

(Re)claiming Language on Palestine in the Media

– a handbook





Sawtuna

Our Voices

London | Washington

“The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.”



Edward Said

“We’re asking for better coverage and better language to describe what’s happening... when we use the wrong language, it really minimizes and reduces the pain of people felt here. And isolates millions... If we’re misrepresenting it through our language, that is an indictment on our journalism.”

Anonymous Journalist
Canada

“Freedom of the press and media is key. On the other hand, so is the measured use of language, and we remind our colleagues that the media can only fulfil its duty to the public if journalists uphold the principals of their profession.”-

International Press Institute



“I know how coverage of Israel and Palestine can work. It’s not that anybody tells you specifically not to cover something, it is just routinely put in the ‘too hard’ basket, with editors fearful of complaints over coverage of the controversial topic.”-

Sophie McNeill

Australia Researcher,
Human Rights Watch





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Introduction: Why Language Matters

The question of Palestine and its ongoing military occupation by Israel continues to be a source of much discussion and debate. This is also the case in the media.

The question of Palestine and its ongoing military occupation by Israel continues to be a source of much discussion and debate. This is also the case in the media.

Whilst its colonisation started over a century ago, it is well documented that over recent years there has been a growing pro-Israeli bias, leading to imbalanced coverage of Palestine within mainstream media outlets. This is particularly the case during periods of heightened international focus, when the state of Israel wages violent attacks against the Palestinian people.

For example, when it comes to reporting about the military occupation's airstrikes on Gaza, which have claimed thousands of civilian lives, the words "clashes" or "violent tensions" are more commonly used by news outlets. With language such as this, the major imbalance of power, weapons, international financial and military support that the occupying force (Israel) has at its disposal, in comparison to those occupied (Palestinians) is completely absent. The responsibility that should be placed on Israel over its violations of international law is not adequately conveyed by the more common terms, which, more often than not, make it seem like two sides are fighting each other on equal grounds.

This phenomenon has, in the past, been flagged a number of times and research continues to be publicly available. For example, *The Centre for Media Monitoring* reported that between 2018-19 there had been 182 accounts of omission related to the political events that had occurred involving the systematic targeting of Palestinians. Large platforms including the *AFP, Reuters and AP* wire services were responsible for 143 of these infractions.

It is also impossible to ignore the considerable role that the media plays in shaping public discourse. It has an important impact on the public's response to, and understanding of, political developments in Palestine, both at a local and international level.

As the International Press Institute has identified¹ in the past on the question of Israel and Palestine, "the language that reporters use in covering this or any conflict can perpetuate stereotypes, can incite hatred or can simply deflect from more pressing issues. How this conflict is covered is important, almost as important as what is covered."

The focus on language is therefore important because linguistic omission, dilution, deflation, and derailment of the political realities in Palestine within the media, is symptomatic of a wider repression and even criminalisation of Palestine solidarity across our societies. The impacts of the continued censorship and silencing of accurate coverage of Palestine within this space therefore only strengthens pro-Israel efforts and undermines the wider defence of human rights.

It seems that around the world the trend of censorship and repression of any Palestine-related organising has been gaining strength. One of the main targets of the solidarity movement have been Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns. The call by 170 Palestinian civil society groups, issued in 2005, to apply international pressure on Israel over its crimes against the Palestinian people has been met with viscous opposition by pro-Israel and right-wing movements. From Europe to the US, one of the principal ways in which these attacks are carried out has been through the weaponization of antisemitism and its conflation with anti-Zionism.

As Israel continues to violate international law through the annexation of Palestinian land and the expansion of illegal settlements, as its siege on Gaza and years of military attacks against civilians in the strip continue, any defence for its actions is becoming harder to maintain on the international stage and in public debate. The strategy by Israeli authorities is less about winning a narrative, and more about silencing through the criminalisation of Palestine solidarity work. The policing of language related to Palestine and its liberation is a central aspect of this process. The media has been a crucial vehicle through which individuals, activists, groups and organisations have been delegitimised in this way.

Interventions within the media, which refuse to bend to these imperatives and cover the situation in Palestine accurately, by placing it within broader historical processes and contemporary power dynamics, are therefore crucial to the ongoing work of highlighting human rights abuses by the Israeli state and the plight of the Palestinian people. In addition, it also plays an important role in the defence of civil liberties and press freedoms globally. Indeed, restricting the space for public discussion about and of Palestine is not only detrimental for Palestinians and their allies, it also undermines the independence of the press and the right to free expression and debate.

How we can challenge dominant narratives and undo the whitewashing of Israel's crimes against Palestinians in the media

As long as the occupation of Palestine continues, so too does the responsibility of all those who work in the media to report the truth about Israel's actions.

Any platform which claims to inform the public, should do justice to the facts on the ground – highlighting that bloodshed, systematic discrimination, forced displacement, annexation of land, the imprisonment of Palestinians who resist their oppression, and violations of international law all continue to take place.

Media workers and journalists can play an active role in reshaping the debate, all the while ensuring freedom of the press and expression, by implementing changes that can begin with actions as small as consciously choosing the language used in their coverage on Palestine.

Reclaiming Language on Palestine in the Media: A Handbook provides a tool to support those who seek to actively change how we approach our reporting on the Israeli occupation, its colonisation of Palestinian land, and its infringement of Palestinians' fundamental rights.

The development of the handbook has been a long process of consultation with experts who work in the field of print, broadcast and digital media platforms, some of whom have previously addressed issues covered here, as well as with academic experts on the region.

Just as crucially, the engagement with organisations, activists, lawyers and academics that participate in the rich tapestry of the Palestine solidarity movement internationally, has been the catalyst for this work. The many years of – ongoing – repression that all of them have witnessed, experienced first-hand, and resisted, have guided the project.

This handbook is certainly not the end of our efforts towards changing media coverage on Palestine. However, we hope that it is an important step in the process, and one that can strengthen the confidence amongst those individuals in the sector who believe that the media can play a positive role in supporting the ongoing efforts to free Palestine from Israel’s colonial occupation. Moreover, our hope is that this handbook will serve as a basis for discussions and – crucially – action.

Impartiality and Palestinian voices

The work needed in this area is not limited to undoing the damage caused by the increasingly biased coverage of Palestine, or to simply replacing certain words that play a part in this process. The active inclusion of Palestinian voices, which can express better than anyone the reality of the situation, inevitably leads to a transformation of the public debate, the highlighting of problematic terminology, and a challenge to the status quo that seems to have made even the very mention of Palestine² controversial. During the Israeli assault on Gaza and Jerusalem in the spring of 2021, for example, the presence of Palestinian voices, like those of the al-Kurd siblings, played a crucial role in centring Palestinian experiences of dispossession and state repression in media coverage.

Unfortunately, such examples remain the exception. Palestinian American Associate Professor at the University of Arizona, Maha Nassar, who analysed articles published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Republic* and *The Nation*, across the span of 50 years (1970–2019) of coverage on the Israeli occupation, concluded that:

“Editorial boards and columnists seem to have been quite consumed with talking about the Palestinians, often in condescending and even racist ways – yet they somehow did not feel the need to hear much from Palestinians themselves.”

Furthermore, the problematic view that if news wires include Palestinian voices the coverage would be inaccurate and impartial – a worry that does not appear to exist when it comes to Israeli commentators – has only reinforced the false idea that the occupation is in fact a war that is being fought by a ‘western’ state against an Arab one, or simply against the more nebulous concept of ‘terrorism’.

In this handbook, we are interested in foregrounding the facts of Palestinian lives, which are increasingly being marginalised and silenced. To do so requires the voices of those who have been targeted by Israel’s colonial project for over a century, to be given a fair hearing and access to media platforms. Readers and audiences deserve to understand what is happening, especially given the complicity in Israel’s ongoing colonial project of so many governments around the world.

This emphasis on the facts of Palestinian lives is important because it challenges not only its silencing by mainstream media outlets, but also raises critical questions about the stated objectivity of these same institutions in justifying it.

As Emily Wilders, a US-based journalist who was fired from AP for publishing the following observation on twitter, notes:

“objectivity” feels fickle when the basic terms we use to report news implicitly stake a claim. [U]sing “[I]srael” but never “[P]alestine,” or “war” but not “siege and occupation” are political choices—yet media make those exact choices all the time without being flagged as biased.

The Methods of Censorship

Whilst the repression of language on Palestine does not *necessarily* occur through the direct distortion of events, the terms used to describe them, as well as their ordering, can present a very different picture to the reality faced by Palestinians.

Several trends can be identified in the mainstream coverage on Palestine, which prevent accurate accounts of this reality:

1. A conflict between two equal sides

Some terms and/or selected facts fail to reflect the imbalance of power between the occupied (Palestinians) and occupier (Israel). For example:

- The refusal to use terms that are regularly adopted by human rights groups, legal experts and academics in relation to the historical and political context – i.e. apartheid, occupation, or settler colonialism – because they are labelled as ‘loaded’.
- Deflection and disproportionate focus on particular parts of the news story, means the wider context that readers/audiences require to understand specific developments is completely absent. For example, Palestinian violence is systematically presented without being framed as a response to Israeli occupation or colonisation, and in the process depoliticised. Rockets fired from Gaza are presented as an existential threat to Israel, whereas the fact that they emerge as responses to an ongoing, decade and a half long, illegal siege, with disastrous consequences for the economy, healthcare, infrastructure, and living conditions of the strip remains absent from the coverage.

