

Palestine Trauma Centre (UK).

2020 report.



2020 introduced a period of chronic uncertainty for Palestine. Would annexation continue or not? Was the “The Deal of the Century” on course, or not? Would Palestinian political division end or not? This daily nervous tension, punctuated by random tragedies, undermined attachment in communities and families. The thirteen-year siege choking Gaza increased poverty and despair. 78% of the young were unemployed and 2020 saw a record increase in suicides. The only certainty was the continuing of brutal, hostile actions from those outside the Strip. PTC(UK) therapy teams work every day in this context. This year, near their centre, they faced the tragedy of a local fire which killed 25 people and wounded 58. Later, the siege intensified because of the COVID-19 threat. Anxieties over insecure funding continued. Here are the details.



A massive fire broke out in Al-Nuseirat refugee camp in the middle of Gaza strip on 5th March 2020 in a bread bakery near the main square of Nuseirat where shops and the central taxi station are located. It was caused by a gas explosion. Due to energy shortages because of the siege, people store huge volumes of gas in very poor conditions of safety. It occurred during rush hour and the resulting fires killed 25 people and injured 58. Many shops and supermarkets were completely burned. PTC(UK) workers provided psychological support to victims and their families. To watch the film report on the incident, you may click on the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwmXEPpYVH8>

This year also brought the unexpected invisible threat of the COVID-19 virus. In a way, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic threat revived the will for pre-emptive, solution-based action in Gaza. PTC(UK)'s team has been a dynamic part of this.

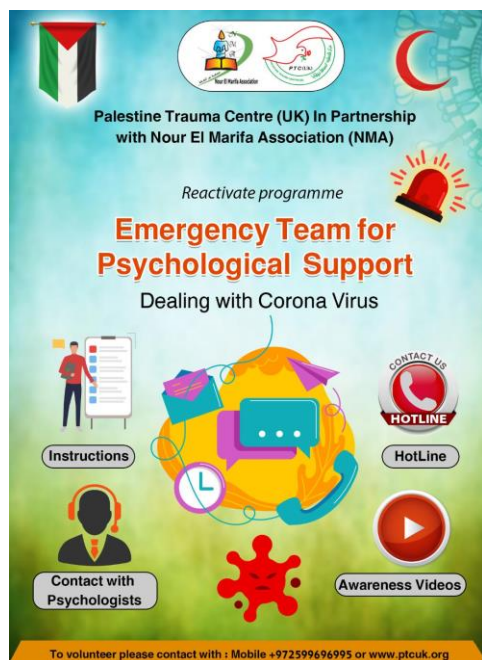
The pandemic did not spread in Gaza until August 2020. Local prevention measures were effective. Infected individuals entering at the Egyptian border were immediately quarantined. Medical and social services in Gaza set up emergency measures to protect communities and the PTC(UK) project teams re-organised to cope with the crisis. Working with our delivery partner, Nour El-Marifa, our three projects (**Family Therapy, Focusing, Friday of Joy**) reactivated themselves as a single **Rapid-Response Team**, carrying out sanitation work,

community education, family support and children's activities that take account of social distancing. This project started on 1st April 2020.



Normal professional services could not cope with the extent of the problem and so voluntary groups had to be drafted in and trained as back-up. Preventative rather than reactive measures were implemented. The PTC(UK) team in Gaza went on local radio to promote this campaign. They also developed strategies on social media to set up a counselling service, give advice on COVID-19 prevention and provide entertainment for children during a lockdown.

Problems requiring therapeutic help included increased anger within families and chronic anxiety in individuals. Panic attacks, OCD, extreme mood swings and depression put a great deal of psychological pressure on the supportive strength within a family. Children often had disrupted sleep patterns or an uncontrollable collection of fears about sudden death, family discord, or a future without hope; parents feared being unable to meet basic needs (such as food, drink, medicine) for the children and family.



The support to families from the PTC(UK) team in Gaza included guidance on:

- How to manage and cope with acute psychological stress.
- How to provide essential home needs, in particular during the holy month of Ramadan.
- How to provide medicine that the Health Ministry cannot offer due to a shortage in the Ministry's stock.
- How to find or create health supplies such as sanitisers, masks and gloves.
- How to deal with the children in the house for many hours when they do not go to school.

The PTC(UK) team were also involved in a drug awareness campaign. Drugs are a growing problem in Gaza, especially amongst a young population who despair over their enforced idleness.

