

Palestinian History - Self-Determination, Resistance, and Liberation

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Format: Self-paced, asynchronous

Target Audience: Learners aged 13-18

Estimated Duration: 95-110 minutes

Module Description: This module explores the history of Palestine through the experiences, culture, and resistance of the Palestinian people. Learners will examine key historical developments that have shaped Palestinian society, including colonialism, Zionism, displacement, resistance movements, and contemporary struggles for self-determination.

Learners will explore:

- Palestinian identity, culture, and connection to the land
- The concept of self-determination
- British colonialism and the Mandate period
- The rise of political Zionism
- Palestinian resistance movements
- The Nakba and its consequences
- The First and Second Intifadas
- Gaza and contemporary realities
- Ongoing struggles for freedom, justice, and self-determination

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

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

- Describe key aspects of Palestinian culture and identity
- Define self-determination and explain its significance in Palestinian history
- Analyze the role of colonialism and imperialism in shaping Palestine
- Explain the emergence of political Zionism and its historical context
- Identify major moments of Palestinian resistance
- Describe the Nakba and its lasting impacts
- Explain the significance of the First and Second Intifadas
- Analyze contemporary challenges facing Palestinians
- Reflect on the relationship between history, justice, and liberation
- Define and use key historical and political terms accurately

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**

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

Community Agreements Co-Creation

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?
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Module Structure:

Warm up: Word Association and Reflection

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Key Concept: Historical narratives influence how people understand current events

- Learning Activities:**
- **Word Association Prompt:** What is the first word or phrase that comes to mind when you hear the term “Self Determination”?
 - **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: Self Determination

Estimated Time: 15-20 minutes

Key Concept: Self-determination is the right of people to govern themselves and determine their own future

- Learning Activities:**
- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ Defining self-determination
 - ✧ Palestinian connections to land, culture, and community
 - ✧ Ottoman rule and its decline
 - ✧ European colonial expansion after World War I
 - ✧ The Sykes-Picot Agreement

- ✧ The League of Nations Mandate system
- ✧ The British Mandate in Palestine
- **Journal Prompt:**
 - ✧ Why might self-determination be important for communities and nations?
 - ✧ How can outside control affect a people's ability to shape their future?
- **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ *Self-determination is important because...*
 - ✧ *One challenge communities face when denied self-determination is...*
- **Knowledge Check:**
 - ✧ What is self-determination? *Answer: The right of a people to determine their own political future and govern themselves*
 - ✧ What was the British Mandate? *Answer: British colonial administration of Palestine following World War I*

Part 2: Zionism and Imperialism

Estimated Time: 15–20 minutes

Key Concept: Political movements and imperial powers played important roles in shaping modern Palestine

Learning Activities:

- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ The emergence of political Zionism in Europe
 - ✧ European antisemitism and Jewish responses
 - ✧ The First Zionist Congress
 - ✧ Colonial settlement projects
 - ✧ Imperial support for Zionism
 - ✧ Connections between colonialism and state-building
 - ✧ The role of European powers in Palestine
- **Journal Prompt:**
 - ✧ Why is historical context important when studying political movements?
 - ✧ How can powerful states influence political movements in other parts of the world?
- **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ *Understanding the relationship between imperialism and Palestine helps explain...*
 - ✧ *One factor that contributed to the growth of Zionism was...*
- **Knowledge Check:**
 - ✧ When was the First Zionist Congress held? *Answer: 1897*
 - ✧ Who founded modern political Zionism? *Answer: Theodor Herzl*

Part 3: Early Resistance to Zionism

Estimated Time: 15–20 minutes

Key Concept: Palestinians organized collective resistance to colonial rule and land dispossession long before 1948

Learning Activities:

- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ Palestinian resistance during the British Mandate period
 - ✧ The 1936-1939 Arab Revolt
 - ✧ General strikes and civil disobedience
 - ✧ The keffiyeh as a symbol of resistance
 - ✧ British suppression of Palestinian uprisings
 - ✧ British support for Zionist institutions and settlement
 - ✧ The 1939 White Paper
 - ✧ The United Nations Partition Plan
- **Journal Prompt:**
 - ✧ Why might communities organize protests, strikes, or other forms of collective action when they believe their rights are being removed?
 - ✧ What role can symbols, traditions, or cultural practices play in resistance movements?
- **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ *Collective action can be powerful because...*
 - ✧ *Historical resistance movements help us understand...*
 - ✧ *The keffiyeh became an important symbol because...*
 - ✧ *One reason Palestinians organized resistance movements was...*
- **Knowledge Check:**
 - ✧ What was the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939? *Answer: A large-scale Palestinian uprising against British colonial rule and Zionist settlement*
 - ✧ What was the purpose of the 1939 White Paper? *Answer: It limited Jewish immigration into Palestine and proposed changes to British policy*
 - ✧ What percentage of Palestine did the UN Partition Plan propose for the Jewish state? *Answer: Approximately 55%*

Part 4: The Nakba and 1967

Estimated Time: 20-25 minutes

Key Concept: The Nakba and subsequent wars transformed Palestinian society through displacement, occupation, and refugeehood

Learning Activities:

- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ The creation of Israel in 1948
 - ✧ The Nakba and mass displacement
 - ✧ Palestinian refugee communities
 - ✧ Formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
 - ✧ Palestinian national movements
 - ✧ The 1967 War
 - ✧ Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza
 - ✧ Expansion of displacement and territorial control
- **Journal Prompt:**
 - ✧ How might displacement affect a community's identity, culture, and connection to place?
 - ✧ What challenges might refugee communities face across generations?

- **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ *Understanding refugee experiences can help us...*
 - ✧ *The Nakba remains significant today because...*
 - ✧ *Historical events continue to affect future generations when...*
 - ✧ *One lasting impact of displacement is...*
- **Knowledge Check Examples:**
 - ✧ What organization became a major representative body for Palestinians in the 1960s? *Answer: The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)*
 - ✧ What territories came under Israeli occupation after 1967? *Answer: The West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights*
 - ✧ True or False: The effects of displacement always end after people leave their homes. *Answer: False*

Part 5: The First and Second Intifadas

Estimated Time: 20–25 minutes

Key Concept: Popular uprisings emerged as forms of resistance to occupation and political conditions

Learning Activities:

- **Content Overview:**
 - ✧ Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon
 - ✧ The Sabra and Shatila massacres
 - ✧ The First Intifada (1987–1993)
 - ✧ Civil resistance and mass mobilization
 - ✧ The Oslo Accords
 - ✧ Expansion of settlements
 - ✧ The Second Intifada (2000–2005)
 - ✧ Ongoing debates about peace, resistance, and self-determination
- **Journal Prompt:**
 - ✧ Why do people participate in protest movements or social uprisings?
 - ✧ What are some different ways communities resist injustice?
- **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✧ *One reason communities organize mass movements is...*
 - ✧ *Understanding different forms of resistance helps us...*
 - ✧ *People may engage in resistance when...*
 - ✧ *The First Intifada demonstrated that...*
- **Knowledge Check Examples:**
 - ✧ True or False: Resistance movements can include nonviolent actions such as strikes and demonstrations. *Answer: True*
 - ✧ When did the First Intifada begin? *Answer: 1987*
 - ✧ When did the Second Intifada occur? *Answer: 2000–2005*
 - ✧ What were the Oslo Accords? *Answer: Agreements between Israeli and Palestinian leaders intended to establish a peace process*

Part 6: Gaza and Contemporary Palestine

Estimated Time: 15–20 minutes

Key Concept: Gaza plays a significant role in understanding contemporary Palestinian history and ongoing humanitarian challenges

Learning Activities:

- **Content Overview:**
 - ✎ Gaza's political and social context
 - ✎ The 2006 Palestinian elections
 - ✎ The blockade of Gaza
 - ✎ Military operations and humanitarian impacts
 - ✎ Access to food, water, healthcare, and infrastructure
 - ✎ International responses
 - ✎ Human rights concerns
 - ✎ Contemporary Palestinian experiences
- **Journal Prompt:**
 - ✎ How do prolonged conflicts affect everyday life for children, families, and communities?
 - ✎ Why is it important to understand the human impact of political conflicts?
- **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✎ *Understanding everyday life during conflict helps us...*
 - ✎ *One challenge communities living under conflict may experience is...*
 - ✎ *Learning about contemporary Palestine encourages us to...*
 - ✎ *Access to basic resources is important because...*
- **Knowledge Check Examples:**
 - ✎ What is a blockade? *Answer: Restrictions placed on the movement of people, goods, or services into and out of a territory*
 - ✎ True or False: Conflicts affect only governments and political leaders. *Answer: False*
 - ✎ What significant election took place in Gaza in 2006? *Answer: Palestinian legislative elections*

Part 7: The Struggle Continues

Estimated Time: 15–20 minutes

Key Concept: Palestinians continue to advocate for self-determination, equality, human rights, and justice through a variety of social, political, cultural, and community efforts

Learning Activities:

- **Content Overview:**
 - ✎ Palestinian communities in Palestine and the diaspora
 - ✎ Sheikh Jarrah and housing displacement protests
 - ✎ Global solidarity movements
 - ✎ Human rights advocacy
 - ✎ Connections between different social justice movements
 - ✎ Cultural preservation and resilience
 - ✎ The continuing pursuit of self-determination
 - ✎ Future possibilities for justice and peace
- **Journal Prompt:**
 - ✎ How can communities preserve their identity and culture during periods of hardship?
 - ✎ What role can education and historical understanding play in supporting justice and human rights?
- **Sentence Starter:**
 - ✎ *Understanding the past helps us think about the future because...*

- ✧ *One way communities preserve culture and identity is...*
- ✧ *Solidarity across communities can help promote change by...*
- ✧ *Learning history can contribute to justice by...*

▪ **Knowledge Check Examples:**

- ✧ What is self-determination? *Answer: The right of people to determine their own political future and govern themselves*
- ✧ True or False: Cultural traditions can play a role in preserving community identity. *Answer: True*
- ✧ What is meant by the term diaspora? *Answer: A population living outside its ancestral homeland while maintaining cultural, historical, or familial connections*

Part 8: 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 9: Exit Reflection

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

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

- **Paper reflection slip submitted in a collection box**
- **Journal entry** kept in a notebook or 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:

- **Historical Research Project:** Research a significant event, organization, or individual discussed in the module and create a presentation or timeline.

- **Media Analysis:** Compare how Palestinian history is presented across different media sources and historical accounts.
 - **Reflective Essay:** How does understanding Palestinian history contribute to broader conversations about justice, human rights, and self-determination?
 - **Creative Project:** Create a digital story, artwork, poem, or infographic exploring themes of identity, culture, resistance, or self-determination.
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Glossary of Key Terms

- **Self-Determination:** The right of people to determine their own political future and govern themselves
 - **Diaspora:** Communities living outside their ancestral homeland while maintaining cultural, historical, or familial connections
 - **British Mandate:** British administration of Palestine from 1920-1948
 - **Balfour Declaration (1917):** British statement supporting the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine
 - **Zionism:** A political movement advocating for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine
 - **Nakba:** Arabic for “catastrophe”; refers to the mass displacement of Palestinians in 1948
 - **PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization):** A political organization established to represent Palestinians and advocate for Palestinian self-determination
 - **Intifada:** Arabic term often translated as “uprising” or “shaking off.”
 - **Occupation:** Control of territory by a foreign military power
 - **Refugee:** A person forced to leave their home because of conflict, persecution, or violence
 - **Blockade:** Restrictions on the movement of people, goods, or services into and out of a territory
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