2. Palestine as a haven for terrorism

Words selected can reinforce racist tropes associated with the Palestinian people and negative historical notions on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Terms that denote violence and terrorism are depended on to weaken sympathy and solidarity with their demand for liberation. They also homogenise the entire Palestinian population, irrespective of their actions, or lack thereof. They further ignore the rights of an occupied people, inscribed in international law, to resist their oppression, whilst providing a justification for Israel's violence, which is in turn framed as an act of anti-terrorism. Hilary Aked, researcher on the Israel lobby and anti-BDS movements asserts:

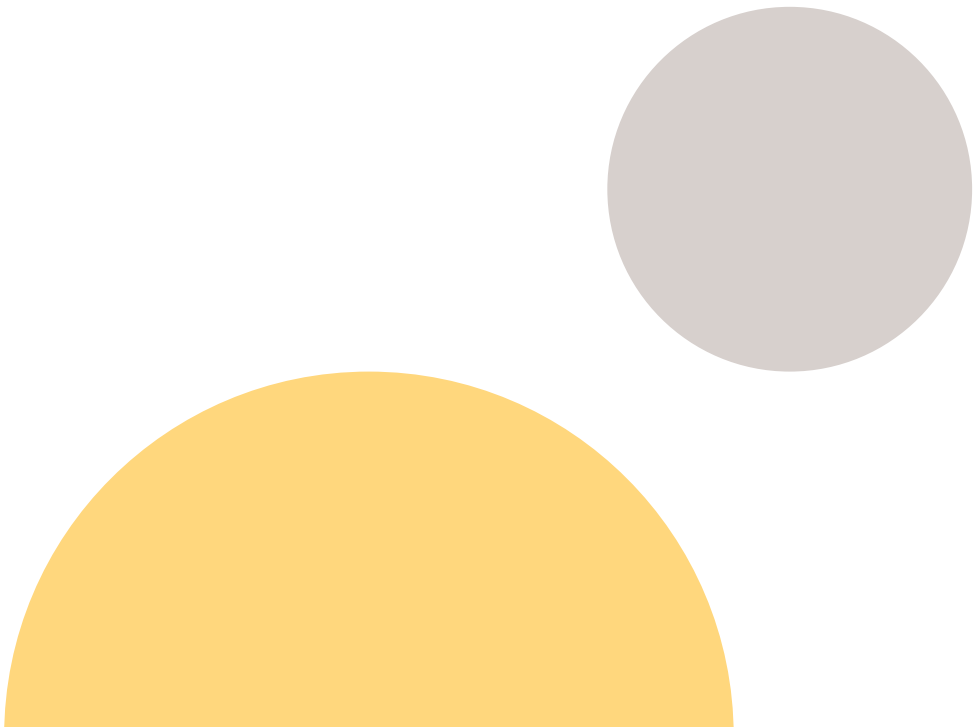
“If the ‘war on terror’ has stimulated the growth of Islamophobia, it has also accelerated the opportunistic positioning of Israel as the ‘front-line’ of the ‘war on terror’ by Israeli politicians and Israel-advocates.”

3. A religious conflict

Particular words that remain within a limited framework of religion reinforce the idea that the occupation is in reality a fight between Jewish people and Muslims. The disproportionate focus on particular cities like Jerusalem and Hebron, for example, as the root cause of the conflict stresses the idea further. This omits the very nature of the issue, which is political, and reinforces stereotypes about religious groups and their propensity for violence.

Additionally the inaccurate narrative is dangerous on many other grounds:

- It depicts all Palestinians as Muslims, and generally homogenises both Jewish and Muslim people.
- It gives the impression that the issue is intractable.



Gaza: a Case Study

A times the very order of the words used in headlines will present the idea that Israel's systematic violence against Palestinians is a necessary act of self-defence against actual or potential attacks.

When we consider that on average, eight out of ten people do not read past the headline of an article, and six out of ten will share the link to a story on social media without reading the content, the way issues are framed and expressed – often in soundbite size – are of considerable importance.

International audiences were witness to misleading depictions of Israel's attacks on Gaza for the last two decades in particular: the 2008–09 military attacks on Gaza, during Israel's Operation Cast Lead; the renewed assaults during Operation Protective Edge in 2014; in 2018 following protests by Palestinians who marched for the right of refugees to return to their homes as enshrined in international law; and most recently in May 2021 following the Israeli raid of Al-Aqsa mosque and their subsequent airstrikes into besieged Gaza. The cumulative effect of these depictions should not be ignored either, with audiences being repeatedly told that the cyclical nature of these assaults is located not in Israel's policy of 'mowing the lawn' as policy makers have called it, but instead in Palestinian's refusal to live peacefully, 'side by side'.

The depictions of the military assaults by Israel provide much insight into some of the failures and bias involved in media coverage of the subject. However, while an instructive and striking example, it is also important to note that these problems are certainly not limited to the reporting of events in Gaza, but relate to all mentions of Palestine and Palestinians everywhere, including amongst the diaspora/displaced majority.

The headlines below were written in reference to Israel's attacks on the Palestinians in May 2021 and October 2023. The examples demonstrate the various forms of repressive linguistic practices which are expressed in print, broadcast and digital coverage of Israel's actions.

Exchange of fire on Gaza border kills Palestinian, wounds 3 Israel soldiers

MailOnline

The reality that the Israeli state and military are not confronting a Palestinian state and military, but an occupied stateless people is not reflected in this headline. In addition, while specific numbers are given for Israeli soldiers, the (much larger) number of Palestinian deaths are omitted. Alongside the fact that the Israeli military assault is reduced to exchange of fire, the impression of equilibrium of forces is created. This fails the duty of adequately and even truthfully communicating information about the region.



‘22 killed’ in Gaza Strip air strikes after Hamas fires rockets towards Jerusalem



The headline fails to explain that the 22 killed were Palestinians. Furthermore, it is Hamas rockets which are flagged, highlighting a terrorist narrative in the minds of readers. The fact that rockets were fired in response to forced displacement of people in East Jerusalem and the occupation of the Al Aqsa mosque – both war crimes – is also obscured by the fact that the headline presents the rockets as its starting point. This has the cumulative effect of presenting Israel as a victim defending itself, rather than the military occupier and aggressor.



Gaza conflict spills into the West Bank as settler attacks and clashes leave dozens of Palestinians dead



The use of the word “conflict’ in this headline denotes equal footing of the occupied under the occupier. It makes no reference to Israel as one of the most militarised occupying nations, with billions of dollars worth of support from the US.

The second part of the headline takes a further passive approach when referring to Palestinians “left dead”, as opposed to highlighting that those killed were victims of a targeting killing by Israeli settlers. The reference to “conflict spilling into West Bank” is flagrantly inaccurate and misinformed when the proposed primary perpetrator in the conflict is Hamas, who do not exist in the West Bank.



As Gazans Scrounge for Food and Water, Hamas Sits on a Rich Trove of Supplies

The New York Times

This New York Times headline makes no reference to why Gazans are without food or water. No reference is made to the fact that Gaza is the longest besieged city of the 21st century, nor that Israel is the occupying power enforcing the siege. No reference is made to Israel's blockade that cut off vital resources and left the territory facing a humanitarian disaster on 9 October 2023, where the most densely populated place on earth was left without food, water and electricity while the bombardment continues.



Bias

Disproportionate focus is often noted within any coverage on Palestine, especially during periods of heightened attacks by the Israeli state. Airtime is more likely to be given to Israel's narrative and justifications. It is explained away as an exercise in objective, balanced reporting that allows audiences to "hear from both sides".

Greg Philo and Mike Berry's *More Bad News From Israel*,³ one of the largest and most rigorous studies in this area, has demonstrated in detail the disparity between how Palestinians and Israelis are depicted in television news across Europe.



Mohammed El-Kurd 
@m7mdkurd



Facebook has shut down two of the most prominent news agencies reporting from Jerusalem on the ground. [#FbCensorsJerusalem](#)

6:02 pm · 24 Nov 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

1,770 Retweets **97** Quote Tweets **4,042** Likes



Social Media

Traditional media outlets are not the sole culprits here. Similar, and perhaps more obviously repressive, processes are at play in the sphere of social media. During Israel's 2021 attacks on Gaza, which followed attempts to evict Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem, social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter came under a lot of criticism following accusations that they were censoring the mention of Palestine and any related content that negatively depicted Israel's actions.

Digital rights group 7amleh recorded around 500 posts that had been removed across Instagram and Facebook during the onslaught on Gaza. Some

accounts were even reported to have been suspended. This included prominent Sheikh Jarrah resident, and one of TIMES magazine's 100 list of most influential people in the world, Mona al-Kurd.

Given the role that social media plays in informing and reporting political events, it has become an important source of news for many around the world especially in countries where press freedoms are not respected. Given we are witnessing a similar pattern of language repression of content related to Palestine our attention must also be focused on challenging any and all attempts of censorship on these digital platforms.

