



Our existence is resistance

Mona El Farra

For 51 days in July and August 2014, the people of Gaza were subject to brutal aerial and naval bombardment by Israel. Mona El Farra, our contact in Gaza, wrote on 12th August:

'Driving south I passed rubble from mosques, houses, and factories. The Israeli bombs were aimed to destroy the infrastructure, to destroy Gaza's economy. Even the main cookie factory was targeted and destroyed.

I saw totally flattened houses and other houses partially destroyed. It reminded me of pictures from war-torn areas where years of fighting might erase a village. I could tell that something huge and terrible had happened here, the rubble and the destruction were extreme. Some villagers told us they had found two bodies in the rubble a couple of hours before we arrived. Still people were searching the ruins for their relative's remains. Many times I had to stop myself from vomiting because the smell was so strong. This Israeli assault has hit the Palestinian people more deeply than the last two military attacks. This one is even more deadly and destructive. Whole neighbourhoods and villages have been wiped off the map. I ask myself now how can we start again?'

Universities suffered greatly and we were not at all certain that they would be able to start up again for the new academic year. Then amazingly in September Mona wrote that she was about to meet with this year's Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund (SPWSF) students prior to the term starting. 'Thanks for your solidarity and the non-stop support to help us continue our work for the women of Palestine,' she wrote. 'This year is sad for all of us. Some of our new and older students lost homes or relatives. I miss you all and our existence is resistance.'



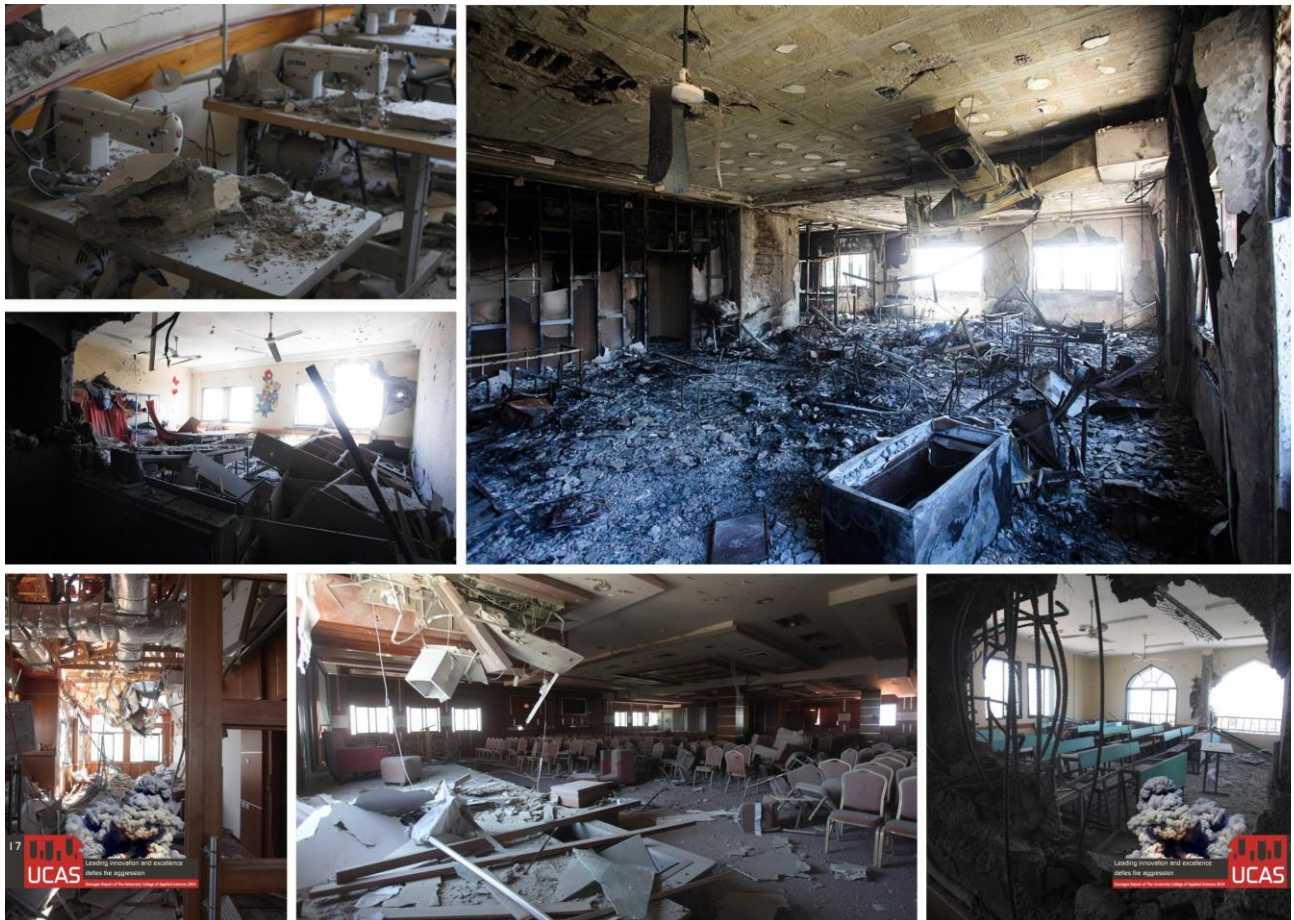
Students receiving their scholarships in September 2014

