



Report for the “Emergency Psychological Support Project”

Implemented, supervised and funded by Palestine Trauma Centre-UK

In partnership with Nour El-Maarefa Association.

January – December 2021



INTRODUCTION

Mental Health workers in Gaza– already overwhelmed – endured 11 night bombardments in May 2021 which destroyed tower blocks, medical centres and homes. They were already exhausted by the day-to-day toil of disinfecting local areas, educating the community for COVID prevention and counselling those suddenly isolated and afraid. A new fear, a new challenge banished fear of COVID. When each night came, children screamed in anticipation of the noise that might end their lives. Helpless parents struggled to appear in control and hide their own terrors. The bombing was continuous, like an earthquake. Parents had to decide if they all slept in the same room to die together or separate in the hope that some of their family might survive. In the morning, they could not believe they were still alive and when they looked out of the window, it was to view an alien landscape of rubble and a desert of cement dust. Frozen in disbelief, they waited for bad news about relatives. This was Eid – a time for celebration, pretty clothes and great cooking. Now the

children stared, unable to speak. They clung to trembling mothers. There was no safe place. When will the next attack come, cried the children? Why us?



Gaza was bleeding in all directions. None of the different parts of their lives cohered or came together because each part struggled separately with different forces in order to survive. They faced siege, poverty, unemployment, domestic stress, COVID and now the terror of night bombardment. It was this psychic fragmentation that the PTC(UK) team had to face in themselves as well as their clients during and after May. They became fed-up with the idea of “recovery”. In order to function on a day-to-day level, they could only aim to be strong in their suffering, without hoping for recovery. They found energy in helping others. Resilience grew with each selfless act of solidarity. Helping clients became a way of healing themselves. Knowing the people they wanted to keep alive for helped combat despair and exhaustion. They also felt empowered by the support they knew they had from everyone reading this report. The webinars we have all shared on *Talk to Gaza* and other online meetings have reassured them that they are not alone. The work detailed below marks a new psycho-social exercise in rebuilding lives from the inside.

In the UK itself and other parts of the world, the events of May 2021 in Jerusalem as well as Gaza were a turning point of some kind. PTC(UK) had unsolicited contacts from charities in the UK, student groups in the UK and US, a French/Lebanese journalist, a UK tv network and many individuals. Awareness of injustice and suffering had grown, in part through the Black Lives Matter movement, and this concatenation of movements produced a new landscape for supporting our work in Gaza. We would like to thank the following charities for helping us recently: International Waqf and Relief Foundation, 13 Rivers Trust, Muntada Aid, Dublin Welfare Society, Portman Trust, Hamlet’s way Mosque, Manarat Foundation and the Muslim Community Association (MCA). We also want to thank our loyal friends for many years for coming to our aid at this critical time: Brent Friends of Palestine, Crouch Enders for Palestine, Norwich Stop the

War, North Herts PSC, Welwyn & Hatfield Islamic Society, UK-Palestine Mental Health Network, Sumud Palestine, Irish Quakers Faith in Action, Rights4Time and British Shalom/Salaam Trust.

The money that came in during publicity during the the basic funding of our projects foreseeable future. Friday of Joy become Days of Joy. Other Focusing leader in Gaza, Ghada a trainer in Focusing and trauma in the Quebec News increase as can be seen on our seminars on Mental Health have practitioners from across the part in two online conferences:



Ramadan as a result of bombardment has meant that is now secure for the can increase its activities and good news is that our Radwan, has qualified to be contributed to an article on Tribune. Online activities Youtube site. The Arabic attracted hundreds of Arab world. PTC(UK) took “War on the Mind” in May

and a solidarity conference from Boston, USA in June. We had a special Talk to Gaza webinar during Ramadan and we gave talks to a local Amnesty International group and a local school. Our UK support team continue holding regular online sessions with the Gaza team to support their work and we have provided case studies to the Rights4Time research being done by Birmingham University. With all the shock, destruction and grief, the PTC(UK) team remain devoted to their tasks. They embody “sumud” every day.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present report covers the period from January to December 2021 of Gaza team of PTC-UK. The work was divided in the first three months from January to March between Family Therapy with **538** beneficiaries their ages between 10-65 yrs. males and females, Focusing Therapy with **150** beneficiaries, Friday of Joy (later Days of Joy) with **5740** beneficiaries, and Sanid programme with **35** beneficiaries, with activities ranging from individual and group therapy sessions, psychological counselling and recreational activities.

Because of the Covid 19 pandemic, remote work was done with cases and consultations were provided by phone and hotline, according to the instructions of the Ministry of Health and the preventive measures such as social distancing, field visits, gatherings and activities that required the presence of a large number of beneficiaries were suspended especially during the first three months of this year 2021.

