



جامعة
دار الكلمة

DAR AL-KALIMA
UNIVERSITY

ANNUAL REPORT

2024/2025



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FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Leading a university is always a challenge. Leading one in the midst of ongoing genocide and settler-colonial pressures requires courage, vision, and unwavering determination and commitment. Over the past academic year, Dar al-Kalima University has exemplified these qualities in extraordinary ways. The art and films produced by our students and faculty, many of which received international awards and recognition at art exhibits and major film festivals, alongside the growing number of scholarly publications, are a testament not only to the excellence of our university but also to the creative and resilient spirit of Palestine itself. We take immense pride in our faculty and staff whose research, creativity, and dedication are celebrated around the world.

In less than twenty years, Dar al-Kalima has established itself as a central hub for art, culture, and design in Palestine. Our vision is to continue building the University into the leading center for the creative industries in the country, while strengthening its financial sustainability and securing the future of the next generation of committed faculty and staff. This is no small task in a context where instability is the norm and settler-colonial pressures aim to make life as difficult as possible, often in the hope of forcing displacement.

Yet, despite these challenges, Dar al-Kalima has continued to thrive through resilience, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit. It is through the relentless dedication of our academic and administrative staff that the University navigates such difficult circumstances while achieving remarkable outcomes. Equally, our achievements would not be possible without the steadfast support of our local community and international partners, whose commitment allows us to continue our mission: to nurture creativity, to cultivate hope, and to offer life and opportunity for generations to come.

Dar al-Kalima stands as a beacon of resilience, creativity, and hope; a testament that even in the most challenging times, education, art, and culture can flourish and inspire the world.

Zahi Khouri
Chairman of the Board



FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT

The academic year 2024/2025 unfolded against the backdrop of the ongoing genocide in Gaza. At Dar al-Kalima University, we continued to face the aftermath of the destruction of our Gaza campus in March 2024. Yet, with unwavering determination and a steadfast commitment to our mission, we began the year confident that nothing could deter us from educating the next generation of creative leaders in Palestine. This determination has once again borne remarkable fruit.

This year, we witnessed growth across all facets of our university. Our student body reached 566, including 82 master's students, and 147 graduates celebrated the completion of their programs. Our academic and administrative teams expanded to 30 full-time and 75 part-time staff members, reflecting our commitment to excellence in teaching and support. At the same time, the economic consequences of the genocide, combined with Bethlehem's dependence on tourism, led to an unprecedented number of students requiring financial assistance. In response, 38% of our students received scholarships, underscoring our dedication to accessibility, equity, and opportunity.

The global political climate also informed our academic discourse. Following the election of President Trump in November 2024 and the formation of a cabinet with historic Christian Zionist influence, we prioritized the study of Christian Zionism in our conferences. We were honored to be asked by HRH Prince Ghazi to organize a major international conference on Christian Zionism, followed by another gathering in Aarhus, Denmark supported by the Palestinian Higher Presidential Committee for Churches' Affairs. These events built upon the foundation of our 2022 conference in Chile, which examined Christian Zionism in Latin America, positioning Dar al-Kalima as a hub for critical, scholarly engagement on this pressing topic.



This year also marked the inauguration of two state-of-the-art facilities: the Hospitality Education Center and the Rami Zahi Khouri Entrepreneurship and Innovation Hub, representing a combined investment of nearly 2.4 million USD. We are deeply grateful to our partners in the United States, Bright Stars of Bethlehem, to the Förderverein Dar al-Kalima in Germany, and to Mr. Zahi Khouri, chair of the DAK Board, in whose son's memory the Hub was established. These facilities embody our vision for innovation, creativity, and the empowerment of Palestine's next generation of leaders.

All of these achievements were made possible through the steadfast dedication of our board, the tireless efforts of our faculty and staff, the support of our partners, and the enduring blessings from above. Despite the challenges, Dar al-Kalima continues to shine as a beacon of hope, resilience, and transformative education.