***Facebook under
fire as human
rights groups claim
'censorship' of pro-
Palestine posts*** _____



**The
Guardian**

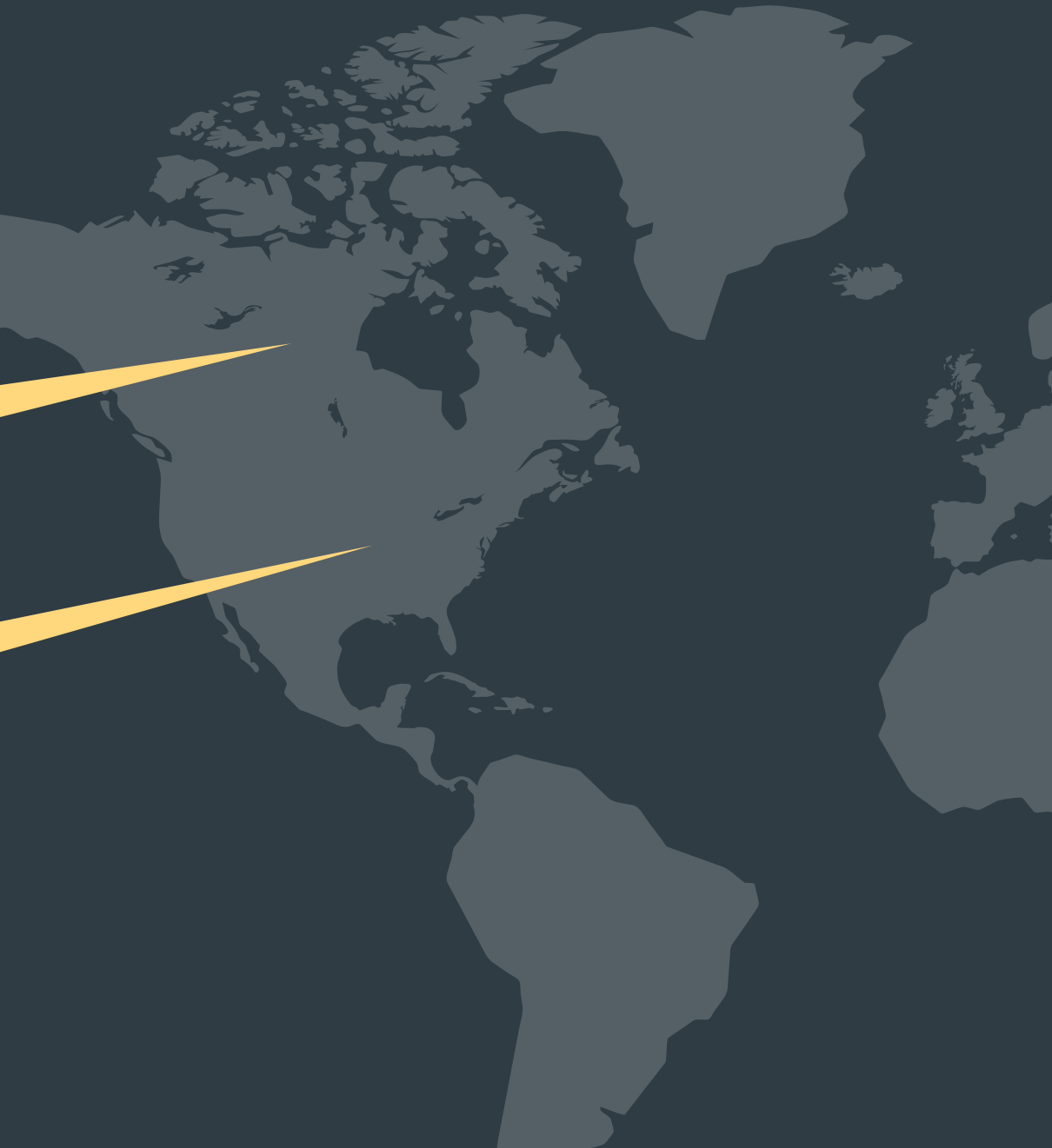
Map of Language Repression



**Canadian journalists fear
retaliation for criticizing
coverage of Israeli attacks
on Gaza**



**Outcry after Associated Press
journalist fired amid row over
pro-Palestinian views**



Map of Language Repression



ABC bans use of
the word 'apartheid'
for Israel

BBC under fire for
'censoring' Palestine lyric



How Palestine
advocacy is silenced
in the Netherlands



Germany's Deutsche
Welle censors critical
reporting of Israel



Self-censorship
in France



Understanding the history of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) **Definition of Anti-Semitism**

In 2002 the Centre for Research on Antisemitism produced a report for the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), which it declined to publish publicly.

Media reports suggested that EUMC board members were unhappy that the report included protests and criticisms of Israel as cases of anti-Semitism. The decision not to publish was criticised by the World Jewish Congress, who accused the organisation of not being prepared to deal with “anti-Semitism among Muslims.”



A “working definition” was later proposed to the EUMC listing the following examples as being anti-Semitic.

- Accusing Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g. claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jewish people collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

Before being published as a draft, the definition was amended to change these examples from being anti-Semitic, to 'could' be anti-Semitic based on 'taking into account the overall context'.

The EUMC however never officially adopted the definition. The organisation was later replaced by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA). In 2010, this successor organisation clarified that "The FRA has no plans for any further development' of the 'Working Definition.'" and that "[S]ince its development we are not aware of any public authority in the EU that applies it."

The definition would find new life in student politics. Pro-Israel student groups pushed for students' unions and universities to adopt the definition in the late 2000s. The National Union of Students (NUS), which represents college and university students across the UK, adopted the definition in 2007 and encouraged other students' unions to do so. In 2011, the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU), which represents lecturers and college workers, voted to reject the definition as it conflated criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism.

Following, a pro-Israel activist, Ronnie Fraser, sued the UCU for anti-Semitic harassment, the judge ruled in favour of UCU, describing the suit as "an impermissible attempt to achieve a political end by litigious means." The court also ruled that "a belief in the Zionist project or an attachment to Israel" was "not intrinsically a part of Jewishness."

Despite these attempts, the EUMC working definition never attained much further institutional support.

The definition resurfaced under a new name in 2016, when the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance decided to adopt the 38-word definition, though without the examples relating to Israel. Despite this, the full text including the examples are now generally referred to in the media and across institutions as the "IHRA Definition

of Antisemitism”. However, the working definition has continued to be presented – and in some cases adopted – alongside these examples.

In October 2016 the UK Parliament’s Home Affairs Committee considered adopting the definition, but decided to only provisionally endorse it with the following caveats:

- It is not anti-Semitic to criticise the Government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent.
- It is not anti-Semitic to hold the Israeli Government to the same standards as other liberal democracies, or to take a particular interest in the Israeli Government’s policies or actions, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent.

The UK Government rejected these recommendations and endorsed the following definition without qualification:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

The impacts of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism

The IHRA definition of anti-Semitism is a non-legally binding working definition. In practice, however, this caveat has mattered little in how it has been presented in public debate. Moreover, this distinction might feel almost theoretical at times, considering the negative impacts that it has had on censoring Palestine solidarity.

The vagueness of the definition has left it open to interpretation – and therefore to political exploitation – and instead of countering growing antisemitism, it has been used to target Palestine activism and opposition to Zionism. Even the definition’s original author raised his concerns about how it was used to delegitimise Palestine solidarity activism on US campuses.

Following the UK government, as well as the Labour Party endorsements of the definition, the pro-Israel lobby has made concerted efforts towards applying pressure on other public bodies to do the same. This includes universities, students’ unions and local authorities.

The repression has been carried out specifically through the working definition’s accompanying examples of anti-Semitism including: “claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour” and “applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation”. Discussion on Zionism and Israel’s crimes in Palestine is therefore undermined, because it imposes a pre-defined conclusion, which states that the

fact that millions of Palestinians were expelled from their land following the creation of Israel in 1948; live in besieged in Gaza or under military occupation in the West Bank; or that those who live within Israel's borders face 65 discriminatory laws – for no other reason than their being Palestinian – cannot by definition be considered racist.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), Jews for Justice for Palestine and Free Speech on Israel raised in their Toolkit: How to lobby on the IHRA definition of antisemitism⁴ that the definition is the newest strategy being used to silence Palestine solidarity efforts.

They assert that:

“This conflation undermines democratic discourse by attempting to limit freedom of expression but also demeans the struggle against antisemitism. These attempts to conflate antisemitism and criticism of Israel have long been employed by supporters of Israel who seek to defend the state from scrutiny of its nature, and practice of oppression of the Palestinian people.”



Universities

Universities have been a key target for implementing the IHRA definition because they are seen to be an important avenue for Palestine solidarity activism.

Through attempts to impose the definition across higher education, the government has attempted to shut down political debate and criminalise Palestinian activism. It does so in order to defend its interests in the Middle East and at the same time weaken resistance to its policies at home.

In Professor Rebecca Ruth Gold 's overview of the IHRA definition she highlights through the citation of an eminent jurist, that institutions that censor speech critical of Israel "may find themselves in breach of UK and EU laws pertaining to academic freedom".

Key events

- In 2017, then British universities minister Jo Johnson instructed Universities UK (UUK) to disseminate the IHRA definition across the higher education system with the particular aim of repressing the annual Israeli Apartheid Week events which had taken place on UK campuses since 2005.
- In 2020, universities in the UK were ordered by the country's then education secretary Gavin Williamson, to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)'s working definition of antisemitism. They were threatened with government sanctions if they failed to do this.
- In February 2021, the University College London's academic board rejected the IHRA working definition, following a report by senior academics in the field who warned that it could have "potentially deleterious effects on free speech, such as instigating a culture of fear or self-silencing on teaching or research or classroom discussion of contentious topics".

