Responding to Questions and Disinformation about Israel

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As we follow Israel’s war with Hamas, it’s important to know how to discuss the situation with

others — colleagues, friends at work or school, parents standing on the sidelines of the soccer

field — and to express the deep pain we feel for family members, friends, and loved ones

experiencing these horrors firsthand in the Jewish State. This can be especially challenging

when we are confronted not with empathy or support, but ignorance or enmity.

Handling these conversations effectively is vital, both in person and on social media, which

cultivates incivility and can exacerbate feelings of enragement, anger, and indignation. On

social media, we must decide if it will be productive to respond to ugly content and the people

posting it. Ideally, the goal is to engage in conversation in real life and not via the screen.

Here are some of the comments and positions you may encounter and potential responses to

consider offering:

**Palestinians just want liberation from Israel so their land will no longer be occupied.**

**Responses:**

• Israelis withdrew from Gaza in 2005. Hamas gained control of the territory. Instead of

investing in schools, hospitals, and civil infrastructure, Hamas invested in its terror

infrastructure and in rockets to target Israeli civilians.

• Hamas consistently places Palestinians who live in Gaza in harm’s way and uses civilians as

human shields, hiding their terrorist cells in neighborhoods where it is more challenging to

root out this evil.

• Hamas indiscriminately seeks to destroy all of Israel —not just control their Strip. The

terrorism taking place in Israel today is not about forming a Palestinian state. It is about

targeting innocent Israeli civilians and wreaking havoc on all of Israeli society.

**When you see content online or in-person that is seeking to elicit an emotional response.**

**Consider beginning with:**

• “This post or content is troubling for me. I seek the dignity of all human beings, and this

content seeks to demonize and harm Jews and the State of Israel. Can I ask why you would

post such inflammable material about an already complicated situation?”

**When you see #FreePalestine from a friend’s social post.**

**Consider saying:**

• I saw you posted #FreePalestine, can you share with me what that means to you? I’d like to

understand how you interpret that phrase.

• I’d also like to talk to you about what that phrase means to me and why it troubles me, as it

has multiple connotations, particularly given the current crisis in Israel.

• FreePalestine, often accompanying the chant, “From the River to the Sea,” is a euphemism

for the total annihilation of Israel and rejection of a two-state solution. Very often, this term

suggests that all land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is part of

Palestine and that Israel, irrespective of its borders, has no right to exist and was created in

sin.

**When confronted with negative comments about Jews, Judaism, and the State of Israel that devolve into antisemitic positions.**

**Consider beginning with:**

• Your words are hurtful, dishonest, and have consequences. The comments you are making

have devolved into a form of hatred against the Jewish State and the Jewish people. Is that

your intent?”

• This will provide you with a clearer picture of whom you are dealing with so you can decide

if this is someone who engenders goodwill and a conversation.

**Israel is an apartheid and colonial state, and the indigenous population is just fighting back.**

**Responses:**

• Israel is a democracy, where Arab citizens vote and serve in government.

• Jews have a historical record that has attempted peace with Palestinians for decades. Those

peace negotiations have failed repeatedly.

• The accusation of Israel as an apartheid and colonial state is an attempt to delegitimize the

existence of the State of Israel. Those who utilize these terms, particularly given the horrors

Israel and Israelis are facing, are trying to rationalize the actions of Hamas.

• As a democracy, Israel is not perfect. It has major societal challenges. And yet the overriding

essence of Israel is to create a shared society between all of its citizens.

• The terminology of “apartheid,” “colonialism,” and “indigeneity” are used by individuals to

suggest that Israel was created in sin and therefore has no right to exist. That is the

motivation: To convict Israel in the world court of opinion.

**Israel is destroying innocent lives in Gaza – why should these innocents be held accountable for acts of Palestinian terrorists?**

**Responses:**

• Israel has a moral obligation to protect its citizens and to recover Israeli citizens — women,

elderly, children, young mothers, teenagers — who are being held hostage by Hamas

terrorists in the heart of Gaza. Israeli hostages have been kidnapped, raped, and maimed

because of their identity as Israelis.

• Hamas terrorists do not engage according to the acceptable rules of military engagement.

There is no ethical approach to their actions. Because Hamas uses Palestinians as human

shields, they have made it impossible for Israel to avoid harming civilians.

• Unfortunately, innocent people will die, and lives will be lost. But this is because Hamas is

not interested in the value of Palestinian lives, Palestinian dignity, and a future Palestinian

state. Quite the contrary.

**Israel has made living conditions intolerable in Gaza, and its aggression has created the context and circumstances that led to this recent conflict.**

**Responses:**

• Israelis withdrew from the Gaza territory in 2005 and Hamas gained control of the territory.

Instead of investing in schools, hospitals, and civil infrastructure, Hamas invested in its

terror infrastructure and rockets to target Israeli civilians.

• For decades, Israel has endorsed a two-state solution that would lead to a Palestinian state.

Palestinian leadership has repeatedly rejected proposals – from both left and rightwing

governments — for two-state solutions

• The Palestinian response should be to negotiate with Israel – not attack civilian

communities. Palestinian voices and leadership need to outwardly condemn Hamas and

their actions. Any attempt to justify and rationalize Hamas’s terror is abhorrent. There is no

moral equivalency to what is taking place.

• What is happening in Israel is not equivalent to the unfortunate living conditions

Palestinians face in Gaza. The slaughter of innocent Israelis and the documentation by

Hamas of these crimes against humanity must be denounced unequivocally.

• Hamas has engaged in a pogrom, attacking Jewish civilians. This is not a military conflict.

• It is possible to be sympathetic to the Palestinians while strongly condemning Hamas and

the actions of the terrorists.

**There are rallies and organizations holding a “Day of Resistance” and celebrating the “successes” of Hamas, don’t they have a right to organize and express themselves?**

**Responses:**

• The organizations like Students for Justice in Palestine, and other pro-Boycott,

Divestment, and Sanctions Movement groups who back Hamas and their terrorist acts

are supporting and praising the killing of Jews. Full Stop. They may claim they are “only”

anti-Zionist. But make no mistake — they advocate for the decimation of Jews. They are

fundamentally Jew haters.

• Did these same groups celebrate and laud the murders and terrorism committed by

ISIS? No, because the victims were not Israeli. Supporting Hamas and their horrors is

equivalent in the American context to supporting the Klu Klux Klan.

This is an unprecedented moment in Israeli society. The nightmare unfolding will forever

change all of Israel, Israelis, and Jews. Now is not the moment to debate the failures of Israeli

political leadership, the missteps of Israeli intelligence and military. There will be a time for that

and that must occur to learn and prevent these atrocities from happening again. But now is a

time for complete and total support of all of Israel.