

# Therapists as Advocates

## A Conversation with Helen Bamber<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Helen Bamber began her career in 1945 at the age of 20, working with survivors of the Nazi Holocaust in the former concentration camp of Bergen Belsen. She dedicated the rest of her life to people who have experienced torture, human trafficking, slavery and other forms of extreme human cruelty. She was renowned for her energetic compassion, helping thousands of men, women and children to confront the horror and brutality of their experiences, and supporting them in their pursuit of dignity and human rights.

Helen Bamber's intricate focus on the individual needs of each person she worked with gave her the ability to navigate the complexity of trauma and human responses to it. She pioneered methods to enable her clients to achieve what she termed »*Creative Survival*« which is delivered within an individually tailored Model of Integrated Care. This includes psychological therapy, medico-legal documentation of injuries, medical advice and access to healthcare services, legal, welfare and housing support, a therapeutic community for parents and children and a creative arts and skills programme to support the challenges of integration through further education. These methods are in practice today at the Helen Bamber

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1 First published in »Menschenrechte und Gesundheit«, see [www.amnesty-gesundheit.de](http://www.amnesty-gesundheit.de) (16.06.2017). The version in this paper has been re-edited.

Foundation (HBF), the London human rights charity which she founded in 2005.

An interview with Helen Bamber was conducted by Freihart Regner as part of his doctoral thesis on »normative empowerment.«<sup>2</sup> The interview took place at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture in London on 18 September 2002 and at the Evangelische Akademie, Bad Boll, Germany on 2 October 2002.<sup>3</sup> The lecture paper ‘Therapists As Advocates’ was presented at the International EFI Conference in Berlin at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences in September 2015 together with a retrospective on the life and work of Helen Bamber and the ongoing work of the Helen Bamber Foundation.<sup>4</sup> Here, the conversation from Regner’s interview has been organised to form a lecture which is in keeping with Helen Bamber’s spoken words.

## 2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THROUGH DOCUMENTATION OF SURVIVORS’ EXPERIENCES

»An important task for a therapist is to recognise what a person has suffered through the careful documentation of their experiences, as well as verbal affirmation. There is no acceptance by perpetrators that torture has been inflicted, so there is a climate of denial. It is such a shameful and difficult subject for people that they repress their feelings about what has happened to them. Therefore the first thing that I do is talk to them about

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- 2 »Normative Empowerment describes a basic conceptual attitude for psychosocial and therapeutic practice with politically traumatised persons based on the values of human rights. The main theme is that of empowering people who have experienced traumatogenic powerlessness and injustice and supporting them in claiming their rights. Therapeutic efforts should be made within the framework of and permeated by this political and legal conceptualisation.« cf. Regner (2006).
  - 3 Client cases that are described in the course of this interview have been adjusted where necessary to ensure that confidentiality is protected.
  - 4 By invitation from the Germany Health Professional Network of Amnesty International.

their experience, acknowledge it and document their story, their injuries and their psychological difficulties.

The taking of history, the taking of testimony, the documentation of a person's suffering by doctors, therapists and others, whether there are physical signs of injury or not, is significant. It provides acknowledgement and validation of survivors' experiences. It can support their claim for asylum, and it also becomes a historical document which could eventually be used in the International Criminal Court at The Hague or other legal forums where perpetrators are brought to justice.«

### **3. THE THERAPIST AS ADVOCATE**

»I am talking about the therapist as an advocate, not solely as a therapist. When a person sees that the therapist is part of their search for justice, and is not only working with their internal world, a different relationship is formed. As therapists who work with survivors of human rights violations we are operating within a political arena, so it is important that we declare this through our work and through documentation of our clients' experiences.

Survivors present to us with many physical and practical problems that need to be addressed. As an advocate the therapist will take up the practical and legal issues of a client's case, as well as looking at the clinical treatment that they need. I recommend a combination of therapy, practical skills and adaptations. You cannot begin to treat a person appropriately if they are desperately concerned about their future, about the past, and about the present. What your client brings to you from the refugee world are the practical things: lack of housing, lack of money, not being able to work or study, being separated from their families. I help them to register with good NHS (National Health Service) doctors and we will take up the case at various levels: housing, welfare, health, asylum, education, occupation and the legal procedures for family reunion.

The question of justice then becomes one for your own society: do they have, for example, the right to access appropriate medical care? Will they be treated with the same respect as other people? If not, their sense of injustice may be carried on from the country of origin to the country in which they find themselves. Many of them have a sense of injustice not

only about what has happened to them and the political dilemma from which they came, but also about their situation now. Their backgrounds are often disbelieved by government officials, and they may be refused registration at NHS medical practices due to a reluctance to accept them, and the challenges integral to working with them, for example the need to use interpreting services.

