

FROM SILENCE TO ACTION: TAKING A COLLECTIVE TURN IN GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TOWARDS SOLIDARITY *WITH* AND *FOR* PALESTINE AND PALESTINIANS

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Citation: de Vries, M, Pieniazek, M A, Posada González, D, Suhonen, R and Vittori, L (2026) 'From Silence to Action: Taking a Collective Turn in Global Citizenship Education Towards Solidarity *With* and *For* Palestine and Palestinians', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, Volume 42, Spring, pp. 139-159.

Abstract: For more than two years now, the world has witnessed and allowed Israel's genocide against the Palestinian people. The disregard for international law and human rights, through continued economic and diplomatic ties with Israel, especially in Western liberal democracies, testifies to the prioritisation of self-interest by states, corporations, and universities. Building on earlier discussions in Issue 39 of *Policy and Practice* that called attention to silences around Palestine in global citizenship education (GCE), this article examines how Palestine and Palestinians have been addressed within recent scholarship in GCE, human rights education, and related educational fields. We analysed patterns of engagement, omission, and constraint to consider how responsibility and action are articulated or absent within the field by reviewing relevant publications from 2024-2026.

Drawing on Shatara and Saleh's (2024) distinction between solidarity *for* and solidarity *with* Palestine and Palestinians, we argue that currently there are limited spaces within GCE that engage with the oppression of Palestine and Palestinians. We, therefore, call for a more critical and accountable GCE; one that develops pedagogies of resistance rooted in the reality of Palestinians and aims to empower people everywhere, as suggested by the work of the Palestinian scholar Munir Fasheh (1990) and centralised with the concept *sumūd*. This

requires naming the entanglements between Zionism and Western supremacy and situating the elimination of Palestinians within longer histories of European colonisation and imperialism. We seek a collective turn within GCE that aligns with Palestinian calls for solidarity and centres listening and dialogue with Palestinians, collective learning, and action.

Key words: Global Citizenship Education; Palestine; Solidarity; Silence; Scholasticide.

Introduction

Over the past two years, most Western states have defended and enabled a genocide against the Palestinian people (Albanese, 2025), following more than a century of colonisation and dispossession (Khalidi, 2020). The repression of civic space and suppression of free speech in democratic countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom enacted in defence of Israel, has exposed the rhetorical and structural contradictions of liberal democratic commitments to human rights (European Civic Forum, 2024). Global citizenship education (GCE) positions itself as a field grounded in defending and promoting human rights, values and commitments to social justice, decolonisation, and global solidarity (August-Mowers and Waghid, 2025). The ongoing destruction in Palestine, identified as acts of genocide in Gaza and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank (Albanese, 2025; Human Rights Council, 2025) alongside the longer history of Palestinian dispossession and settler-colonialism (Krebs and Olwan, 2012), constitutes a critical test of how these commitments are implemented.

We, as early career scholars in GCE who have participated in local Palestinian solidarity actions within our institutions and as education practitioners, share the increasingly explicit critique of the field that exposes its hypocrisy: employing value laden terms without accompanying actions (McCloskey, 2025; Murphy, 2024; O'Toole, 2024; Stein, 2024). This collective inaction of the field reveals a tension between the values that many leading GCE scholars and networks profess and what they are willing to confront publicly. In this article, we lay out recent publications on GCE and Palestine, while also highlighting calls for solidarity by Palestinian scholars and showcasing examples

that shed light on a possible way forward. The aim of this article is to move the GCE sector from silence to action.

Debates around Palestine have become increasingly polarised and institutionally constrained, which is also visible within GCE scholarship and networks as engagement with Palestine has been uneven and politically contested (Murphy, 2024). This dynamic is particularly evident within universities in the global North, where expressions of academic solidarity have remained limited and often faced institutional repression (Badaan and Abu Moghli, 2026). Where solidarity with Palestine has been articulated, it has largely been driven by students, who occupy the most precarious positions and face the highest risks (Ibid.). For a field that frequently invokes emancipatory and decolonial ideals, this pattern of actions failing to match rhetoric raises important questions about how solidarity is conceptualised and enacted within GCE. As McCloskey (2025) notes, despite its normative commitments, the GCE sector has struggled to publicly recognise Palestinians as an oppressed population deserving of global solidarity. The question, therefore, shifts from whether Palestine is addressed to how responsibility, complicity, and action are framed within GCE under current political conditions and how we can do better.

