

Scholasticide Definition

Scholasticide is a term that was first coined by Professor Karma Nabulsi, an Oxford don and Palestinian expert on the laws of war. She conceptualized it in the context of the Israeli assault on Gaza, Palestine in 2009, but also with reference to a pattern of Israeli colonial attacks on Palestinian scholars, students, and educational institutions going back to the Nakba of 1948, and expanding after the 1967 war on Palestine and the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

The term combines the Latin prefix *schola*, meaning school, and the Latin suffix *cide*, meaning killing. Nabulsi used it to describe the “systematic destruction of Palestinian education by Israel” to counter a tradition of Palestinian learning. That tradition, Nabulsi observed, reflected the enormous “role and power of education in an occupied society” in which freedom of thought “posits possibilities, open horizons”, contrasting sharply with “the apartheid wall, the shackling checkpoints, [and] the choking prisons”. Recognizing “how important education is to the Palestinian tradition and the Palestinian revolution”, Nabulsi noted that Israeli colonial policymakers “cannot abide it and have to destroy it.”

During the latest Israeli genocidal war on Gaza, Palestine in 2023/2024, scholasticide has intensified on an unprecedented scale. Israeli colonial policy in Gaza has now shifted from a focus on systematic destruction to total annihilation of education. There is, indeed, an intimate relationship between genocide and scholasticide. Raphael Lamkin, the pioneering Polish Jewish legal scholar who first defined genocide and played a key role in inserting the concept into international law, saw genocide as an effort to “undermine the fundamental basis of the social order.” Key to this effort, in Lamkin’s conception, was the assault on the cultures of national, ethnic, racial, or religious collectivities.

Scholasticide is comprised of any of the following acts that entail systemic destruction, in whole or in part, of the educational life of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group:

- 1) Killings and assassinations of university and school teachers, students, staff, and administrators.
- 2) Causing bodily or mental harm to university and school teachers, students, staff, and administrators.
- 3) Arresting, detaining, and incarcerating university and school teachers, students, staff, and administrators.
- 4) Systematic harassment, bullying, intimidation of university and school teachers, students, staff, and administrators.
- 5) Bombarding and demolishing educational institutions.
- 6) Destroying and/or looting of teaching and research resources including libraries, archives, and laboratories, as well as facilities supporting the educational process, including playgrounds, sports fields, performance venues, cafeterias, and residence halls.
- 7) Impeding the import of essential materials for rebuilding damaged schools and universities.
- 8) Obstructing the creation of new educational structures.
- 9) Besieging schools and universities and using them as barracks, logistics bases, operational headquarters, weapons and ammunition caches, detention and interrogation centers.

- 10) Closing educational institutions and/or disrupting their daily operations .
- 11) Invading educational institutions.
- 12) Restricting faculty, student, and staff access to educational institutions.
- 13) Denying education to political prisoners including child detainees.
- 14) Hindering access to the internet, disrupting the provision of electricity, and preventing free entry of educational supplies including books and laboratory equipment.
- 15) Blocking the hiring of academic staff and denying them entry to their institutions through visa denial and other restrictions.
- 16) Revoking residency rights of students or academics who may pursue educational opportunities abroad.
- 17) Preventing scholarly exchange in all its forms.
- 18) Disrupting international and domestic funding of educational institutions.

All of these acts are currently being carried out to devastating effect in Gaza, Palestine. They are part and parcel of the genocidal effort to impede the reproduction of the social order in that occupied territory, as part of a broader effort to render it uninhabitable, hence paving the way for its comprehensive ethnic cleansing. Many of these acts have long been practiced against educational institutions and communities in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, and some are experienced by Palestinian citizens of the Israeli State.