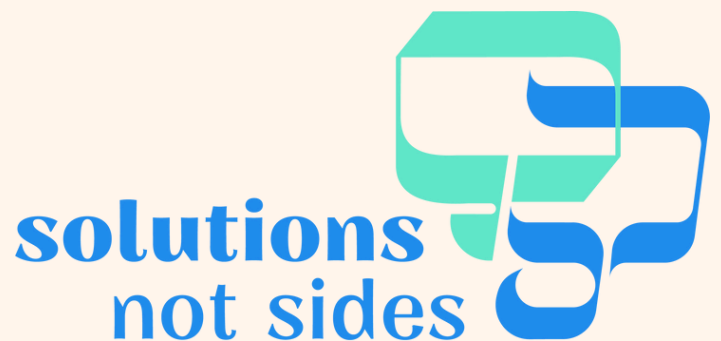


A GUIDE TO VOCABULARY ON THE TOPIC OF ISRAEL- PALESTINE

Updated July 2024





Vocab for Israel-Palestine Discussions: OED & United Nations Definitions

SNS is using both the Oxford English Dictionary (the most used dictionary of English language), and the United Nations (where definitions exist) for initial definitions of terms used in discussions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

However, there is disagreement on both sides about the use of these sources in certain cases, so whilst we encourage these sources as a starting point, the meaning of these terms should be further researched if you want to learn more. These terms are also discussed in more depth in SNS sessions with our Palestinian and Israeli speakers.



A

• APARTHEID

OED definition:

1. The policy of racial segregation and discrimination against South Africa's non-white majority by the country's white minority government between 1948 and the early 1990s. Now *historical*.
2. Any similar official system or policy of (esp. racial) segregation or discrimination. In extended use: segregation, separation, isolation (literal and figurative). Frequently with preceding modifying word indicating the nature of the separation or segregation.

UN definition:

The term 'the crime of apartheid' which shall include similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination as practised in southern Africa, shall apply to the following inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them:

(a) Denial to a member or members of a racial group or groups of the right to life and liberty of person:

(i) by murder of members of a racial group or groups;

(ii) by the infliction upon the members of a racial group or groups of serious bodily or mental harm, by the infringement of their freedom or dignity, or by subjecting them to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

(iii) by arbitrary arrest and illegal imprisonment of the members of a racial group or groups.

(b) Deliberate imposition on a racial group or groups of living conditions calculated to cause its or their physical destruction in whole or in part.

(c) Any legislative measures and other measures calculated to prevent a racial group or groups from participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country and the deliberate creation of conditions preventing the full development of such a group or groups, in particular by denying to members of a racial group or groups basic human rights and freedoms, including the right to work, the right to form recognized trade unions, the right to education, the right to leave and to return to their country, the right to a nationality, the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

d) Any measures including legislative measures, designed to divide the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the members of a racial group or groups, the prohibition of mixed marriages among members of various racial groups, the expropriation of landed property belonging to a racial group or groups or to members thereof.



- **APARTHEID (contd.):**

(e) Exploitation of the labour of the members of a racial group or groups, in particular by submitting them to forced labour.

(f) Persecution of organisations and persons, by depriving them of fundamental rights and freedoms, because they oppose apartheid.

B

- **BOYCOTT/BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS (BDS)**

OED Definition:

Boycott: 1. Withdrawal from social or commercial interaction or cooperation with a group, nation, person, etc., intended as a protest or punishment. Now usually as a count noun: an instance of this; (also) a refusal to buy certain goods or participate in a particular event, as a form of protest or punishment.

2. To withdraw from commercial or social interaction with (a group, nation, person, etc.) as a protest or punishment; to refuse to handle or buy (goods), or refuse to participate in (an event, meeting, etc.), as a protest. Also figurative.

UN Definition:

Boycott: Economic sanctions consisting in the gradual paralysis of a boycotted country's trade relations through the refusal of private individuals in another power to purchase the former's commodities.

BDS: The UN does not have a specific definition for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. However, it references BDS in relation to calls for boycotts and sanctions against entities involved in human rights abuses.

C

- **COLONIALISM**

OED Definition:

1. The principle, policy, or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country and occupying it with settlers; the principle, policy, or practice of maintaining colonies. Also occasionally: an instance of this.

2. The outlook, attitude, or culture considered typical of colonialists; esp. the belief in the superiority of one's own country and its right to colonise other nations.

