

3rd July 2025

Dear Board Members of EMDR UK Association,

We are writing as a group of EMDR therapists from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, including Muslim and Jewish who are deeply concerned by the increasing crisis in Gaza and the mass trauma experienced by the Palestinian people.

We would like you to issue a statement on behalf of your members acknowledging the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza. We are looking for leadership that acknowledges and speaks out against the current atrocities and multifaceted traumatising of Palestinian people and children. As the official organisation representing EMDR trauma therapists in the UK, we are requesting that the EMDR UK Association take a leadership stance that is representative of the core values of our profession, and in line with our duty of care to stop significant harm.

We acknowledge the acutely tragic and deeply disturbing events of October 7th, 2023, and the loss of civilian life and the taking of hostages as experienced by Israel, recognised as unacceptable under International Humanitarian law. We further acknowledge the disproportionate response from Israel which has caused unprecedented destruction that has now reached unspeakable depths in Gaza.

More than 60,000 Palestinian people have been killed, of whom over 16,000 are children. This figure does not include those whose bodies have yet to be accounted for; it is estimated losses will exceed 377,000 (Database hosted by Harvard). According to UNICEF (28 May 2025), since October 2023, over 50,000 children have been killed or injured, with a further 14,000 at risk of starvation. They also estimate that between 3,000 and 4,000 children in Gaza have had one or more limbs amputated, making it the only place on earth with the most child amputees per inhabitant. UNICEF Spokesperson James Elder calls it "a war on children."

Currently food supplies are critically inadequate and perilous to access; the UN reported (25 June 2025) that at least 410 people have been killed by Israeli military whilst getting food at aid centres. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) (28th June 2025), 470,000 people in Gaza are facing catastrophic hunger (IPC Phase 5), and the entire population is experiencing acute food insecurity. The report also projects an alarming 71,000 children and more than 17,000 mothers will need urgent treatment for acute malnutrition.

*'What we are seeing, unfolding in Gaza, is **the biggest case of child abuse in modern history**'*

Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah, British Palestinian plastic and reconstructive war surgeon \*

Dr. Abu-Sittah has documented how children have suffered mass trauma not only through injury and limb loss, but through the destruction of every protective structure in their lives (home, school, family, and community). He reminds us that when professionals and institutions stay silent, we become enablers in the perpetration of this abuse.

The Palestinian people have lived under a system of occupation, and blockade for decades. This current situation which the International Court of Justice has referred to as a potential genocide follows a long history of trauma and violence, including the devastating military assaults on Gaza in 2008, 2012, 2014, 2018 and 2021, which killed and wounded thousands, inflicting widespread psychological damage, particularly on children.

The current military assault against Palestinian citizens in Gaza is a humanitarian crisis (Amnesty International, 2024), which requires a collective humanitarian response; Healthcare professionals across different sectors have 'called to action' their representative organisations to make a stand against the suffering of Palestinian people by issuing statements condemning the atrocities and mass destruction in Gaza (e.g. HCPC, GAP [Group Analysts for Palestine], BMA, Family Therapists for Palestine, Royal College of Nursing, Psychological Professionals, Occupational Therapists, and many other organisations).

As an association comprised of Adult *and* Child and Adolescent EMDR therapists we are ethically committed to the welfare of young people, children, and infants. Children in Gaza are living through extreme forms of trauma; witnessing their loved ones killed, seeing their homes and lives demolished and their futures stolen.

In our clinical work, we are confronted by the acute distress our clients and patients from all backgrounds feel in response to what is happening Gaza and the West Bank. A number of EMDR therapists have been providing therapy to Palestinians and Israelis for some time. The legacy of intergenerational and collective trauma is something we deal with every day in our work. For our clients whose lives have been affected by this crisis, the trauma is deepening and will likely take many generations to heal. Many more EMDR members are now welcoming opportunities to volunteer their time with charities like *Healing for Gaza*.

As trauma therapists we feel compelled to ease the suffering and reduce the disturbance felt by these populations traumatised by this conflict.

The continued silence from the EMDR UK Association is exacerbating this disturbance; to remain silent is to be complicit in this humanitarian tragedy. *'Silence is not trauma informed. Silence is not anti-racist. Silence is complicity, dressed up as professionalism'*, (Delair, 2025).

It is our understanding that the EMDR UK Association remains committed to Francine Shapiro's legacy; *to bring relief from trauma to people around the world, so cycles of violence and pain can be broken through the profound healing and understanding that EMDR trauma therapy brings*.

EMDR Europe issued a statement in 2022 about the Ukraine/ Russia war, but no such statement has been issued regarding Palestine/ Israel.

Our urgent request to the EMDR Association UK board is that we issue a formal statement making a clear stand in solidarity with our Palestinian colleagues and the people of Palestine. Here is our suggested statement.

