

Our first West Bank students!



From left to right: Hala Quattab (Teachers Creativity Centre); Hanadi Abbas (Fatma's mother); Fatma Abbas, Dalia Nasser & Wiam Hameidan (new SPSWF students); Kirsty Wright and Shirabe Yamada (West Bank SPSWF committee)

We are delighted to welcome and congratulate our three new students in the West Bank. They are Fatma Abbas, who is studying Business Administration at Bir Zeit University, Dalia Nasser who is studying Music at Bir Zeit University, and Wiam Hameidan who is studying Computer Engineering at Al-Najah University. We are grateful to the SPSWF committee in the West Bank for all they have done to make this happen and to the Teachers Creativity Centre, which kindly agreed to handle the transfer of monies for us. Below you can read our students' stories.

My name is **Dalia Nasser** and I started getting into music four years ago, specifically the violin.



Before that I was part of a female rap group based in 'Shorug', an organisation that works in Deheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, where I live.

I've done a lot of volunteering with Shorug and with the Lajee Centre in the camp, where I've taught music. I've also volunteered at the Bethlehem branch of the Edward Said Conservatory, teaching dabka, and at the YMCA (Beit Sahour) where I've helped run activities for children. I support a newly formed group of young women rappers in Deheisheh camp. We teach them rap and share our experiences as young women and I'm involved in other workshops for women through Shorug and at the university.

Between my interest in rap and violin, I realised I wanted to pursue music as a career. My family has a limited income and the scholarship I've received is helping me achieve my dream without burdening my family. Thank you so

much. A specialty in music is only available at Birzeit University, which is far from my home, and I have to pay for accommodation and transport as well as the very costly fees.

Birzeit University teaches eastern music, so I'm also continuing my studies in the Edward Said Conservatory studying western music. Each type of music is very different from the other. My favourite instrument is the violin.

I enjoyed my first semester at Birzeit. We were a small group – four girls and five boys – and we got to know each other well. Each of us already had some knowledge in music, so the teaching was based on this. I'm considering taking psychology as a minor subject. This is because I'm thinking, once I complete my degree, that I'll study for a master's in music therapy.

My name is **Fatma Nidal Radwan Abbas** and I live with my family in Amari refugee camp, close



to Ramallah. My father spent five years in an Israeli prison and my uncles spent seven. After my father came home, he worked with his brother as a carpenter to bring in an income for our family. My mother has diabetes and has developed high blood pressure due to the stress, both mental and economic, that our family suffered.

I have three sisters, who all married right after their final school exams. I also have a brother and I differ in ambition from my siblings, because from when I was very young I wanted to go to university. I was one of the hard-working students in school (my average mark was 80). My ambition has always been to help my family and to improve the economic and social conditions within my refugee community.

Since middle school, I have volunteered in organisations in Amari camp such as the Women's Centre and Children's Club and in summer camps. This volunteer work has helped me form good relations with different organisations and community members and has developed and shaped me as a future leader of the camp community.

I chose Birzeit because it is an esteemed Palestinian university. Many famous Palestinians, throughout the history of our Palestinian cause, graduated from here. I believe by studying business administration I will gain the skills and knowledge needed to help build an independent Palestinian economy. My generation wants to re-plan a new Palestinian economy that is strong and not dependent on the Israeli economy and that will allow our people to live in dignity.

It will be hard work to get my degree and I hope I'll be able to do it. After I graduate, I hope to work in an organisation like a bank, or to manage a business of my own. My mother was not able to complete her school leaving exams because the school was closed due to the first Intifada (the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation 1987-91). She is very happy that I am the first female in the family to go to university and she is so grateful to the Sheffield Fund for making this possible.

My name is **Wiam Mofleh Hameidan** and my mother and I live with my grandmother in a small village called Beata just south of Nablus city. There is no breadwinner. My father lives in Jordan

with another wife and their children. My mother is unemployed. She did not complete her education and we have no income apart from the \$80 a month we receive in charity donations.

