



Annual Report 2018

In July 2018, the Karam Abu Salem crossing with Israel closed, stopping all trade and basic supplies including construction material reaching Gaza. In addition to siege and bombardment, the economic screw tightened on a devastated population. The Israeli NGO, Gisha, called this move “illegal and morally depraved”. Then, at a time when over 60% of the young were unemployed, the PA cut 22,000 Gazans from its payroll and UNRWA laid off staff because Trump withdrew its American funding. An educated and enterprising population unable to trade or travel and dependent on aid saw aid slashed. In the words of the Goldstone report, the aim to “punish, humiliate and terrorise the civilian population” of Gaza intensified.

That is the background to a collective act of defiance in the face of total despair that is known as the *Great Return March*. This sustained and largely peaceful protest was planned by various student, activist committees who got together voluntarily under the umbrella group *National Committee of the Great March of Return*. It emphasised its non-political nature by ensuring that no Hamas, Fatah, or Islamic Jihad flags were to be displayed, only the Palestinian flag. It was a cry for attention by a traumatised population; a choice not to “die in silence”. It was a march for civil rights.

PTC(Gaza) participated on the fringes of this event, supporting the wounded in hospitals, organising games with children near the medical tents and photographing some of the action. PTC(UK) offers them our full support. Tragedy has directly affected us all at PTC, however. In May, a cousin of Monther Yaghi (Friday of Joy / Family Therapy) was shot and killed. A cousin of Dr Mohamed Altawil’s was shot and his leg had to be amputated. These crimes, like all the others – the murder of children, paramedics and journalists; the deliberate crippling of young men - will go unpunished. So much of Gaza’s despair has to do with our tolerance of continuous injustice. As therapists, we must consider how we deal with this basic issue.



A comment during a special session of the UN Human Rights Council in April of this year sums up the background for Gaza’s mental health workers at this time:

“The people are, in essence, caged in a toxic slum from birth to death; deprived of dignity; dehumanised ... to such a point it appears officials do not even consider that these men and women have a right, as well as every reason, to protest.”

We welcome this statement from the Israeli group Psychoactive, made on 22nd May 2018:

As members of Psychoactive - Mental Health Professionals for Human Rights, we wish to join our colleagues from the Arab Psychological Association in condemning the Israeli military activity within the Gaza Strip and the massive sniper fire that was directed at unarmed protesters during the Great Return March in Gaza. We express our deep sorrow for the hurt inflicted on Palestinian protesters and are gravely concerned about the disastrous physical and psychological consequences of the massive use of arms against unarmed people.

In the UK, we have been able to inform the UK-Palestine Mental Health Network of some local details so that they can make representations to political figures here. We are also working with them to plan a conference in London in 2019 about the psychological development of children who have known nothing but war. Research at PTC(Gaza) will be vital here. One significant contribution to this has been the publication this year of a research article by Dr Mohamed Altawil in the Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma on “*The Effectiveness of Therapeutic and Psychosocial Intervention Programmes at PTC(Gaza)*”. In addition, Dr Altawil visited a refugee camp in Jordan, comparing conditions there with those in Gaza.



In January, PTC(UK) held its public meeting to report on the projects and included a practical introduction to one of them: Focusing. In addition, a visitor from PTC(Gaza) was hosted in Hatfield for a short time and some useful discussions held on current conditions and future developments at PTC(Gaza). Professional photographer Roy Milani is developing a photography project for refugee children. He has invited us to observe this and maybe adapt it for use in Gaza.



Two new and important responsibilities for PTC(UK) this year are the continuation of the Muslim Aid funded *Psychosocial Project* at PTC(Gaza) and the *Sports Project*. Muslim Aid appreciated the effectiveness and popularity of psychosocial activities which used techniques from Family Therapy. The *Sports Project* involved Kung Fu training and other sports to promote discipline and self-esteem in children with trauma-related behaviour problems. So far, results have been very impressive, with a 95% success-rate in freeing children from PTSD symptoms. We have completed a short film about it, to be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSOFx78pEbI&feature=youtu.be>

During 2018 we gave presentations in Norwich, Lewisham, Hammersmith, Welwyn Garden City, St. Albans, Bethnal Green and the University of Hertfordshire.



