



It's always been my dream – to use my education to defend my homeland



When we discovered, in late 2024, that one of our students in Gaza, **Malak Al-Daour** (left), had resumed her law degree at Al Azhar University, we were amazed and overjoyed. There could be no better news.

We had featured Malak in last year's newsletter. Sue Piper, from the Saddleworth Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund, had met Malak in Gaza in the summer of 2023 and they had kept sporadically in touch. It was Malak who told Sue the tragic news that her friend Malak Khudair Jaber Ali, also a Scholarship Fund student, had been killed (as we reported last year).

In December 2024, Malak texted Sue to say that her family – who had been displaced many times from their home in Jabalia – was now living in a tent on the beach in Deir al Balah in central Gaza. Life, Malak wrote, was very difficult, even more so because her father had stayed behind in the north. But, despite everything, Malak was determined to resume her studies. As she'd told Sue in 2023: *I've always had the dream of using my education in law to defend my homeland within international institutions.*

But studying in a tent was never going to be easy. All classes and lectures are held online and Malak had to walk two kilometres a day to find an internet signal. Then the university told her that if she didn't pay her fees, she would be barred from sitting her course exams, all of which count towards her degree; and Malak couldn't pay the fees.

Thankfully, once we discovered that Malak had resumed her university course, we were able – through our key partner in Gaza, Mona El Farra – to send Malak her scholarship fees for 2024-5. We wish Malak every success in her studies.

We believe other Scholarship Fund students in Gaza may also have re-started their courses online. Mona El Farra is now in contact with Al Azhar and Al-Aqsa Universities (both are providing online teaching) and, if we find any of our other students have enrolled, we will offer them the same financial support.

Education is an act of resistance. A deep desire for survival. All credit to Malak and other Gaza students who, in almost impossible circumstances, are resuming their education.



Deir al Balah in central Gaza



Whatever the hardships, we will stay in our home

Hana Hani Ahmad (left) was awarded a scholarship in 2022 – to study for a degree in computer science and web development at the Islamic University in Gaza. Hana featured in our 2023 newsletter. She spoke then of how she loved her university course and how she was working hard to achieve her parents' dreams for her future. Then the war in Gaza started and we did not know what had happened to Hana, whether she was even alive, until in August 2024, Adham Talal

*Abushawish, a friend to the Scholarship Fund in Gaza, managed to speak at some length with Hana and with two other of our Gaza students – **Enas Bassam Shaath** and **Hayat Nafeth Al Saeedi**. What follows is what each of them told Adham. Of course by the time you are reading this, life for all three will have changed again, and we very much hope for the better, but what you can read below is a snapshot of the terrible experiences and suffering they were enduring in the summer of 2024.*

Hana: Life in Gaza has become impossible. The genocide has forced us to live through things and witness things that are unbearable. There is no humanity and we have learnt and seen things that no one should ever experience. The threat from the Israeli Defence Forces, the control they have over so much of our lives, has created terrible mental pressure.

Currently I am living in Nuseirat Refugee Camp and, because our house is to the west, it is hit by extreme numbers of missiles from the Israeli war machine, including from fighter planes. The noise of Israeli tanks is especially scary. Every house in our neighbourhood has been targeted. We have suffered violent attacks from Israeli tanks, war boats, firebombs, smoke bombs and aerial bombardment. These attacks continue to this day.

At the start of the war the bombing was crazy and horrible.

Individual houses were struck by multiple missiles. One morning we were awakened at dawn by the bombing of our neighbours' homes. The sound was terrifying. Many of our neighbours were martyred. Our own windows were shattered and smoke came in and we couldn't see. The next day was very difficult. We cleaned up broken glass from dawn to evening. My uncle's house was so severely damaged that the children and adults became displaced people.



Displaced residents of Nuseirat Refugee Camp, January 2024

Displacement is traumatic and painful, especially when it's repeated. The search for a safe place and the moving of belongings is very difficult. The first time we were displaced was the most nerve wracking. We were forced to stay in the home of people we didn't know well, surrounded by our luggage and possessions. In the morning we joined a mass of displaced people in the overcrowded street. Many families had been forced from their homes. We eventually arrived at the house of a kind family, because even though their house was really small and already filled with displaced people, they welcomed us for a night.

Afterwards, we found a house with four families in it, which we shared with our relatives. But then my family became divided. My siblings went with my father to a displacement camp in Rafah. After a month of separation, however, we all returned to our family home. We did this despite the danger. The sound of Israeli drones never stopped.

On the day of the land invasion of Nuseirat Refugee Camp, which was the second day of Eid, we were displaced again to an uncle's house. As before, we returned home when the tanks withdrew and the bombing had reduced. But the noise of the tanks was still very near and later that day our own house was bombed. The first missile struck the house between the bathroom and my bedroom. As we rushed outside, a second missile hit the roof of the living room, where my family had been sitting. Had we moved any slower, we would all have been killed. As it was, my head and shoulder and knee were injured by shrapnel.

After returning from the hospital, I found my closet in pieces and all my clothes ripped apart and burned. The walls of the bathroom and my bedroom had been completely destroyed and the roof of our living room had collapsed, leaving our home open to the sky. While we cleaned and repaired the house, we had to sleep at my uncle's and while we were away thieves entered and stole a battery pack and other belongings.

We have now patched the roof with whatever we could find and we have partially repaired the destroyed walls and windows with pieces of wood. We have decided to live in our house, even though the situation is still very dangerous. Two days ago it rained heavily and water entered the house in a huge flood. We know in the winter things will be very difficult, but whatever hardships we have to endure, we will stay in our home.



