



||| CAGE

**REPRESSION OF
PALESTINE
SOLIDARITY
IN SCHOOLS**

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

■ In May 2021, Israel initiated its latest round of attacks against the people of Gaza. At the same time, pogrom-style attacks were initiated against Palestinians in the West Bank and within the state of Israel, Israeli forces stormed the Al Aqsa mosque on the last Friday of Ramadan, and the people of the Sheikh Jarrah district in Jerusalem were being evicted from their homes by Israeli settlers.

■ Between May 10th-21st, the Gaza strip was bombarded, which attracted international condemnation and led to 256 people being killed, 2,000 wounded and Gaza's fragile infrastructure razed to the ground.

■ As hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets across Britain in protest against this assault, students expressed support for Palestine in schools. This included putting up 'Free Palestine' posters, wearing symbols of Palestine and the Palestine flag, or organising actions and protests at school.

■ For many of these children, this was the first time they mobilised for Palestine. Yet the response from schools was often swift and unforgiving. Since May 2021 we have handled 47 cases of students - and occasionally, teachers - being censored for expressing or exercising support for Palestine.

The cases we have dealt with span primary schools, secondary schools and sixth forms - and include state schools as well as academies.

■ Responses from schools and teachers have included verbal reprimands and students being accosted, as well as more serious instances of students being suspended, excluded or targeted by Prevent referrals.

Organisations such as MEND have also dealt with Palestine-related incidents at school', and from their 146 cases, they have reported similar patterns of action from schools.

■ In many instances, the actions taken by schools/teachers appeared to reflect the particular disposition or ignorance of individual teachers.

In other cases, school leadership have justified actions by referring to school policy - yet upon closer scrutiny, these policies have been found to be irrelevant to student activism or they have been overzealously applied.

Recurring incidents include schools denying students the right to express solidarity with Palestine on the grounds that schools in Britain must not be politically partisan under law, or that such expressions would negatively affect Jewish

students or staff.

The picture that has emerged is an education sector that is both under pressure from state regulators to stringently adhere to policies, and school management and teachers heavily influenced by a wider, negative perception of Palestine.

This blend of factors has served to create a pincer effect on students, leading to a crackdown on support for Palestine in schools, and to students being left confused, upset, and alienated from their schools, as well as being left feeling unable to safely express their views.



SUMMARY

We handled 47 cases. Some cases involved multiple individuals. 46 of the cases were considered within the scope of this briefing.

- The vast majority of cases were of students, but teachers and non-students also sought our support. These spanned Primary School, Secondary Schools and Sixth Forms.
- Every single case we handled was of Muslim individuals.
- The actions that individuals were sanctioned for are categorised into the following:
 - Postering about Palestine, or being in possession of posters **(8 cases)**
 - Expressing vocal support for Palestine or Palestinians **(15 cases)**
 - Speaking about Gaza and events happening there **(3 cases)**
 - Fundraising for Palestine **(8 cases)**
 - Protesting in support of Palestine **(6 cases)**
 - Displaying the Palestine flag **(15 cases)**
 - Wearing a keffiyeh **(2 cases)**
- Some cases featured multiple actions.

These categories are drawn from the analysis provided by MEND for their cases, allowing for a comparison of trends across organisations.

- The sanctions that schools applied are categorised into the following:
 - Pre warning (Prevention of action) **(10 cases)**

Verbal warning **(22 cases)**

Physical intervention (removal of posters, banners, stickers from students or from school premises) **(6 cases)**