Central to our examination is the distinction articulated by Palestinian scholars Shatara and Saleh (2024) between solidarity *with* and solidarity *for* Palestine and Palestinians. Solidarity *with* entails working alongside Palestinians in collective struggle, grounded in relationality and shared political commitment. Solidarity *for* refers to actions that disrupt the erasure of Palestinian voices within curricula, research, and institutional structures. It also requires situating Palestine within longer histories of colonial and imperial power, including the entanglements between Zionism and Western supremacy, as part of a broader examination of how educational discourse engages structures of domination (Ibid.). Drawing on Palestinian calls for solidarity, we argue for spaces within GCE that centre listening and engage in dialogue with Palestinians, while grounding this work in practices of care, responsibility, and collective accountability.

Our reflections draw on recent English-language publications in GCE, human rights education (HRE), and related fields, which we examined to trace patterns in how Palestine is engaged, framed, or avoided in education, and how responsibility and action are articulated in relation to the ongoing genocide. We highlight selected publications to illustrate these broader trends. The analysis was carried out by a collective of five early career scholars working in GCE within European academic institutions and positioned outside Palestinian lived experience, without direct personal or familial ties to the region. This positionality affords relative institutional safety in addressing politically contested issues, while also shaping the limits of our understanding. Our engagement with Palestine has developed through multiple and varied sources, including formal education, mainstream and digital media environments, academic discourse, and sustained dialogue with Palestinian scholars, activists, and solidarity movements. Acknowledging this positioning is essential to clarify the standpoint from which this examination proceeds. Many educators working within GCE may share similar starting points. From this location, we do not seek to speak for Palestinians, but to listen, learn, and act in solidarity, resisting the erasure of Palestinian voices within education, particularly GCE.

In the remainder of the article, we will first outline what has been written within GCE research in relation to the ongoing genocide in Gaza. This includes both studies conducted in Palestine, notably in the occupied West Bank, as well as reflections from academia and empirical studies on the approaches taken in schools in Western countries. Secondly, we emphasise calls for solidarity made by Palestinian scholars in the past decades, linking these with the silences in the field of GCE to suggest a move towards collective action within the field.

Palestine and global citizenship education: education under occupation

Our literature mapping explored how Palestine and Palestinians have been taken up within GCE, human rights education, and related educational fields between 2024 and 2026. These publications were reviewed to see what the field engages with and what it leaves out, to understand how responsibility and action can be articulated. A number of publications centred on *scholasticide* as a framework for understanding the systematic destruction of Gaza's education system (Phipps, 2024). Originally coined by Palestinian theorist Karma Nabulsi, (Ahmad and

Vulliamy, 2009) the term refers to the deliberate obliteration of Palestinian educational institutions dating back to the Nakba in 1948. Authors have framed systematic attacks on schools, universities, educators, and students as integral to Israel's genocidal project rather than collateral damage (Al-Natour, 2024; Sammak and Brown, 2024). Sammak and Brown (2024) stressed that Gaza's universities were central sites of Palestinian knowledge-making and argued that their destruction denies young people access to self-determined education. Ibrahim and Heleta (2025: 39) situated scholasticide within broader efforts to undermine 'survival and existence of Palestinians as a people', while Giroux (2025) conceptualised it as an ideological assault on Palestinian history and identity, showing how genocide operates through the erasure of knowledge, memory, and future-making.

Two GCE studies have been conducted in the occupied West Bank focusing on experiences of GCE in the midst of conflict, curfews, resource scarcity and political violence. Drawing on their study at An-Najah National University, Barham et al (2025) traced how students and policymakers conceptualised global citizenship through political engagement, care about the environment and cultural awareness in a context where 'rights and justice are not just abstract concepts but everyday concerns - yet the core values remain global' (Barham et al., 2025: 8). They concluded that GCE can affirm students' political agency and form a dynamic relation between national resistance and global citizenship, enabling them to interpret their lived oppression through global solidarity frameworks.

