

Session 3

Everyday life for young people

Life can be very different depending on where someone lives in IOPT.

For Israeli children and young people, life can be quite similar to life in the UK. Children and young people go to school and have time to enjoy hobbies and time with their friends outside of school. Education is important in Israel and there is an emphasis on science and technology. Pupils also take lessons like Biblical Studies and English Language. Learning about the Holocaust is also a vital part of Israeli education.

Unfortunately, a number of schools and textbooks promote a negative image of Arab people, which means it can be easy to grow up being afraid of Palestinians. Israeli citizens are not allowed into areas that are governed by the Palestinian Authority ('Area A') and there are big red signs on roads leading into Area A, telling Israeli citizens it is dangerous for them to continue. This means that most Israeli citizens have never visited a Palestinian town. Palestinians must get a pass from the Israeli government to cross a checkpoint into Israel and these passes can be difficult to get. This means that, often, Israeli and Palestinian children and young people will never have had a conversation with each other until they go to university.

Some young Israelis are passionate about social justice and campaign for issues close to their hearts; these can include protesting the Israeli government's occupation of the Palestinian territory. LGBTQ+ rights are also important in Israel and lots of people join Pride marches each year.

Some Palestinians live in Israel; when Israel became a state in 1948, some Palestinian families chose to become Israeli citizens. Arab-Isrealis have access to many of the resources that Jewish-Israeli children do, although they can face discrimination and do not always have the same opportunities.



Discussion

Imagine you are an Israeli young person. How would you feel about Palestinians if you had never been able to have a conversation with a Palestinian? How might you learn about life in Palestine if you were not allowed to visit?

Palestinians living in the West Bank also go to school and enjoy pastimes like sports or listening to pop music! Because most people living in the West Bank are Muslim and some people are Christian, the weekends are Fridays and Sundays rather than Saturdays and Sundays. This allows Muslims to go to a mosque for Friday prayers and Christians to go to church on a Sunday. This means young Palestinians in the West Bank have to go to school on a Saturday! At school, they will learn Arabic and about Islam, as well as other subjects like English Language.

Everyday life can be difficult in the West Bank though. Because the West Bank is occupied by Israel, the Israeli military control access to resources like water. Some communities do not have any access to running water, and in places that do have running water the taps often run dry. Palestinians must get a permit to dig a new well or install a pump. Permits are difficult to get and any wells or pumps without a permit are destroyed. Access to springs is also restricted. In Israeli settlements, however, a network of wells and pumps has been set up. This means that Israeli settlers always have access to fresh water, but nearby Palestinian villages often do not. Settlements are lush and green because plants can be watered, while villages a few minutes' walk away are still in desert conditions. According to Amnesty International, water consumption by Israelis is around four times as much as by Palestinians in the Occupied Territory. Palestinians consume less water each day than the amount the World Health Organisation recommends for a person to be healthy.



In Gaza, a lot of the water is contaminated by sewage or seawater. Only 5-10% of water in Gaza is safe for humans to drink. Living conditions are very poor and Gaza relies on humanitarian aid from other countries to get basic resources.

Activity

Make a list of everything you use water for. Remember things like cooking and laundry! Now imagine that you are only allowed a quarter of this amount of water. Write a plan of what you would use your water allowance for. Do you think you could live comfortably on this amount? What would you have to give up?

Watch: The Occupation of Water – Amnesty International (www.bit.ly/3RJvcBy)

The West Bank is surrounded by a wall that separates it from Israel. There are checkpoints in the wall where people can cross it. These checkpoints are guarded by Israeli soldiers.

It is difficult for Palestinians to get through checkpoints. They often have to queue for hours and can be stopped and searched. Sometimes there is violence at the checkpoints.

If a Palestinian wants to cross a checkpoint into Israel, they must get a permit. This includes if they need to go to hospital. Israel has a very good healthcare system compared to healthcare in the Occupied Territory, but difficulty crossing the checkpoints means

that Palestinians cannot always access the care they need.

Even if they have a permit, they may be turned away at the checkpoint or told to come back another day. Some Palestinians have permits to work in Israel, but they can spend several hours just getting to work because of the time it takes to cross the checkpoints.

People can cross checkpoints on foot or in a car. If a car has an Israeli numberplate, it is much quicker for it to get through. On one road, the wall goes down the middle of the road and cars with Israeli numberplates drive on one side, and cars with Palestinian numberplates must drive on the other side.

Watch and listen to Obaida's story. Obaida is 15 years old: www.bit.ly/3CjDpXv



Craft

The Palestinian side of the wall is covered with paintings and graffiti. The graffiti is a way of expressing people's feelings about the wall and their hopes for the future. The artist Banksy has put pictures on it too! Have a look at some pictures of the wall and then design a picture or message that you would put on the wall.



Michal is a young Israeli woman who shared some of her story:

My name is Michal. I live in Tel Aviv. I am part of the Conservative Jewish movement that believes in adapting Judaism to the modern world so that we can raise issues like gender, politics and so on. I have a ginger cat who is like my child; he is ginger like me. He's a great cat. He loves fish and shouting when he wants fish. Those are his hobbies.

...Israel is my home. Here, I can speak Hebrew freely; I can practise my religion. I love people here and am prepared to fight to make this country a better place.

My identity as Israeli is being Jewish, and speaking Hebrew. I love the language so much that I did a degree in Hebrew literature. I also identify with the culture. I feel connected and like I belong.

When young Israelis go to school, they don't get taught about the Palestinian conflict. Only at 18, when I went into the army, I noticed what the conflict was all about. At school all we know is that we are supposed to be afraid of Palestinians. They were supposed to be bad. We are good. I never met a person from Palestine until I was 21, and he was nice. Not scary at all. He was just like me, and I was confused. Why was I afraid? The media, our schools, and families told us to be scared. But 50 years of conflict is enough.

