

## Emergency Relief Fund: The Last Room Standing

Can you imagine being expelled from your home before dawn and watching as soldiers demolish it with your possessions inside? That's what happened to Nureddin Amro (pictured at right, amid the rubble of his home), his brother Sharif Amro and their families.

Israeli soldiers woke Nureddin and Sharif, both of whom are blind, at their home in the Wadi Al-Joz neighborhood of East Jerusalem at 5:30 am on March 31st.

"We were asleep. They banged on the doors and shouted. Soldiers completely surrounded the neighborhood. There were dogs and aircraft. It was frightening," said Nureddin.

After demolishing the home, the soldiers left them with only memories of the life they once had.

Nureddin is the founder and principal of the

Siraj al-Quds School for visually impaired and sighted children in Jerusalem. Siraj al-Quds has provided an education for over 120 children ranging in age from four to six years old since opening in Jerusalem in 2007.

*(continued inside)*



## Celebrating their marriage by improving the lives of others

We would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to friends of UPA Jordan and Yousef (pictured at right) on their upcoming marriage!

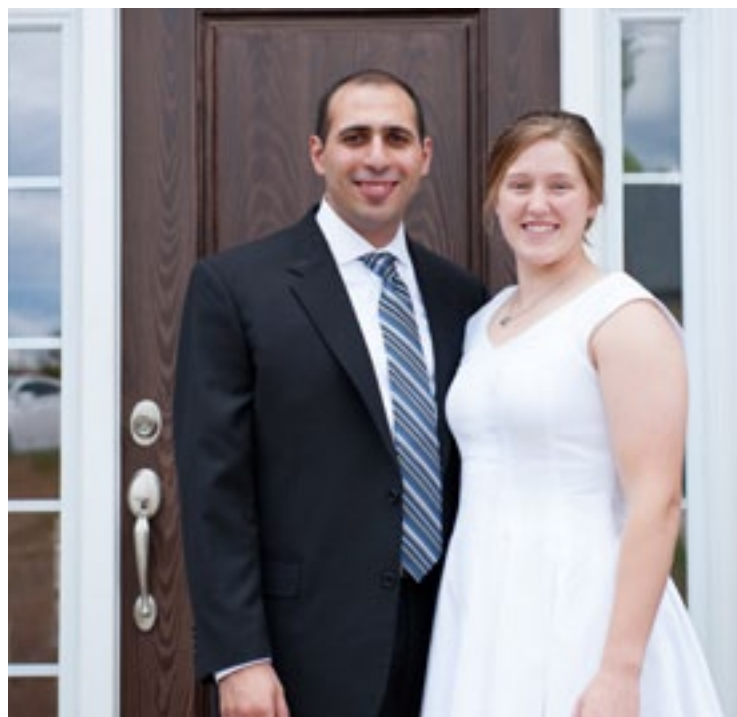
In their time of joy, the couple has chosen to make a charitable gift:

Yousef, a Palestinian from Nablus, and Jordan live in the U.S. and are dedicated to supporting the socioeconomic, cultural and educational wellbeing of Palestinians.

With a desire to help those in need, Jordan and Yousef are giving their guests the option of donating to UPA in lieu of buying a wedding gift.

Thank you, Jordan and Yousef, for your generosity and humility during your celebration.

You too can celebrate an occasion that creates hope and opportunity for a brighter future for Palestinians. To learn more about how you can support UPA when celebrating a



wedding, anniversary, birth, birthday, graduation or other event, please contact Deena Faruki at [dfaruki@helpupa.org](mailto:dfaruki@helpupa.org) or 202-659-5007 ext. 202.

## UPAConnect

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## Generations of Generosity

### Helping Palestinians with cleft lips and palates



Key surgeons involved with the Embracing Life Project—Drs. John van Aalst, Wa'el Al Halaby and Mahmoud Abu Hatab—joined UPA staff, board members and major donors at a dinner celebrating the launch of the project in Washington, DC, on May 19th. To learn more visit: [helpupa.org/embracing-life](http://helpupa.org/embracing-life).

The UPAConnect newsletter is published quarterly by **United Palestinian Appeal**. UPA was founded in 1978 as a non-profit humanitarian organization to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians, particularly those in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and refugee camps throughout the Middle East, and to contribute to the long-term socioeconomic and cultural development of Palestinian society.

## UPAConnect

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### Letter from the Executive Director

I was blessed to have Mahmud Shaikhaly (1918-2014) come into my life in the spring of 2012. This month, as we launch UPA's Embracing Life Project, a project he strongly believed in and generously supported, and on behalf of the children of Palestine whom he cherished, we remember Mahmud's generosity and are most grateful.

During our short-lived friendship Mahmud shared with me 90 years of his life, his experiences, struggles and accomplishments. He talked about life in Palestine as a child with delight, and later in Beirut with excitement. He relayed his adventures on his pilgrimage to America and his accomplishments as a Hollywood actor and screenwriter.

I saw joy in his eyes when he talked about his soul mate and sensed the grief in his heart when he lamented her passing. He shared his fear of old age, but his acceptance of death was a sign of his faith and inner peace.

Mahmud was a gentle and sensitive soul with a

great gift of expressing emotions. I felt privileged that he was comfortable sharing with me from the bottom of his soul. His endless generosity and commitment to helping the children of Palestine was overwhelming and humbling.

It is a great honor for me personally and for UPA collectively to have won Mahmud's trust to allow us to translate his compassion into action during his lifetime and thereafter.

