

Q:

I am worried that the current conflict in Israel and Gaza will expose my son to hostile comments at school. What should I do about it?

A:

You are not alone, and I have had several similar comments from other parents. The most immediate step is to pre-empt the situation so that even if he has not had any adverse remarks, he is prepared for them.

So, discuss the situation and what is happening. This applies even if he says, "Yes, Mum, I know

all about it," as he may have got his information from dubious sources online such as TikTok.

Obviously, there is a massive amount you can discuss, but the key points would be:

- Hamas started the conflict by attacking Israel on 7 October.
- They did not attack military targets but civilians (e.g., people on a kibbutz in their homes or young men and women at a music festival).
- Even worse, they did

not simply kill them (that would have been bad enough) but raped women, tortured the elderly, and mutilated their bodies.

- It was the biggest terrorist attack in the world since 9/11 and the largest number of Jews killed in one day since the Holocaust (1,400 people in all).
- Hamas has repeatedly said since then (and told the world) that they will try to repeat those attacks.

You should also explain that in 1948,

the United Nations voted to create both a State of Israel and a Palestinian State alongside it.

This 'two-state solution' was accepted by Israel but rejected by the Arab countries and has been unresolved ever since.

To be honest, there can be many disagreements over the problem – What are the roots of the conflict? How has it been handled in past decades? Could the present flair-up have

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been avoided? Has the Israeli response been the right one? – but there is definitely no justification for antagonism towards Israel being directed at Jewish children here in England.

People may well be upset at the scenes of civilian deaths in Gaza, but that has nothing to do with your son. He should say so confidently to those who make such comments, while you should speak to the teacher and ask them

to either talk to the pupil concerned, or their parents, or the class as a whole, depending on the situation.

It is legitimate to oppose Israel's policies, but not to be anti-Jewish or to blame your son for Israel's policies.

Separately, you should encourage your son not to get too caught up with social media, which can be very abusive.