

Why Israel Must Destroy Hamas

Lesson Plan (60 minutes)

Step 1: Lesson goals

Goals:

Affective:

- Students will appreciate the complexity of feeling both pride in the IDF and empathy for Palestinian civilians
- Students will understand the threat Hamas poses to Israel, and will recognize the moral complexity of Israel's response.

Behavioral:

- Students will be able to explain why destroying Hamas is necessary for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Cognitive:

- Students will be able to describe both how Hamas takes advantage of the Gazan civilian population and how the IDF maintains its identity as a moral army.

Essential Questions/Big Ideas:

1. What responsibilities does a government have towards its civilians?
2. Can civilian casualties in war ever be justified?
3. Can one condemn the massacre of Israelis and also empathize with Palestinians?

1. Life for Palestinian civilians in Gaza is difficult.
2. Destroying Hamas will benefit Palestinian civilians as well as Israelis.
3. Support for Israel's right to defend itself and empathy for Palestinians are not mutually exclusive.

Step 2: Learning Plan

Hook/Trigger: (5 minutes)

Do a 3-2-1 activity with your students:

- List 3 things you already know about the Israel-Hamas war
- List 2 questions that you currently have about Hamas
- Name 1 thing that you would like to learn more about regarding the war

Briefly review the answers, and have students hold onto their papers to use at the end of the lesson.

Learning Activity: (40 min)

1. Video and review questions (15 minutes). Watch the [video](#) “Why Israel Must Destroy Hamas” and play the [Kahoot](#) game to review. As students watch the video, they should consider:

- What is the history of Hamas in Gaza? What are their priorities as a government?
- What makes the IDF a moral army?
- What are the potential risks to civilians in Gaza in this war? What are the potential benefits for them?

2. Discussion (10 minutes): Choose one question for students to discuss in small groups or as a class

- a. Civility or civilian?** The brutal nature of the attacks by Hamas can engender a lot of anger and strong emotions, especially when [clips](#) can be found of Palestinians cheering about the assault in Gaza.
 - How can we distinguish between the actions of Hamas and groups of Palestinian civilians?
 - Who is considered a civilian? Does age or gender matter? Do cheering and other forms of explicit support affect one’s status as a civilian?
 - As an army that places immense importance on morality and the value of human life, how might Israel maintain empathy for civilians regardless of their beliefs?
- b. (De)Humanization:** Throughout history, one tactic that oppressors have used is dehumanization - the process of depriving people of positive human qualities, thereby making it easier for people to commit horrific acts against them. In

modern times, Israelis have been accused of dehumanizing Palestinians in order to subjugate them (you can read more about these claims [here](#)), perpetuating the narrative that Palestinians are victims of their Israeli oppressors. However, there is evidence that Hamas itself has been taking advantage of its own population.

- What evidence did the video provide that demonstrates that Hamas has been taking advantage of its own population?
- What is the role of narrative in shaping the roles of aggressor/oppressor and victims? Does perpetuating these narratives help the perceived victims?
- How can we distinguish between facts and narrative in conflicts such as this?

3. Learning activity (15 minutes): Choose one of the following activities:

a. Rules of combat: Divide your students into groups, and ask each group to come up with 5 rules the IDF should follow in combat. Students can draw from examples quoted in this video, as well as the Unpacked video on "[Is the IDF held to a higher moral standard](#)." Have each group share the rules they came up with and explain the reasoning behind them. Then, debrief with your students:

- Were there rules that overlapped between the groups? If so, why do you think these rules were suggested multiple times?
- Are these rules absolute or are there exceptional circumstances where the rules should change?
- Should the IDF hold itself to a higher standard than other world armies? Why or why not?

b. Balancing act: Israel has to balance maintaining deterrence, in order to keep its citizens safe, and being a moral army. How can Israel balance these two goals that often clash with each other? (See this Times of Israel [article](#) by Yossi Klein HaLevi where he develops this idea further)

Prepare a visual diagram that illustrates the challenge of this balancing act using a combination of words and pictures. You could use a [Venn Diagram](#), a [balance scale](#) or design your own platform

Consider the following questions as you prepare your diagram:

- Why is deterrence so important? Ideally, should deterrence be passive or active?
- What does it mean to be a moral army?

- What is gained when Israel prioritizes deterrence and security of its citizens? What is lost?
- Conversely, what is gained and lost when Israel emphasizes sticking to a strict moral code no matter the circumstance?
- Have students present their diagrams briefly to the class. Then, ask:
 - i. What new insights did you learn about balancing deterrence and morality by illustrating the challenge in this way?
 - ii. Which way do you think the IDF should lean and why?

Reflection: (5 minutes)

Choose one question:

1. **Emotional response:** The media, and especially social media, is filled with all kinds of images and stories about the Israel-Hamas conflict that raise valid, intense, and often conflicting emotions in us, such as fear for soldiers, sadness for the victims, anger at the situation, and helplessness in our position as viewers. When you see a post on social media that criticizes the IDF, how does it make you feel? Do you respond, and if so, how? How do you maintain respect for the IDF and its impossible task in the face of harsh online narratives against it?
2. **Dialogue:** Imagine that you have the opportunity to speak to someone your age who lives in Gaza. What questions would you want to ask? What would you like this person to know about you? What would you hope to accomplish through this dialogue?

Step 3: Assessment

Checking for Understanding: (5 minutes)

Have students revisit their 3-2-1 from the trigger activity.

- Are there any revisions they want to make to the original 3 things they already knew?
- Are they able to answer the 2 questions they asked?
- Did they learn more about what interested them?

To conclude, ask them to share one fact that was interesting or surprising that they learned from this lesson.

