

DISCUSSING PALESTINE- ISRAEL

A SIMPLE LANGUAGE GUIDE
FOR PALESTINE ACTIVISTS

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DISCUSSING PALESTINE-ISRAEL: A SIMPLE LANGUAGE GUIDE FOR **PALESTINE** ACTIVISTS

As Israel launches yet another major military offensive against the 2.3 million residents of the Gaza Strip, Muslims and others in the UK will want to show their solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine. However, it is important to understand **how** to voice your protest in a way that is measured, responsible, and **most importantly**, that serves to support, rather than undermine, the cause of Palestine. Below is a short guide on how Palestine activists should navigate this sensitive discussion.

DO **NOT** ENDORSE PROSCRIBED TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS

In the UK, the Gaza-based militant group Hamas, along with Lebanon-based Hezbollah, are proscribed terrorist organisations under the Terrorism Act 2000 ¹. Some Palestine activists may wish to proclaim their support for Palestine and in doing so mistakenly use “Hamas” as a synonym. It is important to understand that expressing support for “Palestine” and expressing support for “Hamas” **are not the same**. The government makes it clear that “invit[ing] support” for a proscribed organisation is a prosecutable offence. Therefore, Palestine activists **should avoid** making remarks that appear to be encouraging of Hamas’ actions.

On the other hand, it is **absolutely permissible** for you to express your support for “Palestine” and/or the “Palestinian people,” and/or the “right of Palestinians to defend themselves” and/or the right of Palestinians to “resist occupation.” Such terminology refers to the Palestinian collective, and their right to self-determination as **guaranteed by international humanitarian law**, and not a proscribed terrorist group among them. Such speech would therefore be covered by Article 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998 ², which **guarantees your right to freedom of expression**.

1. UK Government, 'Proscribed Terrorist Groups or Organisations,' 15 September, 2023, accessed 9 October 2023: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version>

2. Liberty Human Rights, 'Article 10 Freedom of Expression,' accessed 9 October 2023: <https://www.liberty-humanrights.org.uk/right/freedom-of-expression/#:-:text=Article%2010%20of%20the%20Human,others%20without%20the%20State%20interfering.>



DO NOT ATTACK JEWS AS A PEOPLE

Avoid terminology like “Jew” or “the Jews” when criticising the policies of the Israeli state. It is important **not to hold** Jewish people in general responsible for the decisions of the Israeli state. To attack Jews as people, and to hold them collectively responsible, is **anti-semitism**.

It is important to understand that there are many Jews around the world, including in the UK, who are opposed to Israel’s policies of settler-colonialism in Palestine. Defenders of Israeli state violence often try to **falsely present** supporters of Palestine as hateful anti-semites who wish to destroy the Jews as a collective people. In order to **combat this ridiculous accusation**, it is important to make a distinction between Jewish people, who are **not all responsible** for what is happening in Gaza, and the Israeli state, which does hold responsibility. Engaging in anti-semitic speech **does a disservice to the Palestinian cause** by seemingly supporting the false idea that being pro-Palestine is anti-Semitic. Therefore, only ever use the words “Israel,” and/or terms like “Israeli state” and/or “Israeli government,” and not “Jews.”

ISSUES THAT ARE LEGITIMATE TO DISCUSS AND CRITIQUE

It is not in any way illegitimate to protest against, whether in assembly or through writing on social media, the decades’ long violation of Palestinian human rights by the Israeli state. Article 10 of the 1998 Human Rights Act protects your right to political expression as long as it does not threaten public safety, undermine the rights of another group (for example by inciting hatred against Jewish people) or clash with existing laws (for example promoting Hamas would clash with the Terrorism Act 2000 as explained above).³

Legitimate criticisms of Israeli human rights abuses include but are not limited to:

- (1) The occupation⁴ of the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza which is recognised by international law⁵ as an illegal occupation.
- (2) Its separation wall, and the Jewish only settlements, which are built on stolen Palestinian land and are recognised as illegal under international law.

3. Liberty Human Rights, ‘Article 10 Freedom of Expression,’ accessed 9 October 2023: <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/right/freedom-of-expression/#:~:text=Article%2010%20of%20the%20Human,oters%20without%20the%20State%20interfering.>

4. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Commission of Inquiry Finds That the Israeli Occupation is Unlawful Under International Law,’ 20 October, 2022, accessed 9 October 2023: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/10/commission-inquiry-finds-israeli-occupation-unlawful-under-international-law.>

5. Amnesty International, ‘Israeli Settlements and International Law,’ January 2019, accessed 9 October 2023: [https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/01/chapter-3-israeli-settlements-and-international-law/.](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/01/chapter-3-israeli-settlements-and-international-law/)



(3) The military control Israel has exercised on Gaza for over a decade, including control of its land borders, air space and maritime zones, imports and exports, population registry, sewage systems and electricity grids. You may point out that owing to Israel's tightening siege around Gaza since 2007, over 53% of its 2.3 million inhabitants live below the poverty line.⁶

(4) The disproportionate military advantage enjoyed by Israel and how this is reflected in the massive Palestinian death toll. For example, since 2008 to before the present assault, Israel has carried out five major military incursions into Gaza. During that time, around 6,400 Palestinians have been killed, versus 308 Israelis.⁷

(5) The destruction of Palestinian society in 1948, which resulted in the displacement of over 800,000 Palestinian-Arabs from their homes in an event known as "the Nakba," meaning "catastrophe."

