

# The Paradox of Anonymity in Justice: A Palestinian Occupational Therapist's Response to the AnonymOT Collective

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Article abstract

This response critically examines the AnonymOT Collective's commentary on occupational therapy's role in advocating justice for Palestine. Written from the perspective of a Palestinian occupational therapist, it challenges the authors' use of anonymity, highlighting the contradiction it poses to their call for open discourse. The response critiques the possible exclusion of Palestinian voices, the lack of actionable proposals, and the performative framing of advocacy. It emphasizes the need for transparency, accountability, and the inclusion of lived experiences in justice-oriented efforts. This piece calls for genuine solidarity and meaningful action to support occupational therapists and healthcare workers in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in Palestine.

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# Commentary

## The Paradox of Anonymity in Justice: A Palestinian Occupational Therapist's Response to the AnonymOT Collective

YOUSEF R. BABISH

This response critically examines the commentary, *Occupational Therapists Speaking for Justice and Human Rights: From Complicit Silencing to Collective Resistance*, authored by the AnonymOT Collective and published in *Aporia: The Nursing Journal*. As a Palestinian occupational therapist, I approach this article with lived experience, professional insight, and a commitment to justice that is deeply rooted in the realities of *my* people. While the authors frame their work as a bold act of resistance against genocide, their approach seems to be riddled with contradictions, omissions, and an unsettling lack of transparency.

## The Contradiction of Anonymity

The AnonymOT Collective claims to advocate for open and public discourse while operating under a pseudonym. This decision, ostensibly taken to avoid reprisals, raises significant ethical and intellectual concerns. Advocacy for justice demands accountability (Jadallah, 2024; Ramugondo, 2024), yet anonymity denies readers the ability to evaluate the authors' lived experiences, professional backgrounds, and personal stakes in the issues discussed. Positionality is not a theoretical abstraction but a necessary foundation for ethical engagement (Junior et al., 2024). By obscuring their identities, the authors undermine their credibility and the solidarity they purport to champion. This contradiction casts doubt on the sincerity of their claims and diminishes the impact of their arguments.

As a Palestinian occupational therapist, I find this anonymity particularly troubling. My work and advocacy require me to navigate systemic oppression and risks, yet I stand by my name and identity. The authors' choice to remain anonymous

suggests a privilege of detachment—a luxury unavailable to those directly affected by the injustices they discuss (Córdoba, 2020; Leonardo, 2004; Minarik, 2017). Those who claim to speak for justice must embody the courage and accountability they demand from others (Ventres et al., 2018).

### Possible Exclusion of Palestinian Voices

While the commentary centres on the genocide in Palestine (Amnesty International, 2024), it fails to adequately incorporate the voices and experiences of Palestinian occupational therapists. The authors' sweeping critique of institutional complicity and silence is undermined by their failure to foreground those most affected by the crisis. Were Palestinian therapists from Gaza or the West Bank consulted or included in this work? The article does not make this clear. This omission is not a minor oversight; it is a glaring flaw that perpetuates the very silencing the authors claim to resist.

As someone who has practised occupational therapy in the West Bank and is part of the Palestinian Occupational Therapy Association (POTA), I am acutely aware of the challenges faced by *my community*. The destruction of healthcare infrastructure, the targeting of professionals, and the daily struggles of practising under occupation (Beaumont, 2024; Euro-Med Human Rights, 2024; Khatib et al., 2024) are not abstract issues—they are lived realities. Any meaningful critique of professional complicity must centre these experiences, not marginalise them further.

### Problematic Framing and Generalizations

The authors' framing of the crisis relies heavily on generalisations and selective evidence. While they rightly critique the silence of occupational therapy's governing bodies, their analysis lacks nuance and depth. For example, their discussion of the World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) fails to consider the complexities of international advocacy within highly politicised contexts. Critiquing silence is necessary, but a clear understanding of the barriers and opportunities for action within professional organisations must accompany it.

Furthermore, the commentary's reliance on broad claims about occupational justice and human rights often feels disconnected from the specificities of the Palestinian context. The authors' invocation of anti-oppressive competencies and ethical responsibilities, while rhetorically powerful, risks becoming performative without concrete actions or proposals. Advocacy must move beyond abstract principles to address the tangible needs and realities of affected communities.

### The Role of Social Media and Public Discourse

The commentary also highlights the role of social media in

amplifying voices and mobilising resistance. However, the authors' engagement with these platforms raises questions about their objectives and accountability. Advocacy on social media is not without its pitfalls, including the risk of performative allyship and the commodification of suffering. The authors' anonymity further complicates this dynamic, as it shields them from scrutiny while they critique others for their silence.

As a Palestinian therapist, I have witnessed the power of social media to galvanise support and raise awareness. However, I have also seen how it can be used to tokenise struggles and obscure the voices of those most affected. The authors must critically reflect on their use of these platforms and ensure that their advocacy does not perpetuate the very dynamics they seek to challenge.

### Professional Complicity and the Way Forward

The commentary's critique of professional complicity is both necessary and timely. However, it must be accompanied by a more robust analysis of the structural and systemic factors that enable such complicity. The authors' call for governing bodies to break their silence is important, but it must be matched with concrete strategies for achieving this goal. What specific actions should WFOT and other organisations take? How can occupational therapists collectively hold these bodies accountable?

Moreover, the authors must acknowledge their role within these systems. Advocacy is not a position of moral superiority; but a practice of accountability and solidarity (Emery-Whittington & Te Maro, 2018; Gilio-Whitaker, 2019; Shaffer, 1979). By failing to fully engage with the complexities of their positionality and the limitations of their approach, the authors risk reproducing the very power dynamics they seek to dismantle.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the commentary by the AnonymOT Collective raises important questions about justice, silence, and complicity within the occupational therapy profession. However, its contradictions, omissions, and lack of transparency undermine its impact and credibility. As a Palestinian occupational therapist, I assert my right to know the identities of those who claim to speak on behalf of my people. I also call on the authors to critically reflect on their practices and to centre the voices and experiences of those directly affected by the injustices they discuss.

Advocacy for justice is not a theoretical exercise; it is a practice rooted in courage, accountability, and solidarity. If the AnonymOT Collective wishes to contribute meaningfully to this work, they must embody these principles in both word and action. Anything less risks perpetuating the very silencing and complicity they seek to resist.

## Acknowledgement

Through this, I honour the extraordinary resilience, courage, and dedication of occupational therapists and all healthcare workers in Gaza and the West Bank. Amid unimaginable challenges, they continue to provide care, hope, and support to their communities. Their tireless commitment to human dignity and well-being, even in the face of systemic violence and devastation, inspires the global healthcare community. I reaffirm my responsibility to amplify their voices and advocate for justice.

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