Universities directly targeted

According to a UNESCO Briefing Paper university students were disproportionately affected by the bombing. Student deaths made up over a quarter –27.4% – of total civilian deaths in Palestine during that period. Even considering the exceptionally high ratio of young people aged 15 to 29 to the total over-15 population (53%), this is a shocking statistic. A total of 421 higher education students were killed during the conflict, primarily by shelling, and 1,128 were injured. Nine academic and administrative staff from the higher education institutes were killed and 21 injured.

Students have been left traumatised by the impact of the conflict. The UNESCO Briefing Paper cites heightened violence among male students, frustration, lack of motivation, depression, lack of concentration, withdrawal, denial of psychological problems, 'intense crying', grief, sadness, nervousness, and aggression. Unable to cope, many students have not returned to their studies. Universities report that trauma and psychosocial distress is also impacting on academic and administrative staff: their willingness to work, their mental well-being, and the quality of their teaching.

Fourteen higher education institutes were damaged during hostilities, some directly targeted, others suffering collateral damage. Many of these institutions are experiencing severe disruption to academic and administrative operations as a result. According to the UNESCO report the total estimated cost of repairs to and replacement of higher education buildings, facilities and equipment is US\$ 16,088,597.



37 women receive scholarships

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters the Fund has been able this year to award scholarships to **37** young women in Gaza – 35 received full scholarships and 2 half scholarships (see the list of students below). Patricia Sellick, Regional Director for the American Friends Service Committee, attended the award ceremony at Nuseirat Refugee Camp in September 2014 and wrote:

The costs of fees are beyond the means of many families. If a family has to make a choice between educating a son or a daughter, it is often the son that is given preference. The only option then open to the daughter may be early marriage. This year the scholarship support for young women is even more important. Some of the young women who received support from Sheffield this year had lost a parent in the attacks, or their homes had been destroyed or damaged. Many families lost their livelihood when factories were destroyed or agricultural land polluted by munitions.

I saw young women who came forward shyly and who were told that through studying they would gain the confidence to speak up in public in the future. I saw other young women who were full of enthusiasm for the study they had already enjoyed and they looked forward to their chosen career. They all said that without this financial support they would not have been able to continue their university studies. Dr Mona El Farra encouraged them all personally, and they were excited to see her as a role model for what they as Palestinian women could achieve. The young women send you many heartfelt thanks for your generous support.

