

A MENTAL HEALTH GUIDEBOOK

For those concerned about Palestine



Note: All contributors to this work are members of the Stanford Muslim Mental Health and Islamic Psychology Lab.

Trigger Warning

This document discusses genocide and other possibly traumatic topics. Please take care of your mental health while reading. If you find yourself feeling distressed, please take a break, talk to someone you trust, or reach out for professional help.

Disclaimer

The authors of this document do not assume responsibility for the content or political beliefs of included resources. We have done our due diligence to ensure all of the information is accurate, up-to-date, and attempted to avoid biased language.

An-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said:

"The believers, in their mutual love, compassion, and sympathy are like a single body; if one of its organs suffers, the whole body will respond to it with sleeplessness and fever."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

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INTRODUCTION

Contextualizing Recent Distress Among Muslim Populations

Acknowledged by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and a United Nations human rights expert as victims of an apartheid system, Palestinians in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are experiencing genocide.^{44, 43, 45} Although our discussion begins with the events that occurred on October 7, 2023, we acknowledge a long and complex history of oppression against the Palestinian people. We understand that this discussion must be centered in a much larger context. Please see our full historical write up for more information: (<https://tinyurl.com/mr25vanh>).

This protracted struggle came to a head when Hamas launched an attack on Israel killing 1,300 Israelis and reportedly taking 100 hostages on October 7, 2023.³⁶ Israel formally declared war, mobilizing 300,000 reservists.²⁸ Beginning on October 9th, Israeli Prime Minister Gallant announced a “complete siege” of an already blockaded Gaza, cutting off electricity and blocking entry of all food, supplies, and fuel.²⁵ Within six days, Israeli forces dropped 6,000 bombs on Gaza,²⁹ whose size amounts to just twice that of Washington D.C..³¹ Indiscriminatory bombing yielded the destruction of ambulances, media offices, mosques, UNWRA schools, residential units, and health centers as well as the death of active medics and journalists.^{32, 46} Furthermore, in violation of international law, Israeli forces launched white phosphorus artillery attacks in Gaza and Lebanon.²⁶ The devastating effects are exacerbated in the densely populated Gaza Strip, whose total population is 2.3 million, 1.7 million of which live in refugee camps and 47% of which are children.³² By October 12th, 650,000 Gazans were facing water shortages.²⁹ The number of Palestinian casualties was estimated to be 2,329 by October 15th, over 700 being children, and more than 9,000 Palestinians injured, and the number is expected to keep climbing in the coming days.³⁶ Countless innocent civilians continue to suffer as the situation worsens.

CHAPTER 1

Mental Health Experiences Related to the Palestine Crisis

Understanding Palestine Within the Framework of Settler-Colonialism

What is uncontested and evidenced by the struggle of the Palestinians and many other indigenous people all over the world today is that colonialism is nowhere near a relic of the past, nor should we view the resulting morbidity and mortality as part of a natural or unavoidable progression of events or a self-evident truth. Settler-colonialism is a continuously reinforced structure, not a singular event. The very existence, as well as the maintenance of the Zionist state and its attendants, relies on the naturalized violence, elimination, expulsion, repression, deprivation, erasure, and othering of the Palestinian people.

Analyzing or reporting on Palestinian health outcomes and disparities while neglecting the historical and geopolitical contexts and legacies they are situated within reduces them to the status of victims of misfortune by happenstance rather than as people who have been and are systematically and deliberately harmed through oppressive power structures in the service of higher interests.⁴⁷ It ignores the nature of apartheid and sufficiently frees those enacting the violence from culpability. Assessing Palestine through the lens of settler-colonialism allows us to question Israel's claims of normalcy and exceptionalism⁴⁸ and build on meaningful solidarity with other Indigenous struggles historically and now.

Palestinian Mental Health and Emotional Experiences Under Colonialism

Loss

Colonial power has the unique quality of pervading every aspect of a Palestinian's life. In addition to the material/physical uprooting, displacement, and dispossession, health and well-being are impacted by the near-constant onslaught of terrorization, pain, fear, agony, and losses in all forms. These losses are both symbolic and systemic, existing at the intersections of the personal and the political. Losses occur as death, loss of health due to incapacitation or injury, loss of livelihood, loss of social roles due to fracturing of families, loss of political autonomy, and loss of dignity and hope. All these losses are felt by the individuals and reverberate through families and communities.⁴⁹ Loss of homes does not only represent the destruction of a place or of belongings but also represents the destruction of dreams and memories, loss of a sense of safety, and loss of identity and heritage that is so intrinsically linked to the homeland.

Mental Health Consequences of Loss

Palestinian reactions to these losses and stressors as they are understood within the realm of psychological research are varied, but common trends emerge. At the individual level, the effects of the blockade on the lives of the people of Gaza undermine mental well-being, resulting in a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, and pessimism about the future on a daily basis, and leading to symptoms of frustration and depression.⁴ Roughly one to two thirds of individuals in Palestine struggle with trauma-related psychopathologies.⁵ Children living under occupation present with concerning levels of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse,⁶ as well as avoidant behaviors and impaired developmental functioning.⁷

These difficulties, compounded by unrelenting loss on many different fronts, paint a harrowing picture of cumulative and intergenerational trauma, where traumas and their effects are passed down due to genetic changes, parenting styles, and mass trauma.⁸ Depression and overwhelming sadness can interfere with the ability to go to work, concentrate in school, or tend to the house. This further contributes to feelings of worthlessness, detachment, and dissociation. After loss, the bereaved are often denied their rights to travel to visit loved ones, mourn their dead, and bury them honorably. The fear, sense of helplessness, and guilt associated with losing someone are further intensified when violence continues in perpetuity,³ and the threat of losing another family member is always present.³ Palestinians become subject to all kinds of loss and dislocation, converging even in death, and these experiences continue to affect individuals, whole families, and lineages long after the events themselves have occurred.