Criticism

- David Feldman, the director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, called the definition “bewilderingly imprecise”⁵ in 2016 and later called on the government not to impose a “faulty definition”⁶ on universities.
- 122 Palestinian and Arab academics, journalists and intellectuals⁷ published an open letter raising concerns about the definition “side-lining the very real threat to Jews coming from right-wing white nationalist movements in Europe and the US”. They also condemned it for attempting to take away the right of Palestinians to name their oppression and fight against it.
- Kenneth Stern, the original author of the working definition, said that the definition is not being used in the way that it was intended. He wrote about his concerns over its weaponisation by “right-wing Jewish groups” and the delegitimisation of Palestine solidarity activism.

To summarise:

The IHRA definition is imprecise, has poor legal standing, and is being mobilised as part of an assault on basic civil liberties and academic freedoms. In doing so, it has ended up being a hindrance to an effective fight against antisemitism and racism more broadly.

This overview is specific to the UK because it serves as an important case study to those continuing or seeking to exploit the definition, as well as those resisting its repressive impacts internationally.

Timeline: International Repression of Palestine Solidarity





2011

Poland's growing Palestine movement faces anti-Semitism smears ⁸



2012

Why is Palestine solidarity being criminalized on California campuses? ⁹



2016

Ontario's move against the BDS movement is an attack on free speech ¹⁰

Suspension of controversial Palestine class at UC Berkeley sparks debate ¹¹



2017

Switzerland suspends funding of Palestinian NGO ¹²

Groups slam US states' crackdown on Israel boycotts ¹³



2018

Denmark to suspend funding to BDS groups ¹⁴

American pro-Israel lobby girds for Al Jazeera exposé ¹⁵

Belgian prime minister smears filmmaker Ken Loach as “anti-Semitic” ¹⁶



2019

**Germany designates BDS
Israel boycott movement as
anti-Semitic** ¹⁷

**How one German political party is
fighting Israel's BDS crackdown** ¹⁸

**Vienna museum cancels Palestine
event with leader of South African
anti-apartheid struggle** ¹⁹

**US Senate advances controversial
anti-BDS legislation** ²⁰

**U.K. Plans to Pass
Anti-B.D.S. Law** ²¹



2020

Repression of speech and scholarship on Palestine needs to end ²²

EU spreads more lies about BDS ²³

Austrian crackdown on Palestinian NGOs signals slide into tyranny ²⁴

UAE Starts Crackdown on Opponents of Peace Deal with Israel ²⁵

Dozens of Palestinians face ‘terrorism court’ in Saudi Arabia ²⁶

In first, Spanish state calls attempts to boycott Israel a form of anti-Semitism ²⁷



2021

France asks police to ban pro-Palestinian protest in Paris ²⁸

Anti-Israel protests in Germany prompt calls for antisemitism crackdown ²⁹

Dutch stop funding Palestinian NGO, question Israeli charges ³⁰

Moroccan police crack down on Palestine Land Day protest ³¹

Biden administration backs contentious IHRA definition of anti-Semitism ³²

US: New York state puts Ben & Jerry's 'on notice' over Israel settlement boycott ³³



2022

UK education secretary says students chanting “from the river to the sea” should be reported to the police ³⁴

Germany bans Nakba Day demonstrations ³⁵

Vandals attack artwork of Palestinian artist in Germany ³⁶



2023

Germany bans Nakba Day demonstrations again ³⁷

UK plans anti-BDS law ³⁸

UK Home Secretary says waving Palestinian flag may be a criminal offence ³⁹

French police ban pro-Palestine protest ⁴⁰

Social media platforms Facebook, Instagram & TikTok accused of ‘shadow-banning’ pro-Palestine content ⁴¹

France orders deportation of Palestinian activist ⁴²

UK Home Secretary calls pro-Palestine demos “hate marches” ⁴⁴

US Rep proposes bill to ban Palestinians entering US ⁴⁵

Timeline: The Occupation of Palestine

1917

Creation of the Balfour Declaration by the British Mandate for Palestine provides the foundation for a Jewish state in Palestine.

1948

The Nakba: 700,000 Palestinians (80%) were expelled and their land taken upon the creation of Israel.

1956

Suez Canal nationalised by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Israeli, British and French troops invade Egypt. US and Soviet Union back peace deal halts fighting.

1964

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is formed.

1967

The Six-Day War launched involving Israel, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. Israel occupies the Gaza Strip, Sinai, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem. Over 300,000 Palestinians are displaced.

1982

Israel invades Lebanon. Hundreds of Palestinians killed in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila by Israeli-backed Lebanese Christian militias kill.

1987

First Intifada launches.

1993

First Intifada ends with Israel and PLO signing the Oslo Accords.

2000

Second Intifada launches.

2005

Second Intifada ends.

2006

Lebanon War/July War: between Israel and Hezbollah. Hamas victory over rival party Fatah in the Palestinian parliament leads to political crisis and fighting. Hamas takes control of Gaza.

2008

Operation Cast Lead:

2012

Operation Pillar of Defence: Israel launches military attacks on Gaza

2014

Operation Protective Edge: Israel launched military assault on Gaza

2017

Jerusalem recognised as capital of Israel by the US Trump administration, announces the move of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv.

2018

Israeli forces shoot over 170 Palestinian protestors and launch raids in Gaza along the barrier with Israel.

2021

Israeli police raid al-Aqsa Mosque following weeks of Israeli settler protests and attempts to evict Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. Israel launches airstrikes onto Gaza.

2022

Escalation of the Israeli army's shoot-to-kill policy. From the beginning of April to December 2022, Israeli attacks on Palestinians constituted 62.8% of the total violence witnessed in the West Bank.

Israeli Custodian General planned six new Israeli settler neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem.

Israeli policy-makers move towards further enshrining citizenship laws for the obstruction of Palestinian family unification and community-building.

Raids on Al-Aqsa Mosque increased during April 2022.

2022

Veteran Palestinian-American journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh, is shot dead by Israeli forces as she was covering an Israeli invasion in Jenin refugee camp. The Israeli military at first denied responsibility for her killing, then attempted to blame Palestinian armed resistance factions for the bullet that killed her as she wore her PRESS vest. The army eventually admitted that the bullet was probably Israeli but that it was “by accident.” Abu Akleh’s coffin was attacked by the Israeli Police during one of the largest processions to take place in Jerusalem.

Another Gaza offensive kills at least 40 Palestinian civilians.

Israeli elections bring Benjamin Netanyahu back into power alongside extreme right-wing parties within the ruling coalition, including the Jewish Power Party. This government is one of the most right-wing governments in Israel’s history.

2023

Following a surprise offensive by Hamas on October 7, which resulted in the killing of 1200 Israelis and the taking of 240 hostages, the Israeli military declared 'war'. Palestinian officials reported 18,000 tonnes of bombs being dropped on the already besieged Gaza Strip. Gaza's oldest church – Saint Porphyrius Church – and numerous hospitals, including Al Ahli hospital, where Palestinians were seeking refuge – were bombed. At least 40,000 people have been either killed, injured, or have gone missing since Israel's bombardment of the Gaza Strip began on 7 October. More than 11,000 Palestinians had been killed as of November 2023, more than half of whom are children.

Explaining the glossary

The glossary below is a list of the terms that are often used within political, academic and media platforms in reference to the historic and ongoing events/processes related to the occupation of Palestine.

The list of terms range in use. Some of those presented here are more commonly adopted within pro-Israel framing, or have been normalised within media spaces as being neutral and impartial, but in practice normalise the occupation and the oppression of Palestinians. Some of the words presented here, on the contrary, accurately reflect the reality of the context and are adopted by human rights groups, academics who specialise on the region, legal experts and can also found in international law. The aim is therefore to present a list of ***“Do’s and Don’ts”***.

The hope is that this glossary will serve as a guide for its users, when navigating coverage on Palestine.

It does so by providing short definitions and/or explanations, as well as a summary about the impact that using them or avoiding them can have.

We recognise that words, terms and expressions change over time, especially in response to shifting political realities.

However, we believe that the terms presented below effectively reflect the current discourse in both media and academic coverage, and that they are all relevant to understanding and engaging with the contemporary context.

“Journalists should understand and choose their words in a way that is sensitive to the cultural and political realities of this long conflict”

Alison Bethel McKenzie
IPI Executive Director & Publisher

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Annexation

Other similar terms:

Land grab

The term describes Israel's decades-long process of permanent integration of Palestinian land into its national territory, through the expansion of Israeli settlements, the occupation of land, and the creation of so-called facts on the ground. This is a violation of international law.

Israel's intention to continue to annex Palestinian land is illustrated starkly in the fact that it refuses to recognise its own national borders – indicating that it expects these to continue to change.

UN experts have stated that the Israeli coalition government's plans, which were announced in 2020, to further annex Palestinian territory in the West Bank would lead to a "21st century apartheid".

Apartheid

The "crime of apartheid" is defined by the 1973 Apartheid Convention as "inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them." Apartheid is considered a crime against humanity.

Human Rights Watch concluded last year (2021) that Israel is committing apartheid and persecution against Palestinians under its rule. Numerous Palestinian and even some Israeli NGOs (Yesh Din and B'Tselem) share this view, as does the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the South African Human Sciences Research Council.