Detention **(4 cases)**

Suspension **(6 cases)**

Exclusion **(1 case)**

Police involvement **(2 cases)**

Prevent referral **(1 case)**

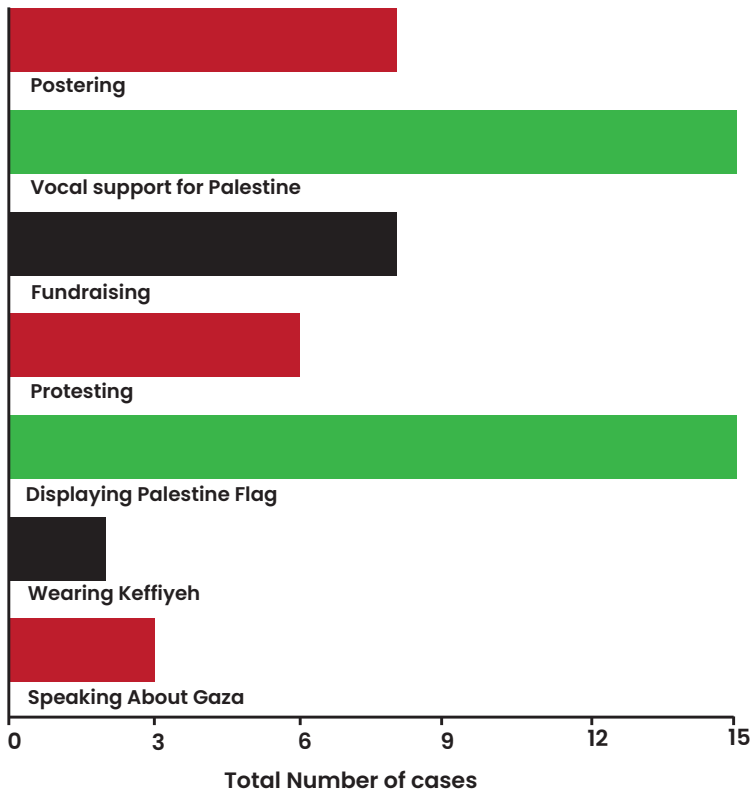
Miscellaneous/Other **(3 cases)**

Some cases featured multiple sanctions.

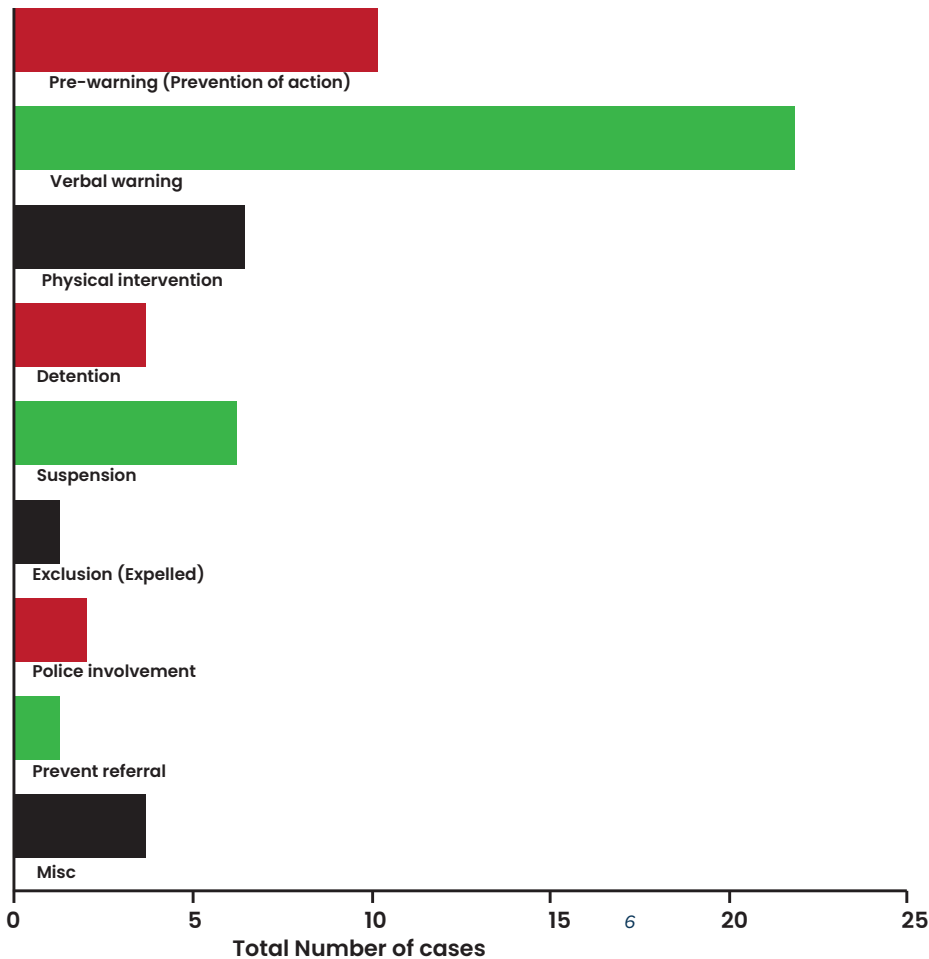
- Cases were distributed across England, with the largest proportion coming from schools in Greater London **(41%, or 19 cases)**.

