

Avoiding Anti-Jewish and Anti-SWANA Racist Language¹

Talking about what's happening in Israel-Palestine is vital, now and always. But we have to do it without falling back on anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim racist tropes and speech. Be thoughtful of your words, and how you post on social media.

1. Be clear about what you mean when using labels:
 - a. Jewish and Muslim refers to two ethno-religious groups who experience racism, and this tends to get worse when violence in the Middle East hits our news headlines
 - b. Palestinian or Israeli are national identities
 - c. SWANA stands for Southwest Asian and North African. This term is used to describe the region commonly referred to as the Middle East. SWANA is a way to distinguish the region in geographical terms, rather than political or religious terms as defined by the Western world²
 - d. 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)
 - e. 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
 - f. 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 Jewish people responsible for the decisions of the leadership of the state of Israel, or SWANA people responsible for the decisions of Hamas
3. Do not demand that Jewish or SWANA people take a certain political position on the war or the tensions in Gaza/Israel or the region.

¹ Most of the content on this handout has been authored by the organization Solutions Not Sides. <https://solutionsnotsides.co.uk/>

² From: <https://aapirc.ucsc.edu/swana/what-is-swana.html>

4. Do not assume that all Palestinians, Israelis, SWANA or Jewish people support the actions of the governments of the state of Israel or Hamas
5. Anti-Zionism is not always antisemitic (for example if someone is generally anti-nationalism and believes in abolishing nation-states), but it can be, for example if criticism of Israel goes beyond that of its government policies and uses [anti-Jewish racist tropes](#)
6. Do not state that Muslims should leave Palestine because they have the whole of the rest of the Middle East or that Israeli Jews should 'go back to where they came from' or use [anti-Muslim racist tropes](#). There is a vast diversity of peoples, cultures and faiths that exist in Gaza/Israel/the West Bank
7. Israel is not a conspiracy to take over the Middle East or the World, and Palestine is not a conspiracy to enforce a Caliphate on Israel/the United States/the World. These are two national identities who both want to exist in the same piece of land
8. Israel is not Nazi Germany. Palestine is not Daesh/ISIS/Al Qaeda
9. Israelis and Palestinians are human beings, therefore celebrating their suffering and death is not acceptable
10. Be sensitive towards people who are pro-Israel and/or pro-Palestine at this time - they may have friends/family involved in the situation, or Israel/Palestine may represent something important to them such as their own sense of struggle or oppression or a place of safety in times of persecution. Solidarity with one side or the other is not a crime, they can be pro-Israel/pro-Palestine and still be pro-solution