

May 6, 2025

Toronto District School Board  
5050 Yonge Street  
Toronto, Ontario M2N 5N8

**Re: Harmful and misleading remarks about the history of Palestine**

Dear Audley Salmon,

I am writing on behalf of the Anti-Racism Program of the CJPME Foundation about the misleading and historically inaccurate claims in the TDSB's Jewish Heritage Month resources<sup>1</sup> about former Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and the Jewish Legion's training in Canada during World War I. These claims are intended to be provided to students as part of their daily morning announcements.

I specifically take issue with the following [statement](#)<sup>2</sup> from the "Daily Announcements" resource: "*David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, trained with other members of the Jewish Legion right here in Canada at Fort Edward in the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia in preparation for the British Army's plan to liberate Israel from Turkish rule during the First World War.*"

The claim that the Jewish Legion was preparing for "liberating Israel from Turkish rule" is a blatant historical falsehood, as it was Palestine that was under Ottoman rule. The Ottoman Empire, which [ruled](#)<sup>3</sup> Palestine for centuries, was not a 'Turkish occupation,' as modern-day Turkey did not exist until 1923—years after the end of World War I—and Israel did not exist at that time either. The denial of Palestinian history and the deliberate erasure of their connection to the land have not only been cornerstones in justifying violence against Palestinians but also in erasing their existence.

Moreover, the statement celebrates David Ben-Gurion as a liberator, even though he is a key architect of the Palestinian [Nakba](#)<sup>4</sup> ("catastrophe" in Arabic), which refers to the forcible expulsion and ethnic cleansing of 750,000 Palestinians. This reinforces the dangerous myth that British colonialism in Palestine was a neutral or positive force, rather than a brutal occupation that facilitated the violent dispossession of the Palestinian people from their homeland. [The British Mandate](#)<sup>5</sup> (1920-1948) was not

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sites.google.com/tdsb.on.ca/tdsbjewishheritagecommittee/jewish-heritage-month-2025?authuser=0>

<sup>2</sup> <https://sites.google.com/tdsb.on.ca/tdsbjewishheritagecommittee/jewish-heritage-month-2025?authuser=0>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/31097/i-ottoman-rule>

<sup>4</sup> <https://imeu.org/article/quick-facts-the-palestinian-nakba>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.miftah.org/doc/specialstudies/2011/britain.pdf>

a liberation but a colonial project that armed and empowered Zionist militias while suppressing Palestinian resistance and self-determination. By omitting this context, the TDSB presents Zionist [colonization](#)<sup>6</sup> as an inevitable and justified process, rather than a violent rupture of Palestinian society. This erasure fosters racism by teaching students that Palestinian history, rights, and suffering are irrelevant—a narrative that fuels discrimination and bigotry today.

This is not only a distortion of history, but also a form of [anti-Palestinian racism](#)<sup>7</sup> that erases Palestine and its people. By framing the British Army’s colonial ambitions and Zionist settler-colonialism as a benevolent “liberation,” the TDSB is perpetuating a harmful narrative that denies Palestinian existence, sovereignty, and historical trauma. Such rhetoric whitewashes the violent displacement of Palestinians and reinforces Zionist myths that justify ongoing colonization and apartheid.

I urge the TDSB to immediately retract this harmful statement and issue a public correction acknowledging the historical inaccuracies and the harm caused. Furthermore, we demand that the TDSB implement mandatory anti-racism training for educators on Palestinian history. Schools must teach this history with integrity, centering Palestinian voices and emphasizing the ongoing impact of colonialism and apartheid. Education should combat racism—not perpetuate it.

Sincerely,

Jamila Ewais  
Lead Researcher of the Anti-Racism Program  
CJPME Foundation

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27119089>

<sup>7</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61db30d12e169a5c45950345/t/627dcf83fa17ad41ff217964/1652412292220/Anti-Palestinian+Racism-+Naming%2C+Framing+and+Manifestations.pdf>