Brent Friends of Palestine organised an outstanding fundraising event from which PTC benefitted by £5,000. It involved performances by top comedians Jeremy Hardy, Francesca Martinez, Sara Pascoe, Ian Saville and Alexi Sayle. Jeremy is one of our patrons and his speech at the event is to be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30UQIf7iqC0&feature=youtu.be> Thanks to Andrew Papworth, Ashok and Anna Sethi and the PFP committee for organising this. PTC(UK)'s own fundraising event was an Iftar in Hatfield. It gathered a lot of local support and raised over £10,000. Thanks to the organizers: Nisreen Altawil, Razwana and their families, with helpers: Dr Safwan, Afia, Abdel Basit, Jennah and Gesine.



In Feltham, Mrs Sana Issa organised a successful fundraising event in July with cooperation from Harah Islamic Centre. Arabic food sold after Friday Prayers raised over £1,000. Sana is a therapist and supports workers in Palestine. Thanks to Haringey Friends of Palestine for their regular donations to us and to Sarah Sturge at Lewisham Friends of Palestine, Hilary Tyrell and Philip Nixon from St Albans Friends of Palestine, Merton PSC and David Sperlinger from The British Shalom Salaam Trust. Our friends Ed Fredenburgh and Shosh Morris at Gaza Children's Trauma Centre negotiated £2,000 from the Centre for Innovation in Voluntary Action. The Mildred Duveen Charitable Trust donated £2,500.

All of this wonderful work in the UK from our supporters keeps the *Friday of Joy* project alive.



Interpal still funds our *Family Therapy Project*, Muslim Aid the *Psychosocial Project* and this year our individual donors, including The British Shalom Salaam Trust, have helped fund *Friday of Joy* and *Focusing* projects. We are most grateful for their loyalty and enthusiasm.

In July, Dr Guido Veronese visited Gaza again to continue Family Therapy training at Gaza Community Mental Health Programme. Two of our staff attended this and Guido visited PTC talking to staff and local people. He reports back to us at PTC(UK) regularly and is always full of admiration for what the mental health practitioners are doing. Here is his latest message to them:

“...Thank you for teaching me always dignity, strength, decency, resistance and love. Every time I come and spend a fragment of my life with you all, I feel blessed and honoured. I feel enriched as a professional and as a human being in this area of the earth, betrayed, neglected and abused; the only place where I can find the rare and almost lost essence of pure Humanity.”



Our Skype support sessions continue with teams in the UK and Gaza discovering benefits in both directions from this online breaking of the siege. Thanks to Gesine Miller, Sarah Hawes and Belinda Milani for assisting Mohamed with this work. Visits from other therapists to these Skype sessions with Gaza are encouraged.



GAZA TEAM



PTC (UK) TRUSTEES 2018

DUE DILIGENCE.

Issues to do with PTC(UK)'s due diligence have been reviewed. Colin Egan and David Harrold attended a Charity Commission training day and we have signed up with the Fundraising Regulator. A data protection policy has been set and trustees received training at recent meetings. We have registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Background checks are done on most donations and all those over £1,000. Keelings in Hatfield continue to audit our accounts.

Project Reports

1. FAMILY THERAPY.

The Family and Community Therapy Project, funded by INTERPAL (London) worked with 62 new families with 450 people (250 females and 200 males) in 2018. Activities with the beneficiary groups vary in aim; some of them depend on learning to concentrate and the others depend on therapy techniques such as Mind and Body Therapy, Focusing Therapy and a form of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.



Groups worked in cooperation with the *Friday of Joy Initiative* in local associations and private schools. 4,600 children benefitted, their ages ranging between 5 and 16 yrs. In addition to games and talent competitions, PTC had a consultation unit. 49 beneficiaries (5 males and 20 females) were referred to other associations such as Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, Atfaluna for the Deaf and Autism Association according to the type of psychological intervention they needed.



Psycho-education meetings were held in governmental and private schools such as "Abd Rahman Bin Awf" and civil associations like Ferdaous, Atfaluna and Thalassemia Patients Association in different areas in the Gaza Strip, to support mothers, fathers, teachers, students and patients: 300 people in total (180 females, 120males). These meetings examined the psychological pressures on parents and how they could deal with the enormous stresses in their lives. Feedback from beneficiaries was positive.

The total number benefitting from INTERPAL's grant during 2018 from all activities was 5, 399 people.

Clients' feedback from Family Therapy sessions for 62 families

Ahmad (Jabalia-10 yrs), "My parents are happy for me since I began these sessions in PTC. My behaviour became better and my level of study is improving."

Naema (Nusairat-28 yrs), " I feel I am better since I started to come to PTC and really would like to continue these therapeutic sessions as long as I need them"

Clients' feedback from psycho-education meetings

Raed (Gaza- 25 yrs), "Not a lot of people can come to the prison and deal with prisoners like you do. For myself I benefited greatly and need more sessions to know how I can deal with people again out of prison ".

