To: **The Norwegian Government**

From: **NorPal – Norwegian Consortium for Higher Education in Palestine**

Date: **9 November 2026**

Programme to Support Higher Education in Palestine

NorPal, the Norwegian Consortium for Higher Education in Palestine, calls on the Norwegian Government to establish a programme to support higher education in Palestine with a total budget of NOK 300 million.

Palestinian universities have demonstrated an impressive ability to maintain educational activities under extremely difficult conditions. Palestine now needs support to strengthen its universities. Education is essential for keeping society functioning. The healthcare sector needs nurses, schools need teachers, and critical infrastructure depends on technical expertise.

Norway has made significant contributions to Gaza and has taken a clear international political stance through its recognition of Palestine as a state. It is therefore natural for Norway to assume a leading international role in supporting higher education in Palestine. Higher education is a cornerstone of national development. It fosters resilient civil societies and social resilience, strengthens democracy, reduces inequality and poverty, and promotes equality, tolerance, and trust.

Rationale: Systematic and Targeted Attacks on the Higher Education and Research Sector in Palestine

Palestine has built universities and colleges of high quality. Through these institutions, it educates the professionals needed to sustain healthcare, education, infrastructure development, the arts, journalism, and many other sectors. Palestinian universities also host significant research communities that are internationally recognised for their excellence.

Since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, the higher education and research sector has been subjected to systematic and targeted attacks aimed at destabilising and undermining civil society, state-building efforts, and democratic development. University campuses have suffered extensive damage, staff and students have been killed or injured, and laboratories, archives, and data collections have been destroyed. At the same time, the resilience of Palestinian universities remains remarkable. Despite widespread destruction, teaching and research activities have continued. Palestinian universities have not been eradicated; they remain operational.

The British report *Scholasticide in Gaza: The Systematic Destruction of Palestinian Higher Education and the Continuation of Collective Resilience* (June 2026) concludes that Israel has, since October 2023, systematically destroyed Gaza's higher education sector and that this destruction is not merely collateral damage resulting from military operations, but part of a deliberate strategy to undermine Palestinian higher education and research as foundations of Palestinian identity, culture, nation-building, and hope for the future.

Programme for Higher Education in Palestine: From Solidarity to Robust and Long-Term Support for Structural and Institutional Stability

Higher education and research are critically important both for reconstruction and for Palestinian nation-building. As Norway continues its engagement with and support for Palestine, it is essential that long-term strengthening of the higher education and research sector be included. Support to this sector is crucial for the sustainable development of Palestinian civil society and a democratic Palestinian state. Following a phase in which immediate humanitarian relief has necessarily been prioritised, higher education and research now require dedicated support as part of Norway's future contributions.

NorPal proposes the establishment of a **Programme for Higher Education in Palestine** as a long-term initiative to strengthen the resilience and independence of Palestinian higher education institutions, enhance their capacity to educate future professionals, generate new knowledge, and support the development of a democratic and sustainable Palestinian society.

The programme should be based on the priorities and needs identified by Palestinian educational authorities and universities themselves. It should contribute both to meeting urgent competency needs and to the long-term institutional development necessary for a sustainable Palestinian higher education and research system.

The programme is proposed to consist of three components:

1. Institutional support for Palestinian universities and colleges
2. Joint Norwegian-Palestinian research clusters in strategically important areas
3. Educational cooperation between Palestinian and Norwegian universities

NorPal proposes that NOK 300 million be allocated to the programme.

The programme could build on existing funding instruments through calls administered by the Research Council of Norway, HK-dir, and Norad, in close cooperation with Palestinian higher education and research authorities.

1. Institutional Support for Palestinian Universities and Colleges

Maintaining and strengthening higher education and research institutions in Palestine is essential for ensuring a robust, sustainable, and future-oriented education system.

The **Programme for Higher Education in Palestine** should place significant emphasis on institutional support for Palestinian universities and colleges, either directly or through the financing of long-term partnerships between Norwegian and Palestinian institutions.

Needs for institutional support and cooperation should be identified and prioritised through dialogue with Palestinian higher education and research authorities and the institutions themselves. As long as hostilities continue, cooperation may focus particularly on digital teaching and supervision, sharing of digital library resources, and technical and digital support.

Long-term partnerships may include the development of joint degree programmes and learning platforms, supervision and mentoring schemes, research fellowships, and the establishment of joint research arenas. The programme should not finance the construction

of buildings or other physical infrastructure, but rather focus on strengthening Palestinian institutions through partnerships.