No	Student	University	Subject	Final year
1	Nour Anwar Mohamed AL-Draimly	Al-Azhar University	Law	2014-2015
2	Roba Hassan Abed AL-Yaseen	Al-Azhar University	Medicine	2017-2018
3	Aya Mohamed Mohamed AL-Mubasher	Al-Azhar University	Law	2015-2016
4	Lamiaa Ali Abdo AL-Ewady	Al-Azhar University	Law	2016-2017
5	Heba Khairy Abed Abu Harbeed	Al-Azhar University	Psychology	2016-2017
6	Amal Ahmed Abed Alhadi Maqadma	Al-Azhar University	Pharmacy	2017-2018
7	Israa Ali A.majeed Abu Shaweesh	Al-Azhar University	English Education	2016-2017
8	Asia Sabry Mohamed Musalam	Al-Azhar University	English Education	2016-2017
9	Dalia Tayser Mohamed Abu Shamala	Al-Azhar University	Pharmacy	2017-2018
10	Alaa Hassan Ibrahim Weshah	Al-Azhar University	Psychology	2016-2017
11	Heba Omar Jebreel	Palestine College of Nursing	Nursing	2016-2017
12	Rola Atia Abu Zer	Palestine University	Business Administration	2016-2017
13	Doaa Kamel Kamal Arafat	Islamic University	English Education	2016-2017

14	Tasneem Wael A.Jawad AL-Jamal	Islamic University	Health Sciences	2016-2017
15	Reham Naser Hussien Shurab	Islamic University	Nursing	2016-2017
16	Alaa Foad Dawood Al-Jmassy	Islamic University	Medicine	2017-2018
17	Nisreen Naser Mohareb Matar	Islamic University	Law	2016-2017
18	Rola Azmi A.Qader AL-hamalawi	Islamic University	Medical Technology	2016-2017
19	Ghader Khaled Salman Abu Khashan	Al-Quds Open University	English Education	2016-2017
20	Nedaa Khaled Awad Abu Sweireh	Al-Quds Open University	Basic Education	2016-2017
21	Rania Mohamed A.Aleem Hassanen	Al-Aqsa University	Economy and Management Sciences	2016-2017
22	Taghreed Ahmed Hamdan Khatab	Al-Aqsa	English Education	2014-2015
23	Sahar Atef Hasan Salha	Al-Aqsa	English Education	2016-2017
24	Amany Mohamed Darwesh A.Hameed	Al-Aqsa	English Education	2016-2017
New Students				
25	Mai Mohamed Ahmed Abu Shawesh	Al-Aqsa	Basic Education	2017-2018
26	Amal Basheer Talab Al Gharably	Palestine University	Dentistry	2017-2018
27	Intesar Jamal Saleh Abu Shaban	Al-Quds Open University	Basic Education	2016-2017
28	Besan Hasan Musaed Al Arabeed	Al-Azhar	Dentistry	2017-2018
29	Niveen Khaled Mohamed Abu Marshod	Al-Azhar	Accounting	2016-2017
30	Shaimaa Ata Hamdy Al Habashy	Islamic University	Basic Education	2016-2017
31	Samera Ahmed Said Wafi	Al-Aqsa	Economy and Management	2016-2017
32	Dina Yousef Jomaa Al Salout	Al-Aqsa	Education	2017-2018
33	Hadeel Talaat Al Awawda	Al-Quds Open University	Basic Education	2017-2018
34	Ayat Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed	Islamic University	Engineering	2018-2019
35	Aya Khaled Mohamed Al Ghalban	Palestine College of Nursing	Nursing	2017-2018
36	Haneen Hamed Deab Al Raey	Islamic University	Basic Education	2017-2018
37	Hala Abu El Khair Al Farajani	Islamic University	Mathematics Education	2017-2018



Letters from our students

We were delighted this year to hear from some of our students.

