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Archived 7/4/25



Link to Toolkit: tinyurl.com/pledgetoolkit

This toolkit is designed to equip students and instructors with the resources needed to center Palestine in class discussions. It provides answers to key questions about the ongoing genocide and occupation of Palestine, explores how Palestine intersects with various disciplines, and offers guidance on how we can support you in protecting yourself against potential repercussions for speaking out.

The toolkit also includes general lesson plans with resources applicable across multiple disciplines. These lesson plans cover the historical context of Palestine, the impact of the occupation, and the roles played by the US and the wider international community.

WHY DID YOU PLEDGE?

Since October 7th, all universities and degree awarding institutions in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed, and roughly 85% of schools have been bombed. Close to two million Gazans have, at some point in time, sought shelter at schools in the territory while fleeing the horrors of this genocide, and so schools themselves have become priority targets of the bloody Zionist regime [Israel]. The current wave of violence has led to the murder of over 180,000^[1] Palestinians by the military forces of the Zionist entity. We must

always put an asterisk next to the number because we cannot accurately account for the thousands under the rubble, the missing, and those still to be counted.

There is a blatant double standard at play here. Under a framework that has coded all opposition to Zionism as [antisemitism](#), Palestinian students, faculty, and staff are rendered invisible. Their safety, their comfort, their feelings, their very existence does not register; all the while the UC Berkeley administration perpetuates this double standard. In the midst of the historic October 25th walkout, the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor sent a [letter](#) admonishing those who participated. This flies in the face of a [September 18th, 2019 letter](#) from the same office, which actually encouraged class cancellations so students could participate in a walkout for climate change. ***A burning planet is worthy of protest. Burning Palestinians, apparently, are not.***

As part of the academic community, we are complicit in the slaughter of the Palestinian people. We should not, however, stop at this conclusion. The power we have as educators & students allows us to repurpose our institutional ties and turn the basis of our complicity into the conditions of our solidarity. We therefore offer this pledge as a foundational tool, a launchpad from which we might begin to unify, and in doing so, counteract the erasure of Palestinian experiences that remains insufficiently challenged in classrooms on campus.

GENOCIDAL CRIMES OF THE ZIONIST REGIME

- [Welcome To Hell: The Israeli Prison System As A Network Of Torture Camps](#)
- [Anatomy Of A Genocide, Human Rights Council](#)
- [Famine And Food Insecurity In Gaza, IPC And WFP Report](#)
- [Water War Crimes: How Israel Has Weaponized Water In Its Military Campaign In Gaza](#)
- [The Warmth Of Our Sons: How Israel Withholds Bodies As Bargaining Chips](#)
- [Criminal Targeting of Journalists Since Oct. 7](#)

HOW DO YOU BRING UP PALESTINE?

If you're an instructor:

Suggested prompting questions to kickstart discussions with your students:

- What have you read, seen or heard about what is going on in Israel and Gaza?
- What kinds of conversations have you had with friends and family members on this subject?

- Where are you getting your information? How do you know that what you are seeing and hearing is accurate?
- How comfortable are you in sharing your questions and opinions about the history of the occupation?
- What questions do you have about what is happening now and about the larger context?

The pledge you have made involves a commitment to teach Palestine on Week 1 of the UC Berkeley semester. We therefore hope that you will recognize the collective strength shown if all pledges do so within this timeframe, and encourage you to consider doing so beyond this. The resources below are, however, adaptable and can be amended to draw connections between the content in lessons even if they are taught further into the semester. All we ask is that pledges remember that teaching Palestine under the Berkeley façade of progressive censorship is an act of resistance and that all resistance is best waged as part of a collective.

If you're a student:

No discipline should be allowed to hide behind abstractions in the face of genocide, and so all educators should have an answer to the simple question: ***“how can the ideas we’re learning in this lesson be related to the situation on the ground in Palestine?”***

Here are some questions that students can ask to bring up the topic of Palestine in their class discussions across various disciplines:

- How does the concept of settler-colonialism apply to the situation in Palestine, and how has it shaped the history of the Palestinian people?
- What parallels can be drawn between the Palestinian struggle and other anti-colonial movements throughout history?
- What are the impacts of prolonged violence and displacement on the identities and lived experiences of Palestinians?
- How have international powers, including the US, helped to maintain the Israeli occupation through diplomatic, military, and financial means?
- What are the implications of the UN resolutions regarding Palestine, and how do they expose the failures of the UN as a political project?
- How does the principle of self-determination apply to the Palestinian people, and what legal precedents exist for their claims?

