

HOW TO TALK ABOUT PALESTINE-ISRAEL AT YOUR SCHOOL





WHY TALK ABOUT IT IN SCHOOL?

In SNS, we believe that avoiding discussing difficult topics can lead to a lack of understanding of them. This is disempowering for young people, who will seek information on these issues elsewhere, usually online. It is important to create safe spaces and provide life skills for British young people to make the difficult but vital conversations about Israel-Palestine not just possible but positive.

Why do students need this?

There is confusion around what constitutes offensive or racist speech or attitudes

Many students care about it personally and emotionally

There is pressure to 'get involved' and take a side

Some students clash over their understanding of it

Israel-Palestine is in the headlines and on social media



CONSIDERATIONS FOR WHEN THE TOPIC COMES UP

This part is to help you tackle discussions about the conflict when they arise at school, whether you're studying the conflict or not.

Things to expect and/or look out for:

Strong emotions, divergent views, and in some cases ignorance and/or completely one-dimensional perspectives

Antisemitic and/or anti-Israeli attitudes*

Feelings of shame or anxiety amongst students, who feel that their views may be taken as wrong, offensive, or anticipate being censured due to their views

Islamophobic and/or anti-Palestinian attitudes*

Creating trust with the students

Inform the students that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a sensitive issue, an ongoing, lived conflict, and that some students present may feel strongly about it or even be directly affected by it.

Explain that feeling empathy with others or frustration at injustices is a good thing, that's why it's best to talk about these issues, rather than ignore them. It's important that they understand various perspectives and come to their own conclusions.

Tell them that the school will create an opportunity for a session about this topic where they will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their views.

*See our Guide to Avoiding Hate Speech around this topic for further information



EMOTIONS AND SAFEGUARDING

Whilst you are seeking to create a safe space and encourage open dialogue, you are now also aware that some students may be particularly emotionally connected to the conflict and those of particular backgrounds may need to be cared for.

Some actions to consider:

Tell the students in advance that you will be studying or discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and they can come to you with any questions or concerns ahead of time

If you spot a student looking particularly emotional, subtly ask them if they want some time out, and/or generally build some breaks into the schedule

Tell them at the start of any class where this will be discussed that they do not have to share their personal views or opinions if they don't wish to

Ensure that students are not pressuring other students to speak up, pick a side, or state a view



The topic of violence

Another aspect of safeguarding students is watching for views that advocate for violence against others. Violence against civilians is unfortunately a common occurrence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whether by civilians against other civilians from both sides, or by Israeli soldiers or Palestinian militants against civilians. Please [click here](#) for our resources that outline some of the details about how violence effects civilians in the region.

These are difficult but important discussions to have, which should not throw up any red signals or concerns about extremism when discussed within the framework of the Geneva Convention, International Law and the right to resistance or defence in a military context.

Try encouraging discussion about other ways to channel anger or seek political change e.g. elections, campaigns, protests, lobbying, international justice institutions, direct nonviolent action etc.

Focus on the consequences of the violence for ordinary people; why should any individual or family suffer because someone chooses violence to promote a political cause? Try to find human stories of those affected by violence. The [Parents' Circle Families Forum](#) is another good organisation to look at.

However, although a discussion about violence shouldn't automatically raise a red flag, there are some things to watch out for:

- Students advocating for and encouraging others to engage in violence or discrimination against UK citizens and not backing down e.g. 'I think that Jews/Muslims here deserve a taste of their own medicine and should experience violence/suffering too. Let's make this happen/let's do this' etc.
- Students referring to their intentions to join any form of violence in the UK or abroad e.g. 'I'm going to go to Palestine to help Palestinians fight the Israelis' or 'I'm going to stop pro-Palestine protesters in the UK by any means possible'.

If you encounter any of the above, seek support through the school's safeguarding lead who will be up-to-date on the latest recommendations and action to protect the students.



Israel-Palestine

Guide to creating safe and compassionate spaces for learning

The next few slides outline how to create that safe space. SNS recommends that you bring expert and diverse voices into that space for the students to learn from.

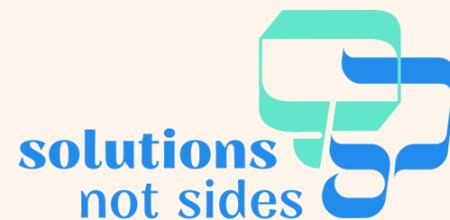
1. Make time in the school schedule for students to voice their opinions about this issue and learn about some of its complexities. Reassure students that racism will not be tolerated, but they should also feel free to express their views and if someone feels hurt or upset, the group will talk about it together and be caring towards each other

2. During that time, allow students to display the Palestinian or Israeli flags and ensure that both nationalities are represented - discussing the symbolism of the flags is a good learning opportunity. Again, be sensitive to anyone who has a negative reaction to either of the flags and allow room for exploration to bust myths that these flags represent terrorism or fascism

3. Allow students to voice expressions such as 'Free Palestine' or 'Save Israel', as long as the first phrase is not targeted at Jewish people and the second phrase is not targeted at Muslim people

4. If students use phrases such as ‘Free Palestine’ or ‘Save Israel’, encourage exploration of what they mean by that, and their understanding of International Law and UN resolutions defining the terms ‘Palestine’ and ‘Israel’

5. If students express concern about freedom for Palestinian people, do not allow others to accuse them of supporting terrorism or being antisemitic - give them the opportunity to talk about why this issue is important to them and encourage others to listen



6. If students express concern about safety for Israeli people, do not allow others to accuse them of supporting apartheid or being Islamophobic - give them the opportunity to talk about why this issue is important to them and encourage others to listen

7. Encourage students to research and define ‘apartheid’ and ‘terrorism’ before deciding to use them or not - both their etymology and their definitions under the UN and International Law

8. Give students a values framework with which to approach discussions on this issue:

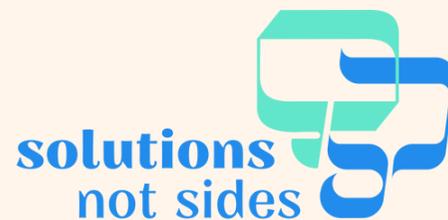
- a. Non-violence**
- b. Equality for all**
- c. Rejection of hatred**

9. Give students a critical-thinking framework with which to approach activism on this issue:

a. Is it fair?

b. Is it constructive (i.e. will it work to actually improve the situation for Palestinian and Israeli people)?

c. Is its goal a win-win outcome for Israelis and Palestinians?



10. Asking students where they heard/read/saw the information that they bring up can be helpful in allowing students to see for themselves that not all sources are trusted and reliable. You can use the free SNS' Fake News Guide to learn more about sources. Before deciding to oppose or support any organisation involved in education on this issue, encourage students to seek to gain first-hand knowledge of their work - don't rely on secondary sources



GUIDE ON WHY AND HOW TO TALK ABOUT ISRAEL-PALESTINE AT YOUR SCHOOL: SUMMARY

1. Provide a space and encourage discussion and learning on this topic
2. Look out for sensitivities and build trust between yourself and the students
3. Address strong negative emotions and attend to safeguarding
4. Take additional recommended steps to ensure the space you have for discussion and learning on this topic to happen is a safe and compassionate one

IF YOU ARE AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION AND WOULD LIKE OUR 90-MINUTE ONLINE TRAINING SESSION FOR YOUR STAFF ON RECOGNISING AND TACKLING ANTISEMITISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA IN RELATION TO THIS ISSUE, PLEASE CLICK [HERE](#) TO BOOK

IF YOU'D LIKE TO TALK TO US ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS GUIDE, CONTACT US ON
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