

Palestine Trauma Centre (UK)

REPORT: JANUARY – JUNE 2014

In both *PTC(UK)* and *PTC(Gaza)* there have been encouraging developments and growing confidence in our practices and reputation. *PTC(UK)* has been approached by various groups to give talks and *PTC(Gaza)* has had a notable success with its recent *Friday of Joy Initiative* which has attracted extra funding for the centre.



In February Dr Mohamed Altawil visited the republic of Ireland to do a series of presentations on the Focusing work at *Palestine Trauma Centre*. This led to a promise of £3,000 to continue this work and *PTC(UK)* has appointed and paid for a Focusing co-ordinator at *PTC(Gaza)* for the next year. This form of therapy is unique in Palestine and is the basis for much of the support given to families, enabling them to help themselves at times of mental crisis.

In January, *PTC(UK)* was invited to be part of the *UK-Palestine Mental Health Network*. We were invited to be one of two main speakers at their inaugural meeting. The other speaker was Professor Jeff Halper, the director of the *Israeli Committee against House Demolitions*. Professor Halper has now become one of our patrons.



Activist and author Sharyn Lock (*Gaza Beneath the Bombs* PLUTO PRESS) contacted us to see if we could help a couple of paramedics get into Gaza. We were able to do this and one of the paramedics stayed at the centre in *PTC(Gaza)* until June taking part in their activities and giving First Aid training to staff. She is compiling a report of her visit.



In March, Dr Altawil gave a presentation for the *UK-Palestine Social Work Network* at Durham and has been invited to do so at the University of East Anglia in October of this year. We have also been asked by the *UK-Palestine Mental Health Network* to help organise a conference in the UK for January 2015. *Tottenham Palestine Literary Festival* asked us to join their team this year. We have given talks to *Palestine Solidarity Campaign* groups in Wimbledon and Worcester and we gave our presentation called *Journey through Thorns* to an interfaith group in Welwyn Garden City. We want to reach as many people as possible, especially in building the therapist and social work links to our activities in Gaza.

Help to Celebrate World Social Work day 2014
World Social Work Day event 19th March 2014

Experiences of Social Work in Palestine



Date:	Wednesday 19th March 2014
Venue:	North Road Methodist Church Durham DH1 4SG (venue capacity 55)
Time:	2.30 to 5.30pm
Cost:	Free (Donations for future PALUK activity welcomed)

Speakers:

- ◆ **Dr Mohamed Altawil** from the Palestine Trauma centre Gaza, discussing work and experiences of trauma therapy based interventions
- ◆ **Dave Harrop and Henry Smith** - Sharing experiences from field trip to West Bank and Jerusalem of practitioner-based research into the daily experience of Social work colleagues Oct 2013 .

An opportunity to learn more about the progress and plans of this developing professional network and regional BASW activity

To register for a place please email harrop_david@yahoo.co.uk



INTERFAITHMATTERS
 Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group

The Work of the Palestine Trauma Centre



Including a description of the conditions in Gaza
 By Dr Mohamed Altawil

At
The United Reformed Church
 Woodhall Lane
 Welwyn Garden City AL7 3TP
 Ample free parking.
 Refreshments.

on
Thursday 13th March 2014

7.15 pm for 7.30pm

Further information from
 Reynold Rosenberg 01707 880941
reynoldrosenberg@yahoo.co.uk

We were very pleased to be invited to take part in a programme on the Islam Channel with *INTERPAL* and also be at *INTERPAL's* fundraising dinner this year. We have continued our own fundraising activities, including our popular food stall created by Nisreen and Mohamed Altawil. This raised nearly £400 at a local food festival.



Inside Gaza, the team described in our first report has continued its work with families. Air strikes continue and Gaza has had to cope with floods, increased isolation because of Egypt and rise in unemployment. Stress and depression are widespread, as are defiant attempts to combat them. The drama specialist at *PTC(Gaza)* came up with *The Friday of Joy Initiative*. He and a group of volunteers go into an area every Friday where they organise street games and face painting for the children. Parents take some part in this too. It brings a moment of fun and excitement to hundreds of people in the community at refugee camps in the area around Gaza City. In the UK we have been able to get funding for this project from a group called *Four Pillars of Hope* to continue for another year. Here is a more detailed account of the work:

Friday of Joy Initiative (FJI) has been developed by our drama specialist at *Palestine Trauma Centre* in Gaza(*PTC-Gaza*). It takes Drama games, Face-painting, Music, Folksong, Art work and Dance (Dabkah) onto the streets of a refugee camps every Friday afternoon. These activities need about two hours of preparation by the work team and the actual activities last for about three hours. *FJI* supports the children by giving them space to play together, freedom to be creative in a safe place and social interaction on a large scale to build community cohesion and trust. It also enables these traumatised children to express their feelings within the safe space of group activities in a joyful and liberating way.

