

Journaling *Razor Wire & Olive Branches*

Introduction

Razor wire is designed to be more dangerous than barbed wire, with sharper edges that tear skin. It is used as part of the barriers built by Israel around the West Bank and Gaza as well as the perimeter fences of settlements and army positions.

Over the centuries olive trees have symbolised prosperity and peace. In the Bible, the olive branch is the first sign the great flood is over:

“And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.” (Genesis 8:11, NIV Bible)

Olive wood can be carved beautifully and you can eat the olives or turn olives into oil for cooking or even lighting. In the past, royal and holy people were anointed with olive oil.

The olive tree is important for Jews, Christians and Muslims. In fact, the emblem of the state of Israel is a menorah (the seven-branched candle stick used in Jewish worship), surrounded by olive branches.

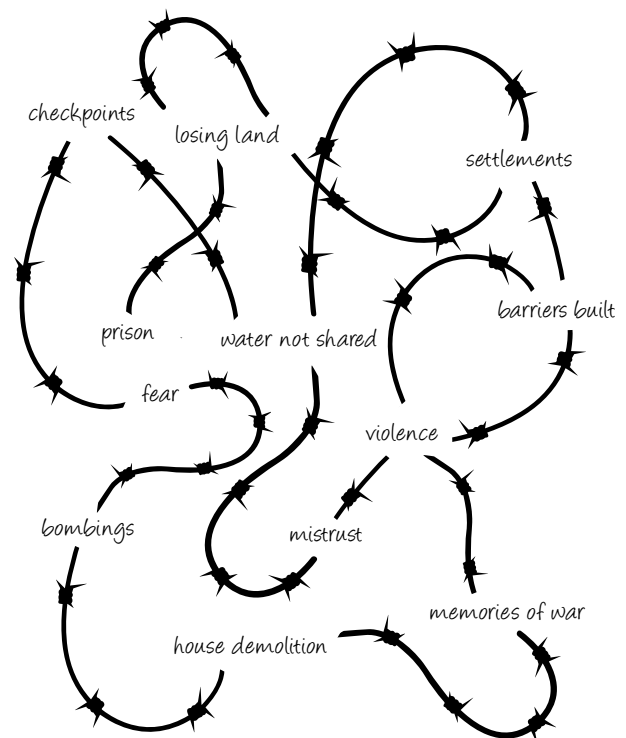


Olive trees also remain a source of income to many Palestinians, but one that is under threat. Thousands of olive trees have been destroyed during the construction of settlements and Israel's barrier. It can be difficult for farmers to look after the trees if they are growing on the far side of the barrier, or if the farmers are attacked by Israeli settlers.

Razor wire tangle

Use this diagramming approach as you learn to take notes about what's happening. The conflict experienced by Palestinians and Israelis can feel very complicated. It is not about just one thing.

The mix of feelings, human rights problems, violence and history can feel like a tangle of razor wire: there are lots of ways to get caught on it. Sometimes getting snagged on one problem gets you caught by others. As you learn more about the conflict, use a razor wire tangle to record the different issues and stories that seem to make this conflict hard to escape. Write an example of one of the problems – for example, house demolition, then draw a line of razor wire to the problem this causes, or something it's caused by. Don't worry if it gets confused. Conflict can feel like that.



RESOURCE 1-A

Olive branches: draw your peace tree

Use this diagramming approach as you progress to think creatively about the roots of change. You can use the image of an olive tree to think about the roots and fruit of peace. Olive trees can live for over a thousand years and grow back after fire, so in many ways they symbolise being 'steadfast' under pressure. Palestinians have a word for this: 'sumud'.

As you learn more about Palestine and Israel, note down anything that is happening or ideas you have that can build peace.

- Roots: things that people are doing or could do that lead to a more peaceful future
- Olive branches: changes we might grow as a result