Prof. Dr. Mitri Raheb
Founder & President



Prof. Dr. Mitri Raheb



Zahi Khouri

FINE ARTS COLLEGE

CONTEMPORARY ARTS PROGRAM

The Contemporary Arts Program equips students with both practical artistic skills and critical, analytical frameworks to engage with Palestinian and global contemporary art movements. The program emphasizes experimental practice, theoretical grounding, and community engagement, preparing graduates for professional artistic practice and cultural leadership.

Key Achievements

Faculty Excellence and International Engagement

During the reporting period, program faculty made significant contributions to contemporary art discourse locally and internationally:

- **Munther Jawabreh** curated and participated in «*All Eyes on Palestine*», a group exhibition in Athens showcasing Palestinian artists from across the diaspora. He also participated in the curated exhibition «*I Will Engrave All That the Sun Tells Me*» at the Abdul Mohsen Qattan Foundation and published an article in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*.



Monther Jawabreh



• **Wael Abu Yabes** presented a solo exhibition, «*Warehouses of Memory*», at 33CO in Italy, and participated in group exhibitions in Bethlehem. He also represented Palestine as a jury member for the Lions International Peace Poster Contest (Levant Region), through which a selected artwork was nominated for the international competition at the United Nations.

Student Achievements and Creative Production

Students demonstrated strong artistic engagement and public presence through:

• Participation of first-year students from multiple disciplines in the free drawing competition

“We Remain Like the Olive Tree.”

• The graduation exhibition of female Contemporary Arts students, featuring installations, video art, painting, and sculpture. The exhibition attracted a wide public audience and fostered collaboration with local institutions and professional artists, including international artist Emily Jacir. The exhibition received highly positive feedback and strengthened graduates' professional confidence and networks.

Community Engagement through Art

The program continued to integrate learning with civic engagement through the course *Art for Social Change*. Student-led initiatives included:

- The *Doors of Beit Sahour* project, decorating doors with Palestinian embroidery and transforming the site into a cultural and tourism landmark and destination.
- Public stair-painting projects in Bethlehem and surrounding areas.
- Art activities in schools and hospitals, reinforcing the role of art in public life and social transformation.

Challenges and Solutions

A key challenge was the lack of dedicated studio spaces suitable for large-scale installation-based artwork, which limited students' spatial experimentation. In response, the university provided access to larger indoor and outdoor campus spaces, allowing students to complete projects with the understanding and commitment that spaces would be restored to their original condition afterward. This adaptive solution enabled continuity of artistic production despite infrastructure constraints.

Priorities for the Coming Year

Looking ahead, the program will focus on increasing enrollment through targeted promotion and marketing, enhanced hands-on learning opportunities, and expanded partnerships with schools and cultural and music centers, while also showcasing student and graduate achievements,



such as exhibitions and initiatives, in university marketing materials and through participation in regional events. At the same time, the university is working to establish a dedicated, well-equipped studio for arts students to support artistic practice, experimentation, and production.

FILM PRODUCTION PROGRAM

The Film Production Program aims to empower emerging Palestinian filmmakers by mastering the art of audio/visual storytelling. It equips students with the technical skills required by the local film industry and the creative vision needed to contribute meaningfully to Palestinian and global cinema.

Key Achievements

Strategic Partnerships and Institutional Support

During the reporting period, the program strengthened its work through active partnerships with DCA, NCA, MAD Solutions, the Palestinian Ministry of Culture, and the Consulate General of France in Jerusalem, enhancing professional pathways, visibility, and industry engagement for students and graduates.

International Recognition of Student Films

Two student films continued to achieve notable

international success:

- Shattered Memory, a documentary by Hayat Laban
- Deer's Tooth, a short fiction film by Saif Hammash

Although produced and supervised earlier in 2024, both films remained on the international festival circuit throughout the reporting period, earning selections and awards at prestigious festivals worldwide.

New Films and Festival Circulation

The program produced and supervised three new student short films, which are currently circulating in international film festivals:

- Restricted by Tamer Zakaria (short fiction)
- Lovely Butterfly by Fairouz Hassan (experimental)
- No Other Path by Laila Khilfeh (short fiction)

In addition, the program developed a feature-length creative documentary, Echoes of Exile, by Saed Andoni, marking a significant milestone in long-form production and mentorship.