We have lost everything

Hayat: In 2023 I enrolled at Al Aqsa university to do a degree in accountancy. On the morning of 7th October I was looking forward to the beginning of my first term, but then the unexpected happened.

I was living with my family in Bureij Refugee Camp, on its eastern side, and this led to our displacement in the first few hours of October 7th. We firstly went further east. Then we stayed at my grandfather's for a while. Through God's destiny my grandfather's house was targeted. Thankfully I didn't lose any of my family members, but we were injured and my injury was the worst. My wounds needed stitches both inside and outside and bruises covered the whole of my body. I left the hospital with my injured sisters, but we couldn't find anywhere to flee to. So we went to a school inside the refugee camp.

There was an infection in my injury and we spent a while struggling with our situation. We were all struggling and then the Israeli army invaded the Bureij Camp. We didn't know where to go. We didn't have the means to flee anywhere. And because our house was to the east of the camp it was really hard to go and get our things.

My dad had been displaced from Bureij Camp and he was worried for me and my sisters, so we went to the piece of land where he and my other siblings were living in tents. It was winter and they would get wet from the rain and have to mend the tents, but the biggest struggle was

finding water, and the lack of toilets and water for washing.

Once the Israeli army withdrew from Bureij Camp we went back. We couldn't bear the cold of winter and we decided to stay in a school again. This proved to be an even bigger struggle. The cleanliness levels were very bad. We got ill with skin complaints and Hepatitis B and our mental health suffered because of our financial situation and the inflation in prices.

Because we have lost everything, we cannot satisfy our basic needs. My father has no income apart from benefits and we

haven't received any financial support since the start of the war. This has affected us badly and has an impact on our physical and mental health. When we returned to Bureij Camp my Dad risked his life and went back to our house, but he found it had turned into rubble.

My wish is for the war to end. My wish is not to lose any members of my family or people close to me. My hope is that our life will return to normal.



Al Aqsa University, the oldest higher education institution in Gaza, where Hayat and Enas were studying, now in ruins after Israeli bombing.

Death has come close multiple times

Enas: I started at Al Aqsa University in Khan Younis in 2021. I was studying psychology* when the war started at the beginning of October last year. I live close to Khan Younis in Rafah. Our house is a kilometre from the Gaza European hospital.

My life, since the war started, has been unbearable. We were displaced from our neighbourhood because of the bombing. We were especially scared given we live in an area near the border, close to where the Israeli army is located.

We stayed with our relatives and the days passed and then – despite the danger – we returned home. We then lived through some really hard nights and death came close multiple times, but God was on our side and we remained safe and alive.

We have been as patient as we can be, but we have been through agony. This is because of the lack of any water being supplied to our house and the lack of food or cleaning materials or gas. We have had to resort to making a fire to fulfil our basic needs.

The Israeli army invaded our area, taking us by surprise. We had to get out of our house, taking nothing with us and – despite the danger – we spent the night on the street. The next day the army withdrew. It was a limited operation. So we are back in our house, but we are not in the best situation. We have to buy water and vegetables and other food and everything is expensive. Our living situation is hard but that's our destiny and we are in a better position than others.

* Originally studying English Literature, Enas changed her major to psychology.

*We thank **Adham Talal Abushawish** for speaking to Hana Hani Ahmad, Enas Bassam Shaat, and Hayat Nafeth Al Saeedi. We thank **Sondos Ghalayini** for translating their words.*

Honouring Gaza students who will never graduate

In July 2024, during graduation week, Sheffield students and activists gathered at the Free Palestine Encampment on the University of Sheffield campus. We came together to mark the devastation and deliberate destruction of universities and schools in Gaza and to honour all the Gazan students who will now never graduate.

It was a very moving event. The names of Gazan students, academics and teachers who had been killed were read out loud. Flowers were then placed in bottles as a symbol of remembrance and also of hope: for a future where children and young people in Gaza can return to their education, and in which schools and universities will flourish.

Sara Gowen





Education is at risk of collapse

Dalya Nasser

graduate of and friend to the Scholarship Fund

Thank you so much for standing in solidarity with us. Your support means a lot. The future in the West Bank, where I live, is deeply uncertain. Many people are wondering whether they'll survive in the years to come and whether they'll be displaced from their homes entirely.

Education, in particular, is facing a crisis, especially given that the schools run by the United Nations refugee programme are under threat.

The state of education

The state of education is complicated. The harsh economic situation (*the Palestinian economy contracted by 28% in 2024, the largest downturn in Palestine's history*) means that many children drop out of school to earn money for their families. At the same time, students are not given the support they need to engage in education and this is especially true since the COVID-19 pandemic and the severe disruption to the education process. The ongoing war has worsened the whole situation further, with schools closing and education shifting online. Online education cannot replace face-to-face learning, especially given many families do not have access to the internet. And alongside all of this, the war in Gaza has caused severe psychological trauma for children, leading to increased anxiety and depression.

Children freed from detention

I am a mental health and social work specialist, working with children who have been freed from detention. I have witnessed first-hand how children, detained by Israeli forces, are unable – after they're released – to return to education. Some feel incapable of going back to school due to the trauma they've experienced, others need to work to support their families. There are also cases of children being arrested directly from their schools, adding another layer of fear and instability to the education process (*university students have also been arrested on campus by undercover Israeli agents, posing as students*). All these psychological and emotional factors severely affect how well students can learn and their ability to concentrate.



