



October 2023

A RESOURCE FOR PARENTS & TEACHERS ON THE TERRORIST ATTACKS IN ISRAEL

Advice for parents of Jewish children in non-Jewish schools and teachers working in non-Jewish schools

INTRODUCTION

The Board of Deputies is aware of the surge of antisemitism triggered by the current situation in Israel. This is understandably of great concern to the Jewish community. No Jewish person should feel unsafe in the UK, especially in a school environment.

Comments may be made to your children about the situation in Israel and they may be asked questions which are difficult to answer.

We hope the information and guidance below will be helpful in terms of understanding if comments would be classed as antisemitic or anti-Israel, and have suggested some responses to comments and questions.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- Antisemitism is context-specific. 'Free Palestine' may not be an antisemitic slogan, in and of itself, however chanting it, or directing phrases such as 'child-murderers', at a Jewish pupil or teacher may well be, as it is identifying the teacher or pupil as Jewish and as an object of protest because of their Jewishness.
- Use of the phrase "from the river to the sea" is not acceptable. It implicitly denies Israel's right to exist, by making this statement, one is rejecting a two-state-solution. This is seen as a call to remove the State of Israel, and the Jewish people from the Middle East, which would comprise yet another ethnic cleansing of the Jewish people from the Middle East.
- It is antisemitic to state that the "Israel lobby" or "Jewish lobby" (ie Jewish NGOs and charities) has had a disproportionately large amount of power and influence in the media, economy and politics.

- It is antisemitic to suggest/proclaim that Jewish people have more loyalty to Israel / their Jewish identity than they do to Britain.
- Given that antisemitism is context-specific, any communications regarding incidents must be treated with care. On one occasion when a pupil was disciplined for saying 'Free Palestine' at a school, the news was shared on social media without the context that this was directed at a Jewish member of the school community in the middle of a lesson. The result was multiple accusations on social media that free speech was being hindered, which was false and unhelpful.
- Online student communication channels set up for one purpose – for example a WhatsApp channel to discuss university applications – becoming dominated by vitriolic rhetoric concerning the conflict can be intimidating to Jewish students who may withdraw from online school forums as a result. This is not acceptable.
- Parents WhatsApp groups could become politically charged and rife with rhetoric, which could become intimidating for Jewish parents.
- Teachers forums (for example Facebook groups) could become not only politically charged and rife with rhetoric, but also be sharing and promoting the use of biased or anti-Israel resources for use in the classroom. This is not only problematic educationally but potentially intimidating for Jewish teachers.
- Making references to or comparisons between Gaza and ghettos and camps or between the treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli government to Jews during the Holocaust is considered as a form of Holocaust revisionism, which should not take place under any circumstances.
- Criticism of the actions of the Israeli Government and support for a Palestinian state are not antisemitic under any definition of antisemitism.
- Repeated use of 'Zionists' as a pejorative and replacement for 'Jews' is not acceptable.

- Repeated use of term Jewish, holding Jewish people for the actions of Israel and / or calling on Jewish people to speak out on Israel simply because they are Jewish is not acceptable.

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS:

For teachers or parents of pupils who have experienced an incident that they believe to be antisemitic in nature, we suggest:

- Make a written note of any antisemitic events, including dates, context, those involved and details including exact quotes. (This includes graffiti).
- Contacting the head teacher and explaining what has happened. Schools should be safe places, where young people and teachers feel able to learn and teach in a welcoming environment. It is our hope that school leaders will be eager to resolve any issues as quickly as possible, taking appropriate action where necessary.
- For younger pupils, class teachers/form tutors should be made aware of any comments/incidents in school, and even if your child is feeling emotionally 'delicate' due to the events occurring in Israel, so that they can look out for your child and so that your child has a member of staff to talk to if needed.
- If any issues remain outstanding, school governors should be approached to ensure the issue is dealt with appropriately.
- For teachers, the Board of Deputies' Employer's Guide to Judaism can be a useful point of guidance for issues in the workplace. <https://www.bod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Employers-Guide-to-Judaism2.pdf>
- Local Education Authorities, Academy Trusts, schools, teachers and parents should know that ALL antisemitic incidents (including antisemitic graffiti) should be reported to the CST, the police, their institution or a combination of the three. <https://cst.org.uk/>
- The Community Security Trust (CST) received charitable status in 1994 and is recognised by police and Government as a unique

model of best practice. CST's website also contains a range of resources that will be helpful to those who have experienced antisemitism.

- If the content of WhatsApp groups or Facebook groups gets too political, promotes false information or biased resources or is intimidating in any way, message the 'admin' of the group privately and request that they do not allow the trend to continue as it is not helpful / not relevant / intimidating.

REPLYING TO DIFFICULT COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Both Jewish children and Jewish teachers in schools may be faced with difficult and unpleasant comments and questions over this time, such as 'Why are the Jews killing innocent Palestinians?' or 'Your army are murderers...' etc.

