

PLEASE HELP

THE GAZA COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM RECOVER AND RESPOND TO ESCALATING NEEDS

Psychologists for Social Responsibility urges our members and friends to contribute to the Gaza Community Mental Health Project, a new PsySR fundraising campaign to support the Gaza Community Mental Health Program (GCMHP), which has suffered extensive damage to its headquarters at a time of escalating demand for its services.



Psychologists for Social Responsibility joins with other advocates of peace, social justice, and human rights in calling for an immediate, concerted, and unrelenting effort to end the devastating violence and the tragic humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

As an organization focused on psychology's contributions to positive social change, PsySR is also painfully aware of the profound psychological impact of the aerial and ground assault on the individuals, families, and communities of Gaza. Several important short-term and long-term psychological consequences of living in a war zone – which undoubtedly describes Gaza today – are now well-documented. They include:

- Psychological distress in war zones is often as great as the physical suffering that receives more widespread attention. For some, including children, coping with issues of family separation, multiple losses, and bereavement can be even more unbearable than other health-related concerns.
- The adverse psychological effects of first-hand exposure to the horrors of war are often exacerbated by pre-existing conditions. People already under stress before an attack –from severe poverty, chronic exposure to harsh imposed restrictions, and past bloodshed – are likely to have stronger and more overwhelming reactions to violence.
- Prolonged fears of attack, powerful feelings of helplessness, and deep worries about family and community heighten the damaging psychological effects – such as depression and PTSD – of life-threatening events and can contribute to ongoing cycles of violence.
- The magnitude of psychological suffering in war zones is determined not only by exposure to life-threatening events but also by people's immediate and continuing access to individual and family supports, along with broader efforts that are locally, culturally, and psychologically-informed.

Ultimately, a just and lasting peace and a brighter future for Palestinians and Israelis alike will require that these psychological consequences and considerations also receive serious and sustained attention.

It is within this context that the recently reported massive damage to the headquarters of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program is particularly distressing. With a special emphasis on vulnerable groups such as children, women, and victims of torture and human rights violations, the GCMHP's staff provides crucial and irreplaceable mental health services to thousands of Gaza residents. These services will be even more broadly and desperately needed in the days and months immediately ahead. Throughout its history, the GCMHP has also been firmly committed to nonviolent resistance and to working for a world where Palestinians and Israelis can live together in peace.

In recognition of these urgent circumstances, PsySR has initiated a fundraising campaign to provide support to the Gaza Community Mental Health Program as it rebuilds and adapts to meet escalating needs. The GCMHP receives funding from a consortium of the Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish governments, but that funding is specifically targeted for programs favored by the consortium. For years, independent groups such as the Gaza Mental Health Foundation in the U.S. and Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, have provided independent funding that can be used more flexibly. Our initiative will supplement these efforts in this time of heightened need.

Organizing help for the GCMHP is one way that we, as psychologists and mental health providers, can counter the despair and hopelessness bred in all parties by this renewed outbreak of seemingly irresolvable violence. In so doing, we make a statement in support of human rights, mutual recognition and security, and pathway to the reconciliation that must underlie a sustainable peace in this region.

We strongly encourage other organizations and individuals to join us in this effort. Today through March 1st, tax-deductible contributions can be made in two ways:

1. Donate online at www.psysr.org/gaza.

2. By check made out to "Grassroots International" (please write "GCMHP" in the memo line) and mailed to PsySR's national headquarters: PsySR, 208 "I" Street NE, Washington, DC 20002.

All donations will be processed through Grassroots International, which has received a four-star rating from independent charity evaluator Charity Navigator, and its online partner Democracy in Action. For more information, please email our Project Coordinators at gazamentalhealth@psysr.org or contact PsySR's executive director Colleen Cordes by phone at 202-543-5347.

PsySR gratefully acknowledges Psychoanalysts for Social Responsibility, the Coalition for an Ethical Psychology, and our other coalition partners in this fundraising campaign.