

Transformations in SWANA Solidarity with the Palestinian Cause: From Popular Rejection to the Axis of Resistance

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Format: Self-paced, Asynchronous

Target Audience: Learners Aged 13 - 18

Estimated Duration: 60 - 75 minutes

Module Description: This module explores how solidarity with the Palestinian cause has evolved throughout Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) from 1948 to the present. Learners will examine how governments, popular movements, resistance organizations, and regional political transformations have shaped different forms of solidarity with Palestine. Through three major historical turning points, or “political earthquakes”, learners will distinguish between symbolic expressions of support and material forms of solidarity that directly influence political outcomes.

Learners will explore:

- What solidarity means in practice
- The difference between symbolic and material solidarity
- The Nakba and regional responses
- Arab nationalism and the limits of state-led solidarity
- Palestinian resistance movements
- The Iranian Revolution and the emergence of the Axis of Resistance
- Sectarianism and regional political divisions
- Arab normalization with Israel
- Operation Al-Aqsa Flood and contemporary regional dynamics
- The future of solidarity in SWANA

Activities include journal prompts, knowledge checks, reflective exercises, and optional extension projects.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this module, learners will:

- Define solidarity and distinguish between symbolic and material solidarity
- Describe how the Palestinian cause influenced political developments throughout SWANA
- Explain the significance of the Nakba as a regional political turning point
- Identify major developments in Arab state responses to Palestine after 1948
- Explain how Palestinian resistance movements emerged and evolved
- Describe how the Iranian Revolution influenced regional resistance movements

- Define sectarianism and explain how it has affected regional politics
- Explain the concept of normalization and its significance
- Analyze Operation Al-Aqsa Flood as a contemporary political turning point
- Reflect on how regional solidarity movements shape contemporary politics

Content Advisory Facilitators should be prepared for the possibility that learners may experience emotional reactions when engaging with the content. These reactions may arise from personal, family, or community experiences related to racism, discrimination, violence, or displacement.

Given the complexity and sensitivity of the topics, it is essential to create a learning environment where all participants feel safe, respected, and able to engage thoughtfully.

The goal of discussion is not to force agreement, but to support thoughtful learning, respectful dialogue, and critical analysis of historical events.

Facilitator Guidance - Establishing a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment

Facilitators should be prepared to:

- Recognize signs of emotional distress in learners
- Pause discussions if needed to allow space for reflection or grounding
- Offer learners the option to step away briefly if they need a break
- Provide access to appropriate support resources
- Encourage respectful dialogue while prioritizing learner wellbeing

Facilitators are encouraged to:

- **Validate feelings:** Acknowledge that learners may experience a range of emotions in response to the content
- **Provide choice:** Offer multiple ways to engage, including writing, discussion, reflection, or listening
- **Encourage autonomy:** Allow learners the option to pause, step back, or observe if needed
- **Promote safety:** Establish and uphold shared agreements for respectful and inclusive dialogue
- **Maintain respect and inclusion:** Ensure all learners feel heard and respected, even when perspectives differ
- **Prioritize learning over debate:** Focus on understanding, inquiry, and reflection rather than argument or persuasion
- **Encourage curiosity:** Support thoughtful questioning and open exploration of ideas
- **Model respectful communication:** Use and reinforce language that is respectful, and inclusive
- **Separate ideas from individuals:** Remind learners to critique concepts and arguments rather than people
- **Acknowledge emotional impact:** Recognize that topics such as racism, colonization, war, and injustice may evoke strong emotional responses
- **Encourage active listening:** Support learners in listening with attention, care, and respect for differing perspectives
- **Provide varied participation options:** Allow learners to engage through discussion, writing, or reflection based on comfort level
- **Ensure equitable participation:** Structure engagement so that all learners have opportunities to contribute, and no single learner dominates, is singled out, or is overexposed

Learners should be reminded that participation in discussions or reflections can be flexible. They may choose to listen, write privately, or participate in other ways that feel comfortable.

Strategies for Managing Difficult Moments

If challenging situations arise during discussion, facilitators may consider the following strategies:

- Pause the conversation if the discussion becomes tense or emotionally charged
- Allow time for reflection or grounding
- Re-center the discussion on the learning goals of the lesson
- Encourage learners to support their ideas with historical evidence or examples from the video module
- Redirect harmful or disrespectful language by reminding learners of shared agreements
- Encourage learners to ask questions rather than make assumptions
- Offer alternative participation options, such as written reflection
- Remind learners that complex historical topics often include multiple perspectives
- **If a learner becomes distressed, pause the activity and provide appropriate support or referral**

Community Agreements Co-Creations

Facilitators may establish clear community agreements at the outset, such as:

- Listening actively and without interruption
- Respecting diverse perspectives and lived experiences
- Using thoughtful language
- Critiquing ideas, and not individuals
- Maintaining confidentiality if appropriate

Suggested Safe Space Activity (5–10 minutes):

Activity: Community Agreements Co-Creation

Instructions:

1. **Ask learners:** *What do you need in order to feel safe, respected, and heard in this learning space?*
2. Synthesize responses into a shared set of community agreements
3. Revisit these agreements throughout the module as needed

Optional Reflection Prompt:

- What does respectful dialogue look like to you when discussing complex or sensitive issues?
- How can you contribute to maintaining a constructive learning environment?