UN Definition:

It designates processes through which a State acquires or maintains full or partial political control over another sovereign nation, or subjugation of groups or entities over others, including terms such as economic, cultural, or ideological colonialism.



- **CHRISTIAN:**

OED Definition:

Of a person or group: adhering to or following the religion of Christianity. Of a country, nation, etc.: predominantly or traditionally inhabited by followers of Christianity; having customs, practices, etc., based on, or influenced by, Christianity. [A follower or adherent of the religion of Christianity. Also: a person whose qualities, actions, etc., are consistent with the moral values of Christianity, or who follows the teaching or example of Jesus Christ.]

E

- **ETHNIC CLEANSING**

OED Definition:

The purging, by mass expulsion or killing, of one ethnic or religious group by another, esp. from an area of former cohabitation.



UN Definition:

Term first used to refer to the policy of mass deportation and murder of civilians implemented by Serbian and other forces in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. It has also been used to describe similar practices in Rwanda, Abkhazia, the Sudan and elsewhere.

F

- **FREEDOM FIGHTER**

OED Definition:

A person who fights for freedom or liberation; a person who takes part in a resistance movement against the established political system of a country; also in extended use.

G

- **GENOCIDE**

OED Definition:

1. The deliberate and systematic killing or persecution of people from a particular group identified as having a shared ethnicity, nationality, etc., with the intention of partially or wholly destroying that group. Genocide was affirmed as a crime under international law in 1946, under Resolution 96 of the United Nations General Assembly.

2. To deliberately and systematically exterminate (an ethnic group, national group, etc.); to subject to genocide.



UN Definition:

Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) killing members of the group;
- (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

H

• HOLOCAUST

OED Definition:

1. Something which is burned whole as a sacrifice or offering to a god; a religious sacrifice involving consumption by fire. historical in later use.
2. The complete destruction of something (esp. a large number of people); a mass slaughter, a massacre.
3. Usually with capital initial and with the. The systematic mass killing of Jews under the German Nazi regime in Nazi-controlled areas of Europe between 1941 and 1945. Later also in extended use with reference to other victims of Nazi genocide, such as Romani people, gay people, or people with disabilities.

UN Definition:

Term is more often -- with initial caps and a definite article -- used to refer to the mass murder of the Jews by the Nazis 1941-45. And, by extension, the term, the Holocaust, is applied to the genocide of a range of minority groups of Europe and North Africa during the Second World War by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. In this context, the Jews of Europe were the most numerous of the victims of the Holocaust in which many other minority members also perished, among them Sinti, Roma, Poles and Serbs.

I

• INTIFADA:

OED Definition:

1. Chiefly with reference to the Arab world: a rebellion or uprising.
2. *specific.* Also with capital initial. A Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

UN Definition:

Palestinian uprising.



- **ISRAEL/ISRAELI**

OED Definition:

Israel: 1. The Jewish people, considered as the descendants of Israel (the name conferred upon Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, after his struggle with the angel of God recounted in Genesis 32); (in early use usually) spec. the ancient Israelites or their nation.

2. In figurative and allusive uses, denoting a people, nation, church, etc., compared to the ancient Hebrew nation or the Jewish people, typically in being considered the chosen people of God; esp. Christians or the Christian church viewed in this way.

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sraeli: 1. A native or inhabitant of the modern country of Israel; a person of Israeli descent.

2. The modern form of the Hebrew language, serving as the official language of the modern country of Israel. More usually called Modern Hebrew or simply Hebrew.

3. Of, belonging to, or relating to the modern country of Israel.

J

- **JEWISH**

OED Definition:

Of, relating to, belonging to, or characteristic of Jews or Judaism; designating a person who is a Jew.

M

- **MASSACRE**

OED Definition:

1. The indiscriminate and brutal slaughter of people or (less commonly) animals; carnage, butchery, slaughter in numbers; an instance of this.

2. *figurative*. A great destruction or downfall; an act of wholesale or ruthless destruction.

3. *transitive*. To kill (people or, less commonly, animals) in numbers, esp. brutally and indiscriminately; to make a general slaughter or carnage of. Also (occasionally) used intransitively. Also *figurative*.

- **MUSLIM**

OED Definition:

1. A follower of the religion of Islam.

2. Of or relating to Islam, its followers, or their culture.



N

- **NAKBA**

UN Definition:

The annual "day of catastrophe" marked by Palestinians on the anniversary of Israel's declaration of independence on 14 May 1948. Means "catastrophe".

