

Discussion Paper on Palestine

The New Enlightenment Project: A Canadian Humanist Initiative

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Abstract

Although enmity between Arab and Jew did not begin with the United Nations 1947 proposal for the partition of Palestine, the history of the region since has been one of intermittent warfare followed by periods of uneasy peace. The Jews, who established the state of Israel in their designated part of Palestine, have won each subsequent war, thereby largely dictating peace terms. The non-Israeli Arabs have generally broken each ceasefire when they believed it is in their interests to do so. Calls for a ceasefire during hostilities seem destined to continue this cycle with a concomitant increase in hate between each side. This paper conducts a historical scan to provide insight into the motivations of each side. We also examine the role of religion. We suggest that a humanist solution would give effect to a secular one-state solution based on Enlightenment values, but we recognize that this is not possible until the cycle of violence and mutual hatred is broken.

On October 7, 2023 Gazan terrorists led by Hamas (an acronym for “Islamic Resistance Movement”) invaded Israel, brutally murdering over 1,200 people. They did not only kill. They mutilated, tortured, beheaded, raped, and set fire to their victims who included infants, children, men, women and the elderly. Moreover, many of the terrorists bragged about their exploits to their parents on the telephone, and they took selfies of themselves committing these acts posting

them on the internet. They then retreated with 250 hostages and several mutilated corpses, which they paraded in front of Gazan civilians.

On October 8, 2024 the Shiite Islamic group Hezbollah (Arabic for “Party of God”) began firing missiles on Israel from their base in Lebanon, vowing to maintain their attack until Israel agreed to a ceasefire with Hamas. Israel started ground operations in Gaza on October 13, 2023 and continued with a full scale invasion on October 27. Two Israeli-American women were released by Hamas on October 20. Twenty-four women were released on November 25, 2023 in exchange for 39 prisoners in Israeli jails. By August 28, 2024, 117 hostages had been released or freed by Israeli forces. In addition, 37 bodies of hostages had been repatriated including three who were killed by friendly fire. On October 1, 2024 Israel invaded Lebanon forcing Hezbollah to agree to a separate peace.

In the initial phase of a new ceasefire to February 1, 2025, 10 Israelis held as hostages were released in exchange for 400 Arab Palestinian prisoners. At the time of this writing, the Hamas controlled Gazan Health Authority estimated that 47,000 Gazans, including both terrorists and civilians, have been killed by the Israelis. In the course of this conflict, Israel has also been attacked from Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

The ongoing conflict between Israelis and Arab Palestinians has resulted in demonstrations and counter-demonstrations in Canada, calling on various levels of governments to take action. At its November 2024 meeting, the NEP board mandated the creation of a paper to promote enlightened discussion of the Palestine question. Other humanist organizations had already taken positions on this matter. For example, in 2024 Humanist Ottawa took a position that:

1. Advocates a total ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, emphasizing that wars inevitably end with political agreements and that the time for one is long overdue.

2. Condemns the severe humanitarian disaster in Gaza, involving significant civilian casualties, the displacement of millions of Palestinians, and loss of life on both sides.
3. Stresses the use of understanding, dialogue, and empathy in discussions about the conflict, thus avoiding dehumanizing rhetoric.
4. Advocates that the Canadian government actively work toward ending the violence, ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law, and striving for sustainable peace.
5. Expresses hope for a world where all people can coexist without fear of violence or oppression, regardless of their ethnicities or cultures.

This position, similar to positions taken by Humanist UK and Humanists International, is a call for peace. It expresses hope for a world where all people can coexist but we need a greater analysis to understand why this has not yet happened. This paper seeks to increase understanding and respectful dialogue in keeping with the third point of the Humanist Ottawa position.

The New Enlightenment Project seeks a world where reason, science, and compassion guide the pursuit of knowledge, the practice of governance, and the pursuit of personal goals. It is our experience that this vision can be best implemented in a liberal, secular state, one that avoids even the appearance of favouring any particular religion while allowing all to practice their religious traditions both personally and communally independent of the state. In this kind of state, Jews and Muslims would be free to practice their religions, or not, while being equal citizens subject to laws, policies and programs applicable to everyone.

