PALESTINE-ISRAEL

Vocabulary Guide

TEACHER RESOURCE

A guide to using definitions when discussing Israel-Palestine in your school

INTRODUCTION

This document has been created to help schools and other educational bodies be able to openly discuss the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in school and understand the vocabulary they are using surrounding the conflict.

As educators, we will uphold the right of young people to learn about political issues in an impartial space. We will keep that space free from hate, inequality and violence. We will teach skills of critical thinking, communication, active listening and conflict resolution so they can learn to navigate these issues for themselves.

SOURCES

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.

GLOSSARY

A
- **Apartheid**:

Historical: From the Afrikaans word "apartness," Apartheid was a government system that originated in South Africa in which a white minority and nonwhite majority were racially, economically, and politically segregated. The policy dictated where South Africans could live, work, their type of education, and whether they could vote. The policy began in 1948 when the National Party gained office. Two policies entrenched apartheid: the Population Registration Act of 1950 which classified South Africans as Banto, Colored, or white; and the Group Areas Act of 1950 which established residential and business sections for each race. Compared to "grand apartheid," policies that dictated physical separation, laws that segregated daily activities became known as "petty apartheid." South Africa was forced to withdraw from the Commonwealth due to apartheid, and protests for racial equality erupted in the 1960s. The United Nations General Assembly denounced the policy in 1973, and voted unanimously to impose an embargo. In 1985, the UK & US imposed economic sanctions on South Africa. By 1990, the South African President F.W. de Klerk repealed most of the social legislation for apartheid; however, racial segregation is still entrenched in society through de facto policies.

Current/International Law: The Apartheid Convention within the United Nations declared that apartheid is a crime against humanity and racial segregation and discrimination are international crimes. It ensured that the crime of apartheid can apply to situations other than South Africa. They list actions that constitute apartheid including physical inhumane treatment and policies that impose racial divisions.

It created a collective responsibility that those who commit apartheid be held responsible. Although no one was prosecuted for the crime of apartheid in South Africa, the UN created a reconciliation commission.

- **Arab**: This term often refers to anyone in the Middle East or North Africa, coming from the Arabian Peninsula. A good definition of Arab would be someone who speaks Arabic as their mother tongue. However, it is often used incorrectly as a blanket term for Muslims and is also often used as a derogatory insult. Within Israel, Palestinians are often called Arab instead of Palestinian, which many Palestinians feel is an attempt to disregard or erase their identity.

B

- **BDS/boycotting**: BDS refers to Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions. This is a tactic used by pro-Palestinian activists and groups to pressure Israel into action. The idea is to boycott Israeli goods and sometimes even people, thus weakening the economy and isolating the country. The movement asks companies, councils, and states not to invest in Israeli companies, but invest elsewhere, and put sanctions on the government of Israel until it acts. This strategy has grown in popularity in the past ten years, drawing comparisons to tactics used to help end Apartheid in South Africa, answering the calls from many Palestinians to support it. However, some particular individuals associated with it, as well as some campaigns or activities, have been criticised for antisemitism through their targeting of Jewish, rather than Israeli, businesses, for conflating anything related to capitalism and large corporations with Israel and its supporters, or for singling out Israel and no other countries for this kind of activism. The idea of boycotting may also draw out terrible memories and fears for Jewish people, as Jews in Germany were subjected to boycotts before the Holocaust.

- **Colonialism**: Colonialism refers to systems of domination, land, economic and population control by one country, power, or empire, over another, in the latter's indigenous land, to the detriment, exploitation, and abuse of the indigenous population. Here in the UK, we have a very significant history of colonialism all over the world; a history which many are now deeply ashamed of, and which is subject to debate today. Colonialism was perpetuated by many European powers as well as the Ottoman Empire, Australian, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, Moroccan, and other governments throughout the past few centuries. When it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the British Mandate of Palestine is often referred to as colonialism, and some even call Israel itself a colony or colonial power. However, although the establishment of Israel as a state undoubtedly required drastic changing of the demographics (96% Palestinian and 4% Jewish at the start of the 20th century), through a process of settling and occupying to make way for establishing the sovereignty of a Jewish state, the latter description is misapplied in the context of modern international agreements, as Israel is now a fully recognised and legitimate state, rather than a temporary foreign power. In addition, some Israelis are themselves indigenous to the land, as their families have been in the land for many generations. Israel's settlements in the West Bank, however, may still be referred to as colonies or as examples of colonisation due to their illegal status under International Law, and the fact that they are built on Palestinian land. Nonetheless, many Israelis living in the West Bank do not see things this way, as they may view their presence there as a return to historically Jewish indigenous lands and do not respect International Law.

- **Christian**: 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.]

F

- Freedom Fighter: You may have heard the term 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'. The same goes in Palestine and Israel, where violence against unarmed civilians has occurred since the conflict began. Whilst more recent history has seen Palestinians use this sort of violence, before Israel was established there were Jewish militias that particularly targeted the British presence in Mandatory Palestine. In recent years, a small number of Israeli citizens have also targeted Palestinian citizens. Whilst the term freedom 'fighter' or 'martyr' may be used by one side in order to communicate a justification for violence, it's really important to understand the human implications of using violence, and question why there is still no peace, despite decades of violence. Widening this debate to the glorification of violence more generally, there is often objection in Israeli society to the naming of squares or streets in Palestine after militant figures, and likewise in Palestinian society to the naming of squares or streets in Israel after military leaders.

H

- Holocaust: The Holocaust is the term used to describe the Nazi genocide of over six million Jews and other minorities during World War Two, 1939-1945. It was a horrific period in human history with a whole race of people targeted for extermination, and a large percentage of that population were murdered in state-run, heavily organised and bureaucratised structures, institutions, and camps. The term Holocaust is sometimes used, wrongly, to describe other phenomena including the treatment by the Israeli Government or Army of Palestinians. It is sometimes useful to draw comparisons between current affairs and history as it can help us to make sense of and respond to situations. However, the occupation of the Palestinian territories is in no way similar to the Holocaust, and many Palestinians will tell you that while they see their treatment as oppression, it is an entirely different situation and that making these comparisons is not helpful at all. Plus, many Jewish people and others will be particularly offended and hurt by any comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany.

- Intifada: Intifada means 'uprising' in Arabic. This refers to two or three periods in the history of the conflict in which Palestinians rose up against the Israeli occupation. The first intifada from 1987-1992 began through civil disobedience including strikes, and later extended into more violent acts. Over 1500 Palestinians were killed, the majority by Israeli security forces, and hundreds of Israelis were killed, mostly by Palestinian militants. The Second Intifada was far more violent, taking place between 2000-2005 and was marked by many suicide bombings by Palestinians against Israeli citizens, with military incursions, curfews, and closures of whole Palestinian cities by the Israeli army. It was a time of great fear, mistrust, and violence, and every Israeli or Palestinian above the age of 20 will have stories about how the Second Intifada impacted their families, childhood, education, and friends. The Third Intifada is said to have taken place between 2015-2017 in which some young Palestinians took knives and attempted to stab Israelis. Over 30 Israelis died, many more were injured, and over 100 Palestinians were shot and killed before the attacks, some in circumstances judged to be extrajudicial killings by local & international human rights observers. This intifada was marked by the young age of the Palestinians, the use of social media, incitement, and frustration over the lack of a better future. The intifadas were bloody and have not resulted in peace for Israelis or Palestinians, instead creating more trauma, distrust, hatred, and fear.

- **Israel**: Israel has been a fully recognised and legally established state since 1948. Whilst the borders of the country are subject to disagreement and a conflict with the Palestinians, which includes an illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza strip, Israel has clearly demarcated borders according to International Law. However, some pro-Israel students may refer to Israel as the whole land between the river and the sea, including the West Bank, and some pro-Palestine students may claim that Israel doesn't exist and is an illegal entity.

- Israeli: Israeli refers to someone who is a citizen of the Israeli state. This does not necessarily mean that they are Jewish or Zionist.

J

- Jewish: The term Jewish generally refers to someone of the Jewish faith, but Jewish is also an ethnicity; something which many people do not realise. There is a misconception that Jewish people are all white ethnically. In fact, this is far from the truth. There are Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews, who herald from North Africa, the Middle East and southern Spain, there are African Jews, particularly from Ethiopia and Eritrea, and many other origins.

M

- Muslim: Muslim refers to people who follow the religion of Islam. Because the majority of Palestinians are Muslim, sometimes people misrepresent the conflict as Jews vs. Muslims, or use the words Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim interchangeably, which is incorrect as not all Arabs are Muslim, not all Muslims are Arab, not all Palestinians are Arab, not all citizens of the Middle East are Arab, and so on.

N

- **Nakba**: This Arabic word refers to the 1948 catastrophe or devastation for Palestinians. After Israel accepted the 1947 UN partition plan and declared their independence, the Palestinians rejected the proposal, for various reasons, and the surrounding countries declared war on Israel. Israel won that war, and during that war around 750,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled from their homes, all hoping to return. Many homes were physically destroyed, and Palestinians were also killed by Israeli militias in documented massacres. This was a time of utmost devastation for Palestinians. Some Israelis may consider the term Nakba to be referring to the establishment of Israel itself and therefore feel upset or threatened by the term.

O

- **Occupation**: The occupation refers to Israeli control of the West Bank and East Jerusalem which is illegal under International Law and has persisted since the 1967 six-day-war. Whilst Palestine has a government called the Palestinian Authority and control over some areas of civilian life in some parts of the West Bank, Israel controls the borders inside and outside the territory and the army may enter Palestinian cities and towns, with no possible legal response by the Palestinians. For Palestinians, the occupation means control of their lives, limited opportunities, insecurity for their physical safety, and a lack of independence. Some Israelis or pro-Israel people may argue that the occupation is a safety measure to prevent attacks on Israel. Many Israelis do not in fact support the occupation and how to end it is a bitter internal debate. It can be a sensitive term because some Palestinians or pro-Palestinian people call the whole state of Israel an illegal occupation, thus seeking to delegitimise the existence of Israel and the people living there, which is threatening and scary for Israelis. However, the term 'occupation' is usually used to refer to the illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem.

P

- Palestine: Palestine under International Law and in accordance with the agreements signed between the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and Israel refers to the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. These are the proposed legal parameters of the Palestinian state, even though Palestine currently has only observer status at the UN. Before the establishment of Israel in 1948, Britain was in control of the greater land and it was referred to as the British Mandate of Palestine. So, for Palestinians who were living all over the area that we know now as Israel and Palestine, Palestine was the entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, even if it was not technically a nation state at the time. If you search online for Israel or Palestine, you will probably see wildly different maps depending on the source. The images used in our school session materials will show you how the internationally recognised borders look.

- Palestinian: Palestinian refers to someone who identifies as Palestinian due to their heritage or nationality. Palestinians may be Muslim, Christian, Druze, Bedouin, Samaritans, or other. Whilst Palestine is not yet a fully recognised and independent nation state, it has a government and there are Palestinian citizens and a Palestinian travel document that functions as a passport. However, Palestinians who are refugees and not living in the Palestinian Territories may have UNRWA identity cards or their nationality may read as Palestinian on their passport, depending on where they are currently living. There are also Israeli citizens who are Palestinian, who may struggle with being seen as Palestinian in Israel and prefer to be called Arab-Israeli instead. Alternatively, they may prefer to be called 'Palestinian citizens of Israel'. You can find the term Palestinian, or Palestine used many hundreds of years back in time, and there are often simplified presentations of history as Israel replacing Palestine. You may also hear false narratives that Palestine never existed, or Palestinians are a made-up people. There are more sinister and Islamophobic narratives, for example that the Palestinians played a leading role in perpetrating the Holocaust.

- Refugees: Refugees are people who are fleeing, or have been pushed out of their home towns or countries due to threats to their life which may be political, social, economic, or environmental. At the end of 2019, the UN registered 79.5 million displaced people worldwide, many internally in their own countries, and many externally. 5.6 million of these are Palestinian refugees. These refugees are Palestinians and their descendants who experienced the Nakba in 1948. Many were displaced within what became the state of Israel and within the Palestinian areas that were subsequently occupied by Jordan (the West Bank and East Jerusalem) and Egypt (Gaza). Others fled or were forced to flee to neighbouring countries such as Jordan and Lebanon, and others made it further afield to other countries around the world. How to help these refugees in a future solution is one of the final status issues that Israel and Palestine discuss in negotiations. Refugees, in the Palestinian-Israeli context, also refers to Jewish refugees who came to Israel-Palestine from Europe before, during, and after World War Two and the Holocaust, as well as Jewish refugees from North Africa and the Middle East who came in the 1950s and 60s, mostly. You will find that most people living in Palestine-Israel have refugee heritage, or even refugee status in the case of some Palestinians. These are lived experiences for millions of people. These are not the only refugees in Israel-Palestine. There are also Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in Israel, and some Syrian refugees in the North of the region.

