

# Impactful Communications: Creating Persuasive Messaging about Palestine

Developed by Kate K. on behalf of  
**Stop the Palestinian Genocide (SPG) Campaign**



# Introduction

This presentation includes a summary of research related to [identifying the best audience for messaging](#) on the Palestinian genocide and a [research on persuasive messaging](#) to assist with content creation, including:

- Fundraising appeals
- Social media campaigns
- Petitions
- Newsletters
- Articles
- Advocacy letters
- Grant proposals

The research is summarized in [recommendations](#) for content creation, fundraising, and audience identification.

Please share this presentation as desired. We hope that this is a helpful tool in creating powerful content!



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# Recommendations

# Content Creation Recommendations

- Focus messaging on a single individual's story or a small group of individuals
- Make stories vivid with imagery and emotion-provoking language
- Use images frequently within content, focusing on emotionally impactful images and aligning images with individual victims
- Emphasize aspects of victims that relate to readers' in-groups (e.g., religious, ethnic, cultural, political, gender, hobby or other group)
- Clarify the specific impact of donations and make donors feel that it is highly impactful on an aspect of the overall problem
- Avoid large numbers and proportions (e.g., can use "10 out of 13 victims need help" but avoid "10 out of 200")
- When content is likely to cause feelings of discomfort with readers' current beliefs, try to connect to their values
- Highlight information or accreditation from trusted experts or organizations
- Use phrases highlighting limited time such as "Right now," "For the next 24 hours," "Do not wait" to express urgency
- Indicate what others have done as a social cue, e.g., "100 people have already donated"
- In articles/emails, highlight the most key information in the title and draw people in via the information they most want to know, e.g. "New report shows..." "How you can..."
- Indicate where the U.S. gov is overextending as most Americans want the U.S. to play a minor or no role in the conflict



# Fundraising Recommendations

- Try providing a token (e.g., a sticker, compliment, gift, etc.) before making an ask
- Make a small ask of donors before making a bigger ask
- Provide clear, specific impact statements about how donations will be used
- Consider asking supporters to conquer some type of physical or mental challenge to show their support (e.g., cold plunge, marathon, volunteer event, etc.)
- Consider hosting a mini public to discuss the issue (e.g., public hearing, town hall, online dialogue, etc.)



# Audience Recommendations

- Focus calls-to-action on ages 18-30, Democrats, Muslims and the religiously unaffiliated, who are more likely to sympathize with the Palestinian people
- Focus information campaigns on ages 30-49, Black Protestants, and White Non-Evangelical Protestants, who are more likely to be uncertain of their opinion about the U.S. role in the conflict
- Post on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, which are the most popular social media platforms
  - Instagram is more often accessed by ages 18-29, while Facebook is more often accessed by ages 30-49
- Share news stories on X/Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram
  - Prioritize Facebook for targeting ages 30-49, who are more likely to read news stories and use Facebook



# Audience Research



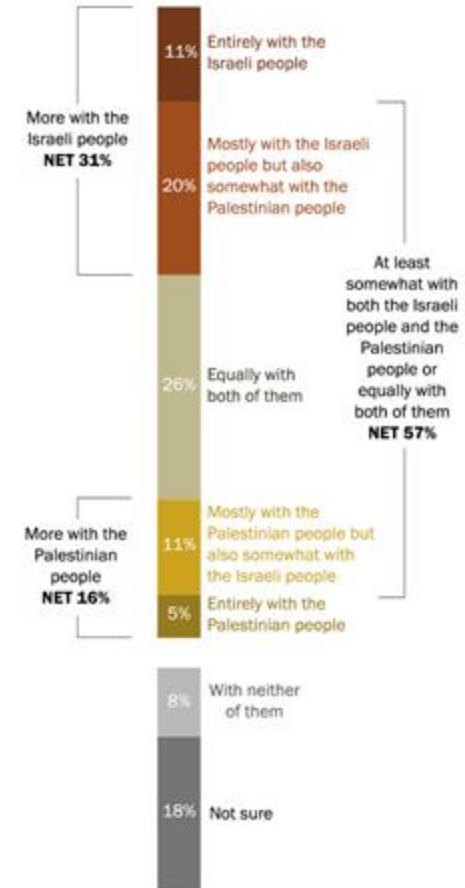
# Sentiment towards Palestine

Findings from a 2024 [Pew Research Center survey](#) of 12,693 U.S. adults:

- 50% of Americans have a favorable view of the Palestinian people vs. 41% unfavorable
  - Ages 18-30, Democrats, Muslims and the religiously unaffiliated are more likely to sympathize with the Palestinian people
  - Ages 50+ are less likely to sympathize with the Palestinian people
- 41% of American have a favorable view of the Israeli government vs. 51% unfavorable
- Some groups are uncertain of their opinion about the U.S. role in the conflict: 48% of Black Protestants; 45% of Americans aged 30-49; 44% of White non-evangelical Protestants
- Americans want the U.S. to play a minor role (35%) or no role (27%) in resolving the conflict
- 50% of Americans favor the U.S. providing humanitarian aid to Gaza

## Most Americans sympathize with both Israelis and Palestinians

% who say their sympathies lie ...



# Social Media Statistics

*Findings from a 2023 [Pew Research Center survey](#) of 5,733 U.S. adults:*

- The most popular social media platforms are YouTube (83%), Facebook (68%), Instagram (47%)
- Among ages 18-29, the most popular platforms are YouTube (93%), Instagram (78%), Facebook (67%), Snapchat (65%), and TikTok (62%)
- Among ages 30-49, the most popular platforms are YouTube (92%), Facebook (75%), and Instagram (59%)
- Democrats are more likely than Republicans to use Instagram (53% vs. 43%)

*Findings from a 2024 [Kepios report](#) on global social media statistics:*

- X/Twitter (61%), Facebook (58%), and Instagram (55%) are frequently used to keep up to date with news and current events
- Age 35-44 (37%) and 44-54 (39%) are more likely to use social media to read news stories



# Messaging Research

# Identifiable Victim Effect

Messaging focused on a specific, identifiable individual evokes more empathy than statistics about larger, vaguer groups of people

What to know:

- Donors give less money when single victim is presented with overall victim statistics, likely because it makes [helping a single victim feel less impactful](#) (Small et al., 2007)
- Effect is strongest when identifying a single victim vs. a group of victims (Kogut & Ritov, 2005)
- Effect is also strongest when victims belong to one's "in-group" (Kogut & Ritov, 2007)



# Proportion Dominance Effect

People are more likely to help victims when they're part of a smaller group, due to the greater perceived impact of helping

What to know:

- People are more motivated to help by small proportions, e.g “10 out of 13 victims need help” than “10 out of 200 victims need help” ([Ein-Gar & Give'on, 2022](#))
- If people have a stronger belief in the impact of their donations, they are more willing to give ([Erlandsson et al., 2015](#))



# Confirmation Bias & Cognitive Dissonance

Confirmation Bias: the tendency to look for, or interpret, information consistent with existing beliefs

Cognitive Dissonance: discomfort a person feels when new information or their own behaviors do not align with existing values or beliefs

What to know:

- Confirmation bias is more likely to occur with emotionally-charged topics ([Dickinson, 2022](#))
- People will try to avoid cognitive dissonance by pursuing opportunities to display their values ([Borah et al., 2020](#))



# Vivid vs. Pallid Information

Vivid (e.g., engaging, concrete, imagery-provoking) information increases persuasiveness

What to know:

- Vivid information is more persuasive when the information is considered favorable by the reader (Kisielius & Sternthal, 1984)
- Transportation, or absorption into a story (involving imagery, affect, and attentional focus) leads to more favorable views of protagonists and truthfulness of the story (Green & Brock, 2000)



# Cialdini's Persuasive Techniques (1/2)

A series of research-based persuasive techniques identified in [Cialdini, 2006](#)

What to know:

- **Reciprocity:** People feel obliged to give back to those who provided something for them
  - *Example:* In a study of waiters, thanking customers for being kind while providing a mint increased donations by 23%
- **Scarcity:** People want more of things they can have less of
  - *Example:* highlighting limited-time offers
- **Authority:** People follow the lead of trusted experts
  - *Example:* Patients are more likely to comply with treatment when doctor's medical diploma is displayed on the wall





