

Share our message with the world



From the left: Malak Hassan Al-Daour, Malak Khudair Jaber Ali and Donia Loay Saadi El-Zaanin, July 2023

We have had almost no news of our Gaza students since Israel's devastating war on Gaza began in October 2023. However, in July 2023 Sue Piper, a member of the Saddleworth Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund committee, visited Gaza and met three of our students (see the photo above). Sue has written for us about that very special day and she shares the heartbreaking news she later received – that one of the three students, Malak Khudair Jaber Ali, has been killed.

It was a beautiful afternoon that will stay in my memory for a long time. I had hoped I might be able to meet with the founder of the Scholarship Fund and its long-term partner, Mona El Farra, while I was in Gaza, and I was so glad when Mona thought this a great idea. She arranged for me to meet up with her in Beit Lahia in Northern Gaza at the Big Ride cycle park.

I was welcomed with open arms and it felt like the whole town had come out to greet me! I met with children, sports coaches, play workers and specialists who work with children and young people and I saw the wide variety of activities on offer (funded by the Middle East Children's Alliance [MECA] and the UK Big Ride for



Sue (middle of back row) with Mona El Farra on her left meeting MECA staff and children

Palestine). It was here, in the Big Ride cycle park, that I met Malak Hassan Al-Daour, Malak Khudair Jaber Ali and Donia Loay Saadi El-Zaanin. These three lovely young women had all received scholarships from the Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund. I chatted to them about the courses they were doing and they thanked me for the work of the Scholarship Fund,

expressing their gratitude for the opportunities it had given them. They accompanied me around the cycle park and we chatted a lot about their hopes and dreams for the future.

Then, after Oct 7th 2023, Malak Hassan Al-Daour contacted me and told me about the horrors of the bombing in Gaza. She asked me to share a message she had written with the world:



Sue with Malak Al-Daour

Hello, I am Malak Hassan Al-Daour. I am 20 years old, a law student studying at Al-Azhar University in Gaza, thanks to the Sheffield Palestinian Women's Scholarship Fund.

Getting a scholarship has helped me to achieve my dream of studying law, because I have always had the dream of using my education in law to defend my homeland within international institutions. My dream is for my homeland to be achieved, for me to live in peace, to survive this war, to complete my undergraduate education and then to obtain a master's degree and a doctorate in law. I thank the women of Sheffield for making my dream come true through their financial support.

Now in the Gaza Strip we are living in the worst conditions. Our homes were targeted and we were forcibly displaced from them. We moved to another place to save our lives, but we cannot. They are burning us, bombing civilians, medical teams, roads and streets. We need you to deliver our message to the whole world and for you to come out on peaceful demonstrations to stop the aggression against Gaza.

Thank you Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund 

A short time after she sent me this message, Malak wrote and told me that Malak Khudair Jaber Ali, one of the Scholarship Fund students I'd met in July, had been killed. Malak was devastated about the loss of her friend. Malak Khudair Jaber Ali had been a nursing student and had hoped to become a paediatric nurse.

Malak and I kept in touch for a while after that and she let me know about the deteriorating conditions in the town of Beit Lahia, where she lived, and in her home. She told me about the shortages of food and water and about the use of white phosphorus by Israel.

From mid November 2023 until the middle of January 2024, I didn't hear from Malak. I feared the worst but then I received this message from her:

Hello Sue

I will tell you what happened to us during our displacement to the southern Rafah area.

First, we walked thousands of metres to reach the checkpoint. We saw the occupation soldiers carrying their heavy weapons, rifles directed at our heads, tanks, and all the cannons on us. We stayed for nearly 7 hours in the hot sun and the bullets above our heads hit randomly. We escaped very miraculously and when we crossed the checkpoint, we saw thousands of martyrs and dead on the ground, with amputated limbs and decomposing corpses and birds flying above us. Then we walked on foot for long hours.

When we arrived in Rafah we did not find refuge. The shelters were full and there was no place for us. We made a tent and sat in it. The bitter cold had really crushed our bodies.



It is the weak world (the weakness of the international community) that has made us live through all of these things.

I will never forget the warmth, hospitality, friendship and love that was shown to me on that beautiful, sunny afternoon in Gaza in July 2023, when I met up with Mona El Farra and our three students. I will continue to tell the stories of children and of young women like Malak, Malak and Donia – to ensure their voices are heard and that one day Palestine is free.