- What are the challenges in prosecuting alleged war crimes in Palestine, and how does this highlight the shortcomings of international law frameworks?
- How is the Palestinian experience represented in literature, film, and other forms of cultural expression?
- What role does cultural resistance play in the Palestinian struggle, and how has it been expressed through art and literature?
- What role does the work we learn here have in the genocide today? (AI, weapons, narrative distortion)

FAQs:

- *Wasn't October 7th the start of the violence?*
- The genocide did not begin on October 7th; it is just the latest chapter in the Zionist settler-colonial project. The project to occupy Palestine began in the late 1800s and was politically actualized during the 1948 Nakba (Catastrophe), which resulted in the displacement of 700,000 Palestinians and the theft of 4.2 million acres of land. The Nakba established a system in which Palestinians were treated as subhuman by the Zionist entity, leading to decades of occupation, apartheid, and attempted ethnic cleansing.
- *But isn't this an age-old conflict?*
- Zionism has its roots in 19th century European ideas of ethnonationalism and took on the contours of settler-colonialism prevalent on the continent around this time. The First Zionist Conference took place in 1897. We also refuse to call the violence perpetrated by the Zionist entity a conflict, as this language fails to convey the asymmetry in power between Palestinians and Zionists.
- *Why do some people refer to what's happening in Gaza as a genocide?*
- Because the conduct of the Zionist entity meets the legal criteria of genocide as handed down by the International Criminal Court. For a list of the criteria that need to be satisfied when defining something as a genocide, see our Glossary of Terms below. To understand the context of Gaza specifically, this [resource](#) offers insight on life in Gaza under the blockade as well as the impact of the genocide.
- *But wouldn't Palestinian liberation mean the forced expulsion of all Jews from Palestine?*

- This characterization of Palestinian liberation falsely explains the actions of the resistance as being motivated by antisemitism, framing opposition towards Zionism as part of a primordial enmity which is somehow seen as essentially Muslim or Arab. In actual fact Palestinian liberation requires nothing more than the deconstruction of the settler-colonial state that currently exists on Palestinian land, self-determination for the Palestinian people, and right of return to those Palestinians displaced by the Zionist occupation.
- *Why should this affect my scheduled learning at UC Berkeley?*
- UC Berkeley, and all of the UC system, benefits from investments in companies that profit from military operations, surveillance, or infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Gaza. Berkeley also has academic partnerships with institutions propped up by the Zionist entity which contribute to the violence faced by Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. In 2005, Palestinian Civil Society issued a call for boycott, divestment and sanctions against institutions complicit in the Zionist regime's breaches of international law, which you can learn more about [here](#).

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

- **Apartheid:** A system of institutionalized segregation based on race that existed from 1948-1994 in South Africa. The term is often used to describe the Zionist entity's similar system of racialized discrimination and separation in Occupied Palestine.
- **Checkpoint:** A physical barrier used by the Zionist military forces to effectively control Palestinian movement from various areas.
- **Genocide:** Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group:
 - (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; and
 - (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

- **Hamas:** A Palestinian political entity established at the start of the First Intifada to resist the Occupation Forces.
- **Intifada:** An *intifada* is an Arabic word meaning "uprising" or "shaking off", used in the context of popular uprising or rebellion. The term "Intifada" refers to periods of Palestinian uprisings against Zionist occupation, most notably [the First Intifada \(1987-1993\)](#) and [the Second Intifada \(2000-2005\)](#).
- **Nakba:** The *Nakba*, the Arabic term for “catastrophe”, refers to the violent mass expulsion of Palestinians from their land by Zionists in 1948, serving as the beginning of the habitual dispossession of Palestinians that is fundamental to the Zionist national project.
- **Self-determination:** The right of a group of people, typically with a shared identity, to choose their political status and govern themselves without external interference. A key principle in international law, especially in the context of groups seeking independence or autonomy in the context of decolonization.
- **Settler-colonialism:** A form of colonialism where colonizers establish a permanent presence by settling on land and displacing or eradicating the indigenous population. Unlike other forms of colonialism, where the colonizers might exploit resources and then govern from afar, settler-colonialism involves the ongoing control and domination of the territory, typically accompanied by the imposition of the colonizers' culture, laws, and societal structures. The goal is to annihilate and replace the indigenous population with colonizing settlers.
- **Settler:** In the context of Palestine, an “Israeli” citizen who lives on Palestinian land or takes over a Palestinian home (Similar to European settlers stealing Native American lands).
- **Resistance:** Typically discussed in situations where a people are subject to foreign occupation, colonial domination, or oppressive regimes. Linked to the right to self-determination, which is recognized in international law. Certain UN resolutions, such as Resolution 1514 (1960) on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, and Resolution 3103 (1973) on the principles of international law concerning friendly relations, have affirmed the legitimacy of struggles for self-determination, including the use of armed force by peoples under colonial rule or occupation.
- **Zionism:** A political ideology that calls for the creation and expansion of “Eretz Israel” as a Jewish state in historic Palestine, based on perceived notions of divine right to the land.

HOW PALESTINE CONNECTS TO YOUR FIELD:

This is important as an anti-repression measure. While [policy](#) states that outside material cannot be introduced in lessons, if you can connect it to the topic and demonstrate its relevance, you can argue that you are not in violation.

