

Title: Gaza: A Human Rights Story

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Description: This lesson is designed for:

- Number of Days: 2-3 days
  - Number of Students: 12-25 students
  - Grade Level: 9-12
  - Subject: World History, American Democracy, Civics, Current Events
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### **Rationale:**

In July 2009, several teachers on scholarship traveled to Egypt for four weeks as part of a study tour of the country. While our stated goal was to witness Islam through an Egyptian Lens and produce curriculum for our classes on said topic, we found that an essential concern of the Egyptian people was the Israel/Palestine conflict, especially the December, 2009 war on Gaza. No matter where our discussions began, we often came back to this topic. Egyptians questioned why the U.S. government supported Israel and not Palestine. They questioned how familiar we were with Mideast history and current issues, and while the newly elected President Barak Obama was a welcomed change from our previous administration, they were hopeful, but still not completely convinced that U.S. policy would change.

This lesson explores the sometimes difficult discussion about the Israel and Palestine conflict and the question of human rights. The lesson begins with the U.N Declaration of Human Rights, the war on Gaza and its place within international law. Students will be introduced to the investigation work of Richard J. Goldstone, a former South African Constitutional court judge who served as the chief prosecutor of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda from 15 August 1994 to September 1996, and in 2009 led an independent fact-finding mission created by the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate international human rights and humanitarian law violations related to the Gaza War. Students will then discuss the work of other human rights organizations and take a position!

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### **Lesson Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Develop an understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the work of Human Rights organizations.
- Take notes on the main ideas expressed in an interview.
- Discuss whether or not the United States should consider human rights in its support to foreign countries
- Analyze the work of human rights organizations as they relate to Gaza.
- Determine the political, economic, and cultural consequences of continued human rights violations.

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**Materials:**

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/> (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/10232009/watch.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/10232009/transcript1.html>

<http://blog.amnestyusa.org/tag/gaza/>

Amnesty International (Gaza)

[http://www.btselem.org/English/Gaza\\_Strip/](http://www.btselem.org/English/Gaza_Strip/)

B'tselem (Gaza)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/features/israel-gaza>

Human Rights Watch Complete Coverage of Israel and Gaza (Operation Cast Lead)

<http://www.palestinejournal.net/>

**Related files provided with this lesson:**

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=168101>

Human Rights Watch Rejects Israeli Report to U.N. on Operation Cast Lead.

**Assumed Student Prior Knowledge**

For this lesson, it would be helpful if students had some knowledge of universal human rights. Many students will have already studied the Holocaust and be familiar with the Universal Declaration while others might know the work of Amnesty International or other human rights organizations. Students should also be familiar with the role of the United Nations and the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Students should also be familiar with the geography of Israel and Palestine. Attached to these lessons are handouts that will be useful in explaining some of the key players such as: Hamas, and the Israeli Defense Force.

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### **Teaching Strategy:**

1. Write the words “HUMAN RIGHTS” on the board and ask students to list what they know about human rights in their notebooks. (Answers will vary and may include historical information or a discussion about human rights abuses today.)
2. Ask students to discuss what they’ve written with a partner, and then invite a few pairs of students to share their responses with the class. Capture key ideas on the board. Have students take notes in their notebooks. Have students share their responses in whole group or pairs.
3. Distribute copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and as students work in small groups or pairs, have students choose two human rights they believe are the most important. Have students keep a notebook of their responses or discuss aloud in whole class.
4. Explain to students that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were created as a result of the Holocaust and the events of World War II.
5. Next, show the class a 14.32-minute clip of the interview between Journalist Bill Moyers and Judge Richard Goldstone. Have students complete the viewing guide as they watch the interview. (Teachers may choose to use a longer clip or assign readings from the written transcript given the scope and level of the class.)
6. For homework, have students write a reflection on what they learned and heard in the previous lesson. They may write to the prompt: *Respecting Human rights in today’s world is important because... cite 3 examples:*

7. When students return to class the following day have them discuss their concerns about the need to respect human rights. Write the key points on the board.
8. Ideally, the class would have access to computers to research other human rights groups and their reports on Operation Cast Lead, but short of this, teachers can distribute copies of reports from several human rights groups including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the B'tselem. (See resources above.) Have students read the reports and discuss in groups of two.

### **Assessment Recommendations:**

1. Participation in class discussions
2. Capturing the main ideas on the Viewing Guide
3. Completing the homework assignments

### **Final product:**

Have students create an editorial, letter to the editor or letter to an elected official that challenges or supports the findings of the Goldstone Report and the human rights organizations.

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### **Background Information:**

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/NewBeginning/>

(Obama's speech in Cairo)

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/968/op12.htm>

(Obama's Peace by Joseph Massad, Ahram)

### **Academic Standards:**

#### Civics & Government

Standard 5.1.C.A.: Analyze the sources, purposes, functions of law, and how the rule of law protects individual rights and promotes the common good.

Standard 5.4.C.A.: Explain how United States foreign policy is developed.

Standard 5.4.C.B: Explain why and how different foreign policy tools are used to advance a nation's self interest (e.g., diplomacy, economic aid, military aid, sanctions, treaties).

### World History

8.4.C.A: Evaluate critical issues in various contemporary governments. (Reference Civics and Government Standard 5.3.12.J.)

Evaluate the effectiveness of various international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. (Reference Civics and Government Standard 5.4.12.C.)

Standard Area: How International Relationships Function:

5.4.W.C: Identify the Role of International Organizations

## **Viewing Guide**

### **A Bill Moyers Interview with Richard Goldstone**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Take notes below while watching the interview segment.

1. What is Operation Cast Lead and what was Richard Goldstone's primary task organizing a fact-finding tour to the Gaza Strip?

2. How does Goldstone describe Operation Cast Lead?



9. Why does Goldstone consider the 1949 Geneva Conventions to be the standard for international law?

10. How does Goldstone describe Hamas's action towards Israel?

11. What distinctions does Goldstone make between Hamas and Israel?