The team for this project is made up of six young people who work with volunteers of all ages. They are passionate to help children in the refugee camps and bring creativity and play into their lives. Apart from drama games, art, music and face-painting, the team can introduce the skill of Focusing with children. The leader of this group is a drama expert and a psychologist. He and five others act as coordinators for the group activities on the streets. The specialist should have a basic payment and the volunteers should have small allowances to cover their expenses for running the activities for 12 months. This allowance would be the equivalent of £10 for each session every Friday.

Below is a video showing some of this work. At present there is only an Arabic version, but it does introduce some of the team inside Gaza and some of the activities.

<http://youtu.be/mLtdTOcy8rI>



THE FRIDAY OF JOY INITIATIVE



PTC(Gaza) has also worked with Downs Syndrome children and took part in World Autism Day.



We are glad to have had links with INTERPAL's office in Gaza during these events.

The team of volunteers at PTC(Gaza) is keen to continue. We see them sometimes when we have our Skype sessions. One volunteer has started his own sub-group to share the drama and Focusing ideas he has learnt at PTC. So the future of our activities looks good.

Some final words on **Focusing** and **Family Therapy**. These are our core practices and unique to *PTC* in Gaza. They are developed in the community and in families. All activities in Art, Drama and Play relate to them.



Here is a summary of the Focusing work from Jerry Conway, the co-ordinator and trainer in the UK.

Project workers have reported that the techniques they learned have been really helpful - including using the green and dry stick to build resilience, using presence language to help people step back from what they notice and see it from the outside, and the principles of good listening.

Mohamed Altawil has offered the group regular Skype sessions to strengthen their skills in Focusing. Focusing trainers in the UK held 2 Skype calls with project workers in Gaza to hear how they are using Focusing and offer advice on particular situations. We have also developed additional training materials and are in the process of translating a Focusing manual.

Focusing and Family Therapy offer a complete package of support. Focusing can help people to develop self-help skills to build resiliency and overcome feelings of stress and anxiety. Those experiencing more intense trauma reactions can be referred for Family Therapy.

Family Community Therapy Project



This project forms the basis of the psychological interventions at *PTC(Gaza)*. Its broader title is: “Strengthening Resilience of Families and Wider Society”. **FCTP** is run by the whole team at *PTC(Gaza)* and is supervised by professional psychotherapists. It uses a therapeutic approach to work along with the psycho-social support.



FCTP started in 2004, providing professional services to the most severely traumatised children and their families. It empowered community resources to reach as many of the traumatised people in Gaza as possible during the crises and invasions. Trauma specialists in the UK, EU and USA say it is one of the most effective intervention approaches to combat complex trauma. It deals sensitively with the perceived stigma of receiving therapeutic services based on the context of Palestinian traditions and gender roles.

The work team of **FCTP** consists of a clinical supervisor, a field coordinator, one psychologist, one drama worker, one social worker, one animator and family worker, psychiatrist and 25 volunteers who have been trained by *PTC(Gaza)*.

From 1st July 2013 till 30th June 2014, **FCTP** provided services to various groups of people in Gaza. **FCTP** maintained and enhanced the resilience of Palestinian families and their communities in the face of insecurity, poverty and constant aggression by the Israeli occupying forces. **FCTP** received several referrals from local NGOs in Gaza such as *UNRWA* schools, governmental schools, *Palestine Future Foundation for Childhood*, *Al-Amal Centre for Deaf Children* and the *INTERPAL* Office in Gaza.

FCTP has provided psycho-social caring services free of charge to 76 extended families (684 individuals: 337 females, 326 males), who were among the most severely traumatised children and adults in the Gaza Strip. In addition, **FCTP** provided psycho-social support to several categories of traumatised children and adults: 3,405 children and adults from these categories: students from schools, students from colleges and universities, widows, orphans, youths, elderly people, physically disabled children and adults, autistic children and adults. So far, 4,773 children and adults have received psychological therapy or psycho-social support services (1,742 females; 1,731 males).