Examples of apartheid policies used against Palestinians include:

- land confiscation, targeted specifically at Palestinians as Palestinians.
- the deprivation of residency rights and building permits for Palestinians as Palestinians, which has led to the forced displacement of thousands.
- the denial of civil rights to Palestinians as Palestinians including freedom of assembly and association

Nobel Peace laureate Desmond Tutu criticised Israeli policies toward the Palestinian people, comparing Israel's behaviour to that of the apartheid regime that discriminated against black South Africans.

Why the term should be used:

- As with colonialism, using apartheid allows one to describe current power relations and

structures of oppression effectively, and avoids de-contextualising specific events and confrontations.

- However, describing Israel as an “apartheid state”, has no meaning in international law, which is often used to deflect these accusations. Apartheid is a crime that is being committed by the Israel state.

Arab-Israeli Conflict

This is used to describe the political tensions between Israel and Arab countries across the Middle-East and North Africa, which developed in response to, first Zionist, then Israeli, colonisation of Palestinian land.

Why the term should be used with caution:

- It could imply that the entirety of the Arab world is at war/engaged in conflict with the state of Israel. This framing

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also serves to present Israel as weak and isolated in a larger Arab region.

- It obscures the fact that Israel has forged diplomatic relationships with several Arab states including: Bahrain, the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Morocco.
- Whilst the term may be used to refer to a specific historical period, the word 'conflict' nevertheless overlooks important specificities. It suggests that there are two opposing and even equal sides which are fighting each other and provides no explanation about the historical sources of the tensions between the nations involved.

Blockade

Other terms used:

siege, embargo

This term describes the ongoing prevention of free movement of goods and people by land, air and sea, imposed on Gaza by Israeli and Egyptian authorities since 2005, and intensified in 2007. Palestinians living in the strip are prevented from having access to any other territory, without the explicit agreement of the blockading forces.

The siege has severely affected living conditions by restricting the entry of crucial goods like healthcare equipment, medicine, and construction materials. All of these are urgently needed. This need increases each time that Israel launches a military attack, destroying crucial infrastructure including hospitals, universities, schools and homes, in addition to killing and injuring thousands.

What to be aware of:

- The restrictions to Palestinian movement by land, were put in place in 2005 following Israeli dismantlement of its settlements. However, Israeli and Egyptian authorities officialised and intensified the blockade in 2007, following Hamas' electoral victory and the failed take-over by Fatah in the ensuing civil war.

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Checkpoints

This is the network of barriers erected by Israel that Palestinians must cross to travel across the occupied West Bank and into Israel. These can be both permanent (it is estimated that there are currently around 109 of these) and temporary (also known as flying checkpoints or roadblocks).

They are put in place by Israeli authorities in order to make Palestinian movement more difficult, and allows them to shut down not only the connections between the West Bank and Israel, whenever the latter decides it is necessary, but also between different areas in the West Bank itself. Checkpoints create barriers to access of basic needs including education institutions, healthcare services, and places of employment as well as worship.

Background:

In 2020, it was reported by Amnesty International that there were “at least 593 Israeli checkpoints and roadblocks”.

These checkpoints allow the Israeli Army to:

- restrict Palestinian freedom of movement at will.
- hinder economic activity and block villages/towns from the outside world without accountability.
- abuse and humiliations of Palestinians stopped at checkpoints, as well as the mobilisations of checkpoints as forms of collective punishment, are a regular occurrence.

Examples of checkpoints:

- *Checkpoint 300* – main checkpoint for Palestinians working in East Jerusalem and other central cities. It blocks the road between

Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

- *Al-Taybeh* – south of northern Palestinian city of Tulkarem
- *Eyal* – northwestern Palestinian city of Qalqilya
- *Tarqumia* – near Palestinian town of Hebron
- *Qalqilya* – main crossing point between Ramallah and Jerusalem. It is west of Nablus, which is almost completely surrounded by the Separation Wall.

Clashes

This term is used to describe violent confrontations between Israeli forces, like the police or the army or even settlers, and Palestinians.

Why the term should be avoided:

- It implies that the violence of the occupier and the occupied are equitable, and

that both sides are equally culpable. It avoids describing accurately the nature of the confrontation or identifying its causes.

- It removes the Israeli state's responsibility in being the source of violence, which is used to maintain control over Palestinian land and the Palestinian people.
- It omits the details of the violence that often takes place, which would otherwise highlight the power imbalance that exists. For example, the use of rocks and stones by Palestinians fighting off house demolitions, versus Israeli security forces using bulldozers, sophisticated weapons and heavily armoured vehicles in order to forcibly displace Palestinian citizens.

Colonisation

This is defined as “control by one power over a dependent area or people.”

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It happens when one nation subjugates another, conquering its people and exploiting it, while forcing its culture and language upon the indigenous population. It involves the exertion of a nation's political and economic control over another people or area.

Israel is intrinsically linked to colonialism in that its establishment was legitimised by the Balfour Declaration, when the British Empire promised to facilitate the establishment of a 'national home for the Jewish people' in Palestine, which was under British rule from 1918 to 1948.

Moreover, the Zionist movement actively described itself as colonising Palestine. For example, in 1899, the Zionist Congress founded the Jewish Colonial Trust to fund Zionist settlement of Palestine, the Jewish Colonial Trust would go to become the National Bank of Israel. The Palestine Jewish Colonization

Association was founded in 1924 to facilitate purchase of land in Palestine for the construction of Jewish settlements. Even after the creation of the Israeli state, up until the late 1950s, it was not uncommon to see pro-Israeli reports of the colonisation of Palestinian land within the borders of the Israeli state.

Because Israel aims not only to subjugate and control Palestine and Palestinians, but also permanently settle its population on Palestinian land, it is more accurately described as a settler colony.

It is only with the growing anti-colonial struggles of the 1950s onwards, and the successful decolonisation of the majority of Europe's former colonies, that Israel distanced itself from the term, as it had increasingly negative connotations, even among former colonising nations.

Why the term should be used:

- It accurately describes the historical nature of the establishment of the state of Israel, which is rooted in a process of colonising a territory and people. In turn, it avoids painting current conflicts as either context specific (they are about short term, current disagreements) or as a-historical and unresolvable (religious hatred, or centuries long hatreds).
- It identified the continued process of dispossession and settlement, imposed through Israel's military occupation, as the latest expression of a long term settler colonial process.
- It identifies the power imbalance between Israel and the Palestinians: there is a coloniser (Israel) and the colonised (Palestinians).

Complex Issue

The term is commonly used to describe the political situation between Israel and Palestine and infers that it is difficult to understand by non-specialists or that it would be too lengthy to be contextualised in the available time (perhaps during news coverage). It is also mobilised as a response to evidence of human rights abuses/infringements of international law by Israel, implying that given the right context and the necessary amount of detail, Israel's human rights abuses/infringements of international law would be acceptable or less severe.

Why this should be avoided:

- Israel's military occupation is a well-documented reality, any attempts to paint it differently undermines this important fact that underscores the

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entire historical political situation.

- Israel is the colonial force that instigates and perpetuates violence against Palestinians for the purpose of controlling the land, this is the root cause of the suffering experienced.
- Human rights abuses and infringements of international laws are not context specific.

Confiscations

These terms relate to a systematic method used by Israeli authorities to take properties away from Palestinians, putting ownership in the hands of the occupying forces.

Some of the buildings taken over also include ones donated to Palestinians for humanitarian reasons.

Background:

The Legal and Administrative Matters Law, introduced in 1970,

allows Jewish families to seize properties in East Jerusalem that they claim to have previously owned.

The Absentee Property Law, introduced in 1950 and amended in 1973, prevents Palestinians from retrieving their property if they have been vacant for a prolonged period of time. If Palestinians are unable to access their property, for example because Israel refuses to let them return, the law still applies. It has been one of the main legislative tools by which Israel has dispossessed refugees.

Why this should be approached with caution:

- These words could insinuate that the action is justified because there is a legal reason for Israeli state authorities to intervene and confiscate Palestinian structures.
- There is much less

weight carried by the terms in comparison to 'evictions' and 'demolitions' which highlight that there is no consent in the process of expulsions and destructions of Palestinian properties.

Crimes against Humanity

This term describes a wide array of systematic and deliberate actions targeted at human populations. These include but are not limited to: the forcible transfer of people, deportations, murder, the crime of apartheid, and torture according to Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

An example of Israel being accused by the UN of potentially partaking in such crimes occurred during its 2018 military assault on Gaza, when around 6,000 unarmed civilians/demonstrators were shot dead by Israeli

military personnel. These included journalists, healthcare workers, disabled people and children.

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Deal of the Century

This is the popularly used name for the proposal announced by US President Donald Trump, during a press conference in the White House, alongside then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The 180-page long proposal, entitled Peace to Prosperity, was presented as a “realistic two-state solution”, which would provide the foundations for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. It offered a massively diminished land mass for a potential future Palestinian state, in exchange for international investment.

No Palestinian representatives were involved in developing the proposal, despite Israeli representatives being involved and agreeing to it. The final plan was rejected by the Palestinian Authority.

The proposal sought to:

- formalise Israel’s

extension of sovereignty over the Jordan Valley.

- formalise a considerable number of illegal settlements in other parts of the occupied West Bank.

It also included the possibility of land swaps of highly populated Palestinian areas of Israel to a future potential State of Palestine.

This plan laid the groundwork for the Israeli state to proceed with plans to further annex approximately 33% of occupied Palestinian land.

Amnesty International was amongst the many organisations to declare that the plan would violate international law, as well as the human rights of Palestinians.

