

Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund Newsletter
March 2018

University has opened up new horizons in my life

Scholarship Fund students tell us what it means to them to be at university

Israa Abed is studying applied sciences in the Faculty of Medical Sciences at Al-Azhar University. She has six brothers and sisters and her brother Mohammed is a student at the faculty of Engineering.

'I have a heart condition and my childhood was spent in doctors' clinics and at home and I wasn't allowed to play or run around or practice sports. So I devoted most of my time to studying and I graduated from high school with a very good grade. It was then that I realized how difficult it would be for me to study at university. My mother's salary is the family's only source of income and I knew we just couldn't afford the university fees. I was very frustrated – I couldn't think of how I'd be able to go – but then the Sheffield scholarship came along. It felt like a gift from heaven.

I've found university very enjoyable and beneficial. Being a student has taught me commitment and discipline – having to be on time for lectures and completing the regular assignments. The world of the university has also opened up new friendships and my friends and I share how we're feeling and our successes. We study together and go out together on holidays.

University has opened up new horizons in my life and introduced me to a whole world of knowledge, friendship and enjoyment. Being a student has also given me greater self-confidence. I'm more able to express myself and to talk about my experiences and my ambition

has grown. I'm a lot stronger psychologically, culturally, financially and educationally. I am grateful to the Sheffield women's group for giving me this opportunity to learn and to prove that I can take responsibility for myself and my family.'



My life has changed a lot

Noor Nael Abu Obaida is studying clinical investigations in the Medical Faculty at Al-Azhar University. She is from a family of nine and two of her siblings are also at university. Noor's family suffered tragically during the Israeli attack on Khan Younis in 2009. Their home was demolished and Noor's mother was killed. Noor

told us that this left a terrible pain in the heart of each family member, a pain that is neither cured nor forgotten, but the Sheffield scholarship has helped her to overcome some of her psychological pain and she says it has given her the strength and confidence that can be absent in the absence of a mother.

‘I am very happy to be in studying at the university and I’m very interested in my course. Although this is only my first year of study, I feel my life has changed a lot. I now have an over-view of the world. I can see there are many different spheres of knowledge, ways of relating and behaviour. I have become more gentle with people. My behaviour and my reactions are softer. I voice my opinion and discuss things more calmly. All this stems from my own self-confidence having grown. Education is one of the necessities of life. It sharpens and strengthens our personalities, gives us self-confidence, and enables us to face the challenges that life imposes on us.

There is nothing I dislike about being student except having to wake up early, but I know that success comes at a cost. I will always be grateful to the Sheffield women’s group for helping me and holding my hand through this most difficult time in my life. The Sheffield scholarship has given me hope that I’ll become an active member both in the community and in my family. It has lifted some of the psychological and financial burden that was on my family. Thank you from the depths of my heart Sheffield women. You have given the world the most beautiful face.’



It’s been my ambition to get a university degree

Iman Gassan Abu Hatab is studying Communication and Languages in the Faculty of Translation at Gaza University.

‘Two of my family are university graduates and it’s been my ambition to get a university degree. There’s no doubt, a degree will help me build a future and achieve my dreams and life goals.

I really enjoy studying at university. It’s given me the opportunity to develop new relationships and to learn in a new way, one that’s based on creativity and independent thinking and research. It’s so different from school, where everything was based on rote learning. It makes me feel that I’m accomplishing something important with my life and that I’ll become an active member of society.

Sometimes my university course means I’ve not enough time for my voluntary work or to go out for a picnic with my family. Sometimes the bad situation in the Gaza Strip, whether economic, security, political or military, means we cannot study for several days and this affects me psychologically and educationally. But I’m ready to face any challenges that being a student brings. I’m committed to my education and to fulfilling my dream of becoming a translator in one of the international agencies.’