The Role of Context and the Construction of Narratives of Palestine

The Palestine Liberation Organization, Hamas and many Western academics begin their examination of the historical context of this conflict with the Balfour Declaration of 1917. That declaration, communicated to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland, declared

British support for “a national home for the Jewish people.” Beginning the historical context with this declaration invites a narrative of colonialism: The Jews were colonizers, presumably placed in Palestine to further the interests of the British Empire. With this narrative, the local Arabs are framed as indigenous victims of Western imperialism.

But if we were to begin our historical narrative only eight years earlier, with the establishment of Tel Aviv on a sandy and largely deserted Mediterranean beach, the narrative necessarily changes. This area was then ruled by the Ottoman Empire, and not as “Palestine” (which did not exist administratively) but as part of Syria. The empire was an Islamic one, of course, but it allowed local Jewish and Christian communities to survive if they adhered to occupational restrictions and paid a head tax. Although Tel Aviv was established with the help of local Jews, it was a Zionist project before the British arrived. The narrative that flows from this beginning indicates that Zionism was a Jewish nationalist movement that encouraged Jews to return to their ancient homeland.

The Ottomans defeated the Mameluk Egyptians in 1517. Were we to start our historical narrative then, we would note that both the Ottomans and the Mameluks administered the region as part of Syria with neither recognizing a Palestinian people. Prior to the Egyptian conquest, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, established by the Crusades, ruled much of the area from 1099 to 1291. While the population was mainly Christian, it included large Muslim (Arab) and Jewish minorities. The Arab Muslims had arrived centuries earlier with the conquering armies of the first (Rashidun) caliphate in 637. These Arabs and their descendents could therefore be described as “settlers” or “colonizers,” but they lived in what was known not as Palestine but as part of Syria. Before the conquering Arab armies, the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire ruled the area except for a brief period under the Sassanian (Persian) Empire. The Jews, who were the

demographic majority at that time, had negotiated “home rule” with both empires in return for military support. Once victorious, each empire reneged on its promise. Under Byzantine rule, this area was called Syria Palaestina.

Earlier, in 135, the (still united) Roman Empire had called it “Palestine” after a series of Jewish revolts and consequent expulsion of Jews from the city of Jerusalem. In 63 BC, immediately before the Romans arrived, this area was a Jewish state of the Hasmonean dynasty. Before that, it had been ruled by the (Seleucid) Greeks, the (Achaemenid) Persians and the Babylonians, but the inhabitants were Jews.

The Israelite tribes settled in this region by the twelfth century BCE and established a kingdom in the tenth century BCE that soon became two kingdoms: Israel and Judah. If we started our history at this point, we would consider Jews to be the aboriginal people of Palestine. This is the position of many Jews who have created settlements in the West Bank and who call the area by the ancient names “Judea” and “Samaria.” Of course, the Jews displaced the ancient Canaanites except for Gaza which was conquered first by an Aegean people, the Philistines, and then by the Egyptians who ruled the city for 350 years. Arab Palestinians sometimes base their claim for aboriginal title to the presence of Canaanite DNA, but such DNA is found in all Middle Eastern peoples including the Jews but with the highest ratios found in the modern Lebanese.

We do not think there is much to be gained in “returning” Gaza to Lebanon and, as humanists, we do not believe that aboriginality necessarily offers on anyone the right to a state. Being the first humans to enter an area does not grant title in perpetuity; indeed, the formal system of land title is a relatively recent European invention. Prior to the invention of titles, land was commonly owned by a ruler who would recognize land use, often but not always, on the basis of customary land tenure. We sometimes think that tribal societies have communal or joint

ownership but that is not entirely accurate. In such societies the concept of land ownership did not exist and occupancy was based on the ability to defend it. Populations shifted over time for a variety of reasons including war and migration. Since aboriginality does not imply ownership or a corresponding “right of return” we must reject any settler claim made on that basis.

This historical scan demonstrates that there were no Palestinian people recognized as such before the twentieth century. The Romans gave the name to one of their provinces in the first century, and the British appropriated that name to describe a part of the Ottoman Empire that they administered after World War I. Events in this “Palestine Mandate” shaped the current conflict.