Graduate Success and Professional Distribution

Several graduate films, including «Born a Celebrity» by Luay Awad and «10 Minutes Younger» by Nisreen Yaseen, were acquired by MAD Solutions, one of the region's leading film distribution companies. These films are now actively circulating through international festivals, reinforcing the program's professional credibility and reach.



Beneficiaries Reached

Students Enrolled

During the 2024/2025 academic year, the Film Production Program enrolled 47 students (25 female and 22 male). The student body reflects a balanced gender distribution (approximately 55% female and 45% male) and represents a wide geographic diversity, including Jerusalem, Hebron, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Tulkarem, Nablus, surrounding villages such as Beit Fajjar, and refugee camps such as Aida, Dheisheh, and Azza.

Community and Economic Impact

Each film production functioned as a community-based initiative in Bethlehem, generating local economic activity through location fees, local procurement, meals for the production team, and short-term employment for crews and cast. At the same time, film productions served as hands-on training platforms, strengthening professional capacity among the next generation of filmmakers.



Challenges and Solutions

Israeli-imposed road closures and periods of instability affected student mobility. In response, the program continued its flexible learning model, allowing impacted students to attend classes online when needed, ensuring continuity without compromising academic standards.

Looking Ahead

In the next academic year, the program will prioritize the production of high-quality visible final projects that reinforce its strong reputation, expand international exposure, and strengthen pathways between education, industry, and professional filmmaking.



PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAM – MUSIC

The Performing Arts Program – Music aims to equip students with strong theoretical knowledge and practical skills in musical performance and singing, while preparing a new generation of qualified music educators to address the shortage of music teachers in Palestinian schools and cultural institutions.

Key Achievements

Strengthening Student Learning and Professional Formation

Throughout the reporting period, the program continued to provide students with structured performance training, music theory, and pedagogical skills, enabling them to develop as performers, educators, and cultural practitioners.

Academic Leadership and Knowledge Transfer

Under the leadership of Dr. Moatasem Adeleh, Coordinator of the Performing Arts Program – Music, students were exposed to current regional and international scholarship through classroom integration of his research, conference participation, and published work. His engagement in major academic forums enhanced the program's academic rigor and ensured that students' learning remained



connected to ongoing debates in music education, ethnomusicology, and accessibility in the arts.

Academic Excellence and Recognition

During the reporting period, Dr. Moatasem Adeleh achieved several major academic milestones that directly strengthened the program and enriched the student learning environment. These included participation and publication at the 32nd Conference of the Cairo Opera House (October 2024), engagement in a regional scientific seminar in Amman, Jordan (December 2024), focusing on the challenges and possibilities of teaching Arabic music to persons with disabilities, and the publication of the research paper "Teaching Music to Persons with Disabilities: Insights from the Palestinian Experience."

Success Story

Professor Moatasem Adeleh was awarded the Scientific Research Prize by the Arab Academy of Music – League of Arab States on December 15, 2024, one of the highest honors in Arab music scholarship. Reinstated after a decade-long suspension, the award recognized his exceptional contributions to music research, ethnomusicology, and the documentation and advancement of Palestinian cultural heritage.

For students, this recognition translated into enhanced academic credibility of the program, increased visibility of their field of study, and greater confidence in the relevance and value of their training. The award reaffirmed Dar al-Kalima University's role as a leading institution for music education and research in Palestine and the Arab region.

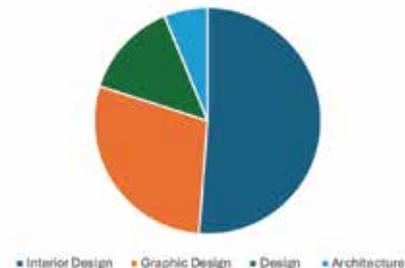


ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN COLLEGE

The mission of the Architecture and Design College is to cultivate and sustain a creative academic environment at Dar al-Kalima University that expands the diversity of knowledge, nurtures design imagination and innovation, and strengthens a sense of belonging among students, faculty, and the wider Palestinian community.