Demolitions

The term refers to the destruction of Palestinian properties by Israeli authorities. These include structures that are

inhabited, as well as un-inhabited.

Palestinians are at times made to destroy their own properties by the command of Israeli officials, to avoid having to foot the bill on top of the loss of their home.

At times Israeli authorities demolish Palestinian properties as a punitive measure. For example, family members of a suspected 'terrorist' are likely to have their home destroyed. This form of collective punishment violates international law.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), between 2009-2022 the recorded total of Palestinian structures that have been destroyed across the occupied West Bank, is 8,182. This has led to the displacement of 12,148 Palestinians.

This process is used to facilitate the construction as well as extension of

Israeli settlements, and the intensification of Israeli control over land.

Why this should be used:

- It accurately describes the process of deliberate and calculated destruction of Palestinian properties caused by the Israeli occupying forces.
- The Israeli state often puts the onus on Palestinians, justifying the destruction of properties, for example by blaming them for not having the correct permits. These narratives obscure the fact that it is practically impossible for many Palestinians to get these documents. Moreover, given that these permits are issued by Israel, the state's justification of house demolitions based on the non-issue of the same permits is an example of a rather cruel circular logic.

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Evictions

The term refers to the forced displacement of Palestinians from their houses and/or lands.

This process often takes place through the use of force by Israeli authorities and Israeli settler groups, and can even be justified through the use of the Israeli legal system.

The Israeli state uses expulsions as a tool to clear areas of land in order to facilitate the expansion of their occupation through a variety of means, these include: military or state infrastructure, natural reserves, or making the seized properties available for Israeli settlers.

In East Jerusalem alone, 218 Palestinian properties, where some 970 people reside, are currently (2021) facing eviction, according to the UN. Many of the court cases on which these evictions depend, were filed by settler organisations.

Why this term should be used:

- Israeli settlers facilitating the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes, claim that these properties belong to them, based on spurious historical and/or biblical claims. Instead, these properties belong to Palestinians who are being forced out of their properties because they are not Jewish, in the name of so-called demographic warfare. The nature of this process should be made clear.

Ethnic Cleansing

In 1948, the newly founded State of Israel carried out an organised campaign of ethnic cleansing by expelling approximately 700,000 Palestinians from their country, on the basis of their ethnic – that is Palestinian – identity. This was to ensure that Israel would have a dominant Jewish majority and a

Palestinian minority of not more than 20% of the population.

Israel continues in this path of forcing Palestinians out of their homes and land by force or through the worsening of living conditions so that they have to leave, imprisoning them and also killing them. The ongoing attempts to Judaize Jerusalem and to increase the proportion of Jewish to Palestinian inhabitants is a striking example of the continuation of this process.

Background:

A United Nations Commission of Experts, which looked into violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, defined ethnic cleansing in its interim report as “rendering an area ethnically homogenous by using force or intimidation to remove persons of given

groups from the area.”

The same Commission’s final report defined it as “...a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas.” Ethnic cleansing is considered a crime against humanity.

Richard Falk, United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories, has described Israel’s policies as bearing “characteristics of colonialism, apartheid and ethnic cleansing.” Numerous Palestinian and Israeli historians have similarly described Israel’s actions in 1948 as ethnic cleansing.

Why this should be used:

- This term best describes the systematic nature of the process by which Palestinians are out

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of the territory, for no other reason than their Palestinian identity.

- It emphasises the concerted political strategy used by the Israeli authorities that violates international human rights.
- It highlights historical continuities between the mass expulsions of Palestinians in 1948 and 1967, and the contemporary expulsions of Palestinians, for example in the Naqab/Negev, Jerusalem, and the West Bank.

False Moral Equivalence

The term is used mostly by defenders of Israel's military occupation of Palestine to argue that Palestinian self-defence is not comparable or equivalent to the violence enacted by Israel.

Why this should be approached with caution:

- It is argued that Israel has a moral justification as a legitimate state whilst Palestinians are depicted as civilians or non-state actors partaking in acts of terror.
- Israel's military occupation since 1948, which is sustained by military, economic and diplomatic support from powerful nations like the US mean that its acts of aggression against the Palestinian people are disproportionately heavier. They are not

morally justifiable and this is made clear by the targets and the intentions of the violence, as well as the number of deaths.

Forced Displacement

The term is used to describe the removal of Palestinians out of their homes, properties, and land by Israeli authorities, against their will. The methods used to achieve this include the eviction of Palestinians, the demolition of their properties and/ or making their living conditions so difficult that they are forced to leave.

This involves the displacement of Palestinians within the occupied territories, inside Israel, as well as internationally. The eviction of Palestinian villages in the Negev/ Naqab, the destruction of Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem, the removal of Palestinian farmers in the

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Jordan Valley, or the mass expulsions of Palestinians in 1948 and 1967 are all examples of forced displacement.

Fourth Geneva Convention

Otherwise known as the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Israel and Palestine are both amongst the 196 countries signed up to the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

A number of its articles relate to the protection of people under occupation and the expectations placed on the occupying force. Some examples include:

- Article 49 which prohibits the deportation and forcible transfer of people to other countries, including the occupier's territory.

Israel defies this through the construction of settlements and their continued expansion

through the annexation of occupied Palestinian land, as well as through its forceful displacement of Palestinians and its refusal to let refugees return.

- Article 56 puts medical obligations towards the occupied population by the occupying power.

Israel's use of checkpoints across the occupied West Bank negatively impacts the ability of Palestinians to access urgent and adequate healthcare. A recent example is that Covid-19 vaccinations were also blocked from entering and being distributed in Gaza.

Gaza Strip

Gaza is located on the border with Egypt. Israel and Egypt have enforced an illegal blockade (land, air and sea) since 2007. People and goods are prevented from moving in and out without Israeli and/or Egyptian agreement.

There are approximately 1.9 million people living under harsh restrictions, poverty, poor health and education services, and high unemployment in what has been termed the largest open-air prison in the world. Repeated Israeli military assaults have crippled the strip's infrastructure, including water and electricity installation, and the entrance of materials needed to rebuild, alongside food and medicine, have been severely limited.

Points to consider:

- Avoid using the term 'Gazans' because

this does not provide an understanding of the makeup of the population. It assumes that all Palestinians currently living in Gaza originate from there, omitting the fact that the overwhelming majority of the strip's inhabitants are refugees – people forcibly displaced to the area from other parts of Palestine and their descendants. These refugees have the right, under international law, to return to their homes. This right is denied by Israel.

Genocide

Article 2 of the Genocide Convention defines genocide 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:

- Killing members of the group
- Causing serious

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bodily or mental harm to members of the group

- Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.
- Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Israel is often rhetorically accused of genocide. For example, the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas used to term to describe Israel's attacks on Gaza in 2014. While human rights groups and UN investigations have concluded that Israel has committed crimes against humanity against the Palestinians, they have stopped short of accusing Israel of genocide.

Why this term should be approached with caution:

The Report of the Independent Fact-Finding Committee on Gaza concluded that while Israel's attacks on Gaza "met the requirements for the actus reus of the crime of genocide", they did not constitute genocide as "the main reason for the operation was not to destroy a group, as required for the crime of genocide, but to engage in a vicious exercise of collective punishment... or to subdue the population into a state of submission."

However, it did conclude that "individual soldiers may well have had such an intent and might therefore be prosecuted for this crime."

Ghettoisation

This term describes Israel's systematic containment of Palestinian civilian populations, by confining them to particular areas of land and through the

imposition of restrictions on their movement, residence as well as other activities, for no other reason than their Palestinian identity.

Why this term should be used:

- It highlights the nature of the policies and practices of the Israeli occupation that seek to cut Palestinians off from each other, whether between different areas of the West Bank, between the West Bank and Gaza, between the occupied territories and the lands inside the Green Line, or between highly populated Palestinian areas within Israel (such as the Galilee and the Naqab) and the rest of the territory.
- It describes the collective, structural and spatial ill-treatment of Palestinians, which severely hinders their rights and living conditions.

Golan Heights

This territory sits on border with Syria. Israel seized the Golan following the Six-Day War in 1967. It is estimated that 131,000 Syrians were expelled as a consequence of the war and the subsequent military occupation by Israel.

Israel annexed the Golan Heights in 1981, in contravention of international law. There are currently almost 22,000 Israeli settlers living in illegal settlements on the land, and around 20,000 Syrians who remain living under occupation.

Why it should be used with caution:

- It should be referred to as an occupied territory in accordance with the 1981 United Nations Security Council resolution 497, which refers to Israel as 'the occupying power' on the land. It also asserted that 'the Israeli

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decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without international legal effect'. However, the Golan is often excluded from discussions of the Israeli occupation.

Israel–Palestine Conflict

Other examples include:

Israel–Gaza conflict, Israeli–Palestinian conflict

This is one of the more common terms used to describe Israel’s 73-year-long colonial expansion and occupation of Palestine.

Why the term should be avoided:

- It suggests there are two equal actors involved: Israel and Palestine, omitting that there is no Palestinian state. In doing so it fails to recognise the central reality of the conflict, which is the fact that a state, armed and supported by European and North American states, is fighting a state-less population.
- It infers that an end to the conflict can be

brought about by both sides, rather than by the occupying force, which continues to violate international law through the military occupation of Palestine, settlement expansions, military blockade and assaults on Gaza, and systematic discrimination against Palestinian citizens and non-citizens.

