

ISRAEL – PALESTINE CRISIS: SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS

To respond as a student body, we have consulted our Muslim and Jewish students to discuss the effects of the crisis on students' wellbeing and concerns we have for social interactions on campus. This resource has been collaboratively created to support all students and to ensure information is being shared, enabling safe interactions and conversations between students in classrooms, societies, and sports clubs.

In this document you will find,

1. Students' Union statement on the Israel-Palestine humanitarian crisis.
2. Support and peer-networks at the Students' Union and university.
3. Information on hate speech, allyship, and supporting safe conversations on the conflict.
4. Advice on reporting hate speech and discrimination.

Understanding that many of you will be looking for an outlet to proactively help with the ongoing crisis we are welcoming student involvement to help shape our upcoming initiatives.

If you would like to be involved, please email ausapresident@abdn.ac.uk and we will get back to you with more details.

1. Students' Union Statement

Dear students,

Throughout the university community, we have followed the news on the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the global political conversation on Palestine and Israel, which has effects on how we interact with each other on campus.

We stand against war and violence, with the hopes that all members in our university community can be free from fear and violence in their home countries, and here in our home away from home.

The implications of this tension for hate speech and discrimination are high, as we have globally witnessed attacks, and wide-spread Islamophobia and Antisemitism. There is no place for these on our campus.

Let us give space for all to reflect in peace and mourn; support those who have lost family and friends; and those who have experienced war and loss in the past being reminded of those memories.

We all have personal opinions, and as an International Relations graduate, I recognise the value in discussing global politics in our community. This is a moment to show sensitivity and compassion for our fellow students no matter their identity or background. Remember, if you have no personal connection and/or limited knowledge on the Israel-Palestine conflict then your role is more about listening and learning.

Our priority is to recognise and remember the thousands of lives that have been lost and re-orientate the focus of our attention to human connection as student members of this community.

Vanessa Mabonso Nzolo
Students' Union President
ausapresident@abdn.ac.uk

2. Support and peer-networks at the Students' Union and University.

Students' Union

If you would like to get in touch with your peers, we have several active societies and student groups for people from specific cultural and faith backgrounds.

Muslim Students Society – Aberdeen Uni Muslim Students' Association
muslim@ausa.org.uk

Jewish Students Society – Aberdeen J-Soc
aberdeenjsoc1@gmail.com

Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Students' Forum
bame@ausa.org.uk

Students' Union Advice Service can offer support and information on a wide variety of academic matters. If your studies have been affected or you'd like to discuss any then please feel free to email us to arrange an appointment with one of our Advisors: ausaadvice@abdn.ac.uk.

University

The [University Counselling Service](#) can offer 1-2-1 support for anyone currently in the UK, to talk about the impact the ongoing situation has had and to explore strategies for supporting you during this time. You can email them for an appointment on counselling@abdn.ac.uk. If you are not in the UK, the team can also help guide you to support that is available locally and virtually.

The [Multi Faith Chaplaincy](#) is available to all staff and students and is a place of pastoral support. You can reach out to one of our chaplains for a conversation and support by emailing chaplaincy@abdn.ac.uk. You don't need to have a faith to contact the chaplaincy, the team support everyone in our community.

The 24/7 Student Helpline can provide one-to-one counselling for students anywhere in the world. In the UK students can call the freephone number 0808 196 2707. Students living overseas should ring 0035315170277.

Students with concerns over their studies should speak to staff in their School, can also email student.support@abdn.ac.uk and can access a [wide range of student support and information services](#).

3. Information on hate speech, allyship, and supporting safe conversations on the conflict.

Talking about what is happening in Israel-Palestine is vital, but we must do it without falling back on Antisemitic and Anti-Muslim tropes and speech. In this section you will find advice on discriminatory language, allyship, and supporting safe conversations on the conflict.

[Solutions not Sides](#) has a set of advice for using terms and understanding the political meaning behind some commonly used tropes in the media. Here are some of the key points, you can find the full resource [here](#).

1. Be clear about what you mean when using labels:

- Palestinian or Israeli are national identities.
- Zionism is the belief in the right of the Jewish people to self-determination (and not all people who call themselves Zionist share the same opinion about the exact territory, principles, etc. of the state of Israel). 'Zionist' or 'Zio' should not be used as a term of abuse.
- Arab is a grouping of people whose mother tongue is Arabic and there is great diversity across the Arab World (e.g. Jordan can't simply become Palestine just because they are Arabs).
- Islamism is an academic term with French origins that refers to a broad spectrum of political ideologies. Islamism is not a synonym for terrorism and should not be used as such.

2. Do not hold Jews responsible for the decisions of the Israeli leaders, or Muslims responsible for the decisions of the Palestinian leaders.

3. Do not demand that Jews or Muslims must take a certain political position on the issue.

Information on identifying racism in political conversations from Solutions Not Sides, find full [resource here](#):

IDENTIFYING RACISM: QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Is the intention deliberate hatred towards Jews, Muslims, Palestinians or Israelis?*
- Even if unintentional, are negative stereotypes and tropes about these people groups being used?

