



A letter to mental health professionals in *Gaza, Palestine*

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November 2023

Dear Mental Health Professionals in Gaza,

As we witness the impact of the war machine on the besieged territory of Gaza, we try to imagine the terrible psychological toll taken by its immense destruction and its traumatic losses of loved ones. It is only natural, and one suspects deliberate, that this devastation evokes in us a **feeling of helplessness and hopelessness** in applying our skills as mental health professionals.

What we confront is the futility of our tools and our work as professionals in the field of mental health.

- How can one escape bombings through relaxation exercises?
- How can we provide psychological first aid when there is no safe place, water, or food?
- How can we utilise digital means of psychosocial support when there is no internet connection?

But we know that the **savagery of this aggression** has been designed to generate feelings of helplessness and guilt in our hearts, and to **break the will of the Palestinian people**.

We also know that the role of **mental health professionals can be a cornerstone** in **building hope and healing** at every level of society.

This hope is also the ink in which the **determination (Sumoud)** of everyone in **solidarity around the world** is being written.

Your steadfastness, in particular, is the **pillar of our resilience** – as mental health professionals – whether in Palestine or anywhere on earth where the people aspire to freedom.

You are the compass for those who are lost and a beacon in the darkness of despotism.

I am listening to the responses of the injured and the bereaved in Gaza, and I am amazed by the feelings of **national unity and faith** that they invoke to maintain their cohesion and resilience in adversity.

Dear colleagues - build your psychological support on these concepts whenever they are evoked and reiterated. **Use collective therapy and strategies of liberation psychology to enhance resilience and rebuild identity**, thus contributing to the psychological recovery and wellbeing of the community.

Despite the extent of destruction, **we still have the capacity to maintain our mutual respect, interest, and empathy for one another.**



My dear Gazans - colleagues contact me daily from **Al-Quds** [Jerusalem], the West Bank, the interior of the occupied country [Palestine '48], and from outside of Palestine, whether or not they are Arabs. They ask me how to help the people of Gaza - motivated as they are in **solidarity with you** during your terrible ordeal and hoping for your victory.

The only thing preventing us from being directly by your side is the war machine that stands between us. We eagerly await the cessation of aggression to **resume work with Gaza's institutions**, its various organizations, and its humanitarian agencies, providing the necessary support and resources to strengthen the mental health of our people.

Finally, I would like to remind you, my dear colleagues, that **you are not alone.** **All eyes see your faces, all ears listen to your words,** and **all hearts now beat to the rhythm of Gaza.** You are **martyrs** and **witnesses** in this **crucial stage of Palestinian and human history.**

Preserve the stories of people's lives, their **dreams,** and **protect** them as much as you can. **Preserve the personal history** of each of these **individuals,** their **humanity,** and their **great courage** in the face of desecration, as well as the history and rights of Palestinians in the face of tyranny.

We will meet again soon, and we will **work together to build better mental health services** and help the people to recover and to rise. We are certain that our work as mental health professionals is a fundamental element in the project of national liberation in both of its aspects - **liberating the human being** and **liberating the land.**

With all **my respect,** and in the **hope of a soonest liberation.**

Dr. Samah Jabr