Our guidance would be not to engage in discussion unless you are an expert in Middle Eastern history or politics. Additionally, the receiver may not actually be interested in truly understanding the situation.

However, whatever the intent of the comment whether it is based on ignorance or has an antisemitic intent, we would advise that you simply say:

"This is not the time or place and none of us are going to achieve anything by continuing this conversation other than upsetting people and destroying relationships."

Or if you are drawn into discussion, you could state a few basic, undisputed facts, such as:

"The attacks on 7th October were unprecedented with over 1,200 Jewish babies, children, adults, elderly people all innocent Israeli civilians slaughtered in their homes or while going about their daily lives by terrorists."

“The acts of terrorism of 7th October have been condemned by the Prime Minister, as well as many leaders around the world.”

Or you may want to reply with comments such as:

“This is a highly sensitive issue that is affecting people from many religions and backgrounds negatively. I would advise anyone who does not know the full facts and historical background to the situation not to comment or make judgements.”

“News reports can be misguided and may not be giving the full story, so please don’t comment on them as the basis of your discussions and opinions.”

“Antisemitic / Anti-Jewish comments are offensive and unproductive. Please think about what you are saying.”

“The whole situation in the Middle East is awful for people on both sides. It’s a terrible and complex situation.”

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

We are aware that addressing issues around Israel and the Palestinians as well as antisemitism can be difficult for schools to navigate. Resources which may be of use to schools include:

- The [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\) definition of antisemitism](#) is internationally agreed-upon and represents the gold standard of identifying and calling out antisemitic attitudes. It can be found [here](#).
- The [TUC guide on antisemitism](#) with its specific section on Israel and the Palestinians.
- Our American partner [ADL has produced a resource](#) with information and discussion questions for the classroom.
- Teaching the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Institute for Curriculum Services: [Free, five-lesson curriculum on the Arab-Israeli conflict](#). Explores the history of the conflict and peace process. With an emphasis on

primary sources, ICS's resources are teacher-friendly and formatted to be easily implemented in the classroom.

- Video: [Myth that Anti-Zionism or Criticism of Israel is Never Antisemitic](#)
- Anna Freud Mental Health Charity: [Racism and mental health resources](#)
- My Jewish Learning: [History of the conflict](#)
- [UK Jewish Film](#): Using the power of film, workshops are run in schools by a qualified teacher, aiming to combat antisemitism and racism and improve dialogue and understanding between faith communities, etc. (Free of charge, aimed at KS4-5)
- [Stand Up Education](#): an interfaith programme of workshops for 11-18 year olds led by facilitators from Jewish and Muslim backgrounds who model a partnership of collaboration. (Supported by Tell MAMA, an organisation that monitors anti-Muslim attacks and provides support to those who have experienced such discrimination.)
- [Wiener Holocaust Library](#): offers a variety of tours, workshops and talks covering a variety of themes including prejudice and discrimination.
- [Stand With Us](#): A range of (free) workshops about Israel available for 6th form students or teachers:
 1. Countering Antisemitism - Discover the evolution of the hatred of Jews since the Roman era, and try to understand what is legitimate criticism of Israel and when it crosses the line into antisemitism
 2. The Path to Independence - In a 60-90 minutes, discover the rebirth of the State of Israel, its conflicts and the attempts to come to a peaceful resolution
 3. Diversity and Society - What do you think of when you hear 'Israel': War? Religion? Falafel? Discover the incredibly beautiful and diverse peoples that make up the Israeli population: Arab and Druze, Muslim and Jew; and learn about how they have influenced Israeli culture.

- [Academic Study Group on Israel and the Middle East](#) - ASG offers introductory talks on Israel and the Middle East to secondary and 6th Form groups. These presentations eschew propaganda, emphasising both the magnificent assets of the region, its tragic dysfunctions, and its huge impact and importance to the UK.
020 8444 0777 / John.levy@foi-asg.org
- <https://www.standwithus.com/situationroom> - up to date information on the situation
- [Streetwise](#) runs free, informal education activities on antisemitism for secondary schools as part of its 'Lifeskills' programme.
- [Jewish UnPacked](#) – collection of videos explaining the Israel Palestine history and situation
- Video: [Brief concise history of the Israel/Palestinian conflict](#)
- Jewish Agency: [History of Zionism](#)
- BICOM: [Explanation of why Israel is not an 'apartheid state'](#)
- Video: [video of an Israeli Arab and a Jew spending time together in Israel](#)
- CST's [educational resources](#) (Community Security Trust)
- FutureLearn: [online course for teachers with certification](#)
- Get the Trolls Out: [videos explaining seven classic antisemitic tropes](#)
- Video: [The Origins of Antisemitic Stereotypes](#)

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

- How To Talk to Children About Israel Today | [The Jewish Educator Portal](#) – Zoom event put on by various Jewish organisations.
- Video: [Advice from an Israeli psychologist](#) on how to talk to your children about the situation plus [free Resilience Workbook](#).

For any further information about the Board of Deputies or further support contact info@bod.org.uk

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