

Find out more about our Scholarship Fund students

My family will feel so proud of what I've done

Meet Hadeel Hassan, twenty-one, who is about to graduate in Arabic from the Islamic University in Gaza. Last summer, as she entered her final year, Hadeel faced the very real prospect of not being able to complete her degree. She was receiving a scholarship from an international donor, but this was suddenly withdrawn when the donor decided no longer to support students at the Islamic University. Fortunately, Hadeel was eligible to apply to the SPWSF and she received a scholarship from us. 'It is only through the Sheffield scholarship that I have been able to continue. You cannot imagine the psychological relief the scholarship has provided. That's why I'm thankful to everyone who helped me. So all thanks, appreciation and respect goes to those wonderful women.'



Three years ago I wouldn't have believed I would go to university



After graduating Hadeel hopes to find a job and help support her family. She is one of eight; three of her brothers are at university and one has graduated. Her father is unemployed and the family dependent on aid, but he did not show any preference for educating the boys in the family. 'My father has been through many difficulties. He knows that it is through education that women can get better chances in life.'

Now I'm looking forward to my graduation ceremony

When she is not studying, Hadeel enjoys reading and calligraphy and she likes to write Arabic poetry. If she doesn't find a job straight after graduation she will volunteer and teach children.

Our thanks to Sameeha Elwan, freelance writer, for this interview. Sameeha kindly agreed – on her return to Gaza after completing her postgraduate studies at Durham University – to interview a number of Sheffield Palestine Scholarship Fund Students for us.

Meet more of our students on pages 4 and 5.

Student news

2012 Graduates

- ✧ Fedaa Mohammed Mattar, graduated in mathematics at Al Aqsa University
- ✧ Madleen Ghanam Abu, graduated in nursing at University College of Applied Sciences.
- ✧ Islam Mohammed Al-Ashqar, graduated in Arabic at the Islamic University.
- ✧ Saham Mohammed Al-Jamal, graduated in social sciences at Al-Quds Open University.
- ✧ Mary Ghassan Feleeb Jahshan, graduated in business admin at Al-Quds Open University.
- ✧ Nevin Bassam Al-Khaldi, graduated in Islamic law at the Islamic University.



Ongoing students –

- ✧ Abba Moneer Ghabayan, studying mathematics at the Islamic University.
- ✧ Nasma Ataia Abu Zer, studying Arabic at Al Quds Open University.
- ✧ Ghada Jamaa Abu Roomia, studying mathematics at the Islamic University.
- ✧ Nedhal Kamal Al-Bish, studying management and English at Al-Azhar University.
- ✧ Iman Rashid Abu Hajar, studying English at the Islamic University.
- ✧ Najah Shawqi Al-Ajrami, studying English at the Islamic University.
- ✧ Taghreed Ramzi Assaf, studying Rights at the Islamic University.
- ✧ Mona Ahmed Al-Samak studying English accounting at the Islamic University.
- ✧ Nadaa Jawwad Darweesh Abu Hasna, studying journalism at the Al-Aqsa University.
- ✧ Doaa Ahmed Hassan Abu Eita, studying chemistry at the Al-Azhar University.
- ✧ Hadeel Hassan, studying Arabic at the Islamic University.
- ✧ Noor Anwar Mohammed Dreemly, studying law at the Al-Azhar University.
- ✧ Islam Gebreel Gaber Abed, studying technical administration at the Al-Azhar University.
- ✧ Ruba Hasan Abed Yseen, studying medicine at the Al-Azhar University.
- ✧ Enas Saadat Abu Selmia, studying dentistry at the Al-Azhar University.
- ✧ Maysa Ali Ibraheem Seedam, studying at the Al-Azhar University.
- ✧ Tagreed Ahmad Hamdan Khatab, studying English at the Al-Azhar University.
- ✧ Salam Sameer El Helou, studying literature and sociology.
- ✧ Reham Taher Abed, studying science at the Islamic University.

Women of Palestine: Speaking Up



From left to right: Kholood Ersheid, Zayneb al Shalalfeh, Maha Reza, Kholoud al Ajarma, Sameeha Elwan.

In March 2012 Palestinian women from Gaza, the West Bank and Nazareth came together in the North of England for a week-long speaking tour to mark International Women's Day (IWD) and to celebrate the centrality of women in the Palestinian struggle for justice.

The speakers were **Kholoud al Ajarma**, of Aida Refugee Camp, a human rights worker and volunteer in the Lajee Cultural Centre in Aida; **Zayneb al Ashalalfeh** from Hebron who works for Life Source, a campaigning organisation focusing on the right to water; **Sameeha Elwan** from Gaza whose blog during Operation Cast Lead was followed by many and who was taking a postgraduate course in Culture and Difference at Durham University; **Kholood Ersheid**, a Palestinian citizen of Israel from Nazareth, who works with abused women and is involved in a group trying to prevent house demolitions; **Maha Reza**, from Gaza, who worked for NGOs in Gaza and currently lives in London studying Gender and Conflict Studies. On the final day of the tour, in Manchester, **Reem Kelani** led a singing workshop. The day was, as one person said "a potent mix of politics and music" – because any expression of Palestinian music inevitably is also an assertion of Palestinian identity.