Sue Piper

Committee Member, Saddleworth Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund



Sue adds: My visit to Gaza in July 2023 was with the Hands Up Project, a U.K. based charity which supports the English language learning of children in Palestine through storytelling and drama. Before Oct 7th every Sunday I would link up with a class of 13-year-olds in Beit Hanoun in Gaza and do all kinds of activities to enable the girls to practice their English.

The charity has many volunteers from all over the world and we link up classes in Gaza with pupils worldwide. The aim of the charity is to enable Palestinian young people to tell their stories with confidence and creativity.

At the moment I don't know what has happened to the teacher I partner or the girls I have worked with, or where they are. I know their school has been completely bombed out and their houses flattened. Last I heard, many were sheltering in schools in the south of Gaza.

For more information on the Hands Up project see: <https://www.handsupproject.org/>

The destruction of Gaza's universities

The Geneva-based, independent Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor reported in January 2024 that the Israel Defence Force (IDF) has systemically damaged or destroyed every university in Gaza. The first to be targeted were the Islamic and Al-Azhar Universities (in 2023 18 of our Scholarship Fund students were at Al-Alzhar University, 9 at the Islamic University). The bombing of other universities and other educational institutions has followed.



Eman Alhaj Ali (standing) at her graduation ceremony in 2023

Eman Alhaj Ali, a journalist, writer and translator based in Gaza, wrote in *The Electronic Intifada* in November 2023.

"I have just turned 22. My birthday should have a joyful occasion, spent with family and friends. Instead, it was agonizing. The sounds of celebration replaced with those of bombardment. I cannot get over the fact that the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) has been destroyed by Israel's warplanes.

When I first heard that news, I dismissed it as impossible. Then my disbelief was transformed into tears. Scrolling through social media posts, I

discovered that far from being a nightmarish illusion, the destruction was now a harsh reality.

Established in 1978, the IUG has partnerships with more than 140 higher educational institutions worldwide. Now its network of research centres has been reduced to rubble. Cherished moments have been turned into ashes. Dreams have been shattered.

Memories came flooding back as I looked at posts documenting the university's destruction. My time studying at IUG was a happy one. I enjoyed attending lectures, studying in the central library. The campus was calm and I loved being there with friends. I took part in many events.

A few months ago, I graduated from the IUG with distinction. I envisioned a splendid future. Everything has changed irrevocably. I had hopes of continuing to study – as a postgraduate – in the IUG. My hopes are now ruined."



The Islamic University in Gaza

In January 2024 Eman told The Electronic Intifada that, having been forced to evacuate from

Maghazi, and after a treacherous journey, she and her family had finally arrived in Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city, now "a sea of tents".

It is not only university buildings that have been lost. Tragically, academics, scientists and intellectuals in Gaza, from across a range of research disciplines, have been killed in Israeli attacks. In January 2024, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor reported that since October 7th 2023, 17 individuals with professorial degrees had died, 59 with doctoral degrees, and 18 with master's degrees. Many were internationally renowned scholars, including Refaat Alareer, a poet and literature professor and one of Gaza's most prominent intellectuals.

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Education, in the first three months of the war, 231 schoolteachers and administrators were killed in Gaza and 756 injured. No schools are functioning.

And thousands of university and school students have died. At the time of writing over 10,000 children are known to have been killed since October 7th and the true number will be higher.

Ahmed Alhussaina is the Vice President of the ruined Al-Israa University in Gaza City. In an interview with the news agency NPR in January 2024, he stressed that the vision for Al-Israa University, when it was set up in 2014, had been that poverty should never be an obstacle for anybody who wanted to gain a university education. Sixty-five percent of the students at Al-Israa had been young women. The University had also been building



Al Israa University before the bombing



Al Israa university after the bombing

a hospital – the first university hospital in Gaza – and it had housed a museum with almost 3,000 artifacts from all over Gaza, some going back to the Roman Empire.

Ahmed Alhussaina is hoping for a permanent cease-fire and no more wars, no more destruction. "We had so many hopes. We built this university and we had so many plans for the future. In a blink of an eye, everything just vanished – it was destroyed and disappeared. All I can hope is what's happening will end and we can rebuild.