*NB: not all Israelis are Jewish and not all Palestinians are Muslim, these are separate, but often related forms of prejudice

Antisemitic:

- Domination and control
- Holocaust denial
- Blood libel
- Dirt and disease
- Wealth and greed
- Demonisation
- Deicide

"These stereotypes do not reflect the reality of who I am and they hurt me."

Islamophobic:

- Culturally incompatible
- Oppression of women
- Terrorism
- Monolithic
- 'Islamisation or threat of a 'Muslim take-over'

3. 'Understanding Positions and Triggers in Relation to Israel-Palestine' p.11

2. 'Understanding Positions and Triggers in Relation to Israel-Palestine' p.16

IDENTIFYING RACISM: QUESTIONS TO ASK

Apply the three D's:

- **Demonisation**
- **Delegitimisation**
- **Double-standards**



1. Are negative tropes and stereotypes being used?
2. Is Israel/Palestine being delegitimised in terms of the UN-granted equal right to self determination for nations/peoples?
3. Is Palestine/Israel being held to a different standard than that same person applies to other political issues and causes that they are involved with?

1. 'Understanding Positions and Triggers in Relation to Israel-Palestine' p.10

Whilst education institutions and students' unions have a duty to uphold free speech, they also have a clear duty to stop unlawful speech. It is important that we are clear on what constitutes unlawful speech. In the current context there is a higher risk of the following types of unlawful speech: hate speech, inciting violence, inciting terrorism, or inviting support for a proscribed organisation.

See below [NUS Middle East Crisis Response Guidance](#) on behavior and encouraged actions on organizing events around this topic. Visit our [External Speaker Policy](#) for more information on inviting speakers to your events to discuss the Middle East crisis.

- ✓ Speak and act with compassion, sensitivity and humanity
- ✓ Try to be generous in spirit to people who are reacting from a place of pain and fear
- ✓ Read up on [how to talk about Israel and Palestine](#) in an inclusive way
- ✓ Go out of your way to make sure Jewish, Muslim, Israeli and Palestinian students feel - and are - safe and welcome
- ✗ Don't stand by if you witness antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian or anti-Israeli abuse or violence take place – report it, have the difficult conversation, take action if it is safe to do so
- ✗ Never interrupt a vigil with 'counter-messaging' or put opposing stickers on top of a poster
- ✗ Never justify, celebrate, or excuse the violence, killing or suffering in Israel and Palestine
- ✗ Never target Jewish, Israeli, Muslim or Palestinian students with hate or abuse, don't assume their political beliefs, and don't demand that they take a 'stance'

5. 'NUS Middle East Crisis Response Guidance' p.3

There is an event coming up where students will be discussing or debating what's going on in Israel and Palestine – how can we make sure it is safe and inclusive?

We recommend the following measures:

1. A **planning process** with the organisers and any interested parties (e.g. relevant student societies) to discuss their intentions, concerns, any plans for external speakers. Give clear guidance on the SUs standards on conduct and holding inclusive events.
2. Agreeing a set of **ground rules** for the event with the organisers, speakers and any other influential parties. The ground rules should include things like what sort of speech won't be tolerated, how participants are expected to behave, and what to do if something goes wrong.
3. If possible, use an **experienced chair or facilitator** who has high level knowledge and skill in conversations about Israel and Palestine – a strong chair or facilitator is key for a good event.
4. **Communicate** the expectations and ground rules in the promotional materials for the event itself to let students know what sort of event to expect and to allay any fears that students may have.
5. At the start of the event make sure to do some **education around conduct** and what is expected in terms of the speech and actions of people at the event.

4. 'NUS Middle East Crisis Response Guidance' p.6

4. Advice on reporting hate speech and discrimination.

You can get in touch with us to share your experience of hate speech or discrimination and we will support you regardless of your decision on taking any formal action. Your wellbeing during this difficult time is priority. Please get in touch with our Wellbeing Advisor: ausaadvice@abdn.ac.uk.

For reporting harassment at the university, the [online reporting tool](#) enables anyone who has experienced any form of harassment to report the incident to the university. Staff, students and visitors to our campus can all use the tool, which can be used anonymously if preferred - [you can submit a report here](#).

For discussing discrimination in societies and sports clubs, contact ausa@abdn.ac.uk. We will be in touch with you to discuss your experience, find appropriate support, and if required, advising you to raise a formal complaint through the Students' Union. More information on our [complaint procedure](#).

Thank you for reading through this resource.
For any queries, please contact ausa@abdn.ac.uk.

Sources

National Union of Students, *Middle East Crisis Response Guidance – For Students, Sus, Officers, and Student Groups*, accessed 9 November 2023, https://www.nus.org.uk/middle_east_crisis.

Solutions Not Sides, *A critical approach to education on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*, accessed 9 November 2023, <https://solutionsnotsides.co.uk>.