A Palestinian child being detained by the Israeli army

The situation for universities in the West Bank is dire. Rising tuition fees have made higher education unaffordable for many. Those who can afford to enrol face immense challenges reaching any of the university campuses because of checkpoints and road closures imposed by

the occupation (*in 2024 86 new movement obstacles were added in the West Bank*). Sometimes the main entry points to the cities, where universities are sited, will be closed, turning simple commutes into exhausting ordeals. Imagine a student forced to wait hours at a closed checkpoint and so missing an entire day of classes or significant portions of their lectures.

In Gaza, the situation is even more catastrophic. The war has destroyed all the universities and numerous schools, many of which have been sheltering displaced families. Massacres and atrocities have been committed, halting education entirely. Those attempting to learn now mainly do so in tents, often with no structured curriculum or resources. Conditions in Gaza are so terrible that people live under the constant fear of whether they will survive the next five minutes.

In the West Bank, there is a growing sense that our turn is coming. Perhaps not in five minutes, but in five years, two years, or even months. What we know for certain is that the situation will only worsen and our fate remains uncertain.

Education is a cornerstone of hope and resilience, but it is at risk of collapse given the economic hardship, psychological trauma, and the deliberate restrictions imposed by the occupation.



Children attending an improvised school in a tent in Gaza

November 2024

You have our backs – you understand what we’re facing

We hear from four, final-year students

In the West Bank our four, final-year students are facing the same difficulties as they did a year ago. They are having to learn online, there’s not enough face-to-face peer support, practical classes are haphazard and out of sync with the teaching of theory, and they are prevented from moving around freely by the Israeli army.

It’s been especially difficult for two of our students, studying in Hebron, because they never know if they’ll be able to reach the city. But whatever the obstacles they face, all four students are determined to graduate. On page 8 you can read what they told our West Bank colleagues, when they were asked what it had meant to them to get a scholarship and to study at university.

We wish all four the very best in their final exams and in their lives beyond university. What amazing young women they are!

Nagham Khalayleh (studying nursing at Hebron University)

Your support made it easier for me to study and gave me a push to continue.



Iman An Najjar (studying Arabic at Hebron University)

Being a university student has contributed to major changes in my personality. I remember my first day at the university and how stressed and afraid I felt, not being familiar with the university and not having friends. But once I made close friends and my social circle expanded, these feelings disappeared to be replaced by feelings of belonging.

Before university, I used to suffer from fear when talking to strangers, or when speaking in front of a group of people, and the university helped me get over this fear, because the tutor would often ask one of us to explain something to the other students.

The university tuition fees were high and I was worried about affording them, but when I received a Sheffield scholarship that helped my family to afford my university tuition for all four years of my degree.

After graduating, I hope to get a job in the Ministry of Education and to help my family with household expenses. I also want to help university students to afford their university tuition fees.

Qamar Kharroub (studying IT at the Open University in Qalqilya)

At university I was motivated to advance to a higher level. I have improved my computer and programming skills and my level of thinking and my ability to analyse things has become stronger.

The scholarship reduced the financial burden on myself and my family during a period of far fewer economic possibilities.



Asma Dakheel (studying nursing at Al Quds University)

Thank you. You have our backs. You understand what we are facing. Your help made it easier for me to register (the University will not register a student until payment is made) and you helped me to continue studying. My personality is now stronger and I find it easier to socialise with different people.

When I graduate, I will try and find a job in a hospital, but I also want to explore the option of providing specialised skin care in a beauty centre. I have the medical knowledge and a nursing qualification will give me wider opportunities.

A big welcome to our nine new West Bank students!



In September 2024 nine young women in the West Bank became Scholarship Fund students. All live in Jenin Refugee Camp.

The Scholarship Fund Committee in the West Bank decided to focus on one location to more easily visit students, to give the students a ready-made network, and to be able to tell the story of a local area in more detail.

Jenin Camp was chosen because it is especially disadvantaged (there are high levels of food insecurity and frequent Israel incursions disrupt people's livelihoods). Also, in Jenin the students who did best in their Tawjihi (the end of school exams) were from families who were experiencing especial hardship (i.e. were female-headed, had a main breadwinner with a low income, or had many young children).

The Ministry of Education Directorate in Jenin gave the West Bank committee the names of nine possible candidates for a scholarship and the committee made the decision to fund all nine! Some of the students will only study for 2 years, so the available funds could be stretched.

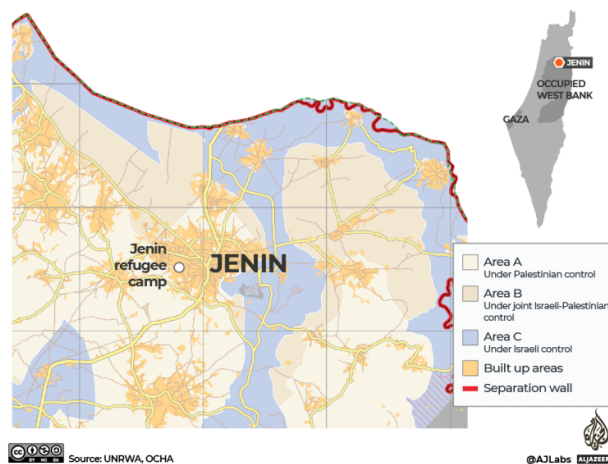
Living in Jenin Refugee Camp

Jenin has always been a key centre of resistance to Israeli occupation. There are frequent Israeli raids and clashes and, more recently, there have been airstrikes, arrests of Palestinian militants, and the wholesale destruction of housing and large areas of public infrastructure. Jenin residents have been killed and injured in these recent attacks and very many families have been displaced.

