



November 24, 2024

To the board,

International Society for Improvement and Teaching of Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Dear Board members,

The Israeli Psychological Association is deeply disturbed by reports from colleagues of the talk by Dr. Nathalie Edmond, *Embodying antiracism for our collective healing and liberation*, at the ISITDBT conference held in Philadelphia earlier this month. While presenting a model to promote anti-racist identity through mindfulness practices, she made use of slides [that were shared with us] referring to Zionism as an aspect of the “colonized mind” and equating it with fascism. This polarized and biased portrayal perpetuates a harmful narrative, and a misunderstanding which proposes that Jews who support the idea of a Jewish sovereign state are 'fascists', 'racists', or mentally unwell.

We find it deeply troubling that a talk about anti-racist psychological processes would stigmatize Zionist Jews in such a harmful way. Moreover, at a DBT conference that emphasizes a dialectical approach, it is disheartening to see the complete dismissal of this perspective, leaving no room for validation or understanding of the experiences of millions of Jews. In particular, a recent survey (AJC, 2024) shows that 85% of American Jews believe in the importance of U.S. support for Israel, and 87% report that antisemitism has increased in the U.S. since the horrific massacre in Israel October 7, 2023, and the ongoing captivity of over 100 hostages.

It is important to point out that Zionism refers to the belief that the Jewish people have the right to live in our historic homeland. Should this belief in the right to a Jewish homeland and the defense of its people against those who seek to harm them—be considered fascism? Such a characterization fails to recognize the diversity of perspectives and the fundamental principles behind Zionism, conflating it with ideologies it does not innately embody.

As Israeli psychologists we are deeply aware of the trauma of the current situation affecting thousands of individuals, their families, their close social circles and society as a whole. We uphold the DBT-based belief that all people have the right to 'a life worth living'. Helping with the recovery and rehabilitation of **all** parts of the Israeli population is our mission, including both Jewish and Arab communities.



It is with great dismay that we address the phenomenon of a colleague who in her session at a conference devoted to psychological healing, invalidates one side entirely. This undermines the dialectic principles of endorsing dialogue, mutual understanding, and validating diverse perspectives. We find it difficult to understand how associating Zionism with antisemitic rhetoric aligns with the goals of promoting anti-racism and anti-discrimination in psychotherapy.

The Israeli Psychological Association strongly urges our colleagues in global psychological organizations and communities to speak out against terror, atrocities, and to denounce ideologies that perpetuate stigma, harm, and division. As psychologists, it is most important that we promote mental health growth through the cultivation of dialogue, understanding, and the acceptance of diverse perspectives, while remaining committed to addressing pain and trauma caused by hate, violence, and discrimination.

Sincerely,

Yoram Schleyer, Chairperson
Israel Psychological Association

CC:

Dr. Nathalie Edmond, Director, Villanova University Counseling Center, 800 E. Lancaster Ave. **Villanova**, PA 19085, USA.

Mariah Covington, and Maureen Zalewski, Co-Chairs, ISITDBT 2024 Conference,.

Dr Cynthia de las Fuentes, President, American Psychological Association,
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Rev. Dr. Peter M. Donohue, President, Villanova University
Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Villanova University