**Defining Terms Surrounding Israel and Palestine**

**Compiled by RIT’s Diversity Education, Division of Diversity and Inclusion**

**Israel**: A state and nation established in the Middle East in 1948 by the Israeli Declaration of Independence, which was immediately recognized by the United States and the Soviet Union. Israel's founding father David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the modern State of Israel on May 14, 1948, establishing a safe space for Jews fleeing persecution and seeking a national home on land to which they cite deep ties over generations.

**Palestine**: When people talk about Palestine today, they’re mainly referring to the Palestinian territories — the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But some also use Palestine to refer to the entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, including pre-1967 Israel.

**Gaza**: A coastal territory bordered by Israel, Egypt, and the Mediterranean Sea. The strip was occupied by Israel following the 1967 war and returned to Palestinian control in 2005. The West Bank is the territory captured from Jordan by Israel in 1967. It remains the core piece of disputed territory between Israelis and Palestinians.

**Balfour Declaration**: In 1917 and during World War I, the British government used this letter to support the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine for European Jews.

**Law of Return**: In 1950, Israel passed legislation stating, “every Jew has the right to immigrate to the country,” creating a pathway for all Jews and spouses of Jews to immigrate to the country and obtain Israeli citizenship.

**Right of Return**: Based on the interpretation of the Article of Resolution 1948, Palestinians call for a “right of return” that would permit them, and their descendants in perpetuity, to return to homes and villages they once fled or were forced to leave making them refugees.

**The 1967 War**: Left Israel in control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, two territories home to large Palestinian populations.

**Intifadas**: Two Palestinian uprisings against Israel, the first in the late 1980s and the second in the early 2000s.

**Settler:** A person who immigrates to live in a new place permanently, whether it’s vacant or minimally inhabited.

**Settler colonialism**: A system of oppression based on genocide and colonialism that aims to displace, erase, and replace with a new settler population.

**Settlements**: Are communities of Jews that have been moving to the West Bank since it came under Israeli in 1967. Some of the settlers moved there for religious reasons, some because they want to claim the West Bank territory as Israeli land, and some because the housing there tends to be cheap and subsidized. Settlements are generally considered to be a major impediment to peace.

**Hamas**: An acronym for Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya, or Islamic Resistance Movement. It is a militant Islamic organization that both engages in acts of terrorism against Israel and serves various social welfare functions. Founded as an offshoot of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas became the governing authority in the Gaza Strip in 2007.

**Zionism**: Pre-1948 Zionism was the general movement to establish a Jewish state. The modern state of Israel is therefore the culmination of Zionism, the Jewish effort to establish an autonomous state and end the diaspora of the Jewish people. Post-1948 Zionism — arguably what most people consider the definition of Zionism today — can be simply defined as the belief that the State of Israel has a right to exist, that Jews have the right to self-determination.

**Antisemitism**: Prejudice against Jewish people.

**Islamophobia**: Prejudice directed towards Muslims, Islam or people perceived to be Arab.

**Oppression**: A system of societal advantage and disadvantage that benefits a group(s) that believes themselves to be superior while making others inferior through individual, interpersonal, institutional, systemic, and cultural strategies.

**Apartheid**: A system of institutionalizing segregation through political, social, and economic discrimination.

**Genocide**: The deliberate killing of many people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation.

**Ethnic Cleansing**: Refers to the expulsion of a group from a certain area. According to the U.N. this act has not been recognized as an independent crime under international law.

**Occupation**: Being controlled by an army or group of people who want to possess or control the land others reside in.

**Siege**: A military operation in which a force surrounds a building, a town and cuts off supplies with the intent to force a surrender.

**Ceasefire**: A temporary suspension of fighting that allows for peace talks to occur.

**Two States** **Solution**: The idea that there would be separate states for two peoples, Israelis, and Palestinians. Hypothetically, the Israel state would retain a Jewish majority, thus remaining a Jewish state, and the Palestinian state would have a Muslim Arab majority.