



March 2024 Lesson Plan: Palestine and Israel

Things to prepare BEFORE the meeting:

- Send an email reminder a week before AND the day before the meeting with the location & time
- Make a Powerpoint or Google Slides presentation with this information to easily share it
- Familiarize yourself with the information to answer any questions your members may have

Objective: Students will learn about the history of conflict in Palestine and Israel, combating misinformation and hatred.

LESSON PLAN

I. Beginning of meeting

- A. It's helpful to have music playing and welcome people as they come into the room.
- B. Have a sign-in sheet ([example](#)), and make sure to send any new names to STAND national (info@standnow.org).
- C. Welcome people as they come in, and use this time to get ready by rearranging the chairs in the room and/or logging into the computer, etc.

II. Introductions

Introduce yourself and any other chapter leaders (name, position and favorite movie/song/book/other icebreaker).

III. Activity One

Assumptions

This has become a very polarized issue, with social media escalating tensions and spreading misinformation. As a group, discuss what you have heard.

- Where have you seen or heard this?
- Why is this a commonly-held belief? Do you agree?
- Who is hurt by this narrative? Who benefits from this portrayal?

IV. Video

Share this video with your chapter or group and discuss.

 [The Israel-Palestine conflict: a brief, simple history](#)

V. History of Conflict and Oppression

A. What is Zionism?

- [Zionism](#) is a term with [very different meanings](#) depending on the context
- In response to pogroms and rising anti-semitism, some Jewish people sought to create their own state, considering a few different places, but ultimately deciding on Palestine due to its historical and religious significance to the Jewish community



- This movement for Jewish statehood in Israel is one definition of Zionism, and has political, religious, and cultural elements
- In reference to settler colonialism and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, Zionism takes on a much more negative context
- In practice, it has resulted in mass displacement, death, and inequality
- Some have adopted the term anti-Zionism to reflect opposition to the Israeli government's oppression of Palestinians, while others use it to disguise antisemitic ideas
- *Note: These terms, like much of our vocabulary, may all take different meanings or connotations in different political contexts and/or when used by different speakers. We have provided base-level definitions here, but you should consider whether the term is being used to mean something different depending on where you hear or read it.

B. Early History

- Palestine, once a part of the Ottoman Empire, was placed under British rule by the League of Nations in 1922; this followed previous contradictory statements on the region:
 - In 1917, Britain issued the [Balfour Declaration](#), promising to set aside land in Palestine for a new Jewish homeland, partially to increase Jewish people's support for Allied efforts in WWI
 - During WWI, British leaders had also [promised](#) to support various Arab ethnic groups' efforts for independence from the Ottoman Empire
- Over the next few decades, many Jewish people immigrated to the region, particularly due to Nazi persecution
 - Many neighboring European countries and the [US](#) refused to take in refugees, even turning ships away and sending people to their death in the Holocaust
- In response, Palestinians protested and called for independence, resulting in conflict and violence on both sides
- The UN proposed partitioning the region in two, creating an Arab state and a Jewish state, after the British Mandate ended
- Many newly independent Arab states opposed this plan and declared war against Israel, attempting to establish an Arab Palestinian state throughout all of the former British Palestine
- The newly-founded state of Israel took over 78% of Palestine's original territory (much more than had been proposed in the plan), expelling 750,000 from their homes in the [1948 Nakba](#), attacking villages and committing massacres.

C. Conflict and Occupation

- Violence marked the next several decades as well
- In 1956, when Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal, Israel [invaded](#) the Sinai Peninsula (in coordination with Britain and France) and additionally took control of Gaza and Rafah in Palestine
- In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) [formed](#) as both a governing and military body that was meant to represent Palestinians
- Following Syrian airstrikes on Israeli villages and hostilities from other Arab countries in 1967, Israel launched attacks as part of the [Six-Day War](#)
 - The Israeli military had a decisive victory, which left them in control of the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem



- After Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked Israel and began the [Yom Kippur War](#) in 1973, Israel and Egypt signed several peace accords over the following years and normalized relations
- In 1982, after disputes with the PLO, Israel [invaded](#) Lebanon, where the PLO had many strongholds
- In 1989, the PLO launched the [First Intifada](#), an uprising against Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, which resulted in an estimated 2,000 deaths (approximately 75% Palestinian and 25% Israeli)
- The First Intifada formally [ended](#) with the signing of the Oslo Accords, in which:
 - Israel formally recognized the PLO, agreed to a long-term withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank, and allowed the creation of a Palestinian Authority to govern those areas
 - The PLO officially rejected terrorism and recognized Israel's right to exist safely and accepted two UN resolutions to this effect
 - There was a plan to settle other details of a two-state solution over the following five years
- Hamas emerged as a competitor to the PLO and began to gain power around this time and called for a Muslim state in all of historic Palestine (rejecting a two-state solution)
- The [Second Intifada](#) lasted from 2000-2005 and involved more escalated violence than the first
 - In March 2002, Israel launched an effort to reoccupy the West Bank and Gaza in response to a bombing that killed 30 people
 - An estimated 1,000 Israelis and 3,200 Palestinians were killed during this uprising
 - Israeli forces officially [withdrew](#) from Gaza in 2005, but their presence in the region has fluctuated over the past two decades, including with periods of escalated violence
- In 2007, Hamas took control of Gaza, and Israeli forces responded with a [blockade](#), which has been in place ever since