In the Academic Year 2024/2025, the Architecture and Design College remained the largest faculty at Dar al-Kalima University, with its students comprising over half of the university's total enrollment (51%). Female representation in the college was notably high, with four times as many female students as male students.

Enrolled Students at FDE
Academic Year 2024-2025



INTERIOR DESIGN PROGRAM

The Interior Design Program seeks to foster creativity and design excellence through educational practice and design thinking. It is committed to integrating theory, technology, sustainability, and cultural awareness into design solutions that enhance quality of life



Key Achievements

Student Design Excellence

Students produced high-quality studio projects addressing residential, commercial, cultural, and community-based design challenges. Graduating students completed comprehensive projects integrating research, conceptual development,

technical drawings, and elaborate 3D designs. Projects included full-scale furniture designs in the Furniture Design class and zero-cost product designs in the Sustainable Interior Design class. Students benefitted from guest lectures and site visits, further enriching their learning experience.

Industry Engagement

The program strengthened its collaboration with local industry professionals, working closely with Baytona in ceramics and marble, Salesian Wood Workshop, Manoli Trading & Industrial Company in wood, carpentry, and related accessories, and Al-Sous Global Company for Construction Industries, specializing in blocks and curbstone. These partnerships provided students with valuable exposure to professional practices and materials, enhancing their hands-on learning and industry readiness.

Student Participation in Competitions and Collaborative Projects

Students actively engaged in competitions and collaborative projects, gaining valuable real-world experience. Two 3rd-year Interior Design students partnered with local artisans through a Turquoise Mountain initiative, designing furniture pieces inspired by cultural stories; their creations are now

displayed in Turquoise Mountain showrooms in Bethlehem. Meanwhile, two 2nd-year Interior Design students participated in the “Best Student Company Competition,” organized by RZK Hub in collaboration with INJAZ Palestine. This experience provided a unique opportunity to develop critical skills in leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving. Their project, Eco Grow “Innovative Agriculture for a More Sustainable Future”, combined creativity with sustainability, reflecting the program’s commitment to applied learning and social impact.

Challenges and Solutions

One of the main challenges for the program was keeping pace with rapid changes in interior design technologies, software, and materials while maintaining high-quality education. To address this, the program began exploring the integration of AI technologies into design and has initiated small-scale adaptations within student projects, ensuring that students stay current with evolving professional practices.

Looking Ahead

The program aims to strengthen students’ skills in AI-assisted visualization, digital techniques, and rendering, while integrating AI, VR/AR walkthroughs,

and real-time design modifications into the curriculum to enhance both their creative and technical competencies.



GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM

The Graphic Design program equips students with foundational principles and advanced skills in visual communication, offering specialized concentration in Printing and Packaging as well as Multimedia and Animation. Through practical education and field training, the program prepares graduates for diverse careers in creative industries, ensuring a smooth transition into the labor market.

Key Achievements

Field Training Program

Twenty-three students completed field training with local companies across Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Hebron, gaining hands-on experience in printing, packaging, advertising, branding, and multimedia. Each student completed a minimum of 160 hours of training, significantly enhancing their industry readiness.

Graduation Projects

Seventeen students completed creative projects that addressed social issues through design. Highlights included a rebranding project for a major Palestinian food company, value-added packaging for children, and a short-animated film aimed at young audiences.



Competitions

Students actively participated in several design competitions, including the Palestine Packaging Competition (February 2025) and the Hebron University Design Challenge (April 2025), showcasing the program's commitment to creativity and professional excellence. Notably, graphic design student Noor Al-Huda Sarhan was recognized as one of the top ten finalists for her innovative design,

reflecting both her talent and the high-quality training provided by the program.



Exhibitions

The program organized two on-campus exhibitions showcasing student work: a poster exhibition for the Advertising Design course led by Mr. Mustafa Bader in May 2025, and a Packaging Design Studio exhibition led by Mr. Alfred Azar. Students also participated in external exhibitions, further increasing the visibility of their work.