When they were interviewed in January 2025 (see pages 10-15), our West Bank students also refer to a Palestine Authority (PA) operation underway in Jenin Camp. The PA operation was mounted in late 2024 against Palestinian armed groups active in the Camp. For more information on this see the Guardian article of January 6th 2025: ["This is basically a civil war': West Bank in fear as Palestinian Authority battles militant groups"](#).

Where is the Jenin refugee camp?

Jenin is a city in the north of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Jenin houses a crowded refugee camp of the same name with a population of some 14,000 people. Residents of the Jenin camp are descendants of Palestinians dispossessed of their land and homes when the state of Israel was created in 1948.



I want to apply the knowledge I gain to our beloved homeland

In February 2025 we heard that our nine, new West Bank students and their families had, as a result of the most recent Israeli assault on Jenin Camp, been displaced from their homes. This assault left much of the Camp in ruins.

The new students were interviewed in October 2024 and again in January 2025 – so before the most recent assault happened. We very much hope that they, and their families, are safe. We thank our partners for introducing these impressive young women to us.



Noor Ighbareye

Noor is studying computer systems engineering at the Arab American University of Jenin.

October 2024: I chose computer engineering because it's essential to both computer hardware and software and because there are numerous job opportunities. When, after four years, I finish the course, I'll do my best to find a job where I can apply all the knowledge and energy I've gained during my studies. I will feel proud of myself then. I really hope I'll get the opportunity to establish my own, innovative tech company and I'd love to invent an application that would help solve everyday problems.

January 2025: I still go to the University even though there are random shootings and arrests. I walk because I can't afford a daily taxi. It takes me 20 minutes. I want to take the exams now rather than postpone. One month stuck at home has been enough. There are also spots in the camp where the internet is better, so when there's no shooting I move around the camp to find a good signal. Lectures have been recorded and are online. I have started a new chapter in my life, the future is foggy but we have to try and develop ourselves.



Yomna Hamda

Yomna is a student of nursing at the Arab American University in Jenin. She lives with her family and has four siblings. One of her brothers was detained during an Israeli siege of the camp in 2023 and both her parents have serious health problems. The family's only source of income is the wage of one of her other brothers.

Yomna scored an outstanding 97.9 in her Tawjihi (end of school exams). She came top in Jenin camp and 6th in the Jenin Governorate.

October 2024: Since childhood, I have been passionate about becoming a nurse so I can serve my homeland and my people. Nursing is a humanitarian, ethical,

honourable profession, which can help alleviate the suffering we face under occupation. I want to pursue a master's degree after graduating, specializing either in haematology and immunology or in intensive care nursing. For me, nursing is more than just an academic choice, it is a life decision. I'm excited to start this journey and to develop myself and I am confident that I will achieve my goals and that I'll have a positive impact on patients' lives.

January 2025: When I go to university, sometimes I can't get home again, because of the clashes, and I have to stay over at a relative's house. There is random shooting and I get stuck between the clashes and cannot move one way or the other. I study every day, but when the electricity is off, I can't. Being at university is very different to being in school. All my studies are in English. I have missed lots of lectures and I haven't taken all my exams because of not being able to get to the university. Some of our tutors help us to get online access to the classes, but when the internet is out, I can't get on Zoom.



Rasha Khateeb

Rasha is studying to be a dental technician at the Arab American University in Jenin. Her father died during her Tawjihi (the end of school exams) and the family (Rasha has four siblings) now relies on welfare payments. These are not always regular.

October 2024: At university I am learning about dental fabrication and how to make dentures. There's a demand for dental technicians and it's a field with many job opportunities, though as well as academic study you need practical experience — sometimes in private labs — before starting work. I want to master my profession, to gain a bachelor's and master's degree, and to graduate with high grades and exceptional competence. I would like then to travel and attend courses, meetings, and seminars abroad. This way I'll gain more extensive experience and I'll be able to use this experience to benefit our beloved homeland, Palestine. Once I am equipped to meet the challenges of my profession, I'd like to open a dental lab and practice in our hometown, Jenin. My aim is to contribute to the reconstruction of my homeland and to work here.

January 2025: I am happy with the subject I chose. I find myself in it. But it has been horrible in the camp. The PA has surrounded the area, there is no internet signal because of the drones flying around, and I haven't been able to go the University since December. Some courses are still running, but the teaching staff have not taken account of our situation. How can we take the exams?

My friends help me get the lesson content, but I have an exam soon and it's too dangerous to go out because of the clashes in the camp. My brother was arrested last week. We had to pay the Palestinian Authority (PA) to get him out of detention. My mother now has high blood pressure.

Even inside the University, it's not safe. The PA entered the campus last Wednesday and

arrested a student. This semester is now ending in February because of the situation.



Tala Ighbaria

Tala is studying medical imaging at the Arab American University in Jenin. She lives with her parents and six siblings. She was a Girl Scout at school and was the President of the Student Parliament.

October 2024: People with medical imaging skills are in demand. There are lots of job opportunities. It's a discipline that requires you to be very precise, very thorough and careful, because you are enabling doctors to identify issues accurately and then to decide on the most appropriate treatment.

Once I graduate, my aim is to study for a master's degree. I want to travel abroad to attend courses, meetings, and seminars and I want apply the knowledge I gain to our beloved homeland, Palestine. I want to contribute to its reconstruction and eventually I hope to open my own medical-imaging lab in my city, Jenin.

