

## Learning about Israel and Palestine with young people

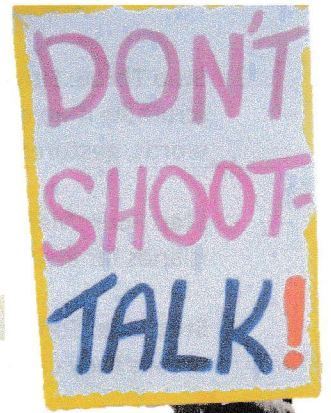
The following is an outline of a workshop I did with high school youth and young adults at “Evolve,” the annual United Church BC youth conference. Please feel free to borrow and adapt these ideas for your own advocacy and youth ministry.

### UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION

**Introductions** – Share your name and why you came to this workshop. Ask if anyone has been to Israel Palestine before or what they know about the area.

#### About the situation:

1. Share some photos from Israel and Palestine and go over some of the key points to understanding the situation: UN partition plan, the proposed border line, life under the military occupation, and obligatory military service for young Israelis. Show photos of some of the beautiful and positive things about the region: what the land looks like, food, culture, interesting sites. Make a link, in terms of land and self-determination, to colonialism and First Nations in Canada.
2. Watch the 5 minute video “Brief History of Israel Palestine” by Jewish Voice for Peace. This is a great and accessible introduction to the situation :  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y58njT2oXfE>



### Case studies in small groups

Each small group reads one short story based on an experience of Palestinian or Israeli young people in the context of the military occupation of Palestinian territories (stories from *Human Rights Are For Children*).

#### Questions for small group conversation

1. Who is involved in this situation? Name all the actors.
2. Discuss what it might feel like to be each person involved.

#### Share any highlights from your story with the whole group

### Shrinking Map exercise<sup>i</sup>

**Supplies:** enough small pieces of paper for everyone in the group to have one piece. There are two kinds of paper (i.e. two different colours or textures etc). There are an even number of both kinds of paper. Several old sheets or beach blankets that people can walk on (or you can ask people to take off their shoes).

**Step One:** Provide each person with a small piece of paper. Don't tell them what it is for yet.

**Step Two:** Ask people to mill around the room—make eye contact with one another, smile, shake hands if you like (while people are doing this, slowly spread out a couple sheets on the floor).

**Step Three:** Ask all the people with one of the kinds of paper to walk ONLY on the sheets. The other people can walk anywhere they like in the room AND on the sheets.

**Step Three:** Slowly make the surface area of the sheets smaller while people are still walking around (crumple it up or fold them). Ask people to pay attention how they feel (notice how people are reacting- words, gestures etc).

**Step Four:** Make the sheets into two islands or more (not connected to one another). Make one of the islands far away from the others (make sure there are some people on this island).

**Step Five:** Some people that can only walk on sheets are given the opposite colour of paper which means they can travel anywhere. Then take some of those papers away after a short time.

**Step Six:** Ask some of the people who can walk anywhere to stay off the sheets (some can still go on).

**Step Seven:** Ask some people (more than 2) who can go anywhere to hold up one sheet that blocks the sheet islands from being able to see each other. Get these people to hold the sheet up for at least 2 minutes or until their arms get tired before ending the activity. Ask people to pay attention how they feel (notice how people are reacting-words, gestures etc).

**Debrief the Activity:**

- How did you feel? What did you notice?

After people have had sufficient time to debrief their own personal experience, bring the conversation back around to Israel and Palestine:

- What parts of this experience can you relate to what you have learned about Israel and Palestine?

## ACTING

### What you can do?

Share any age appropriate information about actions or campaigns that people can get involved with. Let them know about Israeli and Palestinian groups working for peace and justice. Highlight upcoming events or volunteer opportunities (EAPPI, ICAHD, Sabeel). Encourage people to ask questions and learn more from here on.

### Greeting cards

1. Ask people to take some time to reflect on what they have learned from the day and write a message of hope in greeting cards (homemade, recycled, any kind will do) to a young person or family in Palestine. Circle around to see how people are doing – some people don't know what to say.
2. Then ask people to create a banner on a thin strip of newsprint (message of hope or Christmas greeting). Then take a group photo while holding the banner.
3. Connect with an organization in Palestine who would like to receive the cards and who can share them with people in their community.

