



# Advocating for Palestinians in our Schools

Prepared by Beisan Zubi for the Palestinian Canadian  
Congress

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Webinar, May 5, 6pm, 2024



# Welcome

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## Assumptions/framework

1. Intersectional and antiracist
2. Canadian context
3. Created for this specific audience:
  - a. Parents
  - b. Students
  - c. Educators

## Agenda

- 6:00pm: Introduction
- 6:05pm: Section 1 — Reaffirming Palestinian identities
- 6:20pm: Section 2 — Understanding APR
- 6:35pm: Section 3 — Taking action in schools
- 6:50pm: Conclusion/Q and A
- 7:30pm: End



# About me:

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**Beisan Zubi, BA, MA**

- Palestinian Canadian
- equity consultant
- APR work:  
[www.antipalestinianracism.com](http://www.antipalestinianracism.com)
- School boards: WRDSB, TDSB, OCDSB
- Privilege check





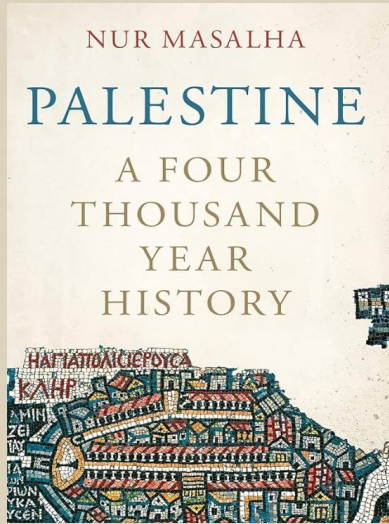
# 1: Reaffirming Palestinian identities

Every student deserves to be valued and respected, Palestinian identity cannot be the exception to this rule

Palestinian identity is not monolithic and lived experiences of Palestinian identity are legitimate and complex

Palestinian identity is rooted in the land of Palestine, our struggle against oppression, and our resilient culture

# Palestinians existed THEN



Pre-1948, pre-Balfour Palestine, AKA 'Historical Palestine' was a beautiful and thriving region where people of all faiths lived in community with each other.

In 1948, the Nakba (Arabic for catastrophe) happened to Palestinians, where almost a million of us lost our homes and homeland via forced displacement. Many others became internally displaced throughout historical Palestine and many lost their lives.

# Palestinians exist NOW



In Gaza (Ghazze)  
In the West Bank (al Duffe)  
In 'Israel'  
Diaspora across the world



Every Palestinian has different valid lived experiences, but are connected by displacement, generational trauma, right to return





# Palestinian solidarity

Across lines of race, faith, age, class, country, etc.

Examples: widespread global protests, non-Palestinians wearing the keffiyeh, anti-Zionist Jews

Demands include: ending occupation, divesting from Israeli economy (example South African apartheid), justice and peace

Solidarity is not transactional or manipulable



# Our Culture is OURS

Palestinian culture is Palestinian-owned. No one else gets to decide what our symbols mean or who they belong to

No other group would allow their culture to be taken and used against them

From cultural appropriation and vilification to reclamation and respect





## 2. Anti-Palestinian Racism

APR.com

Arab Canadian  
Lawyers Association

*Anti-Palestinian racism is adjacent to Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism, but specifically aims to silence, erase, dehumanize and defame Palestinians and their allies who publicly advocate for Palestinian human rights.*

*This form of racism intersects with **colonialism, sexism, xenophobia, cultural appropriation**, and more; it seeks to justify and normalize **Palestinian dispossession and oppression**, as well as to isolate diaspora Palestinians and discourage them from advocating for Palestinian liberation.*

*Anti-Palestinian racism is a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives. Anti-Palestinian racism takes various forms including: denying the Nakba and justifying violence against Palestinians; failing to acknowledge Palestinians as an Indigenous people with a collective identity, belonging and rights in relation to occupied and historic Palestine; erasing the human rights and equal dignity and worth of Palestinians; excluding or pressuring others to exclude Palestinian perspectives, Palestinians and their allies; defaming Palestinians and their allies with slander such as being inherently antisemitic, a terrorist threat/sympathizer or opposed to democratic values.*

# Why APR?

Related, but not the same thing as Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Racism—therefore existing supports are insufficient

It's important to name Palestinian identity and protect it explicitly

# Systemic APR

## **Looks like: System-wide racism and repression**

- Political (politicians, government policies, double standards)
- Carceral (policing, violent arrests, criminalizing expression)
- Educational (erasure, discomfort, ignorance)
- Media (bias, racism, whose stories are told?)
- Intersections with colonialism, capitalism, fascism, etc. aka The Canadian Context



# Erasure/Censorship

**Looks like: Being told we don't exist or our existence is controversial**

- Students wanting to place Palestine on a map
- 'An invented people,' 'land without a people,' etc.
- Silencing or censoring, losing opportunities for self-advocating
- Keffiyeh ban in QP

**Proposal to teach Palestinian history in schools faces backlash**

# Terrorism/violence

**Looks like: Palestinian identity deemed violent,  
Palestinian self-defense called terrorism**

- Google 'scarf a terrorist wears'
- Reel Bad Arabs by Jack Shaheen
- 'Condemn Hamas'
- Collective punishment/guilt

# Antisemitism/Hate

**Looks like: Placing Palestinian safety at odds with Jewish safety**

- No people are inherently hateful, no inherent reason to hate Jewish people
- Jewish people are allies to Palestinians
- Antiracism and collective justice for all!



