

Speaking of Home: An intimate exchange on Israel-Palestine

In July 2024 a conversation between Palestinian-American Karim Dajani and Israeli-American Eyal Rozmarin, both psychoanalysts, was recorded for the ROOM forum (see <https://analytic-room.com/about/>). Their exchange can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOSZbnEq5Mk>

This video has been shown at various meetings of mental health workers, including one organised by the Palestine Working Group, made up of members of the British Psychotherapy Foundation. For their meeting, Karim and Eyal sent letters that updated their views about the continuing genocide. Both provided statements that were much appreciated in the discussion, and have kindly agreed to make these freely available.

Eyal's Statement:

Karim and I taped this conversation last summer. It made sense for us to engage in it, because we could each place ourselves in relation to each other and at the same time to a sense of belonging - even if, in my case, a deeply ambivalent belonging - with some collectivity: for him Palestinian, for me Jewish-Israeli, and speak from there.

The situation was already beyond horrifying. It has gotten exponentially worse since then. We would not have the same conversation today. Because if it has been debatable before, it is no longer - Israel is perpetrating a premeditated, organized genocide on the Palestinian people, and the so called civilized world is either supporting it, or standing by. They did not bomb the railroads to Auschwitz, and they are not bombing the runways from which the American made, Israeli manned extermination machines have been taking off for two years.

My identity as an Israeli-Jew has become lethal. Whatever sense of belonging I have had, is being destroyed together with Gaza. The Israeli part is a black hole, the Jewish part wonders if it could be rescued from the Israeli, or whether it has already been destroyed by it. What I have, is a clear knowledge of the absolute evil being perpetrated in my name.

Karim and I talk regularly, but now it is mostly about keeping each other sane vis-a-vis the insane violence and lies and indifference. We are also trying to understand how something like this can happen, again. There has been a great deal of thinking after the Nazis, but now we have industrial mass-murder being declared and executed live. We can see what Hannah Arendt called "the banality of evil" played out on TV and on social media. We can see in real time a collective going mad. I am now attached to the worst kind of crime in the dictionary of human civilization, forever. I don't know yet what to say from that place.

Except this: we must stop the extermination by any means, we must rescue as many people and as much Palestinian heritage as possible, and we must work towards different kinds of belonging and political organization in Palestine.

Karim's Statement:

Thank you for writing to me and offering an opportunity to address the audience. I would like to make three brief and condensed points for consideration.

The first is that the film is an attempt at a dialogue between two individuals. We do speak about our collectives but we are speaking as individuals. We cannot dialogue as

representatives of our respective collectives for many reasons. The most important is that the Israeli collective is in control of everything and the Palestinian collective is being oppressed and erased by all available means. The asymmetry in the positions between the two large groups makes dialogue impossible. Furthermore, in a dialogue between individuals, if it is sincere, the positions articulated change because learning something new requires loosening existing conceptual frames. Nothing new has really emerged between the two large groups. We are in a new phase now. The genocide is on-going, and the suppression of any efforts to stop it by western governments has reached a level that can best be described as evil. All people of conscience should demand humane and sane actions from their governments and institutions. How many more children must starve?

As psychoanalysts, there are two pressing issues that I suggest we try to address within our groups and as a social phenomena of great analytic interest. The first is how do we understand the lack of empathy in the Israeli collective towards the murder of children, and the displacement of millions of people. How is it that 82% of the Israeli collective supports the Genocide in Gaza. How do we understand that?

The second, is the way our institutions, particularly the IPA, has suppressed any mention of the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and any effort to speak about it honestly. How do we understand that? If we fail as a group to even mention the reality of the genocide and suppress all avenues of inquiry into its psycho-social determinants then we must ask ourselves the questions: who are we serving and what are we working towards?

Thank you for letting me address the group.