



StandWithUs

UNITED KINGDOM

MARCH 2024

TEACH WITH US

STANDWITHUS MONTHLY
MAGAZINE FOR EDUCATORS



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Pupils and teachers need tools to engage in 7 October debates

Yehuda Fink – Director of Schools & Youth Programming and Editor of TeachWithUs

When I worked as a teacher for several years, I would at times be faced with a question from pupils that I wasn't sure I had the answer to. Ask any teacher, but that's a real challenge to deal with as our pupils rely on us to guide them to an answer. Of course, the best option is to be honest with the pupil, admit you don't know the answer, but offer to try and find one together.

Since October 7th, teachers have been met with a wave of tough questions from pupils. Recently, I spoke to some teachers and some of the examples of questions ranged from "why is the IDF killing so many people?", "aren't Hamas simply resisting?", "isn't this all Israel's fault", and one from a Jewish pupil in London, "why does everyone hate us?"

The history of antisemitism and the complexities of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians are topics that are understandably not delved into by all teachers.

This has meant that teachers are finding themselves in repeated situations where they are at a loss for words. For not only do they not know the answer, but they're also not even sure where to begin to find it.

In the recent report (7th February 2024) from the *Jewish News* regarding the survey from HOPE not hate, it was highlighted that only 3% of teachers said they had the training to deal with these sort of issues, and just 11% said that their school had the appropriate resources to support them. Only 18% of teachers said they know where to go externally to get assistance.

So, what are we at *StandWithUs* doing to support teachers and pupils?

Since the 7th of October, *StandWithUs UK* has experienced an almost 400% increase in demand for educational sessions about Israel in schools and profoundly engaged with numerous pupils through deep and insightful sessions. These workshops aim to clarify the recent tragic events in Israel and the ongoing hostilities. Moreover, we recently introduced *TeachWithUs*, a monthly digest offering educators across the UK valuable information, insights, and materials to aid their discussions on these complex topics. We have just released our second edition, and are offering it to anyone in secondary school education at all levels.

Only a handful of teachers know where to go for external support, and so we are stepping in to fill this void. We invite educational bodies to reach out. Let's collaborate to ensure our school communities are well-equipped to tackle these conversations with honesty, depth, and engagement.

In an era marked by global unrest, it is imperative our young ones are educated on these matters with a balanced perspective. *StandWithUs UK* is committed to this educational journey, ready to extend our support to schools throughout the country.

StandWithUs UK is calling on schools to partner in this educational endeavour, aiming to cultivate a generation that approaches global issues with empathy, informed insight, and the bravery to discuss challenging subjects.

From Yehuda's opinion piece in the Jewish News, 15th February 2024



CURRENT EVENTS IN ISRAEL

The Israel-Hamas war has raged on, coming close to entering its sixth month, whilst escalations continue to threaten to erupt in northern Israel.

Here is what we know as of February 28th, 2024:

- 7th Brigade soldiers operating in Western Khan Younis located mortar bombs and cartridges inside UNRWA bags.
- Intensive battles in Khan Younis and Zeitoun, numerous terrorists eliminated whilst preparing to launch rockets at Israel, by the Israeli Air Force.
- In a joint IDF and ISA operation, an IDF UAV eliminated Yasser Hanoun, a resident of Jenin and an Islamic Jihad terrorist.
- In a complex and successful operation, the IDF, Shin Bet and Israeli Police rescued two hostages in Rafah: Roberto Louis Har and Fernando Simon Marman.
- Since the beginning of the war on October 7th, at least 242 IDF soldiers have been killed in Gaza.
- The Hamas-run health ministry says that, over 29,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, since the start of the war.
- Since the beginning of the war, 13,834 trucks have entered Gaza. The IDF has continued to facilitate humanitarian and medical aid to Gazan civilians.
- A rocket launch to the Israeli city of Ashkelon, was successfully intercepted by the IDF Aerial Defence Array. The IDF identified the terrorist responsible for carrying out the launch in Al-Furqan in the Northern Gaza strip. The IAF eliminated the terrorist.

On the northern border of Israel, clashes with Hezbollah continue:

- IAF fighter jets struck several Hezbollah terrorist sites. Furthermore, IDF tank fire struck to remove an imminent threat in Ayta ash Shab.
- Readiness in the north: The Israeli Navy's missile ship Flotilla completed a wide-scale exercise this week.
- In Lebanon, the IDF artillery fired to remove a threat in several areas in southern Lebanon.
- The IDF has continued to target Hezbollah command centres in southern Lebanon.



