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FACTSHEET

THE “TEACH PALESTINE” CURRICULUM

Political Indoctrination Disguised as Education



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Executive Summary

This review critically examines the [Teach Palestine](#) curriculum, a “project of the [Middle East Children’s Alliance](#) (MECA) based in Berkeley, California.” MECA [describes itself](#) as a “nonprofit humanitarian aid organization... We support children and families in Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon” with direct aid, financial support, university scholarships. Notably, MECA does not offer any support for Israeli children, including the hundreds of thousands directly affected by war.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is pivotal and complex. It has had lasting repercussions for the entire Middle East and beyond. It is highly emotive with partisans on either side holding very strong opinions. As a project of the Middle East Children’s Alliance, which holds strong anti-Israel views, Teach Palestine’s approach to this subject should be examined thoroughly.

This paper evaluates Teach Palestine’s methods and compares them to widely accepted pedagogical core values in American K-12 education. The analysis reveals significant shortcomings in Teach Palestine’s approach, which promotes political indoctrination including encouraging K-12 students to become anti-Israel activists.

The document examines Teach Palestine’s biased and politically driven perspective, which undermines the ideals of balanced education and critical thinking. This is no surprise as Teach Palestine, via its parent organization MECA, is allied with a national network of anti-Israel advocacy organizations that dehumanize Israelis, call for Israel’s destruction, and rationalize Hamas’s atrocities of October 7, 2023. This review examines the endorsement of anti-Zionist ideologies by MECA and its promotion of slogans and terms that negate Israel’s existence and call for its destruction.

The analysis of the "Stolen Land" module on the Teach Palestine website demonstrates how it promotes indoctrination rather than education. Through emotionally charged language, the module presents a one-sided historical narrative, selectively uses sources with anti-Israel bias, and promotes MECA’s political agenda that downplays or ignores violence against Israelis, thereby undermining the development of critical thinking skills.

This review concludes that Teach Palestine fails to provide a balanced representation of diverse perspectives, foster critical thinking, and encourage open dialogue and does not live up to widely accepted pedagogical core values. Instead, it promotes a biased politicized narrative, suppresses dissenting viewpoints, and creates a hostile environment for students with differing opinions.

To ensure a comprehensive and academically rigorous education on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this paper suggests incorporating pedagogical values such as empathy, open-mindedness, respect for diversity, honesty, integrity, resilience, collaboration, and ethical reasoning. By embracing these values and presenting widely-diverse perspectives educational materials can foster critical thinking and empower students to form their own informed opinions.

Teach Palestine’s Parent Organization: Middle East Children’s Alliance

- 1) MECA is ideologically anti-Zionist and endorses Israel’s destruction. MECA’s executive director, Zeiad Abbas Shamrouh, stated, “From the river to the sea, Palestine is Palestine. And for sure, soon, will be free.” This slogan is advocated elsewhere on [MECA’s web site here](#) and is also [endorsed](#) on the Teach Palestine web site.

NOTE: The territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea includes Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. As such this slogan negates Israel and is a call to end its existence.

Effectively this would strip away the right of the Jewish people to national self-determination on any part of their ancestral homeland.

- 2) With its endorsement of the term “intifada” MECA [supports](#) violence: *“The first Intifada laid the groundwork for the second Intifada. Now it seems the Palestinians have a new Intifada, and maybe it will grow into more than an Intifada. The young generation will let us know. Free Palestine!”*

NOTE: In the [First Intifada](#) (1987-93) 276 Israelis were killed, civilians (including children) and soldiers. The [Second Intifada](#) (2000-05) was more violent, taking the lives of 1,100 Israelis, mostly civilians, in attacks that included suicide bombings, bus bombings, lynchings, knifings, and shootings. Scores of children were killed in these attacks.

- 3) MECA frequently [co-sponsors](#) events with other anti-Israel organizations including [Al-Awda SF](#), [ANSWER Bay Area](#), [American Muslims for Palestine](#), [Palestine Legal](#), [Students for Justice in Palestine](#) and many others.
- 4) Inverting reality, MECA described the October 7 Hamas invasion and massacre of 1,200 Israelis and mass rapes of scores of Israeli women as [follows](#): “On October 7, Israel launched the bloodiest attack on the people of Gaza ever...” and in the passive voice MECA [writes](#) of “The hostilities that started on 7 October.”
- 5) A search of MECA’s web site did not turn up any statements of condemnation of Hamas’s atrocities of October 7, nor is there any mention on the site of the [well-documented mass rape and murders of Israeli women](#).
- 6) Despite its [stated mission](#) of working “to protect the rights and improve the lives of children in the Middle East” MECA’s web site does not mention the 36 Israeli children murdered by Hamas on October 7, nor the hostages kidnapped into Gaza including 30 Israeli children ranging in age from 9 months to teenagers.