University for me is the beginning of a path to achieving my goals. I want to help my mother and my grandmother and my younger siblings and to shield them from the hardship I have faced in my life. We withstand life's blows to hold on to a dream and I waited through twelve years of schooling to fulfill my dream of university. At first I refused to go to school! But my school years ended with great success and that made my mother proud. My academic journey has just started and I'm determined to become a university graduate working in my field and for my mother to think, her head held high, that yes, this is my daughter for whom I sacrificed.

At university I am starting a new journey into the world of programming, electronics and websites. Then I'll be able to enter the world of engineering, which includes maths, chemistry, physics, and algorithms. I have this bright image of what I will become in the future.

My name will fly high in the world of computers and I will find that whilst achieving one's goal is not easy, it is not so difficult. It just requires time and effort. I want to own a company that contributes to society and to hold an esteemed place in society.

I hope to do a master's and, if I have the opportunity, to study for a PhD abroad, as a PhD in computing is not available in Palestine. At first I'd like to work in an organisation on voluntary basis to gain knowledge and experience in computer engineering. Then I'll find regular salaried work so I can sustain myself and support my family.

The first semester at university was good. It was better than being in school. We are an Islamic society and this limits my dealings and relationships with anyone who is male. To be honest, I don't interact with male students, only female ones. Islam does not say you mustn't speak with men, but there should be boundaries. The students are divided 50/50 between women and men and we have both male and female professors.

University fees and expenses are high and my family would not be able to pay them. I am so grateful for your support.



Wiam Hameidan



Sheffield Palestine Education Network (PEN)

At Sheffield Hallam University, members of the Palestine Education Network (PEN) have continued to be active in supporting and promoting the Scholarship Fund. We have also focussed on a number of key campaigns within the University and Sheffield region more widely. We have supported Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) motions among students and staff and we have supported the campaign for recognition of Palestine by Sheffield City Council.

This year we intend to extend the organisation of PEN into the University of Sheffield and we have begun to plan for a joint programme of activities at both universities.

Meeting Alaa: a SPWSF graduate



In April 2019 members of the Fund's organising group met up with Alaa El Jamassi. Alaa – with support from the Fund – graduated in medicine in 2018.

It was such an exciting occasion to finally meet one of our Scholarship Fund students! Since that meeting Alaa has moved to Glasgow with her husband – from where she kindly agreed to do an email interview.



Organising group members with Alaa (3rd from right), Ahmed Alshantti, Alaa's husband (on the left) and Kirsty Wright (West Bank SPWSF committee) in the centre

Alaa, why did you study medicine?

I had a dream as many children do. My dream was to become a doctor. There were several reasons for this, one of the most important being the great shortage of female doctors in the Gaza community. I also wanted to be able to treat people, to bring them relief and happiness, to relieve their pain.

Can you tell us what difficulties you faced as a student in Gaza?

I faced many challenges during my medical degree, including the 2012 and 2014 wars, which forced us to drop out of our studies. In 2014, when I was in the third year of medicine, one of my friends and I went to the Shifa Hospital and helped to treat some of those who had been injured. The feelings I had were mixed between sadness over my people and happiness about being able to contribute, even if only a little



Alaa in the lab – in her second year at university

Gaining an education in Gaza is difficult. The economic situation is grim and basic services, such as electricity, are scarce. So we study when we can, even when there is no electric lighting. The fees for a medical degree are high, which was a real obstacle for my family, especially as I have eight siblings and my father had retired. But with the solidarity and support from the Sheffield Women's Scholarship Fund, I

graduated and I am now a qualified doctor.

I would like to say that the challenges we faced during our university years, from exorbitant university fees to very difficult political and economic circumstances, made us very persistent. We became very resilient people, determined to achieve our goals despite the difficulties.

Is being a student in Gaza very different to being a student in UK?

Yes. In Gaza the number of students is often greater than the size of the classroom. There is a shortage of doctors who are qualified teachers and a lack of teaching materials.

