

A TOOLKIT ON TEACHING PALESTINE

A guide for Teaching Assistants at York University on the importance of speaking about and teaching Palestine in the classroom.



PREFACE



This toolkit reflects on our collective, moral and professional responsibility to speak, write and teach on Palestine *in spite* of the culture of fear that has dominated much of Western academic institutions. It provides a comprehensive list of resources for teaching assistance (TAs) at York and outlines their rights in accordance to our collective agreement under CUPE 3903, as well as supports for members experiencing reprisals.

In Solidarity,

*The Education Committee
CUPE 3903 Palestine Solidarity Working Group*





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Call to Action

To our fellow CUPE members,

We ask you to join us in responding to Bisan's call for action on January 21st - 28th by refusing to abide by York University's culture of repressive normalcy. Instead, let us collectively divert this week's tutorials to teaching on Palestinian liberation.





I. Why We Are Calling for Action

“This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal.”

- Toni Morrison

Contextualizing the Call for Campus-wide Palestine Teach-Ins in the Palestinian Struggle for Liberation

For the first time in our lifetimes, victims of genocide are live broadcasting the genocide of their people, the destruction of their culture and histories, and the deprivation of their basic access to sanitation, healthcare, food, shelter and education through Israel’s targeted attacks on Gaza’s vital infrastructure. Following a long and brutal 75-year settler-colonial occupation of Palestine, we are witnessing something more horrific than the 1948 Nakba (The Catastrophe).

York University's Complicity in Israel's Occupation of Palestine

Israel's unrestrained confidence to carry out genocidal violence has only been made possible through the discursive legitimation and material support of Western imperialist nations, such as the Canadian settler state, and their institutions, including York University itself.

York University's complicity is evident in its:

1. *Investments in arms manufacturing corporations that supply weapons to Israel.*
2. *Economic and academic relationships with various Zionist cultural institutions (e.g. Hillel) and Israeli universities (e.g. Hebrew University of Jerusalem), some of which are on UN-recognized illegally occupied Palestinian lands.*



Our Collective Moral and Professional Obligation

Gaza's higher education system has been purposely targeted by Israel, resulting in the complete destruction of all 11 of Gaza's post-secondary academic institutions. Moreover, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor has reported that in the last 3 months of Israel's genocide on Gaza, 94 Palestinian professors have been killed, along with hundreds of teachers and thousands of students.

Our moral and professional imperative as educators is to ensure that these atrocities do not go unnoticed and unchallenged. As higher education facilitators at York University in particular, we have an urgent and collective moral and professional responsibility to:

- *Encourage our students' critical thinking skills;*
- *Disrupt our administration's complicity in settler colonialism here on Turtle Island and in Palestine;*
- *Challenge the violences of the dominant world-order.*

Palestinians have called for us to strike from our 'normal lives' and economic activities on the week of January 21st - 28th, 2024 in solidarity with Palestinians and to demand both an end to the human carnage currently unfolding and an end to the ongoing colonization of Palestine.



II. Who Should Teach on Palestine

*"The role of the artist is exactly the same as the role of the lover.
If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don't
see."*

- James Baldwin

Palestine is Everyone's Issue

Palestine is a human issue. It is a medical issue. An arts issue. A feminist issue. A society issue. A political issue. A cultural issue. A geography issue. An engineering issue. An architecture issue. It is all of our issues.

We all have a moral, professional, and collective human imperative to speak, teach, and be in solidarity with Palestine.



Palestine is Everyone's Issue, cont.



Palestine and the stories of Palestinians have long been marginalized, silenced, and erased in mainstream reporting and history-making, especially through the framing that Palestinian issues are 'too complicated' to discuss and that the critique of Israel is akin to anti-semitic hate speech.

We reject this dangerous conflation of anti-semitism and anti-zionism, especially since, to quote the YorkU Geography GSA, "to equate anti-semitism with anti-Zionism would deeply disrespect Jewish activists demonstrating unyielding solidarity with Palestine; homogenise the diversity of beliefs and practices within Jewish communities across contexts, thus dangerously positing the Zionist Israeli state as the legitimate global representative of all Jewish people; and serve to erase the historical origins of the Zionist colonial project."

As educators, we have a responsibility to demystify reductionist and accusatory rhetorics that have long created silences and upheld a culture of fear in academic spaces. We have the skills, tools and resources to provide students with the nuances often neglected within mainstream conversations on Palestine and Israel, and to recenter these discussions around justice and liberation.

No Business as Usual across Campus



Across all YorkU departments, whether we are TAs, CDs or Faculty, we must collectively **refuse the current 'status quo' that upholds a culture of fear and academic silence around Palestine and Palestinian solidarity.** The risks of discipline and retaliation are undoubtedly real, yet at the same time, we have a moral duty to speak out and teach on Palestine.

To partake in this action, **refuse business as usual** and join the campus-wide teach-ins on Palestine. Engage these resources to develop your teaching materials and share with your students why you are participating in this call to action.



III. How to Teach Palestine



Resources

Decolonize Palestine

provides resources on dispelling Israel's pink/rainbow-washing, as well as other resources on identifying and combating the myths of Zionism.

The Zinn Education Project

has resources that span from challenging Israel's independence story, to documentaries and accompanying teaching material and educational tools that address the systemic silencing of any critique of Israel.

Visualizing Palestine

uses graphics to provide a factual understanding of various issues, including but not limited to, Palestinian land dispossession, structural violence and Israel's longstanding blockade of Gaza.

*To access resource, click on the underlined text

Resources cont.



Toronto teacher-activist

Javier Davila

discusses how they teach Palestine and provides their extensive resource list.

The Palestinian Feminist Collective's Palestine Digital Action Toolkit

has an extensive toolkit that encompasses resources on Advocacy, BDS, Learning and Teaching, and so much more.

Teach Palestine

provides important context and resources on the current genocide in Gaza.



*To access resource, click on the underlined text

IV. Introducing the Action to your Tutorial



Teaching as an act of resistance

In today's tutorial, I will be observing the call for a global strike, from Bisan, a Palestinian journalist who nearly lost her life documenting the daily horrors of the still unfolding genocide against Palestinians. Today, I open up our classroom to bring our attention on Gaza, to speak up and stand in solidarity with the Palestinian liberation movement, and contribute in ending Canada's and York's complicity with genocide and the settler-colonial occupation of Palestinian land and life. With our collective skills and resources, we must wholly assess the nuances often overlooked in the mainstream discourse on Palestine and Israel, with justice and liberation for all Indigenous peoples at the centre.

As Ryan Cecil Jobson reminds us, words alone are not enough; we have to narratively and materially refuse, disrupt, and confront all forms of colonialism, racial capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy, and Empire. Let's continue talking together, thinking together, listening very seriously to Palestinians in struggle, and collectively building towards dismantling settler colonialism in/on Turtle Island and Palestine.



V. CUPE 3903 Supports for Members

Background

Many Canadian universities seek to create a climate of intimidation and repression towards pro-Palestine solidarity on campus, in order to make higher education facilitators anxious to speak out about the ongoing genocide. These anxieties are warranted, especially in light of members and allies experiencing firsthand and in real time the material and political consequences of the repression of pro-Palestinian activism - including discipline, workplace reprisals, and even doxxing.

With that being said, our CUPE 3903, has supports, both within our collective agreement and through their staff, that will assist in navigating any reprisal faced by TAs for speaking and teaching on Palestine.