NOTE: [Since 2000](#) (not including October 7, 2023) in over 660 terror attacks 1,456 Israelis were murdered of which 130 were children. These attacks were carried out by Palestinian terror groups including Hamas, Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Tanzim, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, PFLP and others. A search of the MECA website did not find any mention or condemnation of any of these attacks.

- 7) MECA has [defended](#) Hamas. In a statement denouncing the Israeli and Egyptian blockade of Hamas-ruled Gaza that was designed to prevent the smuggling of weapons from Iran and other sources: “Israel and the US want to pressure the Palestinian Hamas movement and its military organization into submission, despite Hamas coming to power through democratic elections in 2006.”
 - a) **NOTE:** Hamas is a member of the “[Axis of Resistance](#)” led by the Iranian regime. This includes other groups designated by the [United States as Foreign Terrorist Organizations](#): Hezbollah, Houthis, Hezbollah in Iraq, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and others.
 - b) There have been no elections since [2006](#). Hamas violently seized full control of Gaza from the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority in 2007. Clashes between Hamas and Fatah killed over [600 Palestinians](#) including 98 civilians. [Human Rights Watch](#) accused Fatah and Hamas of summarily executing captives, attacking hospitals, and endangering journalists.

Bringing MECA's Political Agenda to the Classroom

- 1) MECA [describes](#) its Teach Palestine project as “a collaborative project by and for K-12 teachers and educators who are bringing Palestine into their classrooms.” This political agenda is demonstrated on Teach Palestine’s [home page](#), which includes various political symbols emblematic of the Palestinian nationalist movement. This includes a key superimposed over the Palestinian national flag, and the cartoon character Hanthala.
- 2) Numerous pages on the Teach Palestine web site promote what it calls “educator activists”:
 - a) From [Webinars for Teachers](#): “We’re working with *educator activists* across the country to organize a more united approach, and we’ll keep you posted as that develops... Ethnic Studies *educator-activists* from across the discipline and the United States talk about the significance of the fight for authentic Ethnic Studies.” (emphasis added)
 - b) From “[Dear Teach Palestine Family](#)”: “We’ve been heartened by all the stories of great *teaching and activism* about what’s happening in Gaza and throughout Palestine.” (emphasis added)
 - c) From “[Preparing to Teach Palestine: A Toolkit](#)”: “If you’re interested in broader *organizing in your educational setting*, it will be important to create a support system for this incredibly important collective work... Make sure you have a site of activism and healing on your school site, in your union and with the community.” (emphasis added)
- 3) These “educator activists” are encouraged to inspire pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel activism among students:
 - a) From the [Home Page](#): “As teachers, we know we need to help our students discuss and try to make sense of what’s happening. This is both difficult and critical because the mainstream *media*, as well as our *local, state and national governments*, are almost completely *dominated* by the Israeli narrative.” (emphasis added)

NOTE: This language of “domination” of government and media echoes [antisemitic conspiracy theories](#) of Jewish control over the government and media.
 - b) From the page “[Stolen Land](#)”: “[For teachers](#) who have the freedom to *discuss political action*, *students can explore the tactic being used*. Regardless of whether or not the *activist options* get articulated by the teacher, there will be *students who will understand* the injustice and who will *search for ways to get involved*.” (emphasis added)
 - c) From the page “[Children’s Books About Palestine](#)”: “[There is no question](#) that reading books about contemporary Palestine and the Israeli occupation may raise conflicting points of view, but that is part of *supporting students to become* critical readers, thinkers, and, *hopefully, activists* in support of justice and peace.” (emphasis added)
- 4) Teach Palestine’s positions on October 7 echoes MECA’s political agenda. Teach Palestine’s website does not address the October 7 Hamas massacres in southern Israel and mentions the hostages Hamas kidnapped rarely. Nor does MECA acknowledge that taking hostages is a [war crime](#). This approach ignores the human rights of Israelis.
 - a) **Silence on October 7th Hamas invasion, mass murder and rape**: A search of the site produced only two references, and neither of them describe the massacre of over 800 Israeli civilians (including 36 children), mass rapes and executions of Israeli women, nor the kidnapping of 254 Israelis including 30 children, which set off the October 7th War. Instead Teach Palestine [rationalizes](#) the attacks following the talking points of anti-Israel and pro-Hamas activist groups:

The events that have unfolded in Gaza since October 7th, 2023 are part of the longer history of Palestine/Israel and should be contextualized as such to give students the best understanding; even if that context is summarized. Hamas' actions on October 7th should not be the starting point.

