

Which students in the UK may be affected by events in Israel-Palestine?

Whilst you will likely encounter students from all backgrounds who feel affected by the conflict in one way or another, there are certain students who may feel more emotionally connected to the conflict and some who may feel nothing at all.

Here is our 5-point guide of what to look out for when supporting students' discussions on this issue:

1. Jewish students:

- a. Jewish people trace their origin back to this land, to over 2000 years ago. Jerusalem is particularly important in Jewish prayer traditions and is referred to as 'Zion' in the Hebrew Bible
- b. Today, Israel is referred to as a Jewish state as the modern-day state of Israel was created to be a safe place for Jewish people from all over the world to go
- c. Many Jewish people around the world today call themselves Zionist and support the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, and they feel some sort of affection and/or support for the country because of this. It can be distressing for them to see rocket attacks on Israel in the news – especially if they have family or friends living there
- d. There are still high and rising levels of antisemitism in the UK, and these often flare up when there is conflict between Israel and Palestine. For British teenagers who are also Jewish, the prejudice, discrimination, and racism against them can be extremely difficult to deal with as antisemitic tropes are used by some pro-Palestine campaigners and they are sometimes held accountable for or assumed to support the actions of the Israeli Government. See [here](#) for our guide to avoiding racism when talking about this issue

2. Muslim students:

- a. For Muslim students, Jerusalem is a particularly important place due to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Baraq wall and the history of Islam which has its origins in the Middle East, over 1,300 years ago
- b. The majority of Palestinians are Muslim, and within the state of Israel there are also some Israeli citizens who are Muslim
- c. Because the lands assigned to be a Palestinian state by the United Nations, and under agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, are still under an illegal occupation by Israel (the West Bank and East Jerusalem), or under blockade by Israel and Egypt (Gaza), Palestinians do not have political or physical freedom. Many British students who are Muslim may have feelings of sympathy, sadness, desperation, and anger over the current situation for Palestinians
- d. There is also discrimination and prejudice towards British Muslims regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; for example, the view that because British Muslims may support Palestine it automatically makes them antisemitic, that they support or are somehow part of the violence that some Palestinians carry out against Israelis, that they want to destroy Israel, or that they are more loyal to Muslim countries than the UK. See [here](#) for our guide to avoiding racism when talking about this issue

3. Christian students:

- a. Christianity originated in the region, and there are many Christian holy sites. There are also many Christians living in Israel and Palestine who experience discrimination and often do not feel safe
- b. British students in the UK who are Christian may feel sadness and empathy for the Christians living in Israel and Palestine and may also feel frustrated about the lack of media coverage for their plight

- c. Furthermore, different denominations may show solidarity with either Israelis or Palestinians. For example, Quakers and Catholics tend to support the Palestinians, while Protestants may express solidarity with the Palestinians if they focus more on a theology of human rights, or the Israelis if they focus more on a theology of 'Christian Zionism' or come from Northern Ireland

4. Students who come from refugee background:

- a. The majority of Israelis and Palestinians have heritage rooted in refugee experiences
- b. For Jewish Israelis, most fled or were forced out of their homes in Europe, Russia, North Africa, or the Middle East. Few British students will realise that around 1 million Jews expelled from their ancient homelands around the Middle East made their way to Israel and think only that Jews fled to Israel from Europe, especially after the Holocaust
- c. For Palestinians, the 1948 Nakba (meaning catastrophe in Arabic) saw the expulsion and flight of around 600,000 Palestinians from their homes. Many Palestinians still have refugee status today and live scattered across Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and other places around the world. There are now around 6 million Palestinians with refugee status, so refugees in the UK may see their own experiences and stories reflected in those of Israelis and Palestinians
- d. Furthermore, many Palestinian refugees who have been displaced in refugee camps in Syria since 1948 have had to flee Syria due to the war there, and some are now residing in the UK. You may have Syrian refugees in your school whose heritage is Palestinian but have never visited there nor spoken much about this

5. Politically active students:

- a. Israel-Palestine is also a political issue here in the UK, with the tendency of left-wing activists and politicians to side with the Palestinians, and right-wing with the Israelis. Please note that this is a generalisation, and there are plenty of activists and politicians who do not simply pick a side but choose to work down the middle and advocate justice and safety for all
- b. However, the political divide between pro-Israel and pro-Palestine has become particularly prevalent in the last five years through the former leadership of Jeremy Corbyn of the Labour Party, who has been a significant campaigner for Palestinians for decades
- c. Far-right groups are sometimes claiming to support Israel out of anti-Muslim sentiment
- d. Brexit has also had an influence on the debate surrounding Israel-Palestine. The Brexit campaigns and subsequent battles for and against it have seen a resurgence of the debates and discussions around Britain's colonialist and imperialist past
- e. The Balfour Declaration and subsequent events are subject to much contention by Palestinians and those who support them. However, it is also seen as a period of pride and leadership by many who support Israel, some right-wing activists and politicians (who generally feel pride in Britain's history), and Christian Zionists (often found within the evangelical Christian denominations in the US)
- f. There is little middle-ground or complexity in these debates or positions. You may have very politically active students who support Israel or Palestine as a proxy to their right- or left-wing activism. These students may or may not be personally invested emotionally or vulnerable here, but it may still be an important subject for them