1 case came from a school in Scotland, and 1 from Wales.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY FOR WHICH INDIVIDUAL WAS SANCTIONED



TYPE OF SANCTION APPLIED



GEOGRAPHICAL

LOCATION OF CASES

Scotland 1

North East 1

North West 5

Yorkshire & Humber 6

East Midlands 2

West Midlands 7

Wales 1

East of England 2

London 19

South West 1

South East 1

CASES OF INTEREST

The following cases provide details of interactions between pupils and teachers, which raise thematic trends that will be discussed in the following section.

CASE A

At a school in London, a student in year 8 was having a private conversation about Palestine with her friend in the playground at lunchtime. A teacher overheard the conversation and challenged her on speaking about Palestine; the teacher claimed it was antisemitic and shouted at the student. She was told there were 'two sides' and the Palestinians could be at fault. The girl was extremely upset and was shaking and crying at the end of the school day when her parents found her. The headteacher claimed this could be a criminal offence, and they may get the police involved. Parents have complained.

CASE B

A student and her friend in year 6 at a primary school in London went to school with a clip with the colours of the Palestine flag; they also drew posters saying Free Palestine. The student who reported the case to us received two separate detentions for this. The teaching assistant told her: "I don't like Palestine, and I don't support Palestine", and that "Palestine must have done something for all this to be happening to them".

CASE C

A student in year 8 at a school in London received an internal exclusion for one day (along with six of her friends) for having posters of Palestine on their table (the posters were never put up). They were taken out of class and were told they were disrupting the lesson. The internal exclusion will be on their permanent record, despite there having been no warning given, and it being unclear what policy the students had supposedly breached.

CASE D

At a secondary school in Manchester – a student in the school requested that they raise funds for a specific charity for Palestine – permission was sought and granted by the school, and the students and teachers raised funds. After a short period of time, the school sent an email to all parents stating that the school must share the funds and that they would split the funds between charities supporting those in Palestine and in Israel, despite the original intention for the money raised being specifically for Palestinians impacted. The parent complained and did not accept this. Eventually, the school agreed to give the money to a Palestinian charity that would be agreed upon.

CASE F

A student in year 7 of a school in Bradford had an image of the Palestinian flag on her head, and had drawn the flag too. The teacher said she could not have the flag in school and physically snatched it off her head. She also received two detentions. The student was extremely scared. The school claimed it was a violation of their uniform policy, however teachers could not point to any part of the policy that detailed this. Subsequently, the school said that it would be updating the uniform policy.

CASE E

At a secondary school in Blackburn, children were told they could not protest about Palestine. Teachers then proceeded to explain to their class why this was the case. One teacher told their year 8 students that land occupied by the state of Israel had been given to Jews by the UK, that the Palestinians were being rebellious, and that Palestinians are killing innocent children in Israel.

She complained that she was constantly seeing Palestinian flags on her way to school, and that they might as well have had the Nazi flag up. The parents complained to the school for such remarks and comparisons being made. The school told the parent that this teacher had received Prevent training and mentioned training received from the government-recommended organisation, Solutions Not Sides.

THEMATIC OBSERVATIONS

Several themes emerged from cases reported to CAGE, which display a consistent pattern of thought and behaviour towards Palestinian activism among certain school staff.

ABUSE OF AUTHORITY

A large number of our cases demonstrate the great deal of latitude for teachers to abuse their authority when faced with children showing their support for Palestine.

This abuse takes the form of shutting down discussion through threats, claiming to be victimised, or openly expressing pro-Israeli views and propaganda. In some cases, school policy has been invoked even if lacking in relevance.