Can you tell us about your plans and ambitions?

When I was at school, my teacher asked us what our ambitions for the future were and my answer was simple and clear: “I want to become a surgeon”. For a girl to aspire to be a surgeon was unusual in Gaza where most doctors are male. There was not a single woman surgeon. Nevertheless, becoming a surgeon was – and remains – my ambition. I hope to obtain a UK medical license as soon as possible and to be a surgeon.

With many thanks to Alaa. We wish her every success in her career.



Wafaa El-Derawi (left) at a Middle East Children's Alliance event in Gaza

Helping girls achieve their dreams

We asked Wafaa El-Derawi, our wonderful volunteer in Gaza, if she could tell us why it's especially hard for young women in Gaza to get a university degree. Here is what she said.

When it comes to gaining a university education, young people in Gaza face many obstacles, the first of which is the extreme poverty that afflicts more than 70% of people in the Gaza Strip. On top of this girls face other obstacles. When parents are unable to pay the high universities fees, they prioritise their sons' education over their daughters'. Even when a girl succeeds in completing her university education, she faces a greater problem in finding work. The Gaza Strip suffers from unemployment of more than 80%, and many of the available jobs favour young men over women.

After I graduated from the College of Pharmacy, I worked as a pharmacist. I got a small salary and was able, using what I had saved and with the help of my father, to complete a master's degree in clinical nutrition. I was very fortunate then to get work as a nutrition trainer with the Middle East Children's Alliance and later to become a project coordinator.

Completing my studies was never easy. I had six siblings and we were all university students – mostly studying medicine. My father is a pharmacist and my mother was a teacher. It was very difficult for our family's average income to cover all of our university fees, transport costs, books, clothes, and expenses. I consider my parents to have been strong fighters like most of the families in the Gaza Strip.

I was lucky – my father had a good income compared to others and this enabled me to study and then work. I know of many girls with the same abilities and ambitions, maybe more, whose financial circumstances did not allow them to enter university and reach their full potential.

I realise how tough it is to be at the top of the class in your studies, to have high ability and ambition and yet, for reasons beyond your control, you cannot gain a university education. I am so grateful to the Sheffield women, who set up the Scholarship Fund, because – as your volunteer – I help girls achieve their dreams.



Messages from Gaza

My name is **Malak Ibrahim Qnanish**. I'm 20 years old. I'm Palestinian and I live in Gaza with my family – my Mum and Dad, two brothers and three sisters.

I'm studying Computer Systems Engineering at Al-Azhar University. I'm now in my third year. At the beginning I didn't want to study a specialty that had anything to do with engineering because I had always hated maths at school. But then I came to realise that engineering isn't all about maths and I'm now so satisfied with my choice.

Without passion you'll achieve nothing. It's passion that's helped me to pass my exams and to continue in this field. After I graduate, I'll look on the internet for courses to develop my software skills further. And when I'm not studying? I like reading novels and spending my free time on social media, chatting with friends on Instagram or WhatsApp or watching useful things on YouTube. Time is going by. We have to trust ourselves and make our hopes come true.



My name is **Noor Mohammed Rayan**. I am 19 years old and I am in the second year of a dentistry degree at Al-Azhar University.

When I was a child I needed a filling in one of my teeth, so I went to the dentist with my mother. The dentist was so cute and very practiced. He told me that I could be like him in the future and after many years I enrolled at university to study this, my most favourite subject.

I want to relieve people of pain and to give them beautiful smiles, so I am very interested in everything that I am studying. I hope to become like the dentist who treated me. All of us should hold onto our dreams.

In my spare time I do a lot of things to feel refreshed. I take part in sport or I go and visit my friend and we spend some crazy moments together. I also chat with friends on my mobile and I watch videos about dentistry.

My name is **Nehal Fouad Salama**. I'm 20 years old and I'm in the third year of an English degree at the University of Palestine.

I chose to study English because my ambition is to become an English teacher or a translator in a Palestinian organisation. I want to help my parents and society and to present a positive image of the Palestinian people around the world.