D. Recent Events

- On October 7, 2023, Hamas killed [1200](#) Israelis in an attack, taking about 240 hostages. As of February 27, 2024:
 - [112](#) hostages had been released (most through a six-day ceasefire in November 2023)
 - 31 had been confirmed dead (though estimates vary)
 - 99 living hostages remained in Gaza
- In response to the October 7th attack, Israel [retaliated](#) with air strikes and ground operations killing more than [30,000 people](#), an estimated [40%](#) of whom are children.
 - Access to aid has been limited, as the World Food Programme recently [paused](#) operations in Gaza due to security concerns, several countries [paused](#) funding for the UNRWA, and Israeli forces have [fired](#) on Gazans seeking aid.
- There have been [attacks](#) on several hospitals, leaving very few functioning well enough to provide necessary medical services, particularly as need increases with wounds from airstrikes and acute malnutrition due to the blockade.
- Recently, South Africa brought a case against the Israeli government in the International Court of Justice (ICJ).



- On January 26, 2024, the ICJ [ruled](#) that a case determining whether Israel committed genocide could proceed, and ordered the Israeli government to take all necessary measures to prevent it from occurring and to allow aid to reach Palestinians.
- This is technically a binding decision, but the ICJ does not have any enforcement mechanisms. One month after the ruling, human rights and humanitarian organizations [reported](#) that Israel has largely ignored it.
- In February 2024, the ICJ [heard](#) arguments about a separate claim that the Israeli government has violated international law through occupation of Palestinian lands, but a decision is not likely to be released until August 2024.
- Despite [ongoing](#) ceasefire talks, violence is likely to continue. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has [stated](#) that the military will conduct a ground operation in Rafah (to which [15 million](#) Gazans have been displaced) regardless of whether a ceasefire is reached, planned to maintain a buffer and troop presence in Gaza after a ceasefire, and [rejected](#) calls for a Palestinian state.
- *Note: As we consume news about recent events, both in Gaza and beyond, it is important to be mindful of the language that is used and the way different groups of people are valued. For example, an emphasis on women and children often undermines the impact on men, often when they already belong to marginalized groups and have been portrayed as inherently dangerous and violent, and overlooks the ways in which women may be active participants in conflict and/or peacebuilding.

VI. Activity Two

Discussion

- Share the UN definition of genocide and definitions of other atrocity crimes and discuss how they may be applicable to both current and historic events in Israel and Palestine.
 - According to Article II of the 1948 [UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#) (what most people call the Genocide Convention), “Genocide is defined as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a **national, ethnic, 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.”
 - Section IV of [this lesson plan](#) provides definitions of other atrocity crimes
- Invite people to reflect on what they heard and share if they are comfortable, using the following questions:
 - How did hearing this information make you feel?
 - Is there something you learned today that makes you reconsider a belief you previously held about the situation or makes you want to learn more?
 - Why do you think this topic can be so sensitive and controversial?
 - What true feelings or concerns might motivate some of the misinformation and hatred in discussing this conflict (e.g. fear for one’s safety, anger over past harm, etc.), and is there a different solution that might be able to address these things outside of this conflict?



VII. Actions:

A. Call Your Legislators

- Go to [this link](#) for graphics of the call script below, which can be added to your slides.
- Dial (202) 224-3121, and ask to be connected to your Senator.
- Hi, my name is _____, and I am calling from _____ to ask Senator _____ to support a full review of human rights practices in Israel and Saudi Arabia, pursuant to section 502b(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. The US government has a responsibility to know how the weapons it sells are being used, and the American public has a right to know what its tax dollars are being used to fund. Since October 7, the Israeli military has killed more than 30,000 Palestinians. Nearly 400,000 people have been killed in the war in Yemen, which has been strongly fueled by Saudi Arabia. I strongly urge Senator _____ to support S.Res.109 and a similar review of human rights practices in Israel. Thank you.
- *Note: Senators Butler, Heinrich, Hirono, Lujan, Markey, Merkley, Paul, Sanders, Van Hollen, Warren, and Welch voted in favor of the resolution on Israel. Senator Schatz was unable to vote but supported it. If one of them is your Senator, you can call and thank them and ask them to support a new version of the resolution.

B. Sign a Petition

- Ask your members of Congress to call on President Biden to reinstate funding the UNRWA [here](#).
- Call on President Biden to support an immediate ceasefire [here](#).

VIII. Conclusion

1. Conclude the meeting with a thank you, and ask about future meeting dates. Ask students for feedback about the meeting and some things they liked or didn't like to make adjustments in the future and make everybody feel engaged.
2. Make sure to mention the resources that were given and other topics that were discussed.
3. Follow up after the meeting to let people know about things you will be doing in the future and invite people to get more involved. Consider including a form for people to provide any other feedback or information about how they would like to participate.
4. If any member is interested in getting involved at the national level, have them fill out [this form](#) to join an Action Committee.
5. Please send any pictures you took of activities or other parts of the meeting to info@standnow.org to be featured in our chapter newsletter or on our social media!

Extra Resources

- The Question of Palestine- Timeline of Events. <https://www.un.org/unispal/timeline/>
- Brief Animated History of the Question of Palestine
- Let's Talk About the Israel-Palestine Conflict | The Daily Show