Promotional Video

The program produced a six-minute promotional video aimed at attracting prospective students and

raising public awareness about graphic design. The video highlights the importance of design in communication, culture, and society, emphasizing its positive impact on the community.

Looking Ahead

One of the program's main priorities for the future is to establish an Innovation and Design Lab, equipped with 3D printing, virtual reality tools, CNC routers, and advanced printing, packaging, and binding equipment. This lab will support not only Graphic Design students but also those in Architecture, Interior Design, and other design-related programs, fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration and innovation.

THE DESIGN PROGRAM

The Design Program introduces students to the foundations and principles of design before guiding them to specialize in various tracks, including Fashion Design. Through theoretical and hands-on courses as well as collaborative projects, students develop knowledge, technical skills, creative thinking, and cultural awareness, preparing them for careers in the fashion and creative industries.

Key Achievements

Skill Development Workshops

Coordinated by Ms. Nadya Hazboun, the Sunbula Organization held a specialized embroidery workshop (Tahriri Couching) for third- and fourth-year students as part of their collaboration studio courses.

Student-Led Exhibition

Under the supervision of Ms. Diana Munayer, four first-year students (Eylia Amro, Hala Arar, Rahaf Abed, Raneem Sholi) organized an exhibition for the History of Design course, showcasing the transformation of designed objects in Palestine across three generations.



Graduation Projects

Six students successfully completed and presented their graduation projects in May 2025, guided by Mr. Yazan Zeit, Ms. Jane Salman, and Ms. Diana Munayer



Industry Engagement and Competitions

The Design Program participated in a joint internship program for designers and artisans organized by Turquoise Mountain Palestine. Three fashion design students joined the program, with Anwar Aloh achieving 4th place in the final competition.

International Opportunities

Three students (Iyas Titi, Raneem Sholi, Shahd Weldali) were selected for a six-month exchange under the Erasmus Plus program, organized by the University of Bologna, beginning in January 2026.

Faculty Recognition

Faculty member Ms. Diana Munayer participated in the Prosperity Fashion Conference at the University of Florence in February 2025. Her paper, *“Prosperity Fashion in Palestine: Experiences Between the Past and the Future,”* was published in a special issue of the Fashion Highlight Journal dedicated to the conference proceedings.

Challenges and Solutions

One of the main challenges facing the program was the lack of separate spaces for sewing and pattern making, along with limited access to workshops outside scheduled university hours and the absence of a standalone course in manual fashion sketching and illustration. To address these constraints, students made use of available drawing studios whenever possible, a program graduate volunteered during the month of May to support third- and fourth-year students in completing their projects, and additional training in sketching and illustration was incorporated into the design studios.

Looking Ahead

The program aims to establish a separate, fully equipped space for pattern making, aligning with best practices in fashion design education and supporting practical, hands-on learning.

THE ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM

The Architecture Program at Dar al-Kalima University is a newly established program that provides students with a strong foundation in architectural design through hands-on learning, model making, prototyping, and real-world site exposure. The program emphasizes design thinking, collaboration, and continuous development, ensuring high educational quality that responds to students' learning needs and the local environment.

Key Achievements

Hands-On Model Making and Prototyping

Hands-on learning formed a core component of the program during the academic year. Ten students participated in intensive model-making workshops, producing physical models for architectural projects and product-scale designs. As a result, 100% of architecture students completed physical models as core course deliverables.

Redesign and Re-Rendering of Iconic Architectural Projects

Ten students analyzed, redesigned, and re-rendered well-known architectural projects to better understand form, spatial organization, and architectural language. This process significantly

enhanced students' visual communication skills and their ability to critically analyze architectural design across studios.

Design Principles Through Making

Architectural principles such as balance, hierarchy, rhythm, and proportion were taught through practice rather than theory alone. Seven students explored these principles through sketching, mass studies, and iterative prototyping, with all studio assignments requiring a combination of sketches and mass models.

