

American Jewish Committee (AJC), the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, is offering this guidance to K-12 schools on teaching or holding classroom discussions about the U.S. and Israeli military operations against the Iranian regime. This guidance provides factual background and essential questions to support pedagogically sound instruction, along with recommendations to ensure that discussions are conducted with sensitivity—protecting all students and guarding against discrimination, antisemitism, and intergroup suspicion at a moment of heightened national tension and polarization.

[AJC's Center for Education Advocacy](#)¹ (CEA) collaborates with school leaders to foster educational environments that promote critical thinking and inclusivity for all students, faculty, and families—including Jewish members of the school community—while firmly rejecting antisemitism and all forms of bias.

BACKGROUND

On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel launched coordinated military operations against the Iranian regime. The U.S. campaign, Operation Epic Fury, and Israel's parallel effort, Operation Roaring Lion, has thus far targeted leadership structures and military infrastructure that have resulted in the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as well as other senior regime figures. In response, the Iranian regime launched retaliatory attacks against Israel, U.S. bases, and other nations throughout the region, including Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The U.S. and Israel conducted these strikes in response to escalating Iranian nuclear activity and regional aggression. AJC has [long documented](#)² the Iranian regime's decades of malign behavior: its violations of international nuclear agreements, sponsorship of terror proxies across the Middle East and beyond, violent repression of its own citizens, interference in U.S. elections in [2020](#)³ and [2024](#)⁴, efforts to sow discord on American college campuses, and the sponsorship of Hamas, whose [October 7, 2023 terror attacks killed 1200 in Israel, including 43 Americans](#)⁵ and resulted in the abduction of 8 American citizens among the 251 hostages taken to Gaza. The Iranian regime has made no secret of its nuclear ambitions and has targeted U.S. and Israeli interests, directly and through proxies, [for decades](#)⁶.

Importantly, the Iranian people, many of whom have risked and lost their lives protesting the regime, are distinct from the government that acts in their name. In January 2026, Iran experienced massive nationwide protests that lasted for weeks. The Iranian regime brutally suppressed this popular uprising, reportedly killing between 7,000 and 32,000 people and arresting tens of thousands of its own citizens.⁷

¹ ajc.org/center-for-education-advocacy

² ajc.org/resources/iran

³ [justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/two-iranian-nationals-charged-cyber-enabled-disinformation-and-threat-campaign-designed](https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/two-iranian-nationals-charged-cyber-enabled-disinformation-and-threat-campaign-designed)

⁴ [dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/press-releases-2024/3842-statement-from-director-of-national-intelligence-avril-haines-on-recent-iranian-influence-efforts](https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/press-releases-2024/3842-statement-from-director-of-national-intelligence-avril-haines-on-recent-iranian-influence-efforts)

⁵ ajc.org/news/how-many-americans-have-been-killed-by-hamas-before-and-after-october-7

⁶ ajc.org/news/iranian-regimes-war-on-america-four-decades-of-targeting-us-forces-and-citizens

⁷ [cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-iran-protest-crackdown-death-toll/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-iran-protest-crackdown-death-toll/)

For more information, visit: [The Iran Strikes Explained: How We Got Here and What It Means](#)⁸.

This conflict is ongoing with the situation on the ground rapidly evolving. National debate about the attacks is robust. As questions arise in school settings, educators have a responsibility to provide factual, age-appropriate instruction that supports critical thinking while maintaining safe and respectful learning environments.

Essential questions that educators can use to frame lesson plans about this conflict:

- ▶ What factors should be considered by our government when entering a military conflict?
- ▶ How should our government weigh the potential success of an operation against the potential danger to American troops, or civilians of any nationality?
- ▶ What does the Constitution say about war powers? How have presidents throughout American history acted with respect to military engagement and the Constitution?
- ▶ How should news coverage of an active military conflict be assessed? What questions should readers ask?

AWARENESS

Teaching current events requires recognizing and naming that what is taking place is dynamic and evolving. The high geopolitical tensions of recent years—including the October 7, 2023 Hamas terror attacks on Israel, the ensuing war in Gaza, and two direct rounds of military engagement between Israel and Iran (in April 2024 and June 2025)—have deepened the complexity of this moment. In past periods of geopolitical escalation involving Israel and the broader Middle East, Jewish students have experienced increased antisemitic rhetoric and social isolation.