Anti-Semitism and the Recent History of Palestine

In 1918, one year after the Balfour Declaration, a group of Arab leaders from Mandatory Palestine petitioned the French Commisariat in Jerusalem to include Palestine as part of Syria for historical and cultural reasons. In the ten-year period following the Balfour Declaration, only 40,000 Jews arrived in Palestine, and 1.5 million Jews migrated to the Americas, which indicates a comparative lack of enthusiasm for the Zionist project on the part of world Jewry. This Zionism can be traced to the worldview provided by the nineteenth century Jewish Enlightenment, or Haskalah. This movement called for Jewish integration in Europe and Jewish adoption of European secular knowledge and values while retaining Judaism. Under the tutelage of philosophers such as Elijah Benamozegh (1823-1900) and Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), Jewish education was modernized with secular studies promoted alongside traditional Talmudic learning. Jews were encouraged to adopt the languages, dress, and customs of their surrounding societies. Scientists with Jewish ancestry became recognized as global citizens. In the nineteenth century, Paul Ehrlich won a Nobel Prize in medicine, Gabriel Lippmann in physics and Adolf

von Baeyer in chemistry. Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler were (with Carl Jung) part of the triumvirate that founded modern psychology. Some, including Freud, became atheists. Others, including Adler, converted to Christianity. Others created religious reform movements within Judaism. Many turned to socialist, communist, union or social-activist movements. Karl Marx co-authored the Communist Manifesto. Ferdinand Lassalle founded the German Workers' Association, Victor Adler founded the Democratic Socialist Party of Austria, and Paul Singer led the Social Democratic Party of Germany. Unlike Zionism, the Haskalah sought collective security by eliminating racial and ethnic identitarianism, and by emphasising economic security, human rights and social justice. Pogroms continued, however, particularly in Eastern Europe, but with education, modernization and humanism, they thought, surely a better world would emerge. That hope was premature.

In 1920, three Jewish villages, Tel Hai, Kfar Giladi, and Metula, were destroyed by Arab terrorists in Palestine. Since there had not been, as yet, a significant influx of repatriated Jews, the terrorists could have been responding to the changed status of Jews under British rule. Under Ottoman rule, Jews (and Christians) had been required to show submission to the Islamic authority, but now, they were considered equal. The Jewish Palestinians responded to this pogrom by raising militias of their own. Thirteen Jewish villages were destroyed by the Arabs from 1920 to 1936. Although there are no recorded instances of Arab villages destroyed during this period, Jewish paramilitary forces attacked Arabs during the 1920 Nebi Musa (Arab) riots and the 1936 Arab revolt.

Although the Haskalah favoured Jewish migration to the West, that window of opportunity was closing. In Britain, the Aliens Act of 1905 had already restricted the entry of Jews, particularly those from Eastern Europe. The United States Immigration Act of 1924

established strict quotas on immigration from Eastern Europe including Jewish refugees from pogroms. In 1939, Canada, Cuba and the United States infamously denied entry to the Jewish refugees aboard the *MS St. Louis*, which meant that 907 Jews were returned to Europe with most ending up back in Nazi Germany. The experience of Thessaloniki, Greece, offers a glimpse of the unfolding tragedy.

The city's Jewish population dates back to biblical times, having been mentioned by the Apostle Paul in First Thessalonians. The city's Jewish population swelled with Sephardic refugees from the Spanish Inquisition in the fifteenth century. In the late nineteenth century the city's Jewish population expanded further with Ashkenazi survivors of some 200 pogroms in Eastern Europe. Given natural increase, there likely were 120,000 Jews in the city by 1930. About half of them emigrated by 1939, when the British reached an agreement with the Arabs to restrict Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Nazis recorded 56,000 Jews in Thessaloniki when they captured the city in 1941. Only a few hundred survived.

Arabs ask why they should pay the price for Nazi atrocities by allowing the creation of a Jewish "refugee state." The meeting between, Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and Adolf Hitler in 1941, and his attempts to recruit Muslims for the Waffen SS can be seen as a continuation of the anti-Semitism that had already been historically present in Palestine. While Arabs have argued that the British allowed in too many Jewish refugees, a survivor from Thessaloniki would have argued that the British were harsh in allowing in so few. If the Arabs had formed the government, they might in theory have adopted a different refugee policy, but as this historical scan shows, the local Arab population did not form the government of this region and never had. Furthermore, it shows that Jews had lived there continuously for the past 3,000 years. Finally, Arabs assume that the Jewish refugees came from Europe, but the nine

Arab countries created in the aftermath of World War II expelled nearly 600,000 Jews. Only a minority of Israel's Jewish population are descended from Europe's Ashkenazim.