O

- **OCCUPATION**

OED Definition:

1. The action of taking or maintaining possession or control of a country, building, land, etc., esp. by (military) force; an instance of this; the period of such action; (also) the state of being subject to such action.
2. The action of occupying a work place, public building, etc., as a form of protest.
3. The action of filling or taking up space.

UN Definition:

According to IHL, occupation means a situation when, during an international armed conflict, a territory, or parts thereof, comes under the effective provisional control of a foreign power, even if it is not met with armed resistance. International law distinguishes provisional belligerent occupation from territorial acquisition by invasion and annexation, both of which are illegal under international law. Once a territory is occupied, both the Hague Regulations and Geneva Conventions set out extensive obligations for an Occupying Power. Occupation is deemed to be temporary and does not give the Occupying Power sovereignty. It is important to remember that the United Nations Charter strictly prohibits the acquisition of territory by force.

P

- **PALESTINE/PALESTINIAN**

OED Definition:

Palestine: *attributive*. Designating things or people originating in, associated with, or characteristic of Palestine.

Palestinian: A native or inhabitant of Palestine, in ancient or modern times. In early use also: a Philistine. Now usually: spec. an Arab born or living in the area of the former mandated territory of Palestine; a descendant of such an Arab.

UN Definition:

The State of Palestine. Palestine is a "Permanent Observer State" at the UN, enjoying the status that allows it to participate in all of the Organization's proceedings, except for voting on draft resolutions and decisions in its main organs and bodies, from the Security Council to the General Assembly and its six main committees.



- **POGROM**

OED Definition:

1. In Russia, Poland, and some other East European countries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: an organised massacre aimed at the destruction or annihilation of a body or class of people, esp. one conducted against Jewish people. Now historical.
2. gen. An organised, officially tolerated, attack on any community or group. Also figurative.

R

- **REFUGEE**

OED Definition:

gen. A person who has been forced to leave his or her home and seek refuge elsewhere, esp. in a foreign country, from war, religious persecution, political troubles, the effects of a natural disaster, etc.; a displaced person. Also figurative and in extended use.

UN Definition:

Person recognised as a refugee under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention), the 1969 OAU Convention, or in accordance with the Statute of UNHCR, person granted a humanitarian status, or person granted temporary protection. / A person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (Art. 1(A) (2), Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1A(2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol).

S

- **SETTLEMENTS**

OED Definition:

1. A community of people who have newly settled in a place or region; a region which has been occupied by settlers, a colony, esp. one in the early period of its existence.
2. More generally: a place where a community of people lives.
3. The action or an act of settling as colonists or newcomers; the establishment of a colony; the action of introducing a new population into or colonizing a territory, country, etc.
4. The action of instituting, establishing, or regulating something; the state of being settled and established; an established order of things.



T

- **TERRORISM**

OED Definition:

1. gen. The unofficial or unauthorized use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims; (originally) such practices used by a government or ruling group (frequently through paramilitary or informal armed groups) in order to maintain its control over a population; (now usually) such practices used by a clandestine or expatriate organization as a means of furthering its aims.

2. In extended or weakened use: the instilling of fear or terror; intimidation, coercion, bullying.

UN Definition:

In the absence of an internationally agreed definition of acts of terrorism, the High Commissioner for Human Rights calls upon States to be guided by the key elements of acts of terrorism provided in Security Council resolution 1566 (2004) and the model definition developed by the Special Rapporteur. As a minimum, Terrorism involves the intimidation or coercion of populations or governments through the threat or perpetration of violence, causing death, serious injury or the taking of hostages.

W

- **WAR CRIME**

OED Definition:

An offence against the rules of war, formerly excluding, but since the 1939–45 war including, any such act performed on the orders of a higher authority.

UN Definition:

A serious violation of the laws and customs applicable in international armed conflict, or, in the case of an armed conflict not of an international character, a serious violation of the laws and customs applicable in such conflicts.

Z

- **ZIONISM**

OED Definition:

Originally: a movement among Jewish people for the re-establishment of a Jewish nation in Palestine. Later: a movement for the development and protection of the state of Israel. Also: advocacy of or support for this.

If there are other words or terms that you come across not listed here, please feel free to [contact SNS](#).