



Fostering enlightenment on campus

PART I: Telling our story

1. The Jewish connection to the land of Israel predates its modern statehood in 1948. Archaeological findings, artifacts, and monuments attest to a rich heritage dating back over 3,000 years, including, of course, the text of the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls. From as early as the 13th century BCE, Jewish communities inhabited the Holy Land. Throughout history, the Jewish presence endured despite various empires ruling the region, including the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans, and British. Despite periods of exile, the Jewish people consistently maintained ties to their ancestral homeland, resulting in an unbroken lineage stretching across millennia. Consequently, Jews can be regarded as the quintessential indigenous inhabitants of Israel.
2. The aspiration for a Jewish homeland persisted throughout the centuries, exemplified by cultural practices like praying on Passover for the return to Jerusalem. This longing found tangible expression with Jewish migrations throughout the century and massive Jewish immigration in the second part of the 19th century. Waves of pioneers undertook the arduous task of reclaiming and cultivating the land, transforming malaria-infested swamps into fertile soil and making the desert flourish. All land re-inhabited by Jews was bought lawfully from its (mostly absentee) owners and was not taken by force.
3. After World War I and with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, control over the Middle East fell into the hands of France and Great Britain. During this period, the Arab leadership, primarily represented by King Faysal of Saudi Arabia, endorsed the British government's Balfour Declaration of a Jewish homeland, later ratified by the League of Nations (the precursor to the UN). Until the conclusion of World War II, the term "Palestinian" predominantly denoted the Jewish inhabitants of the

region. Consequently, the area exhibited a distinctly Jewish identity, including a Jewish flag.

4. The aftermath of World War II marked a pivotal moment as many regions transitioned from imperial rule to nation-states. In the Middle East, this era witnessed significant upheaval and movement driven by ethnic considerations. Countries like Jordan and Iraq emerged amidst this transition, reflecting a broader trend toward nation-building in the wake of colonialism's decline. This period exemplifies the evolution from imperial structures to the establishment of sovereign nation-states, a process mirrored in other parts of the world, particularly in Asia. The Middle East, in particular, became a focal point for political realignment, with borders redrawn and new governments established, shaping the region's geopolitical landscape in the post-war era.
5. The United Nations crafted the Partition Plan of 1947 to foster coexistence between Jews and Arabs in the region. The plan proposed the establishment of independent states for both communities. While the Jewish leadership accepted the proposal, the Arab leaders rejected it. Subsequently, a coalition of five Arab states launched an attack on the newly declared state of Israel in the War of Independence in 1948.
6. The Holocaust, spanning from 1939 to 1945, underscored the urgent need for a safe haven for the Jewish people. The Mufti of Jerusalem collaborated with Nazi Germany, helping to ensure that Jews trying to escape to their homeland would not be saved from the Holocaust. In the decades following the Holocaust, Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries sought refuge from persecution in Israel, contributing significantly to the young country's efforts and aspirations.

PART II: Historic Milestones

Following the defensive war in 1967, Israel gained control of the Sinai, the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights. The Sinai was, however, returned to Egypt as part of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979.

In 1988, Jordan officially renounced its claims to the West Bank of the Jordan River, which it had occupied since 1948. Later, in 1994, Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel. Gaza was evacuated by Israel in 2005, and the radical party of Hamas has ruled there since 2007. After the first election that brought Hamas to power, there have not been any further steps toward democracy, and Hamas squelches political opposition.

Numerous conflicts have occurred between Israel and various militant groups in Lebanon, notably the Shiite group Hezbollah, which has received significant support and arms from Iran.

There have been multiple attempts at peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, such as the Madrid Conference, the Oslo Accords, the Wye River and Sharm el-Sheikh Memoranda, the Camp David Summit, the Quartet efforts, and the Aqaba Summit. However, many of these initiatives have not resulted in lasting peace agreements. For instance, the Taba Summit's two-state proposal was rejected by the Palestinian leadership and was followed by a wave of suicide bomb attacks. Similarly, the Palestinian side also rejected another two-state proposal in 2008.

PART III: The Refugee Problem and the UNRWA

UNRWA (**United Nations Relief and Works Agency** for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) is a UN organization that deals exclusively with Palestinian refugees (not even Jewish refugees from the 1948 war). Unlike the over 100 million refugees a parallel organization serves, the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) never lost their refugee status, even once resettled in another country and even once holding citizenship there. Additionally, unlike all other refugees, they pass on their status to their descendants *ad infinitum*. (Notably, neither refugee agency supported the resettlement of Jewish refugees from Arab countries in Israel and Western countries.) UNRWA entrenches the refugee problem by keeping Palestinians as perpetual refugees.

