

UPAconnect

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UPA United Palestinian Appeal
—Transforming lives, empowering communities since 1978—



Reflections from the Executive Director

During my trip to Lebanon three months ago, my friend Kassem Aina and I visited the Cemetery of Shatila Martyrs. Kassem is the director of the National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training (NISCVT). A UPA partner, NISCVT is an NGO based in Beirut that works in and around the refugee camps in Lebanon.

As I stood in silence reflecting on life in Shatila as it once existed, memories of relatively better days rushed through my mind. Life today is not any easier for Palestinian or Syrian refugees who were forced to make Shatila their home. Inside the mosque-turned-cemetery, walls bearing victims' names and their pictures define a captivating space that embodies the violence once witnessed by the alleys we just passed through. I felt like a stranger in a refugee camp I once knew well 40 years ago.

15 minutes away across town is the American University of Beirut (AUB) campus. Above its magnificent main gate, carved in stone is a statement that had been echoed by generations of young men and women going through that gate. Standing tall for decades it proudly declares one of the values of the founders, "...that they may have life, and have it more abundantly."



Across a narrow, dark and damp alley, juxtaposed steps away against the Shatila Martyrs Cemetery, is the Shatila Center. That center is a beacon of hope for the community. Established in 1984 after the Sabra and Shatila massacre, it aims to contribute to the development of the Palestinian community in Lebanon through services addressing the needs of families, with a focus on children, youth and women.

"...that they may have life, and have it more abundantly"

As one of the projects of NISCVT, the Shatila Center's founders' commitment to that statement is no less valid than that of the founders of AUB.

40 years ago, Kassem Aina (pictured left) dedicated his life to a mission of service that Palestinian refugees may have life, and have it more abundantly.

A ruthless, multifaceted civil war devastated Lebanon from 1975 to 1990, resulting in approximately 120,000 deaths. In 1982 under the cover of darkness, Israeli forces occupying Beirut and their local militia allies committed a massacre later concluded to be a form of genocide.



In two days the massacre of Sabra and Shatila claimed almost 3,500 lives, mostly Palestinian and some Lebanese.

40 years ago, a group of Palestinian-American businessmen and professionals from across the globe witnessed the deep predicament Palestinian communities continued to face. They recognized the need to establish an independent platform to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and contribute to the long-term socioeconomic development of Palestinian communities in the West Bank, Gaza and the diaspora. Thus United Palestinian Appeal was born...40 years ago ...

Beirut has changed. The Arab world has become the world's favorite battleground where differences are settled in a faraway land, victims of violence are reduced to numbers and human suffering is concealed from the public eyes. The refugee camps, however, are still there. 40 years ago, United Palestinian Appeal was established ...that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.

Sincerely,

Saleem F. Zaru
Executive Director



No Playground-No Problem at NISCVT in Shatila Refugee camp. Kindergarten children feed a turtle. Due to the scarcity of open spaces in the camp, creative and dedicated teachers bring the playground to the classroom.

Small Business Development in Gaza

Mohammed's small business in Gaza has kicked off, thanks to your support. Mohammed, 20 years old, supports his father, who is unemployed. A new father himself, Mohammed works hard to provide for his family by producing aluminum doors and windows in his workshop.

But with poor materials and little equipment, Mohammed was unable to produce high quality products. Through UPA's Small Business Development program, Mohammed qualified to receive business training, which helped him improve his standing in the market and keep up with demand. UPA also provided new equipment and machines for his shop, which has allowed him to increase the quality and quantity of his products.



"I was worried about the future of my small business. But with UPA's support, I'm confident that I will continue to develop it and satisfy my customers with high quality products."

•According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Gaza's unemployment rate is 44 percent, an increase from 2016.

•Unemployment among Gaza's youth is at a staggering 60 percent. The Small Business Development program aims to shrink those numbers, and the immense suffering they entail, one business at a time.

Shifa, who is 25 years old and also lives in Gaza, was desperate to make ends meet for the family. Her father works in a falafel shop, which kept the family on the brink of poverty. Shifa had completed her vocational training to become a tailor but was unable to start a business on her own.

"In the first month of having my own store, my profit doubled compared to the salary I received working in a smaller shop."