In my leisure time I read English and Arabic books. I also work as a volunteer, helping people and society. I use social media to contact my friends and to share events. I use it to learn from other people in my field and it is very important for me.



Hello, I'm **Rawan Abu Shawish** and I am studying English Translation at Al-Azhar university. I chose to study translation because it enables people around the world to communicate.



Translation also touches on many other fields of knowledge including cultural studies. I was also influenced by my friends and family, by my interest in the subject and by my personality, as I can see myself becoming a successful translator.

As a translation student I don't have a lot of free time. I spend most of my day in lectures and doing course work, though I can't study when the electricity is off.

In my spare time I like to read and study. I'm also teaching myself to cook all of my favourite foods. I enjoy discovering new things and when I don't feel like doing anything productive I watch movies and British comedy shows. Social media plays an important role in my life. It makes it easy to access information and to communicate.

My name is **Ola Abu Habid**. I began to study pharmacy four years ago and this has been a great experience even if pharmacy is a very tough subject.

You have to be very motivated and this I am. I want to be a source of healing, helping many people, and I want to benefit my family and myself. Pharmacy is an essential profession for society, so studying it is of great benefit to all.

In my spare time, I spend time with my family because my studies distract me from them. If I get free time at university, I go to the library to read some books, but this does not happen much because of the pressure of studying.

I don't use social media sites a lot because during the day I'm mostly at university and when I get home I have to finish my studies, so there is never any time. Just every now and then I read some novels and books.



I'm **Rozan Matar**. I'm 19 years old and I'm studying French and English Literature at Al-Azhar university. I'm in my second year. I chose to study French and English because I like to discover new things about languages. I already speak French and English fluently.

In my free time I go out with my friends and I sing a lot of songs and I read novels. I use social media but not all the time. I might explore something new about the French language on YouTube. I chat with my friends. I research French grammar and I share pictures on Instagram.

In the future, when I've finished my degree, I will learn Spanish. I would like to be a multilingual person.



This year's scholarships

This year we are supporting **58** students in Gaza and **3** in the West Bank – a total of **61**.

The number of scholarships in Gaza is less than last year because the dollar/pound exchange rate was very poor in July 2019 (when we made the bank transfer) and the Gaza committee awarded more scholarships at the higher amount of \$1000. The good news is that ten of our students graduated this year – against the odds!



Award ceremony in August 2019 at Afaq Jadeeda in Gaza (more photos on page 11)

	Name	Address	University	Subject	Amount (\$)
Gaza students we are continuing to support from September 2016					
1	Ayat Ahmed Mohammed Ahmed	Nuseirat camp	Islamic Uni.	Engineering	1000
2	Hanaa Atef Hassan Salha	Deir-El-Balah	Al-Aqsa	Primary Education	300
3	Ritta Reyad Ahmed El-Looh	Bureij	Al-Quds	English Literature	600
4	Karama Hassan Mohammed El-Da'or	Jabalia	Uni. Of Palestine	Pharmacy	1000
5	Rasha Anwer Hassan Salha	Jabalia	Al-Azhar	Applied Science	600
6	Lubna Abdelkhaleq Ali El-Farra	Khan Younis	Al-Azhar	Engineering	800
7	Areej Mohammed Madi	Gaza City	Al-Azhar	Accounting	600
8	Deena Soheil Omar El-Tanani	Gaza City	Al-Azhar	English Teaching	600
Gaza students we are continuing to support from September 2017					
9	Duha Jamal Abdulrahman Abu Hayya	Nuseirat camp	Al-Aqsa	English Teaching	300
10	Aseel Nedal Mohammed Shahin	Nuseirat	Al-Aqsa	English Teaching	500
11	Rawan Faraj Abdulqader Abu Shammala	Nuseirat camp	Al-Quds	Accounting	600

