

VACP Statement on Israeli-Palestinian conflict

We have heard from many of you regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and how the ongoing atrocities have impacted you. Thank you for sharing your stories with us. VACP is an organization that represents over 500 psychologists in the state of Virginia, from diverse political, social, religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. We are hearing calls for support on each side of the conflict, and we are racking our brains trying to figure out how to support our membership through these challenging, polarizing times. VACP is not meant to be a political organization, and in this conflict that has raged for decades, there are no winners. So what do we do? What do we say? How do we help?

First, VACP unreservedly condemns terrorism in all of its forms. We grieve the loss of thousands of innocent men, women, and children, and we are simultaneously angered and shattered by the ongoing, unconscionable acts of violence and terror being perpetrated in the Middle East.

To our Jewish, Israeli, Jewish-sympathizing, and Israeli-sympathizing members, we see you. The terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas¹ on October 7th were deplorable on every level. The subsequent international “Day of Jihad”² that caused your children’s schools and your places of business to close down for fear of safety is unimaginable. Many of us did not realize that such hatred for our Jewish brethren still permeated this state. When we speak about diversity, equity, and inclusion we often forget to name our Jewish colleagues and families, and if that oversight has made you feel “less than” or unimportant, we sincerely apologize. Thank you for sharing your experiences with us. Your current and intergenerational experience of trauma should be part of the conversation. It is abhorrent that your right to life and happiness has ever been questioned, and it is devastating that these questions are still present today.

To our Arab, Muslim, Arab-sympathizing, and Muslim-sympathizing members, we recognize the dire humanitarian crisis that is playing out in Gaza right now. For some of us, this conflict is not something abstract that is happening “over there” but is a very real, very poignant sense of loss and suffering. Members are grieving the death of their loved ones. The death toll soars with thousands who have lost their lives, and scores of the deceased are people who were known and loved by our fellow VACP members. Members are experiencing intense prejudice such that people are losing their jobs and their ability to support their families right here in Virginia. Unfortunately, such prejudices are not new to our Arab and Muslim members, as they see a resurgence in hate reminiscent of that which followed after 9/11.

To be clear, we recognize that the above experiences are happening on both sides of this conflict, with prejudice, hate, death, fear, and trauma permeating the lives of *all* who are impacted. Our hearts go out to all of those impacted by this terrible tragedy and its aftermath. We realize there are those who will never fully recover, and we grieve the loss of the innocent victims of this conflict, including those who have lost their lives in recent hate crimes. VACP unabashedly rejects islamophobia and antisemitism in all its forms. To this end, we support the American Psychological Association’s resolution on dismantling systemic racism is the US (<https://www.apa.org/about/policy/dismantling-systemic-racism>).

We are gravely concerned with the mental health impact that millions of people are experiencing today as a result of this horrific war. We are acutely aware that fear and trauma can have long term physical and psychological impacts. To this end, we would like to provide some resources that might be helpful to VACP members, our families, and our clients. These resources were first published through the American Psychiatric Association and can be found [here](#). For those who work closely with children and families impacted by these events, you might also consider visiting <https://www.nctsn.org/>. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

(NCTSN) has all kinds of resources about childhood trauma, including information about war, refugees, and terrorism.

Understandably, emotions are running high, and VACP is here to encourage kindness and understanding. We understand there have been some recent challenges with postings on various listservs. When you see something posted, consider taking a beat before you respond. When you're considering posting, ask if the posting is going to be helpful. Does it lean more towards the educational or political? Who is the target audience and is this the right forum? Every story VACP hears, we take seriously. We are trying hard to learn and grow and be an inclusive organization. We are trying not to let fear, and grief, and trauma get the better of us right now, and we are hoping that we can be a source of growth and healing for our community. For those who feel like they want to contribute more and have a stronger voice in our VACP community, please don't hesitate to reach out and join the Board. We have lots of different committees and positions, and you may be uniquely qualified to lead us into the next chapter of VACP history. We would welcome you to the table.

With humility,

VACP Board of Directors

1. <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

2. Khaled Mashal, the former political bureau chairman of Hamas, called upon Muslims worldwide to express their support for Palestine on October 13, declaring it the "Day of Jihad." VACP recognizes that Jihad is a term that has become synonymous with terrorism and can elicit further polarization and prejudice against our Muslim colleagues. The term is included as part of a quote and is not meant to offer further insult or injury.