Then of course there is their claim for asylum. They usually have to face many legal obstacles before they can, if they are lucky, be granted leave to remain in the UK. Many are initially refused protection by the Government due to a stated disbelief about their case, so their sense of injustice becomes magnified. They feel that they have come to a country in hope of receiving justice and recognition and have found that there is none. I am sure it is the same in Germany and throughout Europe.«

#### **4. THE SENSE OF INJUSTICE OF POLITICAL ACTIVISTS IN EXILE: THE CHILEAN GROUP**

»I am working with a group of middle-aged Chileans who took part in the political struggle against Pinochet's regime in the 1970s. They lost that struggle, they were tortured and some of their relatives were ›disappeared‹. When they arrived in the UK, I was working on Chile for Amnesty International and we documented their cases at the Amnesty International Medical Group.

Many of them had been university students or trade union leaders in Chile, but they had not found a rightful place for their skills in our society. They said they wanted me to run a group for them because they were finding it difficult. They still had one foot in Chile, one foot in this country and their children did not always understand what had happened to them and why they had come to the UK. When I first went to the community centre that they had set up in the North of England, they sat me down at a table with a pen and paper. Everyone had bits of paper and it was like a trade union or a political meeting. I went along with this and I didn't change it. We just talked about what was worrying them. So I think the group I ran was a mixture of a political meeting and a therapeutic group, although they never saw themselves as a therapeutic group at first. They just wanted an understanding of how to go forward.

When Pinochet was arrested in London in 1998,<sup>5</sup> these Chileans had been living in the UK for over 20 years and about one year before his arrest, I had begun to work with the group once again, this time as a therapist.

I found that they had crushed and submerged a great deal of their longing for justice. They had not acknowledged it, they did not know it existed anymore. They were struggling in a fairly hostile society to find a way to bring up their children, to battle with the schools about remarks made about their children, to keep alive something that was very special in their own culture. They cried a lot, they were grieving, and I said to them, ›Do you understand that you have never really grieved? This is why you are finding it so difficult. You have never cried, you have never grieved for all your losses and you have never grieved communally. You have fought each other about your political views and your different political positions in Chile, but you haven't grieved‹. So the group had re-started in this way.

We had kept the group going over a period of a year and one day a man said, ›This is a therapeutic group!‹ *He* said it, I didn't say it. So one aspect of the process was their grief, and saying goodbye to Chile, realising that they would not go back, that there was no place for them there. They knew that they would now be called ›gringos‹ in Chile and they would not feel at home there. They did not feel at home in England really either. I think therapy is always about reality and here it was about coming to terms with who they were, what they had, and how to speak to their children. The main problems that they brought to me were about their children. What they often say is ›I live only for the children‹, and that is dangerous.

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5 ››General Augusto Pinochet was indicted for human rights violations committed in his native Chile by Spanish magistrate Baltasar Garzón on 10 October 1998. He was arrested in London six days later and held for a year and a half before finally being released by the British government in March 2000. His arrest in London made the frontpage of newspapers worldwide as not only did it involve the head of the military dictatorship that ruled Chile between 1973 and 1990, but it was the first time that several European judges applied the principle of universal jurisdiction, declaring themselves competent to judge crimes committed by former heads of state, despite local amnesty laws.« See [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indictment\\_and\\_arrest\\_of\\_Augusto\\_Pinochet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indictment_and_arrest_of_Augusto_Pinochet) [08.04.2015]; Amnesty International (2013).

Another aspect of this process was to give them back a sense of their resilience and to reflect upon whether they could accept their situation. One woman who was teaching Spanish part-time at the university, cried a lot about her child. She said ›I can't even speak English as well as my child does‹. I asked her, ›But how many languages does your child speak?‹ She said, ›Well she speaks English‹. I said, ›And how many languages do you speak?‹ She spoke about four! I didn't say anything else but everybody laughed of course, and she laughed. There were tears and laughter. So you can do quite small interventions in a group, it was charming, she is actually a very intellectual woman.

