

From the River to the World Organizing for Liberation

Presenter: **Malak Afaneh**, Civil Rights Attorney & Director, Palestine Center for Public Policy

Format: Self-paced, Asynchronous

Target Audience: Learners Aged 13 - 18

Estimated Duration: 85 - 105 minutes

Module Description: This module explores how activism for Palestinian liberation is happening online, in schools, and through grassroots lawyering. Learners will explore:

- Digital campaigns that influence global action
- Student protests and encampments as sites of resistance
- Using the law as a tool to fight repression

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

- Explain the role of digital activism in global Palestinian solidarity
- Describe how student encampments serve as centers of learning, protest, and community
- Discuss how grassroots lawyering is used to challenge repression
- Reflect on the ethics, challenges, and strategies of activism
- Analyze how online, offline, and legal activism can combine to create change
- Explore your relationship to the land and consider ways to honor Indigenous histories

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. Collect responses via discussion board, shared document, or live poll
3. Synthesize responses into a shared set of community agreements
4. 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 term "Activism"?
 - **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: Digital Activism - From the Algorithm to the Streets

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

Key Concept: Social media can turn ideas into action and pressure governments or corporations

- Learning Activities:**
- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ Examines how social media campaigns mobilize global attention and action
 - ✧ Explores how digital organizing can influence corporations, governments, and public opinion
 - ✧ Encourages analysis of the strengths and limitations of online activism
 - **Journal Prompt:** How can online campaigns make real-world change? What are the strengths and limits of digital activism?
 - **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ One way the #MaskOffMaersk campaign is described as influencing supply chains is...
 - ✧ Social media campaigns can create global solidarity by...
 - **Knowledge Check:**
 - ✧ Which company did #MaskOffMaersk target? *Answer: Maersk, a shipping company transporting military cargo to Israeli forces*

- ⌘ What was the outcome of the campaign? *Answer: Maersk cut all business ties with Israeli settlements in the West Bank*

Part 2: Encampments as Frontlines - Student Organizing and Collective Power

Estimated Time: 25 minutes

Key Concept: Student protests and encampments combine physical presence and online organizing to create educational and political spaces of change

- Learning Activities:**
- **Content Overview:**
 - ⌘ Examines how social media campaigns mobilize global attention and action
 - ⌘ Explores how digital organizing can influence corporations, governments, and public opinion
 - ⌘ Encourages analysis of the strengths and limitations of online activism
 - **Journal Prompt:** Why are physical protest spaces important for building community and solidarity?
 - **Sentence Starter:**
 - ⌘ Student encampments may be compared to youth participation in the First Intifada in that...
 - ⌘ Students adapted their organizing and communication in response to surveillance and restrictive conditions by...
 - **Knowledge Check:**
 - ⌘ How many campuses hosted encampments in 2024? *Answer: Over 100 campuses globally*
 - ⌘ What online tools did students use during encampments? *Answer: Signal threads, press templates, protest tactics, and digital security protocols*
 - **Reflection Prompt:**
 - ⌘ Why is it important to combine online and offline activism?
 - ⌘ How can local action influence global movements?

Part 3: The Law Won't Save Us, But We Can Use It

Estimated Time: 25 - 30 minutes

Key Concept: The law can be used as a tool by movements, even in systems that try to repress them

- Learning Activities:**
- **Content Overview:**
 - ⌘ Examines how legal systems can both repress and protect activists
 - ⌘ Introduces grassroots lawyering as a strategy used by justice movements
 - ⌘ Encourages analysis of legal tools, rights, and strategic advocacy
 - **Journal Prompt:** What is grassroots lawyering? How does it support activism?
 - **Sentence Starter:**
 - ⌘ Universities and police may use legal systems to repress activism by...
 - ⌘ Transparency and accountability may be increased through lawsuits or public records requests by...
 - **Knowledge Check:**
 - ⌘ How many U.S. states have laws penalizing support for BDS? *Answer:*

Over 35 states

- ✧ Name a legal victory supporting activist rights. *Answer: Texas speech therapist won after refusing anti-BDS pledge; journalist Abby Martin's Georgia case*
- **Reflection Prompt:**
 - ✧ How can the law both repress and protect activists?
 - ✧ Why is strategy and careful planning important in activism?

Part 4: 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
- **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ One way online activism, student organizing, grassroots lawyering, and respect for the land work together to build global change is...

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

Optional Extension Activities

- **Mini Essay:** Compare digital, offline, and legal activism. How do these strategies work together?
- **Case Study Research:** Analyze #MaskOffMaersk or student encampment campaigns for effectiveness.
- **Digital Media Project:** Create a social media campaign to raise awareness of a social justice issue.
- **Reflection Prompt:** What can youth today learn from these activist strategies?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **BDS** (*Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*): Movement to end international support for Israeli apartheid.
 - **Encampment:** Temporary protest site for activism, education, and community.
 - **Grassroots Lawyering:** Legal strategies used to support social movements.
 - **Digital Activism:** Online organizing to pressure governments, corporations, or public opinion.
 - **First Intifada:** Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation (1987-1993).
 - **Doxxing:** Publicly sharing personal information to intimidate or harass activists.
 - **Public Records Act:** Law allowing access to government records to increase transparency.
 - **Political Repression:** Efforts by authorities to limit or punish activism.
 - **Indigenous Land Stewardship:** Practices by Indigenous peoples to care for and protect land and water.
- 