Extending the discussion of education under occupation, Van Teeffelen and Giacaman (2025) foregrounded the Palestinian concept of *sumūd* (steadfastness) as a pedagogical framework for (global) citizenship education grounded in hope, agency, and collective dignity. It rejects passivity, emphasising long-term agency, cultural continuity, and refusal of dispossession while sustaining pride in Palestinian identity. They situated *sumūd* within GCE by drawing connections to Indigenous and grassroots traditions of resistance, positioning Palestinian educational practices within wider efforts for justice, peace and human dignity. Pedagogically, *sumūd* enables community-based learning through storytelling and connects education to activism and environmental care rooted in land and memory (Ibid.). These publications show how GCE can

function as a pedagogy of resistance amidst unimaginable suffering. Arguably, this potential lies in GCE as a pedagogy that promotes global solidarity by incorporating the fate of Palestine and Palestinians as a real case of injustice, and by embracing *sumūd* to promote hope and agency as core values of resistance.

Palestine and global (citizenship) education: teaching Palestine

Most studies connecting GCE and solidarity for Palestine identified patterns of individual, systemic, and institutional silence across the field (Al-Natour, 2024; Khoo, 2024). They also documented forms of institutional repression, including censorship and disciplinary measures (Calleja et al., 2024). Criticism of Israel's violations of human rights is frequently conflated with antisemitism, through legislative frameworks or the adoption of the controversial International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition, alongside campaigns that label Palestine-related scholarship, teaching, and campus activism as antisemitic (Jaffee, 2024; Tatour, 2024). At the same time, Baak, Mayes and Rizvi (2024) noted that the restrictions on critical discussions have generated new forms of pedagogical engagement, most visible through student encampments and mass protests. These have been described as sites of hope and solidarity, where activism and shared sense-making are grounded in responsibilities towards ending the genocide in Gaza (Giroux, 2024; Houlette, 2025; Kenway and Maher, 2024; Tshishonga, 2025).

Beyond higher education, attention was also given to how Palestine is represented or erased across schooling and wider pedagogical contexts. Focusing more generally on K-12 teaching in the United States (US), Garcia et al (2025) demonstrated the longstanding erasure of Palestine within the last 40 years of educational research. Their review showed how Palestine was often framed as an abstract controversy, debate topic, or generic case for teaching 'critical thinking' rather than a real place with over five million inhabitants, a long history and socio-cultural context. In particular, studies where students would be meaningfully engaged with Palestinian histories, cultures, or everyday life were missing (Ibid.). Within human rights education, a subsection of GCE, Palestine has recently been discussed. De Vries (2026) noted how taking a critical approach led students to question the gap between human rights ideals and political realities when they understood how power structures obstruct the realisation of human rights in

situations such as that in Gaza. Liddle's (2026) article on teaching about Gaza in UK secondary schools highlighted structural pressures including enforced 'neutrality' and the need to cover 'both sides', teachers' concerns of appearing antisemitic, as well as outright institutional bans on talking about Palestine. Teachers were also uncertain about having 'sufficient' or 'accurate' knowledge themselves, while they perceived students heavily influenced by social media and their community background, making the matter emotionally charged, and students' knowledge basis potentially formed by disinformation.

While Liddle (2026) suggested a human right based pedagogical approach to avoid accusations of partisanship, Herrera and Peters (2025) pushed further by framing global pedagogy itself as a mode of solidarity. In this dialogic article they argued that educators, must actively confront denial and complicity by engaging directly with evidence of atrocities in Gaza and the role of Western states through the supply of weapons and diplomatic support, and corporations and universities in sustaining the genocide in Palestine. For them Palestine functions as a 'canary in the coalmine': the silencing of genocide is 'a diagnostic for a wider authoritarian turn that seeks to foreclose the very possibility of critical, transnational solidarity' (Ibid.: 178). Herrera and Peters (2025) thus stressed the need to build solidarity across contexts and to understand pro-Palestine resistance as a part of a broader struggle against neofascist mechanisms of suppressing critical thinking, education and dissent. To counter this, they called for classrooms to function as repositories for 'dangerous counter-memories', systematically preserving and integrating in teaching digital evidence such as citizen journalism, satellite imagery, or testimonies from the ground.