K-12 Administrators and Educators Should Be Alert to:

- ▶ Heightened emotions among students, faculty, and families across all backgrounds.
- ▶ The critical distinction between the Iranian regime and the Iranian people—and the importance of ensuring Iranian-American students are not made to feel implicated in or responsible for the actions of the Iranian government.
- ▶ The critical distinction between the Israeli government and American Jews—Jewish students must not be held accountable for Israeli government policy.
- ▶ Increased risk of misinformation and social media amplification, including content that distorts the context or circumstances of these operations.
- ▶ The potential for politicized or polarized classroom discussions.
- ▶ The need for developmentally appropriate framing at each grade level.
- ▶ The importance of ensuring that no student is asked to represent a nation, religion, or ethnic group.

⁸ ajc.org/news/the-iran-strikes-explained-how-we-got-here-and-what-it-means

ACTION

K-12 Educators Can Be PROACTIVE by:

- ▶ Providing clear, factual framing, using credible [news sources and expert analysis](#) to help students contextualize this moment within a broader geopolitical picture.
- ▶ Emphasizing the distinction between governments and people to prevent bias or hostility toward students based on their background or identity.
- ▶ Creating structured, well-facilitated opportunities for students to ask questions grounded in respectful, fact-based dialogue.
- ▶ Communicating proactively with families, centering best pedagogical practices, and promoting student well-being.
- ▶ Monitoring and responding promptly to harassment, bullying, and bias incidents—including online—and reinforcing school social media policies and responsible digital citizenship.
- ▶ Promoting informed civic learning and critical thinking while maintaining a nonpartisan educational environment. Help students distinguish between policy—the concrete decisions governments make to address security, human rights, and national interests, and politics—which involves partisan agendas and political positioning. In relevant courses such as humanities and social studies, successful lessons allow students to explore complexity and nuance through reputable sources, structured inquiry, and thoughtful facilitation.
- ▶ Reminding students that the Middle East is one of the most dynamic and complex political theaters in the world. Simple binaries of good and evil are often unhelpful in understanding a region where ancient and modern identities and narratives intersect with the complex realities of today’s geopolitics.

K-12 Educators Should AVOID:

- ▶ Equating Jewish students or Israelis with the policies of the Israeli government, or Iranian-American students with the actions of the Iranian regime.
- ▶ Permitting debates that question Jewish identity or Israel’s right to exist, or implicitly amplify antisemitic tropes such as Israel or Jews as “[puppet master](#).”⁹
- ▶ Conducting simulations or role-plays that require students to assume identities connected to ongoing trauma or conflict.
- ▶ Drawing false equivalencies between democratic states responding to security threats and terrorist organizations or authoritarian regimes targeting civilians.
- ▶ Minimizing acts of terrorism, repression, or threats to civilian populations.
- ▶ Relying on unverified or viral social media content as instructional material.
- ▶ Asking students to speak on behalf of a religion, nationality, or ethnic group, or to take or express political positions, pledge support for a particular group, or engage in specific acts of political action (e.g., attending rallies, protests).

⁹ ajc.org/translatehate/puppet-master

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

Books on Iranian Jews:

[*From the Shahs to Los Angeles: Three Generations of Iranian Jewish Women between Religion and Culture*](#) by Saba Soomekh

[*Light and Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews*](#), David Yeroushalmi, editor.

[*Esther's Children: A Portrait of Iranian Jews*](#), Houman Sarshar, editor.

Documentary:

[“The Evolution of the Revolution”](#):

Documentary on the Islamic Revolution, how it happened, why it happened, and the history of the Shah and the United States.

Podcast:

[*The Nightingale of Iran*](#) by Galeet and Danielle Dardashti: Six-part series that explores a family uncovering the story and legacy of Younes Dardashti, a famed and beloved radio star adored in 1950s–60s Iran.

Books on Iran:

[*Iran: A Modern History*](#) by Abbas Amanat: A detailed, up-to-date, and comprehensive overview covering the last 500 years.

[*A History of Modern Iran*](#) by Ervand Abrahamian: A highly recommended, concise, and critical analysis of 20th-century Iran.

[*Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran*](#) by Michael Axworthy: A highly regarded narrative history exploring Iran’s cultural and political identity.

[*All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*](#) by Stephen Kinzer: A detailed, engaging account of the 1953 CIA-led coup and its long-term consequences.

Graphic Novel and Movie (for upper middle/high school):

[“Persepolis”](#) and [“Persepolis” the movie](#), both by Marjan Satrapii

CONTACT

AJC’s Center for Education Advocacy recognizes that every school community is different and has distinctive needs. Our experienced educators partner with school administrators and faculty to help foster a deeper understanding of the Jewish people, address antisemitism, and build school environments resilient against all forms of hate. We are here to support your efforts to ensure that every student learns in a brave, respectful, and informed environment. **For guidance, resources, or consultation, please contact us at education@ajc.org.**