Helping civilian populations is laudable. Unfortunately, UNWRA is involved in the fomenting of anti-Israel sentiment and worse. Its schools are named after suicide bombers and consistently incite their students to hatred of Israel and Jews. Further, the basement of its administrative center in Gaza was recently found to be the underground headquarters of the Hamas.

Given the hundreds of kilometres of underground fortifications built by Hamas and the quantity of missiles and armaments that have been transported there, it's pertinent to ask who is benefiting from international aid to Gaza. UNRWA is not the best tool to help the Palestinians' deplorable living conditions.

The United Nations has turned a blind eye to this problem, focusing instead on condemnations of Israel. To date, there have been 215 resolutions about Palestinian

refugees but none on Jewish refugees from Arab countries, who were far more numerous.

Part IV: Setting the record straight – Debunking the lies

Are Israelis white colonialists?

The Israeli population is diverse, consisting of Jews from various races and nationalities. A significant portion, around 40 to 45%, traces their origins to Arab and North African countries such as Yemen, Morocco, Algeria, Syria, and Iraq (which had been home to a Jewish community for over 2,000 years). Many of these individuals, approximately 900,000 Jews, fled persecution and discrimination in their countries of origin and found refuge in Israel. Most of their homes and properties were left behind, benefiting the locals. Importantly, much of the land in Israel was acquired through contractual exchanges.

Is Israel an apartheid state?

Israel is a vibrant democratic state where all citizens, regardless of ethnicity or background, are afforded equal rights, opportunities, and legal protections. Arab-Israelis, who make up approximately 20% of the population, are an integral part of Israeli society, actively participating in various aspects of civic life. They vote, work, live, study, and serve alongside their Jewish counterparts in institutions such as the Supreme Court, military, and government. This inclusivity reflects Israel's commitment to fostering a pluralistic and diverse society based on the principles of equality and democracy.

Is Israel Occupying Gaza?

The Palestinian population living in the West Bank and Gaza suffer from the occupation by ruling Fatah and Hamas, who limit their liberties. Hamas is considered a terrorist organization by numerous countries and international organizations, including the United States, Canada, the European Union, and others.

Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005.

Before the events of October 7, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were employed in Israel, highlighting the economic interdependence between Israelis and Palestinians. In the part of the West Bank controlled by Israel, there are Jewish settlements. While a small

minority of their residents may hold radical views, it's essential to recognize that not all residents share these sentiments.

Is Gaza boycotted by Israel?

While Israel has been criticized for its restrictions on Gaza, Egypt also controls access to the territory through its border with Gaza. Egypt's concerns about security and the potential infiltration of individuals affiliated with groups like the Muslim Brotherhood play a role in its policies regarding Gaza. Both Israel and Egypt have responsibilities to ensure the well-being of the population in Gaza while addressing legitimate security concerns.

PART IV. Questions Specific to the October 7 Conflict

Why is Israel leading a military operation in Gaza?

On October 7, Hamas terrorists stormed through the security fence between Israel and Gaza, indiscriminately murdering over 1,200 citizens and kidnapping 254 more. Over 100 Israelis remain in captivity. Israel commenced a defensive operation in Gaza to eliminate Hamas and destroy its military infrastructure to prevent it from ever being able to pose such a threat again.

Is there genocide happening in Gaza?

The definition of genocide is the intent to eliminate a particular group based on ethnicity, religion or race. What is happening in Gaza is a war, and, as in all wars, there are civilian casualties and other humanitarian consequences (displacement, etc.). The Israel Defense Force minimizes casualties when it can, warning of military interventions for evacuation, which is rendered more complex with Hamas militants taking over residential and civilian areas.

Though the ongoing humanitarian crisis is not a genocide, Hamas' actions on October 7 were. Since its inception in 1988, Hamas has stated its intention to kill Jews both in its founding charter and in repeated and even recent media statements. On October 7, it carried out those intentions and stated that it would repeat those actions over and over.

It is crucial to understand that the "disproportionate" number of deaths on the Palestinian side cannot be equated with genocide. Genocide entails the deliberate intent to eliminate a particular group based on ethnicity, religion, or race, which is not the case in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

From a practical perspective, the lower casualty level among Israelis is a result of Israel's concerted efforts to protect its civilians. The country employs advanced aerial defence systems like the Iron Dome, which intercepts incoming rockets and implements warning systems to alert citizens of impending attacks. Additionally, Israel mandates the construction of shelters and safe rooms in homes, schools, and businesses to provide protection during conflicts. These measures aim to minimize civilian casualties and ensure the safety of Israeli citizens in the face of ongoing threats from militant groups like Hamas.

