



Shu'fat in Crisis



Since our last newsletter in November '23 we have all witnessed the ongoing appalling genocide of the people of Gaza and the carpet bombing of their homes, schools and hospitals, with the shameful cooperation of Western governments, including our own.

At the same time, the current fascist regime in Tel Aviv has armed the out-of-control settlers in the West Bank and given them the green light to harass and murder the indigenous inhabitants, with the active support of the Israeli army. So far over 500 people in the West Bank have been killed and work

on the land, including the economically vital olive harvest, has been drastically curtailed.

Cut off by the apartheid wall from the rest of East Jerusalem and from the West Bank, Shu'fat refugee camp is suffering daily raids by the army, tear gas attacks, arbitrary arrests and checkpoint closures. More than ever, it is difficult for people to find work or to access any local services. Workers and volunteers who live outside the camp face settler attacks on the roads and hours-long queues at checkpoints to get to work.



The policy of ethnic cleansing is clear. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that his government is absolutely opposed to the formation of a Palestinian state, while his finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, recently confirmed their intention to "establish facts on the ground in order to make Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] an integral part of the state of Israel."

UNRWA under attack

In January, at the behest of the Israeli government, western countries cut off aid to UNRWA, which provides vital services to refugees throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In East Jerusalem the UNRWA headquarters was attacked and now needs armed guards.

In Shu'fat camp the activities of the two UNRWA-run schools were cut back, as were the services provided by the UNRWA clinic. This means that the AlQuds Centre has had its already limited resources stretched to breaking point.

Although most Western governments have resumed funding, in August the Israeli parliament passed three bills aimed at closing down UNRWA's activities completely and designating it a 'terrorist organisation'.

Outrageous arson attack forces UNRWA to temporarily close its headquarters in Jerusalem



JERUSALEM, Friday, May 10, 2024 (NWAFA) – The head of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has decided to temporarily close the Agency's headquarters in occupied Jerusalem after an arson attack by extremist Israeli colonists in the vicinity of the premises following weeks of protests.

Unite Shu'fat Twinning Group Newsletter

Facing the challenges

Our friends in Shu'fat have been giving us regular updates on their work and the threats and restrictions they have to face every day.

They are hugely grateful for the support they are getting from the UK, both from their long-standing friends in Unite and from the new friends they made during their visit here last September.

Especially warm thanks go to the Mustafa Trust for their great generosity, particularly during the month of Ramadan when the poorest residents of Shu'fat were provided with iftar meals.



The women of Shu'fat

The AlQuds Centre remains a vital social and cultural hub for the camp. This winter the embroidery team came up with new designs, which have reached us in the UK. Umm Khalil, a stalwart organiser of the women's work, sadly lost her husband to cancer this year, but she continues to coordinate and oversee this valuable addition to family incomes.



Women are of course central to Palestinian traditions and celebrations. Ramadan was celebrated this spring, but the usual joyful feasting and socialising was very muted, as people witnessed the appalling hardships being faced by friends and often relatives in Gaza. Israeli restrictions on the transfer of money make it impossible for them to help financially.



Friends from Japan

Amazingly, a small team of Japanese doctors, together with a TV journalist, was able to spend two weeks this summer seeing patients in Shu'fat and in other towns of the West Bank, in a visit organised by Dr Salim Anati of the AlQuds centre.



They have been coming to Shu'fat and the West Bank for a number of years, witnessing the deteriorating situation in the region. This time they were able to document it in some detail and to make a film which was shown recently on Japanese TV. They are planning to return in November.



Summer respite

It was touch and go whether the young disabled people of Shu'fat would have their annual holiday on Lake Tiberius – the highlight of their year. The Lutheran church centre which hosts them is situated in northern Israel, and was threatened by the exchanges of fire

between Israel and southern Lebanon. Also, expenses had increased and finances were stretched. Nevertheless, as organiser Ashgan Abu Rumaleh said, "Our prayers were answered: generous friends came to the rescue - and there was a lull in the fighting!"

More than 20 patients and over a dozen volunteers were able to spend a few days enjoying the countryside, picnicking and having fun in the pool, with music and games in the evening. Only a few days later the security situation worsened and the centre had to be evacuated.



Ongoing support



Friends from as far apart as Orkney and Hastings have continued to raise funds and spread information about the situation in Shu'fat, while holding vigils and rallies for the people of Gaza.

In August the annual Big Ride for Palestine was the biggest ever, with 1,674 riders taking the message 'Free Palestine!' to 7 cities in the UK.



Throughout the summer local festivals and carnivals have proved great places to sell the handicrafts from Shu'fat and to tell people more about our friends there.

What can we do?

The recent rulings of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court give some hope that the international community will act to curb Israel's genocide in Gaza and the accelerating ethnic cleansing of the West Bank. It is up to all of us in the UK to put pressure on our government to do this.

In the meantime, we can help our friends in their struggle not only to survive but to provide as normal a life as possible for the most vulnerable in their communities.



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Dr Salim Anati, Chair of the Al-Quds Disabled Centre, to the Unite Community of London and the Eastern Region:

"We are so happy to have friends like you, who share our lives and feelings and lend us your support. This group of friends is like a candle lighting our long journey towards peace and justice. Although we are facing hard times and difficult conditions— daily raids, demolitions, killings, and arrests — we will never give up. Our camp is separated by the wall of hatred, but our hearts are full of love for freedom."

We are Raising £1000 to Support Families in Shu'fat Refugee Camp - Occupied East Jerusalem. Please donate to our JustGiving Crowdfunding Page and help make it happen

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/Shufat?utm_id=1&utm_term=EBREDm53q

Thanks for your support

To donate:

via JustGiving, [click here](#) or scan this QR code

via bank transfer:

Shu'fat Group Account, Unity Trust Bank

Sort Code 60-83-01

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Thank you for your solidarity!