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ISRAEL SOLIDARITY: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Eva James - Lead Educator (evaj@standwithus.com)

I return with these unforgettable images but, also with a renewed love and respect for our wonderful country.

I have just completed a solidarity trip to Israel. A profoundly emotional yet necessary experience. From my early childhood, Israel has always felt like home. I thought I understood and felt the pain of the atrocities of October 7th, but now I realise I only had a tiny piece of the reality. This journey has been incredibly powerful and will take me days to process everything I heard and saw. The deep trauma our nation endures every day was palpable through every moment.

Hostage families are holding their breath in desperate anticipation of news of their loved ones, having not slept since they were abducted by Hamas; soldiers irreversibly wounded who have the undying determination to fight on despite their life-changing injuries and grieving families who have lost their loved ones in battle, in terrorist attacks or who were massacred in their own homes.

What struck me was the dignity and courage of our nation. The resolve not to be defeated but to fight; not just for the State of Israel but for the Jewish people. The Jewish people are not just a religion but a people; a people that have survived through thousands of years of persecution and massacres. Each time we are called up to fight we do so with great resilience and faith.

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I return with these unforgettable images but, also with a renewed love and respect for our wonderful country, which needs all of us as much as we need it. It is often exhausting and bewildering when it feels like we are not just fighting a conflict between two people but between us and most of the world. This is why it is important now more than ever to put any differences we have aside and come together.

As an educator who teaches Israeli and Jewish history, one thing that will stay with me forever is that whether you have relatives or friends living in Israel, we are one nation, one people and one family.



Am Yisrael Chai! The People of Israel Live!

LAST MONTH HIGHLIGHTS! – FEBRUARY 2024

We continue to work hard to reach and deliver content to as many people in-person, and online, with sessions or literature! Check out some of our highlights.



30th January, "Israel Under Attack" Session at JFS

Navigating Challenges with JFS

We were privileged to spend a day at JFS, speaking to over 700 pupils about the events of October 7th, and the impact it has had on Israel, the Jewish community here, and the rest of the world.

The best things out of these sessions are the questions from pupils, no matter how young or knowledgeable they are, they want to learn!

Countering Antisemitism with Woodside Park Youth

We joined Bnei Mitzva students at Woodside Park Synagogue to discuss how we should be thinking about antisemitism, and the appropriate ways to respond to it.

The students also thought about how they can continue to represent their community in a proud and honourable fashion. There were really good insights from these young participants.



7th February, Bnei Mitzva Workshop at Woodside Park

Final StartUp Session!

Our StartUp students enjoyed their final session at the StandWithUs office before they break up for 6 weeks to work on their group projects.

The students have a wonderful range of fantastic ideas, which will be presented to a packed audience at the StartUp Graduation Ceremony in April!

We wish them luck!



25th February, final StartUp session at the StandWithUs office

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COMBATTING NORMALISED ANTISEMITISM IN THE UK

Isaac Zarfati - Executive Director

We have to remain steadfast in our mission to combat antisemitism in all its forms but most of all among youth.

The recent CST report on antisemitic incidents in the UK in 2023 paints a troubling picture, reaffirming what many have known for years: that the driving force behind modern antisemitism is the virulent hatred of Zionism and Israel. We witnessed these trends firsthand both prior to and to a greater extent following the tragic events of October 7th, recognising anti-Zionism as a potent breeding ground for violence against Jewish communities.

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l, in his poignant analysis, aptly described antisemitism as a mutating virus. Over the centuries, its manifestations have evolved, but its essence remains unchanged: an irrational loathing of Jews and, in contemporary times, their nation-state, Israel.

Looking to the future, the most concerning trend is the normalisation of anti-Zionism. A stark reminder of this is the recent verdict in David Miller's employment tribunal case, where "anti-Zionist beliefs" were deemed a protected philosophical belief. This ruling dangerously legitimises a discourse that not only vilifies Israel but also perpetuates the erasure of the Jewish state. Allowing academics to cloak their incitement and hate under the guise of academic freedom sets a perilous precedent, undermining the very principles of democracy we hold dear.

Normalising hate and violence in the name of moral values and freedom poses a grave danger. The data revealed in the recent CST report should be a concern for every British citizen, as history has taught us the dire consequences of allowing the normalisation of hatred towards ethnic, national, or cultural groups in any free society.

We have to remain steadfast in our mission to combat antisemitism in all its forms but most of all among youth. We should stand together and refuse to accept the normalisation of hatred towards Jewish people or the state of Israel. Our commitment to supporting students on campus in the fight against antisemitism and anti-Zionism should remain unwavering. We should empower the next generation to confront bigotry and prejudice wherever they may arise.