January 2025: Our electricity is on and off and I can't go to the University, even though it's only ten minutes away by taxi, as the PA is shooting randomly. My teachers are supportive and my friends near Jenin help me. I had to buy 3G, but even this does not always work. I will postpone my mid-term exams, but I am not going to give up studying.

I've been getting good marks and positive feedback, but now everything is dark because of the attacks on the camp. We don't forget what the Israelis have done, raiding houses and destroying infrastructure at three or four in the morning. Two of my cousins were martyred. But since the PA came, I can't go out. They fired at our water tank, so we now have no access to water. My father tried to go to work, but they shot at him. The PA told him to take his family out of the camp, but we have nowhere to go, and we are afraid that if we leave, the house will be burned down.



Dua Haboub

Dua is studying nursing at Al Rawda University College, Nablus. She has three siblings, one still at school. Dua applied late to university and hoped, when she was interviewed at the beginning of January 2025, to start her studies by the end of that month.

October 2024: Because of my family's financial situation, I need to complete my studies as soon I can and find work. That's why I chose a two-year course in nursing. Nursing seems very appropriate for the situation my country is going through. I want to serve my community through humanitarian work.

After graduation, I want to work as a nurse. I want to be independent and to be able to support my family and myself. I still have ambition even after all we've been through. Having

obtained an excellent grade at the end of high school, I'm determined to complete my studies at college. After graduation, I want to further my career and study for a master's degree in nursing.

January 2025: I cannot leave the camp safely to go to Nablus and register for my course. The University has given me until January 28th to do this, but if I can't do it by then, I will have to postpone until September 2025. When I missed the first semester, I started a First Aid Course with the Red Crescent in Jenin, but I now cannot attend the course because it's held in Jenin city and I cannot travel safely there.

My family has been displaced from our house in the camp as it was partially destroyed in recent clashes. The windows were all broken so it cannot provide shelter.



Malak Amouri

Malak is studying computer systems engineering at the Arab American University. She has three siblings, two still at school.

October 2024: I decided to study computer systems engineering because it is an important field with a bright future and I have a passion for it. After graduation I plan to help startup companies by creating websites for them and by running courses in computer skills.

I'd like to gain more experience by volunteering and working in Palestinian companies and I also plan to teach information technology in schools while I complete a master's degree.

January 2025: Because I live on the outskirts of the camp, beyond the siege line, I am able to reach the University but I know that students inside the camp are very unhappy with what is going on. I have really found myself, studying computer systems engineering. The subject fits my personality and, having to attend classes and to study on my own, I have become responsible.

Rawa Omar

Rawa is studying fashion design at Al Najah University in Nablus. She has four siblings, all still at school. She is a member of the Scouts.

October 2024: Peace and blessings be upon you. I have chosen to study fashion at Al Najah. Since my early childhood, I have sketched fashion outfits. As I grew older, I began to explore the whole world of design, drawing inspiration from it to create designs that align with Palestinian religion, reality, civilization, and culture today. What helps me is that my mother, may God protect her, has an excellent background in sewing and fabrics. It's been her hobby since childhood, so I can say that I inherited my passion from her. What she's taught me has helped me hone my skills quickly.

I intend to begin working during my studies. I'll showcase designs online and I hope to gain



customers and experience and to build up the capital to launch a fashion design business. I want to establish my own global brand that represents all of Palestine and shines a light on our cause. I will create original designs to uplift the spirits of my people and their passionate children and to encourage children and young people at the start of their life's journey.

January 2025: It is hard to move around the camp when I am at home because of the random shooting. It's now very difficult to get to Nablus as the road is often closed and there are multiple delays at roadblocks, when it is open. On Tuesday night, I slept at the University because of the military operation in Fundus.

My family supports me staying in Nablus as it is safer than if the road suddenly closes. I just need to save a little, so I can start paying for a small room in Nablus where I can stay. But I am very, very happy with the course. So many things encourage me to continue. My tutors like my designs so, despite all the challenges, I will continue.



Rasha Badaweyeh

Rasha is second from the right in the photo opposite.

Rasha is studying to be a primary education teacher at Al Quds Open University, Jenin. She has been a volunteer with the Youth Thought Forum – an NGO in the camp.

October 2024: At University we will learn much more than just academic subjects. We're going to learn how to manage our time and how to handle responsibilities and challenges, and we'll develop skills in communication, leadership, teamwork and problem-solving. My aim is to achieve multiple educational and personal goals.

My field of study – primary education – will equip me to provide high-quality education to future generations. I want to gain a deeper understanding of modern teaching methods and lesson planning. I want to learn how to create educational activities that stimulate students' creative thinking and that take into account their diverse skills. We need to improve the quality of education, our engagement as teachers with students and parents, and how we use technology to support learning. In the future, I want to be an educational consultant or teacher trainer.

January 2025: During my mid-term exams, my father passed away (*Rasha's father was a coffee seller in the camp and the family's only breadwinner*). This was a very heavy burden for me. But at least, for the first time, the UN has started giving everyone in the camp a cash pay-out for food. I'm now trying to do my end-of-semester exam, but it's too dangerous to go to the University because of the snipers. The last time I went out, I was shot at. It is impossible to leave the camp safely. The University does not allow us to do the exams online, and the Ministry of Education will not postpone them.

