A Note for Teachers:

The unrest in Israel and Palestine is causing unsettling disturbances and some pupils may be directly or indirectly affected, either with relatives in the area or surrounding Gaza, or because of rising antisemitism and Islamophobic backlashes suffered in the UK.

Both religions have strong historic links to the region through accounts of religious figures, including Abraham and Moses. However, the current dispute around the territory of Gaza is political, not religious. Not all those who follow Jewish religion are Israeli (live in the country of Israel), nor are they all Zionist (movement striving for an independent state/homeland for all Jewish people). Similarly, not all Muslims are Arab (dwell in or derive of from the region of Arabia) or Palestinian. Unfortunately, many people are unable to make this distinction, and repercussions are being felt by those from within both these religious groups, even if they have no ties to the area in question.

For this reason, we should be mindful of the words we model and encourage pupils to use. We must be factually accurate, correctly identifying or attributing the actions, words and beliefs to the appropriate group, and not making generalisations that these may apply to all people of the same faith or nationality. http://www.insted.co.uk/words-about-words.pdf. Be clear if speaking about Jews or Israelis for example, or Palestinians and Hamas supporters.

nazir afzal @nazirafzal · 1d

It is NOT islamaphobic to detest, as I do, Hamas for the murder of Israelis
It is NOT anti-Semitic to detest, as I do, Netanyahu's Govt for its treatment of Palestinians

It IS Islamaphobic or anti-Semitic to attack Muslims or Jews for the actions of Hamas or Netanyahu's Govt

💬 424   🔁 5,010   ♡ 25.9K   ‖ 1.3M   ↑

Nazir Afzal OBE is a British solicitor and former prosecutor within the Crown Prosecution Service. Afzal spent most of his career in the CPS, rising to be Chief Crown Prosecutor for North West England in 2011, a role he held until leaving the CPS in 2015.

In the interest of being factually accurate, this document may help explain the distinction between Zionism and the country as a religious state/country https://www.bicom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/BICOM-AS-Update-NOV-2022-3.pdf. Other sources which provide factual information without opinion include: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRYZjOuUnIU (giving a concise and unbiased history of the Israel/Palestinian conflict) and https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/countries/article/israel about the geographical facts.

Further teacher guidance can also be found at: https://pshe-association.org.uk/resource/discussing-terrorist-attacks-with-pupils.

We all have our OWN Worldview

At the same time, it should be recognised that everyone has a unique worldview. These are built up from own personal experiences, what we have learnt from others and influenced by organisations and opinions of those around us or in our communities. Just as some of our pupils may initially be more inclined to connect with certain groups involved in the dispute, we must also be aware of our own positionality, and aim to be neutral: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools/political-impartiality-in-schools.

We cannot speak for those involved- our experiences and worldviews are different to each individual, and even within certain organisations and political movements, there may be diversity in perspective. We can only speak for ourselves.

We should not be supposing or assuming the opinion, view or feeling of others, and we should be encouraging our pupils to recognise this also.

It may be helpful for pupils to recognise how certain people are sometimes assumed to automatically hold or reflect certain viewpoints e.g. because most Palestinians may identify as Muslim, not all Muslims may agree with Hamas activities. Conversely, some Jewish pupils may feel their identity is being criticised when it may only be the actions of the Israeli government that is being discussed.

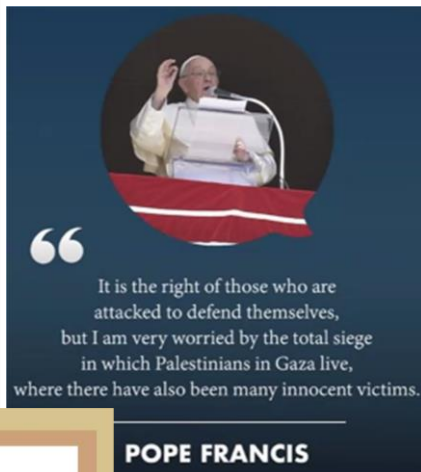| Questions that seek clarification	Can you explain that? What do you think this source is about? Can you give me an example of? What questions does that raise? What argument does that support? How can we apply this to...?
Questions that probe reasons and evidence	Why do you think that this issue is...? How do you know that this issues is...? What are your reasons? What evidence do you have that this issue...? How is that compatible with British values...?
Further open questions	What other views might exist? What would be the consequences of that? What questions could you raise about that? What conclusion are we drawing here?