Celebrating 10 years of the Scholarship Fund



Kholoud Ajarma, Lord Mayor, Cllr Denise Fox and Sara Gowen from the Scholarship Fund at the 10th Anniversary event

On International Women's Day 2017 we marked the Fund's ten year anniversary. The event was hosted by Sheffield's **Lord Mayor, Cllr Denise Fox** and supporters were welcomed by some brilliant singing from Sheffield's Socialist Choir. We heard from **Kholoud Ajarma** a Palestinian anthropologist, refugee, rights activist, photographer and filmmaker, who spoke passionately about the power of women's education, and from **Musheir El Farra** representing Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign, who spoke about life in Gaza today and how important solidarity projects, such as the Scholarship Fund, are to Palestinians living under occupation.



We read out some of what our students have told us over the years about their hopes and their achievements and their words brought to life the power of education to change lives and communities. We were also very proud to announce that the Scholarship Fund more than achieved its target of raising £100,000 in its first ten years. It was a lively evening and a great opportunity to thank all of our supporters. In the last ten years **216** women in Gaza, who could never have afforded to go to university, have been able to gain a university education through the Scholarship Fund.



Expanding into the West Bank

Towards the end of 2017 the Scholarship Fund was offered an anonymous donation of £10,000 in memory of a woman committed both to Palestine and women's education. Never having received such a large donation, we asked our supporters how they thought we should use this very generous gift. Should we continue to fund more students in Gaza or expand our remit to fund students in the West Bank? The supporters who responded to this question were more or less equally divided between the two options, with many leaving it to the organising group to decide. Then, amazingly, we received two further promises of £10,000 from two more anonymous donors.

We now have sufficient funds to spend more in Gaza AND explore expansion into the West Bank. Following discussions in the organising group, we have decided to put this £30,000 into a savings account, whilst we carefully explore options for development with our partners in Gaza and with potential partners in the West Bank. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our three donors, we have a very exciting opportunity to develop the Fund and we believe it is vital that our partners in Palestine guide us in how we proceed. We will of course keep supporters informed as our plans take shape.

Why I volunteer with the Sheffield Scholarship Fund

In last year's newsletter we introduced you to Wafaa El Derawi, our volunteer in Gaza. We owe Wafaa many thanks as she does a great deal to help the Fund run smoothly, including keeping us up to date on our students. Wafaa is able to talk to our students (see pages 1 & 2) and these fantastic interviews really help us to get to know the young women who receive our scholarships and to understand their hopes and lives.

Wafaa already has a busy job. She is Middle East Children's Alliance's project assistant in Gaza. So we asked her: what made you decide to volunteer with the Sheffield Scholarship Fund? This was her reply:

'I grew up in a family that valued education. My father is a pharmacist and my mother a teacher and my four siblings had all gone to university so naturally I decided that a bachelor's and a master's degree were my priority – and I also hope one day I'll be able to do a PhD.

When I was first at university I thought that all the other students were like me, that they'd chosen to complete their degree, and if any of them left to get work I thought they must have made that choice.

It was only later, when I was working myself, that I realised leaving university is very often not a choice. It's a decision made by the student's very tough life. I now know that not being able to complete a degree can destroy the future that a student saw ahead of them. I know how much it hurts not to finish. But poverty is merciless. It crushes human dreams and takes away the right to education.

The students I knew who left their courses were around my age. Some had more ambition than me, some were smarter, others more diligent. But life is unfair. I had been given the conditions that enabled me to complete my university education, whilst these students had been given nothing.

I believe it's my duty and the duty of us all to make education available to young people whose families cannot support them financially. Education gives young people hope for a better future. It enables them to be active in their communities and to be pioneers. So I decided to volunteer to support the Sheffield Scholarship Fund.

Seeing the happiness on the face of each student, as they receive their Sheffield scholarship, leaves a deep feeling inside me. The graduation of each student is a success for me and a big achievement for everyone who has contributed to the Fund.

All thanks and love to the Sheffield women's group for your conscience and humanity in helping Palestinian women to get an education. You are helping them to rescue their futures and to achieve their dreams.'



