

UPAconnect

Issue 18 • Spring 2018

40
YEARS
OF SERVICE

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- Surviving winter in Gaza Camp
- Music for refugee children in the West Bank

and more...

UPA United Palestinian Appeal
Transforming lives, empowering communities since 1978



Reflections from the Executive Director

During my last trip to Lebanon, we walked 15 minutes away from the American University of Beirut (AUB) campus through the alleys of Shatila camp to get to the Shatila Center.

Underneath dangling electrical wires mingled with sagging plastic hoses that distribute water to residents, a typical sight in refugee camps, the alley led us to a small secluded courtyard. Whitewashed walls decorated with colorful images announced to the pedestrian traffic that they have arrived at a special place, the Shatila Center.

Over 35 years ago, these alleys once witnessed a massacre, later concluded to be a form of genocide. In only two days, the massacre of Sabra and Shatila claimed almost 3,500 lives, mostly Palestinian and some Lebanese.

A few floors above the dark alley, in a make-shift music room decorated with Palestinian flags, a music class was in session.



A group of Palestinians and their most recent guests of Syrian children tried to perfect a pitch or hit the right note. As they struggled to do so, tension built up in their facial expressions and body language.

Their instructor Iyad patiently coached, asking them to repeat a part of a song, seeking perfection. "One last try - now this is perfect," he said. What a sense of relief and accomplishment.

Life in the camp is anything but perfect. Residents have little to no control over any aspect of their lives or destiny. In contrast, life in this music room is near perfect. It is perhaps one of the few places where children can expect to create something perfect, pure and beautiful – something to aspire to and to provide a sense of pride.

This year, in collaboration with Al Kamandjati, UPA made a three-year commitment to support summer music camps for children in Lebanon.

Above that dark alley in the make-shift music room, life is exceptionally elevated from a bleak and unpredictable reality. This is the delightful gift of music.



Saleem Zaru, UPA Executive Director (center), pictured with Ramzi Aburedwan (left) and Iyad Staiti (right).

UPA Supports Music Education



The majority of Palestinian children UPA supports live in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Lebanon or Jordan, or other marginalized areas. They face a multitude of challenges depending on their location including siege, military occupation, curfews, poverty, and malnutrition.

Imagine the toll these realities have on children's development. Where is their childhood? Where is their hope and inspiration for the future?

Al Kamandjati Association, a non-profit organization founded by Palestinian musician and composer Ramzi Aburedwan, uses music as a lever for empowerment. Since its founding 15 years ago, 2,000 children in Palestine and Lebanon have benefitted from Al Kamandjati's music education programs.



Thanks to people like you, UPA is proud to support Al Kamandjati's work to spread the gift of music education to children. Last year, your support allowed hundreds of children, between 5 and 10 years old, living in the West Bank refugee camps of Al Am'ari, Jalazon, Qalandiyah, and Marj ben Amer, to benefit from and enjoy this gift. The weekly music lessons helped children learn how to express themselves and heal their frustrations. On their behalf, we thank you.

This March, UPA hosted two concerts – in Maryland and in Michigan – featuring Ramzi Aburedwan and the Dal'ouna Ensemble. We are thankful to our friends and supporters in both communities who joined us to support music education for Palestinian and Syrian children living in Burj Barajneh and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon. As young generations continue to be born and raised in crowded camps, music education is ever more critical for their spirit and creative growth.



Surviving the Winter in Gaza Camp, Jordan

For refugee families living in Gaza Camp, finding sufficient cloths, heating fuel, and shelter during the harsh winter season is a constant struggle. Gaza Camp is the poorest among the 10 Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan.

The camp's entire population of almost 30,000 people lives on less than half a square mile and those lucky enough to have a job often earn the equivalent of \$3.14 per day, a wage that is below the national poverty line.

The camp suffers from a lack of health and education services, and its infrastructure is outdated.

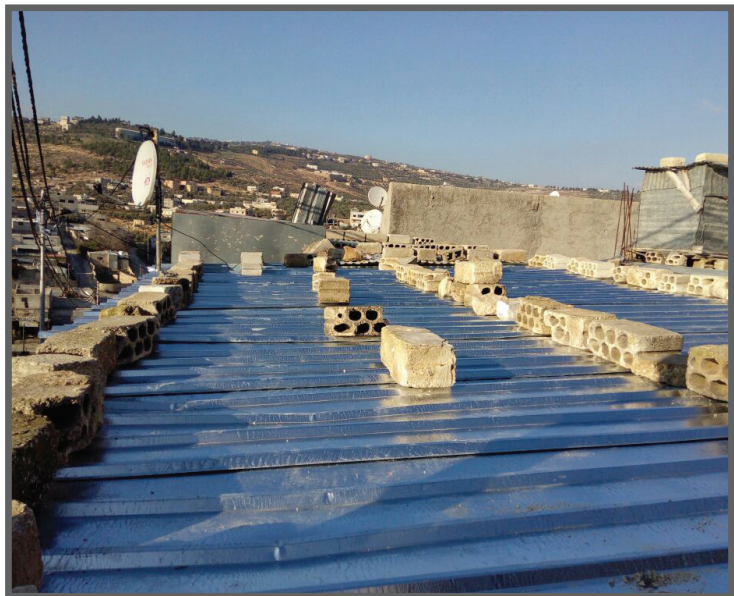
Thanks to your support, this winter, a team of UPA staff and volunteers helped families in Gaza Camp combat the bitter cold, snow and rainfall by distributing warm clothing to over 300 families.