In Sheffield we held a wonderful IWD event with food and singing from the women's section of Socialist Choir.



A fantastic booklet called 'Women of Palestine Speaking Up' has been produced as a celebration and record of the tour and of the powerful role played by Palestinian women in the struggle for justice. It costs £3 + P&P - contact sheffieldpwsf@yahoo.co.uk



Meet more of the Fund's students

With thanks to Sameeha Elwan.

Iman Rashid Abu Hajar is nineteen and a second year student of English and education at the Islamic University in Gaza.



I want to achieve something in my life and I want to help my family and serve my society. I want to do this for myself as well – because education brings about both confidence and intellect.

Through English I can be a voice for my community. I find it necessary or even obligatory to communicate what happens here to the world.

Iman lives in Jabalia refugee camp. She describes it as the Camp of Resistance and Steadfastness. Her father is unemployed and her elder brother is an electrician who is always on the run for a job. She has a disabled brother who is a high school student; and her older sister graduated from IUG last year.

The Islamic University of Gaza is the most expensive university in the Gaza Strip,' Iman explains. 'But I convinced my father that if I memorized the Koran I could get a full scholarship from the university and have my fees covered. I did memorize the Koran, but for some reason I did not pass the interview. After seeing all what I went through, my father could not crush my dreams and he got a loan to cover the expenses of my first semester.' But her father would not have been able to continue this support. Without the Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship, Iman would most probably not have been able to continue beyond that first semester.

'As a woman, education has enhanced my place in society. It has made me realize how much I can achieve. I am now an English student at one of the best universities in Gaza. And unlike any of my other female relatives who took on different crafts, I'm proud that I did persist and continued with my education despite all the difficulties.'

Islam Abed is a second year student at Al-Azhar University, where she is studying technical administration (developing knowledge and skills in administration and the use of new technology). After graduation, Islam will be able to apply to be a teacher of administration or IT

in school. She will also be able to apply for admin positions in a wide range of settings. Islam lives in Zaytoon Quarter in Gaza City, which she describes as a lively place.

Islam has four brothers and sisters. Islam's father died when she was nine and her mother, now aged forty-five, decided the best way she could increase the family's income and help her children get to university was to go back into education herself. She is now studying for a social work degree.

Islam takes her mother as her example of steadfastness and endurance. Despite all the hardships her mother has faced as a widow, she has raised her children, supported four of them to go to university and is now at university herself. Islam says she feels proud whenever she is joined by her mother on campus.



Without the Scholarship from SPWSF, Islam says she would probably not have been able to go to university. Aid for fatherless children stops at a certain age and does not cover university expenses. It would have been impossible for her mother to support her to go to university when she was already supporting three of her other children. Islam would probably have had to wait for one of her sisters or brothers to graduate.

'Through being a university student, Islam says, 'I have learned to be more independent. It has also made me more sociable as I'm meeting and talking to a wide variety of people.' Islam hopes that when she graduates she will get a job and be able to help her mother support the rest of the family to get their university degrees.

Doaa Abu Eita is nineteen and studying chemistry at Al-Azhar University.

Doaa is passionate about chemistry. At school she always knew it was what she wanted to study at university. Many school students view chemistry as one of the most difficult subjects and Doaa hopes that if she goes on to teach chemistry in school her students will become as passionate about the subject as she is.



Doaa has five sisters and two brothers. One of her brothers is also at university, studying maths. Her father is unemployed.

Doaa was determined to get to university despite the enormous obstacles, because she is convinced that it is through education that she will be able to help her family and will also feel valued by society.

Her dream is to graduate and get a job. She believes that by doing this she'll also get a real sense of achievement.

The Israeli Offensive

The aggression is so savage and inhuman and no place is safe

Mona el Farra in an email written November 21st 2012.

The Israeli bombardments in November 2012 claimed the lives of 163 Palestinians, 34 of whom were children. A further 274 children were injured. It caused appalling damage, including to schools. Sameeha Elwan sent us this report of children returning to school two days after the Egyptian-brokered cease fire:

The air is permeated with the smell of powder, dust and rubble.’ ‘This was my classroom,’ nine-year-old Lina says, gripping my hand.

For children like Lina the offensive brought back memories of the Operation Cast offensive in late 2008 and early 2009. ‘I’m happy that I’m fine and my family are in good health,’ Lina tells me. ‘None of us were killed this time. Not like the last war when I lost my 17-year old brother.’



