



Statement – Wednesday 13 February 2024

The Psychological Society of Ireland calls for an immediate end to hostilities in the Middle East

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) is calling for an immediate end to hostilities in the Middle East, imploring the leaders of our country to do what they can to end the violence and move towards lasting peace in the Gaza, Israel, and West Bank regions. A cessation of the hostilities will allow for open dialogue and greatly contribute to working towards peace, something that cannot be achieved during the current conflict.

In addition, the PSI is calling for the release of hostages on both sides of the conflict, including those held without charge, and, in keeping with the recent International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgment, the immediate provision of access to humanitarian aid, food, water, medical supplies, and assistance. The PSI also offers our solidarity to all our psychological colleagues working within the affected areas.

The people of Gaza, along with the West Bank and Israel, have the right to have a place to call home, they have a right to feel safe and feel validated in their existence. They have the right to live their lives freely, to speak out, and to move around. They have the right to a future and the international community has the responsibility to help them define and build that future. Documented examples of, or concerns relating to, dehumanising language, apartheid practices, targeting innocent civilians, incitement to genocide, or failure to prevent genocide are anathema to the United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), and the PSI Codes of Ethics.

On 16 November 2023, the PSI released a [statement](#) about the violence in Gaza and Israel. Since then, tens of thousands of people have lost their lives in the daily violence and intense bombardment in Gaza, with over 75% of civilians displaced. Tragically, generations of families have died, and statistics highlight on average two mothers are killed every hour, with 70% of those killed reported to be women and children. Reports have highlighted that amputations are being carried out without anaesthesia. Ninety percent of the population has extremely limited access to food and water.

As the professional body for psychology in the Republic of Ireland, the PSI is committed to advocating for the protection and enhancement of the psychological wellbeing of others.

Members of the PSI ascribe to the Society's Code of Professional Ethics, of which the principles are: respect for the rights and dignity of the person; competence; responsibility; and integrity. In drafting this statement, we have come back to these guiding principles alongside reflecting on the PSI's current strategic priority of psychological wellbeing as a human right. According to the [WHO](#), mental health is a basic human right for all people.

Psychology is a profession that works with the impact of trauma on individuals and, as outlined in our statement regarding the [conflict in Ukraine](#), our central mission is to avoid its occurrence, wherever, whenever, from whomever. The impact of armed conflicts on mental health is significant and can have traumatic consequences on civilians caught in the crossfire. The social, economic, and physical environments associated with areas of conflict profoundly impact the physical and psychological health of innocent civilians, particularly women, children, the elderly and the disabled, with intergenerational consequences likely to follow across all groups directly affected by this war.

The PSI is gravely concerned about the immediate and long-term negative consequences of this trauma and violence on people of all ages, faiths, and communities.

Watching the horror of what is happening in Gaza can lead to overwhelming feelings. This is an understandable reaction to something that is not comprehensible. This feeling can lead to an urge to tune out, to develop a "them and us" mentality, or to blame the victim. To be able to engage compassionately with the traumas experienced by others it is important to also look after yourself.

Even while removed from trauma, seeing distressing images from the war in Gaza can be upsetting and triggering for some people who too may have experienced the horrors of wars themselves, or may have links to Israel, Palestine, or Gaza. The PSI encourages all who are finding it difficult to cope at this time to seek support.

The [Time of War](#) section on the PSI website provides resources for psychologists, refugees, and members of the general public during times of war.

ENDS.

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