12	Abeer Anwar Khalil Maleha	Gaza City	Al-Quds	Health Administration	600
13	Salsabeel Salman Hassan Abu Rashed	Nuseirat camp	Palestine University	Business Administration	600
14	Nehal Fouad Nabhan Salama	Nuseirat camp	Palestine University	Teaching English	600
15	Reham Bassam Abdulsame' Abu Seef	Nuseirat camp	Palestine University	Law	600
16	Eman Arrar Mohammed El-Atawna	Nuseirat camp	Al-Azhar	Pharmacy	1000
17	Anwar Saed Sobhi Abu Jalhom	Gaza City	Al-Azhar	Teaching Arabic	600
18	Israa Ra'fat Ameer Abed	Gaza City	Al-Azhar	Applied Sciences	600
19	Shorouq Hassan Mohammed El-Awadi	Jabalia Camp	Al-Azhar	Psychotherapy	600
20	Noor Nael Shehda Abu Obeida	Gaza	Al-Azhar	Clinical Investigations	800
21	Norhan Khaled Tawfeeq El-Ghaffari	Nuseirat camp	Al-Israa	Business Administration	600
22	Nahla Mohammed Hassan Ahmed	Maghazi	Palestine University	Law	600
23	Tasneem Naser Juma Darweish	Maghazi	Al-Quds University	Accounting	600
24	Noor Mohammed Ibrahim Rayan	Deir El-Balah	Al-Azhar University	Dentistry	1000
25	Ghalia Ghalib Gabr Abu Khaled	Zwaida	Islamic University	Nursing	600
26	Manar Nafez Mahmud Al-Saidy	Bureij	Islamic University	Nursing	600
27	Remaz Ahmed Zaher Farj Allah	Nuseirat	Al-Aqsa University	English Literature	600
28	Hadeel Gamal Abdullah Abu Haya	Nuseirat	Al-Aqsa University	Arabic Teaching	500
29	Hanady Mahmud Khalil Abu Shawish	Nuseirat	Al-Azhar University	Clinical Investigations	500
30	Lamia Anwar Abdulhameed Abu Hezien	Nuseirat	Al-Aqsa University	Accounting	500
31	Rola Borham Mohammed El-Quraan	Zwaida	Al-Aqsa University	Nursing	500
32	Malak Ibrahim Ibrahim Qnanish	Khan Younis	Al-Azhar University	Engineering	1000
33	Rawan Ali Abdulmajeed Abu Shawish	Nuseirat	Al-Azhar University	Translation	600
34	Alaa Naser Hassan Zuqat	Nuseirat	Al-Quds University	Primary Education	600

35	Lama Hussein Nady Hamad	Jabalia	Al-Azhar University	Accounting	600
36	Samaher Akram Abdulsalam Ali	Jabalia	Al-Azhar University	Teaching English	600
37	Marwa Mamdouh Ibrahim Ba'alousha	Zwaida	Al-Azhar University	Pharmacy	1000
38	Ola Khairi Abdulrahma Abu Habid	Jabalia	Al-Azhar University	Pharmacy	1000
39	Amal Mahmud Rizq Seyam	Nuseirat	Al-Azhar University	Nursing	600
40	Iba'a Yosif Mohammed Hamoda	Khan Younis	Al-Azhar University	Engineering	600
41	Eliaa Ibrahim Ibrahim Al-Fasees	Gaza City	Al-Quds University	Information Technology	600
42	Haya Mohammed Gasem El-Assar	Nuseirat	Islamic University	Mathematics Education	600
43	Alaa Maher Fahmy Al-Ghreez	Nuseirat	Palestine University	Information Technology	600
44	Lina Abdullah Mahmud Awadallah	Gaza City	Islamic University	Engineering	1000
45	Rima Fayez Ali Al-Thawabta	Nuseirat	Al-Aqsa University	Business Administration	500
46	Yasmin Baker Ismail Shaheen	Bureij	Al-Aqsa University	Teaching Arabic	300
47	Nehad Raed Ahmed Al-Jadbah	Gaza City	Al-Aqsa University	Chemistry	500
48	Rozan Nahed Abdulrahman Matar	Gaza City	Al-Azhar University	English Literature	600
49	Reham Sobhi Mohammed Nassar	Gaza City	Islamic University	Clinical Investigations	600
50	Rania Khaled Tawfiq El-Ghafari	Beit Lahia	Al-Aqsa University	Clinical Investigations	300
51	Noor El-Huda Amin Esmat El-Borno	Gaza City	Al-Aqsa University	Business Administration	500
52	Asmaa Iz El-Dein Abdeen	Khan Younis	Al-Aqsa University	Teaching Arabic	500
53	Rouand Jaber Ibrahim Abu Saeed	Bureij	Al-Quds University	Primary Education	600
54	Amal Maher Ahmed El-Sayed	Bureij	Gaza University	Business Administration	600
55	Waed Bahjat Nayef Abu Sawirh	Zwaida	Islamic University	Nursing	600
New Gaza students for 2019-20 academic year					
56	Amal Abdulralim Mutleq Ashour	Nuseirat	Palestine University	Pharmacy	1000