As Trauma Mental Health Professionals:

- We condemn Israel's violation of the Genocide Convention in Gaza & the oppressive colonial policies throughout Palestine (including the West Bank)
- We acknowledge the catastrophic physical and psychological impact on children and families of the prolonged atrocities in Gaza.
- We condemn the killing of healthcare workers, healthcare infrastructure and Israel's contravention of International Humanitarian law.
- We support a call for an immediate and sustained humanitarian ceasefire and unimpeded, safe humanitarian access to medical supplies and food.
- We support international accountability and observance of international law within the conflict & support the call for suspension of all UK arms sales to Israel.
- We adopt a position against all Israeli institutions that support the oppression of the Palestinian people and hinder their self-determination.
- We affirm the need for trauma professionals to act in alignment with justice, ethics, and humanity and protection from moral injury.
- We will promote workshops, training and discussions aimed specifically at working with Palestinians experiencing ongoing trauma without the general climate of silence and negation.
- We call for better understanding of antisemitism and Islamophobia, as well as clarifying the differences between anti-Zionism and antisemitism (with a view to challenging the IHRA's non legally binding definitions of antisemitism).
- We recognise this situation deeply affects our Arab, Muslim and Jewish colleagues and we need to ensure they feel supported with safe spaces for open dialogue.
- We recognise the need for open dialogue around Palestine at future EMDR UK & European conferences.

We are steadfast in our belief that condemning the ongoing atrocities in Palestine is not only humane and fits with the EMDR UK Association's core values but is also a moral necessity. It is therefore incumbent upon us to speak out on behalf of those that do not have a voice, due to the news and journalist blockade, to break the silence.

We ask, as an Association, for the opportunity to stand together, in solidarity with Palestinian people for their dignity and freedom, and as a refusal to remain silent in the face of this human catastrophe.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

## Working Group for Palestine

1. Aisha Dorcat, Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapist, Compassion Focused Therapist, Accredited EMDR Practitioner (EMDR Europe)
2. Amal Wartalska, Integrative Counsellor and Psychotherapist, EMDR Practitioner
3. Amy Prior, EMDR Consultant (Adult, Child & Adolescent)
4. Andrew Keefe, EMDR Therapist, EMDR Association UK & Ireland member
5. Androula Pistolas, EMDR Member
6. Annabel McGoldrick, PhD, Accredited EMDR Consultant (UK & Australia)
7. Anne-Marie Lewis, EMDR Adult Consultant
8. Aradhana Perry, Clinical Psychologist, EMDR Consultant-In-Training
9. Bina Blick, EMDR Association UK Member
10. Carmen Garcia Perez de Leon, Systemic Family Therapist, EMDR member
11. Cathy Ward, Art Therapist, EMDR member
12. Charlotte Hilleary, EMDR member, UKCP Accredited Psychotherapist
13. Christie Coho, Senior Psychological Therapist, EMDR UK Association Member
14. Ciara O'Gorman, EMDR Consultant (Adult and Child & Adolescent)
15. Clea McIlraith - HCPC registered Arts psychotherapist, EMDR practitioner
16. Dr Claire Treleaven, HCPC Registered Clinical Psychologist
17. Dr Deborah Kingston, EMDR Consultant
18. Dr Elaine McCullough, Chartered Clinical Psychologist, EMDR Member
19. Elena Abad Navarro, Family Therapist, EMDR Member
20. Eliz Eminaga, CBT, EMDR Consultant
21. Einar Jenssen, EMDR consultant
22. Dr Elizabeth Penny, consultant clinical psychologist and EMDR practitioner
23. Emma Agarwala, EMDR Consultant
24. Emma Gerrard, Dramatherapist, Clinical Supervisor, EMDR UK member
25. Esther McNeile Jones, EMDR UK Member
26. Farrah Dowlut, Accredited EMDR Practitioner
27. Fiona Gregory, Psychotherapist, EMDR UK Accredited Practitioner
28. Fiona Nicolson, EMDR Practitioner
29. Flora Saxby, Integrative Psychotherapist, EMDR UK and Europe Accredited Practitioner
30. Dr Farhana Patel, Psychologist, EMDR Accredited Practitioner
31. Hamodi Kayal, EMDR Consultant & Trainer
32. Hania Maclagan, Child & Adolescent psychotherapist, EMDR UK member
33. Helen George, Psychotherapist & EMDR Member
34. Dr Harriet Rankin, Clinical Psychologist, EMDR Member
35. Jen Bellanich, EMDR Europe Accred. Practitioner
36. Jon Rowe, EMDR UK Member
37. Dr Gemma Boyd, Chartered Clinical Psychologist, EMDR Europe Accredited Practitioner
38. Dr. Jeyda Hammad, Counselling Psychologist, EMDR Europe Accredited Consultant
39. Dr Karen Barton, Clinical Psychologist, EMDR Accredited Practitioner, Consultant-In-Training
40. Kate Moberly, EMDR Consultant
41. Katherine Chartres, RN (MH), EMDR Consultant
42. Kate Snewin, Compassion Focused and EMDR Therapist
43. Katarzyna Sobkowicz, Clinical Psychologist, EMDR Member
44. Kinga Komarzynska, EMDR Consultant
45. Kostas Kouriatas, Counselling Psychologist, EMDR Accredited Practitioner
46. Krissy Dudley, EMDR UK Member
47. Lauli Moschini, MA (Art Psych), EMDR Consultant in Training
48. Lee Johnson, EMDR Consultant/Supervisor
49. Dr Leann Lavery, Counselling Psychologist, EMDR Accredited practitioner
50. Dr Lily Lewis, clinical psychologist, EMDR Association member
51. Maggie Cole, CBT Therapist, EMDR Consultant
52. Mary Clare de Echevarria, EMDR Consultant
53. Dr Maya Kaur Khera, Counselling Psychologist, EMDR Member
54. Dr Marion Sangster, Child and adolescent psychotherapist
55. Martina Leeven, Counselling Psychologist, EMDR Consultant
56. Myriam Laplanche, EMDR UK Member
57. Nadina Al Jarrah, EMDR Consultant
58. Naina Gupta, EMDR Practitioner (Adults & Children & Adolescents)
59. Nicola Dyson, EMDR Consultant (Adults, Children & Adolescents)
60. Dr Nikki Pitman, Clinical Psychologist, EMDR Member
61. Nuria Martin, Nuria Martin Integrative Counsellor and EMDR Practitioner
62. Rita McGrath, EMDR Consultant (Adults, Children & Adolescents)
63. Dr Rachel H Tribe, Clinical Psychologist and EMDR therapist (member)
64. Roya Dooman, Drama therapist, EMDR Member
65. Ruth Kendrick, Art Psychotherapist, EMDR UK Member
66. Sadia Sadiq, Integrative Psychotherapist, EMDR Member
67. Sally-Ann Soulsby, Psychotherapist & Clinical Supervisor, EMDR Europe Accredited Practitioner & Consultant
68. Sharon Kenny, EMDR Member