The COVID-19 threat is one more anxiety on top of all the rest, but in this case pre-emptive action has meant retraining for PTC(UK)'s therapy team. Dr Omar Albuhsisi, the PTC(UK)

project psychiatrist in Gaza, carried out a training course for the team about communication skills over the hotline and new methods about remote diagnosis. This was completed in three training hours every Saturday in April. It aimed to develop the performance of the PTC (UK) project team for remote work and provide new methods for an emergency program based on scientific and administrative theories.

A vital facility provided by the emergency team was the telephone hotline. Due to the fears of an epidemic, citizens were told to stay at home. Tensions within homes started increasing as this new danger added to stresses caused by unemployment and poverty. The phone hotline provided some relief and advice for people under psychological pressure. It increased their capacity to cope with the strains of living in crowded conditions with restless children and vulnerable adults. It has even been used by some of those quarantined for weeks at the border and becoming seriously depressed through loneliness.



In response to the COVID threat, the **Friday of Joy** team made videos for a Youtube channel which children throughout Gaza could use. The Sport Counselling team has done the same to illustrate how activities can be conducted with social distancing.



Here are the links to videos which show the sports activities:

1-Warm up exercises (5 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Jw0vLhnYhM&feature=youtu.be>

2- Thigh muscles exercises and obesity (3 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VieCnSMdwQM>

3- Stretching exercises (3 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcOWNlnPYIk&feature=youtu.be>

4- “How to get a flat stomach” (3:30 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQBntfAtlPI>

5-Thigh and Arm Muscles Strengthening Exercises with a sample of children.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ny-j2gFdPUE>

6- Relaxation and Breathing Exercises with a sample of children.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJX04u3U6JQ>

Some former members of the FoJ team created an independent self-funding unit to conduct activities in the Nusierat area. **PTC(UK)-Friday of Joy** has, meanwhile, broadened its area of operations. It also has a vision to create a training programme for those who want to set up FoJ activities in their area. A manual similar to the one on Focusing will be created. FoJ groups could spread across Gaza. During lockdown, FoJ became **Windows of Joy**. (See Page 10.)

There is increased regular contact between the Gaza team and the supervisor, Dr Mohamed Altawil, and advisors in the UK. Zoom meetings attended by the Gaza team include online seminars organized by the UK-Palestine Mental Health Network. These international links with Gaza are an important part of our mission.



The PTC(UK) trustees have continued to look for a large organisation that will regularly fund all the projects. We are most grateful, at this time of financial insecurity, for the loyal support given by the British Shalom/Salaam Trust, Irish Quakers Faith in Action, Brent Friends of Palestine, Norwich Friends of Palestine, St. Albans Friends of Palestine, Crouch Enders for Palestine, Joyce Green Association, North Herts PSC, The Welwyn and Hatfield Islamic Society. Also many individuals, including Carmela Rozzi and her son Malcolm, Kris Connolly, Colin Archer, Heather Ford, Jacob Ecclestone, Jafar and Sandra Ramini and Gwyn Daniel. Belinda and Roy Milani with Gordon and Josie organized a *Yoga and Gong Bath Meditation Zoom Workshop*. It exceeded expectations and raised over £2,000.

Two articles were published about PTC(UK): one in the *Journal for Psychoanalytical Studies*

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/15569187/2020/17/2> and the other in *Middle East Monitor*.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200711-doctor-psychological-support-is-vital-for-palestinians-in-gaza-but-the-real-problems-are-the-occupation-blockade/>



Our last live presentation before lockdown was to students at Imperial College, London and we were all set up for two others before they were cancelled in March.

In September 2020 PTC(UK) became actively involved with the *Rights for Time* project at Birmingham University. The funding for this research project, disbursed by The University of Birmingham, originates from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It forms part of the UK's foreign aid spending, through its Global Challenges Research Fund. An emergency grant enabled us to review the work by the Gaza team in response to the COVID crisis. *Rights for Time* explores the issue of Accumulated Trauma. It also seeks to assess how investment in Mental Health services not only addresses the current crisis but builds long-term and pre-emptive programs/facilities so that investment in the crisis can be investment in the future.



In the second half of 2020 two PTC(UK) online innovations proved to be successful.