Risks & Rights

CUPE 3903 supports the rights of academics, students, unionists, and activists to **speak out** against all forms of violence and oppression without fear of intimidation or reprisal, but **cannot promise that there are no risks.**

CUPE 3903 is committed to

- **a) supporting and fully representing any members who are targeted because of their scholarship, political work, and community organizing**
- **b) holding the employer accountable to its duty to provide a safe workplace.**

If you are facing reprisals, harassment, or discrimination - or believe that you might be - get in touch with CUPE 3903 as soon as you can. **Nadia Kanani**, our **Equity Officer**, can be reached at cupe3903equity@gmail.com. All conversations with Nadia are strictly confidential and do not oblige you to take further steps.



CUPE support in response to discrimination, harassment, and reprisal

The union can help members with one or more of the following responses to discrimination and harassment:

- *Filing grievances (i.e. official complaint against the employer) on your behalf*
- *Filing complaints with the Centre for Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion*
- *Representing you in any disciplinary or other meeting in which you are being reprimanded for your activism or beliefs*
- *Supporting you in safety planning*
- *Supporting you through the workplace accommodations or paid leaves processes, if the harassment or discrimination negatively impact your ability to work*
- *Connecting you with community-based resources and supports*

You don't need to know what support(s) you need to start a conversation - please reach out to CUPE 3903 in case you experience these forms of harm or feel like this might be the case.



How to Reach Us

This toolkit was put together by the Education Committee of CUPE 3903's Palestinian Solidarity Working Group.

Contact us via email:



yorkupalestiniansolidarity@gmail.com

Connect with us on social media:



@CUPE3903PaISol



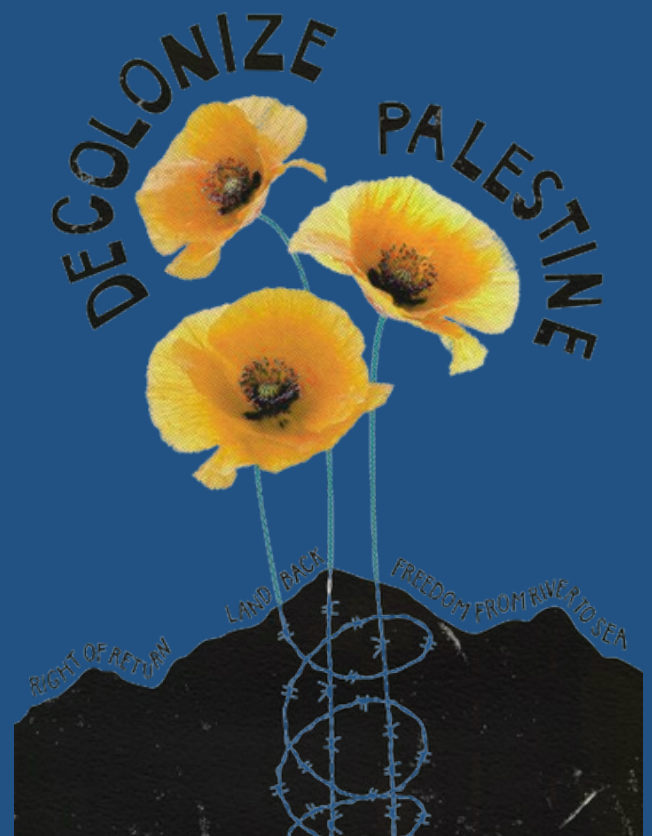
@CUPE3903PaISol

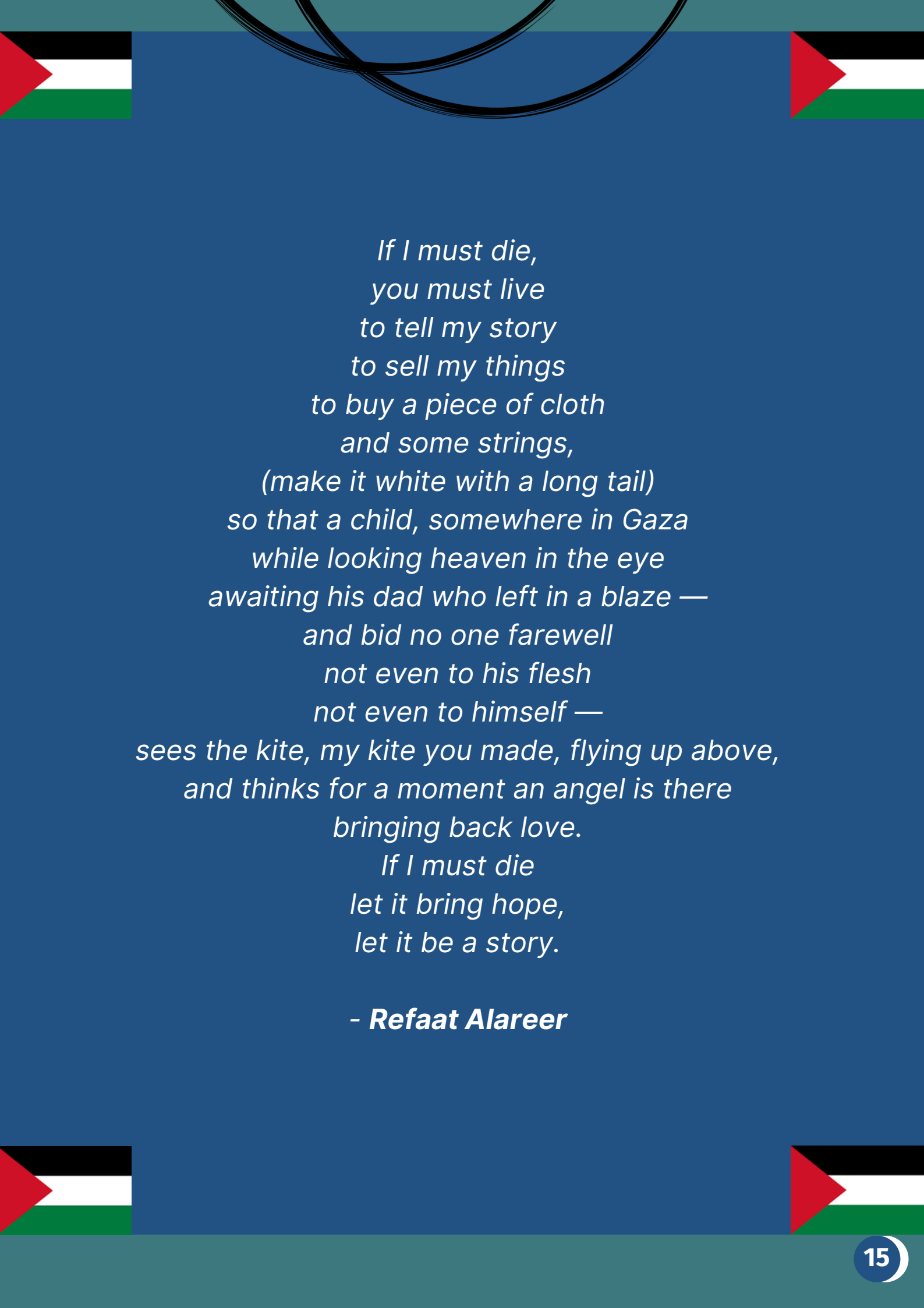




“Nothing in my view is more reprehensible than those habits of mind in the intellectual that induce avoidance, that characteristic turning away from a difficult and principled position, which you know to be the right one, but which you decide not to take. You do not want to appear too political; you are afraid of seeming controversial; you want to keep a reputation for being balanced, objective, moderate; your hope is to be asked back, to consult, to be on a board or prestigious committee, and so to remain within the responsible mainstream; someday you hope to get an honorary degree, a big prize, perhaps even an ambassadorship. For an intellectual these habits of mind are corrupting par excellence. If anything can denature, neutralize, and finally kill a passionate intellectual life it is the internalization of such habits.”

- Edward Said





*If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze —
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself —
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above,
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love.*

*If I must die
let it bring hope,
let it be a story.*

- Refaat Alareer