57	Shadia Yasir Mohammed Shmed	Nuseirat	Al-Aqsa University	Psychotherapy	250
58	Ola Ibrahim Mohammed El-Shaltawi	Jabalia	Al-Quds University	English Education	600
New West Bank students for 2019-20 academic year					
59	Fatma Abbas	Amari Camp	Bir Zeit University	Economics	1700 first semester*
60	Dalia Nasser	Deheisheh Camp	Bir Zeit University	Music	1025 for first semester*
61	Wiam Hameidan	Beata – a village south of Nablus	Al-Najah University	Computer Engineering	1025 for first semester*
Students who graduated in 2019					
1	Eman Ghassan Ahmed Abu Hatab	Khan Younis	Gaza University	Translation	
2	Noor Atta Hamdi Habashi	Gaza	Islamic Uni.	English Teaching	
3	Haneen Hamed Deeb E-raee	Gaza	Islamic Uni.	Clinical Investigations	
4	Hala Abu El Elkheir Mohammed Ferjani	Khan Younis	Al-Aqsa	Business Administration	
5	Amani Mohammed Adel Abdelhameed	Nuseirat	Al-Aqsa	English Teaching	
6	Mai Jamal Saleh Abu Sha'ban	Gaza	Al-Aqsa	Primary Education	
7	Noha Raed Ahmed Abu Khater	Nuseirat camp	Islamic University	Nursing	
8	Lamees Ashraf Wedad Faraj	Jabalia Camp	Islamic University	Business Administration	
9	Areej Khaled Shehada El-Ebweni	Nuseirat camp	Islamic University	Health Administration	
10	Noor Nasee Abdulaziz Abdula'al	Nuseirat camp	Palestine University	Law	

*A total of £8000 has been transferred to the West Bank to support 3 students in their first year. Allocations for the second semester are yet to be confirmed.



Saddleworth Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund

2019 saw us once again running two successful fundraising events, each very different from the other but united by the support we received from local Saddleworth businesses.

On May 10th we held a **Solidarity Supper**. Music was provided by the talented John Napier, a long-time supporter, and the venue and much of the catering by *The Reclamation Room*, a local café in Uppermill that charged us only their costs. The *Wine Vault* offered wine on a 'sale or return' basis, for which guests were asked to give donations and the Manchester Palestine Solidarity Campaign craft stall was also in attendance. To top all of this we welcomed Alaa Fouad El Jamassi, a graduate of SPWSF, who spoke eloquently about the importance of the fund for her personally and for her sisters in Gaza (see page 4 for more about Alaa). The event was a sell out! 75 people came – our regular attenders plus newcomers – and it raised over £900.