The **FCTP** team can visit the families at home or the family can go to the *PTC* centre in Gaza City. Psychological support even happens in the street by doing art and drama activities. The team use several psychological practices such as: Focusing; Mind Body Medicine; CBT; Complex Trauma-Focusing Oriented Therapy; Play Therapy; Movement and Body Psychotherapy and Drama.

The problems inside Gaza increase as the economy collapses and insecurity grows. The eyes of the world turn to other crises in the Middle East and elsewhere as Gaza's siege intensifies. Our role is to remain steadfast and make sure the people we help know that we are not going away. This has been a good year for building our therapeutic practice and starting to record our methods. The networking with other mental health workers in the UK, Ireland, Canada, the Netherlands and the US means that we have a chance to make a real difference to the lives of people in Gaza and develop therapeutic practices that will be of use in other troubled areas of the world.

Mohamed Altawil, Jerry Conway, David Harrold, July 2014



SUPPORTED BY





PTC(UK) report: July – December 2014.

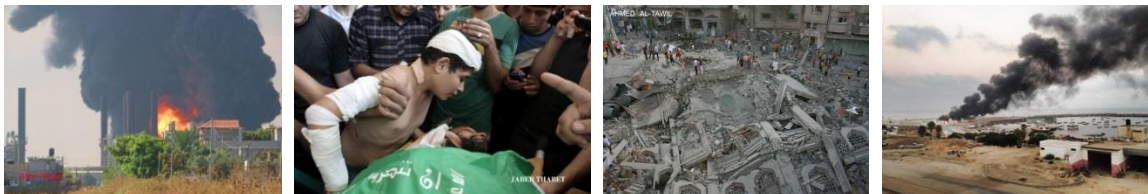
The second half of 2014 has been marked by a major disappointment and one horrendous event.

The disappointment was that our main team of therapists was not able to visit Gaza this year because of the unstable situation in Egypt and the uncertainty of being able to get through the Rafah Crossing. However, a couple of young paramedics did get into Gaza with a view to staying in Gaza City for a couple of months, as mentioned in the earlier report.



One of the paramedics left after a week because of the lack of opportunity to do paramedic work. The other stayed and worked happily with the *PTC(Gaza)* team from March, but then had serious difficulties and delays before being able to leave Gaza in June. She did some First Aid training with the *PTC(Gaza)* team and joined in their outreach programmes, like the Friday of Joy Initiative. In November, the Egyptians closed the Rafah crossing for 3 months for “security reasons” as it created a buffer zone which destroyed many homes in Egypt and intensified the siege of Gaza. We have now begun exploring ways of getting to Gaza through Israel. A member of the *UK-Palestine Social Workers’* group has been helping with this.

What prevented visits from July to September was, of course, the brutal bombardment of Gaza called “Operation Protective Edge”.



Given the other major events in the Middle East, it is easy to forget how devastating this invasion was. About 550 children under 18 were killed. The UN estimated that 300,000 needed psychosocial

care; over 3,000 were injured; over 1,000 permanently disabled; 1,500 orphaned. The scale of the disaster is so great that some commentators, like Sara Roy, believe that Gaza can never recover.

RESPONSES TO “OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE”: JULY – SEPTEMBER.



During this period, PTC sent out Rapid Response teams to visit hospitals and families, often using the Focusing skills that PTC(UK) had given them. *The Friday of Joy Initiative* worked in UN schools and in Nusierat refugee camp and since the war has been broadening the range of its street activities. PTC(UK) has helped fund the purchase of an amplifier and speakers to enhance this project. A gift of some money was sent to all the volunteers who did extra work during this period.



Everyone at PTC(Gaza) was affected by the war, losing family members or having homes damaged or destroyed. The centre itself was unaffected and all the staff were uninjured. PTC(UK) remained in touch through Skype with staff at PTC(Gaza) during the war. PTC(UK)'s therapy consultant, Andrew Enever, reported after one of these sessions that he was amazed at how calm, resilient – almost optimistic the team appeared to be when talking about what they were experiencing. We received many pictures and some film from Jaber Thabet and Ahmed Altawil at PTC (Gaza) showing us the details of the bombardment and the Rapid Response team's work. http://youtu.be/qncwOr_OAd4



PTC(UK) went on the marches in London protesting the invasion and we have since written to and had a meeting with local MP, Grant Shapps (Chairman of the Conservative Party). This meeting was arranged by Jill Weston, one of our trustees. We explained the effects of “Operation Protective Edge” and expressed our fears about the likelihood of future operations of this nature. We see this lobbying activity as a vital part of our charitable work to support the trauma centre and the children of Gaza.