Last month, I bought the modules from my course that I'd missed so I can study for the end-of-semester exam. If I can't do the exam, I will do it with the midterms in March. I was so happy to go to college, and I am determined to continue. I need to get a job to support my family.



Shojoun Abu Tubeikh

Shojoun is third from the right in the photo below.

Shojoun is studying physical therapy at the Arab American University in Jenin. She has three siblings and her parents both have university degrees.

October 2024: I wasn't sure which specialty to choose. It needed to suit my personality and desires. I discovered that physical therapy was ideal and for two main reasons. Firstly, it brings excellent job satisfaction and this satisfies my humanitarian nature. Secondly, the career opportunities are extensive – in medical institutions, therapeutic centres, nursing homes, and you can also work independently either in the home or in clinics. I plan to work and to gain practical experience, whilst I study, under the guidance of supervisors. My field has many specialisms and I would like to do postgraduate study, if circumstances allow. I'd need financial and job stability after graduation. I also hope to open my own therapeutic centre.

January 2025: I sometimes go to the University, but it's dangerous because of the clashes. Otherwise, I move around the camp to find a strong-enough internet signal to follow the classes online. The University has helped by postponing the exams, but I want to take the exams now. I don't want to fail and it would be too hard for me to take these exams at the same time as the next midterms.

I like my course, and studying makes me feel better. Also, seeing the second and third year students doing practical work is very encouraging. This chapter of my life—until the clashes in the camp became so dangerous—was very exciting. It was not like school. My father will retire this year because of ill health. He does not get a full salary even now. What is also encouraging for me is I can see there are many job adverts for physical therapists.



Our nine, new students in Jenin in late October 2024, when they came together to sign their scholarship contracts



Our community is shattered into small pieces

In September 2024 we received a letter from Dr Mona El Farra, our key and very dear partner in Gaza, who was at that time living in Britain.

I am so sad writing this. My home in Khan Younis in Gaza has been destroyed completely and with it all my memories. They were wiped away by a jet fighter pilot pressing a button. It was so simple, so criminal. I have lost all my documents, all our family photos, including very precious photos of my late parents in Palestine in 1948. Gone too are the love letters my parents wrote one another during their engagement in 1942. These are things that cannot be replaced. I have lost my history. How can I prove who I am?

I feel guilty to mourn this loss. I think of the women who have lost their children or their husbands or their lives. But since my home was destroyed, I think of it every day, of what has gone, including my parents' most precious love letters. They told you such a lot about that period in the life of Palestine. It is our collective history.

Also lost were albums with photos of my parents and our family before I got married. My father had many duties as the Secretary of the Khan Younis Municipality, but – when he had the chance – he was fond of capturing family moments. He took lovely photos that brought back memories of childhood and my siblings, going back to the fifties. He also took photos that showed my town in previous times and he documented all the attacks it suffered after 1948. But all these photos are gone, as are cherished photos of my own children on different occasions, including when my son stayed three months in Khan Younis with my parents. Now my parents' house is gone, my siblings' homes too. Our whole town has been destroyed since October 7th.



Displaced Palestinians in Khan Younis, November 23

Displaced, in my new home, I put up new photos. They are on a wall next to some plants and every day I think of those who have been killed: close cousins and relatives, fellow doctors, nurses, friends, neighbours, the local shop keeper and his family. The list is so long I cannot reach the end. Our community has been shattered into small pieces. We all have lost in different ways. Gaza's historic places are gone. This is genocide – to erase not only the people but how things looked before.

When I am able to go back to Gaza, will I meet our scholarship students? Will I see their lovely youthful faces, full of hope and determination to shape their future? I have always felt proud of

the Scholarship Fund. Always it has re-charged me with energy and hope.

Re-building community

Working with other women has helped me with my trauma. Because our trauma is collective. The setting up of community kitchens in Gaza is an initiative I love. They help women to overcome their own pain through helping others. Families gather and everyone gets involved – the women, the children, the men, everyone. Food is donated using funds raised in the UK.

Community kitchens have been very effective in the north of Gaza, in Jabalia and in Gaza City. Nine out of ten families in the Gaza Strip have only one very modest meal a day but the situation in the north is worse. No aid is getting in, except occasional small amounts. At points people have had no choice but to eat animal food and tree leaves.

The families running the kitchens face many challenges, including daily shelling and displacement. Sometimes they have to stop but always later they continue, using whatever is available at the market, even when there are no vegetables or fruit or milk or yogurt, and absolutely no meat or chicken. In Gaza City there is a small Christian community living now inside their church. They are reached too.

One woman in Gaza City kitchen lost her son during the bombardment of Shifa hospital. He was volunteering there as a nurse. In Jabalia one woman lost all of her brothers and sisters and also her husband. Her son, the father of a young toddler, lost his leg. But, despite everything, against the odds, these women continue cooking for the community.

Mona El Farra

Manchester, September 2024

News of Wafaa, our Gaza volunteer

Wafaa El-Derawi is a good friend of the Scholarship Fund and has been an invaluable volunteer over many years. Wafaa works for Middle East Children’s Alliance (MECA) in Gaza and since the start of the war she has been organising emergency relief on behalf of MECA.

We have been concerned for her safety and wellbeing and were so glad to find her quoted in a MECA

newsletter in July 2024, sounding strong and determined and full of compassion. This is what she said: “You will find us in every street, among the tents of the displaced, and amid the rubble of destroyed homes, even during the most dangerous times. We are there, carrying water, food, and medicine, providing not just essential supplies but also a lifeline of hope. Our mission goes beyond basic survival. We strive to strengthen the resilience of our people, preserving their dignity in the face of unimaginable hardship.”