Israeli Right to Self-Defence

The term is used in reference to military and civilian acts of aggression against Palestinians. For example, the phrase has often been mobilised to justify Israeli military assaults on the Gaza strip, claiming that these actions were justified by Palestinian group’s use of rockets against Israel.

Why it should be avoided:

- It often serves as an explanation or

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justification for Israel's use of force because it reinforces the notion that it is constantly under attack and therefore has no choice but to partake in armed violence and military assaults.

- In doing so, it obscures the military imbalance between Israel's military and Palestinian armed groups, as well as the cause of Palestinian armed resistance being the military occupation.
- It varies in use from portraying Israel as an underdog which must protect itself and be protected from the attacks by Palestinians, to the state being involved in a war where both sides are proportionally equipped with weapons and international allies. Both of these claims are factually incorrect.
- Self-defence does not apply to an occupying state's wars against

the people it occupies. Israel has no legal mandate to the use of force when it denies the human rights of Palestinians. Palestinians on the other hand have the right, enshrined in international law, to defend themselves militarily against military occupation.

Israeli Settlements

Areas, communities or clusters of buildings inhabited exclusively by Jewish (overwhelmingly Israeli) populations, which are built over land illegally seized (by settlers or the Israeli state), and are therefore in violation of international law. They are one of the strongest bodies of evidence of Israel's colonial project in Palestine, aiming to settle permanently on the land and displace the indigenous Palestinian population.

Israeli settlements are currently located in the

West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Golan heights. Settlements in the Gaza strip and the Sinai Desert were dismantled.

Background:

Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva convention forbids an occupying power from transferring any part of its civilian population into the occupied territories. Since 1968, Israel has constructed settlements in the OPT, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Desert and moved its civilians into them. It repatriated settlers when it dismantled settlements in Gaza and the Sinai.

The most recent figures (2021) estimate that there are 430,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, 220,000 in East Jerusalem, and 22,000 in the Golan Heights.

This violation of international law has been condemned by multiple UN Security Council resolutions, most recently by Resolution 2334 passed

in 2016, which states that Israel’s settlement activity constitutes a “flagrant violation” of international law.

In 2004, in a landmark ruling on Israel’s separation wall, which annexes Palestinian land and separates some of Israel’s largest settlements from the rest of the West Bank, all 15 judges on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) agreed that Israel’s settlements are illegal under international law.

The report entitled *A Threshold Crossed*, published by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in 2021, notes that Israel’s settlement policies are part of its government’s long standing plan to obstruct Palestinian sovereignty.

What this means in practice:

- All Israeli settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are entitled to

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citizenship and full civil rights, many of whom are recent arrivals from Europe or North America.

- The Palestinians living in the same territory (often for generations) live under Israeli military rule.
- For Jewish citizens of Israel living in settlements, the 'border' with Israel is effectively non-existent, but Palestinians are forbidden from crossing it without an Israeli travel permit, which are only granted based on specific restrictions, discriminating based on age, gender, and political affiliation.
- Palestinians travelling within the West Bank also face being stopped at Israeli military checkpoints and unable to use Israeli only roads, whereas Israeli settlers face no such restrictions.
- Israel has built Israeli-only roads in some areas, which Palestinians are forbidden from using.

Jerusalem

It is often referred to as a city which holds historical significance for the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The tendency to refer to the city simply in terms of its religious importance and history, which attracts pilgrims from around the world, can serve as a distraction from its contemporary political realities, and of Israel's ongoing – illegal – occupation of the city.

Indeed, Israel illegally occupied West Jerusalem in 1948, this was then followed by its occupation of the entire city in 1967 and its unilateral annexation in 1980. Israel describes the city as its 'undivided and eternal capital'.

Points to consider:

Palestinians who were born and live in East Jerusalem are often wrongly referred to as 'East Jerusalemites', which reinforces Israel's

claim over the illegally occupied city and implicitly undermines Palestinian's right to return to West Jerusalem.

Jewish State

This is a term used to describe Israel by those who support Zionism as a political project. It refers to the political foundation of Israel's establishment, premised on the creation of a state, which claims to be not the state of its citizens but of Jewish people worldwide. It does so despite its significant number of non-Jewish citizens ($\pm 20\%$ of its population) and the millions of non-Jewish people living under its military rule. In addition, Jews around the world are supposedly represented by the state in this formulation, despite having no say in its elections.

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Why this term should be avoided:

- It suggests that Israel is a land that is representative of all Jewish people, which many Jewish people within and outside of Israel do not identify with.
- It obscures the nature of Israel as a specific nation state, with its own population, institutions, and language – separate and distinct from other Jewish populations around the world.
- It fails to acknowledge the numerous non-Jewish citizens and subjects of the state as legitimate.

Judaisation

The term is used to refer to the demographic and cultural process used by the Israeli state to make areas less Palestinian and more Jewish. This process involves primarily enforced demographic changes – increasing the number of Jewish people and reducing the number of Palestinians across a given region or area. The demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their properties, as well as the expansion of Israeli settlements, are used to facilitate this process.

Judaisation also includes the erasure of non-Jewish history from the land, such as changing the names of areas and public spaces from Arabic to Hebrew.

Judea and Samaria

Judea and Samaria is a term used by Israeli settlers and their allies to refer to the territory internationally known as the West Bank – not including East Jerusalem.

Why the term should be avoided:

These are biblical references that denote exclusive Israeli-Jewish ownership of the land, and removes Palestinians from having any connection or claim to it by erasing the two-thousand-year history elapsed since.

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Nakba

This is an Arabic term that means the ‘Catastrophe’, and denotes the forced removal and displacement of over 700,000 Palestinians from their homes, villages and towns in 1948 by Zionist militias and the Israeli Defence Forces, in order for the state of Israel to be formed. They were dispossessed of their properties, land, livelihoods and rendered refugees.

The 15th of May is marked internationally as Nakba day, during which solidarity with Palestinians is expressed in various ways across the world, in opposition to their continued displacement and the occupation of their land.

It is a term dismissed by the state of Israel as propaganda, which continues to deny the violent events that took place in 1948 against the Palestinian people. Palestinians often refer to their ongoing dispossession, exile, and displacement as an ongoing Nakba.

Why this term should be used:

- It is the historical name given by the Palestinians to describe the beginning of Israel’s occupation of their land and the origin of their continued displacement.
- It refers to the tragic and violent process of ethnic cleansing that took place in 1948 which Israeli authorities attempt to whitewash through the emphasis of Israel’s formation.

- By referring to the events in 1948 as Israel's "war of independence", the occupying forces suggest that Israelis fought against a colonial presence in order to form a Jewish state. It also invokes the idea that it is a positive event in history and ignores the detrimental impact it had on Palestinians, whose land was stolen and who continue to face the colonial oppression of Israel as a result.

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Occupation

An occupation is defined by Article 42 of the 1907 Hague Regulations as territory “placed under the authority of [a] hostile army.”

Background:

In 1967, Israel invaded the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza, as well as the Golan Heights and the Sinai Desert. The latter was returned to Egypt in the context of the peace deal between the countries. The UN officially refers to the WB, GS, and East Jerusalem collectively as the ‘Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)’.

The Fourth Geneva Convention lists obligations an occupying power must adhere to during the period of occupation. These include:

- prohibitions on the occupier acquiring sovereignty over the territory.

- destruction or confiscation of private property.
- the transfer of civilians of the occupying power into the territory.

The UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 in 1967, which demanded a full Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, ‘emphasising the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war’. Israel never complied with the resolution. Instead, it has continued to illegally build settlements, transfer civilian settlers to the territories, and seek to permanently acquire sovereignty over the bulk of the territories.

Why this term should be used:

- It is a term recognised and adopted by international human rights, academic and legal institutions.
- It describes the exact relationship that

exists between Israel (occupier) and Palestine (occupied), without watering down the reality of the political situation.

- It provides a clear framework to explain the political developments in the region, such as settlement building, Palestinian home demolition, Israeli military and settler violence, and conflicts over land and resources.

Why some caution should be used:

While the term is accurate, it can also serve to obscure the fact that much of what constitutes Israel today was seized militarily, in contravention of international partition agreements, and is therefore also occupied. Many Palestinians also fear that to emphasise only occupation, runs the risk of failing to acknowledge Israel's ongoing colonial

project, which predates both 1967 and 1948.

One-State Solution

This is one of the proposed solutions for an end of the occupation of Palestine and the conflict. It puts forward the idea of the creation of a single, unified state with equal rights of citizenship for all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity or religion. It therefore emphasises the end to the institutionalised supremacy of one group over another.

This state would include Israel, the West Bank and Gaza whose inhabitants would all collectively be given the same rights, alongside the returning refugees.

Palestinian Deaths

This term is often used to describe the Palestinians who are killed as a consequence of Israel's acts of aggression in their continued military occupation of Palestine. This includes the use of arms, physical force, bulldozers, airstrikes and torture.

Why this should be avoided:

- It removes the responsibility and intent of the Israeli state in the act of killing Palestinians.
- It does not provide details about how Palestinians are killed, by whom, and for which reasons.
- It does not distinguish between Palestinians who die as a consequence of the military occupation and those who die of other unrelated causes. Even the latter can,

at times, necessitate further contextualisation. Certain illnesses that Palestinians may die from, alongside higher child mortality rates and lower life expectancy, are brought on by and exacerbated by the poor living conditions and the inability to access adequate healthcare, brought about by Israel's occupation.