69. Dr Seyed Alemohammad, Chartered Psychologist, Europe Accredited EMDR Practitioner
70. Silvia Angioi, Psychotherapist, EMDR association member
71. Simon James Carpenter, BACP accred / NCPS, EMDR Consultant, Psychological Therapist
72. Susan Cowan-Jenssen, EMDR consultant
73. Dr Shahid Majid, Psychiatrist, EMDR UK Member
74. Dr Tamara Vaughan, Chartered Counselling Psychologist, EMDR Europe Accredited Practitioner
75. Dr Tanya Augustine, Chartered Counselling Psychologist, EMDR Association member
76. Teresa Raven, Accredited EMDR Practitioner
77. Valerie Hartland, Art Psychotherapist, EMDR Consultant (Adult, Child & Adolescents)
78. Dr Wendy Frappell-Cooke, Consultant Psychologist, EMDR Europe Accredited Consultant and Facilitator
79. Yasmin King, Psychotherapist, Supervisor and EMDR UK Member
80. Dr Barbara Smith, Accredited EMDR Therapist
81. Catarina M. Rato, EMDR Accredited Practitioner
82. Colleen Heenan, Accredited EMDR Practitioner
83. Colin Brazier, Accredited EMDR Consultant
84. Akila Vanat, Accredited EMDR Practitioner
85. Dr. Ceri Lyck Bowen, Clinical Psychologist Accredited EMDR Practitioner
86. Karen Hodgeson, Accredited EMDR Europe Consultant
87. Jacquie Horgan, EMDR Member
88. Astrid Perez-Lyons, EMDR Member
89. Dr Emma Hormoz, Counselling Psychologist, EMDR UK Member
90. Elena Brogi, Counselling Psychologist (HCPC, BPS), EMDR Europe Accredited Practitioner
91. Lee Anna Simmons, EMDR Consultant / Art Psychotherapist
92. Lisa Grande, BACP Accredited, EMDR Practitioner
93. Oliver Wright, EMDR Consultant Therapist
94. Nancy Southcott, EMDR psychotherapist & Integrative Therapist
95. Ilaria De Simoni, Registered Member MBACP (Accred) Counsellor, EMDR Practitioner (Accred)
96. Michaela Trainini, Registered Member MBACP, EMDR UK member
97. Dr Rhiannon Jones, Chartered Clinical Psychologist, Accred EMDR Practitioner
98. Dr Soraya De Boni, Chartered Clinical Psychologist, Accred EMDR Practitioner
99. Gill Tunstall, BACP accred Counsellor, EMDR UK member

\*Quote taken from a talk given by Dr Abu-Sittah at a showing of *Ambulance*, Q&A / documentary at Genesis Cinema, London on May 12th, 2025

Delair, Yahya, (2025, April 04), Silence Isn't Neutral: Why Mental Health Must Confront Injustice