PALESTINE SOLIDARITY AS 'OFFENSIVE'

Rather than cultivating discussion around Palestine, many teachers are going above and beyond their roles to stifle or silence discussion.

This involves either telling students that expressing support for Palestinians is 'offensive', inappropriately 'political', or antisemitic.

Some teachers have also claimed that by expressing support for Palestine, students are 'bullying' teachers.

LONDON, ACADEMY

Seven students were temporarily excluded when it was deemed that wearing a Palestine badge to school was inappropriately political and may offend students who know people [Israelis] who have been killed.

LONDON, ACADEMY

Student discussing Palestine with friends on the school Google classroom platform was banned from using the platform after their teacher complained of feeling 'bullied' and 'harassed', and pushed for their exclusion.

ESSEX, SECONDARY SCHOOL

Student was told to remove the Palestine flag and cease expressing support for Palestinians, as this would be 'upsetting' for anyone Jewish.

LONDON, ACADEMY

A sixth form student putting up posters and the Palestine flag was threatened with suspension on the grounds that this constituted antisemitic and threatening behaviour.

TEACHERS BEING PRO-ISRAEL/ANTI-PALESTINE

We have also encountered a number of cases where teachers have precluded expressions

of support for Palestine, while themselves expressing quite clear sentiments in support of Israel or treating pro-Israel expressions in a markedly different manner.

This is a clear abuse of procedure and power by teachers, and emblematic of the way in which Palestine is exceptionalised within the public imagination, which is explored in more detail below.

BLACKBURN, ACADEMY: Students in a class were told by a teacher that land seized by what is now the state of Israel was ‘given to Jews by UK’, that Palestinians are killing innocent children in Israel and compared seeing Palestinian flags to the Nazi flag.

LONDON, PRIMARY SCHOOL: Two students issued with detention at a primary school for drawing a ‘Free Palestine’ flag and wearing clips with the colours of the flag. They were told by the teaching assistant that she ‘didn’t like or support Palestine’.

LONDON, SECONDARY SCHOOL: One student had her Palestine posters pulled down, and was told by a teacher that she was ‘being emotional’ and asked ‘what about Hamas killing children?’.

It is clear that the teachers and schools that we have dealt with and which are documented here are failing in their responsibilities as educators, by censoring children, rather than cultivating schools as a space to explore their ideas. The framework and climate that enables such punitive behaviour on the part of teachers

must, however, be seen in the context of wider school policy and duties placed upon schools.

SCHOOLS, POLICIES AND LEGAL DUTIES

Cases demonstrate that teachers and/or members of school management bodies are not following any specific policies in their handling of ‘incidents’ relating to Palestine.

Rather, they are all relying upon different policies - and importantly, different interpretations of policies - to justify their decisions.

OVERZEALOUS AND UNEVEN APPLICATION OF POLICIES AND DUTIES

All of the parents that have pursued, or are currently pursuing, complaints with schools have reported that they have not been happy with schools’ responses.

There appears to be a lack of specificity on the issue, and we have not observed a consistent policy being applied across schools.

For example, some schools rely on uniform policy to justify their actions, but when asked to highlight specific aspects of the policy there is nothing relevant in these policy documents; in some of these cases, parents have been informed by schools that they will subsequently be changing those policy - to in effect justify schools’ actions retrospectively.

This has led to confusion within schools, and

mixed messages from teachers.

SKIPTON, SECONDARY SCHOOL: A student was granted approval to put up a 'Free Palestine' poster by two members of staff – yet after doing so, was shouted at and told to remove them by a member of the school's senior leadership.

ESSEX, ACADEMY: A teacher issued a complaint against a teacher for fundraising for Palestine, even though the initiative had been approved by the school. A member of senior leadership questioned the individual following the complaint.

Schools' conduct often hinges on a very austere interpretation of existing laws and duties upon schools, such as the requirement under the Education Act 1996 for schools to be non-partisan and avoid promoting 'one-sided' political narratives to young students.

Yet schools appear to be stretching such duties far beyond their remit, by invoking non-partisanship as an institution to deny students the ability to express their own opinions on social and political matters as individuals.

In doing so, schools risk violating other obligations upon them, such as fundamental rights of expression that are guaranteed under the European Convention of Human Rights.

In other cases, schools are drawing upon equality duties to suppress Palestine solidarity, claiming that such action risk 'offending' certain groups of students or staff.

ACCRINGTON, SECONDARY SCHOOL: Student was told off, threatened with being sent home and told to remove a drawing of the

Palestine flag from her hand as it was 'not a political school'.

BIRMINGHAM, ACADEMY: School has banned any discussion about Palestine.

LONDON, SECONDARY SCHOOL: A letter issued to parents, seen by CAGE, specified the following, citing their duties to be "apolitical" and to foster inclusivity:

"[The] use of any political colours, symbols, flags or messaging within the school environment and/or systems is not permitted and will be stopped. Parents are asked to reinforce this message at home and in particular to ensure that student clothing or appearance when attending school is not political in intent and cannot be construed as such."

These instances may be aggravated by official communications from local authorities, and will have certainly been exacerbated further by the deeply politicised intervention of Education Secretary Gavin Williamson in a letter to headteachers in May policing how schools handle issues raised around Israel-Palestine².

Moreover the conduct of schools reflect a culture of self-regulation and over-management that has been fostered in schools through the likes of the Ofsted monitoring regime.

FUNDRAISERS

Fundraising for charities dedicated to Palestine featured prominently in our cases. At times students – and in two instances, teachers - were told that they had to fundraise for 'both

sides', including for Israel/Israelis.

This may stem from an overzealous interpretation of 'non-partisanship', or it reflects the political dispositions of teachers. Above all however, it is an incomprehensible demand: an appeal to an apparent universalism that completely negates the sharp resource and impact gaps between the besieged coastal strip of Gaza, and the well-funded and resourced state of Israel.

ROTHERHAM, ACADEMY: Students wanting to organise a bake sale for Palestine were subject to aggressive comments by teachers, and told to fundraise for 'both sides'.

MANCHESTER, SECONDARY SCHOOL: After receiving permission to fundraise for Palestine by the school, students were told by the administration that the money would have to be split, with a portion going to charities for Israel/Israelis too.

BIRMINGHAM, SECONDARY SCHOOL: Students were not allowed to do a fundraiser unless they raised money for 'both sides'.

SCOTLAND: A schoolteacher who shared a personal Gofundme fundraiser with fellow staff was told to raise money for 'both sides' and came to learn that their fundraiser was discussed at a school governors' meeting. Staff who received their Gofundme link were also told to delete the email.

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

Significantly, every single case that we dealt with were Muslim.

While abusing their authority and procedure, teachers and/or schools in certain instances acted in ways that could be classed as Islamophobic and prejudicial, or in a manner that was overtly discriminatory.

LONDON, SECONDARY SCHOOL: Responded to students wearing the keffiyeh and Palestinian flag by banning students from wearing or displaying any colours of the Palestinian flag, as well as abayas or any clothing resembling 'Middle Eastern clothes'.

BLACKBURN, PRIMARY SCHOOL: Children were asked for their views on Palestine and Israel in an assembly. When they expressed support for Palestine they were questioned on whether they learnt their perspectives in their mosques or madrassahs - rather than on account of it being a prominent and ongoing current issue. They were then told that they 'needed to look at it from the Israeli side too'.

NEWCASTLE, PRIMARY SCHOOL: Concerns were raised with parents of a student about their child, who had delivered a presentation on Islam and featured Palestine; they were told the child was exhibiting 'too much interest' in Islamic history.

Parents and concerned individuals have pointed to the disparity in the treatment of expressions of support for Palestine in schools, with expressions related to other social issues, such as Black Lives Matter last year.

While certainly not seeking to pit such causes against one another, or ignoring the way in which the government is suppressing support

THE WIDER POLITICAL CLIMATE

for those causes too - there is something to be said about the unique way in which Palestine solidarity is not just treated differently, but actively securitised - as we discuss below.