# Effects of APR on youth

**APR, if unaddressed, is extremely traumatizing for young people especially.**

- Lack of identity, confidence
- Shame, discomfort
- Internalized hatred of self and roots
- Alienation and resentment
- Missed opportunities



**London, ON, School Board**  
**Must Apologize**  
**to Palestinian Canadians**

**Palestinian scarves controversy at Nova Scotia school prompts calls for public apology**

# 3. Taking Action in Schools

## **Foundations/fundamentals:**

- Education act in Ontario protects students
- Schools vs. Boards
- Human Rights Tribunals, Ombuds

Ontario's education system, at all levels, must respect diversity, promote inclusive education, and work towards identifying and eliminating barriers to equal treatment in education that limit the ability of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society. Discriminatory biases, harassment, non-inclusive environments, lack of accommodation, systemic barriers, power dynamics, societal poverty, and racism make it difficult for students to acquire the skills they need to be successful, competitive, and productive members of society. Ontario schools aim to improve the academic outcomes and experiences of students who have traditionally not benefited from the promise of public education.

In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, all students, parents, caregivers, and other members of the school community – regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, disability, race, colour, religion, age, marital or family status, creed, gender identity/expression, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other factors – are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. Diversity is valued when all members of the school community feel safe, welcomed, and accepted. Every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.

# Proactive support

**Don't wait until more damage is done!**

Ask your Board to issue an affirming public statement, educate staff before harm is done

Inquire about equity coordinators, who is responsible for Palestinian equity?

Protecting students' rights to free speech and self expression

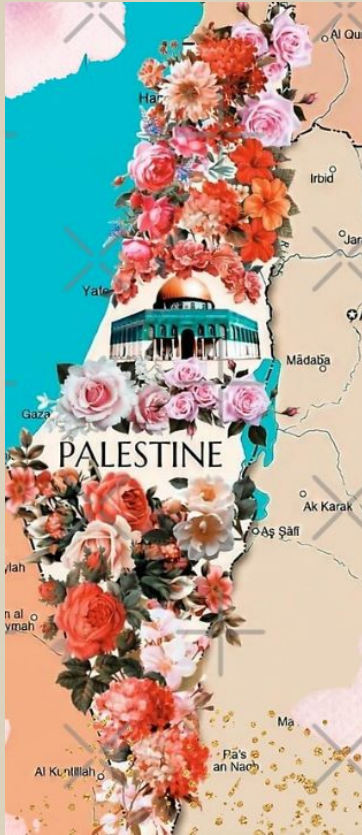


# Recognition

Keffiyehs

Nakba Day

Historic Palestine

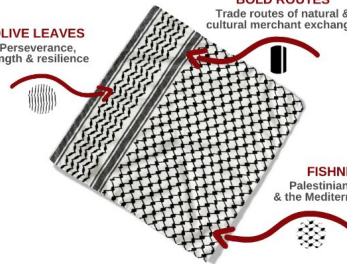


## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KEFFIYEH PATTERNS

**OLIVE LEAVES**  
Perseverance,  
strength & resilience

**BOLD ROUTES**  
Trade routes of natural &  
cultural merchant exchange

**FISHNETS**  
Palestinian sailors  
& the Mediterranean sea



# Professional education

Trainings for administrators and educators alike

Adding Palestinian identity to the curriculum, understanding Israel's history is not 'one-sided'

Openness and preparation for students' curiosity and learning desires

# Organize and Report

Organize as parents, students, and educators (separately but in cohort)

Use reporting tools to make sure APR is logged because they want to see stats/hear stories

## **Group activity:**

Take one minute right now to use PCC's APR reporting tool:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdUs-ZVxxzq\\_pN-v8GzdxrcF3bFAA3wLy2-QdNBATvspvL8RQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdUs-ZVxxzq_pN-v8GzdxrcF3bFAA3wLy2-QdNBATvspvL8RQ/viewform)



# Conclusion and Next Steps

**Organize!**

**Practice!**

**Collaborate!**

Email [education@pcc-cpc.ca](mailto:education@pcc-cpc.ca) with your name,  
school board, to join this important work

# Questions and Conversation

Questions? Hesitations? Concerns? Let's discuss  
them!

Please leave your Questions in the Q and A tab at  
the bottom of the Zoom screen.

Thank you for your attention!