Architecture Design Studio I – Family Villa Complex

In Architecture Design Studio I, nine students developed initial design proposals for a family villa complex. Projects addressed spatial organization, site response, and user needs, resulting in complete conceptual design packages that included drawings and spatial studies.

Structure, Construction, and Site Visits

As part of structure and construction courses, students visited active construction sites. These visits allowed students to observe materials, building systems, and construction processes in real conditions, strengthening their understanding of construction realities and material behavior.



Challenges and Solutions

One of the main challenges faced by the program was limited access to advanced fabrication tools and material resources. To address this, the program emphasized the use of low-cost materials, hands-on prototyping, and collaborative studio work, ensuring that learning outcomes remained strong despite resource constraints.

Looking Ahead

The program aims to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration and expand fabrication and making facilities. Additional priorities include creating opportunities for students to participate in design competitions, workshops, exchanges, internships and external professional engagements.



CULTURAL MANAGEMENT COLLEGE

CULTURAL AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PROGRAM

The Cultural and Sustainable Tourism Program aims to equip students with in-depth knowledge of Palestinian culture and sustainable tourism practices, preparing them to promote, protect, and professionally engage with Palestine's cultural and archaeological assets.

Key Achievements

Strategic Academic Partnerships

The program initiated a partnership with the French research center EHOVA International and the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage to prepare for a joint archaeological excavation project in Anabta, Tulkarem, scheduled to begin in mid-2026.

Student Graduation

During the reporting period, the program had 11 students successfully graduating, reflecting a strong completion rate despite challenging national conditions.

International Academic Representation

The program organized a workshop within the ICAANE 2025 International Conference in France. As part of this engagement, program graduate Amina Shalalkeh presented a research paper examining



UNESCO heritage in Palestine, which is scheduled for publication, marking a significant scholarly achievement for both the student and the program. In parallel, Dr. Mohammad Al-Zard, originally from Gaza, represented Dar al-Kalima University at the conference, further strengthening the department's international presence and reinforcing its commitment to amplifying Palestinian academic voices on global platforms.



Graduate Progression

Program graduate Ibrahim Da'amsa was accepted into a Master's program in Tourism in Malaysia, demonstrating the program's ability to prepare students for advanced academic pathways.

The program also indirectly benefited local communities by strengthening research, documentation, and academic discourse around Palestinian cultural heritage and tourism in times of crisis.

Challenges and Solutions

The ongoing war has had a severe impact on the tourism sector, resulting in reduced student enrollment in the program. In response to these challenges, the program emphasized academic resilience by strengthening field-based learning, supporting participation in academic conferences, and encouraging graduation projects that critically address tourism, heritage, and the realities of war, thereby maintaining program relevance and meaningful student engagement.

Looking Ahead

The program plans to rename itself "Tourism and Archaeology" to more accurately reflect its academic focus and attract a wider pool of students. This strategic shift supports the planned archaeological excavation project in Anabta (2026), to be implemented in partnership with EHOVA International and the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, and is expected to strengthen student enrollment while expanding hands-on, experiential learning opportunities.



SPORTS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Sports Management Program aims to prepare qualified professionals with the knowledge and practical skills needed to manage sports institutions and activities effectively, contributing to the development of the Palestinian sports sector in line with local labor market needs.

Key Achievements

Second Graduating Cohort Completed

A key milestone this year was the graduation of the program's second cohort, demonstrating its growing stability and continuity since establishment.

Increased Student Enrollment Through Targeted Promotion

The program recorded a notable increase in student enrollment. This improvement resulted from targeted promotional initiatives led by the program coordinator, including short visual materials and interviews with current students and alumni shared across social media platforms.

Expanded Student Engagement Through Sports Tournaments

Student engagement and practical learning were strengthened through the organization and participation in several sports tournaments and activities. These included a football tournament for students and alumni (November 2024), participation in the Palestinian inter-university basketball

championship where DAK achieved second place (December 2024), hosting a Bethlehem Governorate inter-university football tournament where DAK again placed second (December 2024), and organizing an internal football tournament among university faculties.