Hala Shaath (Manager of PCORD- 50 yrs), "This is the first cooperation between us. I see the partnership will be very useful in different fields in the near future. Thank you for coming."

Ibrahim (Islamic University-22 yrs), "I felt I benefited a lot as a university student and I think I and my colleagues need more such meetings ".

A *Sports Project* ran for three weeks at Jenin Sports Club, Nusairat Camp. 66 children aged 8-16 yrs with psychological and behavioural trauma symptoms took part. Iyad Altawil led the project and it was supervised by the *Friday of Joy* teams in Gaza and the UK. Kung Fu was used to teach the children self-control and build self-confidence. Pre and post assessments, interviewing children and parents, agreed on its positive impact.



Father of the child: Mohammed (13 yrs): "My son no longer raises problems with neighbours. His time is busy between the school and the club. He has become aware of his brothers' sports movements that he learned and his level of study is improving more than before."

The Child: Yosef (11 yrs): "I was very afraid to go anywhere alone, but now I go from Al-Braij Refugee Camp to Nusairat Refugee Camp without fear after encouragement from my coach. I also obey my mother and I do not hit my sisters as I did before."



Training and discussions via Skype continued between the UK and PTC(Gaza). Gesine Miller, Sarah Hawes, Belinda Milani and Sahida Uddin offer regular professional consultations assisted by Dr Mohamed Altawil. Andrew Enever continues to advise on case studies. At PTC(Gaza), Mr. Mohammed Abu Yousef conducted three sessions on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. The Family Therapy team trained four female students from Islamic University of Gaza in the PTC Centre for 100 training hours from Jan.-May 2018. The training included the basics of working with cases, how to implement educational and recreational sessions, write case studies and make a diagnosis. This training is part of the Centre's contribution to working with civil society on professional development amongst different institutions in Gaza.



On "Land Day" (30 March), the Palestinians began six weeks of peaceful protests in Gaza. PTC psychologists visited the wounded in Shifa and Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Hospitals to check on the injured, provide psycho-social and moral support and give symbolic gifts to raise their morale.

There are still continued power cuts, because of the crippling blockade imposed on Gaza. All suffer from regular cuts in the electricity supply which interrupts work on projects.

EXTRACT FROM REPORT BY RASHA QANDIL, PROJECTS CO-ORDINATOR PTC(GAZA)

2. FOCUSING

The project's work plan was implemented through individual and group Focusing sessions with families, children and adults with age groups between 10-65. Sessions were held at different locations within the targeted project areas. **1,356** participants benefited from the project activities: 998 female and 358 male. The number of adult beneficiaries of group Focusing sessions conducted at partnering associations was 40: 23 female, and 17 male. Among them were 15 female students from *Challenge to Change* - Almina area, 15 journalists from The Palestinian Institute for Communication and Development, Alshifa area.



The Focusing Journey in Gaza was a huge success. Focusing techniques were spread quickly due to the ease of extending them between the different target groups and the simplicity of the skills that are taught. Also, participants had the freedom to manage the expression of their feelings without being forced or judged.

The total number of adult beneficiaries in group Focusing sessions conducted at partnering associations was 40: 23 Females, 17 Males. 12 sessions were delivered over three months. The number of adult beneficiaries in individual sessions was 6: 5 females, 1 male through field (home) visits. The number of adult beneficiaries of Educational Focusing sessions conducted at partnering associations was 888: 719 Females, 169 Males. The number of adult beneficiaries from entertaining Focusing sessions conducted through home visits was 422: 251 Females, 171 Males. 13 persons were transferred to receive more specialized interventions at Palestine Trauma Centre's therapeutic unit.



The technical supervisor, Dr. Mohamed Altawil, developed a Focusing manual for trainees, which included three different levels of Focusing attainment. He also trained the focal group on these levels through regular meetings conducted weekly over Skype. The project coordinator, Ghada Redwan, and the other facilitator, Alaa Hinawy, implemented the group Focusing sessions as described in the Focusing manual, consisting of twelve sessions with 23 female participants and 7 male participants, with ages ranging from 8 to 65. These sessions were delivered through partner associations: Challenge to Change Association, and The Palestinian Institute for Communication and Development. The success of these sessions appears clearly in the following comments:

A female participant (M.S 63 yrs) from Hope of Smile Association at Almينا area said: "I found the resiliency to protect my soul with the Focusing session: Lights of Resiliency. I discovered a very important thing: that I am not a victim of cancer, I am a survivor. Focusing gave me hope, and hope to think that happiness may come to me from unexpected sources at unexpected times, but that God has chosen to reward me for my patience and help me to stand up and go on. I certainly think after the Focusing session that the one who keeps up his faith trusting God will not be left down and everything will happen at the right time."