Trauma Responses

Without any periods of true relief or cessation, stress responses can become programmed into the body and never completely turned off. While these responses serve a purpose in times of immediate danger, they take a toll on the body when prolonged beyond those critical moments. Chronic stress and trauma can show up in many different ways in those affected. Common emotional experiences of trauma can be categorized into fight, flight, or freeze responses. Emotional responses can show up as fear, anxiety, worry, sadness, grief, anger, rage, guilt, and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. These are normal responses to abnormal events. Naturally, one may also notice changes in their behavior, such as loss of interest in enjoyable activities, underperforming in school and work, loss of appetite and sleep disturbances, changes in memory and concentration, memory gaps, intrusive memories or thoughts about events, and social withdrawal and avoidance. They may develop fears of and avoid situations their brains associate with disaster. When disaster becomes part of everyday life, fear can be activated even for mundane activities.

As an adverse event persists, one's system may shut down or go into freeze response. Here, dissociation may occur and can look like disengagement and disconnection from self and the world. It's important to note that sometimes the signs of distress occur immediately, while other times they can be delayed.

Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims around the world may often feel a variety of emotions as they watch and follow the terror in Palestine. Watching traumatic events unfold directly or indirectly (e.g., on TV or through social media) gets processed by the brain in the same way and thus gets processed emotionally in the same way. Keeping up with the news is an important part of being connected to our brothers and sisters in Palestine. However, it can also make us feel on edge or excessively on alert. Anxiety and worries can show up as bodily sensations such as increased heart rate, stomach pain, and stress headaches. When following events within relative safety, we can feel powerless to help, which may increase feelings of survival guilt and helplessness.

Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma, or secondary trauma, occurs as a result of empathic engagement in traumatic experiences.⁵⁵ It is natural for people who experience greater empathy to also feel the negative impacts of cruel events they witness. There are often heightened responses to traumatic events when the people or communities experiencing those adversities share identities or values with us, as this increases the empathic bond. Not only being a direct witness but being an audience through media can also aggravate stress symptoms of anger, fear, depression, cognitive interruption, and/or distress.⁵⁵ It is only natural, then, that the consumption of media coverage of the atrocities faced by Palestinians is creating a sense of frustration and overwhelm for us. Despite being so geographically removed from the traumas faced by Palestinians, our shared religious, cultural, and ethnic identities and values create a bond of empathy with the oppressed. We might be finding ourselves minimizing our own mental health needs as we advocate for the rights and justice of Palestinians because their battle is so much larger comparatively, and thus, we may be denying ourselves the care to sustain our voice in this battle.

Muslims and Palestinians in the West are witnessing these atrocities within the context of Islamophobia and racism. Being subjected to ongoing systemic and individual experiences of Islamophobia while simultaneously witnessing the violence in Palestine can compound trauma and emotional distress. A traumatic experience can be exacerbated if the traumatized individual or community does not have a safe space to recuperate and recover. Other ongoing life stressors such as immigration, financial challenges, and health concerns can all play a role in the experience of traumatic events.

Media Disenfranchisement

While Muslims are privy to injustices happening to the Palestinian people, we are also witness to the lack of empathy and fairness in Western mass media reporting. The plight and trauma of the Palestinian people undergoing occupation remains underreported, especially relative to coverage of other tragedies. When it is reported on, if at all, most Western media outlets gloss over the severity of the attacks and targeting of civilians, in effect perpetuating the Orientalist fallacy that only certain lives have value and Palestinian lives are expendable. Reporters fail to acknowledge the losses that their Palestinian interviewees have dealt with daily for decades and actively condemn the impending genocide of Palestinians in Gaza just as fervently as they do other tragedies.

Historically, Palestinian voices and perspectives have been sidelined. Maha Nassar⁵⁶ reported that from 1979 to 2019, less than 2% of approximately 2,500 NYT opinion pieces and less than 1% of approximately 3,300 Washington Post opinion pieces that discussed Palestinians were actually written by Palestinians. Many of these pieces had patronizing undertones and racialized the occupation. Furthermore, social media platforms have historically tried to censor and silence Palestinian voices, thus reinforcing neglect and erasure of their identity and trauma.⁵⁷ This can be understood as media

disenfranchisement and falls under the umbrella of what Kawsar Ali calls “digital settler colonialism” – the use of the Internet to reify settler colonialism, contribute to structural violence, and undermine the plight of the Palestinian people.⁵⁸ Multiple layers of disenfranchisement can invalidate emotions. The invalidating experience whereby emotions are either rejected or minimized can be encapsulated by the terms “disenfranchised grief/anger.” These feelings when not publicly acknowledged or socially accepted build up, fester, and exacerbate and complicate the trauma that is already so intensely felt.

As Muslims in the Western world, we may also feel a heightened responsibility for change, and there is a lot to process with our identity, positionality, society, and the consistent consumption of content. This makes our trauma even more complex because we empathize with the triggering experiences of Palestinians and intake the graphic horrors of the Palestinian condition, and yet are further invalidated in our experiences under the oppressive systems that forward inaccurate counter-narratives. In trying to take up space with pro-Palestinian narratives, we are automatically labeled as anti-Semitic and are asked to clarify our position on the violence against civilians. This leads to exacerbated marginalization and the loss of autonomy to express our emotional experience.