Promoting Student Well-Being and Campus Sports Life

To encourage physical activity and student well-being, the program facilitated the opening of the university's enclosed sports arena every Wednesday during the official activity hour, enabling broader student participation in organized sports.

Development of a Diploma in Sports Training

The program initiated preparatory work to develop a Diploma in Sports Training, currently undergoing accreditation, with the aim of attracting a wider group of students and strengthening professional sports education in Palestine.



Challenges and Solutions

The program faced a primary challenge during the reporting period. It was the lack of specialized sports coaches in key disciplines such as football, basketball, and volleyball, limiting the program's ability to optimally prepare competitive teams. To mitigate, the existing faculty members were encouraged to pursue additional coaching certifications, while alumni and local practitioners contributed as mentors and assistant trainers. In the long term, the planned Diploma in Sports Training is expected to help build a stronger local pool of qualified coaches and reduce future gaps.

Looking Ahead

The program aims to expand its academic offerings to include more applied courses and advanced physical training modules, while increasing Dar al-Kalima University's participation in national sports championships. These priorities are expected to enhance students' academic and practical competencies and contribute to increased enrollment in the Sports Management Program.



GRADUATE STUDIES AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH COLLEGE

The Graduate Studies and Scientific Research College at Dar al-Kalima University continued to consolidate its role as a leading academic institution dedicated to developing graduate programs in art and culture that integrate academic research with artistic practice, while promoting critical thinking, cultural engagement, and active contributions to issues of liberation, decoloniality and cultural justice in Palestine.

This year was marked by important academic and structural development. The College advanced institutional quality by developing a graduate thesis supervision policy, establishing program committees for Art Therapy, Interior Design, Management of Cultural Institutions, and Art, and reviewing several curricula to introduce a non-thesis track, expanding academic pathways for students with diverse professional goals.

Academic progress was reflected in student outcomes. During the 2024/2025 academic year, 19 students completed their MA degrees across the programs, demonstrating program continuity and academic rigor. Graduate success was further reflected in employability, with two Art graduates

recruited as university staff, highlighting the College's role in nurturing qualified cultural professionals who contribute directly to the institution and the wider cultural sector.

Operating within a constrained higher education environment, the College also faced limitations in internal thesis supervision capacity. This challenge was mitigated by engaging qualified external supervisors and expanding alternative graduation pathways, ensuring academic continuity while upholding quality standards.

Looking ahead, the College plans to expand its academic offerings by initiating new graduate programs, launching the MFA program upon receiving approval from the Ministry of Higher Education and securing the necessary human and financial resources. In parallel, the College will formally activate the Research Ethics Committee, building on the preparatory work completed this year, to strengthen academic governance and ensure responsible research practices across all graduate programs.



ART THERAPY PROGRAM

The MA in Art Therapy integrates theoretical foundations with supervised practice across art- and music-based modalities. The program prepares graduates for competent professional practice in clinical/community settings, and for potential academic pathways.

Key Achievements

Institutional Partnership Development

A new partnership was initiated with Caritas Baby Hospital (Bethlehem), with plans for a joint research project and a scientific symposium. Steps toward signing a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) are underway, strengthening clinical training and research collaboration.

Faculty Research and Knowledge Production

Dr. Nawras Kurzom published the Music Therapy Manual to support structured training and evidence-informed practice (now used as a study material for students). In addition, a peer-reviewed article was published in the international journal Music Perception, and the program was represented internationally at a music psychology conference in Zagreb, Croatia (October 2024).

Student Research Success Stories

Graduate thesis projects addressed pressing psychosocial issues through innovative approaches:

- Mahmoud Shana'a examined a music-based intervention addressing smartphone addiction among children in Qalqilya.
- Mishleen Marcos conducted a study combining virtual reality and music interventions to reduce anxiety among university students.

Expanded Community and Clinical Engagement

The program strengthened its field training network through collaboration with 15 partner institutions, schools, and centers across Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jerusalem, and surrounding areas. These partnerships enhanced student practicum opportunities and expanded psychosocial outreach to diverse community groups, including children, women, families, and persons with disabilities.