The man who had first called it a therapeutic group had realised that they were dealing with their feelings rather than their political concepts. He understood this because he had cried a lot in the group, and it was something that I have rarely seen in a communal setting, except at a catastrophic event where you get sobbing and screaming and crying. Here you got sustained, uncontrollable sobbing by everybody there, and it was a *releasing process*. All of this happened before Pinochet was arrested, it was nothing to do with him, it was to do with the beginning of the therapeutic group. It was not easy to run that group because of their political positions. Just imagine starting a group with everybody with pens and papers, to a point where it became understood that we were dealing with our feelings.«

## **5. PINOCHET'S ARREST IN LONDON, 1998–2000**

›When Pinochet was arrested in London, the Chileans mobilised. They had always maintained a community centre where they put on Chilean activities, taught their children Spanish and so forth. Now they formed themselves into a committee with computers and telephones. I managed this situation from the therapeutic point of view by being very open with them. I had known them first when they were on hunger strike, when they had been tortured and needed our help. Now, instead of being victims upon whom we called for assistance, they became active in trying to bring Pinochet to justice.

The early documentation of their cases had become highly significant: if we had not documented the cases of these Chilean exiles when they first

came to the UK, we would not have been in a position to take part in the legal case against Pinochet. The group gathered new information from Chile and asked Chileans who were living in other countries to come to us so that we could document their cases.

Our aim has always been to advocate using evidence that we have produced. In other words, we do not just speak, we speak only if we have the evidence, and we had a good deal of evidence against Pinochet. We had many documented cases of torture and we had people with us who had been tortured. I think that sometimes therapists lose the capacity to see their client as a person who has potency and strengths and resilience, and we have to work with that, as well as with victimhood. I had worked for a long time with the victimhood in this Chilean community, and I saw the possibility of something else. We began to work together, joining with Amnesty International and human rights lawyers in order to provide evidence.

The Chilean group was invigorated by this event. Although Pinochet was not brought to full trial, their sense of injustice was alleviated to some extent because they were able to see him appear in a magistrates' court in London to hear the allegations against him. They felt he had been shamed and reduced, and that was very important for them. The whole world, and the world's media, was speaking and writing about Pinochet's crimes. People do not generally use the word ›justice‹, but they did in the Pinochet context because the word ›justice‹ was being used publicly all over the place: ›Bring Pinochet to justice, bring the torturers to justice‹ and it is still being used because torturers are being pursued now in Chile. Suddenly Chilean people who had submerged their feelings in order to survive within family and work settings in the UK began to feel potent.

I asked those who felt able to speak if they were prepared to take part in interviews. I think that one has to use people's own sense of advocacy when it is appropriate and if they feel able to do it. You have to be open with them about what an interview means though: it has expectations, you want change to come from it and change does not always come. You have to be very honest, but you are also speaking to people who have been politically active and have not lost their capacity to be realistic and understand the limitations. I accompanied them to all the interviews that took place – CNN, BBC, the World Service. For them, being able to speak to the media was empowering. I was with them during the interviews and I was interviewed many times myself.

It was a very difficult thing for them to do. They spoke about their dreams, their shattered dreams and their torture. I am not keen on the word ›healing‹ any more but it was a *healing process* for them. This is where the therapeutic aspect came in, because it was upsetting and it brought back many memories and a lot of pain. It was important that we had the time and space to talk about what it was doing to them and to be open about whether they'd had enough, and if they felt that what they had done was sufficient.

I accompanied the group in the role of therapist and advocate. I have never been able to separate the two because I find that advocacy is part of the therapeutic process. Whilst I dealt with a lot of their tears, their pain and their anger, I was also able to accompany them to speak publicly, to go to the House of Lords, to go out on the streets and see the public interest in the case. So there had been preparation for Pinochet, and I suppose, I have to be honest, I am a political activist as well as a therapist. It is a double act which you have to be very careful about and you have to be honest about it. In any case, everybody was prepared for the interviews, and the whole group did very well.«

## 6. THE PINOCHET EVENT IN RETROSPECT

›The dynamics of the group changed after the Pinochet event: immediately afterwards there was a sense of realism. They were politically aware enough to know that there was not going to be a full trial in the UK despite enormous efforts. However, they felt that something of a victory had been obtained because they had been *acknowledged* and they now felt there was a future for justice. They knew that some torturers in Chile had become frightened and fled South, and Pinochet had been humiliated.

After Pinochet left the UK the group still had many of the same problems that they had before. But had there been a change? We looked afterwards at what had happened: did they have more sense of justice? I think they did. They personally had more sense of justice and recognition. They had been able to speak publicly about being tortured and persecuted, they had been interviewed in the media, they had spoken and been *heard*, acknowledged by politicians on all sides. It's true they had to go back to being cleaners, or teaching Spanish or living off benefits – and many had been seriously damaged physically and psychologically by the torture they

had suffered.<sup>6</sup> However, there is something about political and legal justice that recognises what has happened to you. This is what we see refugees suffer every day: a total lack of acknowledgement. So it is to do with justice in emotional terms.