Dear SPWSF

I would like to thank the women of Sheffield who have helped us overcome these difficult times, who have supported us in completing our studies. It's no secret the difficult economic situation for Palestinian families. My father doesn't work and I study pharmacy in Al Azhar University. I have a sister who also studies at university and my father can't afford to pay for both our fees.

The last attack on Gaza was very painful and difficult for everyone. On a personal level, our neighbours' house was bombed. They got a warning message and we were worried, nervous and afraid, as we collected memories from our own house, not knowing day or night when the bombs would hit. A week later they did bomb our neighbours' house. Our house was partially demolished too, but thankfully no one was hurt. We went home, cleaned the rubble and sat in the intact part of the house. These were difficult times.

Again I would like to thank everyone who has helped us.

Dalia Tayser Abu Shamala



Dear SPWSF

The war was some of the most difficult days of my life. Everyone in Gaza was affected, old and young. We suffered and it was the worst times economically and psychologically. My family was forced to escape from our house and leave all our memories and important possessions behind. Every brick in our house has a special place in my heart.

We went back to our house after a long time of staying with our relatives. Given the dire economic situation, I missed registration at university. I was told if I didn't register within 2 weeks, I would miss the first semester, but thanks to the kind people who are working on this scholarship I was able to register and continue my education. Now two of my siblings and I are university students, and five other siblings are still at school.

Thank you to everyone involved in making this happen for me and for supporting my education.

Reham Shurab

Dear SPWSF

I would like to start by thanking everyone who has helped me and my colleagues complete our university studies. I am a very ambitious student. I strive to achieve the highest of marks, in safe and normal conditions, away from problems and psychological torment that the recent attack has left in the Gaza Strip.

May such an attack never occur again.

Thank you.

Dina Yousef Salout



Dear SPWSF

My name is Haneen Al Raey. I got an average of 86.4% at high school. Our financial circumstances didn't allow me to finish my university degree because of the attack on Gaza and the destruction it caused, which affected houses, mosques and anything that moved, which lead to my father becoming unemployed.

If this scholarship wasn't available I wouldn't have been able to finish my studies, given how high the university fees are. We were living in such fear and apprehension as if death surrounded us. We live in the Al Zaytoon area. A store behind us was bombed and we saw the rockets fall and reduce it to rubble. When we first saw the rockets fall we thought they were aimed at us. It was terrifying.

I thank Sheffield's women for their great efforts to help the students of Gaza.

Dear SPSWF

My name is Heba Khairy Abed Abu Harbeed. I would like to thank those who have organized this Sheffield scholarship and also to thank Dr Mona El Farra and the organisation Afaq Jadeeda. It has really helped us to finish our university degrees. I hope the Fund is able to help as many women as you can, especially given the financial difficulties that have resulted from the Israeli attack on Gaza. I hope that you continue with your efforts with people in Gaza especially women, given that women give society the most regardless of what Gaza is going through and they also need to continue their roles within their families. Our house was damaged and it became uninhabitable. Regardless of this we insisted on living and persevering to make our hopes and dreams come true. Again I would like to thank everyone who had made this scholarship happen.

International Women's Day 2014

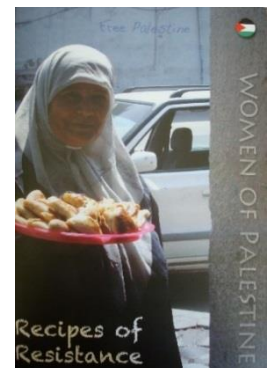


Every two years the SPWSF collaborates with women active in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign across the north of England to mark International Women's Day. The 2014 collaboration was an event called 'Resistance, Survival and Identity', held in Sheffield on March 8th, where we showed the film *Jameela's Kitchen*, especially commissioned for International Women's Day 2014.

Palestinian food and cooking were the major themes of the event. We also raised awareness of the growing movement to boycott Israeli food products and other goods, a movement we can all take part in to show solidarity with the people of Palestine.