Resources

To learn more about responses to trauma for adults, children, and adolescents:

- Mental Health of Palestinian Children:
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/12/how-the-israel-war-blockade-affects-mental-health-of-palestinian-children>
- Continuous trauma rather than Post-trauma
<https://qz.com/1521806/palestines-head-of-mental-health-services-says-ptsd-is-a-western-concept>
- Trauma Guide for Parents in Arabic
- https://childmind.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CMI_TraumaGuide_Arabic.pdf
- Emotional, Behavioural, and Cognitive responses to trauma:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207191/#:~:text=Initial%20reactions%20to%20trauma%20can,effective%2C%20and%20self%2Dlimited.>
- PTSD and religious coping: <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Ftra0000179>
- Trauma for adaptive action:
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1534765612441975?casa_token=aEYqy4NqzZ8AAAAA:M0WzWfKpHs3wX4GY7Nu5DyllLUBQ2ZYF1KL5qqvNpUpqVC-u9BNJry5-u-CfejO5I7E2HnqZsfHG
- Racial Trauma:
- <https://www.mhanational.org/racial-trauma>
- Stress and Trauma Toolkit
- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/diversity/education/stress-and-trauma/muslims>
- Demonization of Islam in the media <https://www.mdpi.com/909330>
- Media representation of Muslims
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1748048520987440>
- Media and American Perception of Arabs
https://media.okstate.edu/images/Farah_Shami_Thesis.pdf

Moving From Depoliticization to Decolonization of Mental Health

Problematic Individualization of Trauma

In the fields of physical and mental health, there is a dominance of neo-colonial and Western frameworks to analyze pain and suffering that overlook the structural forces that create and perpetuate that very suffering. When suffering or trauma is individualized and depoliticized, Palestinian's enduring and collective socio-political efforts to resist are cast to the side, and their broader contexts ignored. These frameworks create their own categories for people involved in struggle that dilute the multidimensionality of their existence, diminish their subjectivity, and strip them of their collective narratives of survival. They either class Palestinians solely as 'victims' of unfortunate circumstances or assign diagnoses in place of acknowledging and rectifying the underlying communal suffering in the face of political and social oppression in all forms. The trend toward individualizing trauma has operated as a means for those in health fields to shape narratives of Palestinians as is convenient or acceptable for broader society, while Palestinians' own testimonies, concerns, and experiences are largely discounted.

What Is a PTSD Diagnosis When There is No "Post"?

It is important to note that what is described above are justified responses to unjustifiable ongoing war and terror. Clinical diagnoses of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) within a Palestinian context may be irrelevant and inconclusive given the ongoing violence of the settler colonial state of Israel on occupied Palestine. It is not the individuals who are sick but rather the socio-political context in which they find themselves. The fact that PTSD labels and, subsequently, trauma programs are common for Palestinians is not a product of their

proven efficacy but actually a result of their appeal to agencies as a safe, staid, and time-limited intervention that avoids controversy associated with tackling core issues.⁴⁸ An uncritical and wholesale adoption of the PTSD label relegates the root issues of Palestinian trauma to the periphery, medicalizes and pathologizes their conditions, and does a great disservice to describing their realities. It represents a neutrality and intentional complicity, as well as a failure to properly name and challenge the state-sanctioned actions and policies that are direct causes of this suffering.⁴⁷

A Human Rights Framework

At the heart of this issue is the Palestinian right to health, which cannot be realized while other basic rights are being undermined.⁴⁸ Veins of “conflict health”, “refugee health”, or “minority health” fall short of understanding and addressing the roots of disparate physical and mental health outcomes. They attempt to deal with the aftermath by proposing stopgaps, grouping vastly different realities of oppression together, and framing suffering and dispossession as inevitable markers of certain cultural identities rather than as systems to be dismantled. There has been a burgeoning focus on health under apartheid and colonialism by human rights groups outside Palestine, but only much more recently. The pursuit of psychosocial well-being for Palestinians is inextricably linked to indicating settler colonialism as the main driver of health outcomes⁴⁷ and challenging Israeli discriminatory policies, aggression, and status quo. Any efforts to address Palestinian mental health and well-being must be cognizant of and informed by this broader context in order to be legitimate. Just as Muslim mental health initiatives are engaging with and challenging dominant Western frameworks of health and wellness (صحة), similar transformative approaches must be taken to cultivate health and wellness for Palestinians individually and collectively.

Resistance and Resilience

The Red Thread of Resistance

Palestinians have been engaged in many forms of resistance, both on their own and supported by similar revolutionary struggles across the globe. It is important to acknowledge the shared histories of resistance and solidarity between the Palestinian struggle and other freedom movements across time and place, including but not limited to the ongoing Black Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the fight against Apartheid in South Africa, the struggles of the Indigenous communities of North America, New Zealand, Australia, and the Caribbean, the victims of the genocide in Bosnia, the treatment of the marginalized in Myanmar/Burma, the struggles of the Muslims in Kashmir, Yemen, Syria, India, Sudan, Somalia, and all other oppressed freedom fighting peoples of the world.

Palestinians view their communities as a source of strength and draw upon their collective experiences and memories as well as their faith to contextualize their griefs. Concepts such as our “Amaanah” in this world, “Qadr”, “Hikmatullah”, and what is “Maktoub” are oft-cited in testimonies of Palestinians⁴⁹ as responses to loss and tragedy. These responses do not represent a resignation to oppression or fatalism, rather they are deeply rooted in a profound understanding of Tawakkul in Allah (SWT)’s plans and His (SWT)’s justice. When laws and practices label Palestinians as “present-absentees” or “security threats”, and deny them their rights, identities, histories, and even their humanity, their very existence becomes a reminder of and an act of resistance. The concept of “Sumood”, or steadfastness, has been a principle that Palestinians have embodied when their oppressors have used every means at their disposal to otherwise uproot and erase them. Those who have Allah (SWT) on their side will always be victorious. We witness

their valiance in surmounting adversity and how they remain exemplars of Islam, Iman, and Ihsan through it all. As the illustrious Taha Abderrahmane tells us in his book *al-Haqq al-‘arabi fī l-ikhtilāf al-falsafī*, the Palestinians,⁶² through their continuous exercise of their rights to struggle and resist against their oppressor, epitomize the true moral essences of futuwah and makārim al-akhlāq.⁶⁰