To facilitate this, Herrera and Peters (2025) also proposed a 'fugitive pedagogy', using encrypted platforms for organising or creating educational content, and learning about the algorithms of social media platforms to subvert their control. They identified strategic ambiguity as valuable: by avoiding explicit references to Palestine, they argued, students could still learn analytical tools for recognising settler colonialism and state violence everywhere by prioritising voices from the global South, Indigenous communities, and occupied territories. Teaching about Palestine belongs within GCE as a pedagogy grounded in human rights aiming at collective resistance. While institutional demands for 'neutrality'

and false accusations of antisemitism constrain educators, the literature points to creative practices that show how this potential can be realised.

Moving forward: calls for solidarity by Palestinian scholars

As noted above, there is limited solidarity with Palestine and Palestinians within academic educational circles. Yet Palestinian scholars have been clear about the kind of solidarity necessary - and expected - from their critical colleagues. Badaan and Abu Moghli (2026: 5) distinguished between conditional and unconditional solidarity, defining the former as solidarity 'rooted in specific conditions, contingent on the behaviour of those we are standing in solidarity with', and the latter as 'rooted in an ethical or moral commitment to justice [...] motivated by ideological alignment with the cause/issue'. They found that unconditional solidarity was practised mostly by those with the least privilege and the most risk: students. In contrast, most repression of pro-Palestinian solidarity is carried out by those with the most power and privilege: academic institutions. Among individual academics and collectives, the scholars identified mostly performative solidarity, in the form of whitewashed statements which use words such as 'conflict' or 'crisis' rather than naming this as a form of settler colonialism and genocide. In their theoretical framework, Badaan and Abu Moghli (2026: 6) provided guiding principles for unconditional academic solidarity which 'entails supporting Palestinians in their struggle for liberation from settler colonialism, as aligns with the Palestinian "thawabet الثوابت" or the national constants/red lines which cannot be compromised in this liberation struggle'. They were clear about the kind of solidarity that was needed: 'unwavering, historically and politically grounded, and disruptive. It requires centring Palestinian voices, dismantling colonial frameworks, and leveraging institutional power to end complicity in genocide' (Ibid.: 16).

Whereas Badaan and Abu Moghli address academic solidarity more broadly, Hajir and Qato (2025) focus on the lack of solidarity within the field of education, particularly among scholars engaged in critical pedagogy and decolonisation. They centre scholasticide in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, framing it as a long-standing mechanism within Israel's genocidal violence against Palestinians. According to Hajir and Qato (2025), universities and scholars in the global North are complicit in this scholasticide through four practices: i)

silence; ii) suppression of solidarity by academic institutions; iii) the application of concepts such as ‘complexity’, ‘nuances’, and ‘reflexivity’ in order to avoid pronouncing any judgement against a settler colonial machine that has been ethnically cleansing for over 70 years; and iv) promise and threat of theories. The use of such strategies is not new and has been deployed by oppressors to justify oppression throughout time. Hajir and Qato (2025) highlighted the emptiness of theories that lack the political dimensions, praxis, and struggles from which they are drawn. When scholars over theorise without grounding their work in the lived realities of the oppressed, terms like ‘justice’ and ‘equity’ lose their transformative potential.

Originally written in 2021, Shatara and Saleh (2024) reissued a direct call for educators to enact upon solidarity with and for Palestine and provided guidance for enacting solidarity with and for Palestinians. Firstly, educators could listen and dialogue with Palestinians, along with engaging in critical reflections on who they are working with and their stance regarding Palestine. Secondly, Palestine should be considered as part of the interconnectedness of collective struggles against systems of oppression; therefore, Palestine and Palestinians belong in all curricula, teaching, and research. This to counteract attempts to erase Palestine from our collective knowledge by media, government agencies, and curriculum guidelines. It is, hereby, important to acknowledge Israel as ‘a settler-colonial nation-state and occupation regime’ to ‘counter an ahistorical and decontextual “both sides” approach’ (Shatara and Saleh, 2024: 406). Lastly, educators and scholars need to work toward humanising Palestinians, by teaching about the joy, empathy, and care that Palestinians have for their land and people.

Moving forward: community education

Munir Fasheh is an influential Palestinian educator who has articulated a vision of education grounded in the lived realities of oppression and resistance. In an article from 1990, reissued in 2025, Fasheh outlined a blueprint for an education that empowers people everywhere, grounded in the oppression faced by Palestinians. Fasheh (1990) made a distinction between an education rooted in Western hegemony, often presented as universal, ethically neutral, and superior, but deeply implicated in systems of domination, dispossession, and violence; in contrast to a form of community education grounded in the concrete needs,

knowledges, and resources of communities. Community education aims to provide learners with the freedom to imagine alternatives and build the capacity to disrupt existing structures in order to reorganise social life in response to collective problems and needs (Ibid.).