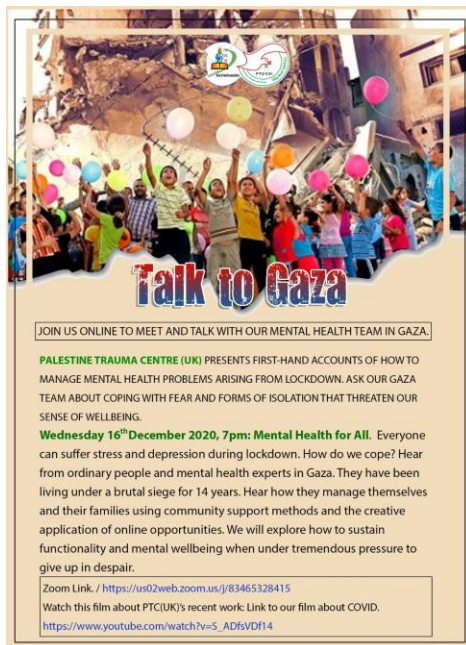
المغرب أخصائي الصحة النفسية : سعيد محمد الكحلوت

يسر مركز فلسطين الصدمة بريطانيا وتحت إشراف خبراء
عيادة الغصن الأخضر-لندن الإعلان عن التدريب المتخصص في
"تقنية شجرة التوازن الإنساني"
THE HUMAN BALANCE TREE TECHNIQUE
تدريب متخصص مكون من ثمان جلسات حول مجموعة من مهارات التكيف الإيجابي المتوازن
مع متطلبات الحياة اليومية ، الرعاية الذاتية ، و كيفية تحقيق و تعزيز التوازن في الشخصية
وذلك عبر منصة الزوم/ اليوم الأول السبت القادم 2021/01/23 الساعة الخامسة
مساء بتوقيت القدس الثالثة بتوقيت جرينتش
← للتسجيل في الدورة يرجى تعبئة النموذج المرفق بالإعلان →

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One was the setting up of online Arabic workshops to share good practice in the treatment of trauma and promotion of mental wellbeing. This has been enthusiastically used by, on average, between 200 and 400 practitioners across the Arab world. It continues into 2021 with participants from Libya, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Tunisia and Turkey as well as Palestine.

The other was a monthly webinar in the UK to enable discussion between our Gaza team and our contacts in the UK. This is called *Talk to Gaza* and also continues into 2021. So far it has covered the subjects of stress during lockdown, childhood resilience and intergenerational trauma. We were delighted to have the well-known historian Avi Shlaim take part in one of these online events.



JOIN US ONLINE TO MEET AND TALK WITH OUR MENTAL HEALTH TEAM IN GAZA.

PALESTINE TRAUMA CENTRE (UK) PRESENTS FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS OF HOW TO MANAGE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ARISING FROM LOCKDOWN. ASK OUR GAZA TEAM ABOUT COPING WITH FEAR AND FORMS OF ISOLATION THAT THREATEN OUR SENSE OF WELLBEING.

Wednesday 16th December 2020, 7pm: Mental Health for All. Everyone can suffer stress and depression during lockdown. How do we cope? Hear from ordinary people and mental health experts in Gaza. They have been living under a brutal siege for 14 years. Hear how they manage themselves and their families using community support methods and the creative application of online opportunities. We will explore how to sustain functionality and mental wellbeing when under tremendous pressure to give up in despair.

Zoom Link / <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83465328415>
Watch this film about PTC(UK)'s recent work Link to our film about COVID.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_AD6sVDf14



PALESTINE TRAUMA CENTRE (UK)

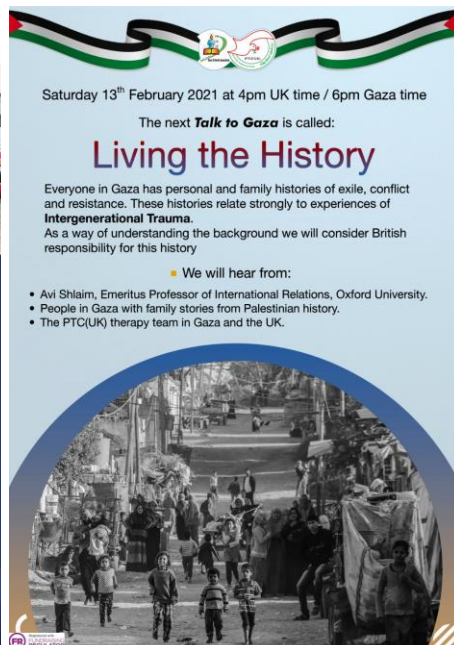
The theme of Palestine Trauma Centre (UK)'s Talk to Gaza for 16th January 2021 is
MY CHILDHOOD

Parents, Therapists and Children from Gaza and other parts of the world will talk about life in Gaza and the resilience work that can go on with children even under conditions imposed by COVID.