Islam as a Source of Resilience

Palestine is a religiously significant holy land for all Abrahamic religions, including Muslims. Not only is it the birthplace of many of prophets honored within the Islamic scripture, including Isa (Jesus), but it also houses the third holiest mosque in Islam – Masjid al-Aqsa. Naturally, when Israeli soldiers raid al-Aqsa mosque or when Israeli citizens openly insult the prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), Muslims feel a religious obligation to respond not only on behalf of Palestinians but seemingly on Islam as a whole.⁶¹ It is imperative to note, however, that while Palestine is certainly an issue with Islamic implications, it is not exclusively so, with Israel regularly committing human rights violations against all Palestinians, including those who do not identify as Muslim.⁶²

Research has reflected on using narratives on empowerment, belongingness, sharing, and religious adherence to bolster Palestinian pride and resilience against the atrocities they have dealt with over decades.⁶³ Post-traumatic Growth (PTG) contrasts the existence of inherently terrible events and the resulting solidarity, faith, and community that can arise from it and become ways to cope. Sharing our stories and learning from the stories documented in the Quran creates a sense of hope and lessons from those who have traveled these paths and adversities before us. Furthermore, documenting our stories in oral tradition or through written reports creates a sense of legacy whereby what we endured is witnessed and captured for posterity. Sharing the extent and full degree of our emotional experiences has also been used as a dimension through which growth can happen in trauma survivors.⁶³

Creating space for our stories, seeking help through our community, and sharing our emotional experiences to their full extent can strengthen our resilience in the face of these hardships.

In a similar vein, there is space to recognize that a period of trauma and our recovery from those experiences can have a significant impact on our religiosity and faith.⁶⁴ Although trauma may be continuous for Palestinians, we are encouraged to disconnect and take mental health breaks to sustain ourselves as we prepare for ongoing advocacy (See the section below for suggestions on how to do this). Recovering from trauma can significantly alter our relationship with faith, and we are invited to find or make meaning through Islam in our struggles. Some people make meaning through their faith by relying on stories, on the just nature of Allah (SWT), or persevering and finding peace in their strengthened relationship with Allah (SWT). There is also an invitation therein to seek help from learned practitioners who understand the value of Islam and leverage it in building ways to cope with the adversities we are faced with.

Bentley and colleagues⁶³ describe how the six sessions of the Islamic Trauma Healing program are modeled after the prophets (AS) and their stories to create hope. The first session is centered around Prophet Ayub (AS) and having faith during hard times. The second and third sessions focus on how trials build strength through the stories of Prophet Yusuf (AS) and overcoming fear like Prophet Musa (AS), respectively. The fourth session anchors itself in the story of Yunus (AS) with redeeming oneself and others, while the fifth session builds on Ibrahim's (AS) story of having faith, hope, and courage for the future. Centralizing on Muhammad ﷺ and his commitment to reconciliation, these six sessions terminate, having built in the wisdom from the stories of our role models in Islam.

People naturally seek connection and social support to overcome challenges, and Islam has enforced a community-based lens in many components of the deen, including congregational worship, the structure of zakat, and the value of forming and maintaining kinship. Community is an inherent tenet of Islam and strengthens the connections we have and our ability to bounce back from adversities together. Hadiths also remind us of the strength in our connections and community as in the following examples: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts support each other.” The Prophet then clasped his hands with the fingers interlaced while saying that.”⁶⁶ He ﷺ also said: “The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever.”⁶⁷ There is a reason we are all feeling the same feelings of distress, anger, and guilt over the situation in Palestine, and it is because of our inherent connectedness and need for community. Just as we suffer vicariously in solidarity, we are also encouraged to come together and heal.

CHAPTER 2

General Recommendations & Resources:

Donate to reputable organizations supporting Palestine.



Donating to organizations that support Palestine is a meaningful way to contribute to humanitarian efforts. These organizations work to provide aid, resources, and support to Palestinian communities in need. Here are some reputable organizations that you can consider supporting:

1. **Baitulmaal**: Baitulmaal is a humanitarian charity that provides support to people in need, including to Palestinian communities, with aid, including food, medical care, and education.
2. **Palestine Children's Relief Fund**: Provides free medical care and a pediatric mental health program to support traumatized children in Gaza.
3. **Islamic Relief**: Islamic Relief operates in many countries, including Palestine, providing aid in the form of food, healthcare, and education.
4. **Helping Hand for Relief & Development**: This organization focuses on humanitarian aid and development in Palestine, offering programs related to healthcare, education, and emergency relief.
5. **Local Charities**: You may consider supporting local charities and initiatives that work directly with Palestinian communities.



Get updates from reputable news sources

Staying informed about the ongoing Palestinian occupation and crisis is essential for understanding the context and being an effective advocate. Many media outlets are affiliated with different countries, ideologies, or interest groups, which can influence their reporting. Thus, it's essential that you critically evaluate the sources of information you are consuming online.