This is found on the page, "[Teaching Gaza Now: A Multiple Narratives Approach \(2023–2024\)](#)." The only narrative offered in this "multiple narratives approach" is that of the pro-Palestinian advocacy movement. There is nothing on this page that describes the Hamas attack, the names of Israelis or people from other countries murdered and kidnapped, the trauma inflicted on Israeli society. It presents the "genocide" narrative as though it is the truth, rather than an [unsubstantiated](#) claim by anti-Israel and pro-Hamas campaigners.

- b) **Near Silence on Israeli hostages:** The Israeli hostages are mentioned on only three pages of the website.
- i) [Humanitarian Crisis Document Set](#): This page mentions the hostages only once. Its primary focus is the effects of the October 7th War on Palestinians in Gaza. While the war has been devastating for civilians, and students should be able to discuss this in an age-appropriate way, it is not legitimate to leave out context about Hamas or mainstream Israeli perspectives. Teach Palestine fails to mention the humanitarian crisis caused by the displacement of 120,000 Israelis from their homes in southern and northern Israel. It provides one token mainstream Jewish organization as a resource (American Jewish Committee), but all the other resources are from the pro-Palestinian perspective. The page also cites as fact the casualty figures sourced in the Hamas-run Gaza Ministry of Health. These figures are problematic because they:
- [do not distinguish](#) between combatants and civilians
 - [contain significant inconsistencies](#), such as the lack of [correlation](#)
 - fail to discuss how [various international organizations](#), including the United Nations, have adjusted their fatality reporting from Gaza between the [number of women and children casualties](#) and the number of men reported as casualties
- ii) [Sitti's Bird: A Gaza Story—An Introduction to Gaza for Children](#) is offered for grade school children. It rationalizes the atrocities of October 7, referring to those responsible as "fighters" who were "angry" about Israeli actions, rather than terrorists adhering to an [ideology committed to Israel's destruction](#). It also morally equates Israeli hostages, most of whom are civilians, with Palestinian security prisoners who committed various acts of violence, including murder. Example:
- Right now, there is a terrible war happening in Gaza. Fighters in Gaza, who were angry about how Israel has been treating people in Gaza, broke down the wall and killed many Israeli soldiers and Israelis who were at a music festival. They took 220 Israeli people hostage and took them back to Gaza—they wanted to trade them for Palestinians in Israeli prisons.*
- iii) [Teaching Gaza Now: A Multiple Narratives Approach \(2023–2024\)](#): Only after leading the reader through a set of documents promoting the genocide charge does the word "hostage" appear, and only once.

Case Study: The “Stolen Land” Module

Analyzing the “Stolen Land” module on the Teach Palestine website can provide insights into how it promotes indoctrination rather than education:

1) **Emotional and Politically Charged Language**

- a) The use of terms like "stolen land" and "colonization" immediately frames the conflict in a way that portrays one side (Israel) as the aggressor and illegitimate occupier.
- b) This language can evoke strong emotional responses that inhibit objective analysis of the historical and political complexities involved

2) **One-Sided Historical Narrative**

- a) The module predominantly focuses on the narrative of Palestinian displacement and suffering, with little to no discussion on the historical claims and security concerns of Israelis.
- b) The module frames the establishment of Israel as a colonial project, which is a common Palestinian narrative. However, it lacks factual context about Jewish roots in the land based on historical and archeological record and excludes the broad range of Jewish perspectives about their connection to their ancestral home.
- c) The module fails to discuss the existential threats faced by Israel. It presents Israel as solely responsible for all tensions and conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians.
- d) The sources referenced and the activities proposed largely reinforce this singular narrative without providing opportunities for students to explore counterarguments or diverse perspectives.
- e) This one-sided portrayal prevents students from being part of the solution in any meaningful way, instead encouraging them to contribute to an endless cycle of division, hatred, and conflict.

