



FTA Newsletter



A return to humanity: hope or utopia?

Introduction to the APF Conference

"War and Forced Migration. Family Losses and Transformations."

July 4-5, 2025, Rome.

Maurizio Andolfi

Let's begin with a few questions ...

Who are we here in this Auditorium?

We are representatives of the helping professions, with diverse areas of expertise (psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers, family and cultural mediators), who care deeply at both a clinical and psychosocial level with the suffering and desperation of many people and families in difficult situations; with their grief, with their tragic losses, with intra-family abuse and violence, and with social disintegration, in particular with marginalized communities, of which migrants and the homeless represent a significant portion.

Moreover, we are educators who at various levels (university and psychotherapy schools), teach the core principles of systemic thinking and the study of family relationships and their development. We also teach the methods and strategies to foster family harmony and well-being, mutual respect amongst family members, as well as being able to listen to every individual's reasons and needs, including children and adolescents, in order to foster better integration into the social fabric of society.

As such, we do not only represent helping professions but we are more holistically actively operating in our communities towards issues tied to gender identity, ethnic and racial identity, poverty, social justice, climate change and other man-made detriments to planet Earth – with considered care & mindfulness. If we fully take this on board, we should consider our work to be a *mission* more than a mere profession, a mission that embraces fundamental values and that has at its core a specific objective to accomplish.

Who are we in a world that is increasingly disrupted by wars, massacres, genocides and armed invasions justified by the criminal megalomania of those who wield military and economic power?

This is a difficult question to answer in a concrete and realistic way and I hope these two days of work will help us to address these concepts and issues and to draft an answer.

The Assisi International Conference with its global resonance, and the Manifesto that was subsequently created, led us to declare some essential principles of our mission as systemic psychotherapists, such as "facilitating those relational processes that strengthen families and help them cope with normal life events but also with traumatic losses associated with violence, war, and forced migration, which we are currently witnessing on an unprecedented global scale."

Moreover, the Assisi Manifesto and the Conference that is about to commence, featuring witness accounts from many speakers working in war zones and forced migration, represent a call to action, a condemnation of these atrocities and an exhortation to promote social justice and peace in any form and place. Furthermore, it fundamentally rejects the idea of war as a solution to global conflicts, as it is brought forward and imposed on us daily by criminal, megalomaniacal and inhumane world leaders.

This leads us to reflect on the political role of systemic therapists, as suggested ten years ago by Joachin Schweitzer, President of the German Family Therapy Association, who

beautifully outlined the reasons and processes of acting politically as therapists. This text was cited by Valeria Pomini in the latest newsletter of the Family Therapy Academy.

Us and Them

An ancient, arbitrary, and damaging distinction against peaceful global coexistence, and one that has become even more entrenched in recent years and marred by worrying sovereigntist movements and the belligerent use of religions, is the one made between the Western world—and those who are not part of it, be that African, Arab, or Asian.

We are white, we are Christians, and we are Europeans. We are those who, along with North America, hold a large portion of the economic and decision-making power, to the point of strongly influencing the fate of the world. We are the privileged society that, with old and new colonialisms, have plundered entire continents like Africa, only to then erect walls and detention centers for anyone who dares even approach this opulent world in the feeble attempt to take back a few shreds of what has been taken from them. Yet, we Europeans consider ourselves the "cradle of civilization."

As early as the 1960s, a French sociologist described an inevitable phenomenon: the Africanization of Europe. And he was right. In 2019, Steven Smith, an expert on this poorest continent, predicted in his book that by 2050, one in four Europeans will be of African descent. This is similar to what has transpired on the West Coast of the United States, where Hispanic Americans have had a significant cultural, economic, and social impact.... Trump be damned!!

It's almost a law of physics: if on one hand there's nothing and on the other there's too much, change is inevitable, and all right-wing and far-right European governments win elections on the threat of an African invasion, which in reality entails the challenge of social equality that has never existed. Perhaps the only exception is sports, and particularly the world of soccer, where in just a few decades African players have ended up surpassing the much-vaunted European players.

I would like to address the topic of Israel and the Palestinian people, through some of my professional experiences from over 50 years.

For over 50 years, I have contributed to the systemic and family training of many Israeli therapists in Rome. Among them, relevant professionals and internationally recognized figures such as Joel Elizur, and Noga Nabarro. I have participated in international conferences and led multiple workshops at the Kibbutz Institute in Tel Aviv. I lived for a while in a kibbutz when it seemed like a unique model to replace the nuclear family. I have conducted in-person consultations with numerous Jewish families who bore the physical scars of Holocaust trauma passed down from generation to generation, in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Herzliya.

I came into contact with the Palestinian professional community through Mustafa Qossoqsi, who graduated in Clinical Psychology in Rome and collaborated with the Andolfi Foundation during its early years. Together we shared some of his fantastic experiences called "Seeds of Peace," a successful attempt to introduce "Seeds of Peace" among Israeli and Palestinian students through stays in Italy. With a large group of Palestinian therapists and social workers, we had planned a family therapy training program organized by the Family Therapy Academy in Gaza, a few months before October 7, 2023. This program obviously never transpired after the dramatically tragic events that has occurred over the last 20 months.

In 50 years of recurring travels to Israel, I have witnessed firsthand the conditions of racial segregation and military oppression of the Palestinian people in a form of apartheid very similar to that of South Africa, captured movingly in the documentary "Wrong Side of the Bus." Segregation and denial of the most fundamental rights are clearly visible to all, never truly challenged from either Israel or the rest of the world, complicit for decades to the Palestinian genocide.

Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, is one of the few authoritative voices. In her latest book: "When the World Sleeps," she writes: "*How far will we go, while the world seems to be asleep like stone and cannot keep its eyes open in the face of a wound as great as an entire population.*"

Gaza is no more... only the rubble of a land where two and a half million Palestinians once lived, after months of bombings and attacks with a combined power far greater than that of the Hiroshima atomic bomb.

I have been caring for children and their well-being for 55 years. We all know, as parents, grandparents and educators, the sacred value of a child: for a child, we will sacrifice our lives. No religion will ever accept or justify killing children, either Ukrainian, Israeli or Palestinian.

The children of Gaza, brutally killed in unspeakable numbers, crippled, hungry, thirsty, orphaned of everything, are the final frontier of our humanity.



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