

## PALESTINIAN CLINICIANS CONDEMN IARPP MEETING

The *Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists* has issued a formal statement on October 1, 2019 condemning the decision of *The International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy (IARPP)* to hold its 2019 annual conference in Israel. In December 2017, an international group of mental health clinicians requested that the *IARPP* reconsider that plan, but *IARPP* refused. In January 2018, three organizations, the *USA-Palestine Mental Health Network*, the *UK-Palestine Mental Health Network*, and *Jewish Voice for Peace* then launched a petition signed by 1400 mental health professionals worldwide protesting the *IARPP* plan to meet in Israel. There were subsequently two other petitions in protest of the *IARPP* decision to meet in Israel: one signed by a group of Israeli clinicians who are members of the organization *Psychoactive*, and another signed by a group of Palestinian mental health clinicians who are citizens of Israel.

Now, the *Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists*, representing 20,000 to 25,000 members according to its Secretary General Dr. Iyad Othman, has launched its own powerful statement. The petition may be viewed on the organization's Facebook page through this link:

[https://www.facebook.com/PUSWP.Palestine/posts/902274599967730?\\_tn =K-R](https://www.facebook.com/PUSWP.Palestine/posts/902274599967730?_tn =K-R)

The petition itself states:

At the very moment when our people are struggling for justice, freedom, and dignity in the face of the Israeli occupation, with all of the damage inflicted by its arbitrary policies and immoral practices...

At the very moment when social workers and psychologists in Palestine stand together against this oppression, supporting the people of Palestine in their struggle for an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital...

And at the very moment when the Israeli government enacts an apartheid "Nation-State Basic Law," nullifying the fundamental right of equality to its Palestinian citizens, undermining their already-fragile status, and further debasing their humanity, identity, language, and claim to their homes in both real and symbolic terms...

At this very moment, *The International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy (IARPP)* decides to hold its 2019 annual conference in Tel Aviv, despite international protests and criticism.

We believe that holding this conference and participating in it only lends legitimacy to the occupation and its innumerable violations of human rights. Participating in

this conference gives implicit support to Israeli policies that violate the principles of social work and psychological practice—principles based in freedom, justice, dignity, and human rights. Moreover, participation in this conference by Palestinian clinicians will be used to undermine the efforts of those who protest the violations of human rights by Israel and to discredit the cultural boycott of Israel. Participation in this conference will be exploited to weaken the friendship between Palestine and its international supporters who seek to isolate Israel on account of its human rights violations.

The Israeli branch of is well aware that holding conferences, presentations, concerts, academic visits, and cultural scientific exchanges in Israel imply acceptance of the status quo. The cultural boycott of Israel clearly articulates that organizing such events in Israel lends Israel political support and promotes its policies on the world stage.

It is painfully ironic to see that Israel has been chosen as the venue for an international conference focusing on the in-depth study of human relationships as an aspect of mental health. Our concern is to combat the occupation in all of its manifestations—first as human beings, and in addition as mental health practitioners committed to human values. We are profoundly aware of the importance of these values to the well being of children, families, and communities. Recognizing the impact of violence on individual health and collective well-being, we feel an additional responsibility to communicate our voices and to highlight the moral issue of our responsibility, as mental health workers, to study the context in which we treat our patients. We understand very well the impact on mental health of oppression, political struggle, economic constraints, and war. We see the therapist as having a duty to address these aspects of the environment in which the patient lives.

We therefore appeal to our friends all over the world—whether they be individuals, federations, unions, or institutions --not to participate in the *IARPP* meeting and instead to condemn it. We appeal as well to our Palestinian colleagues working in mental health and related fields not to participate in this meeting in any way. We ask this in the name of our national professional and trade union, and in the name of the freedom, justice, and dignity of every Palestinian.

Thanking you for your understanding and support,

*The Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists (PUSWP)*  
Palestine  
10/2/2018