In 1947, the United Nations proposed a partition plan that would establish two states in Palestine, one for Jews and another for Arabs, according to population density. Under this plan Jerusalem would be an international city with separate governance. The Jewish Palestinians accepted this partition and named their new state "Israel." The Arab leaders did not accept this "two-state" solution and a civil war broke out between the paramilitary forces on both sides. The Israeli military plan was to disable the local Arab forces before the armies from the surrounding Arab states of Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Yemen arrived. By war's end, about 700,000 of the Arabs in Israel had fled, forcibly displaced or encouraged by their leaders to leave with the promise of a right of return after an Arab victory. According to the partition plan, the area designated as the Arab state had a population of approximately 1,181,000 consisting of 630,000 Muslims, 143,000 Christians, and 408,000 Jews. Between the ethnic cleansing of Jews by the surrounding Arab states and those in Arab Palestine, the new state of Israel absorbed a million Jewish refugees.

The new Israeli government was dominated by leftists and socialists of the Haskalah tradition. In many ways, they established a modern secular state with accommodations for religious orthodoxy. For example, while government offices are closed on the Sabbath, the "basic laws" under which Israeli courts and government operation include:

- (1) the right to life, personal liberty and property;
- (2) the right to engage in any profession or occupation;
- (3) equality before the law including a prohibition of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, nationality, or gender; and,

(4) freedom of religion.

The 150,000 Arab Palestinians who remained in Israel after 1948 were granted full citizenship and their language had official status, although they remained under military administration until 1966. Their descendants now number about 2.1 million, comprising about 20% of Israel's population. They have their own political parties with representation in Israel's parliament. They serve at all levels of governance including the country's Supreme Court. They face discrimination, because not all Israelis believe that they can be trusted given their ethnic and religious connections with those Palestinians seeking to destroy the Israeli state.

What does religion have to do with it?

"Good men will do good things and bad men will do bad things, but to make a good man do bad things it takes religion?" - Steven Weinberg

Most humanists will recognize the moral depravity exhibited by those who participated in the October 7 massacre, but some excuse this behaviour as the natural or inevitable result of years under occupation. But the Hebron massacre of Jews almost 100 years earlier, before the creation of Israel, displayed similar dehumanizing hate:

It was a quiet Shabbat morning in Hebron (August 23, 1929) when a Muslim Arab mob 3,000 strong, armed with clubs and swords and knives, spent two hours going from house to house, massacring, raping and mutilating any Jews they found. They slaughtered 30 Rabbinical students as they rested in their quarters. They tied a baker's head to a lit stove and cooked it. They cut a Rabbi's brain out of his skull. They hung a Jewish woman by her feet, and cut breasts, noses and hands off bodies. (Quoted in Danielle Kubes; *Hamas's savagery would exist with or without Israel.*, Dec. 5, 2023.)

As we have noted, Israel's War of Independence broke out in 1948. Despite winning that war, peace was marred by continuing conflict on a smaller scale: shootings, car-bombings, knifings, kidnappings and other acts of terror. The Sinai War broke out in 1956 after Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran blockading Israel's only port on the Red Sea and closed the Suez

Canal to international shipping. France and Britain joined Israel intent on reopening the canal. The war ended with an agreement to reopen the Straits and place the canal under international control. Egypt maintained control of the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza.

The Six-Day War broke out in 1967, after Egypt once again closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Joining the Egyptian invasion of Israel were Jordan and Syria. After this war, Israel took control of the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza. The Arabs in Palestine began to call themselves “Palestinians.”

The Yom Kippur War broke out in 1973 in a surprise attack on the Jewish Day of Atonement. In the peace treaty, not signed until 1979, Egypt recognized Israel as a state and regained the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt did not ask for the return of Gaza.

The new Palestinians have engaged in two “Intifadas.” The first, beginning in 1987, featured rock throwing youth, strikes and civil disobedience. It ended in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo [a](#)ccords that gave limited self-government to the Palestine Liberation Organization. At the subsequent Camp David Accords of 2000, the PLO was offered a Palestinian state that included 96% of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem as its capital. The PLO rejected this offer, because it did not include control of Temple Mount in Old Jerusalem and did not grant the Arabs a right of return to Israel proper. As a consequence of the failure to accept this “two state” solution, Israel maintained formal control of approximately 60% of the West Bank. It is within this area new Jewish settlements have been created. A second intifada began in 2000 and included suicide bombings. It ended five years later with a ceasefire agreement to de-escalate hostilities. Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005 closing all Jewish settlements in what was termed “trading land for peace.”

