

Learning Under Siege: A Student's Fight for Education in Gaza

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In Gaza, education is more than learning – it is a lifeline, a form of resistance, and a statement of hope. Amid war, displacement, and daily hardships, Palestinian students persevere, holding on to knowledge as if it were oxygen. This article shares my personal journey, the daily struggles we endure, and the unyielding spirit that drives us to continue learning, speaking, and documenting our lives, despite impossible circumstances.

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Learning Under Siege: A Student's Fight for Education in Gaza

Sondos Abdalfattah Sobih

I am Sondos Sobih, a second-year student of English Language and Literature at Al-Aqsa University. Before the war, my dreams were modest yet clear. I began a professional translation course with the ambition of becoming a legal translator. I imagined myself interpreting between languages and laws in courtrooms – a future built on precision, words, and justice. But war doesn't ask for permission. It arrives unannounced and takes everything.

I was forcibly displaced from my home. The space I had once called safe – filled with books, notebooks, family memories – was reduced to a memory. The displacement wasn't just physical. It was psychological, academic, emotional. I missed a full semester. I didn't have the internet to attend classes or even the will to care. Studying felt irrelevant in a world where survival had become the only priority.

The daily reality was harsh and relentless. Hunger, scarcity, and fatigue shadowed our lives. Bread and flour were often unavailable, and the smallest portion of lentil soup shared among us became a fleeting comfort. Long nights without electricity, the constant worry for loved ones, and the fear that another attack could strike at any moment – these were our daily companions. Each day demanded a quiet courage, a delicate balance between endurance and hope.

Gradually, I returned to my studies. I completed a year and a half of academic work online; not from a library or a desk, but often from a shared space of displacement. Today, I continue my education through a remote English diploma with Hashemite University, in Jordan. I also earned a certified PMP (Project Management Professional) qualification from the American Board, and I am currently enrolled in a course on communication and soft skills. This is not just about certificates – it is about refusing erasure.

During a research project, I discovered the story of Zarlasht Halaimzai, an Afghan refugee who shared her journey through a TED Talk. Her words pierced through borders. When she described the fear of losing her school, the pain of forced migration, and the silence that followed – it was as if she was speaking for me and for many students in Gaza. Her story resonated deeply, a mirror reflecting struggles that, while distant geographically, were painfully familiar in essence.

She once said:

“We were forced to live as refugees, but we weren’t born to be silent”.

This sentence stayed with me. In Gaza, silence can be safer. But I chose otherwise. I chose to speak, to study, to document.

Students in Gaza do not only suffer from war. We study in blackout conditions, attend online classes over unstable connections, and live in constant fear. Hunger and exhaustion remain constant companions, yet we persist. We do not seek sympathy. We seek recognition.

This is not just my story. It is the story of thousands of Palestinian students who, like me, hold on to education like it’s oxygen. Because it is.

War tries to strip us of our identity, our ambitions, and our right to imagine a future. But in continuing my studies, in writing this article, and in researching stories like Zarlasht’s, I reclaim that right. I dream of pursuing postgraduate studies in literature – not just to study texts, but to write them. To tell our stories in our own words.

Education in Gaza is not a path. It is a battlefield of its own. But even under siege, we study. Even in exile, we write. Even through grief, hunger, and exhaustion, we hope.

Because “we weren’t born to be silent”.

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Biography

Sondos Abdalfattah Sobih is a second-year student in the English Department. Sondos has always loved language and been drawn to translation. Her journey began with a professional translation course, where she first dreamed of becoming a legal translator. Sondos continues to develop her skills through an English language diploma offered by the Hashemite University of Jordan, and a professional project management course, undertaken alongside her university studies. Her ambition is to pursue graduate studies, possibly in literature.