3) **Selective Use of Sources**

- a) The curriculum cites sources and organizations that have been criticized for their anti-Israel bias, such as the [Middle East Monitor](#), which holds “strong sympathies for Hamas. [MEMO’s director](#), Daud Abdullah, is a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood-linked British Muslim Initiative, set up and run by the Brotherhood activist Anas al-Tikriti and two senior figures in Hamas.” Abdullah, signed a public [statement of support](#) for Hamas while he served on the Muslim Council of Britain. Of note, he initiated a boycott of Holocaust Memorial Day.
 - i) This selective sourcing undermines the credibility and balance of educational content.
 - ii) For robust educational standards, reliance on peer-reviewed, academically respected sources is essential to ensure balanced information.

4) **Promoting a Political Agenda**

- a) The curriculum supports Palestinian “resistance,” including narratives that legitimize or romanticize acts of violence by terrorist groups like Hamas, to the detriment of Palestinians and Israelis alike. For example, a downloadable [PowerPoint](#) offered to educators describes Hamas as a “resistance” group. It rationalizes [Hamas's decades of rocket fire at Israeli civilians](#) as “an attempt to draw Israel and the world’s attention to the humanitarian crisis being caused by the blockade on Gaza... Israel’s first formal attack to ‘root out terrorists and stop the rockets’ began on December 27th, 2008...” Israel’s plan was “to show Hamas as a dangerous political entity,

severley (sic) damage the Palestinian resistance movement, most of which was growing out of Gaza, and have the people lose faith in their leadership (i.e. Hamas) capabilities by putting the people in a position in which Hamas could neither help nor defend them.”

- b) This approach can indoctrinate students into adopting a biased political stance rather than encouraging them to form their own informed opinions based on a balanced presentation of facts.

5) **Lack of Critical Engagement**

- a) The curriculum does not sufficiently encourage critical engagement with the material. Instead of presenting questions and activities that promote critical thinking and debate, it tends to present a single narrative as the absolute truth.
- b) This pedagogical approach can limit students' ability to critically analyze the information and develop their own well-rounded understanding of the conflict.

By focusing predominantly on a single narrative, using emotionally charged language, and selectively citing sources, the “Stolen Land” module promotes indoctrination rather than fostering a balanced, critical educational experience. For a more comprehensive understanding, educational materials on this subject should include diverse perspectives and encourage critical analysis and debate.

Does “Teach Palestine” live up to widely accepted pedagogical core values?

The main question to examine is whether “Teach Palestine” aligns with the widely accepted core pedagogical values of the major teaching colleges and teachers’ associations? (For examples see: [The American Federation of Teachers](#), [National Education Association](#), [Harvard Graduate School of Education](#), [Teachers College](#), [Columbia University](#).) Teach Palestine fails at multiple levels:

- 1) **It teaches a one-sided narrative** that highlights the Palestinian national movement’s perspective without equally representing the broad mainstream of Israeli viewpoints. This creates a lack of balance in educational content.
- 2) **Fails to Foster Critical Thinking:** The curriculum does not sufficiently encourage students to engage in critical thinking or debate by presenting multiple viewpoints. Instead, it often provides a single narrative, which can hinder the development of students' analytical skills. By focusing predominantly on one perspective, using biased sources, and employing emotionally charged language, the "Teach Palestine" curriculum fails to provide a balanced and academically rigorous education on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This approach can lead to indoctrination rather than fostering critical thinking and informed understanding, making it unsuitable for use in public schools.
- 3) **Ignores Complexities:** Teach Palestine often oversimplifies the conflict by ignoring the complexities and nuances, such as the roles of regional politics, international law, and the diverse viewpoints within both Israeli and Palestinian societies. This can lead to a superficial understanding of the issues.
- 4) **Lacks Scholarly Sources:** The curriculum relies heavily on sources and organizations that are politically charged and lack broad academic acceptance. This undermines the credibility and reliability of the information being taught. Without diverse scholarly sources, students are not exposed to a comprehensive and academically rigorous understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- 5) **Emotional and Political Bias:** The curriculum is often charged with emotionally loaded language and political bias. This can indoctrinate students rather than educate them, making it difficult for them to form their own informed opinions. Educational materials should aim to present facts and multiple viewpoints to foster independent critical thinking.
- 6) **Political Agenda:** The curriculum has a clear political agenda to promote anti-Israel sentiments. This is reflected in the choice of materials and the framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This includes links to publications like the *Middle East Monitor* (see above) and *Jadaliyya*, which have been criticized for supporting Palestinian terror groups. For instance, *Jadaliyya* [praised](#) the Hamas terrorist organization's "resourcefulness" in an article about the October 7 massacre of 1,200 people in Israel, mostly civilians. Such an agenda can foster a hostile environment in schools, particularly for Jewish students and those who support Israel.