Wafaa El-Derawi at a MECA event in 2019

This year's students

This year we are funding **14** students: 13 from the West Bank and 1 from Gaza. We very much hope to contact and support more of our students in Gaza during the 2024-5 academic year.

	Name	Course of Study	Institution	Annual Grant
GAZA				
				In UK £
1	Malak Hassan Al-Daour	Law	Al-Azhar University	1550
WEST BANK				
				In US \$
Final year students				
2	Qamar Hazem Mohammed Abu Kharroub	IT	Al Quds Open University	1000
3	Naghham Nayif Ibrahim Khalayleh	Nursing	Hebron University	1400
4	Eman Ali Hassn Al Najjar	Arabic Language Teaching	Hebron University	1200
5	Asma Basil Fathallah Dakheel	Nursing	Al Quds University (Abu Dis)	1400
New students				
6	Yomna Hamda	Nursing	Arab American University, Jenin	1600
7	Tala Ighbaria	Medical imaging	Arab American University, Jenin	1150
8	Shojoun Abu Tubeikh	Physical therapy	Arab American University, Jenin	800
9	Rawa Omar	Fashion design	Al Najah, Nablus	1250
10	Rasha Khateeb	Dental Technician	Arab American University, Jenin	2300
11	Rasha Badaweyeh	Teaching	Al Quds Open University	1000
12	Noor Ighbariya	Computer engineering	Arab American University, Jenin	1250
13	Malak Amouri	Computer engineering	Arab American University, Jenin	1250
14	Dua Haboub	Nursing	Al Rawda University College, Nablus	1400
	Total West Bank costs			\$17000

Saddleworth Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund

We could not have imagined, at the start of 2024, that we would be witnessing an ongoing genocide at the beginning of 2025. We have been fortified by the determination of our students to keep on studying despite the horrors they are experiencing, by the commitment of our



Our 2024 International Women's Day Event poster

supporters to carry on fundraising, and by our hope and belief in the future of Palestine and in the importance of supporting women's higher education. At all our events we have given attendees the option to donate to the Middle East Children's Alliance's Gaza Emergency Appeal, alongside fundraising for the Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund.

We raised a total of **£12,862** for the Scholarship Fund over this last year. We organised five fundraising events and we received funds through our supporters' standing orders and through individual donations. Three of our events took place outside Saddleworth, in the nearby towns of Oldham and Ashton – a sign of our expanding visibility and widening support.

Fundraising events

Our first fundraising event was a Solidarity Supper, which was hosted by a local café, the Mosaic in Ashton-under-Lyne. The Mosaic specialises in North African and Lebanese cuisine and owner Karim, and staff members, Karen and Cassie, offered to provide a dinner at cost price, all additional proceeds going to the Scholarship Fund. How could we refuse! The event was held in March 2024 to mark International Women's Day. It was a sell-out, the food delicious, and the evening was enjoyed by all, raising £467.

Our second event, a Family Fun Day at Kaly's Play Centre in Oldham, took place in April. It was organised by committee member Jamilla Saif along with family and friends. The Fun Day raised funds for two charities, one of which was the Scholarship Fund. There was soft play, five-a-side football and a raffle as well as stalls selling clothing and Palestinian produce and merchandise. The day was a great success and £2215 was donated to the Scholarship Fund.

In June 2024 Steve Roman, a long-term supporter, led a guided Heritage Walk around Oldham town centre in the morning, and Alexandra Park in the afternoon. Roughly 40 people joined the walk. Those who took part in both the morning and afternoon enjoyed a picnic in the park at





Heritage Walk in Oldham

lunchtime. Steve was a font of information and we received many positive comments about how interesting and informative the event was. The Walk raised £1004.

In July 2024 Shirley Wilson, a Fund supporter and experienced Yoga teacher, hosted a yoga session in Uppermill. The event attracted new people who were excited to discover us and join our mailing list. Then in October 2024 Fund supporter

Imran Raja Bashir ran the very hilly Oldham half Marathon in October raising £840 for the Fund!

And in November 2024, we held our Autumn Fundraiser in Saddleworth. "Strings of Solidarity" was an evening of folk music from singer-songwriter Bernie Murphy and six-piece folk band Northern Threads. With Bernie's captivating vocals accompanied by John Chandler on guitar, and Northern Threads, this was an evening of powerful musical performances. There were uplifting songs and heartfelt ballads highlighting Palestinian women's aspirations and local historical struggles. Over 100 people attended and we raised £2375.

Our thanks

We thank everyone who supports us – all who attend events, who donate and who take out standing orders and all who donate time, ideas, skills and goods to sell throughout the year. This year particular thanks go to Kamil, Karen and Cassie at the Mosaic Café for their hard work, generosity and hospitality; to Jamilla and all who helped her to organise the Family Fun Day; to Steve Roman for sharing his considerable knowledge and time; to Shirley Wilson for providing a unique fundraising occasion; to Imran Raja Bashir for choosing to raise funds of the Scholarship Fund; and to Gunhild Wilcock, regular provider of delicious homemade preserves at all of our events.



Packed house watching Northern Threads

Our committee has two new members, Jamilla Saif and Marie Price. Both are already making valuable contributions to our group. We were greatly saddened in January 2024 by the death of committee member Ann Forster. Ann was a highly valued and loved member of the Scholarship Fund and a dear friend to everyone on the committee. She brought a sense of peace and calm to our group, as well as kindness and humour. We really miss her.