STEM:

STEM fields are directly complicit in the genocide, particularly in the material ways they contribute to it: from AI software to precise surveillance technologies to horrifically destructive weapons. It is not a stretch to draw tangible lines between the students sitting in desks today, where they will be in ten years, and their potential place as a cog in the US war machine. The role of big tech, surveillance, and AI in the Zionist occupation requires us to examine how these technologies are used for monitoring and controlling Palestinian populations, often with the involvement of major tech companies.

- ***Specific resources:***
- [The Responsible AI Community in Solidarity with Gaza and the Palestinian People](#)
- [No Tech for Apartheid](#)
- ***Sample Exercise:***
- Have students go to investigate.afsc.org and search their dream employers or the top companies in their fields and see the ways they are complicit in various oppressive systems around the world.

Social Sciences & Humanities:

The methods of knowing, learning, and observing in the social sciences and humanities have long aided empires in conquering, dividing, and ruling. This complicity in systems of domination and settler-colonialism is evident in the ongoing genocide in Palestine, particularly in the deafening silence on the issue coming out of Western academia. The lesson plans provided below can help you connect your course material to the violence faced by Palestinians, but while teaching the material we must also never overlook the fact that this genocide has destroyed knowledge-producing institutions in Gaza and directly targets historical and cultural artifacts in an effort to erase Palestinian existence.

- ***Specific resources:***
- [Thematic Chronologies for the Study of Palestine in the Social Sciences](#)
- ***Sample Exercise:***

- Design a simulation where students role-play as ethnographers conducting fieldwork in a Palestinian community. They must navigate ethical dilemmas, power dynamics, and the challenges of accurately representing the voices of those they study.

LESSON PLANS:

General Lesson 1: Introduction to Palestine and Zionism

[Lesson Plan](#) | [PPT Slides](#)

General Lesson 2: Geopolitical Context

[Lesson Plan](#) | [PPT Slides](#)

General Lesson 3: Realities of Apartheid

[Lesson Plan](#) | [PPT Slides](#)

General Lesson 4: The Role of the International Community

[Lesson Plan](#) | [PPT Slides](#)

ANTI-REPRESSION: HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

INSTRUCTORS:

Although university administrators have cracked down on a few GSIs for speaking about Palestine while teaching, the likelihood of directly repressive tactics remains low. If targeted, GSIs can expect emails that might attempt to intimidate or silence; some departments might also threaten discipline for what they allege to be “political indoctrination” for teaching about the genocide.

There are several ways GSIs can teach Palestine and limit university repression on these grounds:

- Tie the subject matter *you* are instructing on back to the Palestinian liberation struggle.
- Add a caveat in your syllabus that mentions this class might cover sensitive issues as it ties the material to the world it is situated in.

If you sense that the chance of repression is high:

- Offering your Teach Palestine section *optionally* and at the end of your class periods to avoid repression on the basis of the requirement that instructors endorse a particular viewpoint.

- Presenting the information “empirically” and “objectively” to avoid allegations of “political indoctrination,” without compromising on your political convictions.

If you face retaliation at a UC, here are the steps to take to protect yourself:

- Immediately file a report with the [Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination \(OPHD\)](#). This puts the University on notice and adds the instance of retaliation to their records. This may be important in future legal claims against the University to serve as evidence that they were aware of these instances. As it is a University office, OPHD is very unlikely to take action.
- Promptly Inform SJP who can connect you with faculty support as well as other GSIs facing the same issue.
- Inform the Berkeley Law student-led Palestine Advocacy and Legal Assistance Project (PALA), which is tracking open OPHD reports. [Link forthcoming]
- Victims of retaliation have the best chance of ensuring protection and workplace security through [our Union’s Grievance Process](#). Unlike OPHD, the grievance process holds the University Accountable to the Academic Student Employee contract. If the University does not come to a settlement in the grievance process, instances may be handled by a neutral third party arbitrator who is not unilaterally decided by the University. GSIs can familiarize themselves with the [Discipline and Dismissal](#) and [Grievance and Arbitration](#) articles.
- File an intake with [PalLegal](#), who has assisted SJP activists over the years in several harassment and retaliation claims.

Policies they may cite against you (taken from an UCB HR letter):

1. [Campuswide email dated October 25, 2023 from the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost](#)
2. [Regents’ Policy 2301](#)
3. [Article 8 – Discipline and Dismissal of the UC/UAW \(BX-Unit\) Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)

STUDENTS:

Unlike employees, students are protected and have significant liberty and leeway to express their opinions at UC Berkeley. However, subtle forms of discrimination can still occur. If students feel they are being targeted or discriminated against, they should

immediately reach out to SJP at info@ucbsjp.org for support as well as make use of the several avenues available to them:

- [Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination \(OPHD\)](#)
- [Student Ombuds Office](#)
- [The Gender Equity Resource Center \(GenEq\)](#)

[1][The cumulative effects of Israel's war on Gaza could mean the true death toll could reach more than 186,000 people, according to a study published in The Lancet medical journal.](#)