

PE2169/B: Facilitate a review and upgrade of the teaching resource 'Palestine and Israel, understanding the conflict'

Petitioner written submission, 5 August 2025

For the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to use the issue of ownership of the resource as an excuse for rejecting the Petition is a red herring and untenable. When the Scottish Government gave the go-ahead for the formation of the original working group to produce a resource, in 2015, no contract of ownership was drawn up. Education Scotland consented to the use of its office facilities in Robertson Street, Glasgow which lasted for at least two years. And all the Petition is asking is a similar courtesy for the group tasked with upgrading and reviewing the resource.

Also, legal advice obtained at the time indicated that where there is contest over ownership of a resource the first question to be answered is in relation to the ownership of the computer hardware which produced and stored the resource. I can assure you there is no point in searching any such device held in the computer hardware of Education Scotland.

The Cabinet Secretary's submission makes the point: 'Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) aims to develop a society based on social justice, equality and respect. It provides opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of conflicts, as well as issues such as Islamophobia, antisemitism and other forms of discrimination.' What it fails to recognise is that this resource is a perfect way of developing students' awareness of these values.

The Cabinet Secretary's submission also states: 'It is for local authorities to ensure their learners can engage confidently with challenging issues and topics and that balance and impartiality are respected. It is therefore for individual teachers and schools to use their professional judgement to design their curriculum, and which resources they use to support learning and teaching.' With the current situation and political sensitivities around the topic of Israel-Palestine, local authorities and schools should be supported to identify impartial material. Education Scotland is the correct body to do this, with examples to be found on their website. In this respect the First Minister's recent public statement, acknowledging the genocide in Gaza, leads the way.

Just what the Cabinet Secretary regards as problematic in ensuring that Scotland's pupils have access to an impartial, upgraded and reviewed Palestine and Israel: understanding the conflict is not clear. Is it too much to ask for a similar courtesy as that extended 10 years ago to the original working group?