Here are some reputable news sources to consider:

1. <https://www.haaretz.com/> (Usually)¹
2. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/>
3. <https://www.aljazeera.com/>
4. <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/>
5. <https://electronicintifada.net/>
6. <https://mondoweiss.net/>

Resources for Advocacy and Changing the Discourse on Gaza

Engaging in advocacy and reshaping the narrative on Gaza is important for those looking to support their Palestinian peers and those affected. These resources are designed to empower community members to take informed action:

1. **[Palestine Terminology Sheet](#)**: This resource offers key terminology and language for Palestinian activists when discussing the Palestine-Israel conflict.
2. **[American Muslims for Palestine](#)**: This article dismantles misconceptions on topics such as Israel's assault on Gaza or the actions of Palestinian armed groups.
3. **[Students for Justice in Palestine](#)**: SJP is a network of student groups committed to advocating for Palestinian rights and justice on college campuses.
4. **[Visualizing Palestine](#)**: Visualizing Palestine employs visual art and infographics to convey complex issues and data related to Palestine.
5. **[Palestine Solidarity Committee](#)**: The Harvard College Palestine Solidarity Committee offers resources and opportunities for community members to engage in solidarity activities and advocacy for Palestine.
6. **[Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions](#)**: The BDS movement is focused on pressuring Israel to comply with international law through nonviolent economic and political actions.
7. **[IF Americans Knew](#)**: An educational resource providing facts, figures, and other information about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

¹ This is an Israeli news source. Although they tend to portray the situation accurately, there may be instances where the news may misrepresent events, particularly in reporting the perspective of Palestinians.

How to safely attend protests:



It's crucial to ensure safety and know your rights while attending protests. Below, you will find a list of resources and guides to help you safely attend protests:

1. [Human Rights Campaign Guide](#)
2. [ACLU guide](#)
3. [Protest Tips and Resources | NYU School of Law](#)
4. [CAIR IDF: Know Your Rights as a Protester: A Guide](#)

There may be times when one is approached in an aggressive manner at a protest. When confronted by hecklers, there are a couple of things to keep in mind:

- Stay calm: try your best to remain calm even if you feel scared. Take deep breaths and try your best to find a group of allies to be with.
- Avoid engaging: although it's very tempting to want to reply to people, oftentimes, it is best to avoid those who are increasingly aggressive and angry. By letting your own anger get in the way, the situation could escalate further.
- Be non-violent: if choosing to respond, do so in a very calm manner. Do not say anything with aggressive language or with insults.
- Find allies: try to go to protests with people you know, such as family and friends. If you feel threatened or unsafe, try to find safety in those around you.
- Report and know your rights: if you continue to feel unsafe, remove yourself from the situation and report any violence, harassment, or threats to authorities and organizers of the event. Additionally, familiarize yourself with what your legal rights are and use legal resources such as CAIR to help.

CHAPTER 3

Islamic Coping & Taking Care of Your Mental Health

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught cognitive reframing that can help Muslims navigate adversity. Abu Yahya Suhaib bin Sinan (May Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah said, “How wonderful is the case of a believer; there is good for him in everything, and this applies only to a believer. If prosperity attends him, he expresses gratitude to Allah, and that is good for him; and if adversity befalls him, he endures it patiently, and that is better for him” [Muslim].

In essence, as much as the Palestinian crisis is a trial for the Palestinian people, it's also a test for us. How will we respond when our beliefs are challenged? When we feel powerless or weak in the sight of Allah? What will we do when our faith is tested? We must have certainty in the unseen. And trust Allah's plan.

Amid these disconcerting thoughts, the ultimate source of solace lies in our steadfast faith in the Day of Judgment. We must possess "yaqeen" (certainty) that on That Day, Allah will give Justice: He will hold these oppressors accountable and lavishly reward the oppressed. We pray that Allah gives victory to the Palestinians in this world and the next, strengthens our faith, and reunites us in Jannatul Firdaus. Ameen.

Scholars have wrestled with the problem of evil (theodicy) for generations, which we cannot address here (there are some YouTube videos if you're interested). What's important to understand is that it's entirely normal to question and have doubts in one's iman (faith). Faith can go down just as it goes up in Ramadan and during prayer. Even the best of the Sahaba sought reassurance when things didn't go their way. Umar (RA), for instance, had moments of doubt and needed Quranic revelation to reassure him when he doubted in the victory of Allah after the Treaty of Hudaibiyya was finalized.

Ultimately, it is a chance to remember Allah and become closer to Him. Below are some additional resources that you may find useful in using Islamic principles and wisdom from the Quran and Sunnah to cope with the ongoing struggles of our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

Lectures and Videos

Below are a series of video lectures from our scholars and teachers about suffering, stress, anxiety, oppression, trusting Allah, grief, and loss, among other topics that you may find helpful and comforting during this time.

1. [Why God Allows Suffering? by Sh. Yasir Qadhi | ICNA-MAS Convention 2018](#)
2. [Five Tips to Cope with Stress & Anxiety | Ustadha Dr. Rania Awaad](#)
3. [When Allah takes Grasp of the Oppressor | Shaykh Dr. Yasir Qadhi | Khatira](#)
4. [Managing Anxiety & Trusting Allah: Lessons and Q+A \[Maryam Amir\]](#)
5. [Ep. 5: How Do You Cope With Grief And Loss? | Attaching to Allah](#)
6. [Khuṭbah: Coping With Stress | Shaykh Dr. Yasir Qadhi](#)
7. [Justice for the Oppressed | Judgment Day | Ep. 14](#)
8. [Navigating Anxiety: Hope From Our Sunnah For Anxious Muslim Minds | Ustadha Dr. Rania Awaad](#)
9. [Finding Healing in Our Trials: Lessons and Q + A \[Rania Awaad\]](#)
10. [Prophet Muhammad's Approach to Mental Health | Holistic Healing with Dr. Rania Awaad](#)

Dua

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “There are three whose supplication is not rejected: The fasting person when he breaks his fast, the just leader, and the supplication of the oppressed person; Allah raises it up above the clouds and opens the gates of heaven to it. And the Lord says: ‘By My might, I shall surely aid you, even if it should be after a while.’”⁶⁸ During this challenging time, one of our most powerful tools is du’a. Turning to Allah and calling on Him by all of His names, as the All-Powerful, the All-Merciful, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing, and the Most Just, with full certainty that our duas are heard and answered in the best way, as decided by Allah can provide an immense sense of security and comfort.