Once UPA's staff in Gaza heard about her situation, UPA stepped in to make that dream a reality. UPA provided Shifa with a new sewing machine, raw materials and business training needed to successfully launch her own business.

"I am confident I can expand my business and one day help other families as I've been helped."



Embracing Life Program

This November, UPA hosted the 2nd MENA Cleft and Craniofacial Care Conference, in Amman, Jordan. Organized by the UPA Embracing Life Program and supported by Smile Train, the conference engaged over 50 medical professionals from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to discuss best approaches for providing comprehensive craniofacial care.

Disciplines participating were: plastic surgeons, maxillofacial surgeons, ENT surgeons, speech therapists, orthodontists, dentists, genetic researchers, nurses, feeding specialists and anesthesiologists.

The conference emphasized the need for multidisciplinary teams in the treatment and care of patients with cleft and craniofacial anomalies. UPA's Embracing Life Program is unique in this respect, because it follows

this model of comprehensive care instead of focusing exclusively on the surgeries needed to repair the cleft.

Presentations and discussions reviewed various approaches to further improve the overall quality of treatment available to cleft and craniofacial patients in centers across the MENA region.

Since 2014, UPA's Embracing Life Program has been expanding the capacity of the Palestinian medical personnel and providing local centers for families to turn to for craniofacial surgeries.

In 2017, ELP performed **106 surgeries** and increased the number of Palestinian master surgeons – meaning those surgeons are able to operate independently and train other surgeons in the treatment of craniofacial conditions – to four.



Upper Left: ELP Program Manager, Dana Awwad discusses cleft and craniofacial care provided by international organizations. Bottom Left: ELP volunteer, Dr. Rushdi Amr, shares the story of his child with a cleft lip and cleft palate. Upper Right: ELP Program Director, Dr. John van Aalst introduces Dr. Elias Zgheib of AUB. Bottom Right: Aziza Al Johar, presents her work on orofacial care.

Children's Program

Bridges of solidarity in Bethlehem

This Fall, UPA fortified the growing bonds of solidarity between African-Americans, Palestinian-Americans and Palestinians by supporting a Solidarity Studios workshop at Al Rowwad, a Cultural and Arts Society in Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem. Solidarity Studios is an initiative bringing the youth and communities of occupied Bethlehem, the Southside of Chicago, and Cape Town, South Africa together under one set of mobile music studios meant to inspire solidarity and help spark positive change (in addition to producing music, of course).

For four days this fall, three Solidarity Studios instructors from Chicago worked with Bethlehem youth, teaching them how to create quality music content on the Ableton Push.

"I've seen many videos on YouTube about the Ableton Push, so this was my chance to learn how to use this lovely instrument," said Kan'an, a workshop participant.

In addition to new skills, participants emerged from the workshop with a stronger sense of community and solidarity, a deeper understanding of past and ongoing struggles at the local and global level, and new-found inspiration to create music and share their stories and experiences with the world.

"When I heard about the workshop I was so happy," said Kan'an.

The workshop, however, was just the beginning. The students and Solidarity Studios instructors remain in contact and are continuing to collaborate. Additionally, with support from UPA and Solidarity Studios, Al Rowwad now has their own set of music production equipment that the students can use to hone their skills and teach others.

While Chicago and Bethlehem may be geographically divided, initiatives like this lead to greater recognition of shared struggles, create deeper connections, and generate positive action between these communities.



Calid Bowen, Solidarity Studios instructor, working with Kan'an and Hamza, workshop participants. Calid is a rising artist and music producer currently living in Chicago.



Kalonji Nzinga (pictured left), Solidarity Studios instructor, working with Ramiz, a workshop participant at Al Rowwad.

"We talked about the life here and the life out of Palestine. I liked this workshop," said Motasem, workshop participant. I liked it so much I'm starting now to think about how I can make music."

Why I support UPA

I recently met with Mahdy from Florida. He is one of our young donors, originally from Palestine, and I asked him what inspired him to join the **UPA Circle of Hope** as a sustaining supporter.

His reflections on why he gives touched us all at UPA. I hope it will inspire you as well.