Wafaa at her MA graduation in January 2017



Wafaa with SPWSF partner Dr Mona el Farra



This year's students

Below you can see where each SPWSF student is studying, the course she is taking and what size of scholarship she has received. The size of scholarship is decided by our partners in Gaza, who take into account the cost of the course, whether the student is nearing completion and any individual needs.

	Name	Where from	University	Specialisation	\$US
1	Hala Abu Elkheir Mohammed Alferjani	Khan Younis	Al-Aqsa	Business Administration	300
2	Amani Mohammed Adel Abdelhamed	Nuseirat camp	Al-Aqsa	English	300
3	Rola Atyya Murjan Abu Zer	Nuseirat camp	Uni. Of Palestine	Business Administration	600
4	Duaa' Kamal Kamel Arafat	Gaza	Islamic Uni.	English	600
5	Alaa' Fouad Dawood Aljumasi	Gaza	Islamic Uni.	Medicine	1500
6	Ghadeer Khaled Salman Abu Khashan	Khan Younis	Al-Quds	English	600
7	Hanaa Atef Hassan Salha	Deir-Albalah	Al-Aqsa	Arabic and Religion	300
8	Mai Mohammed Ahmed Abu Shawish	Nuseirat camp	Al-Quds	Primary Education	600
9	Amal Basheer Talab Alghrabli	Gaza	Uni. Of Palestine	Dentistry	1500
10	Mai Jamal Saleh Abu Shaban	Gaza	Al-Quds	Primary Education	600
11	Noor Atta Hamdi Habashi	Gaza	Islamic Uni.	English	400
12	Ayat Ahmed Mohammed Ahmed	Nuseirat camp	Islamic Uni.	Engineering	1000
13	Aya Khaled Mohammed Alghalban	Khan Younis	Uni. Of Palestine	Nursing	600
14	Haneen Hamed Deeb Alraie	Gaza	Islamic Uni.	Clinical Investigations	1000
15	Karama Hassan Mohammed Aldaour	Jabalia Camp	Uni. Of Palestine	Pharmacy	1000
16	Sabreen Mohammed Ismael Albaz	Nuseirat Camp	Al-Quds	Health Management	600
17	Areeg Mohammed Mady	Al-Shati camp	Al-Azhar	Accounting and English	600
18	Lubna Abdelkhaleq El- Farra	Khan Younis	Al-Azhar	Information Technology	600
19	Iman Gassan Abu hatab	Khan Younis camp	Gaza University	Communications and languages	600
20	Rasha Anwer Hassan Salha	Jabalia camp	Al-Azhar	Medical Science	600
21	Dena Suhail Omar Altanani	Jabalia camp	Al-Azhar	English education	600