A male participant (L.B 23 yrs) from Palestinian Institute for Community and Development (PICD) at Al Shifa area said: "Just mentioning my father and his strong and complicated personality was a forbidden area that I couldn't dare approach. I used to go through a phase of complicated feelings from anger and fear, to stubbornness. But after the "Safe Place" session, honestly I saw another tired face working hard to reward us with many things. Different feelings about my father started to fill my heart, step by step. He is the best gift for us, he means the "safe place". Maybe he did not express his love but he is full of love and protection".

Parents and families benefited greatly from the Focusing activities, which reinforced psychological resilience during crisis. On the communal level, coordinating and networking occurred with local NGOs to open new channels for cooperation in implementing the project's activities at different locations in the Gaza Strip. The most important example of this coordinating was holding many Focusing sessions with Challenge to Change Association. Focusing specialists also participated in the *Great Return March* in Gaza, visiting the wounded in Shifa and Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Hospitals to check on the injured, provide psycho-social and moral support, and give symbolic gifts to raise their morale On "Land Day" (30 March).



EXTRACT FROM REPORT BY GHADA REDWAN, FOCUSING PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR PTC(GAZA)

3. THE FRIDAY OF JOY INITIATIVE.

This is the fourth year Palestine Trauma Centre-UK and other supporting groups in London have funded this project. It aims to help children overcome the traumas and daily pressures caused by eleven years of siege, periodic bombing and economic and social stagnation. Activities set up in local areas serve to change the meaning of the streets for children and their families. Grim, grey areas become places of joy, where the community celebrates itself, expresses hope and finds resilience.



The total number of beneficiaries was **26,620**: 21,735 children, 4,885 parents. The *Friday of Joy* sessions were usually provided on a one-off basis. The team delivered 45 sessions during this period.

11,210 males, 11,200 females, including 4,910 parents, benefitted from these in various parts of the Gaza Strip, especially the marginalized areas. The *Friday of Joy Initiative*'s team observed and transferred 60 children (male and female) for individual intervention for having some behavioural and introversive problems (Aggression, Bedwetting, Chronic lying, Isolation, Severe fear). 13 male children benefitted at PTC(Gaza) from interventions after being transferred to the Family Therapy project.



New activities were added during this period: parachute game and birds' tree. The Hakawati developed story-telling methods, including mime. Safety and child-protection were enhanced by adding a paramedic to the team. This is especially important for protecting children from injury during the games. Hospital visits during the *Great March of Return* were undertaken and games organised by the medical tents.



Hosam Thabet (35yrs), a man from Sawarha area in Nusairat Refugee Camp said:

“I was very happy with these activities, especially seeing my children so delighted and participating with the singing and dancing. My children struggled through a very difficult period after the destruction of our house. These activities are very important. We need more of such events and I hope we can have a celebration like this every Friday”.

Mrs. Hala Shaath (55yrs), Ambassador of Arab Women in Lebanon-Jalaa area:

Mrs. Hala talked about the great happiness she witnessed during these activities in the Nahr al-Bared region in Khanyounis. This area is marginalized and suffers from a lack of basic amenities. She thanked Palestine Trauma Centre and the *Friday of Joy Initiative* for bringing ordinary happiness to the area.

The project coordinator Mr. Monther Yaghi regularly communicates with the professional supervisors, Dr. Mohamed Altawil and Mr. David Harrold, through Skype for professional oversight. Weekly reports are sent to Britain for evaluating the project's activities, discussing challenges, finding solutions and developing ideas. The field supervisor Mr. Ahmad Thabet meets with the team to review the work processes and discuss the problems and challenges that may face the team.



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Demand is growing from local communities for *Friday of Joy* to operate in their areas. The team is unable to satisfy this demand because it only operates for one day every week. We would like to increase the number of *Friday of Joy* sessions to cover all the areas of the Gaza strip, but this is unrealistic at present due to lack of funds.



EXTRACT FROM REPORT BY MONTHER YAGHI, FRIDAY OF JOY SUPERVISOR, PTC(GAZA)

4. PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT PROJECT.

The *Psychosocial Support Project* is a new responsibility for PTC(UK) and is funded by Muslim Aid. This year it provided trauma relief to 1440 direct beneficiaries from 1st May 2018 to 30th June 2018. The full project continues to 31st March 2019.