The Saddleworth PWSF committee members are: Catherine Holland (Chair), Jacqui Greenfield (Treasurer), Michele Abendstern (Secretary), Sarah Hey, Maggie Magner, Sue Piper, Marie Price, Jamilla Saif, Magda Sachs, and Sue Warrington.

Michele Abendstern (for Saddleworth PWSF)



Now in its eighth year, **Small Park BIG RUN 2024** took place in Meersbrook Park in Sheffield over the June midsummer weekend. A solidarity event like no other, it was – as always – a celebration of community and of Palestine and Palestinian people, but there was also sadness, because Palestinians in Gaza, and now across the West Bank, are facing such dreadful times.



Sahar Awadallah cutting the ribbon to start the run

We were privileged to have so many Palestinians with us. Sahar Awadallah, a Scholarship Fund committee member, cut the ribbon to start the run (see the photo to the left) and at the very end there was an amazing **BIG SING** (photo below) during which we linked up online with friends in Ramallah. Six choirs from all over Sheffield sang “You will never walk alone” to those listening in Palestine. It was very moving. To Palestinian people solidarity means everything.

We welcomed over 500 runners and walkers over the weekend and parallel runs took place, against all the odds, in Gaza, Ramallah and Nablus. In Sheffield we also welcomed fun

runners and many more who came to watch, listen, support, make lanterns and other crafts, sing and eat, and the event was supported by 100 volunteers.

Lanterns were made to light up the woods at the top of the park. All our runners and walkers have to make their way through these woods, irrespective of how many laps they are doing.

Amazingly, as in previous years, some people ran or walked for the whole 24 hours and they were glad of the lanterns during the hours of darkness.



The Big Sing



Community meal

and crops, seeds of hope and Gazan farmers growing in the most difficult situations.

Whilst it was a wonderful weekend and the community festival atmosphere was inspiring, the terrible situation in Gaza was present in everyone's minds. Musheir El Farra led candle-lit march and silent vigil around the park in memory of all those killed in Gaza. We finished by laying our candles under the solidarity tree planted in 2023 by Mahmoud Swahre.



Lantern parade setting off



Silent march and vigil, as we remembered all those killed in Gaza

We raised over £17,000!

We thank everyone who came along or supported SPBR this year – those who gave it a go for the first time and also those who come along every year. As always, half the £17,000 we raised went to Sheffield Palestine Cultural Exchange and will be used to rebuild projects with children in Gaza. The other half went to the Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund, where it contributed

directly to student scholarships. Unusually for the Fund, nearly all scholarships – at the current time

– are going to young women in the West Bank (rather than in Gaza). This is because of the war in Gaza and the destruction of university buildings, the destruction of homes and infrastructure, the killing and the displacement of so many. But education is highly valued by Palestinians and the Scholarship Fund is actively exploring how – even in this terrible, current situation – they can support young women in Gaza, who still dream of gaining a university degree.

More photographs of **SPBR 2024** can be found at <https://spbr.org.uk>

And please save the date! **SPBR 2025** will take place on: **Saturday June 21st** and **Sunday June 22nd 2025**. The theme will be play and education. We are delighted that Dalya Nasser, a Scholarship Fund graduate (see page 6), has been invited to come and speak at **SPBR 2025**.

Caroline Poland



A BIG thank you

In 2024 we sent out a total of **£13,407** to the Teachers Creativity Centre in the West Bank (the Teachers Creativity Centre administers the Fund's scholarships in the West Bank, charging no admin fee). The payment from UK was converted into \$17000 and covered 14 West Bank scholarships (see page 18). In January 2025 we sent **£1550** to Gaza to cover a scholarship for one student (see page 1).

We are grateful to everyone whose generosity made these scholarships 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.
- ✚ Our ongoing, most valued partners: Saddleworth Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund, Bolton Socialist Club, Rotherham Friends of Palestine, and the Derbyshire Dales Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund.
- ✚ Anyone who has made a one-off or annual donation.
- ✚ Ayman Eissa, who ran the Sheffield Half-Marathon.
- ✚ The organisations that have supported the Fund this year, including Thanet4Palestine and Littleborough Peace Group.
- ✚ Kevin Hanson for continuing to donate the proceeds from the sales of his poetry book *The Olive Tree* and Maggie Norman for donating proceeds from the sale of her cards in her "stall over the wall" in Grindleford.
- ✚ Everyone who took part in the **Small Park BIG RUN** in June 2024. See page 21 for more details and <https://en-gb.facebook.com/smallparkbigrun/>
- ✚ All those who have made gifts to the Fund in memory of friends and family

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 Scholarship Fund is managed in Sheffield by a small coalition of women working in partnership with the Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign. In Gaza, the Fund has been managed for many years by a panel drawn from the Board of Directors of the Red Crescent Society and the Union of Health Work Committee. Admin support has been provided by the community organisation, Afaq Jadeeda. In West Bank, we work with a committee of women, who are active around women's education and employment. We route our payments for scholarships through the Teachers Creativity Centre based in Ramallah.

Because of the devastating war, we were unable to award scholarships in Gaza for the academic year 2024-5. We hope and plan to re-start an awards process in Gaza (one student has already received her 2024-5 scholarship fees, see page 1). Up until 2024, candidates for scholarships in Gaza were nominated by their local community centre when they were ready to start university or when they were in the first or second year of a course and unable to continue for financial reasons. There have always been strict selection criteria for the Scholarship Fund in Gaza, 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 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 Cliffefield 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.