That's the only thing you can hope for, that Al-Israa will be re-built and people will again have the chance to gain a university education."

Please keep supporting us

We hear from our students in the West Bank



Eman is in the red coat next to her mother (left) with her sister in front. To Eman's right are Hilary Smith and Carolyn Leary from the Scholarship Fund and to the right of her mother are Kirsty Wright (West Bank Scholarship Fund committee), student Dalya Nasser, Julie Pearn (Sheffield Labour Friends of Palestine) and Shirabe Yamada (West Bank Committee), March 2022

Eman Al Najjar

Eman is in her third year of a four-year Arabic language degree at Hebron University

Hello, Sheffield Women's Scholarship Fund! I am Eman Al Najjar, a Palestinian from the city of Khaleel. I live in the Fawwar camp. I am happy to be in contact with you. It's a long time since some of you came to Palestine. I hope the situation will improve and we will meet again.

I chose to study Arabic [*Eman was originally training to be a teacher of Arabic*] because I like to read and write

poems, stories and novels. I would like to be a writer and continue my studies in Arabic.

University has an impact on every student. If you don't go to university, you don't get the same chance to develop. I think how I grew up, my personality, and my ways of thinking have made me very aware of this. At university I have got to know new people and a new environment. And this has an effect on all aspects of your personality.

But, because of the situation in Palestine, I don't feel as happy now about being a student. Immediately after 7th October, e-learning was introduced and we couldn't go to the university and see our friends. This has made studying very difficult. It has changed my educational experience deeply.

Nagham Khalayleh

Nagham is in her third year of a four-year nursing degree at Hebron University

I love being at university. I chose nursing as it is a noble and humanitarian profession. It's about helping others.

My studies have become much harder for me. I've faced the challenges and stress of adapting to online learning, which started after October 7th and may continue into the next semester given

that the war in Gaza is ongoing. Blessed be our martyrs. The practical training we need in order



to understand the theory has been re-scheduled and the uncertainty over whether it will happen is very stressful. I'm sure my educational attainment will be affected by all that has happened.

I live in the village of Samoa, which is about sixty kilometers south of Hebron. It is almost impossible now to go to Hebron or move around the city. The road closures are very strict. Even if practicals can be organised, it will take hours to get to the university and hours to get back again.



Weam Hameidan

Weam is in her fifth (last) year of studying computer science at Nablus University.

First, I wish safety for the people in the Gaza Strip and recovery for our wounded, and may God have mercy on our martyrs. What is happening in the Gaza Strip has affected the academic performance of most of our students, because of the psychological state we are in due to the massacres, rights violations and war crimes in Gaza. Not to mention the arrests carried out in the West Bank. Several students from my university have been arrested, including the head of the Student Union Council, for demonstrating in response to what is happening in the Gaza Strip.

At the same time, university hours have been suspended because of the difficulty in commuting between villages and cities. Moving around has become very difficult and dangerous, due to harassment and sabotage by settlers in the villages and because the main road, Huwwara Road, the link between the villages and the cities, has been closed.

Many families have been affected by this, by the closure and destruction of many shops and by not being able to get to work. This has especially affected those people who work in the occupied interior [*Israel*]. During the olive harvest season, most families headed to their land in groups out of fear of the settlers, not to mention that the occupation allows the settlers to carry weapons. I heard that some families suffered at the hands of the settlers. Thank God, nothing bad happened.

The economic situation is much worse now. The Student Council at the University has been on strike against the administration's proposal to split each four-month semester in two, so that students can pay a smaller amount to cover a two-month period. The students want a normal four-month semester, but with the right to pay in instalments.

It has been quite hard because of the war and online learning. Our practical sessions have been postponed till the summer. There is a distance between the teachers and the students, and between the students themselves. I had to go to the campus twice in Nablus for group discussions. Normally it takes me an hour, there and back, but now it takes two hours to get there and three hours to return. E-learning makes me feel very distant and isolated and it's stressful. Honestly, we feel oppressed because the teachers are so afraid of us cheating, they make the questions extra hard. There is not enough time to answer the questions, and this adds

to the stress. And we don't yet know if the next semester will happen.

Please sustain your solidarity, especially with the students in Gaza. All their universities have been destroyed and their studies stopped.