The film *Jameela's Kitchen* explored the lives of Palestinian women in Zeitoun, one of the poorer neighbourhoods of Gaza City, and showed the work of The Olive Roots Association and the kitchen set up by Jameela Khalil Dalool and her friends with the support of our SPWSF contact in Gaza, Mona El Farra. In the film the women who work in the kitchen shared their recipes and demonstrated that through food the Palestinian people are able to keep alive their culture, history, and their irrepressible spirit.

After the film Leila and Maha, twin sisters and friends of the singer Reem Kelani who was sadly unable to come herself, gave a wonderful cooking demonstration. We ran workshops on different topics and sold copies of a beautiful, illustrated booklet called **Recipes of Resistance**. The event, which included other workshops, was supported by a grant (no monies from SPWSF were used) and funds were raised for the Olive Roots Association. St Mary's provided a delicious meal for the social in the evening and there was some great singing from Body of Sound and members of Sheffield Socialist Choir.



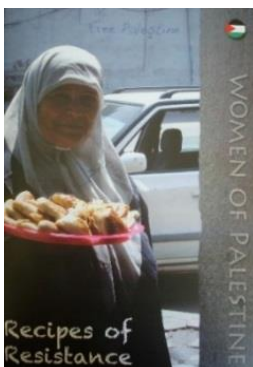
Jameela's Kitchen – continues to support women

With the money raised by the IWD event last March, and through sales of the booklet *Recipes of Resistance*, Jameela's Kitchen bought chickens, runs and coops, but sadly these were mostly destroyed in the Israeli bombing. With further funds sent in December by the coalition of women in the north of England, the women bought two industrial sewing machines. This is a very exciting development as it means that the Olive Roots Association can now support women to make an income through sewing. The Olive Roots Association has also bought blankets and food parcels with the money and replaced chickens killed in the bombing.

We have heard since the event from some of the women who work in Jameela's Kitchen. They told us about how the Israeli bombardment in July and August 2014 affected them.

Amira Abu Jabal is a widow with fifteen children and grandchildren and no source of income. She has worked in Jameela's kitchen for some years, helping to prepare pastries and other dishes. She told us: 'We fled from our house at night when shells and rockets rained on us. We raised white flags and fled. Martyrs and the wounded fell on the ground and no-one could save them. We just ran and ran, not knowing where to go.'

Sabah Abdul-Karim Arafat is another regular at the Kitchen. She is fifty-three, married with six sons, five daughters and five grandchildren. Her husband does not work and the family is dependent on food parcels and aid. She has come to Jameela's Kitchen every day for the last twelve years. She told us: 'I have benefited greatly, improving my skills through the various courses and through the psychological support. During the recent aggression on Gaza our neighbours' house was bombed without warning and then shells fell on us randomly, so we ran onto the street and on the way my son's wife miscarried. We went to a relative's home. A hundred and fifty people were living in this very small house with not enough food or water for all of us and the children. It was the most difficult period of my life.'



Buy your own copy

Recipes of Resistance is a beautiful publication. It has great photographs and recipes that are introduced by Palestinian women and there is information on Palestine and some poetry. It costs £5. There are also sets of recipe cards costing £3 per set.

To buy booklets or cards contact Annie O'Gara: annieog@googlemail.com or sheffieldpwsf@yahoo.co.uk

Satellite Groups



Saddleworth Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund

The Saddleworth Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund is an independent group, which supports the aims of the SPWSF. This year the group raised a fantastic **£2295** for the Fund through:

- An **International Women's Day** celebration with a presentation on Jameela's Kitchen (see page 7 and 8) and a poetry reading. Around 60 people attended this free event, including the local MP, Debbie Abrahams, and the (soon to be) MEP, Julie Ward. £700 was raised on the day, with a further £240 was raised for Jameela's Kitchen through selling recipe cards and books.
- A **brunch** in October – a free event with a moving presentation from Mariam El Farra, who grew up in Gaza and has relatives there. This event also raised around £700 and a number of people set up standing orders, encouraged by raffle prizes donated by local people, including businesses and Julie Ward, MEP.