Hamas claims that the events of October 7, 2023 were a consequence of Israeli occupation, even though Israel had not occupied Gaza for 18 years. The claim of occupation is often based on Israel's continued control of its borders with Gaza and its blockade restricting the movement of goods and people. Israel maintains that these measures are a necessary response to terrorist attacks. Hamas was able to convince Israeli officials that they had adopted a more pragmatic non-terrorist approach prior to the 2023 atrocity, which is why the Israelis relaxed their guard even to the point of ignoring the concerns of lower ranking intelligence officers.

A blockade is not an occupation, but we need to consider that the Islamists, represented by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, view the very existence of Israel to be "occupation." They have insisted on one Palestinian state that stretches "from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea" with the implication that Jews are not Palestinians and have no right to live in this territory. The tenacity with which Palestinians insists on this "solution" in the face of repeated defeats indicates a religious fervor. For Hamas, Hezbollah and other jihadist movements, this is not a secular struggle. Its heroes are "martyrs" not "freedom fighters." We must consider the possibility that the jihadists counted on Israel invading Gaza after the October 7 atrocity, which would create many civilian martyrs for their cause.

The original 1988 charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) frames its struggle in the context of jihad stating, "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it," It's revised 2017 charter still identifies its members as Muslims and promises to obliterate the State of Israel but frames this struggle as "anti-Zionism."

Because Zionism originated in order to establish a Jewish state, anti-Zionism is a denial of the Jewish state's right to exist. Yet Israel has existed for 75 years. Although some humanists

might disagree with the nationalism underpinning the creation of modern nation states -- that people who identify with a particular language and culture and live in a common territory are a nation with the right to a state on that territory --- we would not agree with involuntarily destroying the states so created or killing their citizens. Since the modern state of Israel has adopted many secular and liberal values, we suspect that the problem is not that the majority of the population are Zionist but that the majority are of Jewish ancestry.

The persistence of the jihadists in attempting to murder Israelis irrespective of danger to themselves with cries of “Allahu Ahkbar” explicitly indicates a religious motivation. The mutilation that often accompanies jihad can be legitimated by Qur’an 8:12: “I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them” and Qur’an 9:5 “And when the forbidden months have passed, kill the idolaters wherever you find them and take them prisoners, and beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush.” According to a hadith attributed to the Prophet Mohammad in both Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, two of the most respected collections of hadith in Islam, the Day of Judgment will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and the rocks and trees will call out saying, “O Muslim, O servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.”

Maybe the modern jihadists are trying to emulate the Prophet Mohammed’s seventh-century conquest of Medina (then known as Yathrib). Thirty to forty percent of its population had consisted of three Jewish tribes. After a series of battles, Mohammad showed mercy allowing two tribes to immigrate to the Daraa region of Syria (which borders what is now the Golan Heights). The third tribe was destroyed with all males who had reached puberty executed and the women and children taken into slavery.

In defending the notion of Islam as a religion of peace, some theologians can argue that the passages referenced need to be understood in the context of violent times in which they were written. Another interpretation grounded in medieval Sufism, is that the concept of jihad has two meanings: an outward (military) struggle and an inner (spiritual) one and that the more peaceful interpretation applies to modernity. Although humanists certainly hope that this modern interpretation will prevail, the jihadists of today appear to be externalizing their struggle. Jihad meant conquest of the infidels in the seventh century, and to them it still does. The leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad declare dead terrorists to be “martyrs” who will be given a special place in Heaven.

There are also Israelis who hate. On December 18, 2023, Israeli police charged Noam Dayan with incitement to violence. He had written on social media, "Personally, I would relish blowing up Arab babies' skulls," "Palestinian girls should be raped," and "Death camps should be made for Palestinians." Since October 7, 2023 Israeli police have charged 34 people with this crime. A web search using ChatGPT did not uncover any data on similar charges against Arabs in Palestinian courts.

