

PvP UK

Psychoanalytic Centre Philadelphia
Rockland Mansion – East Fairmount Park
3810 Mt. Pleasant Drive
Philadelphia, PA 19121
USA

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Dear Philadelphia Symposium Organisers,

Psychoanalytic Voices for Palestine (PvP) are pleased you are giving psychological amplitude to Palestinian psychoanalytic psychotherapist Salem Eid S. Al-Arjani PhD in your forthcoming online Henri Parens Symposium, *Resilience in Response to Violence and War* (March 7th, 2026). However, we join others in expressing concern at the architecture of the Symposium, which in its very title negates the political reality of ongoing settler colonialism and de facto occupation, ethnic cleansing and genocide of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, whilst Al-Ajarni is kettled into case presentation, both other speakers, including Israeli training analyst Prof. Merav Roth, appear to have freedom of commentary. We are particularly concerned that Professor Roth's apparent public position on Palestine further reinforces a delusion of equally suffering sides and would respectfully urge her to clarify the following concerns.

So far as we are aware, Professor Roth has never publicly recognised or acknowledged an Israeli occupation, siege and decades-long blockade of Gaza and living entombment of its people. We therefore ask whether Professor Roth acknowledges that non-violent and violent resistance are linked to Gazan's chronic oppression and colonial conditions. Professor Roth has never, as far as we can tell, acknowledged Israeli war crimes, crimes against humanity or Israel's serial and flagrant violations of international law over decades before, and the months after, October 2023. We think it essential to clarify whether Professor Roth recognises the genocidal intent and action on the part of her nation?

Professor Roth does not, it seems, comment on the destruction of all means of life in Gaza, the starvation of its people and the continued withholding of vital aid, including medical equipment, as deliberate punishment, ethnic cleansing and attempted erasure of the Palestinian people. We consider her recognition of these abysmal actions prerequisite for any psychologically conscionable meeting between herself and any Palestinian. Has she proffered such recognition?

The PVP note that Professor Roth speaks often about the psychological consequences of being an Israeli hostage or combatant, but has never, as far as we can tell, acknowledged Israeli soldiers deliberately targeting, seizing, abusing and murdering defenceless men, women and children in Gaza, mocking their culture, debasing and destroying their property, desecrating their grave sites and bespoiling their bodies. Will Professor Roth publicly acknowledge that Israeli combatants continue to hold hostage, torture, deprive, mistreat, sexually assault and occasionally kill men, women and children in Israeli detention in contravention of the Geneva Convention? Will Professor Roth speak publicly about the multitude of Israeli combatants so mentally tortured by their war crimes that they are driven to deliberate self-harm, self-destruction and suicide?

Professor Roth, in a recent Jewish Women's Archive podcast (JWA - Oct 2025), celebrates Israeli hostages and combatants drawing, in their moral fortitude and 'heroism,' on their deep ethics and values, their love and imagination, as 'medication' to sustain them through their travails. Of course, Professor Roth also feels for Gazan men, women and children. In reportedly maintaining a dialogue with Gazan psychological therapists, does Professor Roth openly acknowledge the moral depravity of her nation's industrial scale abuse and slaughter of their people?

Without Professor Roth's clarity on these issues, the American Psychoanalytic Association's Henri Parens Symposium risks normalising a perverse moral equivalence between occupier and occupied, between serial perpetrator - within the context of settler colonialism - and on-going victim. It also risks coercing the Palestinian participant, Salem Eid S. Al Arjani, to accede to perverse terms of engagement in which trauma and resilience on both sides are equalised, the nuclear-bomb-scale devastation in Gaza, targeting of children, withholding of means of life, abject suffering of hundreds of thousands in life threatening conditions and serial ceasefire violations all ignored.

We observe that in her work with Israeli survivors of October 7th and its aftermath, Professor Roth explicitly invokes the ghosts of the holocaust (JWA podcast- Oct 2025), recruiting them for the hopeless task of (re)creating a sanctuary of Jewish goodness and inviolability for both living and dead, a new Israel atop Auschwitz. Within this melancholic trap, Roth's therapeutic discourse appears to perpetuate a delusional normalcy. Supposedly 'working through trauma' or 'towards healing,' this depoliticised fantasy of restorative 'love,' 'imagination,' 'ethics' and 'values,' drives deeper the wedge between her with her patients' and nation's protective psychological 'zone of interest,' and the despicable savagery that Israelis collectively endorse, and to which the world bears horrified witness. Whilst such insularity temporarily protects against collective recognition and breakdown, it dangerously sustains this extremely violent melancholia and denies life sustaining and psyche-saving reality to both oppressor and oppressed. One cannot kill one's way out of 'never again.'

We have attempted, without success, to contact Professor Roth and Salem Eid S. AlArjani to establish a dialogue regarding this Symposium and express our heartfelt concerns. We now

simply question your plan to facilitate a psycho-discourse that dangerously risks denying the ever-immanent psychic and physical erasure of the Palestinian people. As a most basic moral principal of this Symposium, this fact, the fact of Israel's on-going reign of terror over the Palestinian people, backed by America and its allies, must surely be acknowledged.

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