From left to right: Val Johnson (Sheffield organising group), Michele Abendstern (Saddleworth committee), Alaa El Jamassi (SPWSF graduate), Catherine Holland and Jacqui Greenfield (Saddleworth cttee) at the Solidarity Supper in May



November sponsored swim at Manor House Barn

Our second event was a **Sponsored Swim**, which not only raised money for the Scholarship Fund but increased people's awareness of the contrast between our own easy access to water and the water crisis in Gaza. The aim was for our swimmers to cover a total of 25 miles: the length of Gaza. This took place in various pools over the month running up to Sunday November 3rd, when we organised a collective swim at Manor House Barn Pool. Supporter of the Fund, Jane Dronsfield, and her family kindly provided the venue free of charge.

A total of 27 swimmers were involved in the Sponsored Swim, with an age range of 7 to 70. We achieved an incredible **136** miles in total, surpassing all expectations! In the afternoon of the collective swim we held a social. Magda Sachs gave a short talk on the water situation in Gaza and we were pleased to welcome Dr Mona El Farra, SPWSF's partner in Gaza, who spoke warmly about our work and about the importance of education for Palestinian women and the country's future. Sara Gowen from the SPWSF organising group gave us an update on expanding the Scholarship Fund into the West Bank and our local MP Debbie Abrahams spoke in support of the work the Fund does. The Sponsored Swim raised over £4000.

Other fundraising

Through the year supporters have raised money on our behalf either by holding events themselves or by making donations. Events included a garden party in Alderly Edge, a meal and

presentation in Lancashire, a Labour Women's Forum event in Rochdale, a donation from a local church and three birthday appeals. Again we received a grant from the women's trust fund Funderbirds, this year for £2000. We were also given jewellery, jams and chutneys and other items to sell or raffle at our events and at a CND Peace Fair in December, all of which helped to make a very successful fundraising year. Our total income for 2019 was £14,373.23. Of this £4177.00 came from the 33 people who support us via regular standing orders.

We would like to say **thank you** to all those individuals who turn up to each of our events to help, rolling up their sleeves to prepare and tidy up venues, and to serve refreshments. You know who you are! We couldn't do what we do without you all and your help is really appreciated by us all.

We have been very pleased to welcome a new member to our organising committee this year: Anne Forster. Anne has been a great asset to the group already, particularly in drumming up support for the Sponsored Swim from her family and friends.



Knitted banner made by
Magda Sachs

Saddleworth PWSF Committee - Michele Abendstern (Secretary), Anne Forster, Jacqui Greenfield (Treasurer), Sarah Hey, Catherine Holland (Chair), Magda Sachs and Sue Warrington



Bolton Socialist Club

Over the last year the Club held just one fund-raising event for the Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund – a concert by Leon Rosselson in November, which raised £182. Normally we hold at least two events per year and we plan on doing so again next year.

In addition to our organised events, individual members continue to make regular donations to the Fund and in the last twelve months these have amounted to £400. So over the year we raised a total of £582 for the Scholarship Fund.

The Club has over two hundred members and we keep them regularly informed about the work that the Club and the Fund are doing together, sharing progress reports on the women we support in Gaza and the West Bank. Photos and reports are displayed on the notice board and on the walls of the club.

We are proud to be part of the Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund network and send our congratulations to everyone involved in making the Fund so successful. As we constantly remind our members, we do not regard it as charity but as solidarity.



Leon Rosselson concert at
the Club in November 2019

Rotherham Friends of Palestine

This last year was very busy for our members, who are involved in several organisations as well as Rotherham Friends. Nevertheless, we have continued to raise both money and awareness – in solidarity with Palestine.

The Rotherham Show was a highlight of the year, because it was where we met Arwa Omaren. Arwa is Palestinian and a refugee and her experience is, itself, a story. She travelled from Syria to Lebanon to Kurdistan then through Turkey and walked to Greece from where she flew to London. I



Arwa with a supporter at Rotherham Show

was very moved when she introduced herself and said how wonderful it was to meet people who cared about her home.

Before Christmas Trisha and I hosted a 'Winter Soup Lunch' for the Scholarship Fund.