I know you are looking at horrible pictures and it has become normal. It is not normal. Please don't normalise it. These are people, every one of them is a person, and we need every one of them to be able to build a better future.



Asma Dakheel

Asma is in the third year of a four-year nursing degree at Al Quds University

The last semester was much more difficult and dangerous than any before, because of the hundred days of the war. The conflict escalated in the West Bank with soldiers entering Jericho every day and with restrictions on moving around, though these have now lessened a little. [*Jericho, where Asma lives, is 20 kilometers from Al Quds University, which is in Abu Dis, Jerusalem*].

Online learning makes it more difficult to concentrate and to keep up with my classes. I am in touch daily with my classmates through WhatsApp and all of them have the same difficulties. I have tried my best between online learning and the war.

We were supposed to have two practicals last semester, but these were both postponed and now a third one will also be pushed to the summer. You need practical experience to understand all the theory, otherwise you can't apply what you've learnt.

We expect the next semester to be online, but we don't know yet. The course schedule has not been posted. All this uncertainty compounds the pressure of being online. We cannot plan. There is no possibility of this in our current situation with such unpredictability in everyday life.

Please keep supporting us. Please keep up the pressure and demand that the war stops.

Qamar Kharroub

Qamar is in the third year of a four-year IT degree at the Open University in Qalqilya

I am excited by my studies as there is a market for IT skills and I want to work after I graduate. My two brothers studied IT at the Open University and they both have jobs in Ramallah and they help me with my course work.

The Open University is close to my home and I am happy with the course. But studying online is hard. The last semester was all online. This made a big difference. And the economic situation for students and their families is now much worse. I don't have any real social connection through my course given the



Open University does not require students to attend in person, but I have grown and I've taken on more responsibility since I've been a student. I hope next semester to improve my average from seventy-six percent to the high eighties.

Support Palestinians and use your solidarity to stop the war.

Congratulations to our West Bank graduates

Fatme Abbas was the first of our West Bank Scholarship Fund students to graduate. In June 2023 Fatme was awarded a degree in economics. Dalya Nasser then graduated in January 2024 and was awarded a degree in psychology and music. Dalya has kindly let us have her reflections on her last year as a student.



Dalya Nasser

I have gone through beautiful and challenging experiences in the last two semesters at university. I could feel that I was approaching a new phase in my life and I experienced various emotions—fear, excitement, happiness and sadness – as I realized that this university life will never be repeated.

In this last year at university, I tried my best to be socially active and, if they needed it, to support students at the beginning of their university lives. With the start of the second semester, things changed due to the war. Teaching became online due to the difficulty students faced in reaching the university. Teaching was a bit disrupted but, despite the impact on our well-being, I always tried to find a way through.

The best thing has been completing my graduation project. I conducted research to identify groups in need of psychological support and then initiated a project aimed at reducing psychological stress for mothers of children with special needs. I assessed the mothers' needs and then organized seven activities to meet these needs and I am planning to continue these activities so that the support can be sustained.

One of the most inspiring things I learned is the importance of building social relationships. These are considered fundamental in the field of psychology and this knowledge has greatly assisted me in my graduation project and also in the voluntary work that I do with organizations focusing on mental health.

The brutal and recurrent practices of occupation have impacted our mental and physical health, leaving lasting effects on the community as a whole. Particularly, the tragic war on the Gaza Strip has had profound consequences. I offered psychological support to residents of Gaza who were stranded in Ramallah. My focus was on women battling cancer, who were receiving treatment in Ramallah and who were unable to return home due to what was happening there. I stayed in touch with these women and did my best to support them and provide psychological relief as they faced daily fears and anxieties about the well-being of their families.

Now that I have completed my degree, I look forward to doing more voluntary work for the organizations I am already involved with. Additionally, I plan to continue my educational journey by pursuing a master's degree in clinical psychology.



Dalya supporting the mothers of children with special needs as part of her graduation project.

I consider our fate unknown; I do not know what tomorrow holds for us. Indeed, the ongoing war has completely disrupted all aspects of life and has affected every facet of our existence.

During all these years of study, the Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund has been an integral part of my journey. The success I have achieved is thanks to all of you. You were with me on my educational path step by step, providing continuous support. I hope to live up to your

expectations. Thank you very much for the wonderful opportunity you gave me – to study for and to complete a degree at Birzeit University.

