

In Gaza **26** young women receive scholarships



This year, thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund (SPWSF) has been able to give a bumper **26** scholarships to young women in Gaza. This is 8 more scholarships than last year. Above you can see Mona El Farra, our partner in Gaza, presenting the students with their scholarships at a ceremony in September 2013. The recipients were:

1. Nour Anwar Muhammed Alderemli, studying law at Al-Azhar University
2. Ruba Hasan Abed Alyaseen, studying medicine at Al-Azhar University
3. Inaas Saadat Abu Salemah, studying dentistry at Al-Azhar University
4. Taghreed Ahmad Hamdan Khattab, studying English language at Al-Aqsa University
5. Nedal Kamal Mohammed Al-Bish, studying management and English at Al-Azhar University
6. Aya Muhammed Muhammed Almubasher, studying law at Al-Azhar University
7. Duaa Kamal Kamel Arafat, studying English language at the Islamic University
8. Ranya Muhammed Abdel-Aleem Hasanain studying financial and administrative science at Al-Aqsa University
9. Ghadeer Khaled Salman Abu Khashan, studying English at Al-Quds Open University
10. Tsneem Wael Abdel-Jawwad Aljamal, studying medical sciences at the Islamic University
11. Lamya Bader Abdo Al-Awady, studying law at Al-Azhar University
12. Reham Nasser Hosain Sharab, studying nursing at the Islamic University
13. Hiba Khairy Abdel-Rahman Abu-Hrbeed, studying psychology at Al-Azhar University
14. Amal Ahmad Abdel-Hadi Almaqadma, studying pharmacy at Al-Azhar University
15. Sahar Atef Hasan Salha, studying English language at Al-Quds Open University

16. Asya Sabri Muhammed Msalam, studying English language at Al-Azhar University
17. Alaa Fouad Daoud Aljamassy, studying medicine at the Islamic University
18. Nisreen Nasser Mhareb Mattar, studying law at the Islamic University
19. Dalya Tayseer Muhammed Abu-Shmmalah, studying pharmacy at Al-Azhar University
20. Alaa Hasan Ibraheem Weshah, studying psychological guidance at Al-Aqsa University
21. Amany Muhammed Adel Darweesh Abdel-Hameed, studying English language at Al-Aqsa University
22. Nidaa Khaled Awwad Abu-Swiereh, studying primary teaching at Al-Quds Open University
23. Rola Azzmi Abdel-Qader Alhamlawe, studying medical technology at Al-Aqsa University
24. Israa Ali Abdel-majeed Abu Shaweesh, studying English language at Al-Azhar University
25. Hiba Omar Shehda Jibreel, studying nursing at the Palestine College of Nursing
26. Rola Atteya Morjan Abo Zer, studying business administration at the University of Palestine



Sadly, two students did not receive high enough grades to make it through to this year of study. They are:

- Taghreed Ramzi Assaf, who was studying law at Al-Azhar University
- Salam Sameer El Helou, who was studying literature and sociology

Congratulations to those who graduated this year

- Ablu Moneer Ghabayan, who graduated in mathematics from the Islamic University
- Nasma Ataiya Abu Zer, who graduated in Arabic language from Al-Quds Open University
- Mona Ahmed Al-Samak, who graduated in English and accounting from the Islamic University
- Hadeel Hassan, who graduated in education from the Islamic University

Feedback from a graduate

In September we received an email from one of the Fund's graduates. She wrote:

My name is Nasma Ataiya Abu Zer. I studied Arabic language in Al-Quds Open University. Thanks for your help. I want to tell you that I am glad I finished my learning this year, and I'm applying for jobs. Finally thank you Dr. Mona el Farra and Sheffield women. Nasma

Mona El Farra, our partner in Gaza forwarded the email to us and added: 'the student's father is a worker who is unemployed and this is a very hardship case. He is a builder that has been affected by the lack of building materials and the stopping of construction in Gaza. I was touched by the letter and felt proud of our work to support the students.'

'The freedom here is inconceivable to someone who's spent their entire life in Gaza'



Malaka Mohammed is a graduate in English Literature and Education from the Islamic University of Gaza. She is now studying for a Masters in Global Politics and International Law at the University of Sheffield. Malaka was not a SPWSF student but she can help us appreciate the contrasts between life here and in Gaza – and from a student's perspective. She is documenting her experience in Sheffield in posts on Mondoweiss (<http://mondoweiss.net/author/malaka-mohammed>). Here is an extract:

The differences between Sheffield and Gaza were immediately apparent. The degree of peace and calm is so alien to me it was initially unnerving. Every day in Gaza is unpredictable in comparison; before I could not imagine spending a day without hearing the sound of F16 or Apache jets hovering in the skies, infiltrating our daily life.

It seems miraculous to behold a city where the electricity supply is continuous and clean water is freely available. I can travel freely where and whenever I want. The freedom here is inconceivable to someone who has spent their entire life in Gaza. The contrast is peculiar, unnerving and yet exhilarating.

Gaza is still inculcated in different aspects of my life: whenever I skype with my family, there is either a power cut or weak net connection and I can hardly hear their voices or see their faces. But this is better than nothing; life teaches me that there is always a bright side.

