

Adam Goren's letter 5th January

Dear Dr Aram,

Israel is presently a hostile and dangerous place to be for any free thinking person; my own Israeli father has temporarily left the country for his physical and psychological wellbeing.

I understand that the organisation of which you are CEO, the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) is in some way associated with or affiliated to another called OFEK planning a February '24 conference in a conflict zone where the prime minister insists war will continue without respite for months if not years. Since there is nothing on any TIHR related online platform to substantiate your involvement in the conference, can you please confirm whether your organisation is part of this and willing for its members or those of any affiliated / associated organisation to attend a conference in Israel during a brutal war of attrition where IDF (Israeli Defence Force) security will surely be needed and lives could be in danger?

Furthermore, if TIHR is involved, could you also explain to me how a conference about authority, identity and belonging can be conducted under circumstances where not only half the country's representatives from occupied Palestinian territories, subject to various severe sanctions and limitations, are prevented from attending, but where that half's peoples, including thousands of children, are being savagely brutalised, incarcerated and killed on a daily basis in the name of self-defense?

This business-as-usual approach seems to maintain the delusion, as the Israeli journalist Gideon Levy has so eloquently put it, that 'life is (too) good' in Israel; the bubble in which Israelis live their daily lives completely free of concern for a whole demonised population with whom they share a strife-ridden land, persisting despite the calamity the county is suffering. Such insanity, makes complicit any visiting organisation in the denial of chronic persecution and trauma inflicted on an entire indigenous peoples said by experts in the field, together with international humanitarian organisations and the UN, to be at this moment subject to forced displacement, ethnic cleansing and possibly genocide. In short, attending such a conference will render attendees in some part complicit and culpable in the systematic erasure of Palestinian selfhood and suffering.

I clearly recall from years back, a well known and respected group relations facilitator, (now chair of the BPC), Julian Lousada, setting an opening exercise in a group relations conference in which participants, including myself, subtly organised in the room, were invited to freely arrange themselves as they wished. The disturbing point so effectively made was how rapidly and mindlessly humans can build and then defend their affiliations and allegiances. It has been decades that Israel, unable to process the consequences of its own traumatic birth, has to its detriment and harm wrapped itself in a psychoanalytic cloak of innocence and engaged in human rights washing and systematic brainwashing of its own children, (of which I was one), to perpetuate the righteous and racist fear-fuelled paranoid belief in a natural Jewish superiority over resident Semitic brothers coupled with a corrosive culture of all-absolving victimhood. I hope that your organisation will not accept any unconditional participating in this tradition and furthermore finds the courage to publicly condemn the violence and call for freedom and dignity for all peoples in Israel-Palestine. I look forward to your clarification regarding the OFEK conference.

Kind regards,

Adam Goren
Psychoanalytic Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist