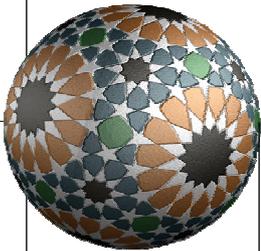


Terrorist or freedom fighter or..?



Learning outcomes

- ◇ Students will practice arguing and understanding views which are not necessarily their own
- ◇ Students will gain an understanding of how history can judge events in a different way from contemporary observers
- ◇ Students will learn that terrorism or political violence arises from a political and historical context
- ◇ Students will use the internet to perform research

Lesson in brief

In order to explore political violence and how its perpetrators are viewed, students will research two groups – the ANC (African National Congress) and Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement). The class will be split into groups. Each group will perform research and then defend their assigned position in a class tribunal.

Materials—access to the internet

There is no agreed upon definition of terrorism. People and groups accused of terrorism do not usually see themselves as terrorists. They see their violence as justified, and usually talk about it in terms of a struggle for freedom. This has given rise to the maxim – or cliché – ‘one person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter.’

Should perpetrators of political violence be considered terrorists, freedom fighters, or maybe even a mix of the two?

Lesson Plan

Divide students into four teams, assigning one of the following positions to each team.



- ◇ The ANC was a terrorist group
- ◇ The ANC was not a terrorist group
- ◇ Hamas is a terrorist group
- ◇ Hamas is not a terrorist group

Get each group to research its position using the list of questions as a guide. The students should be ready to defend their position.

The internet resources listed can be their starting point.

When the research is complete, hold a tribunal for each group, where students defend their assigned position. The judges pose questions from the list of questions which guided the research.

If you think it useful, the class can vote on the issue.

Possible questions for a follow-up discussion

- ◇ Is it helpful to think of terrorism as irrational violence?
- ◇ Is political violence best dealt with by force? Why or why not?
- ◇ Is it necessary to understand why people carry out violent acts? Is it helpful to understand the political and social causes?
- ◇ Is there a difference between condoning something (approving of it, saying it is ok) and trying to understand it?



What the ANC was fighting against: Apartheid

South Africa was ruled by a white minority government under a system called apartheid which is a word meaning separation. The system rested on the separation between blacks and whites – but it was a separation in which the white minority were superior and powerful and the black majority went through great hardship. There were different education and medical systems for blacks and whites – and the ones available for blacks were inferior. Racism and discrimination on racial grounds were enshrined in legislation.

African National Congress

The African National Congress was in many ways the backbone of the resistance against Apartheid. It began by using peaceful methods to oppose the system. The Sharpsville Massacre in 1960 – where many black peaceful demonstrators were shot in the back by police – was a powerful factor in the ANC decision to take up arms against the system. In 1964 Nelson Mandela – leader of the ANC's armed wing – was sentenced to life imprisonment for terrorism. Margaret Thatcher, prime minister of Britain in the 1980s, called the ANC a terrorist organisation, and her spokesman famously said that anyone who believed that the ANC would ever form the government of South Africa was 'living in a cuckoo land.' Apartheid came to an end in 1994 and ANC formed the new government with Nelson Mandela as president.



What Hamas is fighting against: Israel

Until 1948, the area that both Palestinians and Zionists (now Israelis) claimed was known internationally as Palestine. But following the war of 1948-49, this land was divided into three parts: the state of Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Many of the people (Palestinians) who lived in the part that became Israel fled or were expelled from their homes – and Palestinians became the largest refugee population in the world. Most of those who left never saw their homes again. In 1967, Israel took over the remaining parts – the West Bank and Gaza, and the Palestinians living in what is now known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories there have been living under foreign occupation ever since.

Hamas – the Islamic Resistance Movement

Hamas is a Palestinian national movement that uses a religious language and points of reference. The short-term aim of Hamas is a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories which Israel occupied in 1967. Most states agree that the occupation is against international law. The Palestinians have been living under occupation for 40 years.

Hamas's military wing is known as the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades. Hamas is not only military – it performs much needed social functions such as building schools and hospitals and supports families in need. Hamas has traditionally had more support in Gaza, where poverty is much more severe and widespread than in the West Bank.

Hamas is listed as a terrorist organisation by the United States and various other countries. When Hamas won democratic elections in the occupied territories in 2006, the international community refused to deal with them because they saw Hamas as a terrorist organisation.





QUESTIONS TO GUIDE RESEARCH

General

- ◆ When was the group established? What is the group's history?
- ◆ Where is its base of operations?
- ◆ What acts have been attributed to the group? What acts has the group actually claimed responsibility for? Has the group sought publicity for its acts?
- ◆ How has the group tried to justify its actions, choice of targets, and strategy? Is a particular set of ideas such as religion an important part of its justification?
- ◆ How does the group want the enemy to respond? Is its strategy successful? What is the response of its target enemy?