For example:

I join the call for an immediate ceasefire.

As I have processed the tragic news of the past days, I think of the Palestinian and Israeli children caught in the middle.

I was only 11 years old when I witnessed violence and terrorism. We woke up to the sounds of mortar shells, saw our schools and mosques destroyed by bombs. Peace became something we could only dream about.

War never spares children — not those kidnapped from their homes in Israel, not those hiding from airstrikes or without food and water in Gaza.

Today, I am grieving for all the children and people longing for peace and justice in the Holy Land.

MCB @MuslimCouncil · 2d
STATEMENT: Muslim Council of Britain calls for peace in the Middle East

"The Muslim Council of Britain calls for an end to the violence in and around Gaza. The targeting of innocent civilians can never be excused or justified."

Read full: tinyurl.com/callforpeacenow

MCB MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN
End the Violence Now
Muslim Council of Britain calls for peace in the Middle East
tinyurl.com/callforpeacenow

"It is the right of those who are attacked to defend themselves, but I am very worried by the total siege in which Palestinians in Gaza live, where there have also been many innocent victims."

POPE FRANCIS

NEWS
The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem unite in a call for peace and justice amidst unfolding violence

https://www.anglicanne ws.org/news/2023/10/th e-patriarchs-and-heads- of-churches-in-jerusalem- unite-in-a-call-for-peace- and-justice.aspx

Indeed, many religions contain within their teachings the importance of peace and the commonality of humanity, and demonstrably criticise any discrimination and persecution of others because of their faith. Examples include:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength and with all your mind. And, love your neighbour as you love yourself." Christian Bible: Luke 10:28

"I am a stranger to no one, and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all." Guru Granth Sahib 1299

"You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Old Testament Leviticus 19:18

"This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others that you would not have them to do unto you." Mahabharata 5,1517

"Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." Buddhist text: Udana-Varga 5,1

"None of you will have complete faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself" Quote of Muhammad from Muslim text

"Do not do to others what you would not like for yourself." Confucius (non-religious), Analects, C 500 BCE

Pupils could watch this video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAIud2n4bBw&list=PLBm9k0V6w4-WpiI8d0p8P8RrNgvRTLPZ8&index=3

It may be useful to help pupils distinguish between religious teachings, their own individual feelings and views and those of the political groups involved and be helped to recognise that examples of antisemitism and Islamophobia in the UK are often unfairly directed at those who may not have the same assumed opinion of the events in the Middle East.

To help place the focus back on individuality, you could look at: https://faithbeliefforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Safe- Space-KS2-LP4-v4.pdf.

Focus on the Positive

Examples of interfaith solidarity could be shown for example this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2af-rc3Q8g, or even demonstrated as part of a positive ethos in school, perhaps with teachers of different faiths visibly sharing a coffee, discussion or other 'fun' activities which all pupils can join. It is also an opportunity to engage in interfaith week: https://www.interfaithweek.org/about#:~:text=WHEN%3F,runs%20until%20the%20following%20Sunday.

You may also wish to promote the positive examples of solidarity through multicultural examples at the school – particularly for younger pupils: a creative display such as the peace rainbow (https://faithbeliefforum.org/resources/schools-skills-for-dialogue-primary/) for personal wishes and words, for example, or holding collections for humanitarian aid, or for older pupils to consider the skills required for resolving conflict: https://solutionsnotsides.co.uk/sites/default/files/2023-04/SNS%20Student-Led%20Resources%20EMOTIONS%20IN%20CONFLICT.pdf

Supporting Pupils:

Many pupils may wish to talk about the situation. Below is some guidance to consider how we can best help our pupils navigate any dialogue around the current crisis surrounding the Israeli/Palestine situation – including the dispelling of myths and misunderstandings, skills for learning to talk safely and respectfully – which will hopefully build teachers' confidence to facilitate this.

Questions without Answers

We need to accept that we as teachers and adults do not have all the answers, but this doesn't mean questions are not valid and they should still be heard.

If the answer was that simple, there wouldn't be an issue.