What is Dua al-Nasiri?

This du’a, by the renowned Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Nasir, was recited across Morocco and inspired resistance to the French occupation. So powerful was it that the French President had to issue an order banning its recitation from the mosques. Moroccans date the movement to return King Muhammad from that outlawing of the du’a. It is appropriate to the present state of the Muslim ummah today.

Below are a few links with the recitation and translation:

- [Nasiri Dua: So Powerful, Rulers Would Ban It From Mosques](#)
- [Dua Of The Oppressed | Dua Nasiri | الدعاء الناصري | Arabic Nasheed | English Translation |](#)
- Dr. Omar Suleiman: [Reflection and Du'a for #Palestine | Dr. Omar Suleiman](#)
- Mufti Menk: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/COmVh5rJ8jM>

Islamic Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness practices and meditation have been shown to help ease stress⁶⁹ and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression.⁷⁰ Islamic mindfulness and meditation are deeply rooted in the concept of Muraqabah (Islamic mindfulness). In a state of Muraqabah, a person maintains a constant awareness of Allah (SWT). As a result, individuals develop heightened attention and care for their actions, thoughts, emotions, and inner states. Below are some resources to learn more about how to implement Islamic mindfulness and meditation into your lives:

1. [Islamic Meditation Practices | Deeds to Habit](#)
2. [Yaqeen Institute: How to be a Mindful Muslim: An Exercise in Islamic Meditation](#)

Salaah

By regularly performing Tahajjud, we awaken and rest our hearts, becoming true worshippers of the Merciful. Praying tahajjud is one of the powerful ways of contributing to the struggle against the injustice of the occupation. As some of our teachers have said, “If you are not getting up in the middle of the night and praying tahajjud, do you really want what you are praying for?”

In the video below, Anse Tamara Gray discusses the concept of how Tahajjud is the most important Nafilah (supplemental prayer) that can contribute to not only personal growth but the improvement of the entire Muslim community.

It is also important to note that there may be minor differences of opinion around the details of praying tahajjud. Should you have any specific questions, please direct them to your local or personal scholar.

- [Ep. 1: Why Tahajjud? | Tahajjud: Waking Soul & Society | Dr. Tamara Gray](#)

Quran

Below is a list of ayat from the Quran that focus on some feelings that we may be experiencing during this time. Please feel free to examine existing resources around the tafaseer of these verses for additional learning and support.

1. Feelings of guilt

- a. Surah Al-Furqan, Chapter 25, Verse 70: "Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them, Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful"
- b. Surah Al-Imran, Chapter 3, Verse 89: "Except those who repent after that and amend, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful"
- c. Surah Taghabun, Chapter 64, Verse 17: "If you give Allah a goodly loan, He will increase it for you several fold and will forgive you. Allah is Most Appreciative, Most Forbearing"
- d. Surah Al-A'raf, Chapter 7, Verse 153: "And (as to) those who do evil deeds, then repent after that and believe, your Lord after that is most surely Forgiving, Merciful"

2. Feelings of anger

- a. Surah Al-Imran, Chapter 3, Verse 134: "...who spend in the way of Allah both in plenty and hardship, who restrain their anger, and forgive others. Allah loves such good-doers"
- b. Surah Ash-Shura, Chapter 42, Verse 37: And those who avoid the major sins and immoralities, and when they are angry, they forgive"

3. Feeling overwhelmed

- a. Surah Al-Baqara, Chapter 2, Verse 286: "Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear"

4. Feeling hopeless

- a. "And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to As-Saabiroon (the patient). Who, when afflicted with calamity, say: 'Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return.'" [2:155-156]
- b. "O My servants who have believed, fear your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and the earth of Allah is spacious. Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account." [39:10]

When to take a break from Social Media

The constant exposure to distressing news and video clips online can significantly impact your mental state.⁷¹ Thus, recognizing when to take a break from social media is crucial. Consider reading the following resources to understand the importance of social media breaks and how to implement these habits into your life:

1. [War & Mental Health - The Social Media War - SA Federation for Mental Health](#)
2. [5 things you can do if you're feeling overwhelmed by social media or the news | Health & Wellness Services](#)
3. [Need a Break from Social Media? Here's Why You Should — and How to Do It - Harvard Summer School.](#)

Mental Health and Counseling Services

Frequent exposure to distressing news, especially in situations as emotionally charged as those related to Palestine, may lead to vicarious trauma (refer to the previous section for more information). Seeking mental health and counseling services can help individuals who may be experiencing vicarious trauma or in need of support. The organizations listed below provide support and counseling services to the Muslim community and provide them with the tools needed to navigate and improve their mental health.

1. [Maristan](#)
2. [Khalil Center](#)
3. [Naseeha](#)
4. [Ruh Care](#)
5. [Collaborators - Institute for Muslim Mental Health](#)

CHAPTER 4

Engaging with Others Around Palestine

Maintaining Islamic etiquette while engaging in person or online: The power of respectful and considerate interactions cannot be overstated. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever among you sees evil, let him change it with his hand. If he cannot do so, then with his tongue. If he cannot do so, then with his heart, which is the weakest level of faith.” Source: Sahih Muslim 49. The hadith highlights the importance of addressing wrongdoing through various channels, such as direct action or vocal intervention. In all cases, it is important to be respectful and compassionate, following the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (S).