Visit to Gaza postponed

Because of the unsettled situation in Egypt this autumn and the closure of the border with Gaza, the planned delegation to Gaza in October 2013 by 5 members of the Fund's organising group could not go ahead. This was very disappointing as plans were already in place to meet with the Fund's students, to find out more about their lives and the impact of the scholarships, and to make contact with the universities where they study. The delegates were also to take part in the *Right to Learn, Right to Play and Right to Roam* campaign that had started earlier in the year in Sheffield and Gaza.

To highlight the worsening restrictions on travel in and out of Gaza, the women who would have taken part in the delegation organised a 'right to roam' walk with a difference (see below). 'We could not be physically together with our friends in Gaza,' Caroline Poland – one of the organisers – explained, 'but we could walk in solidarity.'

If the political situation eases and the border with Egypt reopens, the delegation will go ahead in October 2014. The closure of the border between Gaza and Egypt has not only restricted travel but has led to serious issues with supplies for Gaza, such as medicines and medical equipment.

Right to Roam – with a difference



On October 12th 2013 two walks took place in parallel. One in Derbyshire, one in Gaza. In Gaza a large numbers of adults and children walked behind the banner 'Breaking the Siege of Gaza Marathon'. At the same time walkers, aged from 7 to 70, took to the Derbyshire hills in solidarity.

This right to roam walk 'with a difference' was prompted by the fact that the planned delegation by members of the Scholarship Fund organising group and Palestine Solidarity

Campaign to Gaza could not take place (see *Visit to Gaza postponed* above). The solidarity walk in Derbyshire honoured British people's struggle to achieve the 'right to roam' in Britain and highlighted the extreme lack of freedom that Palestinians endure, particularly in Gaza.



Of the two walks Gaza got the better weather! A good time was had by all and the day raised funds for the Scholarship Fund and for the children's projects supported by Sheffield PSC. One of the walk's organisers said: 'We were thrilled to know that whilst we walked in the rain in Edale, a lively walk of children and families was taking place in the sunshine in Gaza, calling for the right for Palestinians to travel freely'.



Growing support for the Scholarship Fund

There has been a fantastic legacy from the 2012 Women of Palestine Tour. Not only are women in Palestine Solidarity across the north continuing to work more closely together, SPWSF now has satellite groups raising funds for scholarships.



Saddleshorn

A group of women in Saddleshorn have set up a 'Saddleshorn Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund' to raise funds for scholarships in the Gaza Strip. The group now has a designated bank account and is in the process of putting together a leaflet that can be used locally. The group held two fundraising events in 2013:

-  a showing of the film 'And Still They Dance' with a Palestinian craft stall, a jewellery stall and refreshments
-  a brunch at one of the member's houses, with a report back from one of the members who had recently visited Palestine.

The group raised £1,230 for SPWSF in 2013. There was also a one-off donation of £360 and one standing order has been taken out. The group is planning further fundraising events for 2014, including an International Women's Day event in March.

Bolton Socialist Club

At the end of 2012, Bolton Socialist Club decided that it would focus its twinning with Afaq Jadeeda Community Centre in Gaza on raising money for the Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund. The Club set up a designated bank account and members now make regular payments by standing order and lump sum donations. The Club will hold three fundraising events a year. In 2013 these were:

-  A curry evening at the club
-  A sponsored walk along the Leeds/Liverpool canal
-  A poetry evening.

Members also joined the Solidarity Walk in Derbyshire.

The Club raised over £2,500 for SPWSF in 2013 and fundraising is underway in 2014. In January the Club initiated what will become an annual 'Outstanding Contribution to Socialism' Award. The first recipient was Maxine Peake, who came in person to receive her award. Admission to this special evening was by ticket with all proceeds going to the Scholarship Fund.

Abu Bakr Rauf Memorial Scholarship Fund

When Abu Bakr Rauf, a very active supporter of Palestine Solidarity, died in April 2012 his family and friends, inspired by the example of SPWSF, set up a scholarship fund in his memory. The Fund is now established and supports students to take up higher education in the field of IT. It is currently providing scholarships to 3 students at Gaza University College of Applied Sciences. For more information contact: abubakrraufscholarshipfund@topmail.co.uk

A BIG thank you

In 2012 we sent a total of **£11,077** to Gaza. This covered 26 scholarships and included a 5% admin fee to the Afaq Jadeeda Association in Gaza and bank charges. 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 when many people are experiencing financial pressures. The monthly total of standing orders is currently just over £511.
- ✧ Everyone who made a one-off donation.
- ✧ Bev Booker for donating her retirement gifts.
- ✧ Heather Hunt and Ros Wollen who fundraised during the Olive Harvest Talks that they gave when they returned from olive picking in the West Bank.
- ✧ Caroline Poland completed the Pennine Way, joined for stretches of the route by friends and SPWSF supporters. She walked from Edale in Derbyshire to Kirk Yetholm on the Scottish border and covered 268 miles! This freedom to roam through some of the most beautiful open countryside in England is in stark contrast to the severe restrictions of movement for Palestinians within the narrow 26 mile Gaza Strip. Talking to other walkers along the way, Caroline was able to raise awareness of what is happening in Palestine and gain new supporters for SPWSF. The walk raised money for the Sheffield PSC's children's projects as well as SPWSF.
- ✧ The Funds' supporters in Bolton and Saddleworth.
- ✧ All the women who helped with putting on our 'International Meal' in November. It was really well attended and everyone agreed it was a great night. There was Eritrean food, singing from the Socialist Choir, poetry and a magnificent raffle!



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.