This is the mission of our lifetime.



THE WOMAN WHO EXPLAINS WAR TO CHILDREN: "THEY ASK THE TOUGHEST QUESTIONS"

This article was written by Hagar Kochavi and published in Hebrew on Ynet, 12th December 2023

On October 7th, Staff Sergeant (Sar-El) Tali Versano, an IDF Home Front Command spokesperson for children, found herself coping with a family tragedy while also mediating losses for her own children. Since then, she has navigated among evacuees and survivors, answering questions, and working to strengthen national resilience. "One mother told me her daughter ties a Barbie to a chair," she says, explaining why, even in difficult times, one must continue to seek butterflies.

For over 25 years, Staff Sergeant Tali Versano Eisemann, 49, has been involved in emergency education for children. In times of crisis, she dons a uniform, serving as a spokesperson for the Home Front Command to parents and children, appearing in the media and various children's channels. In times of conflict, crises, alarms, and emergencies, she mediates, explains, answers questions, and reinforces national and familial resilience. She has visited disaster-stricken areas in Israel and worldwide, but like all of us, she was unprepared for the events of October 7th, the loss she and her family would experience, and the answers she would have to provide.

"Many people call me the 'resilience woman.' Some think that resilience means the ability to stand firm against everything, without breaking, without shattering, and, in my opinion, it's the opposite. Even here, talking to you, I cry, and it doesn't weaken me. I'm not afraid to touch my emotions; I go to very deep places of sorrow and bounce back to my roles. You're asking me how I am? I break down and strengthen, completely," she candidly states.

Versano, a mother of three from Shoam, has two children serving in the reserves, and the third, an 18-year-old, is in a pre-military academy in the north. She lectures at Tel Aviv University's Department of Psychology and is also an author and poet who has written children's books. When she took on the role of head of the guidance department in the Home Front Command's explanation branch, she immediately fell in love with the world of children.

Some think that resilience means the ability to stand firm against everything, without breaking... in my opinion, it's the opposite. I cry, and it doesn't weaken me.

"War and children are two opposing concepts," she says. "Children are the soft, the innocent, everything beautiful in this world, and war is precisely the opposite - human evil, death. Since we live in Israel, I saw it as a significant challenge to explain war to children. The truth is, children ask the toughest questions. I pursued a second degree in public political leadership because I wanted to make a difference at the national level, and then I entered the emotional resilience realm and realised I wanted to meet people, especially children, face to face. I studied psychotherapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and bibliotherapy at the University of Haifa, and I'm still learning. I see myself as a lifelong learner."

Regarding what happened in her home on October 7th, she recounts, "On that Saturday morning, I woke up in distress from strong tremors. I went to the phone and saw hundreds of messages on my mobile, no less. Very quickly, I got into action, into tasks. In parallel, my brother called me and told me that his son, Ron Yehudai, was at a party in Rishon LeZion. At that moment, I still didn't understand what it meant; the picture hadn't yet clarified. Like everyone else, I still didn't grasp how significant it was."

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Two weeks later, the family received the hardest news of all: Ron was murdered at the party. "We know he hid in a grocery store, in a garbage room. All his friends who were with him escaped, and he was shot in the head and killed," she says, "everything was mixed up, never before has the professional and the personal been so intertwined. It's all so sad and so difficult."

So, alongside mediating for all our children, she also had to mediate the loss to her own children at home. "Yes. It's very complex and challenging at any age. We know that we, the parents, are the ones who need to mediate reality for our children. At first, I found myself wondering how do you mediate a pit? How do you mediate despair? With all the professional experience and previous operations, suddenly I was in a place where I questioned how to do it. Slowly I began to formulate answers."

"What keeps me going are the tools of resilience. They keep me from within, and I rely on what's outside - I trust the army, I trust our local leadership, the good people I know, our people. I try to find things outside that will give me strength. We have a lot of natural resilience. The life force is great, the Israeli spirit is great. I can't remember the last time I felt it so strongly, especially after the crisis we went through. A tailwind can propel the ship forward."

"The questions that arise never cease to surprise me. I always try to think ahead, to guess what they will ask me. I knew they would ask about the kidnapped soldiers, for example, or when it would end. But suddenly, different questions came up that we didn't know. One mother told me her daughter ties a Barbie to a chair and plays with terrorists and kidnapers. In general, I was in Eilat with evacuees from Nir Oz, and I heard very tough stories. I noticed that the most common games for children there are war games. In the lobby, on the street, they play as terrorists, they get kidnapped, they kidnap. It's a well-known phenomenon; it's very present even in professional literature, yet the content is very harsh."

