



Appeal for reflection

As the Professional Association of German Psychologists, we are observing the situation and developments in the Middle East and in Germany with shock and great concern.

The terrible events in Israel and Palestine are very upsetting and polarizing. Extreme events and terrible suffering affect everyone involved, deepen existing rifts and escalate conflicts between cultures and groups.

While people located in the areas continue to directly fear for their own safety, get injured, die, experience psychological trauma, lose loved ones and flee for their lives, all those indirectly affected, including those who are located in Germany, are worried about their family members, friends and acquaintances who are located in the areas and neighboring regions.

People in our country who are not directly affected by the events within their families or closer social environment are also experiencing great psychological tensions, moral dilemmas and cognitive dissonance. Answers and attitudes to difficult questions need to be found. FOR EXAMPLE: What is "right" and what is "wrong" in the current situation? What is "allowed" and what is "forbidden"? How can we show solidarity in such a complex situation and still be against civilian casualties without appearing cold-hearted or as lacking solidarity to others?

These psychological challenges are also hitting us humans after and at the same time as other major crises: The corona pandemic, climate change and wars seem to be completely overwhelming for us. We are also exposed to a highly emotional storm of images on a daily basis, which further increases tension and pressure to act. As a result, we are experiencing scientifically well-researched psychological reactions: Shock, freezing, helplessness, resignation, avoidance and actionism. As psychologists, we would like to remind you that the human and emotionally understandable reactions in moments of crisis, such as cognitive narrowing, friend/foe thinking and impulsive actions, do not usually lead to a long-term resolution of the conflicts and the memories of them.

Spirals of violence and traumatization threaten to push the necessary discussion towards a long-term understanding into a distant future. It seems to be unimaginable for those affected to forget and to enter into a dialog. Those acting usually only perceive themselves as reacting and assume to be right and acting with good intentions. As individuals, members of groups, nations and especially as decision-makers, we are faced with a civilizational challenge which, among other things, requires a "jumping over our shadows" attitude more quickly than ever and enable us to consider and address known necessities for long-term coexistence, even beyond the worst experiences.

Examples of forgiveness and reconciliation between peoples and groups provide us with a cause for reflection about solutions for the future. The high level of escalation and the extent of suffering that has already occurred urgently call for pause and reconsider.

As psychologists, we therefore would like to call on all people to have courage and "jump over their individual shadows". Sustainable change is almost always uncomfortable at the beginning and meets with great resistance. May everyone work within their own means to put an end to this spiral of violence as quickly and sustainably as possible, to find a long-term solution to the conflict and to live together in peace and empathy.

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The Professional Association of German Psychologists (BDP)

... represents the professional interests of psychologists in private practice, self-employed and employed/civil servant psychologists from all fields of activity.

As the recognized professional and specialist association of psychologists, the BDP is the point of contact and informant for politicians, the media and the public in all matters relating to the professional application of psychology and psychotherapy.

The BDP was founded on June 5, 1946 in Hamburg by 21 members of the profession. Today, the association has around 10,000 members in regional groups and sections.

The BDP has its headquarters in the "Haus der Psychologie" in Berlin-Mitte at Köllnischer Park.