"The initiative had a great impact on the kids and their families. The kids feel marginalized and excluded. When people visit our camp and spend some time playing with the kids, bringing them gifts or just talking to them, this goes a long way. It makes them feel recognized and cared for by the outside world"

-Mr. Adnan Hussein, Director of the Camp Center

According to UNRWA, about 75% of the housing units in the Camp are unsuitable for living due to their poor conditions. Many families crowd into units that contain only one or two rooms and lack sunlight and good ventilation. In response to these conditions, UPA installed new roofs on 13 family shelters, including Buthaina's.



Yasser, 16, with UPA Programs Coordinator Nisreen Abu AlSheikh. Yasser and his sister both suffer from a rare medical condition that causes them to lose feeling and mobility in their limbs.



"The first time I walked into Buthaina's home, I could not escape the sound of water hitting the ground or the smell of mildew. Her roof leaks every time it rains. There were buckets everywhere to catch the water and more water stains than you could count. The walls were crumbling, and the floors were cold."

-Nisreen Abu AlSheikh, UPA's Programs Coordinator in Jordan.

Can you imagine?



With your support, UPA also provided 120 families with enough heating fuel for one month. A one month's supply of fuel for a standard heater costs about 30 Jordanian Dinars (about a month's income!) Delivering a one-month supply of fuel relieved many worries.

Iqraa Runner visits Gaza Camp

Laila Boufraine, a Friend of UPA based in Virginia, recently traveled to Jordan where she visited the Gaza Camp in Jerash. Laila shared her experience with UPA.

Gaza Camp was created in 1967 to house Palestinians primarily from Gaza who had fled to Jordan during the 1967 war. These refugees and their decedents have lost their right to residency in Gaza, and unlike refugees from the West Bank, have not been granted Jordanian citizenship.

"I wanted to personally experience the camp in Jordan and gain a better idea of what was happening, regardless of how disturbing it was. I needed to know and then act at my modest level," Laila told UPA.

Similar to Palestinians living as refugees in Lebanon, people here are treated as non-residents and face major restrictions on employment opportunities. For example, refugees are not allowed to start an independent business outside the camp or join Jordan's public sector. They also do not have health insurance and would not be able to afford higher education. They continue to live in the margins of society.

"It is impossible to accept that, in our day and age, people are still facing such poverty and injustice... and that they are suffering in silence," Laila noted.

Laila, a single mother of two and an Iqraa veteran, has volunteered in refugee camps in the West Bank prior to her visit to Jordan. Iqraa, which means "read" in Arabic, is a group of runners in the DC metro area that raises funds for UPA's University Scholarship Program.

"When you see a smile on a face and see that the little you brought made a difference, it is empowering. These people need to be seen and recognized," Laila exclaimed.



Supporting Gaza's Fishermen

The United Nations now estimates that by 2020, Gaza could become uninhabitable.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 1 million people in Gaza (47% of its population) are food insecure. Currently, power outages lasting 18-20 hours a day disrupt businesses and affect households. Poor infrastructure and the severe economic crisis caused by the ongoing blockade affect education, health, agriculture, and social services.

The fishing sector in Gaza does not require much electricity, but fishermen are facing their own daunting challenges as a result of Israeli restrictions. The best and most profitable fish swim beyond the 9 nautical miles currently permitted to Gaza's fishermen, limiting their access to smaller fish and sardines in the shallow areas. Due to the blockade of Gaza, fishermen also face restrictions on the import of new fishing boats. Often-times, they have no choice but to use old boats, including simple row boats.



Compounded with a lack of equipment, being a fisherman becomes a physically exhausting and laborious experience that yields little result. Thanks to your support, UPA's Small Business Development program helped eight skilled fishermen expand their fishing business.

"Fishing is our only source of income. The sea is our livelihood. My partners and I used to fish on small boats. Those small boats didn't help us make a lot of money. It was tiresome and time-consuming."

-Mohammed Abu Reyala



To support their fishing business, UPA supplied a large boat with an engine and materials including fishing nets, lighting, rain protection, and life jackets. The upgraded boat and materials helped all four fishermen increase their catch, sales, and support for their families. In turn, these four fishermen donated their old row-boats to aspiring fishermen eager to enter the trade and increase their income. In total, this project benefited 8 families.

A little help can make a big difference for fishermen struggling to support their families.



Iqraa

Running for a
**Brighter
Palestine**



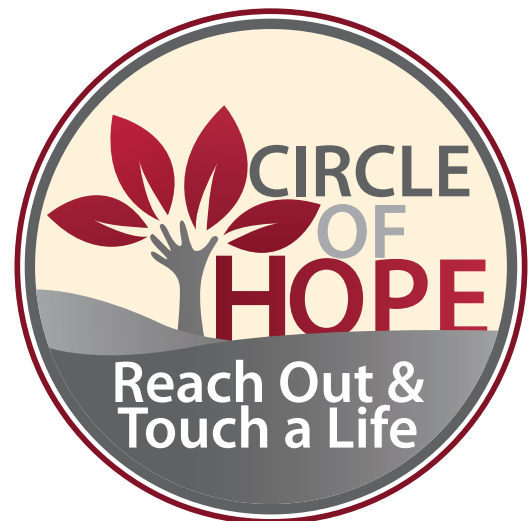
**Are you a runner in the DC area?
Interested in training for a 5k, 10k,
half-marathon or marathon?**

Since 2008, Team Iqraa has trained 150 runners and raised over \$230,000 for UPA's University Scholarship Program.

Join Team Iqraa!
Contact Kirk Campbell at
kirkcruachan@yahoo.com

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





United Palestinian Appeal

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SAVE THE DATE

UPA's 40th Anniversary Banquet

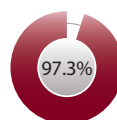
September 20th, 2018

Details to Follow

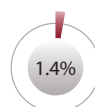
For Sponsorship and Partnership inquiries:
Zeina Davis, zdavis@helpupa.org

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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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