A Humanist Way Forward

It is possible to develop a humanist dialectical theory of history. We are both individual and social beings. The Enlightenment increased the freedom of the individual to ascertain what is true through rational and scientific means, thereby displacing previous mechanisms, such as organized religion, that enforced a form of collectivism. The resultant increased emphasis on individualism led to the rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. Humanist compassion, supported by Western religious traditions, placed limits on unfettered capitalism, and this led to

universal education, medicare and the welfare state. But this has not happened in many parts of the world.

Karl Marx proposed a post-capitalist socialist collectivism wherein the Enlightenment individual would meld into a cooperative commonwealth while retaining personal rights and freedoms. That, of course, did not happen. The Soviet Union was built on a pre-capitalist feudal society that inherited its view of humanity from the Mongols, and this eventually resulted in Stalin. Similarly, the early leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization along with other Arab liberation movements, such as the Baath parties of Syria and Iran, were educated in Western socialism, but their movements emerged in societies that had experienced neither the Enlightenment nor industrial capitalism. Individual life was of value only insofar as it serves the collectivity. For example, Hamas built hundreds of miles of tunnels for terrorists and their armaments but forced civilians to remain above ground. Similarly, Hamas stores weapons in, under or near schools, mosques and hospitals, thus placing civilians in direct danger during enemy attacks.

In an ideal world, humanists would favour a single state that includes both Jews and Palestinians with a secular government that promotes rational discourse, freedom of thought and speech, scientific discovery and universal compassion. But that kind of state is not possible apart from a society that actually values those principles. Israel is the only functioning democracy with (somewhat) liberal values in the Middle East today. Given that fact, we would recommend an intermediate stage of development that includes:

1. Recognition of Israel's right to exist and to defend itself;
2. Interim self-government for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank with the understanding that they must not harbor terrorists or their supporters;

3. A universal education system which teaches the values of equality, human rights and peace along with basic literacy, and the replacement of textbooks that demonize Jews or Arabs;
4. Mixed classrooms of Arabs, Jews and other ethnic and religious groups where possible;
5. The development of cross-cultural exchanges for all students;
6. Universal hate speech laws that criminalize incitement to murder while promoting freedom of speech.
7. The return of West Bank settlements deemed illegal by the United Nations to the new secular government in the West Bank

Humanists would view any “two-state” solution with respect to Palestine as interim. We hold that Jews and Arabs should ultimately live cooperatively in a secular state as equals. The problems in reaching that ideal were illustrated by the suspension given an Israeli teacher shortly before the October 7 massacre. Sabine Masarwa’s participation in a Nakba Day march was noted by some parents and students in her community, who demanded her dismissal. Her community of Tayibe is predominately descended from those Arabs who never left Israel and were granted Israeli citizenship. The Israeli Ministry of Education maintained that her conduct violated professional ethics. Masarwa said that her identity as a Palestinian and her participation in the march were important to her. The ministry admitted that there was no evidence that she had incited violence or used her position to indoctrinate her students.

In an ideal society, teachers and other citizens are allowed, in fact are encouraged, to give expression to unpopular ideas without undue censorship. Perhaps Masarwa would have been

allowed to express her viewpoint on her own time, had her school used an approach based on ethical guidelines for teaching controversial matters.

Teaching about the Nakba and the parallel ethnic cleansing of Jews from Arab territories involves navigating a complex and sensitive historical narrative beginning with historical accuracy and balance. Such an approach might begin with a historical timeline that includes the Zionist movement's aspirations, Jewish anti-Zionist perspectives, and various, sometimes competing, Palestinian narratives. Events can be understood from various perspectives without the suggestion that a perspective is necessarily tied to an ethnicity. An ethical approach to controversial topics avoids simplification while drawing liberally on primary sources. The teacher acts as a facilitator of discussion rather than an advocate for one side. Students are encouraged to analyze sources for bias, understand propaganda from the period, and evaluate the reliability of information. Teachers foster an environment where students can express their views while being respectful of others. The curriculum would include comparative history, legal and humanitarian aspects. Educators using this method should be transparent about their own biases or cultural background, encouraging students to recognize and critique bias in themselves and others. By using this multi-faceted approach, educators can ethically teach these complex historical events, helping students to understand the multifaceted nature of history, the impact of collective memory, and the importance of empathy and critical inquiry. In the process, students would be learning the skills they need to live side by side with “the other.” This dream may only be possible in a remote future, and it begins with education. But first, terrorism must be eliminated.