In next three months, from April to June - except the war time in May - all psychologists received Cognitive Behavioural Therapy training and then started to implement CBT sessions with beneficiaries. The number of beneficiaries of these sessions is about **840**.

The e-Education and Awareness Unit was also launched, which has had numerous online awareness-raising activities and campaigns and has a positive impact on the dissemination of the Centre's message

The PTC UK team in Gaza in partnership with Mutanda Aid, MCA, NAHAR, WAQF and Quaker Associations started its work from the first day of the war on Gaza in May 2021 to reach families who are affected directly or indirectly by this Israeli aggression on Gaza and they started to visit families inside UN schools who had been affected by the total destruction of their home, and remember that this emergency, in spite of the COVID crisis.

During the period between July to December 2021, PTC-UK in Gaza worked on three programmes that benefited many people, such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Days of Joy and Psychological Sports Counseling, where psychologists carried out individual and group Cognitive-Behavioral therapy sessions, benefiting approximately **245** beneficiaries, and about 40 educational meetings in cooperation with partner institutions in various governorates of the Gaza Strip, benefiting **856** beneficiaries, including mothers, fathers, teachers and school students. In addition, 76 recreational activities for the Days of Joy initiative benefited **24,603** children and the Psychological Sports Counseling Programme benefited about **200** children and youth

The total number of the beneficiaries in all programmes run by the Gaza centre in 2021 is 33,207.

YouTube links to see the activities in details:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_XjxlJ2To

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rZtVjVzoYs>

1. Family and Community Therapy



Family Therapy, empowering resiliency, works with families still affected by the repeated wars on Gaza and their efforts to sustain some level of wellbeing every day as they cope with siege, deprivation and the fear of more violence. The teams worked with displaced families, using techniques such as Mind Body Therapy, Focusing and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. Because of Covid-19 pandemic, most of work from January to March 2021 was done by phone and hotline.

178 people (43 children:25 females and 18 males, 135 adolescents: 78 females and 57 males) benefited from phone sessions. Some home visits occurred after March.

Psycho-education meetings were held in cooperation with Ministry of education in Abd Moati Rayyes and Asmaa Bent Abo Baker schools in Gaza to support **360** teachers and mothers. These meetings explored how to deal with the everyday psychological pressures on parents and how they can learn to cope with this continuous responsibility and anxiety and how to live safely during Covid-19 pandemic. The beneficiaries at these meetings were completely positive about their experience of the event.

Em Ahmad-North Gaza (35yrs) said: “I was confused because of this pandemic and did not know how to save my children. I can live now by following your helpful methods. So, thanks PTC-UK”.

Samaher-Gaza city (33yrs) thanked the team and said: “In the past months, I could not deal with the online learning with my children and felt frustrated. Now I am better and I feel I can cope with this situation”.

The total number of the beneficiaries from both psycho-education and individual activities is 538 .



The training and discussions via Skype and Zoom between the team in Gaza and the supervisors in UK are increasing. Gesine Miller, Sarah Hawes, Gwyn Daniel and Belinda Milani are still offering regular professional consultations assisted by Dr Mohamed Altawil. There are occasional visits to these sessions from other UK mental health professionals.

2. Focusing



Focusing is funded by Irish Quakers Faith in Action and Palestine Trauma Centre (UK). Focusing is the development of a process of listening to our feelings in a warm, kind, and accepting way in order to open an entrance to the human body's wisdom. The Focusing program aims to enable the participants to develop their own skills from using these techniques in order to be more mindful of their inner resources to improve the quality of their lives.

150 participants benefited from the project activities: (130) Females and (20) Males. Regular individual and group weekly sessions are conducted between the professional supervisor in the UK, Dr. Mohamed Altawil, and the Focusing team in Gaza. Evaluation of the program used a pre assessment interview at the first session and a post assessment at the end of the sessions to identify the effects of the program.

Khadeja-Gaza city (48 yrs) said: “The Focusing sessions opened new prospects for me. They gave me the way of dealing with my family and others especially during this pandemic of Covid-19”.



3. Friday of Joy Initiative. / Days of Joy.

Friday of Joy converted to be Days of Joy (DoJ) to meet the demand of needs on the ground after the Israeli attack in May 2021. DoJ has two distinct parts to its activity-led therapeutic aims: the street entertainment project and the sports movement to relieve trauma symptoms and system to enhance wellbeing. The projects are funded by Palestine Trauma Centre (UK) and supporting groups in the UK, including Brent Friends of Palestine, the British Shalom/Salaam Trust, NAHAR Association, Norwich PSC, North Herts PSC and 13 Rivers Trust. During the project period, but because of Covid-19 pandemic, the street activities decreased. Instead, the team recorded videos and published them via FB page and YouTube channel: Quality of Life. The following table illustrates the activities of DOJ team from January to June 2021.