Module Structure:

Warm-Up – Word Association & Reflection

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Key Concept: Initial perceptions influence understanding; reflection reveals bias.

Learning Activities:

- **Word Association Prompt:** What is the first word or phrase that comes to mind when you hear the word “Solidarity”?

- **Optional Activity:**
 - ✧ Facilitators may create a word cloud using learner responses to visualize common themes, patterns, or differences in perceptions. This activity can be revisited at the end of the module to reflect on how learners' understanding may have evolved.

Part 1: Understanding Solidarity

Estimated Time: 20 - 25 minutes

Key Concept: Solidarity involves actions that materially strengthen another group's ability to pursue its goals.

- Learning Activities:**
- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ Defining solidarity
 - ✧ Symbolic vs. material solidarity
 - ✧ Indigenous resistance
 - ✧ Palestinian liberation
 - ✧ Why actions matter more than rhetoric
 - **Journal Prompt:**
 - ✧ Can someone support a cause through words alone?
 - ✧ When might actions matter more?
 - **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ Solidarity becomes meaningful when...
 - ✧ Material support differs from symbolic support because...
 - **Knowledge Check:**
 - ✧ What is material solidarity? *Answer: Support that directly strengthens another group's ability to pursue its goals politically, economically, socially, or militarily.*
 - ✧ What is the difference between symbolic solidarity and material solidarity? *Answer: Symbolic solidarity expresses support through words, symbols, or public statements, while material solidarity involves concrete actions that directly strengthen another group's ability to pursue its goals.*

Part 2: The First Political Earthquake - The Nakba and the Establishment of Israel (1948)

Estimated Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Key Concept: The establishment of Israel and the Nakba reshaped politics throughout the Arab world.

- Learning Activities:**
- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ The Nakba
 - ✧ Arab public opinion
 - ✧ Early Arab governments
 - ✧ Rise of Arab nationalism
 - ✧ Gamal Abdel Nasser
 - ✧ Republican governments
 - ✧ The Six-Day War (1967)
 - ✧ The Three No's
 - ✧ Battle of Karameh
 - **Journal Prompts:** Why might people lose confidence in governments

during times of crisis?

- **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ Governments and people may respond differently because...
 - ✧ The Battle of Karameh was significant because...
- **Knowledge Check:**
 - ✧ What were the Three No's adopted after the 1967 Arab League Summit? *Answer: No peace, no recognition, and no negotiations with Israel.*

Part 3: Resistance Beyond Governments

Estimated Time: 10 - 15 minutes

Key Concept: As Palestinian resistance movements expanded, many governments increasingly viewed them as political threats.

- Learning Activities:**
- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ Black September
 - ✧ Palestinian organizations in Jordan
 - ✧ Relocation to Lebanon
 - ✧ Lebanese Civil War
 - ✧ Containment of resistance
 - ✧ Arab Liberation Front
 - ✧ Al-Sa'iqa
 - ✧ Camp David Accords
 - ✧ Popular opposition to normalization
 - **Journal Prompt:** Why might governments sometimes fear independent political movements?
 - **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ Governments may seek to control movements because...
 - ✧ Popular movements become influential when...
 - **Knowledge Check:**
 - ✧ What does normalization refer to? *Answer: The establishment of official political, diplomatic, or economic relations with Israel.*
 - ✧ Following Black September, where were many Palestinian organizations relocated? *Answer: Many relocated to Lebanon)*

Part 4: The Second Political Earthquake- The Iranian Revolution

Estimated Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Key Concept: The Iranian Revolution introduced a new regional model of resistance centered on long-term political and military organization.

- Learning Activities:**
- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ Iranian Islamic Revolution
 - ✧ Ayatollah Khomeini
 - ✧ Political Islam
 - ✧ 1982 invasion of Lebanon
 - ✧ Emergence of Hezbollah
 - ✧ Liberation of southern Lebanon
 - ✧ 2006 Lebanon War
 - ✧ Hamas
 - ✧ Changing models of resistance
 - **Journal Prompt:** How can political ideas spread across borders?