One important and immediate measure for strengthening Palestinian institutions would be tuition-fee scholarships for Palestinian students. Universities in Palestine are non-profit institutions whose finances rely almost entirely on student tuition fees. As a result of the war, many students have lost the ability to pay, undermining the financial basis for continued university operations. An immediate tuition support scheme of NOK 100 million could provide a foundation for long-term institutional development.

2. Joint Research Clusters in Strategically Important Areas

It is proposed that the **Programme for Higher Education in Palestine** establish interdisciplinary research clusters in strategically important areas. These clusters should bring together Palestinian and Norwegian academic communities in long-term, mutually committed research collaborations.

The purpose is to strengthen research capacity at Palestinian institutions, contribute to the qualification and development of academic staff, and support the knowledge base required for a well-functioning and sustainable Palestinian society.

The research clusters should be established in areas identified as particularly important for the development of the Palestinian state and where both Palestinian and Norwegian institutions possess strong academic environments capable of ensuring mutual learning and academic benefit. Relevant thematic areas may include food systems and food security, climate and environment, public health, education systems, and physical and digital infrastructure.

Within these research clusters, support could be provided for activities such as:

- Joint research projects
- Joint supervision of master's and PhD candidates
- Reciprocal research stays and researcher mobility
- Sharing and development of research infrastructure, laboratory facilities, and digital solutions
- Access to and sharing of data, databases, and storage systems

The clusters may also include measures that strengthen collaboration between academia, the public sector, and industry. This may involve entrepreneurship programmes, innovation centres, incubators, and other initiatives that promote knowledge-based innovation, value creation, and societal development.

3. Educational Cooperation

The third component of the programme should focus on long-term cooperation in the development and delivery of educational programmes that address key competency needs in Palestine while simultaneously strengthening the capacity of Palestinian universities and colleges over time.

The objective is to contribute to the development of expertise necessary for societal development, reconstruction efforts, and the establishment of robust public institutions. At the same time, it is essential to strengthen Palestinian higher education institutions as pillars of a future knowledge-based society.

Cooperation should focus particularly on academic fields that are critical to Palestine's long-term development, including health, education, public administration, technology, climate and environment, energy, food security, societal planning, and infrastructure.

Educational programmes should be developed through close cooperation between Palestinian and Norwegian institutions to ensure relevance, quality, and local ownership.

The scheme may include support for the development of new degree programmes and courses, joint degrees and joint teaching activities, as well as initiatives that strengthen teaching capacity at Palestinian institutions.

Possible instruments include:

- Exchange programmes and study visits
- Digital teaching and learning initiatives
- Support for master's and doctoral education, academic supervision, and mentoring
- Access to libraries, academic journals, databases, and digital learning resources
- Access to laboratories, research infrastructure, and technical facilities at Norwegian institutions
- Professional development opportunities for academic and administrative staff at Palestinian institutions

Educational cooperation should enable Palestinian universities and colleges to offer high-quality education and strengthen their capacity to develop, manage, and continuously improve academic programmes, scholarly communities, and quality assurance systems.

NorPal – Norwegian Consortium for Higher Education in Palestine

NorPal is the first university consortium of its kind in the world. It brings together 18 Norwegian universities and university colleges, as well as the Norwegian National Union of Students.

Its purpose is to mobilise and coordinate resources that can support and help rebuild Palestinian higher education and research as an essential component of Palestinian societal development. NorPal builds on extensive and ongoing collaboration between Norwegian and Palestinian academic communities in fields such as education, health, childhood studies, infrastructure, media, arts, culture, and documentation.

NorPal's ambition is to mobilise and coordinate Norwegian resources in support of the reconstruction of Palestinian higher education and research. It adopts a broader and more long-term perspective than the immediate needs in Gaza by encompassing all of Palestine and contributing to the development of a robust and sustainable higher education system.

NorPal consists of the following 19 member institutions:

- Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO)

- Queen Maud University College of Early Childhood Education
- Molde University College
- Volda University College
- Østfold University College
- Western Norway University of Applied Sciences
- Oslo National Academy of the Arts
- Nord University
- Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)
- Norwegian Academy of Music
- Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)
- Norwegian National Union of Students (NSO)
- Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet)
- UiT The Arctic University of Norway
- University of Bergen
- University of Oslo
- University of Stavanger
- University of South-Eastern Norway
- VID Specialized University