The attack on Palestine solidarity under the guise of bureaucratic maneuvering is deeply cynical and invoking school policy or law to censor students has proven deeply confusing for students, parents and even teachers.

More concerningly, it threatens to undermine the principles of civic education that should be at the heart of the education system.

UNDERMINING PALESTINE SOLIDARITY

When analysing the repression of Palestine solidarity in schools, it is necessary to place this latest spate of incidents in the context of a broader anti-Palestinian political climate that has been built up over recent years in Britain.

The swift, unforgiving crackdown on expressions of solidarity reflects attempts at the discursive and policy level to toxify Palestine as an issue, and prevent people from speaking out against Israeli abuses.

This has come about through a concerted,

multi-pronged strategy by pro-Israel groups and the Israeli government itself^{3,4}, that has gained ground since 2016.

These efforts have included influencing government policy⁵, implementing lawfare threats and tactics, launching propaganda campaigns and other aggressive advocacy.

While centering on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, the targets of these efforts have come to encompass any and all discussion of Palestine that transgresses the boundaries of the government's pro-Israel position.

Every single one of the cases we have recorded of Palestine support being suppressed in schools involve Muslims/Muslim children. It is not possible to separate the attempted toxification of Palestine solidarity in recent years from the Islamophobia that shapes it. Implicit or explicit Islamophobia has often animated the attacks on Palestine solidarity, and it has also proved a helpful vehicle for legitimising these attacks, by invoking the spectre of Muslim and/or non-white 'extremists' threatening Jewish people⁶.

The structural racism that shapes the Prevent policy in schools has likely helped to create an enabling culture of suspicion towards Muslim activism, and strengthen existing opposition to specific causes that can be associated with

Muslims, such as Palestine.

SECURITISATION OF PALESTINE AS AN ISSUE

The kneejerk manner in which teachers and school management have sought to suffocate any discussion about Palestine goes further than censorship of other political issues in schools.

In addition to the toxification of Palestine as an issue, this reaction has also come about because of the way that Palestine solidarity has been uniquely constructed as a security and/or criminal concern, or beyond the pale of acceptable discourse, rather than as being a legitimate topic of activism, debate and inquiry.

Perhaps more so than any other mainstream political issue in Britain, Palestine solidarity has been explicitly singled out as:

- a marker of 'extremism' and 'radicalisation', including as a object of Prevent attention in Prevent documents⁷;
- inherently linked to antisemitism, such as through the censorious, government-promoted International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism; and
- a supposed staple of anti-Jewish hate crime, and therefore a potential policing issue.

It is not surprising to see the significant overlap between advocates of Israel and advocates of Britain's repressive counter-terror policies.

An anti-Palestine offensive of recent years has implicated Britain's central government, right-wing elements among opposition parties, the more avowedly hawkish elements of the

security industry and Zionist organisations and thinktanks, all of whom find an uncritical audience in the mainstream media.

For example, organisations engaging in lawfare such as UK Lawyers for Israel explicitly point to the Prevent duty and counter-terrorism laws as tactical considerations for Israel advocates to use against Palestine solidarity activities⁸.

Meanwhile those organisations ostensibly campaigning against antisemitism, such as the Community Security Trust actively promote damaging counter-extremist policies such as Prevent⁹.

It is in this context that we can understand incidents such as the headteacher of Allerton Grange High School in Leeds describing the Palestinian flag as a "call to arms... [and] a message of support for anti-semitism"¹⁰, or the London school which appeared to be comparing the colouring in of the Palestine flag to the 'hi-jacking of the flag of St George by a UK political party' - likely in reference to the far-right English Defence League.

■ **London, Primary school:** A teacher questioned parents of a child who put up Palestine posters in school, telling them to search the child's laptop or to let the school do it for them, because their child 'knows too much' about the Palestine-Israel issue.

■ **Birmingham, Secondary School:** Following a Prevent assembly delivered by a teacher on Palestine-Israel, a student with behavioural issues, whose dad described them as not understanding how to express themselves properly, emailed the school. Unhappy at the way the issue had been presented, the student's email included hadith and Islamic videos about

the end of days as well as about *ruqya* (Islamic spiritual healing). Following this, the school said they would have to make a referral to Prevent and social services.