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS.


As a result of the war, *PTC(UK)* has had many opportunities to speak and to fundraise.

WORCESTER-PALESTINE FRIENDSHIP
presents a PUBLIC MEETING and FILM
**SUPPORTING RESILIENCE IN
GAZA**
THE WORK OF PALESTINE TRAUMA CENTRE IN GAZA
AND ITS SUPPORT GROUP IN THE UK




Presenters
Yousef Al-Helou is a journalist from Gaza
Dr Mohamed Altawil PhD is a Clinical Psychologist from Gaza and founder of
Palestine Trauma Centre in Gaza
David Harrold is Chair of Palestine Trauma Centre - UK
Jerry Conway is a Focusing Trainer who has been helping to provide training in
Community Wellness Focusing - a psychosocial approach.

Thursday 3 July 2014
Refreshments from 7pm - Meeting 7.30pm
St George's Catholic Church Parish Hall
Sansome Walk Worcester WR1 1UG
FREE ADMISSION · LIMITED FREE PARKING
FREE REFRESHMENTS
PALESTINIAN PRODUCE FOR SALE
For more information, please contact Lorna Incher on 07973 448827





TRAUMA, GRIEF AND RESILIENCE



A first-hand account of the work of Palestine Trauma Centre in Gaza.
University of East Anglia, Monday October 6th, 7 – 9 pm
Room Arts 01.02
Presentation, short film and Q & A
With Dr Altawil (Phd Clinical Psychology and Phd Mental Health)
founder of the Palestine Trauma Centre (Gaza & UK)
The work of the Palestine Trauma Centre is supported by the Quakers in Britain,
Interpal, Irish Quaker Faith in Action, Child's Cry for Help and PTC UKI.

Organised by Norwich Stop the War Coalition in conjunction with Harod Marsh PPT, USA
Administration: Peter O'Hara 07791 753481 Email: Peter.O'Hara@stwc.org.uk
Harod Marsh harod.marsh@stwc.org.uk info@norwichstwc.org.uk




artintoheart
would like to invite you to
**A Concert for the
Children of Gaza**
in Coventry Cathedral, November 1st 2014, 7:30pm

Featuring a live performance of commissioned music
"The Children of Gaza" by Si Hayden
+ spoken word & poetry from Coventry & Gaza

Tickets available from the Cathedrals Online Shop
www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/online-shop
Collection on the night for the Palestine Trauma Centre
www.ptcuk.org




Worcester *PSC* and Norwich *Stop the War* gave us opportunities to speak to big audiences. At Norwich we were in a packed lecture hall at the University of East Anglia with students, lecturers and activists. A concert arranged by Kris Connolly for us in Coventry Cathedral attracted between 200 and 300 people. Kris also set up *Artintoheart* to raise funds for *PTC* (www.artintoheart.com). An event in Aberdeen called "Giggin for Gaza" raised money for *PTC* and attracted new supporters in Scotland. An organisation called *ChildrenPlus* has organised a fundraising dinner for *PTC* at the V&A Museum for Children. We shared a platform with *Medical Aid for Palestinians* at *The Tottenham Palestine Literature Festival* and held our own Therapists' Day at a London venue which attracted 20 mental health professionals. We were part of a panel at *INTERPAL's* conference in November and we gave talks in Manchester, Welwyn Garden City and Hertford.



MAP CEO Tony Laurance & author Sarah Irving by our stall at Tottenham Literature Festival.



Coventry Cathedral Concert



Journalist Yousef al Helou at PTC(UK)'s Therapists' meeting.



Mohamed Altawil with UNWRA's Chris Guinness. INTERPAL conference.

GOVERNANCE AND FUNDRAISING

Mohamed Altawil and Denis Hawes have been working on a proposal with Muslim Aid to extend *PTC(Gaza)*'s work to other parts of Gaza. Plans for a conference organised jointly by *PTC(UK)* and the *UK-Palestine Mental Health Network* are under way. This should take place in April 2015 at Kingston University.

We welcome Imam Suliman Ghani as one of our patrons and are delighted that the Gazan journalist, Yousef al Helou spoke at our London meeting and continues to be a good friend of *PTC*.

INTERPAL renewed its arrangement with us in July, supplying £24,000 as basic funds to keep *PTC(Gaza)* running and £6,000 to fund running and co-ordination costs at *PTC(UK)* for one year. We are most grateful for *INTERPAL's* loyalty and commitment. We feel that there is a productive and friendly relationship between us and we very much hope that it will continue.

Trustees' meetings since July have focused on the needs of *PTC(Gaza)* in the light of the war and the need for liability protection and insurance for *PTC(UK)*. There have been some fundraising initiatives, like the production of a *PTC* calendar for 2015 and the introduction of the Gift Aid scheme. A Focusing handbook has been compiled by *PTC(UK)* and *PTC(Gaza)* and one for *The Friday of Joy Initiative* is in preparation.

WORK OF PROJECT TEAMS

In spite of the horrors of the past few months, the projects continue – indeed in some cases the work becomes intensified as the Gaza team deal with Psychological First Aid. Drama ideas from the UK have been incorporated into the *Friday of Joy* activities in refugee camps. Support in terms of Helping the Helpers comes from *PTC(UK)* through Skype, especially from Mohamed Altawil and Jerry Conway. Focusing has been extensively developed by key people at *PTC(Gaza)*.



In October, the Gaza project workers gave a presentation to the International Focusing Conference in Ireland, via Skype. This was inspiring for the Focusing group in Ireland and gave *PTC(Gaza)* the vital sense that they were in contact with practitioners internationally. Mohamed Altawil is the main link here. He has completed his Focusing Trainer Qualification with the Focusing Institute and is regularly in touch with the Gaza team to explore techniques. The funding from *Irish Quaker Faith in Action* to *PTC's* Focusing project was, in part, a result of this conference link.



RESPONSES FROM PTC(GAZA) TO FOCUSING.



Ghada Radwan is Focusing Co-ordinator at PTC(Gaza). This is an extract from her report at the October Focusing Conference:

"I found some of the Focusing activities were very helpful in supporting resilience in the people during the war such as Good Quality of Listening to ourselves and others, Safe Place, and drawing feelings on the image of a body.

In the beginning of conducting our sessions in 2011 as a Focusing group, we started to carry out Focusing sessions within the core PTC group. This helped us a lot. In May 2014, a new team joined us to work in the Focusing project: Noha Karsh, Hadeel Bdeer and Iman Mattar.

In this project, we conducted 10 sessions per week with women (housewives) in individual & group sessions; our target group is children, adults and families. The common psychological and social problems that people who attend to our sessions are facing during the recent war include acute anxiety, sadness, hopelessness, anger, tiredness, shame and fear of death. The housewives and children who are participating in the Focusing project during last five months and onwards are: 2026 individuals (1061 females)(965 males).

On the personal level, Focusing helps me to face the difficulties coming from my family's house being destroyed in the recent war on Gaza. It has been empowering my resilience to allow me to continue my work during the war in school shelters in order to help people to express their feelings and to get some strength and the ability to cope with devastating situations through having some Focusing sessions. "



Sabrin Mousa has worked on the Family Therapy project as well as Focusing and this extract from her report gives some indication of the outcomes of her work as a Focusing practitioner:

"Focusing activities help me to deal with my own issues in light of the huge pressures in living in such a place like Gaza, with all the great stress and difficulties and with very small hope towards a good future. Focusing helps me to listen to myself and other people, to be more aware about myself and empower me to convert negative feeling to positive feeling.

Also, I found Focusing has good techniques to be used as a part of a treatment process. Focusing has good activities to be used with individuals and groups such as Good Listening and Partition the Negative Feeling. For example, I have a case of a married lady who lost her house and two of her children. She felt very down and suffered from somatic symptoms like headaches, pain in her arms, legs and stomach. However, during Focusing activities especially Partition-Reflecting and resilience activities, she changed from her overwhelming feelings towards looking to the other side of her life through her children and building some hope for her current and future situation. "

Family and Community Therapy Project (FCTP)

Summary (July - December 2014)

INTERPAL funded the **Family and Community Therapy (FCTP)** for another year (July-2014-June 2015) in order to enable *PTC(Gaza)* to provide the essential psychological treatment for severely traumatised children and their families.