Participants in the zoom will include
Fedaa Ledawi, member of Friday of Joy Team
Dr Mohamed Altawil, Founder of PTC in Gaza.
The PTC (UK) Support Team of Therapists

This is a family zoom. Children are welcome and can ask questions.
11am (UK time) 1pm (Gaza time) Saturday 16th January 2021.
Dr. Moh'd Altawil is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.
Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89847865242>
Meeting ID: 898 4786 5242

→ To support our activities in Gaza, please donate now: <http://ptcuk.org/donate/>



Saturday 13th February 2021 at 4pm UK time / 6pm Gaza time

The next *Talk to Gaza* is called:
Living the History

Everyone in Gaza has personal and family histories of exile, conflict and resistance. These histories relate strongly to experiences of **Intergenerational Trauma**.
As a way of understanding the background we will consider British responsibility for this history

• We will hear from:

- Avi Shlaim, Emeritus Professor of International Relations, Oxford University.
- People in Gaza with family stories from Palestinian history.
- The PTC(UK) therapy team in Gaza and the UK.

In addition, PTC(UK) has been actively involved with the UK-Palestine Mental Health network in promoting online discussion to raise awareness of the effects of occupation on the mental health of the Palestinian people. UK-PMH forges links with Palestinian mental health professionals and contributes to advocacy work in the UK.

A WhatsApp Group was launched for the exchange of personal and professional experiences between mental health workers in the Arab world. Seminars specialized in psychotherapy and the blending of various psychological practices. During 2020 PTC(UK) held two seminars:

* *Sustainable Psychotherapy Seminar, presented by Dr. Mohamed Altawil.*

- Introducing the integrated treatment approach.
- Multi-treatment approaches that ultimately benefit the patient.

**The Human Balance Tree technique, presented by Saeed Al-Kahlout, a mental health specialist and director of training in the Mental Health Ministry.*

A technique developed by Dr. Altawil and Al-Kahlout, based on narrative, positive and integrative treatment. The goals of the seminar:

- Identify the importance of human balance and its reflection on the individual and society.
- Identify the possibility of using this as a preventive, constructive, supportive and curative method.
- Preparing for the launch of specialized technical training after completing the application guide.
- Conducting a professional research study within the framework of the efforts to adopt the Human Balance Tree approach by the competent authorities.

Seminar link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7eD09uhtls>

YouTube Channel for PTC(UK)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCW9X9qrw8O1GY52p1L8urDg>



Online training.

PTC(UK) also welcomes the appointment of **Ibrahim Isbita** as Projects Coordinator in Gaza.

Here are the most important activities implemented by the project team during 2020.

- 2779 cases benefited from psychological counselling through the hotline, which included cases from the West Bank and Arab countries such as Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Libya and Algeria.
- 409 individual cases benefited. These activities were among the psychological and social support activities which helped families overcome the Israeli blockade and the spread of the Coronavirus.
- More than 200 trainees benefited from training courses related to psychological support through the education unit.
- Draw Joy on Children's Faces: online competitions, such as the short story competition. Dozens of children and their families participated in it. Prizes were distributed for the winners and other prizes for the participants.



- 30 needy families benefited from the health package: (hand sanitizers, sterilizers to clean homes, and a face mask)
- 15 needy families benefited from the Ramadan food basket activity before and during Ramadan.
- 120 needy people benefited from the fasting breakfast activity for needy families.
- 300 fasting people benefited from the activity of distributing dates and water as part of the activities of the month of Ramadan.
- 45 people benefited from the Eid Al Fitr gifts activity for needy families.



The Friday of Joy team presented most of their activities through social media, with 82 video sessions. Outdoor events could not happen with large numbers and so a single performer or a small group from the FoJ team presented interactive entertainments in open squares while children watched and joined in from their home windows.

Here are some selected FoJ items from our Youtube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7LYBN-p_gs&t=100s

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKL4FczipxO0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdnj-nTBkeA>



A link to a photo-gallery on the emergency project can be found here:

<http://ptcuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Photo-Gallery.pdf>

The COVID pandemic has increased suffering and isolation, but has also been a stimulus for imaginative development of therapeutic practice online and advocacy work in the UK. We hope that 2021 will build on the online initiatives and see the development of recovery programs.