1. [A Quick Guide to Social Media Etiquette - MuslimMatters.org](#)
2. [Etiquettes and Fiqh Issues in Social Media Use](#)

Stand for Justice

When engaging with others around Palestine, it is important to correct our intention and make sure that we are engaging to stand for justice and truth rather than for self-gratification or our own egos. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri narrates that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: The best fighting (jihad) in the path of Allah is (to speak) a word of justice to an oppressive ruler.⁷² Allah says in the Quran, “O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allāh, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allāh is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allāh is ever, of what you do, Aware.” (Qur'an 4:135). Below are some additional resources that discuss the concept of justice and social justice from an Islamic framework.

1. [Divine Duty: Islam and Social Justice | Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research](#)
2. [More Than Just Law: The Idea of Justice in the Qur'an | Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research](#)

Validate Information Before Sharing

We are in a time when sharing information without verifying its truth is very easy. However, it is important to remember that as Muslims, we are responsible for the information we share so we should do our best to verify anything we share before we share it. As Allah says in the Quran, "O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful." (Qur'an 49:6). Here is a resource that talks more about misinformation from an Islamic perspective: [Fake News is Nothing New: Misinformation and Islamic Critical Epistemology | Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research](#)

Leave Arguments

The Prophet Muhammad (S) emphasized the importance of avoiding unnecessary arguments. Narrated by Abu Umamah, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "No people go astray after having been guided, but they resort to arguing." Then the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) recited this Ayah: '...They quoted not the above example except for argument. Nay! But they are quarrelsome people...' (43:58)
Reference: Jami' at-Tirmidhi, Book #47, Hadith #30

It was narrated that Ans bin Malik said: "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: 'Whoever gives up telling lies in support of a false claim, a palace will be built for him in the outskirts of Paradise. Whoever gives up an argument when he is in the right, a palace will be built from him in the middle (of Paradise). And whoever had good behavior, a palace will be built for him in the highest reaches (of Paradise).'"⁷³ In this hadith, Prophet Muhammad (S) taught that giving up arguments, especially when one is in the right, provides a lot of benefits. This is particularly relevant when it comes to discussions about Palestine, where misinformation on the subject is widespread. Instead of engaging in arguments, focusing on education and respectful dialogue can lead to a more productive discussion.

Navigating Discussions & Activism on College Campuses

Ensuring your safety on campus when engaging in activism, as well as safeguarding your mental health, can be a source of stress during the current climate. Many have fears of being doxxed through websites like Canary Mission, having anxieties about how activism could affect their future in education or their professions. Other intimidation tactics have increasingly been used against those advocating for the Palestinian cause. These include concerns about being photographed during protests. Our fears should not hinder us from our activism.

Although websites like the Canary Mission exist, there are many resources available to help. Websites like [Equality Labs](#) have created an anti-doxxing guide to help support those engaging in activism. They explain how to secure your phone and network access and give additional recommendations, such as changing passwords as well as changing privacy settings on social media. [Palestine Legal](#) is another website that allows one to learn more about how they can advocate on campus for the Palestinian cause. They aim to help guide students who protest on campus and the situations that they may be presented with. Ways to go about said situations, as well as discussions on freedom of speech, are available. A legal form is also available in case one believes their rights have been violated or if they have any questions in general. [The Council on American-Islamic Relations \(CAIR\)](#) has a page dedicated to reporting incidents. Requests can be made for legal help, some of which include Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Religion, and Equal Protection, just to name a few. In the case of an urgent situation, the [National Lawyers Guild Mass Defense Program](#) works to provide support in a multitude of ways. Options on the site include an attorney referral directory, resources for mass defense, and requests for legal observers.

Conversation Starters

How to talk to children about this: With so much going on in the world, it can be difficult for children (and adults) to process the news and make sense of it all. For parents with younger children, determining how to approach this topic and decide what and how much kids should be aware of can be challenging. The resources below provide a basis for how to initiate these tough conversations:

1. [How do we talk to our children about Palestine?](#)
2. [How to Talk to Your Children about Palestine – The MuslimMoon \(US\)](#)
3. [Palestine Resources for Concerned Citizens.pdf](#)

How to talk to non-Muslim community members or colleagues at work:

When engaging in conversations about Palestine with the non-Muslim community either as community members or colleagues at work, it's important to broach the topic with sensitivity, respect, and active listening. The resource listed below is great for those looking for ways to support employees and colleagues.

- [Crescendo: Supporting Employees and Communities: Israel-Palestine](#)

How to talk to non-Muslim family:

When discussing the ongoing Palestine occupation and crisis with non-Muslim family members, start by acknowledging the complexity of the issue and express your desire for a respectful dialogue. It is crucial that you emphasize that this is not a religious conflict but rather a matter of human rights. Rather than using phrases like “you must” or “you shouldn’t,” it’s more effective to focus on educating your family about the subject rather than pushing them to adopt a certain viewpoint. Provide a background history of Palestine, address their misconceptions, and encourage them to read some of the resources we have linked in this document to make their own informed perspective on the matter.

Templates

Below are some ready-made fill-in template documents that you may find useful.

1. Writing to politicians: Below are some sample letters and information on how to contact your political representatives:
 - a. [Share4Rare guide to writing to politicians](#)
 - b. [Letter — Justice for All](#): Open letter from a collective of Palestinians in the US to Congress, demanding freedom for the Palestinian people and an end to US funding for Israel's military. Open for anyone to add their signature.
 - c. [Rise Up With Palestine](#): Tell Congress to Sanction Israeli Apartheid. This open letter is urging Congress to sanction Israel in response to the ongoing and current occupation of Palestine and subsequent injustices. Currently, the letter is still accepting signatures.
2. Below is a template created by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) for community members to address concerns around biased statements released about the current situation:
 - a. [How To Respond When Your School or Employer Releases a Biased Statement About Israel and Palestine - CAIR-Philadelphia](#)

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3. Resources for responding to censorship at work/school created by CAIR are listed below. Please reach out to your local CAIR chapter if you have experienced any rights violation in response to your support of Palestine for further legal resources and support.