Speaking to their children had formed the essence of the therapeutic group from its beginning, because they felt they had lost contact with them. They were keeping many of their Chilean characteristics going, but the children were not so interested in what their parents had to say: they wanted to integrate, to be like every other child, to play football. This changed when Pinochet was arrested in the UK, because the children saw their parents in a different light, and we were able to work with the issues that emerged.

I suppose what also came out of the group concerned their differences from each other. Some were originally from very simple backgrounds and others from far more sophisticated backgrounds. Their politics had varied depending on which political organisation they had belonged to, which always matters terribly to them of course. So they had other difficulties in being thrown together as a community, which we ought to understand. Had they remained in their own environment they would have kept within their own social structure, whereas this group, because they were Chilean exiles, stayed together. They had enormous differences, so this was something else we needed to think about in the group: the differences between them which they had never thought about because they had always seen themselves collectively as Chilean *políticos*. This also touches on the question of justice, because there was envy in the group, and we had to acknowledge it. As we got deeper into the therapeutic content, we began to talk about the anger and envy that existed within the group and the feelings that members had towards each other. There was also a hierarchy of suffering, as to who had suffered the most. So there was injustice within the group and we were able to resolve some of this together.«

»I do not think that we could have achieved all that we did without the opportunity presented by Pinochet coming to London. It was such an extraordinary event, Pinochet being arrested by policemen in London,

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6 See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indictment\\_and\\_arrest\\_of\\_Augusto\\_Pinochet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indictment_and_arrest_of_Augusto_Pinochet) [08.04.2015]; Amnesty International (2013).

which is crazy, which is wonderful! I do believe that the work we did in the group – hard, grinding work – was good preparation. They had become more mature, I would say. Who knows how they would have reacted if his arrest had happened earlier? It could have been a negative experience with the group and their difficult feelings with each other.

We spoke a lot in the group about being defeated and what ›defeat‹ means. One day a man said, ›I'm not going to be able to go back to Chile to live. I will visit, I will be called a 'gringo' and I will come back again. My dream of Chile has gone.‹ So they were able to let go of a dream. However, he said something interesting: ›There was a defeat but it wasn't 'mine' or 'our' defeat‹. He meant that in losing them, Chile had lost something good, but they had each kept their integrity. This is what the group really achieved: the sense that there was integrity in the group and within each individual. It had not been lost and this helped them in quite a profound way.«

## **7. RECOGNISING LACK OF JUSTICE: TURKISH-KURDS**

›Of course we see many people in this country who have not had the opportunity of the Chilean group. Sometimes you need to recognise with a client that they may never get the justice they want, and that their country may not move towards the progress that they wanted to see happen. It is a difficult job for the therapist but it is important. I see Turkish-Kurdish people who have been persecuted since they were children. Their villages were ransacked, their cattle were killed, they were persecuted in the schools and not allowed to speak their Kurdish language. They have a long history of persecution and tragedy and they find living in exile very difficult. Some go on hunger strike when there is a protest in Turkey or when people are killed. It is a collective sense of injustice and they carry it with them like a flag, a kind of emblem.

Many of them make a living here. Once they are established, they set up their workshops and their kebab shops and they become quite competitive. They do very well sometimes, although not always. We are also working with impoverished Turkish-Kurds, many of whom face enforced return to Turkey. I am fighting their cases.

I think that the people I work with carry a sense of loss and injustice that they will always carry. It is not the only thing that they bring to the therapy room, but it's an inevitable part of it. Having their histories acknowledged means a great deal to them. They are impressed that there is a file with their *history* – not only their injuries, not just their suffering and the medication that their doctor prescribes for them, but their history, their story. They know that there may be a time when this can be used, when torturers from Turkey are brought to trial. We cannot be sure of that, but we have to work for it together.«

## **8. MOVING FROM A POLITICAL STRUGGLE TO A HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLE: A WOMAN FROM THE MIDDLE EAST**

»Making an issue of the sense of injustice is, in a way, therapeutic too. It can be quite empowering. I am working with a woman from a Middle Eastern country who was very political and had joined a hardline, militant opposition group. She was tortured, raped, all of it. She is now beginning to realise that their way of trying to fight while they are here in exile is not changing anything in her home country, it is just hurting them a great deal. I think many people move from a more militant political struggle to a human rights struggle once they are living in exile. They need to think in terms of establishing their rights under the various UN Conventions. I believe it is our job to help them to do this, to understand that there are international Conventions that are there to protect them.

