policies. They have ruthlessly attacked politicians running for office who have criticised Israel, leading to the defeat of many in Democratic primaries (Barshad 2023).

AIPAC has flooded the media with pro-Israel propaganda, blacklisted individuals, organisations, media spokespeople, and groups protesting Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. Usamah Andrabi, a spokesperson for Justice Democrats, points out that 'AIPAC is funded by Republican billionaires and mega-donors'.³ These same billionaire elites and their administrative enforcers are ruthlessly working to 'engineer the intellectual, social, and financial impoverishment of the educational sector', silencing anyone who dares to challenge their pursuit of national and ideological conformity (Ben-Ghiat 2023).

Scholasticide is a modern form of McCarthyism that intensifies from silencing opposition to the outright destruction of academic and cultural institutions that enable both individual and collective resistance. It begins by targeting informed judgment, historical memory, and dissent, and then

3 Op. cit. Harb (2024).

escalates to obliterating civic infrastructures like schools and museums. In its wake, it leaves a trail of bloodshed, broken limbs, wounded women and children, and a chilling legacy of violence, mass deaths, and ethical emptiness. Scholasticide is the canary in the coal mine, signaling an imminent and grave threat to academic freedom, free speech, critical education, and democracy itself.

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