- **London, Secondary school:** While not a student himself, a man who was waiting to collect his sister from the Jewish school she attends was reported to police by bystanders and fined by police for ‘causing disturbance’ - for sitting parked in his car, which displayed the Palestinian flag.

The aim of strategies like PREVENT in schools is to police and manage discussions around politically sensitive matters under the guise of providing ‘balance’, while promoting government-approved ideologues to dominate the discussion.

The example of *Solutions Not Sides*, documented below, demonstrates that this is ultimately the government’s intention with the Israel-Palestine issue as well.

However, the convergence of PREVENT with the concerted and vigorous campaigns of Zionist groups has pushed the compass towards the outright censorship of Palestine activism; of policing Palestine out of sight and out of mind.

It is within this climate that schools appear to be defaulting towards censoring discussion around Palestine, rather than risk being found failing in their various duties and responsibilities, including Prevent.

Others may fear finding themselves in the crosshairs of Zionist attacks - or are simply empowered to express their existing anti-Palestinian sentiments.

MANAGING DISCOURSE ON PALESTINE

We have also observed organisations being promoted and invited to speak at schools on Palestine and Israel, through assemblies or workshops.

Solutions Not Sides (SNS) is one such organisation that has regularly cropped up. SNS is a charity which has been recommended for work on Israel and Palestine in schools by the Education Secretary Gavin Williamson¹² and local PREVENT teams¹³, and has been invited to speak at a number of schools.

In its own words SNS, ‘*is designed to prepare students to make a positive, solutions-focused contribution to debates on Israel-Palestine*’, and until very recently has functioned as a project of the organisation *OneVoice*, which is active in Israel, Europe and the US.

While purporting to be impartial, *OneVoice*’s approach tacitly favours Israel over Palestinians by erasing the substantial and obvious power imbalance between oppressed and the oppressor, and by seeking a compromise two-state solution’. *OneVoice*’s ‘solution’ speaks to protect the interests of a supposed ‘moderate majority’ in Israel, while subordinating the principle of Palestinian self-determination.

Leading Palestinian organisations such as the Palestinian Campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott (PACBI) have stated that ‘While paying lip service to “ending the occupation,” [OneVoice’s] overriding imperative is to serve Israel’s basic interest in remaining an apartheid state... Simply put, it is the interests of the occupier that drive [OneVoice’s] mission.’¹³ In seeking support from this ‘moderate majority’, activities by the Israeli branch of *OneVoice* vacillate between patronising appeals to Israeli citizens to prop up the

government of Mahmoud Abbas¹⁴, and more nakedly racist advocacy, for example by propagating racist narratives of Palestinians as a demographic threat to Israel¹⁵.

Meanwhile OneVoice's Europe branch, based in the UK, has previously received funding from the Prevent counter-terror programme¹⁶ and the *Building a Stronger Britain Together* counter-extremism fund¹⁸.

In promoting SNS as a 'legitimate' source for education on Palestine and Israel, the government is effectively seeking to box in discussion around the Israeli occupation of Palestine, to take place on its own terms.

Neither SNS nor OneVoice are a sound source of information about Israel and Palestine; rather they perpetuate an untenable status quo for the Palestinians.



RECOMMENDATIONS

PARENTS

Parents play an important role in supporting and nurturing their children's desire to explore ideas and express themselves. This is doubly important in this context where schools are actively shutting down spaces for students to do so when it comes to Palestine.

Some of the cases that we have witnessed leading to a positive outcome, or that have resulted in a u-turn by schools, have come about through pressure and challenges from parents, particularly when they have come together to support one another.

We urge parents to:

- **Challenge and probe schools on any action taken against their children for expressing support with Palestine.**

They can do so by:

- Respectfully asking to know under what policy such action is being taken, and requesting copies of the policy if possible
- Challenging blatantly overzealous or unfair interpretations of policy - CAGE can assist with this
- Lodging formal complaints and

requesting apologies through individual or collective letters to school management

- Being sure to keep written records and communication wherever possible, noting names and contact details.

