

## FEATURE ARTICLE: To Speak or not to Speak: Palestine and Schools.

First published [here](#)



This [Guardian article](#) from over two years ago shows that for some time it has become increasingly difficult for teachers and students to discuss Palestine-Israel openly. More recently, a report by Amnesty International last November ("[This is the Thought Police](#)": The Prevent duty and its chilling effect on human rights) focuses on the chilling effect of the Prevent strategy.

Some Sheffield students and parents are saying that this pattern of silencing legitimate discussion is occurring here too. Schools declared their solidarity with Ukraine, but are clamping down on students' expressions of solidarity, concern, grief and frustration about Gaza/Palestine. Some schools have even censured children who spoke up or who gave expression to their legitimate views through symbolic means – badges on coats, keffiyehs, or Palestine t-shirts on non-uniform days.

### **The young will not forget.**

On Saturday a rally outside the City Hall, (which was followed by twin meetings, one for parents, one for youngsters aged 11-18), heard from two youngsters who brought great credit to themselves, their families and their schools by speaking for Palestine with dignity and commitment. Mohammed's grandfather survived the Nakba, went into exile

in Iraq and now Mohammed and his family are here. Mohammed's speech was well-crafted, thoughtful and moving.

**Here is a short extract:**

*"Today, as I stand here before you, I am not just a voice from Iraq; I am a voice for Palestine, echoing the pain and aspirations of a displaced generation. The story of my grandfather is just one among countless others, reflecting the deep-rooted connection Palestinians have with their land and the enduring hope for a return.*

*Palestine is not just a piece of land; it is a mosaic of cultures, histories, and dreams. It is a place where olive trees whisper stories of resilience, where ancient streets bear witness to the footsteps of generations, and where the sunsets paint the sky with hues of hope.... we must come together to advocate for justice, peace, and the right of return. Let our voices be instruments of change, urging the world to recognize the rights of the Palestinian people, promoting dialogue, and fostering understanding."*

**A poem for the children of Gaza**

The title of Sakeena's poem speaks volumes: *"Feel my Pain: I'm a Palestinian Child"*. We now know that 10,000 children have been killed in Gaza. Large numbers are orphaned and many have suffered life-changing injuries, not to mention the psychological trauma of over 3 months of daily bombings, forced removal from home, hunger and fear. Recording of [the poem is here](#).

Sakeena's young voice urges us all to understand the enormity of the suffering inflicted on Palestinian families. Sakeena - though young - joined older students in the meeting and made good contributions to the discussions. The numbers attending the meetings testifies to the depth and breadth of concern about young people's right to discuss, to learn about major world issues and be enabled by schools to form and express their own opinions.

**The parents and the youngsters' meeting were highly productive; more events will follow.**