What our West Bank students are facing

Kirsty Wright (West Bank Scholarship Fund Committee)

As the interviews with our students make clear, there are three main issues troubling and affecting West Bank students.

Firstly, on-line learning is very hard. Our students find it difficult to concentrate, feel very distant from peers and teachers, and if they don't have a relationship with the teachers from previous semesters, they find it even more difficult to engage. As do the teachers, I am sure! It's a lot more work for them too.

Secondly, there is the worsening economic situation. Our students mention it in terms of hardships for their peers, but it's true for our students' families too. Two of the families rely on a public sector salary, but the Palestine Authority is bankrupt and cannot pay salaries as the Israelis have not transferred the Tax income due since October 7th. One other family is dependent on social welfare from the Palestine Authority, which is also not being paid. And another family has no-one able to bring in a stable income. As a result, the scholarships are a lifesaver for these young women.

Then there is the war in Gaza, which is deeply traumatising for all Palestinians. Focusing on long-term study is a real challenge in the circumstances, especially as the Israelis are stepping up their actions in the West Bank. They have targeted all the areas where our students live, either through settler action or military incursions into the villages and camps.



Students at the Open University in Palestine



Mona El Farra
congratulating a student
in September 2023

Together we've changed the lives of hundreds of young women in Palestine

The Scholarship Fund remains committed to raising funds for Palestinian women's education. In the coming year we will rely on our partners in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to tell us what is needed in terms of women's education and what is feasible, and we will share this information with our supporters.

We have sent regular messages of solidarity and support to our students in Gaza. We very much hope, for those who survive, that their dreams of an education can still be achieved.

Dr Mona El Farra, the Scholarship Fund's much-loved founder and partner in Gaza, who is currently in Britain, sent us this message in January 2024:

Dear supporters and friends of the Women's Scholarship Fund

With your unwavering support for women's education in Palestine, we have together changed the lives of hundreds of students, who would not have been able to gain a higher education – except with your support they did.

The current attack against all people in Gaza has cast a shadow over these young women and their families. Sadly, some of the students are amongst the thousands of women who have lost their lives or been injured, or who have become disabled.

The time will come when we can again focus on the educational needs of women in Gaza and across Palestine. It is so important that you continue to raise funds so we are ready to help women gain an education, when it becomes possible to do so.

Right now we need to do what we can to help support the students' families, who are living alongside all the other displaced women and families in shelters and who are hungry, thirsty, ill, lacking in sleep and terrified of the non-stop attacks. It is women who have to work hard to keep the family intact and who have to provide for their families with the very little means they have.

Such women have been displaced a few times and they still don't know when they will be ordered to leave their homes again. The women of Gaza, including our students and their mothers and sisters, are lacking sanitary pads alongside many other necessities such as milk for their newborn babies and nappies.

We as Gaza women are supposed to show strength, but what is happening in Gaza is beyond our comprehension.

Thank you and in solidarity

Mona

Ways to donate to **emergency relief** in Gaza:

Mona is Gaza Projects Director for the Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA). You can send donations to MECA's "Gaza Emergency" appeal:

<https://www.mecaforpeace.org/>

You can also donate to Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign's [Emergency Relief Fund](#)

This year's scholarships

This year we have no record of the scholarships that were awarded to students in Gaza for 2023-4. An award ceremony took place, but the war in Gaza started before our partners had a chance to give us the students' details.



The photo above was taken at the award ceremony at Afaq Jadeeda in Gaza in September 2023 and shows Mona El Farra with the team from Afaq Jadeeda, Wafaa El Derawi (in blue next to Mona) and members of the local committee, who help with selecting scholarship candidates. We are very glad to know from Mona that Wafaa, who has done so much for the Scholarship Fund as a volunteer, is (as of writing) OK and busy with relief work on behalf of MECA (Middle East Children's Alliance).

In 2022 we funded 55 scholarships in Gaza and we assume a similar number were awarded by the local Scholarship Fund committee in 2023. Seven scholarships were awarded in the West Bank in 2023. These enabled two students to complete a fifth year of study and four to continue their studies. As always, we thank our partners in Palestine for their commitment and hard work and we send them our love and solidarity.