Today we celebrate the life of the late Mahmud Shaikhaly. May he rest in peace. Mahmud had no offspring, but his generosity will no doubt inspire generations to come.

Sincerely,

Saleem F. Zaru



My Dear Saleem,

At the end of 2013  
and still counting...

My thanks to you for the framed picture of the both of us has been long overdue. Please know that my intent runs contrary to my action. Blame the years for this; they get in my way. Almost on a daily basis I look at the picture and think I'll write today!

Today has been long in coming, until it occurred to me the very reasonable possibility that I would check out without your hearing from me.

My love to you and all those who care about the children of Palestine.

Mahmud

**UPA**  
United Palestinian Appeal



### Connect thru Giving

UPA is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Contributions are tax-deductible according to applicable laws.





Serving Disabled Refugees

Gaza Camp, in Jerash, Jordan, is home to approximately 24,000 Palestinian refugees who fled Gaza after the 1967 war. A key part of the camp is the Community Rehabilitation Center for the Disabled. Established by UNRWA in 1985 with an initial 10-year fund from Oxfam, the center provides training and support to people with disabilities.

The Center has struggled to stay open since 2010, when a Swedish charity discontinued its support. The Center currently depends on individual donations and small project grants to continue to provide needed services to the community.

Families benefit from the Center’s special education classes, therapy and community-based rehabilitation services. The Center hosts workshops that raise awareness of the rights of the disabled and ways to integrate the disabled into society.

That is why UPA has stepped in to help the Center become self-sustaining.

Hasan Siam, 31, (pictured below, at top) is a key part of that effort. He started training in the Center when he was three and has since become a member

*(continued on opposite panel)*



Children’s Fund & Food Program Projects: April - June 2015



Al-Malath Charitable Society  
Beit Sahour, West Bank  
Food Program

With a grant from UPA, Al-Malath promoted healthy eating and physical exercise habits for 18 intellectually challenged youth and their parents.

The project held workshops once per month led by a nutritionist, an occupational therapist and a physical therapist, respectively. Participants learned about proper food intake, food preparation and cooking skills, obesity and other diet related health complications and physical exercise.

The group worked together in preparing meals made from vegetables, fruit, rice, chicken and beef. Over the course of the project, participants began asking for healthier, more diverse foods and practiced portion control.



Community  
Rehabilitation Center  
for the Disabled - Gaza  
Camp  
Jerash, Jordan  
Children’s Fund

UPA has partnered with the Community Rehabilitation Center (see feature to the left) to improve its sustainability and quality of service for the disabled living in and around Gaza Camp.

To raise community awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, with a focus on women with disabilities, the Center held a six-day summer camp in June with a grant from UPA. Participants included fifty children with a disability, fifty without a disability and twenty volunteer supervisors.



Save Youth Future  
Society  
Gaza City, Gaza Strip  
Children’s Fund

In the economically strangled Gaza Strip, Save Youth Future Society has sought to improve the food security of children still displaced by the war last summer. With a grant from UPA, they distributed food parcels to 70 families in which the breadwinner had been injured or killed.

Each parcel included items purchased on the local market, including flour, sugar, rice, olive oil, beans, lentils, milk powder, jam, canned meat and tuna, hummus, cheese and tomato sauce.

The total child beneficiaries reached by the project were 118 girls and 150 boys.

Nursing College Renovation

Located on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, Al-Makassed Islamic Charitable Society Hospital is a state-of-the-art hospital that serves Palestinians from East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Between 1985 and 1990, UPA funded the construction of the hospital’s Nursing College. Since then, the nursing program has undergone two expansions. In 2000 Al-Makassed established a two-year nursing diploma, and in 2010 it began admitting students to a four-year bachelor’s of science in nursing program. The first class of four-year nursing students graduated last year (pictured below).

UPA is pleased to continue its partnership with Al-Makassed at this time of exciting growth for the nursing college. UPA recently began implementing a renovation and rehabilitation project for the nursing college, which is set to finish before the fall semester. As part of the project, UPA is installing new air conditioners, painting classrooms, rehabilitating a bathroom, procuring computers for a new lab and providing teaching equipment and furniture for classrooms.



The Last Room Standing (cont.)

During the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Israel took control of East Jerusalem from Jordan. Since then, according to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHN), Israeli forces have demolished approximately 27,000 Palestinian structures in the occupied Palestinian territories.

“There was no advanced notice. No reason given. They announced that they came to demolish the house and they did it. They stayed for four hours and destroyed the garden, all our things. They left us one room,” said Nureddin.

ICAHN reported to the United Nations in 2013, that Israel violates the Fourth Geneva Convention and the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination when it demolishes homes.

Since the demolition, Nureddin and his family are living in the last standing room of their home. The room does not have any electricity, sewage, water or a telephone line. The UPA Emergency Relief Fund is providing support to Nureddin’s family in their time of distress. The Fund helps displaced families and distributes essential items during emergencies.

Serving Disabled Refugees (cont.)

of the Center’s team.

He defied his deafness by learning sign language, enabling him to go to school. After the seventh grade, Siam studied carpentry at a vocational center. Since mastering the required skills in 2003, he now trains people in the Center’s carpentry workshop, passing his knowledge on to the next generation.

In 2014, 97% of UPA’s operating expenses went to programs that directly benefited Palestinian communities in need.



Transformative humanitarian work in Palestinian communities.



<http://on.fb.me/helpUPA>

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