
CURRICULUM ANALYSIS · SEPTEMBER 2026

Rewriting the War: How CAIR's 'Back to School Resource Guide 2026–2027' Distorts History for American Students

A guide published by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) for Muslim K-12 students ahead of the 2026–2027 school year devotes more than a quarter of its text to Gaza, yet makes no mention of Hamas, October 7th, the hostages, or Israel.

26%

of the text is devoted to Gaza and Palestinian advocacy

1

use of the term “antisemitism,” and only as an accusation to be refuted

0

mentions of Israel, Hamas, October 7, or the hostages

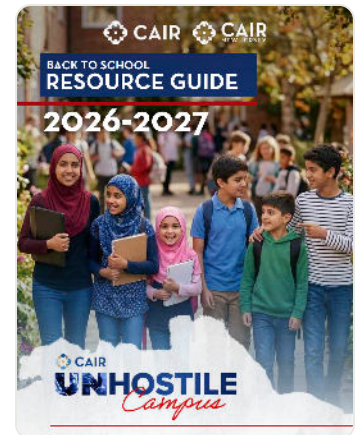
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- CAIR's "Back to School Resource Guide 2026–2027," created for educators and students, devotes 26% of its text to the situation in Gaza and Palestinian advocacy.
- The terms "Israel," "Zionism," "Hamas," "October 7", and "hostages" are absent from the document. The history it teaches begins after October 7, 2023.
- Educators are told to "ground discussion in facts," but are given no reports, no named sources, and no alternative viewpoints to offer students.
- Students are directed to study "apartheid," "genocide," and "terrorism," all accusations, without references to related events.
- The term "antisemitism" is used only once, portrayed as a false charge not to be conflated with "peaceful advocacy for Palestinian freedom." It is never defined, and no procedures for protecting for Jewish students from harassment and discrimination are set out.

Scope and provenance of the document

The "Back to School Resource Guide 2026–2027" was published by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), building on its "Unhostile Campus Campaign" for K-12 schools. CAIR encouraged parents and students to share the guide with teachers, principals, district leaders, and school board members.

74% of the text covers religious accommodations and school procedures, with five ready-to-use email templates. Those materials are not the subject of this analysis.



The guide as published, 16 pages.

26% of the text outlines for Muslim students and parents how to discuss the situation in Gaza, advocate for the Palestinian cause, defend that advocacy as protected expression, and refute accusations of terrorism or antisemitism. The history that is presented opens on October 8, 2023. The brutal massacre of 1,200 Israelis the previous day is not disputed or explained away. It is simply never referred to, and neither is Hamas, which perpetrated the atrocities and still rules Gaza. The terms "Israel" and "Zionism" do not appear in the document at any point. "Jews" are named once, in a section title, and "antisemitism" once, as a false charge not to be conflated with "peaceful advocacy for Palestinian freedom."

Extent of the Gaza and Palestinian advocacy content

The situation in Gaza and Palestinian advocacy account for 845 of the 3,249 words of the document’s text, or 26%, and for two of the guide’s 12 pages.

What the vocabulary shows

The vocabulary of grievance and advocacy runs throughout the guide, while events-related vocabulary does not appear at all.

TERM	USES	WHERE AND HOW
“Palestinian”	8	Plus "Palestine" and "Palestinians" once each
“Advocacy”	7	Plus "advocate" four times
“Human rights”	5	The framing device for Gaza
“Gaza”	4	Concentrated on pages 6 and 7
“Terrorism”	3	A term to study, or an accusation to refute
“Genocide”	2	Including a section title
“Suppression”	2	Of Palestinian rights advocacy
“Apartheid”	1	Recommended for classroom study
“Jews” · “Jewish”	2	"Jews" once in a section title, "Jewish" once in a sentence
“Antisemitism”	1	Only as an accusation to refute
“Victim” · “war” · “conflict”	3	Once each: the 9/11 victims, the war in Afghanistan, and religious accommodations
“Israel” · “Israeli”	0	Absent from the entire document
“Zionism” · “Zionist”	0	Absent from the entire document
“Hamas”	0	Absent from the entire document
“October 7” · “hostages”	0	Absent from the entire document
“Massacre”	0	Absent from the entire document
“Rockets”	0	Absent from the entire document
“Human shields”	0	Absent from the entire document

THE SAME METHOD APPLIED TO SEPTEMBER 11

The guide's section on the 25th anniversary of September 11th attacks asks educators to teach the day "with accuracy and empathy," then moves directly to the aftermath it wants taught - the war in Afghanistan, changes in national security, and the "rise in hate crimes and discrimination" against Muslims. The 2,977 people murdered by Al Qaeda terrorists on 9/11 are never referenced, the perpetrators are not named, and an accompanying note advises that primary documents concerning them are best left to the post K-12 level.