- **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ Different resistance movements develop by...
 - ✧ Regional events influence neighboring countries because...
- **Knowledge Check:**
 - ✧ How did the Iranian Revolution change regional solidarity? *Answer: It promoted resistance organizations built around long-term political and military organization rather than primarily state-led rhetoric.*
 - ✧ Who led the Iranian Revolution in 1979? *Answer: Ayatollah Khomeini.*

Part 5: Sectarianism and the Axis of Resistance

Estimated Time: 10 - 15 minutes

Key Concept: As Palestinian resistance movements expanded, many governments increasingly viewed them as political threats.

- Learning Activities:**
- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ Defining sectarianism
 - ✧ Sunni and Shiite identities
 - ✧ The Axis of Resistance
 - ✧ Syrian conflict
 - ✧ Information campaigns
 - ✧ Regional polarization
 - ✧ Abraham Accords
 - ✧ Expansion of normalization
 - **Journal Prompt:** How can identity be used to unite or divide societies?
 - **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ Political alliances often change because...
 - ✧ Sectarian narratives can influence...
 - **Knowledge Check:**
 - ✧ What is sectarianism? *Answer: The use of religious differences to divide communities or influence political conflict.*
 - ✧ What is meant by normalization in regional politics? *Answer: Normalization is the establishment of official diplomatic, political, or economic relations between states and Israel.*

Part 6: The Third Political Earthquake - Operation Al-Aqsa Flood

Estimated Time: 10 - 15 minutes

Key Concept: Operation Al-Aqsa Flood reshaped regional and international discussions surrounding Palestine.

- Learning Activities:**
- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ October 7, 2023
 - ✧ Regional responses
 - ✧ International attention
 - ✧ Gaza
 - ✧ Regional alliances
 - ✧ Future political directions
 - **Journal Prompt:** How can one event reshape public opinion across multiple countries?
 - **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ Regional conflicts often affect...
 - ✧ Political turning points matter because...

- **Knowledge Check:**
 - ✧ Why does the presenter describe Operation Al-Aqsa Flood as a political earthquake? *Answer: Because it significantly altered regional politics, renewed attention on Palestine, and reshaped discussions surrounding regional alliances and resistance.*
 - ✧ According to the presenter, what were the two regional consequences of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood? *Answer: It renewed international attention on Palestine and influenced discussions about regional alliances and political strategies.*

Part 5: Honouring the Land – Reflection Activity

Estimated Time: 10 - 15 minutes

Key Concept: Understanding our relationship to the land can deepen awareness of historical and ongoing displacement.

Learning Activities:

1. Use a resource like Native Land Digital to explore the Indigenous territories where you live.
2. Research local Indigenous communities, their histories, and present-day stewardship efforts.
3. Reflect on how land and water are protected and managed by Indigenous peoples.

- **Journal Prompt**

- ✧ What is your relationship to the land and waters where you live?
- ✧ What meaningful actions can you take to support their care and preservation?
- ✧ How will you commit to these actions moving forward?"

- **Sentence Starter:**

- ✧ Social movements that acknowledge Indigenous histories and stewardship may be more effective because...
- ✧ Honoring land may help guide actions for justice and solidarity by...

Part 6: Exit Reflection

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Learning Activities: Students may choose any one of the following formats:

- **Anonymous digital submission** (e.g., Google Form with no name required)
- **Paper reflection slip submitted in a collection box** (no names required if anonymity is preferred)
- **Private journal entry** kept in a notebook or personal document
- **Verbal reflection shared** (if comfortable)
- **Journal Prompt**
 - ✧ One thing I learned
 - ✧ One question I still have
 - ✧ One impactful quote or idea that stuck with me

Facilitators should clearly communicate that **learners are not required to identify themselves** unless they choose to do so.

Optional Extension Activities:

- **Timeline:** Create a timeline of the three political earthquakes discussed in the module

- **Case Study Research:** Research one regional organization discussed in the module
 - **Media Analysis:** Analyze how different media sources describe solidarity with Palestine
 - **Creative Project:** Design an infographic illustrating the evolution of solidarity in SWANA
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Glossary of Key Terms

- **Solidarity:** Support for another group through political, economic, social, or military action
 - **Material Solidarity:** Concrete actions that strengthen another group's ability to achieve its goals
 - **SWANA:** Southwest Asia and North Africa
 - **Nakba:** Arabic for "catastrophe"; refers to the displacement of Palestinians during the establishment of Israel in 1948
 - **Normalization:** Establishing official diplomatic, political, or economic relations between Arab states and Israel
 - **Arab Nationalism:** A political movement emphasizing unity among Arab peoples
 - **Sectarianism:** The use of religious identity to divide groups politically or socially
 - **Axis of Resistance:** A term used for an alliance of state and non-state actors that oppose Israel and U.S. influence in the region
 - **Three No's:** The 1967 Arab League declaration of no peace, no recognition, and no negotiations with Israel
 - **Political Earthquake:** A major historical event that fundamentally reshapes regional political dynamic
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