

THE VIOLENCE OF LIBERAL RACISM

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What Palestine Reveals About British Mental Health Care

An Original Research Report by
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This report examines what the genocide in Palestine has revealed about the racist logics of British mental healthcare. It does so by exploring the experiences of those who have been managed, silenced or disciplined for Palestine solidarity.

Repression of Palestine solidarity cannot be understood without an understanding of the processes of racialisation underlying Zionism or Islamophobia. Zionism is a settler-colonial ideology which racialises Jews as a monolith in the orbit of Israel, and Palestinians as undeserving of rights and liberty. The global War on Terror racialises Muslims and Arabs as security threats, prone to antisemitism.

This report is based on narrative-based and community-grounded qualitative research. It involved interviews with 30 mental health practitioners and trainees who self-censored or were disciplined for Palestine solidarity.

PART 1: MENTAL HEALTH CARE IS POLITICAL

Part 1 demonstrates how Palestine is explicitly positioned outside the boundaries of acceptable liberal politics in British mental health. Disciplinary measures enforce this erasure, underwriting Palestine's association with terrorism and antisemitism. As a result, staff, students and service users self-censor their solidarity out of fear. If they do speak out, they employ a myriad of "safety strategies" to shield themselves from allegations of antisemitism and terrorism.

PART 2: MENTAL HEALTH CARE IS RACIST

Part 2 uncovers the racial politics of British mental health care, as revealed by the genocide. There are two processes of racialisation at play in the management of Palestine solidarity. First, prevailing counter-terrorism structures racialise and securitise Muslims for their political thoughts and behaviours. Second, Zionism racialises Jews as vulnerable to expressions of Palestine solidarity, which are coded as antisemitic. These racial formations appear most saliently in "anti-racist" spaces, including those led by 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.'

PART 3: MENTAL HEALTH CARE IS NOT SAFE

Part 3 surfaces the clinical implications when British mental health care legitimises Zionism and counterterrorism. It explores how these render mental health spaces unsafe for practitioners and services users alike. Palestinians and Lebanese, particularly those whose family members had been killed by Israel, shared disturbing interactions with Zionist colleagues.

CONCLUSIONS

The legitimacy afforded to counterterrorism and Zionism's racist logics are fundamental to the erasure and repression of Palestine solidarity. A space is not simply safe and anti-racist because it is claimed to be. Racial formations must be theorised and understood. For a healing space to become truly anti-racist, especially with regards to Palestine, it must contend with counterterrorism and Zionism.

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