

# THE ART OF ARTIVISM

Art should comfort the disturbed, and disturb the comfortable.

**Banksy**



## Purpose

To explore how art can be a tool to raise awareness about global justice issues.



## Materials

- Activism slide show
- Introduction to Palestine slide show
- Worksheet 1: Exploring Activism
- Worksheet 2: Activism in Palestine
- Tablets or laptops



## Reminder

View slides 1–25 of the Introduction to Palestine slide show before completing these activities. The slide show offers background information and context on Palestine.

**Note:** Activism is the combination of two words, ‘activism’ and ‘art’. It is an artistic way to bring about awareness of a topic, leading to social change. In this activity we are going to explore activism by exploring mural art on the separation wall in Palestine as well as Trócaire murals and then invite young people to create their own murals/art on a global justice issue that affects them.

## Activity 1: Exploring Activism

### Step 1

Show slide 1 of the Activism slide show. Ask the young people what they think the word ‘activism’ means. Can they think of what two words have been combined to make this new word? Once the young people have made their suggestions, show and go through slide 2.

### Step 2

Split the young people into pairs, and give each pair a copy of Worksheet 1: Exploring Activism. Using the trigger questions below (and on slide 3), ask the young people to examine the four examples of activism for effectiveness. The examples are included on slides 4–7.



## Questions

- What is it saying?
- How is it saying it?
- Are pictures or symbols used?
- How does the message relate to the wider world?
- Who are the intended audience?
- What location has been chosen?
- Why was this location chosen?
- Do you think it will be widely seen?
- Which example do you think is the most effective?
- What, if anything, would you do differently?



## Activity 2: Activism in Palestine

### Step 1

Read out the following background information on the separation wall to your group.

#### Background on Wall

In 2003, after decades of conflict, the Israeli government started building a barrier around the West Bank, including a separation wall around East Jerusalem. The barrier takes various forms, including a security fence and the wall. The wall itself is 26 feet tall (three times higher than the Berlin Wall) and the entire barrier including the wall is over 440 miles long. The wall has changed the landscape of the area around East Jerusalem and is very controversial. The wall, built deep into Palestinian territory, has resulted in the confiscation of large parts of Palestinian land and has cut off thousands of Palestinians from social services, schools and farmland.

#### The Wall a Canvas for Art and Protest

The wall has been used as a canvas for street art, murals and political graffiti. Different kinds of urban art can be seen on large sections of the wall close to built-up Palestinian areas like Bethlehem.

In 2005 famous urban artist Banksy visited Bethlehem and Abu Dis, cities that have been impacted by the wall, and created nine big murals, all of which illustrated the need to go through or destroy the barrier. However, there is another side to the wall. Many Palestinians think that the presence of urban art makes the wall more acceptable since it is filled with beautiful art. They argue that a grey wall would be more shocking. Have a look at the Activism slide show and decide what you think.

### Step 2

Show slides 8–15, depicting some examples of art on the separation wall. After each picture appears on the screen, encourage the young people to use the questions on Worksheet 2: Activism in Palestine (and on slide 16) to explore the meaning and message of each picture and record notes. Alternatively, split the young people into groups and show all of the pictures. Then ask the groups to choose one picture each to examine in depth using Worksheet 2: Activism in Palestine.

### Step 3

Designate one side of the room as 'agree' and one side as 'disagree'. Explain to the young people that they will hear a series of statements (below and on slide 17) that reflect viewpoints about activism on the separation wall and they must decide if they agree, disagree or are somewhere in-between. They then position themselves in the room to reflect their viewpoint. Choose some young people to explain their viewpoint for each statement.



#### Agree/Disagree Statements

- Street art is an effective way to make a statement.
- The wall should not be used as a canvas.
- The wall should only be used by local people and artists to highlight injustices.
- Art on the wall takes away from the severity of the wall.
- The wall needs a global audience. The more famous people who make art on the wall the better.
- The wall can be used to speak truth to power.

### Activity 3: Your Activism

#### Step 1

As a group, conduct a brainstorm of local justice issues. Once complete, challenge the young people to identify which issues they would consider to have a global justice dimension. For example, an issue with a local housing development affecting parkland might be a locally contained issue. However, the cost of living crisis, youth unemployment and women's rights can all be considered issues with a clear local and global dimension.

#### Step 2

Ask the young people to think about how they intend to display their activism. Consider the following options as a starting point:

- What do you want to say?
- How will you say it?
- Do you want to use words, pictures or symbols?

#### Step 3

Ask the young people to think about how they intend to display their activism. Consider the following options as a starting point:

- Poster murals for display around your youth club
- Larger scale murals using sheets of paper, card or other suitable material that can be displayed around the youth club
- Create a pop-up global justice art gallery using the murals
- Ask young people to go on a scavenger hunt of their youth club or community to find a place suitable for their mural (with permission)
- Organise a youth club competition

#### Step 4

Ask young people to design their mural either on paper or on tablets or laptops using appropriate apps or paint tools. Show slide 18, which lists some things to consider for this project.



A section of the separation wall in Bethlehem.

Photo credit: Ahmad Alami.



## Worksheet 1: Exploring Activism

1



Mural in Dublin city to commemorate murdered Honduran activist Berta Cáceres, killed for standing up against big business in Honduras to protect her people's environmental and human rights.

2



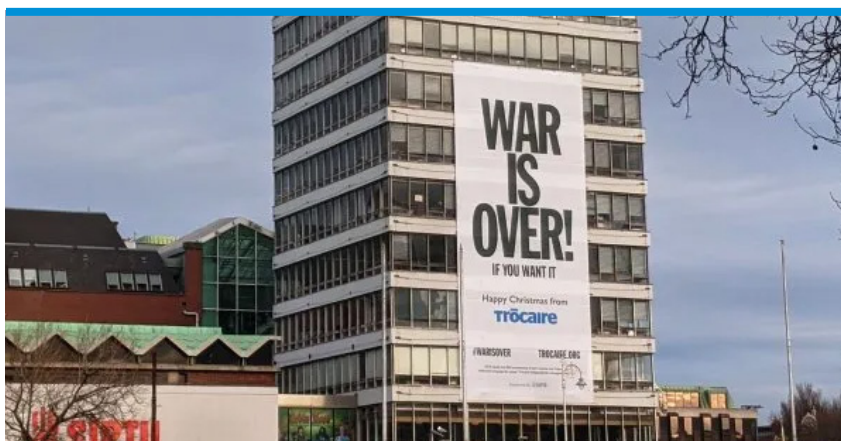
Mural at the International Peace Wall, Belfast, depicting effects of climate change.

3



Climate change mural in Skerries created by students and staff of Milverton NS and Scoil Réalt na Mara, supported by Trócaire.

4



Trócaire's 2019 banner at Dublin's Liberty Hall as part of the Christmas appeal supporting families living in war zones around the world.

## Worksheet 2: Activism in Palestine

<p>How does this piece of art make you feel?</p>	<p>What do you think it is trying to say?</p>
<p>Is the location of the activism important? Why?</p>	<p>Do you believe it is successful in trying to make that point?</p>

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