"I'm blessed to come from a country with such a beautiful heritage and tradition. Yet, it's the suffering that gets me to take action. After searching for a charity, I found UPA and have had the great privilege to learn more about the organization's mission and projects.

"What really did it for me, though, was getting to meet UPA staff through networking events and listening to them describe their work. The genuine passion and commitment that they put into their work is remarkable and heart-warming. Not only that, it's inspiring and motivating.

*"UPA is an organization that **constantly reflects results through detailed hard work** mixed with the utmost kindness and sympathy for others, especially for the men, women and children back home and in refugee camps throughout neighboring countries.*

*"I hope that being a supporter brings some sort of peace and comfort to these individuals. What I seek to accomplish for them as a supporter isn't just donating money, **but having them understand that there are people out there thinking of them, taking as much action as they can to help improve their lives.***

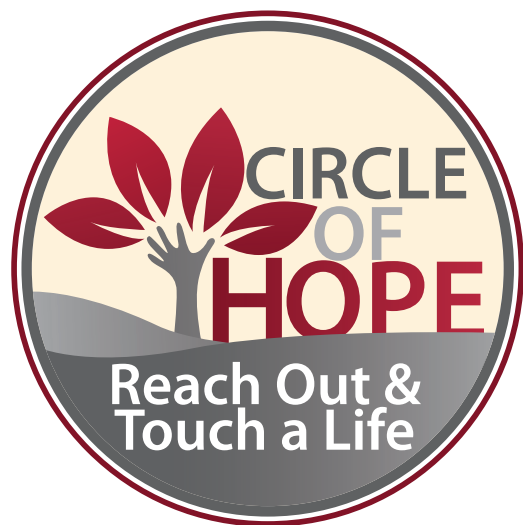
"I'd encourage others to get to know UPA staff members and ask about their work and current projects. Take a look at their website www.helpupa.org.

"Spread the message to friends and even strangers of UPA's fantastic work!"

I hope you will consider joining Mahdy as a member of the **Circle of Hope** community today. Our work helping Palestinians in need is made possible by the support of people like **YOU**.

With hope and gratitude,

Deena T. Faruki
Director of Donor Stewardship

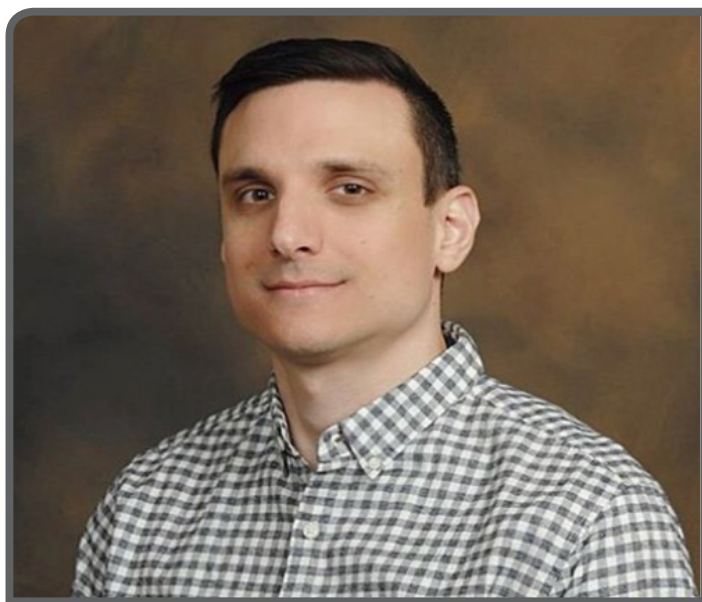


Join UPA's Circle of Hope
\$10 / month!

By Mail: Use the enclosed envelope
(check "Monthly")

Online: helpupa.org/hope

By Phone: 855-659-5007, ext. 202





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Thank You

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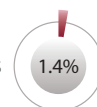


UPA ELP Feeding Specialist, Israa (based in Ramallah), holds baby Rakan who suffers from a cleft lip. We thank our donors for sending words of encouragement and strength to share with mothers seeking hope so their children can embrace life fully.

In 2016, 97% of UPA's operating expenses went to programs that directly benefited Palestinian communities in need.



Programs



Management



Fundraising

UPA is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible according to applicable laws.



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