Hamas, the group in question, mixed its operations and ammunition storage with civilians and civilian institutions such as schools and hospitals, using them as human shields. It has invested heavily in building fortified tunnels and stockpiling missiles rather than in civilian infrastructure such as shelters. This prioritization underscores the group's focus on military capabilities over the well-being and safety of the civilian population in Gaza. These tunnels and missiles are often used for offensive purposes, posing a significant threat to Israel.

Civilian casualties are reported by the Gaza Ministry of Health (GMOH), which is an arm of Hamas. Hamas is not a reliable source as it has a vested interest in inflating casualty numbers to garner greater international support. Hamas has been shown to include combatant deaths in its reports as well as deaths caused by its own actions (e.g., civilians shot trying to escape an area, civilians killed from one of its numerous misfired rockets, etc.).

While everyone desires an end to the fighting and loss of life, the challenge with implementing a ceasefire lies in the actions of various parties involved. Hamas has, at times, violated ceasefires and used periods of calm to prepare for future terrorist attacks. This behaviour undermines the effectiveness of ceasefires and further entrenches terrorism in the territory.

For Israel, ensuring its security is paramount, and allowing hostile groups like Hamas to regroup and rearm poses a significant threat. As such, Israel may take measures to

prevent such activities and protect its citizens from potential attacks by dismantling the underground reserve of missiles in Gaza.

Is Israel blocking humanitarian aid to Gaza?

Israel has greatly increased the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza over the past several months. There are enormous delays in distribution on the part of the UN and aid agencies due to shipments being regularly looted by Hamas. Similarly, as weapons are often smuggled in with humanitarian aid, all shipments need to be verified, contributing to their distribution delays.

So, we can't criticize Israel?

Areas such as Bosnia, Croatia, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Kashmir, East Timor, Lebanon, Syria and Sudan have been the scene of devastating violence that has claimed tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of lives: 50,000 to 200,000 in Bosnia, 50,000 in Croatia, 30 to 50,000 in Chechnya, 100,000 in Tajikistan, 20,000 in Kashmir, 200,000 in East Timor, 100,000 in the civil war in Lebanon, close to half a million in Syria and half a million to 2 million in Sudan.

The Iraq-Iran war claimed almost a million lives. The massacre of Iraqi Kurds under President Saddam Hussein claimed almost 100,000 Kurdish victims. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait resulted in 50,000 deaths. Jordanian troops killed nearly 20,000 Palestinians when the PLO tried to take the law into its own hands. The Syrian government's crackdown on its own extremist citizens in Hama left 25,000 dead. In Algeria, the civil war claimed more than 150,000 lives. The list goes on.

Currently, Sudanese, Afghans, Yemenites and Rohingyas are suffering war and famine. And the media are hardly concerned. According to UNICEF, a Yemenite child dies from hunger every ten minutes.

The rejoicing of the Gazans and their mistreatment of Israeli hostages, like the demonstrations of joy in some student circles across the West at the spectacle of massacred Jews, or the threatening of Jewish students on campus revealed another face: that of Arab and broader antisemitism. The West was surprised by the pro-Hamas celebrations immediately after learning of the anti-Israeli savagery in the pure tradition of the Islamic State: to celebrate barbarity is to invite it to take root in the host country.

Like any other country, criticism of Israel should be grounded in facts and context. While Israel has faced numerous challenges, including security threats and conflicts,

misinformation and biased narratives can distort the truth and perpetuate misunderstandings. Therefore, it's essential to seek reliable sources of information and engage in informed discussions to understand the situation's complexities fully. The truth will prevail.

What about the future?

Finding a sustainable solution to the conflict requires addressing the root causes of violence and fostering genuine dialogue and cooperation between all parties involved.

The teaching of hate has to stop. Presently, 10% of the budget of the Palestinian Authority goes to families of Palestinians who harm or kill Israelis. The perpetuation of hate through education or other means impedes achieving the two-state solution.

The two-state solution remains a viable framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it requires genuine commitment from all parties to negotiate in good faith, end the incitement to violence and promote a culture of peace and coexistence. Only then can the two-state solution become a tangible reality.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gn-3ZEqX_V56mZwzn_sCRdhefuQgebXn/view

MANAA Mission Statement: The Montreal Academic Network Against Anti-Semitism (MANAA) is committed to addressing antisemitism in all of its forms at academic institutions in Quebec. MANAA values education and outreach as primary mechanisms to respond to misinformation and anti-Jewish hate. In addition, MANAA provides social support to Jewish members of academic institutions through mentorship and connectivity.*

**We subscribe to the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>*