supporting women in Palestine to access education

22	Rita Reyad Ahmed El-Looh	Nuseirat	Al-Quds	English Literature	600
	New students				
23	Aseel Nedat Mohammed Shahin	Nuseirat	Al-Aqsa	Teaching English	500
24	Noha Raed Ahmed Abu Khater	Nuseirat camp	Islamic University	Nursing	600
25	Anwar Saed Sobhi Abu Jalhom	Gaza City	Al-Azhar	Teaching Arabic	600
26	Abeer Anwar Khalil Maleha	Gaza City	Al-Quds	Health Administration	600
27	Abeer Eyad Abdulhaleem El-Qazaz	Khan Younis	Al-Aqsa	Primary Education	500
28	Salsabeel Salman Hassan Abu Rashed	Nuseirat camp	Palestine University	Business Administration	600
29	Duha Jamal Abdulrahman Abu Hayya	Nuseirat camp	Al-Aqsa	Teaching English	300
30	Shorouq Hassan Mohammed El-Awadi	Jabalia Camp	Al-Azhar	Psychotherapy	600
31	Israa Ra'fat Ameer Abed	Gaza City	Al-Azhar	Applied Sciences	600
32	Leila Hamza Ahmed Al-Attar	Jabalia Camp	Islamic University	English Commerce	600
33	Norhan Khaled Tawfiq El-Ghafari	Nuseirat camp	College of Applied Sciences	Business Administration	300
34	Hadya Sami Owda Abu Reda	Khan Younis	Islamic University	Information Technology	300
35	Lamees Ashraf Wedad Faraj	Jabalia Camp	Islamic University	Business Administration	600
36	Sonia Issam Mohammed El-Taweel	Maghazi	Al-Aqsa	Psychotherapy	500
37	Amal Kamel Awwad El-Orjan	Nuseirat camp	Al-Azhar	Teaching English	600
38	Nehal Fouad Nabhan Salama	Nuseirat camp	Palestine University	Teaching English	600
39	Rawan Faraj Abdulqader Abu Shammala	Nuseirat camp	Al-Quds	Accounting	600
40	Areej Khaled Shehada El-Ebweni	Nuseirat camp	Islamic University	Health Administration	600
41	Reham Bassam Abdulsame' Abu Saif	Nuseirat camp	Palestine University	Law	600
42	Noor Nasif Abdulaziz Abdula'al	Nuseirat camp	Palestine University	Law	600
43	Dena Mohammed Hassan Ahmed	Maghazi	Al-Azhar	Clinical Investigations	600
44	Sally Ahmed Mefleh Abu Swereh	Zawaida	Islamic University	Information Technology	600
45	Iman Arar Mohammed El-Atawna	Nuseirat camp	Al-Azhar	Pharmacy	800
46	Noor Nael Shehda Abu Obeida	Gaza	Al-Azhar	Clinical Investigations	800



This year's students receiving their scholarships at a ceremony hosted by our partner organisation, Afaq Jadeeda, in Gaza



Students who graduated in 2017

	Name	Where from	University	Specialisation
1	Ruba Hassan Abed Alyasen	Rafah	Islamic Uni.	Medicine
2	Lamiaa' Badr Abdo Alawadi	Gaza	Al-Azhar	Law
3	Heba Khairy Abdelrahman Abu Harbed	Beit-Hanoon	Al-Azhar	Counselling and Guidance
4	Amal Ahmed Abdelhadi Almaqadma	Beit-Hanoon	Al-Azhar	English Literature
5	Israa' Ali Abdelmajeed Abu Shawish	Nuseirat camp	Al-Azhar	English
6	Asia Sabri Mohammed Musallam	Maghazi	Al-Azhar	English
7	Dalia Tayser Mohammed Abu Shammala	Khan Younis	Al-Azhar	Pharmacy
8	Alaa' Hassan Ibrahim Weshah	Bureij camp	Al-Azhar	Primary Education
9	Khawla Marwan Mohammed Abu Khater	Nuseirat camp	Al-Aqsa	Sociology
10	Tasneem Wael Abdeljawad Aljamal	Gaza	Islamic Uni.	Physiotherapy
11	Reham Naser Hussein Shurrab	Khan Younis	Islamic Uni.	Nursing
12	Nisreen Naser Muhareb Matar	Nuseirat camp	Islamic Uni.	Sharia and Law
13	Rola Azmi Abdelqader Alhamalawi	Nuseirat camp	Islamic Uni.	Nursing
14	Nidaa' Khaled Awwad Abu Sweireh	Zawaida	Al-Quds	Health Management
15	Rania Mohammed Abdelaleem Hasaneen	Rafah	Al-Aqsa	Primary Education
16	Besan Hasan Musaed Alarabeed	Gaza	Al-Azhar	Dentistry
17	Neveen Khaled Mohammed Abu Marshod	Nuseirat camp	Al-Azhar	Accounting
18	Dena Yousef Jomaa El-Salout	Nasser	Al-Aqsa	International Secretary

Saddleworth Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund

Saddleworth PWSF was formed in 2012 and we run two fundraising events each year. We also raise money through standing orders, ad hoc donations and the sale of jewellery (which is made and donated by the sister in law of a committee member).