*Saddleworth supporters at the brunch -
Mariam El Farra is second from the left.*

- The group has also focused on **awareness raising** during the year. Women from the group gave presentations to the Oldham Labour Women's Group, to local churches, to a local Labour Party Branch and Bolton Socialist Club. The group also attended the 'Making A Difference' conference organised by Oldham Council following Israel's attack on Gaza.

The group currently has 14 supporters with standing orders, which provides an income of £154 each month and there is one annual standing order of £350 paid directly to Sheffield.

Congratulations to Catherine, Jacqui, Kathy, Michele, Pam, Sarah and Sue on their success and very many thanks for their commitment and hard work.








Bolton Socialist Club

This year Bolton Socialist Club raised over **£4,300** for SPWSF through its **Gaza Women's Education Fund**. This is an amazing achievement and our heartfelt thanks go to the Club

members and organisers who made it happen.

The Club has encouraged supporters to set up standing orders or make lump sum donations and has put on a variety of fundraising events and activities including:

-  a curry evening
-  a sponsored walk
-  a sponsored quilt making
-  various music evenings
-  a number of raffles.

Neil, a spokesperson for the Club, told us that the Club sees the Gaza Women's Education Fund (and work around Gaza in general) as an important part of the Club's campaigning activities and they are planning more events for the coming year. He said: 'Congratulations to you all in Sheffield for the work you're doing. We proud and glad to be a part of it.' For our part, the SPWSF is delighted and honoured to have the Club's partnership. We look forward to another successful year.

New Network at Sheffield Hallam

In December 2014 seventeen people – students and staff at Sheffield Hallam University – attended the first meeting of Sheffield PEN (Palestine Education Network). The meeting, opened by Peter Jones (a lecturer at the University), agreed that the priority for PEN will be to act as a satellite group for the Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund, fundraising for the Fund and raising awareness about education in Palestine. The group also plans to get involved in links (including twinning) with Palestinian Universities as well as in other activities to support Palestinian Education. The group hopes to expand PEN to other educational institutions and organisations in Sheffield.



Hala Alnaji (from Gaza and currently a SHU postgraduate student) spoke about the Palestinian people's passion for education and thanked those present for their interest and commitment.

Kevin Taylor (SHU University College Union (UCU) delegate to the Sheffield Trade Union Council) brought greetings and a message of support from Sheffield TUC.

After the event new standing orders for SPWSF were set up and a donation was made from UCU, the university lecturer's union.

For more information contact j.fortune@shu.ac.uk

A BIG thank you

In 2014 we sent **£13,751** to Gaza. This covered 35 full scholarships and 2 half scholarships. It 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. This regular income is the backbone of the Fund and allows us to plan.



Everyone who made a one-off donation.



The Bints, for singing at our fundraising social on 8th November 2014 and Body of Sound and members of Socialist Choir for singing at our IWD social on March 8th 2014.



Body of Sound for their donation that will fund one student for 3 years.



The Settle Quakers for their donation.



Supporters in Bolton and Saddleworth and in the Palestine Education Network.



Jonny Feldman, who raised funds for SPWSF through taking part in the Great North Run.



Chris Roberts in Manchester for her donation.



Hilary Smith for the funds she raised through walking the Pennine Way.



Caroline Poland plus friends and SPWSF supporters, who raised funds by completing the 'England' section of a Right to Roam Walk from Bristol – covering 240 miles! The photo shows Caroline on the top of Mam Tor on 5th October 2014 where – in solidarity with people in Palestine - walkers gathered to raise Palestine flags before walking down to the café in Edale.



Please note: to make it easier for supporters to fundraise for SPWSF we are going to be setting up a Virgin Money Giving page for SPWSF. For more information contact: sheffieldpwsf@yahoo.co.uk

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 Clifffield 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.