Month	Description of activities	Place of implementation	No. of activities	Target group
January 2021	Video recording	PTC	12 videos	6,000 views
February 2021	Video recording	PTC	8 videos	4,000 views
	Group activity in star kids kindergarten	Star kids kindergarten, Nusairat	1	80 children
March 2021	-Recreational activity in Khokh kindergarten	Khokh kindergarten-Nusairat	3	300 children, 30 female teachers
	-Recreational activity in Haifa kindergarten	Haifa kindergarten-Nusairat		
	--Recreational activity in Ahbab kindergarten	Ahbab kindergarten-Nusairat		
April 2021	-Recreational activity in Emarat kindergarten	Emarat kindergarten	6	800 children, 200 parents and teachers
	- Decorating an area in the beach camp on the occasion of the coming of Ramadan	Beach camp-Gaza		
	-Live with Alaa Meqdad for three hours on FOJ page.	Gaza city		
	-Qatayef distribution to the population in different areas in the Gaza Strip.	Deir Balah-Meghraqa		
	- Visit to patients in Red Crescent hospital.	Khanyounis-Red Crescent		
May 2021	-Preparation for Eid El-Feter on Gaza beach.	Shihk Ejleen area-Gaza	5	400 children, 120 parents
	- Debriefing activities for children by drawing	Jalaa tower		
		Zahraa city		

	-Recreational activity for children of Jalaa tower. -Video recording of story teller as home work.			
June 2021	-Recreational activities for children in the mentioned four areas.	Gaza city- North Gaza, Nusairat, Khanyounis	13	3210 children, 600 parents

The above table shows:

- The total number of children involved in activities is **4790**
 - The total number of caregivers and parents benefiting from the activities is **950**
 - The total number of beneficiaries of media activities during January and February via Facebook platform is **10,000** views.
- **The sport videos** for traumatised young people were recorded and published via social media and you tube channel: Quality of life, at range 4 monthly videos about the self-care during Covid-19 pandemic and how to deal with this new life style.

YouTube links to see some FOJ videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrzN4WpiB_4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ht9urUokfg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLVB-bCRh2w>



4. Sanid

Sanid Programme was implemented from the beginning of the Corona pandemic in the Gaza Strip in six sessions. During the first three months of the year, different groups of males, females and children were formed to be targeted through the program. The number of beneficiaries was **35** from all the governorates of the Gaza Strip aged between 15-60 yrs.



5. CBT training/ Sessions:

Mr. Mohamed Abu Yousef trained PTC-UK team in Gaza on "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy" in March 2021 for 6 days (36 training hours). This training raised the professional efficiency of the psychologists and prepared them to implement CBT sessions with adult beneficiaries in April, May and June 2021.

840 people of different ages (parents, students) benefited from CBT sessions which were implemented in cooperation with local society associations in all governorates of the Gaza Strip such as: Rawafed and Tamkeen in middle area, Rayaheen in Gaza city and Health of Woman in North Gaza).



6. Education and an electronic awareness unit

ندوة الصحة النفسية في رمضان
الربط بين مظاهر الصحة النفسية بشكل عام و تأثير الصيام عليها بشكل خاص الى جانب عرض تجربة الدكتور جميل الطهراوي مع الحجر الصحي في رمضان .

Psychological education contributes significantly to the psychological services provided. It also normalizes the experience of psychotherapy and thus attracts those in need of psychological services. It works in conjunction with the psychiatric therapy sessions offered by the team, as well as preventing relapse after the completion of psychotherapy.

- **Tools used in the unit**

- Daily publications on the Centre's page.
- Posting content on the YouTube channel: Quality of Life
- Reviving world events adopted from the Mental Health Organization's work agenda
- Hosting writers, experts and stitches across the Centre's platform
- Awareness campaigns accompanied local events and events (Palestinian Children's Day, Ramadan, war)
- Launch of the educational platform where the Centre hosts psychotherapy and mental health experts
- At the time of the present report, there were 9 WhatsApp groups, with an average of 180 members per group of 1620.

- **Implemented activities**

Activity	Facebook publications	YouTube posting	Workshops	Campaigns	Days and events
Total	280	16	13	4	5

- **International days and events celebrated:**

1. International cancer day
2. International women's Day
3. International mother's Day
4. Memory of the Israa and the Maraj
5. National Day of the Palestinian Child.

War 2021 on Gaza



Daily nervous tension, punctuated by random tragedies, undermines attachment in communities and families. The 15-year siege choking Gaza has created poverty and despair. 78% of the young are unemployed and this year has seen a record increase in suicides. The only certainty is the continuing of brutal, hostile actions from those outside the Strip. PTC(UK) therapy teams work every day in this context. This year so far they have faced the tragedy of an escalation which killed 243 people and wounded 1910, the intensification of siege because of the COVID-19 threat and continuing insecurity over funding.