(6) The right of return for the millions of Palestinian refugees who are scattered across the Arab world and beyond, which the UN recognises as "a fundamental pillar of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination" and is enshrined in UN General Assembly Resolution 3236 which, "reaffirms ... the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted" ⁸.

(7) The general policies of collective punishment employed by the Israeli state against the Palestinian people, as recognised by the UN ⁹. Collective punishment is itself a crime under international humanitarian law, specifically Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention¹⁰. This would include, but is certainly not limited to, Israel's policy of economically strangling the 2.3 million inhabitants of Gaza, forcing them into a humanitarian crisis, simply because of the actions of Hamas. In one example of collective punishment, on October 9th 2023, during its fifth offensive on Gaza, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant announced a "complete siege on Gaza ... No electricity, no food, no water, no gas - it's all closed." Human Rights Watch subsequently accused Israel of calling for an "abhorrent" policy of "collective punishment, which is a war crime" ¹¹.

6. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, '53 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza Live in Poverty, Despite Humanitarian Assistance,' 5 June, 2018, accessed 9 October 2023: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/53-cent-palestinians-gaza-live-poverty-despite-humanitarian-assistance>.

7. Al-Jazeera English, 'Israel-Hamas Conflict: List of Key Events, Day 2 After Surprise Attack,' 8 October, accessed 9 October, 2023: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/8/israel-hamas-conflict-list-of-key-events-day-2-after-surprise-attack>

8. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Right of Return of Palestinian Refugees Must be Prioritised Over Political Considerations: UN Experts,' June 21, 2023, accessed 10 October 2023: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/06/right-return-palestinian-refugees-must-be-prioritised-over-political>

9. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Israel's Collective Punishment of Palestinians Illegal and an Affront to Justice: UN expert,' July 17, 2020, accessed 10 October 2023: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/07/israels-collective-punishment-palestinians-illegal-and-affront-justice-un#:~:text=%22Collective%20punishment%20has%20been%20clearly.No%20exceptions%20are%20permitted.%22>

10. International Committee of the Red Cross, 'Article 33 - Individual Responsibility, Collective Penalties, Pillage, Reprisals,' accessed 10 October, 2023: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-33#:~:text=12%20August%201949.-,Article%2033%20%20Individual%20responsibility%2C%20collective%20penalties%2C%20pillage%2C%20reprisals.Pillage%20is%20prohibited>

11. Yahoo News, 'Human Rights Watch Accuses Israel of War Crimes for Defence Minister's Call to Impose Gaza 'Siege,' October 10, 2023, accessed 10 October 2023: https://news.yahoo.com/human-rights-watch-accuses-israel-082400523.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0CHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2Z2xlMnVbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAaZaBhrFOQNpQQoiNvBxEzCaaFaMfuH2B_SLsDBtr83hodr0D2M-32hY9cyj_LxAUN0YY9zQJB6dQhIbRIPQg6qC_swGGkdEgHJ3zQuvPacEhxP46lRk1P1RhRYci5A555oJN4bvzd-oZG079VUpF8p3Jc0qfJL6ly7bH-10c3YC



(8) Israel as an apartheid state. Israel fits this definition because Palestinians in the West Bank and Israeli settlers living on stolen Palestinian land live under two different legal systems. Palestinians are under Israeli military law, while Israeli settlers maintain their own civilian courts. To further support your argument that Israel is an apartheid state for this reason, you can point out that in 2021, Human Rights Watch became the first major human rights organisation to accuse Israel of the crime of apartheid¹². Amnesty International¹³ and a UN expert¹⁴ followed with this charge in 2022. A host of Israeli rights groups, such as B'Tselem had previously made the same accusation¹⁵. Even a former head of Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad, recently admitted that Israel "is an apartheid state."¹⁶ Therefore, there is nothing controversial about this claim.

This is not an exhaustive list, but gives an example of the main areas that Palestine activists are legally permitted to rally and write against in solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people.

12. Oliver Holmes, 'Israel is Committing the Crime of Apartheid, Rights Group Says,' 27 April, 2021, accessed 9 September 2023: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/27/israel-committing-crime-apartheid-human-rights-watch>

13. Amnesty International, 'Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: A Cruel System of Domination and a Crime Against Humanity,' 1 February, 2022, accessed 9 October 2023: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/>

14. United Nations News, 'Israel's Occupation of Palestinian Territory is 'Apartheid': UN Rights Expert,' 25 March, 2022, accessed 9 October, 2023: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114702>

15. B'Tselem, 'A Regime of Jewish Supremacy From the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is Apartheid,' 12 January, 2021, accessed 9 October, 2023: https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid

16. Tia Goldenberg, AP News, 'A Former Mossad Chief Says Israel is Enforcing an Apartheid System in the West Bank,' 6 September, 2023, accessed 9 October 2023: <https://apnews.com/article/israel-apartheid-palestinians-occupation-c8137c9e7f33c2c8a7b0b5ac7fa8d115>

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