You may wish to support pupils in voicing their own personal questions but allow yourself time to prepare a sufficient response or space to talk them through in a more structured manner.

Perhaps an anonymous 'Thought Box' could be set up, where pupils can post their questions, thoughts, ideas, artistic expression and comments. These can then be collated and used to inform a planned and structured session.

Below are some further tips for helping our pupils to share, taken from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2hJaKoBSdA.

Talking about the situation

Give brief, simple, direct and honest information and let their questions lead the way
- Answer the question they actually asked – don't give unnecessary information they didn't request
- Avoid euphemistic language.

Different conversations for different ages/stages
- Be aware that older children can access the information independently – you can help them to process their reactions.

Don't give false reassurance or pretend that this didn't happen
- We want to 'protect' but can end up making them feel less secure or filling in the gaps

Use prompts to encourage communication
- 'I noticed that you heard us talking about what was happening in Israel. I wanted to know if you had any questions?'
- 'Even for adults, this kind of situation can also be confusing and scary. Is there anything you want to talk about?'
- 'Were they talking about the situation in Israel today at school? How are you feeling about what is going on in Israel?'
- 'Even if you don't have questions now, I want you to know that you can always ask when you do have questions.'

You don't need to have all the answers
- It is ok to say that we don't know what will happen. It is also OK to say that it won't always be like this.

Talk about the things that people are doing to take help with the situation
- e.g., soldiers are helping to protect people, people are raising money, people are hosting families that had to leave their homes.
- 'Even Rishi Sunak spoke in a shul and told everyone he is supporting this fight'.

Be prepared to have multiple conversations – not all the information needs to be shared in one go

Fact not Fake News

We also need to help pupils recognise when an expression of feelings or views is innapropriate, or unfair. For example, recognising instances of bullying due to islamophobia (http://www.insted.co.uk/islam.html) or anti semitism.

There are also some resources avilable to help pupils recognise these: https://www.standupeducation.org/post/how-to-identify-trustworthy-news and https://www.standupeducation.org/post/pocket-workshop-series-2-free-speech-vs-hate-speech-part-2, as well as https://faithbeliefforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Oops-and-Ouch_Primary_v1.pdf for primary or https://faithbeliefforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/FBF-1-LP6-Oops-Ouch-v5.pdf for secondary.

It is also important for pupils to be able to recognise unbiased reporting in the news for example, where facts are shared without the influence of opinion, and even when other social media may be at risk of this. Secondary pupils may find this materials useful https://solutionsnotsides.co.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Learning%20Resource%20-%20Media%20%26%20Critical%20Thinking.pdf, or https://www.facinghistory.org/en-gb/resource-library/teaching-wake-violence-uk for primary children this resource could work well: https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#inbox/KtbxLvhKQxSdWFsmKVVmZdltsnJLRXPpdB?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1

Create a Safe Space to Share

Recognising these means pupils can work towards having an open dialogue within a Safe Space. More about how to create this can be found at: https://faithbeliefforum.org/resources/school-ks3-lesson-plans/ or this video for secondary https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rBI7UP9-hc&t=16s, or for primary: https://faithbeliefforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Safe-Space-KS2-LP1-v2.pdf and the video: https://youtu.be/VkVkooLbcXU.

Dialogue not Debate

There is not one easy answer to the issues, concerns and suffering being experienced in the Middle East, nor for those affected by repecussions in the UK. Beyond the explicit examples of persecution and bullying, we should aim to move pupils away from making judgements about the actions of those abroad. It should not be a case of debating 'who is right' or 'who is in the wrong', but an attempt to understand what is behind certain actions. For secondary pupils, this may be a useful resource: https://solutionsnotsides.co.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/SNS%20Student-Led%20Resources%20NEGOTIATIONS.pdf, which aims to help pupils consider the people behind the politics and events.

Further resources on holding a respectful yet 'brave' dialogues can be found here: https://faithbeliefforum.org/resources/the-art-of-qa/, as well as perhaps exploring https://faithbeliefforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Safe-Space-KS2-LP6-v2.pdf for younger pupils.

For for older pupils still, the '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. Contact JOHN LEVY (Director) 020 8444 0777 or via email: John.levy@foi-asg.org., or an alternative programme for Years 12-13 can be arranged through: https://www.standwithus.com/explore-uk.