	Name	Address	University	Subject	From	Amount \$
West Bank students we are continuing to support from September 2020						
1	Wiam Hameidan	Nablus, Beata	Al-Najah University	Computer Engineering	2020	1700
West Bank students we are continuing to support from 2021						
2	Qamar Hazem Mohammed Abu-Kharoub	Habla near Qalqilya	Al Quds Open	IT	2021	600
3	Nagham Nayif Ibrahim Khalayleh	Al Samoa	Hebron	Nursing	2021	1000
4	Eman Ali Hasan Al Najjar	Fawwar Camp	Hebron	Arabic Language Teaching	2021	800
5	Asma Basil Fathallah Dakheel	Jericho	Al Quds (Abu Dis)	Nursing	2021	1000
West Bank graduates 2023 - 2024						
1	Fatme Abbas	Amari Camp	Bir Zeit University	Economics	2020	-
2	Dalya Nasser	Deheisheh Camp	Bir Zeit University	Psychology Music	2020	1027

Rotherham Friends of Palestine

Like everyone else who supports the Scholarship Fund, we have been horrified by recent events in Gaza and the West Bank and we have been worrying about “our” students and their families. Before October we ran our usual, annual fundraising activities for the Scholarship Fund. In February 2023, a soup lunch was held at the home of one of our members with delicious food and good company on a winter’s day. It raised a total of £260.

Our other main event was a stall at the Rotherham Show in September. Our aim there was to raise both awareness and funds and, at the time, we were pleasantly surprised by how many people visiting the stall already knew about the situation in Palestine. How much has changed since then with reports and pictures from Gaza and the West Bank being sent around the world.

We have sent donations to the Sheffield Emergency Fund for Gaza and to Medical Aid for Palestine. Members have attended rallies calling for a ceasefire as well as contacting local MPs. Our membership has grown recently and, as a result, we are hoping to be undertake more actions in Rotherham.

Our thoughts are with all the Scholarship students, past and present, and their families, and we will continue to help and support them in any way we can.

Patricia White



Ruth Hobson and Dianne Castor running the stall at the Rotherham Show



Bolton Socialist Club

Greetings to all our friends and supporters in the Scholarship Fund in these terrible times. Since October and the horrors of Israel’s war on Palestine, our focus has been on giving what support and solidarity we can to the people of Gaza and the West Bank. What the future holds is anyone’s guess, but what seems certain is that university education as it existed in Gaza up until October is unlikely to be able to continue in the same way for a considerable time. The dreams of our students must be shattered. Let us only hope that they have at least managed to survive.

Here in Bolton, club members have organised and taken part in many demonstrations in support of the Palestinians. Since October our fundraising has been directed towards organisations like the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and Medical Aid for Palestine (MAP). In consequence, during that period we have not held any fundraisers for the Scholarship Fund.

However, members have continued with their direct debits to the Fund, and prior to October we raised around £2,000 through various events, making a yearly total of £2,520.

We call upon the international community to do everything it can to halt the suffering that is being inflicted on the Palestinian people. Perhaps then our students will find a way of rebuilding their lives and their education.

Neil Duffield



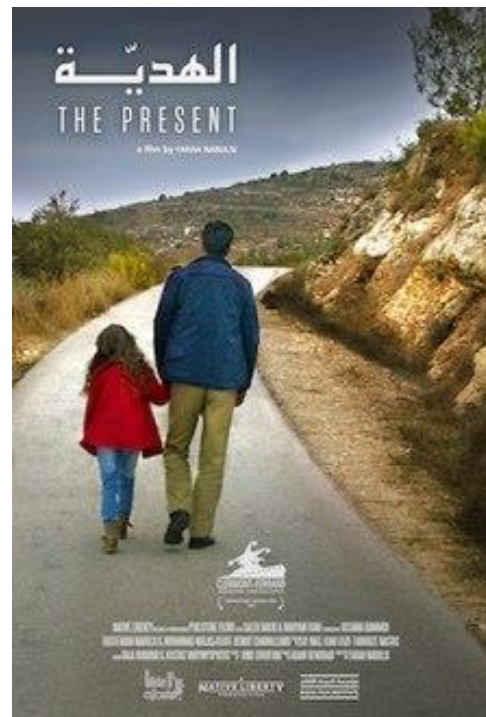
Derbyshire Dales Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund

The Derbyshire Dales Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund is a small group with members based across the Derbyshire Dales, including in Bakewell, Matlock, Middleton, Wirksworth and Youlgreave.