- a. [Self-Advocacy Palestine Letter Templates \(College\) \(CAIR OH\)](#)
- b. [Self-Advocacy Palestine Letter Templates \(Employee\) \(CAIR OH\)](#)
- c. [Self-Advocacy Palestine Letter Templates \(K-12\) \(CAIR OH\)](#)

CHAPTER 5

Learning More About Palestine

Below are some additional resources to learn more about Palestine, including video lectures from some of our community leaders as well as a series of books by Palestinian authors or about Palestinian history.

1. [Why Palestine is the Holy Land | Taraweeh Reflections with Dr. Omar Suleiman](#)
2. [How Do We As Muslims Make Sense of the Palestinian Situation? | Shaykh Dr. Yasir Qadhi](#)
3. [Palestine Is Our Badr | Khutbah | Imam Tom Facchine](#)

Learning About the History of Palestine

Pre Nakba

1. Doumani, Beshara. Rediscovering Palestine: merchants and peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900. Univ of California Press, 1995.
2. Hjelm, Ingrid, et al., eds. A New Critical Approach to the History of Palestine: Palestine History and Heritage Project 1. Routledge, 2019.
3. Joudah, Ahmad Hasan. Revolt in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century: The Era of Shaykh Zahir al-‘Umar. Gorgias Press, 2013.
4. Kamel, Lorenzo. Imperial perceptions of Palestine: British influence and power in late Ottoman times. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.
5. Kanafani, Ghassan. The 1936-39 revolt in Palestine. Committee for Democratic Palestine, 1972.
6. Khalidi, Rashid. Palestinian identity: The construction of modern national consciousness. Columbia University Press, 2010.
7. Khalidi, Walid. Before their diaspora: a photographic history of the Palestinians, 1876-1948. Institute for Palestine Studies, 1984.
8. Khalidi, Walid. From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948. Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987.
9. Masalha, Nur. Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History. Zed Books Ltd., 2018.
10. Lockman, Zachary. Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish workers in Palestine, 1906-1948. Univ of California Press, 1996.
11. Muslih, Muhammad Y. The origins of Palestinian nationalism. Columbia University Press, 1988.

12. Pappé, Ilan. *The idea of Israel: A history of power and knowledge*. Verso Books, 2014.
13. Ra'ad, Basem L. *Hidden Histories: Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean*. Pluto Press, 2010.
14. Regan, Bernard. *The Balfour Declaration: empire, the mandate and resistance in Palestine*. Verso Books, 2017.
15. Shlaim, Avi. *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist movement, and the partition of Palestine*. Clarendon Press, 1988.

Books on the Nakba

1. Abdo, Nahla, and Nur Masalha, eds. *An oral history of the Palestinian Nakba*. Zed Books Ltd., 2018.
2. Assad, Dawud. *Palestine Rising: How I Survived the 1948 Deir Yasin Massacre*. Xlibris Corp, 2010.
3. Khalidi, Walid (ed.), Sharif S. Elmusa, and Muhammad Ali Khalidi. *All that remains: The Palestinian villages occupied and depopulated by Israel in 1948*. Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992.
4. Masalha, Nur. *Expulsion of the Palestinians*. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992.
5. Masalha, Nur. *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising history, narrating the subaltern, reclaiming memory*. Zed Books Ltd., 2012.
6. Masalha, Nur. *The politics of denial: Israel and the Palestinian refugee problem*. London: Pluto Press, 2003.
7. Sa'di, Ahmad H., and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds. *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the claims of memory*. Columbia University Press, 2007.
8. Pappé, I. (2007). *The ethnic cleansing of Palestine*. Oneworld Publications.

Post Nakba

1. Chomsky, Noam, and Ilan Papp. Gaza in crisis: reflections on Israel's war against the Palestinians. Haymarket Books, 2013.
 2. Chomsky, Noam, and Ilan Pappé. On Palestine. Haymarket Books, 2015.
 3. Ganim, As'ad. Palestinian politics after Arafat: A failed national movement. Indiana University Press, 2010.
 4. Khalidi, Rashid. Under siege: PLO decision-making during the 1982 war. Columbia University Press, 2013.
 5. Lockman, Zachary, and Joel Beinin, eds. Intifada: the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. South End Press, 1989.
 6. Masalha, Nur. A land without a people: Israel, transfer and the Palestinians 1949-96. Faber and Faber, 1997.
 7. Massad, Joseph. The persistence of the Palestinian question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians. Routledge, 2006.
 8. Omer, Mohammed. Shell Shocked: On the Ground Under Israel's Gaza Assault. Haymarket Books, 2015.
 9. Said, Edward W. The politics of dispossession: The struggle for Palestinian self-determination, 1969-1994. Vintage, 2012.
 10. Tilley, Virginia. Beyond Occupation: apartheid, colonialism, and international law in the occupied Palestinian territories. Pluto Press, London, 2012.
- Book list from [Reading list | Decolonize Palestine](#).

Books by Palestinian Authors

1. [17 new books by Palestinian writers that are worth reading | Middle East Eye](#)
2. [10 great books by Palestinian writers you'll really want to read | Esquire Middle East](#)

Other Booklists:

1. [Decolonize Palestine Reading List \(100 books\)](#)
2. [Free Palestine - A Reading List - Pluto Press](#)
3. [Recommended Reading: Palestinian Studies – UC Press Blog](#)

References

To access a comprehensive list of references, please click on the following shortened URL link, which will take you to a separate document:

<https://tinyurl.com/ymz8k53b>