During the war:

The PTC-UK team in Gaza in partnership with Mutanda Aid started its work on the first day of the ceasefire to reach families who are affected directly or indirectly by the Israeli aggression on Gaza.

In less than 30 days more than 126 families and more than 1000 children benefited from the following:

- Psychological first aid
- Food parcels
- Blankets
- Gifts
- Online Community education
- Online psych - education

This emergency, in spite of the COVID crisis, prompted the PTC-UK team of psychological specialists to visit families and deal with their traumas immediately.

On 20/05/2021 the PTC-UK team started to visit families inside UN schools who had been affected by the destruction of their home. These families received psychological first aid to enable them to overcome their pain. Food parcels were distributed along with blankets to help these families cope with new homeless conditions.



1. Individual session beneficiaries- Psychosocial Support Intervention

Beneficiary number	Place of residence Gaza-north Gaza - middle area-Khan Younis-Rafah		children		adult		How we provide service	
			male	female	male	female		
126 families	Living place	Beneficiary number	250	250	56	200	service	numbers
	Gaza	400					Telephone	-
	North Gaza	100					Face-to-face	756
	Middle area	100					WhatsApp	-
	Khan Younis	100					Zoom	-
	Rafah	56					Other	-
	Total	756 persons					Total	756

2. Food parcel & blanket beneficiaries

Beneficiary number	Place of residence Gaza-north Gaza – middle area - Khan Younis - Rafah				
126	Living place	Food Parcel		Living place	Blanket
	Gaza	60		Gaza	60
	North Gaza	7		North Gaza	7
	Middle area	54		Middle area	54
	Khan Younis	5		Khan Younis	5
	Rafah	-		Rafah	-
	Total	126		Total	126

3 Entertainment event and gifts

Entertainment event	Place of residence: Gaza-north Gaza – middle area - Khan Younis - Rafah		
10	Living place	Beneficiary number	Gifts
	Gaza	400	400
	North Gaza	100	100
	Middle area	200	200
	Khan Younis	100	100
	Rafah	100	100
	Total	1000	1000



After the war:



“The war is over, but its impact appears now on my children”

The PTC-UK team in Gaza in partnership with Muslim Community Association (MCA) began work on the first day of the ceasefire to reach families affected directly or indirectly by the Israeli aggression on Gaza.

In less than two weeks more than 110 families and more than 1000 children benefited from the following:

- 1- Psychological first aid
- 2- Food parcels
- 3- Blankets
- 4- Gifts

According to an official source at the Palestinian Authorities in Gaza, more than 75% of families are homeless and living with their children in UN schools for shelter. 1447 houses have been completely destroyed. 13,000 houses have been partially destroyed (Al-Jazeera, 2021). This emergency, in spite of the COVID crisis, prompted the PTC UK team of psychological specialists to visit families and deal with their traumas immediately. Children were now terrified of the night time when bombs had fallen. Parents felt disempowered and frozen by anxiety. One of the mothers told the team:

“During the aggression, at night we had to make a very important decision. Should we all sleep in the same room and die together, or should we sleep in different rooms so that in case we are attacked at least we will increase the chance one of us staying alive”.

On 20/05/2021 The PTC UK team started to visit families inside UN schools who had been affected by the total destruction of their homes. These families received psychological first aid to enable them to overcome their pain. Various activities and techniques were used:

- Family support activities strengthened bonding and care-giving amongst family members.
- Children support activities enabled children to relax and smile again.
- Elderly support activities reinforced inner strength and calm for older family members.

The following table show the beneficiary group from these activities:

Activities	Benefited number
1- Psychological first aid	110 families
2- Food parcels	60 boxes
3- Blankets	50
4- Gifts	300
5- Entertainment events	1000 kids (10 events)

PTC-UK through their activities, won the admiration of officials, as well as poets and writers.

Yousri Al-Ghoul a Palestinian writer, founder of many associations, had relatives who were one of the families who benefited from our project. He wrote about PTC-UK and recorded a video to thank PTC-UK for the effort that was done inside and outside the schools. Kindly follow the link to see his video:

Link : <https://youtu.be/WAuhndH3cnc>

Dr. Waleed Sarhan, Consultant Psychiatrist in the Kingdom of Jordan, wrote on his page:

“I was lucky and happy to see this effort made by Palestinian specialists who themselves suffer with their families from the traumatic events. After 11 days of brutal aggression, they insist on coming out to help produce a successful story with each case. With your cooperation we helped these families to overcome their pain, accept their losses and try to start over again.”

YouTube links to document the activities:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_XJxlJ2To

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rZtVjVzoYs>



Immediately after the war, Waqf in the UK and Quaker Foundations in Ireland provided food parcels in support of families affected by the war. Muntada Aid supported Eid events and Rights4Time financed equipment for a launch event in Gaza for their research project. Now Muslim Community Association (MCA) has provided crucial funding to sustain the main project. It seems our work has just begun.