It is not that she is giving up her political beliefs – I would be the last person to expect that – but we have looked at how she can empower her community here to get what they need; to be able to speak their original language, to teach the children that language so they do not lose it, to have a community that keeps alive many of the things that are important to them. These are not just the political issues, but can be food, music, fun, anything. We helped this woman to get asylum eventually, and now she is taking up a childcare course so that she can empower fellow women here to do other things while their children are being taken care of. They do not have to just be a servant in their home, but they too can learn English, go and study, or engage in other activities.

It has given her a tremendous sense of justice for women. She does not use the word justice, and I am not sure she considers it that way, but she thinks about women becoming more creative, and having a place and a voice in their society. It is not just about women being able to join a political struggle anymore, because many women of her ethnic group have played a strong role in that. She will always feel part of that struggle, but she is doing something now which is giving her the courage to see herself in a much broader way, continuing with her studies and doing challenging things on her course. At the moment it is the men who go to the coffee house and into the community and the women who stay at home. This way she is doing something quite imaginative for the future of her community here, which is actually about justice.«

## **9. INJUSTICE IN FAMILY, CULTURE AND POLITICS: A WOMAN FROM EUROPE**

»I think it is a mistake to only consider the political arena. I have clients who bring a sense of injustice which originates from their home life, so the therapist needs to consider their childhood, to go through the experience of their family home, their school and – only then – their political life. I am not sure you can simply separate each of these out, or look only at political injustice.

I am working with a European woman who was abducted and raped by soldiers during a war in her home country. Such was the tragedy of her experience of the war that she has never been able to disclose it to anyone. She says that because of her community's patriarchal culture she could be rejected, or possibly even killed. Now there are two areas of injustice here: one is the terrible tragedy of war, in which innocent people can be taken and abused. Another is the fact that, after having experienced this tragedy, she cannot receive the normal sympathy, care and understanding from her community that one would hope for, quite the contrary. We must look at this as well, and explore it with our client.

This woman also experienced injustice in her family home from childhood: she was not allowed to do the things she wanted, not permitted to study, and she was treated as a kind of servant in the household. She had to be extremely obedient, any sign of deviation from expected behaviour

would result in a beating. Dancing, singing, all the things that young people like to enjoy were denied to her. Then there was an arranged marriage imposed upon her. So it would be a mistake to look only at the political scene and the tragedy that happened to her. Did she think that it was unjust that because she is a woman she had to be obedient, that she had to take off her father's coat and serve him? She just said to me ›This is how it is in my home country‹.

My work then was in finding out how she *felt* about it. Without using the word ›injustice‹, how did this make her feel as a young person? What did she feel then about her parents, about her home, about her society? I think she feels that the situation for women in her country and in other countries is terrible, but she is not looking for political justice for herself. She has grown up in a system which was imposed upon her by her own community, quite apart from the brutality of the war. She had felt that there was no one to help her in her predicament. I find that people do not use the word ›justice‹ very much, there is not always an expectation of justice in the region that they were brought up in, but they do seek it in different ways. I would use the word ›right‹ in my discussions with her: did she feel it was *right*? What was *wrong* in that situation, for her?

I wanted her to be able to express her feelings, because she has two children and she does not believe that she can be a good role model for them. My great concern is about generational perpetuation of trauma, so I explored with her how she felt when her needs were not acknowledged by her family members, and how we can begin to change how she reacts to her own children; how she feels about herself and about them. She loves her children very much, but she would shrug and say, ›Well that's how it is‹. I might then say to her, ›Well do you think we can change that, and if so, how?‹ ›Do you want to change things for your children or do you want to go on in the same way that you knew before?‹ I would not rush to look at how we can make changes, but rather allow her to express herself, and enable her to do it herself, without guilt feelings. Every person has feelings for their parents, no matter how questionable their actions may be. I always work with clients who have suffered this kind of injustice within their communities on the understanding that their parents did not know anything else. They were born into a situation in which everything they did was simply what everyone else did, and it was acceptable. There is no need to blame her parents or even her community, that is just ›how it is.‹ However

now she is in a different situation, in a new country, how does she feel about what she wants to do?