S

- **Settlements**: Settlements refers to Israeli homes established on Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. There were also settlements in Gaza, but these were evacuated when Israel's internal occupation of Gaza ended in 2005. Settlements are illegal under International Law, as an occupying power cannot move its population to the occupied land, nor establish private companies on the land. Settlements mostly began after the 1967 six-day-war and have grown in number and size since that time. The 1993 Oslo Accords, an agreement signed between Israel and the Palestinians, divided the West Bank up into three areas, with the proposal that eventually the newly established Palestinian government, the Palestinian Authority, would be handed control over the majority of the West Bank. In that time, Israeli settlements have grown rapidly and there are now around 600,000 Israelis living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Settlements built without Israeli government approval are known as 'outposts' and are illegal under Israeli law. Some pro-Palestinian activists call all of Israel an illegal settlement and all Israelis settlers, despite the legal status of Israel as a country. Some pro-Israel activists may not see an issue with the settlements as they believe the entire land constitutes Israel, or that Palestinians benefit from the settlements as they may be able to obtain forms of employment in them. It is a very important issue when it comes to discussing solutions to the conflict.

T

- **Terrorism**: Terrorism has become a politicised and pejorative term. Just as the phrase 'freedom fighter' has different meanings depending on whom you speak to, so does the word terrorism or terrorist. When we hear the word 'terrorism', we loosely understand that it refers to violence carried out, usually by civilians or civilian groups, targeting civilians, often at random, and usually for political goals. However, we have also seen the term being politicised and used against certain groups of people, who do not carry out violence, in order to delegitimise their own aspirations or goals. People who have not carried out, planned or supported acts of violence have been called terrorists due to their views, and some states have used the term terrorism to arrest political dissenters. It is a particularly polemical term in Israel-Palestine.

- Zionism: The term 'Zion' comes from the Hebrew Bible and initially meant Jerusalem, then was later used to refer to the land of Israel as a whole. 'Zionism' refers to a worldwide Jewish movement that resulted in the establishment and development of the state of Israel and that now supports the state of Israel as a Jewish homeland. The term has carried different meanings both historically and in the present to different people. Students will need to understand the significance of the term for various groups and make up their own minds about the topic. For many Israelis and their supporters, Zionism is the safe return of the Jewish people to their homeland after centuries of persecution, granted with the approval of the United Nations in 1948 and defended on repeated occasions against its enemies in surrounding countries that wish to destroy the state and its people. Equal rights for minorities are something that many Israelis understand to have been part of the original founding documents of the idea of a Jewish state in their homeland, and security concerns are usually cited as the reason for this not having been implemented (although some Israelis do have an ethnic supremacist view towards non-Jewish people in Israel and the Occupied Territories). As there are many examples of human rights abuses around the world, Israelis and their supporters will often view the negative focus upon Zionism (as the movement supporting the existence of the only Jewish state in the world) as antisemitic, if the attention is disproportionate to such criticism levelled at other states. It is important to note that not all Zionists are Jewish and not all Jews are Zionist. For example, there is a strong Christian Zionist movement in the USA. For many Palestinians and their supporters, the aims and objectives of Zionism as embodied in the Zionist Congress are that the goal was to establish an exclusivist state that necessitated mass immigration, settlement, and subsequent occupation of the land where this goal was to be realised. They see it in a negative light because Zionism is seen as one of the reasons behind the 1948 Nakba (disaster or catastrophe in Arabic), the displacement and death of many Palestinians, an ongoing refugee crisis, and continuing expulsion and destruction of Palestinian homes and land.

- Zionism (cont). In some cases, it has also been used as an insult (shortened to 'Zio'), or for more sinister purposes such as replacing the word Jewish with Zionist as a way to cover up antisemitic conspiracy theories. Some see Anti-Zionism through a general anti-nationalist lens and do not support nationalism of any form. Some consider themselves as 'post-Zionists' because they feel that the initial goal of Zionism has been achieved. For many, Zionism is an on-going movement because there is a feeling that the state of Israel is under constant threat by some of its neighbours and by those who wish to see it destroyed. Many Zionists also support the establishment of a Palestinian state along the basis of the 1967 borders, but some interpret Zionism to mean Israel expanding into the territories in the West Bank and having all the land between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea (also known as 'Biblical Israel'); this is a more extreme interpretation but is held by some.

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

Thank You

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