Sponsored Walk

In May around 30 supporters and Committee members walked approximately 8 miles over the beautiful moorland between Marsden and Uppermill. This was our second sponsored walk and we were thrilled to welcome both old and new supporters from as far away as the Midlands, Fylde Coast,

Calderdale, Kirklees, Greater Manchester and, of course, Saddleworth (apologies if we've missed any area). It was wonderful to have a number of children on the walk and their enthusiasm was infectious! We were pleased to be met in Uppermill by more supporters who shared tea, coffee and cakes with us and made generous contributions to the money raised. Thanks to everyone who made the walk such a success in so many ways.

Autumn Fundraiser – 'Food for Thought - 100 Years After Balfour'

Over 60 people attended our autumn fundraiser where we heard an excellent illustrated presentation by Annie O'Gara and Paul Wimpeney (Sheffield PSC). Annie and Paul spoke about how the Balfour Declaration was imposed on Palestine by the British government and why it was, and remains, so important both here and in Palestine.



We were also fortunate to hear from Dr Mona El Farra who gave us an update on the Scholarship Fund students and told us about the deteriorating conditions in Gaza. Despite the enormous difficulties they face, it was both encouraging and humbling to hear how much value the students place on education and the difference it makes to their lives. We had two stalls at the event – Linda and George's Palestinian goods stall and jewellery made by Wendy. We are very grateful for their continuing support.

Other events

We were invited to run stalls at a number of community events during the year. These resulted in a number of new contacts and some generous donations for which we are grateful.

Steve, one of our long-standing supporters, organised and ran another 'Peace Walk' in Manchester with donations going to the Fund. This was another very enjoyable and informative

event and an opportunity to spread the word about the Scholarship Fund to a different audience.

Media Coverage

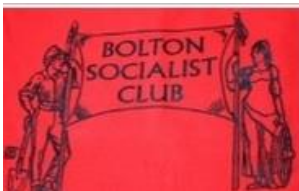
We received excellent coverage of both our sponsored walk and autumn fundraiser in the local press – possibly the first time our local newspaper has printed information about the Nakba!

Finance

In 2017 we raised a fantastic total of £10,482.57.

£5,237.94 was raised through our two main fundraising events. We raised £2,599.00 from standing orders. We were pleased to be awarded a grant of £1,000.00 from the 'Funderbirds' Trust Fund which supports initiatives that directly benefit women and invited us to make an application. We have also had a number of generous 'one off' donations, totalling £1,645.63.

Saddleworth PWSF members are Catherine, Jacqui, Joy, Kathy, Michele, Sarah and Sue and we thank all those who have supported women's education in Palestine throughout the year.



Bolton Socialist Club

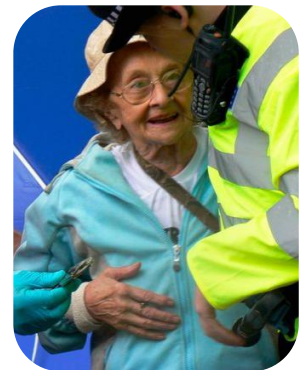
Bolton Socialist Club raised over £1000 this year for the Scholarship Fund. The money was raised from individual donations and standing orders as well as from an annual curry night and from the sales of a video commemorating the life of lifelong peace activist, trade unionist and women's rights campaigner Betty Tebbs who was a Club member and who died in January 2017 at the age of ninety-eight.

The Club continues to do well. It has over two hundred members and the building is used by political, trade union, and campaign groups. In addition the Club runs regular film nights, Love Music Hate Racism gigs, theatre performances, choir concerts, talks and discussions, writing groups, as well numerous one-off events - all of which bring in a lot of people from a wide variety of backgrounds and age groups.