She is an extremely bright woman, very clever. It would give her a tremendous sense – whether it is justice, it may be – to fulfil her dream to go to university. This is possible for a mother in a Western society. I do not know whether her husband would allow it, but I believe it would be recognition of all that she lost in the course of her early childhood when she was forbidden to study. I hope that by working with both the husband and the wife there may eventually be recognition on his part that she should go to university. This does not put right the early injustice in her family or the terrible injustice of the war which assaulted her so badly, but it is one way of looking at how she can achieve something that was absolutely denied to her. She was told by her community and by the events of the war itself that she was nothing, deserved nothing. So in this case working with the inner world is not enough, certain practical things need to be put in place. It is worth considering that there is an Open University<sup>7</sup> which enables people to study at home. There are many other things that are needed for her, but being able to pursue her education would give her a sense of recognition.

Change – and this is a political word really – change can be made. She is excited by the idea of change. Although she does not feel she can get justice for herself, she might be able to provide more justice for her children. She is interested in looking at the ways I have been able to work with her in relation to her husband. When she married him she was very young and she wasn't able to assert herself. Now she has told him - not asked him, but told him – that she is coming to see me because she thinks it will help her with her asylum claim, her poor health and her future. She also believes that it helps her to manage her children better. This did not happen overnight, it took time. I go very slowly and it's difficult. You could not put on paper what you have achieved in one session because it is so small. However, there are little areas of change, and recently she has brought her children to a session with me for the first time.«

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7 The Open University is a public distance learning and research university, and one of the biggest universities in the UK for undergraduate education: [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk).

## 10. THE CONCEPT OF JUSTICE

»I think my irritation towards the concept of justice when we started with this interview was really to do with the fact that as therapists working in Europe with people who have been tortured, abused, who have been war victims, misused as slaves – we are ourselves working in an atmosphere of injustice towards our clients. I mean the injustice of the rhetoric that is used politically and publicly against them, the asylum legislation that becomes more and more punitive, the harsh decisions to send people back to their countries when we know perfectly well that they are likely to be tortured or ›disappeared‹. So the question of justice applies to us as much as it does to our client, and it forces us into the role of being an advocate for them. It is irritating because it brings out the advocate in us, the sense of injustice on behalf of our client and on behalf of ourselves.

I have never really been preoccupied with what my father called ›the enemy‹. He once said to me, ›Don't waste your hatred and your time with the enemy. You'll recognise the enemy, you'll work against the enemy, so don't waste your energy. Attend to the bystander, attend to the people who allow these things to happen!‹ I think that in a way my anger and my irritation about injustice is most definitely towards my own Government and government policy. What the client brings to me in many cases – not all, I am not going to generalise here – is the injustice of the system in which they now find themselves, and the final disappointment and disillusion from believing that the United Kingdom is a country where they will be given a full and fair hearing. This is a final piece of the destruction in their belief system.

I believe that a sense of justice becomes applicable only when people are more settled and stabilised. They may have obtained their safety in the country, which is something, they may still be fighting for housing and the right to work and to be accepted, but they will be in a better position now to look back upon their original tragedy. It is then that you are able to unravel some of the most difficult feelings that people have about what is, very often, their lost political cause. Most refugees have lost the political battle, the change that they wanted to bring about in their country. This is a good point to talk and listen, to flush out and try to disentangle the complicated feelings that people have about lack of justice.

So justice is an essential component of therapy in such cases, perhaps the most important component, but we do not verbalise it very much. I think we should try to explore it more. [...] We do not often see the *original* search for justice, but I believe that this search goes on with people in some way. With the Chilean group for instance, they do not expect to have justice in the way that they wanted it originally. They have had a success with the Pinochet event, they saw him humiliated and they got a lot from that, above all a sense of recognition. However, justice is also about the public, the host community, about an understanding of who they are and what they are. For example, there is an ›Artists in Exile‹ group, which has exhibitions, music, art and theatre. This is one way of expressing to the public whatever they want to express. Public recognition is terribly important: it is the denial of public interest that accentuates the sense of injustice. It is difficult for some therapists to see themselves as advocates and it is important to recognise this. It goes against their training and it can cause a conflict. There is a jump to be made: you need to accept that we are working in a political and social environment which not only affects the lives of our clients, but our own lives as well. We can acknowledge their suffering but often we cannot bring the justice that would make the difference. We can be part of the pursuit of justice though. It is important for therapists not to feel powerless as they often do, but to think a little bit ›side-laterally‹, to see whether there is a way in which they can use documented evidence of injuries and work more with the legal justice system for their client as well as working through feelings. This way we can be more powerful as therapists.«

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