Ten-year-old Nour hides any of the fear she feels behind defiance and determination: ‘There are no chairs, no windows, no tables,’ she says. ‘No blackboard. Nothing. But we will go to another school until we rebuild our own school again.’

Fund Developments and Plans

At the SPWSF AGM on 15th January we began a discussion around how we might develop the Fund. In particular we talked about:

- A potential **women’s delegation to Gaza** in the autumn of 2013. The aim would be to forge stronger links with Scholarship Fund students and closer working relations with our colleagues at Afaq Jadeeda, who administer the Fund in Gaza. The delegation would also visit the Children’s Project supported by Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC). The trip, if it goes ahead, will be self-funded, but funding will be provided for expenses arising from the visit. For more information contact sheffieldpwsf@yahoo.co.uk
- Should the Scholarships cover only the fees required to attend university – or **should we provide support for books and/or travel**? Recent interviews with students suggest they may be experiencing difficulties finding the money to cover these costs. At the same time it appears that our partners in Gaza have favoured spreading our funding as widely as possible (including in previous years splitting some scholarships) so it is not clear what we should do. We agreed that the delegation to Gaza would explore this question further and return with clear suggestions.

A BIG thank you

In 2012 we sent a total of **£6,011** to Gaza. This covered 15 scholarships and included a 5% admin fee to the Afaq Jadeeda Association in Gaza. We thank everyone who has organised, helped with, or attended events and/or made donations of time, money or other forms of support to the Fund over this last year, including:

- ✧ All those who have maintained or taken out a standing order. We are particularly appreciative that the standing orders have remained so steady (around £450 a month) when many people are experiencing financial pressures.
- ✧ Everyone who made a one-off donation.
- ✧ Jonny Feldman, who ran the Great North Run in the summer with half of the proceeds coming to SPWSF.
- ✧ Rosalind Harrison (and her daughter) who gave a major donation in lieu of a wedding present.
- ✧ All those who helped to organise and/or took part in the Jos Kingston Memorial Walk in September 2012 – half of the proceeds came to the Scholarship Fund.
- ✧ Saddleworth supporters who raised money for SPWSF at a breakfast event and who plan to continue to raise funds to cover a scholarship.
- ✧ All the women who cooked and helped run our International Women's Event, which took place during the Women of Palestine tour. A special thank you to the women's section of Socialist Choir; and also to Body of Sound for wonderful singing at the Manchester IWD event.
- ✧ Claudia Kuntze (from the organising group) for not only designing SPWSF's beautiful new card and poster but inspiring an amazing collective effort to produce it. An olive tree of fired clay, hanging on Catherine Gaze's wall, made by her friend Nan Mumford, first sparked the idea for Claudia. Then a friend from the USA suggested adding a poem. Claudia remembered Arwa Abu-Haikal Harvard reading a poem of her mother's at a SPWSF event and she, Arwa and Feryal Abu-Haikal then chose a poem to quote from.



Claudia felt strongly that the card/poster should not be computer generated but made by hand, using stencils. This took more than one attempt! The photography was also tricky and was provided skilfully by Jenny Greenfield. Finally, it was done. Contact Claudia to order cards and posters on claudiabk61@hotmail.co.uk. Cards with envelopes are £1 for 1, 11 for £10, and posters £6.

How the Fund works

The Fund is managed in Sheffield by a small coalition of women working in partnership with the Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign, and in Gaza by a panel drawn from the Board of Directors of the Red Crescent Society and the Union of Health Work Committees, with administrative support from Afaq Jadeeda.

Candidates for scholarships are nominated by their local community centre and are either ready to enter university or are in the first or second year of a course but unable to continue for financial reasons. There are strict selection criteria for the Scholarship Fund, which include having attained 65% or above in high school grades, socio-economic background, commitment to the community, and personal and family circumstances such as a recent home demolition, or war injuries.

Our partners in Gaza keep in contact with the scholarship students and help them overcome problems in completing their courses, from bombings to not being able to afford transport, books, equipment etc. Our partners access other small amounts of funding to cover some of these additional costs.

In Britain the Fund's supporters make donations or monthly contributions through a standing order, and/or by organising or taking part in fundraising events. Any contribution is much appreciated. Standing orders are particularly welcome as they enable us to estimate our income more accurately and to plan.



Meeting of the Sheffield Scholarship Fund Organising Group at Blue Moon Café

HOW TO CONTACT US

You can contact the Scholarship Fund on sheffieldpwsf@yahoo.co.uk or by writing to SPWSF, 124 Cliffe Road, Sheffield S8 9DN.

If you wish to take out a standing order with your bank, our bank details are:

Co-op Bank, account name: Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund
Sort code 08-92-99
Account number 65236686.

Please contact us if you do take out a standing order. In order for the Fund to claim back any tax you may have paid on your donation/standing order, can you please supply your name, address and postcode and indicate that you are a tax payer and wish the Fund to claim gift aid. Our charity number is 1133499. Thank you for your support.