The project activities helped victims of the ongoing conflict and siege who are not supported by other agencies, especially children and families who have faced the destruction of their houses, witnessed death through shelling, or have suffered injury to themselves, their families, neighbours or close relatives.

The main activities targeted the following numbers of beneficiaries:

- A. 1476 Home visits for delivering therapeutic and counselling services for 307 families (2143 persons)
- B. 15 Psychological education services carried out for 444 parents and teachers,
- C. 31 in-door Recreational activities carried out for 2494 children,
- D. 2 out-door Recreational activities carried out for 1330 children,
- E. 24 sport therapy sessions carried out for 96 children,
- F. 271 of food vouchers delivered for poor families,
- G. 2053 gifts/toys delivered for targeted children.

The Psychological Rehabilitation Team assisted these families to relieve some of their burdens, help them to cope after traumatic crisis and help them attain some degree of normality in their lives.



REPORT FROM MOHAMMED ABU RIALA PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR PTC(GAZA).

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS:

In October 2018, PTC(Gaza) upgraded its Skype and also, thanks to Interpal, installed Solar panels to ensure a reliably consistent energy supply. This means that the quality of the support sessions with PTC(UK) has been improved, thanks to clarity of reception and fewer interruptions from electricity cuts.



The range of discussions in these sessions has broadened. The Gaza team have usually presented personal issues and case studies to the UK team, but recently the consulting role went in the other direction and UK case studies were discussed with PTC(Gaza). This proved to be a great success since the Gaza team felt empowered and were able to express their intense curiosity about life in the UK.

One session was attended by Family Therapy specialist Gwyn Daniel, from UK-Palestine Mental Health Network. She wishes to set up a UK support system for places in the West Bank. Gwyn is also helping to organise a mental health conference in London, “Children of Occupation”, in which we hope to take part.



Earlier this year, BBC producer Christine Garabedian consulted us about a documentary on trauma in Gaza. She visited PTC(Gaza) where she was able to experience the *Friday of Joy Initiative* and later find a child to appear in the documentary which was shown on BBC World News in October 2018. Thanks to Rasha Qandil at PTC(Gaza) for facilitating research for this and to Martin Kempe at the UK-Palestine Mental Health Network for suggesting PTC to Christine.



In November, *The Friday of Joy Initiative* introduced another activity for their *Sports Project*: a street by street football competition hosted by local community leaders and the FoJ team. It was a great success.



The Kung Fu activity has grown beyond anything we expected and will need extra funds or sponsorship if it is to meet the demand for it in 2019. Thanks to Iyad Altawil for developing the idea at PTC(Gaza).



In November, PTC(Gaza) received a visit from Italian clown and magician ‘Marco Rodari’ who delivered some training and also took part in the street activities. He also joined *FoJ* in celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with Palestinians in which The Palestinian Vision Association, funded by the European Union, organized street carnivals in all areas of Palestine including the Gaza Strip on 29th November.



PTC(UK) had their own encounter with the EU when we met with Labour MEP for the East of England, Alex Mayer. We explained PTC(UK)’s work to her and she showed great interest in our activities. We also lobbied for the EU to follow recommendations from the World Bank relating to Gaza’s economic needs and noted the EU vote on 19th April 2018 calling for the “immediate and unconditional” lifting of the blockade.



In December, Mohamed gave a talk to students at the University of Hertfordshire about his life and the work of PTC. He was also invited to introduce Focusing methods for refugees in the UK. So, work begun at PTC(Gaza) now returns to benefit people here.

Loyal donors continue to keep our projects going. Interpal, in particular, maintain a lifeline for the centre inside Gaza. Muslim Aid, as well, contribute essential funding. Recent generous donations have come from the Mildred Duveen Charitable Trust, individuals including Mike Barnes, Heather Ford, Val Brown and many others who make regular monthly payments.

On 1st December, Jafar and Sandra Ramini and Ann Wright held a fundraiser for Palestinian children. Half of the donations went to MAP. PTC(UK) received £2,500. It was a wonderful event and we are very grateful to Jafar, Sandra and Ann for their continued interest in our work.



Ongoing cumulative traumas serve to undermine all this patient, imaginative and dedicated work. The de-development of Gaza produces toxic stress in families, despair and anger in young men and a general breakdown of trust. Resilience at PTC(Gaza) and absolute dependability at PTC(UK) remain our priorities. Gaza enters 2019 in a state of economic and social collapse, yet resolute in defying the oppression, creatively dynamic in making an indifferent world take note and developing resilience skills from which we all can learn.



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