In December 2023 we organised a meeting at the Imperial Rooms in Matlock. The meeting had originally been planned as an educational and fundraising event where we would show the excellent film "The Present"/ "Al Hadiya" by director Farah Nabulsi. The film had won the award for best short film at the 2021 BAFTAs.

Given what was happening with Israel's military onslaught on Gaza and the increased violence towards Palestinians in the West Bank, we decided to extend the brief of the meeting and we invited Yousef Taktak and Sahar Awadallah to speak briefly after the film about their direct experiences of living in the West Bank and Gaza and to answer questions from the audience. Sara Gowen also reported briefly on the current situation for students in Gaza and the West Bank.

More than forty people attended the event. We had very positive feedback and it has encouraged us to think about organising more educational events. We raised more than £900 in donations, which we decided to divide equally between the Women's Scholarship Fund and Medical Aid for Palestine.



Seni Seneviratne & Kathryn Taktak (for the Derbyshire Dales Group)

Saddleworth Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund

Our report this year is tempered by the horrendous events of the autumn and winter in Palestine. These have both shocked and galvanised us to work harder than ever in support of Palestinian women's education.

We had three main fundraisers between spring and autumn and four of our group visited Palestine during 2023. Three went to the West Bank in the spring and one to Gaza in the summer. We were able to meet both students and Fund organisers and collectively this has been a privilege and the highlight of our year.



In Bethlehem *from left*: Joy Bishop and Catherine Holland (Saddleworth), Dalya Nasser (West Bank student), Michele Abendstern (Saddleworth), Maggie Magner (Saddleworth) Kirsty Wright and Shirabe Yamada (West Bank Scholarship Fund Committee)

For our spring fundraiser, Miles in May, we encouraged supporters to walk 62 miles over the month, each mile representing one of the 62 students supported by the Fund in 2023. On May 21st we came together for a five-mile shared walk and picnic, followed by a presentation from those who had visited the West Bank. The event raised £2546.



Setting off on our 5-mile walk and picnicking on May 21st



Tayo Aluko with Steve Roman

We had an extra fundraiser on June 17th courtesy of one of our long-term supporters, Steve Roman, who turned his 75th birthday into an opportunity to raise money for the Scholarship Fund. Steve organised a birthday event in Manchester with a buffet, a concert of Paul Robeson songs and stories by award winning Tayo Aluko. The event was ticketed and raised £4108, which Steve donated to the Scholarship Fund.

For our autumn fundraiser in November we put on 'A Breakfast for Palestine'. Once everyone was assembled, we acknowledged the catastrophe that is taking place in Gaza and we held a one-minute silence for everyone killed, injured or displaced in the region. Sue Piper then gave a powerful presentation on her visit to Gaza in July. She described the deprivations that Gazans suffer daily and she conveyed the warmth and laughter that she shared



Sue Piper speaking at the November 'Breakfast for Palestine' talking about her visit to Gaza

with the three Scholarship Fund students she met through the Fund's partner, Mona El Farra. Sue's presentation also highlighted the horrendous transformation that has taken place in Gaza since she was there. After her talk, we showed a

short film: 'Raising Their Voice' about a women's

rap group in the West Bank. The group was started by Scholarship Fund student, Dalya Nasser, and two of her friends. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRPZzqx3hg4> or search: Raising Their Voice, Ettijah, Music for Good, Doha Debates.

Aware of the dire situation in Gaza, we shared the proceeds from November's Breakfast for Palestine between the Scholarship Fund and the Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA). The Scholarship Fund received £2,246 and MECA £843.

Further autumn fundraising took place in September, when – as secretary – I gave a talk at the launch of the Dumfries and Galloway Palestine Solidarity Campaign. I centred my talk on the stories entrusted to me and my committee colleagues when we visited the West Bank in April. The event was well attended and raised £85 for the Scholarship Fund.

In total we raised over £12,000 for the Scholarship Fund in 2023. This is a record amount only made possible because of the generosity of our supporters, who have supported our events, made one off donations and contributed through regular standing orders. It has also been a year of creating new contacts in nearby Oldham and Ashton and we hope these contacts will bring new fundraising opportunities and new audiences to hear about the work of the Scholarship Fund.