Guidance on Challenging Topics 25th Anniversary of 9/11 and Tools for Classrooms

As educators approach the 25th anniversary of September 11th attack on our nation, it is important to teach this tragic moment in American history with accuracy and empathy. Comprehensive lesson plans would address the 9/11 attack itself, the victims and families impacted, and the aftermath of the attack, such as the war in Afghanistan, changes in national security, and the rise in hate crimes and discrimination against American Muslim and perceived-Muslim communities.

The instruction begins at age five

"Talking to Young Children About Gaza" scripts conversations for kids ages five to eight and nine to twelve. Parents and educators are told to ask what the child has heard, invite sadness and fear, frame the matter as one of suffering and human rights, then offer them to pray or draw pictures.

Hardship in Gaza is described. However, who started the war, who took hostages, and who rules the territory are not.

Talking to Young Children About Gaza

Children see and hear about Gaza, and they deserve safe, honest, and age-appropriate conversations. CAIR encourages parents and educators to provide compassionate guidance rooted in dignity and justice when students ask about this topic or if lesson plans address this topic. Tips for parents and educators include:

- Listen first by letting children share what they've heard or felt and by asking them:
- "Can you tell me what you've heard about what's happening in Gaza?"
- "What questions do you have?"
- "How did that make you feel?"
- "Is there anything you're worried or confused about?"
- "Thank you for telling me. I'm glad you shared your thoughts with me."

A history that begins the day after the 10/7 massacre

Page 7 directs students to examine "apartheid," "genocide," and "terrorism" through the lens of international and U.S. law. Those three terms are accusations. They are not paired with Hamas, the October 7th massacre, the hostages, rocket attacks on Israeli towns, or the laws of armed conflict.

A student who follows the guide's own reading list learns these accusations against Israel, but not the broader history of the conflict nor the existence of Hamas and its designation by the United States and European Union as a terrorist organization.

Why talk about foreign issues in school?

Preventing students from discussing difficult topics can sometimes make students feel confused and powerless, especially if they rely on unreliable online sources. Parents and teachers can play a supportive role by fostering safe and welcoming environments. They can also share helpful skills that inspire students to engage in conversations with empathy and understanding, creating a more open and caring space for everyone.

CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR OPEN DIALOGUE.

- **Ground discussions in facts:** Provide accurate information about the realities of events in Gaza as documented by the United Nations and recognized international human rights organizations.
- **Facilitate respectful dialogue:** Set aside time for students to share their perspectives while making clear that targeted bigotry or harassment will not be tolerated and will carry consequences.
- **Protect free expression:** Ensure students are not penalized or stigmatized for expressing support for Palestinian human rights and do not conflate peaceful advocacy for Palestinian freedom with supporting terrorism or antisemitism.
- **Promote understanding:** Encourage students to explore key terms that may arise in lesson plans or that students may notice, such as "apartheid," "genocide," and "terrorism," through the lens of international law and U.S. law.
- **Center universal values:** Highlight the rejection of hate against any group as the foundation for discussion.

7

Antisemitism appears only as an accusation to be refuted

The term "antisemitism" appears once in the entire guide, and only in this instruction to schools: "Do not conflate peaceful advocacy for Palestinian freedom with supporting terrorism or antisemitism." The problem is what that single appearance does. Antisemitism enters the document as a false accusation to be guarded against, not as conduct that occurs in schools. A teacher reading the guide is given no definition of it, no example of it, and no procedure for a Jewish student facing harassment or discrimination.

The effect is to change what the word means. In this guide, antisemitism is a smear used against Palestinian advocacy, not hatred directed at Jews.