What pedagogical values should be incorporated into education about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

- 1) **Empathy and Compassion:** Foster empathy and compassion by encouraging students to consider the feelings and experiences of others. Activities that promote understanding and connection can help build these values.
- 2) **Open-Mindedness:** Encourage students to approach discussions with an open mind, ready to consider and understand different perspectives even if they disagree with them. This can be nurtured through exercises that challenge students to defend viewpoints other than their own.
- 3) **Respect for Diversity:** Instill a respect for cultural, ideological, and individual diversity. Highlight the importance of valuing differences and understanding how diversity enriches the learning experience and society.
- 4) **Honesty and Integrity:** Promote honesty and integrity in discussions and academic work. Encourage students to be truthful, acknowledge when they don't know something, and give credit to original sources.
- 5) **Resilience and Perseverance:** Help students develop resilience and perseverance in the face of challenging topics or viewpoints. Encourage them to continue learning and engaging even when the material is difficult or uncomfortable.
- 6) **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Encourage collaboration and teamwork to solve problems and explore issues. This helps students learn to work with others, value group input and develop collective solutions to complex issues.
- 7) **Ethical Reasoning:** Teach students to apply ethical reasoning when considering contentious issues. This involves evaluating the moral implications of different viewpoints and actions and making decisions based on a well-considered ethical framework.

Political Indoctrination vs Education

By incorporating diverse sources and perspectives, a curriculum can provide a comprehensive, balanced, and critical understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This approach promotes critical thinking and helps students develop informed opinions based on a thorough analysis of historical and contemporary issues.

The key elements of political indoctrination are:

1. **One-Sided Presentation:** Presenting political issues, historical events, or social topics from only one perspective, while ignoring or discrediting opposing viewpoints. This creates a biased understanding of the subject matter.
2. **Manipulative Content:** Using textbooks, learning materials, or classroom discussions to subtly or overtly promote a specific political ideology. This can include selectively presenting facts, using emotionally charged language, or misrepresenting information to influence students' beliefs.
3. **Suppression of Dissent:** Discouraging or penalizing students for expressing opinions that differ from the promoted ideology. This creates an environment where critical thinking and open discussion are stifled.
4. **Lack of Critical Analysis:** Failing to encourage students to analyze and question the information presented to them. Instead of fostering critical thinking skills, indoctrination focuses on acceptance of specific viewpoints without scrutiny.
5. **Ideological Curriculum Design:** Structuring the curriculum around a particular political ideology, with content and learning objectives aligned to reinforce that ideology. This can include the selection of literature, historical events, and case studies that support the desired narrative.
6. **Teacher Bias:** Teachers using their position of authority to influence students' political beliefs, either through direct statements or by creating a classroom atmosphere that implicitly supports one ideology over others.
7. **Exclusion of Diverse Perspectives:** Deliberately excluding or marginalizing perspectives that challenge the promoted ideology. This limits students' exposure to a wide range of ideas and hinders their ability to form independent opinions.

Teach Palestine uses all these methods to promote its political position in the K-12 classroom. To avoid political indoctrination, educational curricula should aim to present balanced and unbiased information, encourage critical thinking, and foster an environment where diverse perspectives are respected and explored.

Conclusion: Teach Palestine Doesn't Belong in K-12 Schools

Teach Palestine's approach to the teaching of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to promote a one-sided, binary good vs evil narrative that paints Israel as the villain. Specifically Teach Palestine fails in the following areas:

- 1) **Imbalanced education:** An educational curriculum should provide balanced viewpoints to help students understand the complexities of global issues. The *Teaching Palestine* curriculum, by focusing predominantly on one perspective, fails to achieve this balance. This can lead to a biased understanding of the conflict and hinder students' ability to critically assess different perspectives.
- 2) **Potential for indoctrination:** The emotionally charged and politically biased content can lead to indoctrination rather than education. Schools should aim to develop students' critical thinking skills, not push them towards a particular political stance.
- 3) **Potential for creating a hostile environment:** Introducing such a controversial and one-sided curriculum can create a hostile environment for students who may have differing views, particularly Jewish students or those with connections to Israel. This can lead to bullying outside the classroom, as well as increased tensions and divisions within the school community.

By presenting a one-sided and politically charged view, the *Teach Palestine* curriculum undermines the principles of balanced education and critical thinking, making it unsuitable for an inclusive and comprehensive educational environment.