Palestinian Right to Self-Defence

The Palestinian right to self-defense is firmly rooted in international law. In 1982, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution (37/43) recognised the rights of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination for being "under foreign and colonial domination" by Israel.

It asserted "the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national

unity and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle.”

The term can refer to Palestinians opposing Israel’s military occupation through multiple means including:

- Protesting the expulsions from, and demolitions of, Palestinian homes by Israeli forces through protests, sit-ins, and other forms of obstruction.
- Demonstrating against the Israeli state’s actions against the Palestinian people, including displacement, occupation, land dispossession, physical violence, amongst other forms of state sanctioned violence.
- Responding militarily to Israel’s military assaults and/or occupation.

Why this should be used:

- It clarifies the power balance between Palestinians and the Israeli state.
- It restates the internationally recognised status of Palestinian resistance against its occupier.
- It undermines narratives of Palestinian resistance as ‘terrorism’, ‘irrational hatred’, or posing an ‘existential threat’ to Israel.

Property Disputes

The term is used in relation to the Israeli authorities’ evictions of Palestinian families from their homes and the demolition of their houses. It claims that Palestinian protests against these actions are not political in nature, but the outcome of a disagreement over ownership. This language has recently been

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encouraged in the context of the expulsion of families in East Jerusalem.

Why this should be avoided:

- The term serves to dilute the severity of home expulsions.
- It obscures the power imbalance that exists between Palestinians and Israeli settlers and state organisations.
- It reduces the systematic processes of Palestinian dispossession, as is the case in East

Jerusalem for example, to problems of legal tensions. It makes a false equivalence between Palestinian dispossession and conflicts between landlord and tenants or individuals purchasing properties.

- This does not describe the property related issues as being those of forced expulsion of Palestinians specifically, based on their ethnicity, from their homes and land.

Right of Return

This refers to the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their ancestral homes and lands.

This relates to all Palestinians who were displaced from the end of the British mandate through to the present. The two largest waves of ethnic cleansing in Palestinian history were the displacement of 700.000 Palestinians in 1948 and 300.000 in 1967.

This is enshrined in international law by virtue of the 1948 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194. The UN general assembly also passed resolution 3236 in 1974, which stated "the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted".

Why this term should be used:

- It highlights the ongoing call for Israel to cease its double standards regarding the rights of Palestinian refugees who are not permitted to return to their ancestral homes after being forcibly expelled. Simultaneously, Jewish people may seize properties that they say were historically owned by their families.
- it reinforces the rights of Palestinians under international law.
- it re-iterates that Palestinian refugees, who constitute the majority of the Palestinian population world-wide, continue to be awarded these rights under international law and that any just end to the conflict will require this right to be met.

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Separation Wall

Other terms used:

Apartheid Wall

This refers to a wall that is 712-kilometers long, that was constructed by Israeli authorities following the second Intifada. Its construction led to the further annexation of Palestinian land in the Occupied West Bank, with 85% of the wall cutting through the area, disregarding the 1949 Armistice demarcation line (Green Line).

Tensions

The term is often used to describe the political relationship between Israel and Palestinians, particularly during moments of heightened violence. It is used as a euphemism, like clashes, to avoid describing the precise nature of the violence taking place, or its sources.

Why the term should be avoided:

- When used in reference to the Israeli state's repressive actions against the Palestinian people, or the latter's responses to it, it serves to omit the former's responsibility.
- It does not provide any details about the original or ongoing reasons for the so-named political tensions.
- It serves to avoid explaining the series of longer term events leading up to the so-

named tensions, nor the nature of shorter-term events that triggered and intensified them.

Transfer

The term is often used by Israeli officials to refer to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, and their replacement by Jewish populations instead. It can refer to population transfers – expelling populations from different areas in order to increase their ethnic homogeneity – or land transfers – exchanging areas between different states to increase each state's ethnic homogeneity. Both processes are considered forms of ethnic cleansing and are therefore crimes against humanity.

Why this term should be avoided:

- It is used as a euphemism to remove the historical and political weight of the processes of ethnic

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cleansing imposed on hundreds of thousands of Palestinians since Israel's formation.

- It obscures the role of the Israeli state in the removal and expulsion of Palestinians from their land by suggesting an agreement between two sides.
- It fails to evoke the violence involved in the process of expulsion of Palestinians.
- If it is to be used it should be followed by the term 'forced' in order to avoid the pitfalls listed above.

Two-State Solution

This is one of the proposed solutions for an end of the occupation of Palestine and the conflict. It puts forward the idea of the establishment, side by side, of an independent Israeli state and an independent Palestinian.

In 2002 the UN Security Council Resolution 1397 was adopted which affirmed a vision of a region where two states, Israel and Palestine, exist side by side within the Armistice line of 1967 war.

The Two-State solution is considered by some as a way to entrench Palestinian dispossession, displacement and legitimise the annexation of their land, while others argue it is the only realistic solution to the conflict. However, several Israeli prime ministers have pronounced the end of the Oslo process, which aimed at the formation of these two states.

Violence/Terrorism

These terms are often used to describe the actions of Palestinians directed against Israel and/or Israelis. It ranges from armed resistance to throwing stones, and even burning kites. In late 2021, six Palestinian civil rights' organisations were accused of terrorism for no other crime than the political membership of some of their employees.

Why this must be used with caution:

- They makes no difference between military and peaceful Palestinian resistance.
- They are intentionally vague, playing on the fears and assumptions of the audience.
- They are used as synonyms for acts of self-defence by Palestinians, despite the latter's recognition under international

law, and blurs the lines between different forms of confrontations – effectively depicting all Palestinian acts of resistance as dangerous, irrational, and justifying Israeli repressive actions.

- They depoliticise and decontextualise the actions being described.

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War Crimes

Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) defines War Crimes as including: Wilful killing, inflicting suffering, torture, the destruction and appropriation of property which is not militarily necessary, unlawful displacement and deportation of people, and depriving prisoners of war their rights including to a fair trial.

Israel has been accused of committing a number of war crimes which include:

- the killing of Palestinian civilians during various military assaults.
- use of excessive force against Palestinian demonstrators.
- the unlawful forced displacement of Palestinians.
- the construction and expansion of settlements on occupied land.

- the imprisonment of hundreds of Palestinians (including children) without charge or trial, as well as the abuse and deprivation of basic rights like family visits due to the fact that some prisoners are kept in Israeli prisons rather than the occupied territories, which international law dictates.

Why this term should be used:

- it highlights the gravity of the crimes committed by the Israeli occupying forces.
- it describes the wilful nature of the crimes committed against the Palestinian people.
- it allows for a more effective comparative engagement with Israel's actions, alongside those of other regimes across the globe.

- it avoids the normalisation of Israel's actions through banalisation

West Bank

The area of the West Bank is intentionally fragmented by Israel throughout its military control of the land. It is divided into three parts: Area A, Area B and Area C which allows Israel to control Palestinians by keeping them divided in isolated overpopulated areas. This also facilitates Israel's annexation of more land across the West Bank.

Area C is entirely controlled by Israel and includes the border with Jordan, large Israeli settlements and the fertile agricultural lands of the Jordanian valley. In addition, it runs through the different territories of Areas A and B, respectively under the control of the Palestinian Authority and shared PA and Israeli control. Area C is effectively annexed by Israel, which serves to divide the West

bank, isolating it from the neighbouring states in the region, as well as from the rest of Palestine.



Source: UNOCHA⁴⁶

Points to consider:

The WB is not a unified national territory even though it is often portrayed this way. It is fragmented and divided by the Israeli state into 167 small isolated islands, otherwise known as bantustans.

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Zionism

It is the name of the organised political movement, born in the late 19th century in Europe, which aims to build an exclusively Jewish nation state in Palestine. This was conceived of by its leaders as a colonial response to European anti-Semitism..

The founder of modern political Zionism was Theodor Herzl, a European secular Jew who encouraged the migration of Jewish people to Palestine under the protection of a colonial power.

Why this term should be used:

- it's the ideological and political movement that created the foundations to the creation of Israel.
- it's a precise political description that avoids collapsing religious and ethnic groups with the state and its actions.
- it continues to defend and lobby in favour of Israel and its occupation of Palestine around the world.

48 territories/ Inside the Green Line:

This term is used by Palestinians to refer to the lands that make up the Israeli state today. It is used to highlight that much of this land was occupied militarily and remains illegally occupied by Israel. In addition, many Palestinians use it to highlight the fact that they continue to reject the division of historic Palestine into separate states. There is often a close correlation between support for the one state solution and the use of 48 and 67 territories to denote Israel and the Occupied Territories, respectively.

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Sawtuna

Our Voices

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(Re)claiming Language on Palestine in the Media

– a handbook

The framing of Palestine in mainstream media platforms is often imbalanced and bias towards Israel's occupation. Given the important role the media plays in shaping public discourse, the impact of its distorted framing continues to shape the public's response to news about Palestine, both at a local and international level.

When people lack the necessary knowledge to express what is happening in the region, and how their own governments are involved in normalising this situation, action and public pressure is unlikely to be asserted effectively.

This handbook, and the recommendations it provides, will be essential in rebuilding the confidence needed amongst those working in the media, activists, public figures, and other stakeholders to intervene effectively in public debates. It contains a timeline of key events that have led to the current situation in Palestine; information about recent examples of censorship, omission and dilution; and a glossary of terms and why they should or should not be used when engaging in dialogue concerning Palestine.



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