# Cialdini's Persuasive Techniques (2/2)

A series of research-based persuasive techniques identified in [Cialdini, 2006](#)

What to know:

- **Consistency:** People like to be consistent with what they have previously said or done
  - *Example:* Homeowners previously agreeing to display a small 'Drive Safely' sign in their window were more likely to put a large 'Drive Safely' billboard in their yard
- **Liking:** People are more likely to say yes to those similar to us, those who pay us compliments, and/or those cooperating with us towards mutual goals
  - *Example:* In a study of negotiations, asking MBA students to exchange a personal story led to a greater frequency of successful and agreeable outcomes
- **Social proof:** People look towards the actions of others to determine their own, especially if they are uncertain
  - *Example:* Hotel guests are more likely to reuse towels if a sign indicates that 75% of guests do so



# Regret Aversion

The anticipation of regret leads people to make choices that minimize the possibility of later regret

What to know:

- Regret aversion may be minimized by ([Regret Aversion](#)):
  - Using testimonials that highlight positive outcomes and satisfaction can reassure customers/donors
  - Offering clear, supportive information
- May be leveraged with [scarcity](#) or to make an emotional appeal to urge people to make a decision at a faster pace ([Consumer Regrets](#))



# Priming

Exposure to written or visual stimulus can change how people behave shortly after exposure

What to know:

- In one study, researchers primed website visitors by using a green website background with pennies on it - visitors who saw this background spent a longer time looking at price information than the control group ([Mandel & Johnson, 2002](#))



# Martyrdom Effect

Asking your supporters to conquer some kind of physical or mental challenge can increase participation

What to know:

- Examples include running marathons, cold plunges, eating spicy foods, or volunteering instead of just donating ([Olivola & Shafir, 2013](#))
- Craft content that highlights the donor's sacrifice and its impact ([Rapoport, 2023](#))



# Information Gap Theory

When someone has a gap in their knowledge on a topic they care about, they will take action to find out what they want to know

What to know:

- In email marketing ([Information Gap Theory, 2023](#)):
  - Use superlatives such as worst, last, only, etc. - studies show that using the negative ones work better
  - Use the word 'new' and highlight the provision of new information
- In social media, can publish articles highlighting what readers want to know, e.g. “Why you should...” “How you can...” “New report shows...” etc. ([A Marketer’s Guide, 2024](#))



# Verbatim Effect

People are more likely to remember the gist of what they hear or read and not the specific details

What to know:

- Focus on headlines as people are more likely to remember these than the content of an article ([Verbatim Effect, 2020](#))



# Mini Publics

Mini publics are groups of citizens randomly selected to deliberate on a public issue and share their conclusions with decision makers

What to know:

- Opinions are more likely to change as people discuss and reflect upon them ([Himmelroos & Christensen, 2024](#))
- Mini publics can include public hearings, town halls, online dialogues, study circles, participatory theatre ([Gronlund et al., 2014](#))



# Using Visuals

## Content that includes visuals is more effective

What to know:

- The brain can interpret images in as little as 13 milliseconds, while text takes a few seconds ([Potter et al., 2014](#))
- Visual content gets 94% more views result than from content without images ([Forbes, 2022](#))
- The ability to remember information after three days goes from 10% for text alone to 65% when content is paired with a powerful image ([Dale, 1969](#))
- Website first impressions are 94% design-related ([Sillence et al., 2004](#))
- Users spend an average of 5.94 seconds looking at a website's main image, which is approximately the same amount of time spent reading website text ([Sirjana, 1986](#))





# Donation Transparency

Clear, specific impact statements increase the likelihood of donation

What to know:

- *Example:* “A \$40 donation helps purchase essential supplies for puppies in our rescue shelter.”
- Transparency from non-profits increased donations by 53% ([Harris & Neely, 2018](#))
- Two-thirds of donors say that understanding the impact of their donation would encourage them to give more ([Barriers to Giving, 2016](#))