Motives

- ◆ What are the stated goals of the group?
- ◆ In deciding whether something is terrorism, is the motive behind the violence important or should we just consider the violence itself?
- ◆ If these goals are legitimate, are any means to achieve them also legitimate? Do the ends justify the means?
- ◆ Who is the group's declared enemy? On what basis?

Appeal

- ◆ Is the group popular? What is the appeal of the group to its members? And to the general population?
- ◆ Who are its members? How does the group recruit new members?

Methods

- ◆ What strategies or weapons does it use against its enemy?
- ◆ Has the group pursued its goals in other peaceful ways? If so, with what success? Why has the group started to use militant/violent ways of pursuing their goals? Have they completely abandoned non-violent means – or do they pursue violent and non-violent avenues?
- ◆ Do you think that they would pursue violent means if they thought that non-violent means were just as effective? Why might they feel that it is necessary to use violence?

Target

- ◆ What or whom does the group target?
- ◆ Could an attack on a military target be terrorism? How do you decide what a civilian is – what about off-duty military personnel? Should all attacks on civilians be considered terrorism? Does it make a difference if the civilians are deliberately targeted or if they die in say an attack on a military target? Can vandalism or the destruction of property be considered terrorism?

Other

- ◆ Is terrorism always carried out by armed opposition groups? What about their enemies – could they be terrorists?
- ◆ Can the labelling of a group as terrorist change with time?
- ◆ Can terrorism be understood as a "weapon of the weak"?
- ◆ Is it possible to distinguish between a terrorist and freedom fighter? If so, on what basis?



INTERNET RESOURCES TO GUIDE RESEARCH

ANC

- Official website of the African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party <http://www.anc.org.za/>
The historical section would be most useful <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/>
(Contains historical documents, biographies, major campaigns, statements from the dock, solidarity movements etc plus information on Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC)
- Wikipedia entry on ANC http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_National_Congress
- Wikipedia entry on Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umkhonto_we_Sizwe
- MSN Encarta http://uk.encyclopedia.msn.com/encyclopedia_761579473/African_National_Congress.html
- Timeline <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1069402.stm>
- Manifesto of Umkhonto we Sizwe <http://www.bellum.nu/literature/ANC004.html>
- Terrorist knowledge base – entry on ANC <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=305>
- Country profile http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1071886.stm

HAMAS

- Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Primer http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/toc-pal-isr-primer.html
- Who are Hamas http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/978626.stm
- Wikipedia entry on Hamas <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamas>
- Amnesty report 'Without distinction – attacks on civilians by Palestinian armed groups' [http://web.amnesty.org/aidoc/aidoc_pdf.nsf/Index/MDE020032002ENGLISH/\\$File/MDE0200302.pdf](http://web.amnesty.org/aidoc/aidoc_pdf.nsf/Index/MDE020032002ENGLISH/$File/MDE0200302.pdf)
- Dealing with Hamas <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2488&l=1>
- Suicide bombers driven more by politics than religious fundamentalism <http://electronicintifada.net/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi/10/2637>
- A hard look in the mirror: a bereaved Israeli father speaks <http://electronicintifada.net/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi/4/1678>
- Islamic Social Welfare Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A Legitimate Target? <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1662&l=1>
- On violence and the intifada <http://electronicintifada.net/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi/7/1098>
- Non-violent resistance in Palestine: Pursuing Alternative Strategies <http://www.palestinecenter.org/cpap/pubs/20020329ib.html>
- Resistance: Moral or Murder? <http://www.mideastweb.org/log/archives/00000575.htm>
- No to confiscation, yes to community - A 5-page special issue of Peace Power Magazine focusing on Palestinian nonviolence. http://calpeacepower.org/0201/no_confiscation_israel_palestine.htm
- This is a 13-page PDF produced by the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers) in 2005. There is also a well documented article about [Nonviolent Resistance and the Olive Harvest](http://www.afsc.org/israel-palestine/documents/palestiniannonviolentresistancetooccupation.pdf) <http://www.afsc.org/israel-palestine/documents/palestiniannonviolentresistancetooccupation.pdf>
- Peaceful activists caught in fight <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines03/0428-03.htm>
- Palestinian Political Violence http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_political_violence
- The Palestinian Resistance: Its Legitimate Right and Moral Duty http://www.ifamericansknew.org/cur_sit/pal-resist.html
- Hamas leader acknowledges reality of Israel <http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel//Story/0,,1987305,00.html>

The list on Hamas appears longer than that on ANC. The historical section on the ANC website contains a wealth of information.