The Scholarship Fund has a high profile throughout the club. There is a banner on the wall and photographs and information are available. This is to raise awareness and interest not only in the Scholarship Fund but in the whole situation in Palestine and the treatment of Palestinians.

Neil Duffield said on behalf of the Club: 'As always we are proud to be a part of the Scholarship Fund and our congratulations to you all on the invaluable work you are doing.

During 2018 the Club plans to organise a sponsored walk in aid of the Scholarship Fund.



Betty Tebbs protesting against nuclear weapons at Faslane naval base in 2007

Sheffield Palestine Education Network (PEN)

Sheffield Palestine Education Network (PEN) is an informal organization of staff and students at Sheffield Hallam University. This year the activities of PEN were built around three well attended public events at Sheffield Hallam.

On 20th February, 2017 PEN hosted the world-renowned scholar, Professor Ilan Pappé from the University of Exeter and author of many important works on the Israel-Palestine question, including *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Professor Pappé's theme was 'Palestine in the Trump

Era: Is it all Bad?' At this event Sara Gowen made a presentation to the audience on behalf of the Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund.



Professor Ilan Pappé

On 15th November, 2017, Professor Nur Masalha from the School of Oriental and African Studies, and a distinguished Palestinian historian and writer, gave a lecture to mark the 100th Anniversary of the Balfour declaration: "From Balfour to the Nakba: Empire, Settler-Colonialism and the Question of Palestine."

On Thursday, 14th December, following Donald Trump's announcement of support for Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, PEN organized a screening of *Jerusalem: The East Side Story*, a documentary by the Palestinian filmmaker, Mohammed Alatar, followed by discussion. The documentary explores 100 years of the city's history to shed light on the impact of Israeli military occupation policies.

For more details on the activities of PEN please contact Peter Jones, P.E.Jones@shu.ac.uk.

Bank account closed – again!

In May 2017 we received a letter from Yorkshire Building Society, from their risk and compliance department, informing us that they were going to close the Scholarship Fund's account. They gave us only two months' notice and no explanation as to why the decision had been taken, despite it being only sixteen months since we opened the account (following the closure of our account by Co-op Bank).



Timing was tight to get a new bank account up and running in time to make our annual transfer of funds to Gaza in June, but fortunately the Yorkshire Bank took us on and the money was despatched.

In July Yorkshire Building Society took the same action against our sister organisation in Saddleworth and the group has now also opened an account with Yorkshire Bank.

We are very thankful to all Scholarship Fund supporters who transferred their standing orders to the new bank accounts – many for a second time!



A BIG thank you

In 2017 we sent a record **£24,150** to Gaza! This covered the **46** scholarships as well as 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, as always, the backbone of the Fund and is hugely valued.
- + Everyone who made a one-off donation – we've had many generous donations this year.
- + Supporters in Bolton and Saddleworth, the Palestine Education Network.
- + Rotherham Friends of Palestine who put on a **summer** meal and an **autumn soup lunch**.
- + Sahar Awadallah for hosting a delicious fund raising meal in May.
- + Quaker meeting house members across Yorkshire who made collections for the Fund.
- + Members of the Sheffield WEA Current Affairs Class for their collection.
- + Maggie Norman for holding her 'stall over the wall' in Upper Padley.
- + Everyone who walked, ran or helped to organise the 'Small park BIG RUN' in June 2017. The event was a huge success with the Scholarship Fund sharing the proceeds with the children's projects that Sheffield Palestine Solidarity supports. The Run will be repeated on June 16th/17th 2018. See <https://en-gb.facebook.com/smallparkbigrun/> for details.



Thinking of raising sponsorship for the Scholarship Fund?

We are registered on **Virgin Money Giving** which makes it very easy. Just go to <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/giving/> and use the search facility to find Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund.

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.



Members of the Sheffield Scholarship Fund Organising Group

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:

Yorkshire Bank, account name: Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund

Sort code: 05 08 68

Account number: 33288777

Reference: your name.

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.