We remain a women-only committee with our events open to everyone.

Our current committee members are Michele Abendstern (secretary), Ann Forster, Jacqui Greenfield (treasurer) Sarah Hey, Catherine Holland (chair), Maggie Magner, Sue Piper, Magda Sachs, Jamilla Saif, Sue Warrington.



Members of the committee at the Autumn event. *From the left:* Sue Piper, Maggie Magner, Jacqui Greenfield, Michele Abendstern, Catherine Holland, Magda Sachs.

Michele Abendstern (for Saddleworth PWSF)



The *sumud* (strength and resilience) of trees is often used as a metaphor for Palestinian resilience and trees were a strong theme at our annual 24-hour **Small Park BIG RUN** (SPBR) event in June 2023.

The run, as always, took place in Meersbrook Park and – in the spirit of resilience shown by the Palestine people – two runners kept going for the whole 24 hours.

There was poetry, a Palestinian Voices tent, and the planting of a solidarity tree, a native hawthorn, donated by local residents. Mahmoud Zwahre, an activist, farmer and academic living in West Bank planted the tree. He spoke passionately and eloquently about the struggle of farmers in his area, the harassment they face and the work he does to support them, in particular planting trees to



The BIG SING

Palestinians who participated, despite very difficult circumstances.

This year we raised £2,300 for the Palestine Sheffield Women's Scholarship Fund and £2,300 for children's projects in Gaza. Even more importantly Small Park BIG RUN enabled us to express our solidarity. Solidarity means more than anything to Palestinians struggling for peace and justice and is even more important now.

A date for your diary: **Small Park BIG RUN** will take place from 12 noon Saturday 22nd to 12 noon Sunday 23rd June 2024. We hope to see you there.

Caroline Poland

replace those destroyed by settlers.

And there was an amazing BIG SING with seven community choirs and SPBR participants taking part.

As always, we linked up with our partners in Palestine, who had organised their own events in tandem with ours. A special thanks goes to all the



Mahmoud Swahre has help planting the solidarity tree from Catherine Gaze (Scholarship Fund organising group and Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign)



Runners gathering at the Never Stop Dreaming Centre in Khan Younis in Gaza

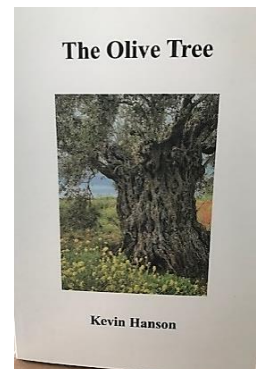


A BIG thank you

In July 2023 we sent **£29,946** to Gaza to cover scholarships (this sum included a 5% admin fee to Afaq Jadeeda). We sent **£4357** to the West Bank in July and a further payment of **£1130** in February 2024 (we pay no admin fee in the West Bank).

We are very grateful to everyone whose generosity made this possible, including:

- ✚ All those who have maintained or taken out a standing order. These regular donations are the backbone of the Fund and enable us to plan.
- ✚ Fund supporters in Bolton, Saddleworth, Rotherham and the Derbyshire Dales.
- ✚ Anyone who has made a one-off or annual donation.
- ✚ The friends and family of Barbara Iqbal who made a collection in Barbara's memory.
- ✚ The friends and family of Jill Angood who made a collection in Jill's memory.
- ✚ Everyone who took part in the **Small Park BIG RUN** in June 2023. See page 18 for more details and <https://en-gb.facebook.com/smallparkbigrun/>
- ✚ Kevin Hanson for donating all proceeds from the sales of his poetry book *The Olive Tree*. Kevin has just a few copies left (they cost £10, including postage). For more information, contact Kevin on: kevinedwardhanson@icloud.com
- ✚ Carolyn Leary for organising a Christmas fundraiser.
- ✚ All the organisations that support the Fund, including Wooldale Quakers.



Please get in touch if you are in an organisation and would like someone from the Scholarship Fund to speak at a meeting.



Thinking of raising sponsorship for the Scholarship Fund?

We are registered on the fundraising platform **Give As You Live**. It's very easy. You can set up a fundraising page, or simply donate. Go to <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/charity/sheffield-palestine-womens-scholarship-fund/1133499/0>

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

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.