Psycho-education for wives of martyrs.



Psycho-social support activities with elderly people.

PTC (UK/Gaza) set up an **Emergency and Rapid Response (ERR)** team made up of professionals and volunteers to provide the additional Psychological First Aid that was so urgently needed. This new team worked entirely on a voluntary basis. The team visited hospitals, homes and displaced families. In schools and on the streets of refugee camps, it provided psycho-social support to children affected by the shocking violence. In some of these activities, *PTC(Gaza)* worked in cooperation with *UNRWA* in Gaza, giving psycho-social support and psycho-social education to build resilience among children and their families in *UNRWA*'s shelters. In other activities, *PTC(Gaza)* delivered Psychological First Aid at 27 sites: schools, hospitals, churches and mosques.



Psycho-social support activities with children.



Psycho-social support activities with students.

This work continues today, but now the emergency phase has moved into the recovery phase where Family Therapy and Focusing are used to aid a return to some kind of normality. Many new families are traumatised and need urgent support. This is the rationale for keeping and increasing the capacity of **FCTP** to deal with this new work load. If these newly traumatised children and families are prevented from having trauma counselling within a family setting, then their PTSD symptoms will intensify and the strain on parents and carers will grow to breaking point. *PTC(Gaza)* has revised its data base of the children/families that need urgent therapeutic services and psychological rehabilitation. The list now consists of 720 additional families who need urgent psychological trauma treatment.

The work team consists of 7 staff: one in UK, one as clinical supervisor and 6 staff in *PTC(Gaza)*: a field coordinator, one psychologist, one social worker, one animator, one psychiatrist. In addition there are about 10 volunteers who have recently joined the Family Therapy project as trainees.

In July and August 2014, more than 11,435 children and adults received psychological support and psycho-social education about coping with trauma and stress. 10,407 children have benefited from these services and 1,028 parents have benefited from psychological first aid and psycho-education.



Working with traumatised families (outreach)



Working with traumatised children in the Centre.

From September till November 2014 (after the war), *PTC(Gaza)* has provided trauma treatment for 32 severely traumatised families (236 children and adults: 119 females and 117 males). In addition, the **FCTP** work team extended their work to include those bereaved by the recent war: the wives of martyrs, orphaned children and elderly relatives. This work has been conducted in cooperation with NGOs and UNRWA's schools: Noor Al-Marifa Society on 20 September 2014 (60 children involved); Al-Noor Society on 23 September 2014 (25 widows involved); Jabalia Women's Health Centre on 13 September 2014 (600 mothers and children involved), UNRWA's schools from 9-28 September 2014 (6,200 students from primary and preparatory schools involved).

Feedback from the beneficiaries:

Child 11 yrs old (A.S) said: "Today, I was able to get some fun. I would like to come in again to these activities. I have enjoyed it a lot."

Child's mother 34 yrs old (M.S) said: "It is a good idea to involve mothers and their children together in the same activities, especially after the recent war. These activities by PTC generated a feeling that we are still alive."

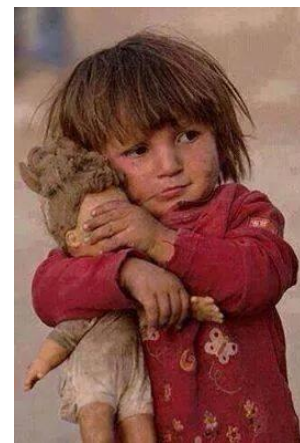
Mother 45 yrs old (S.F) said: "I have learnt a lot today from the psycho-education. I hope these activities will continue for us and for other women."



Contact



Skype continues to be our primary means of communication with *PTC(Gaza)* as well as a Facebook page and individual Facebook friend contacts. Aimee Valinski is managing the Facebook page. This interaction led to the designing and printing of a calendar by Shehnoor Ahmed in the UK made up of children's pictures from *PTC(Gaza)* and photographs by Ahmed Altawil and Jaber Thabet, the media and drama specialists at *PTC(Gaza)*.



If there is, as Sara Roy has suggested, a “dynamic of disintegration” set up for Gaza by “Operation Protective Edge”, then our work at *PTC(UK)* and *PTC(Gaza)* stands in direct opposition to it as we promote personal resilience, community support and creativity.

Mohamed Altawil, Jerry Conway, David Harrold. December 2014

www.ptcuk.org