This took place only a few days before the general election so several of our regular members were engaged elsewhere, but we raised £230 and were grateful to Sara and Bev (from SPWSF's organising group) for travelling from Sheffield and saying a few words. Trisha and I hope to hold another event sometime in 2020.

Finally, we would like to mention the ongoing support from Joan Hindle who, though now unable to attend meetings, has supported the Palestinian cause for many years.

Jon Smith



Winter Soup Lunch. From left: Janet, Bev (Sheffield SPWSF), Dave, Ellen, Tricia, Sara (Sheffield SPWSF), Maurice, Hilary, Steve and Gill



From left: Gill, Ruth and Janet at the Rotherham Show



Financial Crisis in Gazan universities

Dr Mazen Hamada, Vice President of Al-Azhar University (Gaza) for Administrative and Financial Affairs, told journalists in July 2019 that the numbers of students applying to the Islamic University, Al-Azhar University (Gaza), and University College of Applied Sciences had dropped from 45,000 to less than 35,000. He said many were "reluctant to enrol in university because they cannot pay the tuition fees due to the difficult economic conditions in Gaza." Hamada also said that about 10,000 students, who had successfully completed their degrees, had not been able to graduate because they could not pay off their tuition fees. This meant they could not go on and get work in their field of study.

The crisis has impacted not only on the number of grants that can be given to students to enable them to study, but also on staffing levels and the resources available in the universities.



A BIG thank you

In July 2019 we sent **£30,450** to Gaza to cover **58** scholarships. This sum also included a 5% admin fee to Afaq Jadeeda and bank charges. We sent **£8000** to the West Bank, which covered **3** scholarships and bank charges – we pay no admin fee. The new West Bank scholarships were made possible by the large donations and legacies received in 2018/19. We thank those donors and everyone who organised, helped with or attended events and/or who donated time, money or other support to the Fund, including:

- ✚ All those who have maintained or taken out a standing order. We so value these regular donations. It means we can plan ahead and also claim gift aid from HMRC – we receive an extra 25p for every £1 you give, if you're a tax payer!
- ✚ Everyone who has made a one-off donation – we received one amazing donation of £1200 – and everyone who made a collection for the Fund, including Wooldale Quakers.
- ✚ Supporters in Bolton, Saddleworth and Rotherham, in the Palestine Education Network at Sheffield Hallam University and in the University of Sheffield Palestine Society.
- ✚ Everyone who walked, ran or helped to organise the **Small park BIG RUN** in June 2019. The event – in Meersbrook Park – was again a great success, raising a fantastic £6500 of which £3150 came to the Fund (the same amount went to Khuza'a Children's Play and Heal project). The Run will be repeated on June 20th/21st 2020. See <https://en-gb.facebook.com/smallparkbigrun/>
- ✚ Val Johnson and Mavis Kirkham for donating half the proceeds from a most enjoyable garden party and plant sale that they organised at the end of June.
- ✚ Maggie Norman – for continuing to run a very successful 'Stall over the Wall' in Grindleford.
- ✚ Members of Labour Party constituencies and trade unions that made donations to the Fund. *We are hoping to develop more links with the labour movement. Please contact us if you would like a speaker on the Scholarship Fund to attend one of your meetings.*
- ✚ People for Print, who print the newsletter so beautifully and never charge us full price.
- ✚ Emma Rattenbury, who facilitated a very useful development day for the organising group in July, donating her skills and time.



Thinking of raising sponsorship for the Scholarship Fund?

We are registered on **Virgin Money Giving** which makes this 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. In West Bank we work with a committee of women, all of whom are active around women's education and employment. We route our payments for scholarships in the West Bank through the Teachers Creativity Centre based in Ramallah.

In Gaza 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 the West Bank have adapted these criteria for their own student selection process and, as in Gaza, they keep in contact with the scholarship students and help them overcome problems in completing their courses, i.e. not being able to afford transport, books, equipment etc. Our partners can sometimes access other small amounts of funding to cover 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.



The Fund's organising group at a development day in July 2019

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.