"If the child is a soldier now, he decides whether he lives or dies. That's the power of the game; that's how

they experience control. So, it's also crucial to allow them to play. We have a role as present parents to find a way to observe them because it's an opportunity to understand what's inside them. It's a glimpse into the inner world of our children. In their game, they can create a happy ending, and if they don't, we can participate in the game and help them reach a happy ending."

"In Tzuk Eitan, I was recruited for 60 days. I was in the Ashkelon Regional Council and met the residents, no measurements. They were with me in the car. Suddenly there was an alarm; a missile fell near Nir Oz. The head of education, Yael Edri, who is currently fighting to bring back her son Tamir, kidnapped in Gaza, asked me to wear the uniform and talk to the youth instead. I did it and entered a club in Kibbutz Hatzor half an hour after the rocket fell," she recalls. "Everything was dusty, a strong smell in the air. The kids sat with me around the table, and we started talking. I asked them what gives them strength, and the round began. One said it's the army outside, another said it's the media, and she can talk to the people of Israel, and they will listen. Two days later, she came with me for an interview and went on the air, strengthening all the children of Israel. After the emotional meeting in the club, I started a group with the girls called 'Girls with Strength,' and out of the four girls, the family members of three of them are kidnapped."



Picture credit: IDF



Is Israel's response in Gaza proportionate?

Over 1,200 Israelis were murdered amongst the many injured and taken hostage on October 7th. Since then, Israel's response has successfully killed over 60% of Hamas' fighting force, but has also taken the lives of nearly 30,000 civilians, leaving many homeless, injured and hungry. Is this response from Israel proportionate to what happened on October 7th?



Yes.

Since October 7th, over 28,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza. Every civilian death is a tragedy. However, an attack is only disproportionate if it causes incidental civilian casualties and/or damage to civilian objects which would be excessive in relation to the direct military advantage anticipated. Under international law, an attack is still proportionate even if there are more casualties on the other side. When the enemy embeds itself amongst the civilian population and in civilian infrastructure, as is the case with Hamas, substantial casualties are inevitable.

So, have Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip since the October 7th massacre been disproportionate? It is impossible to assess this without having the information known to the IDF commanders at the time. However, the IDF has processes for assessing both the expected military advantage and the risk of civilian casualties, including a review by lawyers who are not part of the command structure.

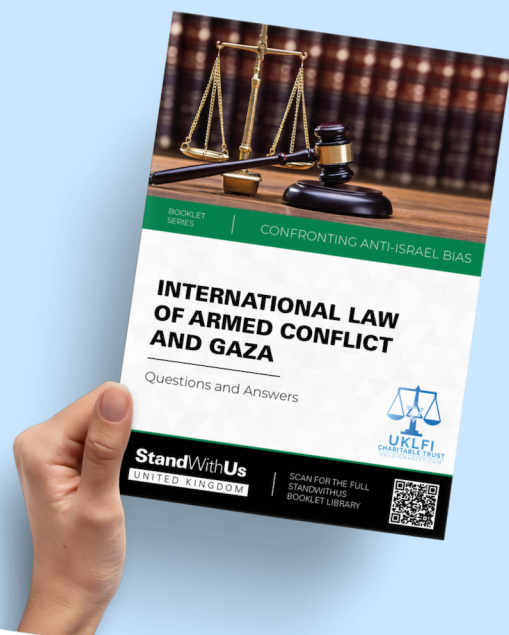
It is important to remember that Israel's military response in Gaza is a result of the October 7th massacre. Israel has a legitimate aim to destroy Hamas to make sure such atrocities never happen again. Israel is acting self-defence which is allowed under international law.

Educational Resources

We are building a base of resources for teachers and educators to support you in the classroom, youth group or camps. Each month we will highlight a new resource that we upload to the database. If you have any requests for resource topics and activities then please email yehuda@standwithus.com

We are proud to present our newest resource created in partnership with UK Lawyers for Israel: *International Law of Armed Conflict and Gaza*. Using legal expertise of lawyers at UKLFI, we have formed a guide to allow people to understand various debates about this war. This booklet will **support you** when it comes to facing **challenging questions** about Israel and the IDF's conduct in Gaza during this very difficult war.

**SCAN THE QR CODE
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Tough Question of the Month

Each month we will address a tough question about Israel and the conflict. These questions may be ones that your pupils may have asked, or you have thought of yourselves. Our suggested answers are aimed to support you in navigating these topics in the classrooms when pupils have thoughts or concerns about Israel and the conflict.

Send in your tough question to yehuda@standwithus.com

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against antisemitism on social media



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