

OPEN LETTER TO AMITAV GHOSH

Dear Amitav Ghosh:

It can't have escaped your notice that Margaret Atwood, with whom you're sharing one of this year's Dan David prizes, has received a number of public appeals, from Palestinians, Israelis, and others, to refuse the prize, or not go to Tel Aviv to receive it, or at least to speak out against Israeli war crimes (those in Gaza are just the most recent). We thought you shouldn't be left out.

It's surprising to have to raise Israeli colonialism with a writer whose entire oeuvre seems to us an attempt to imagine how human beings survived the depredations of colonialism. Gosh, even the Dan David judges like the way you evoke 'the violent dislocations of people and regimes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.

Can it be possible you think Israeli colonialism hasn't involved any 'violent dislocations'? That it's softer, kinder, nicer somehow than the colonialism that shattered the ancient polities of India, stole their land, smashed their industries, absconded with their wealth, and so on? You surely know it isn't. You surely know that to drive out half the Palestinian population, and keep the rest under subjugation, requires ruthlessness and cruelty – the same ruthlessness and cruelty and imperial chutzpah with which the British ruled India.

'At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps...' -- some of us still can't hear Nehru's great speech without getting tears in our eyes.

But what about 'life and freedom' for the Palestinians? Don't they, after more than sixty years of ethnic cleansing, torture, collective punishment, siege, bombardment, destruction of their houses, their olive groves, their businesses, their hopes for their children, their children's hopes – don't they, at the very least, deserve to have writers of the stature of yourself and Margaret Atwood refuse to collude with their oppressors?

What can you be thinking of? Please, think again.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Haim Bresheeth
Mike Cushman
Professor David Pegg
Professor Hilary Rose
Professor Steven Rose

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