Fasheh based his educational vision and practice on core Arabic principles such as *mujaawarah*, *muthanna*, *yushen* and *ahaali*. *Mujaawarah*, which roughly translated into English is about 'being together', provides a kind of learning that has relevance to both the teacher and the student, because 'it is based on collective thinking and reflecting situated in specific contextual concerns, instead of merely abstract analytical/critical thinking' (Fasheh, Abtahi and Chronaki, 2017: 1). Another core principle is *muthanna*, whose meaning can be captured in the phrase 'you are, therefore I am', and to embody *muthanna* is only possible by developing a pluralistic attitude grounded in humility (Ibid.). A concept closely related to developing such an attitude is *yushen*, which refers to the worth of a person that has nothing to do with professionalism, wealth or status, but is grounded in the practice of living together with others (Sukarieh, 2019). A particularly useful concept for GCE is *ahaali*, which signifies a community in which one is among 'themselves and with the place, culture, and collective memory' (Ibid.: 9) which we can contrast to the traditional Western concept of citizenship as a relationship among people formed by institutions. As GCE scholars, and empathetic individuals, we feel the need to listen and engage in dialogue with these solidarity calls from Palestinians to support the liberation of Palestine by taking a stance in the cultural struggle against colonial ideologies.

Promising practices

Despite the institutional silences and suppression documented in previous sections, practices of solidarity with and for Palestine and Palestinians have emerged across academic and educational contexts over the past two years. These practices have opposed colonial ideologies by supporting the Palestinian struggle for liberation and resisting the normalisation of Zionism in academic institutions and classrooms in the global North. While these examples are necessarily partial and geographically specific, they offer important insights into how solidarity can be enacted within GCE and related fields.

In several European countries, academic solidarity networks have formed explicitly to challenge their institutions' complicity in genocide. One example is from Poland, Akademia dla Palestyny (2024), who beyond condemning the assault on Gaza and Western double standards and calling for an immediate ceasefire and justice-based peace, actively mobilises protests and coordinated academic action. In Finland, Researchers for Palestine (2025) at the University of Helsinki engages academics through events, reading initiatives, and calls for academic boycott while documenting the institutional repression of Palestine. Another example comes from England, where BDS@UCL (Boycott Divestment Sanctions @ University College London) brings together students and staff to campaign for the university to adopt Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS, 2026) principles, linking the struggle for Palestinian liberation to broader institutional transformation (Badaan and Abu Moghli, 2026). From the same institute originated the academic network SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa) Forum for Social Justice, (2025) which has created sustained spaces for dialogue with Palestinian educators through regular webinars. These sessions feature Palestinian scholars and practitioners reporting from Gaza, the West Bank, and the diaspora, ensuring that those most directly affected by genocide and scholasticide can speak for themselves rather than being spoken for (Hajir and Qato, 2025).

Parallel movements have emerged among educators working in primary and secondary education. Teachers for Palestine networks in Belgium (2024), the Netherlands, Ireland, and Italy have created communities of practice where educators can collectively address teaching about Palestine and resisting Zionist influence in their schools. These networks provide resources for teaching about settler colonialism, the Nakba (Catastrophe), and ongoing dispossession in ways that are grounded in Palestinian voices. They also offer solidarity and guidance for teachers who face institutional pressure or accusations of bias when including Palestine in their teaching. The existence of these networks demonstrates the possibility of collective action even in contexts where individual educators may feel isolated or vulnerable.

In the United States, the critical educational movement Rethinking Schools has shown a sustained commitment to teaching about Palestine. Their

publication of a dedicated resource book, *Teaching Palestine* (Bigelow, et al, 2025), alongside continuous coverage in their journal, provides educators with practical materials grounded in critical pedagogy. These resources situate Palestine within frameworks of settler colonialism, Indigenous resistance, and international solidarity movements, offering pedagogical approaches that embrace complexity without defaulting to false equivalencies or ‘both sides’ narratives. The materials also emphasise joy, culture, and Palestinian resilience alongside documenting violence and dispossession, working to humanise Palestinians in ways that counter dehumanising media representations (Fasheh, 1990).