- Requesting CAGE's support through our Helpline[®] if required.

■ Support your child

This can be achieved by:

- Taking an active interest in what children are being taught about Palestine in schools

- Creating a home environment where they feel able to explore and ask questions about news stories they have heard, and support them in understanding events

- Talking to them about the occupation of Palestine and normalising Palestine as a topic of discussion

- Explaining to them the need to help create a more compassionate society, underpinned by active citizens who have the ability to identify and challenge those who abuse their powers over other human beings, animals and the environment.

- Actively supporting your child if they have been disciplined or reprimanded. Going through such an experience can be isolating, confusing and upsetting, especially where the child doesn't know what they have supposedly 'done wrong'.

elevating the rights of certain students de facto over others. The fact that certain schools have justified their actions as a defense of Jewish students/staff, while all cases we have dealt with are of Muslim individuals, suggests that the rights of some are being privileged over others.

SCHOOLS/TEACHERS

Schools should remember their role in fostering an environment conducive to civic education, where students feel able to explore issues and events that they see happening in the world.

Students should not be disciplined for practising empathy, and Palestine should not be singled out as any more 'beyond the pale' than other pressing current issues.

We urge schools to:

■ **Strike the proper balance between their legal duties, and the rights of students in their care.**

Schools may not be allowed to promote 'one-sided' political narratives as institutions, but students should be allowed to practice freedom of expression, including through different forms of civil activism, including protest.

Schools should facilitate these to the best of their ability rather than approaching them through the lens of a problem or disciplinary matter to be stamped out - a position that may violate students' rights under Human Rights law²⁰.

Similarly, equality duties should be applied equally, and schools should avoid

■ **Avoid approaching Palestine through the lens of security**

Schools need not be scared of the Israel-Palestine issue.

However, the different standard that schools appear to be applying to Palestine compared to other social or political issues is striking and unsettling.

The manner in which schools are approaching Palestinian solidarity as inherently 'risky' is deeply problematic and reinforces securitised state frameworks which recast social issues as security concerns, even 'threats'.

The fact that Prevent is being invoked in certain cases is also very concerning. Schools should strive to find alternative, more positive and balanced measures to handle student behaviour.

■ **Nurture critical thinking among staff**

Under the guise of being 'neutral' we have seen schools effectively recycle talking points of the Israeli embassy, or simply reproduce misinformation about Palestinians.

This is exacerbated by the fact that current

British government policy is stridently pro-Israel, which is reflected in their pronouncements and information sources.

Schools and teachers should keep themselves informed on Palestine, the nature of Israel apartheid policies and the occupation, including through sources such as Adalah²¹ and Human Rights Watch²².

It is unnecessary, and perhaps unhelpful, to single out or issue value judgements on any Palestinian political party when presenting the issue to students. Our personal feelings on groups like Hamas are ultimately of little consequence to the political landscape within Palestine, and are best left as the concerns of the Palestinian political process.

GOVERNMENT:

- **The government should cease with its unhelpful interventions and its politicised management of the education sector.**

The government's position on the Israel-Palestine issue and their recent interventions into the policing of Palestine solidarity in schools are deeply ideological, and reflect a firm pro-Israel bent which is being forced upon the education sector.

Meanwhile, institutions and bodies established by the government, such as Ofsted and Prevent teams, function as frontline agents to enforce the government's position in schools and generate a pressure on school management to toe the government line.



Endnotes

1. <https://www.mend.org.uk/mend-press-release-schools-punishing-students-for-supporting-palestine-including-exclusions-and-calling-police/>
2. <https://twitter.com/GavinWilliamson/status/1398374786871537664>
3. <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Israels-public-security-minister-heads-to-London-on-BDS-fighting-mission-466842>
4. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-israeli-ministries-feud-over-anti-bds-warfare-in-u-k-1.5443589>
5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-israel-boycott-ban-bds-queens-speech-a9253651.html>
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8. https://ukficharity.com/resources-2/student-legal-guide#Contents_Legal_Obligs_Uni
9. <https://www.cage.ngo/the-neoconservative-war-on-terror-cannot-be-understood-without-israel>
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