The Irish development education sector has also taken important steps towards solidarity. Development education organisations in Ireland have organised webinars, published resources, and created spaces for educators to engage with Palestine as central to questions of global justice rather than as a peripheral or controversial addition (McCloskey, 2025). This work has involved both documenting Ireland’s journey towards greater institutional recognition of Palestinian rights and providing practical support for educators navigating institutional resistance.

These examples share several common features that offer guidance for GCE practitioners seeking to enact solidarity. First, they are collective rather than individual, recognising that institutional change requires organised action and mutual support. Second, they explicitly name settler colonialism, genocide, and institutional complicity rather than adopting the euphemistic language of ‘conflict’ or ‘crisis’ (Hajir and Qato, 2025). Third, they centre Palestinian voices and scholarship, working with rather than for Palestinians (Shatara and Saleh, 2024). Fourth, they connect Palestine to broader struggles against interconnected systems of oppression, refusing exceptionalism while honouring specificity. Finally, they recognise solidarity as ongoing praxis rather than a one-time statement, requiring sustained commitment and willingness to face institutional consequences (Badaan and Abu Moghli, 2026).

We would like to close this section by offering a short list of reflective questions drawing on the HEADS UP framework (Andreotti De Oliveira, 2012) and its later adaptation by Pashby and Sund (2019) as a starting point for

examining the knowledge, assumptions, and silences that shape how Palestine and Palestinians are approached in teaching and dialogue. We propose a list of questions that foreground history, power, language, and responsibility. While not exhaustive, they offer an entry point that educators can adapt and develop within their own contexts:

- What do I know about Palestine, and how has this knowledge been formed?
- Am I aware of the Nakba and its continuing significance for displacement, land dispossession, refugeehood, and Palestinian life across the occupied West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the diaspora?
- Do I understand contemporary events as part of longer historical trajectories of settler colonialism, occupation, and resistance, rather than as isolated or exceptional moments?
- How do I describe what is happening in Palestine: as a conflict, a war, a humanitarian crisis, ethnic cleansing, or genocide? And what assumptions are embedded in these terms?
- Whose interpretations do I rely on and do they include Palestinian scholars, legal experts, United Nations bodies, and human rights organisations?
- Where do I primarily get my information about Palestine? Do I listen mainly to mainstream Western media, national news outlets, or do I engage with Palestinian journalists reporting from the ground, non-Western or independent sources such as *Al Jazeera*, *Middle East Eye*, *Mondoweiss*, *Declassified UK*, *MintPress News*, *The Canary*, or *Zeteo*?
- Have I noticed deliberate patterns in media language, for example Western reporting ‘deaths’ rather than ‘killings’, or ‘airstrikes’ rather than ‘bombing of civilian areas’, and how might such language shape understandings of agency and responsibility?
- Do I consider questions of accountability, international complicity, and responsibility in my engagement with Palestine?
- Am I open to being challenged to unlearning taken-for-granted assumptions, and to sitting with discomfort, uncertainty, and the absence of easy solutions?

Conclusion

We set out to examine how GCE has responded to Palestine and the ongoing genocide by reviewing recent publications in GCE and related educational areas. While a few publications engaged with Palestine, and some articles may still be in the publication process, this topic remains far less prominent than expected, considering that GCE is a field that positions itself as committed to social justice, decolonisation and solidarity.

Palestinian scholars have provided clear guidance on what unconditional solidarity requires: centring Palestinian voices, naming settler colonialism and genocide explicitly, and taking sustained collective action that accepts institutional risk. We acknowledge the tensions inherent in this work: the fear of professional and personal consequences in terms of professional career and personal safety, the pressure to remain 'neutral', and the complexity of navigating institutional repression. These tensions and risks are real, but we believe they cannot justify inaction when genocide is unfolding. In a world increasingly shaped by disregard for international law, violence, dispossession, and supremacy, GCE can become a space where we collectively resist these forces rather than accommodate them. Our call is simple. Listen to Palestinians, learn from their pedagogies of resistance and joy, and act in solidarity. We aim to do so through our collective, joining wider efforts to put GCE's commitments to justice and solidarity into practice at a time when they matter most.

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