Challenges and Solutions

A key challenge during the reporting period was the limited availability of qualified instructors in this field who could commit consistently to the program, which placed pressure on teaching continuity and supervision capacity. In response, the program

strengthened its professional networks and institutional partnerships, broadening its pool of potential instructors and collaborators. This adaptive approach helped maintain academic quality while ensuring that students continued to receive the specialized guidance required for both coursework and clinical training.

Looking Ahead

The program plans to launch the Music Psychology Lab, integrating physiological measurement tools into student training and research. It will also prioritize high-quality academic publications through faculty-led and joint faculty–student research outputs derived from thesis/fieldwork projects and will pursue new collaborations with international NGOs working in art therapy and psychosocial support.



INTERIOR DESIGN PROGRAM

The program prepares graduates in Interior Design and Architecture with advanced professional and creative competencies that respond to the evolving social, cultural, and market needs of Palestinian society. It integrates emerging design technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), and Augmented Reality (AR) to strengthen research capacity, innovation, and industry-relevant skills in line with global standards.

Key Achievements

International Academic Representation

The program strengthened its international academic presence through participation in the 15th International Conference on Sustainability, Development, and Advanced Research in Tourism and Heritage (Luxor, Egypt, April 2025), where Program Coordinator Dr. Rabab Alshweiky presented a research paper.

Student Research Engagement

Student research capacity was notably advanced through participation in the same international conference, where three students (Raghad Khleif, Saja Abu Laban, and Yodleen Dwaib) presented two research papers under the supervision of Dr. Wissam



Shadeed. This achievement highlights the program's emphasis on academic mentorship and early integration of students into scholarly research environments.

Challenges and Solutions

The program faced a challenge during the reporting period related to the limited availability of specialized faculty in certain advanced design technology fields. To address this gap, a specialized instructor from Jordan was recruited to teach the Artificial Intelligence course, ensuring continuity of high-quality instruction and maintaining the program's commitment to integrating cutting-edge design technologies into student learning.

Looking Ahead

The program will adopt new specialized software in architectural, furniture, and graphic design to further enhance students' technical and creative competencies.

MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS PROGRAM

The MA Program in Management of Cultural Institutions prepares graduates with the academic knowledge and applied skills required for the effective management of cultural institutions within the Palestinian cultural context, combining theory, research, and field-based engagement.

Key Achievements

Graduate Research Milestone

Eight MA students successfully completed and defended their graduation theses, marking a significant academic milestone for the program. Their research addressed priority areas in cultural institutions management, including leadership, financial sustainability, human resources management, and audience/consumer behavior in the visual arts, all grounded in the Palestinian context. Beyond academic completion, these theses and applied projects directly benefited Palestinian cultural institutions, translating graduate research into practical sector support. Contributions included financial sustainability case studies conducted with the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, audience development research for Palestinian



museums, and the development of strategic and marketing plans for institutions such as Dar Al-Majus, strengthening the program's role as a bridge between academic research and the operational needs of the cultural sector.

Curriculum Innovation

The program developed and introduced the first academic course of its kind in Palestine focusing on cultural genocide and its impact on identity, heritage, and collective memory, strengthening critical thinking and engagement with contemporary cultural and political realities.

Educational and Cultural Events

The program organized major educational and cultural events that bridged academic learning with community engagement:

- A joint academic event with the Smart College in Hebron featuring the student theatrical performance "The Theft of the Apollo Statue", followed by discussions on human heritage in the digital age and cybercrimes.
- A multidisciplinary cultural event centered on "Gaza Monologues," presenting first-hand testimonies from Gaza alongside community participation, including women from Gaza presenting traditional cuisine. This event was implemented in partnership with Ashtar

Theatre, Ibda'a Foundation, and Power Group.

Guest Speakers

Several distinguished guest speakers enriched the learning environment, including Dr. Iman Al-Tayti (Director General, Tourism and Antiquities Directorate in Bethlehem), cybercrime specialist Kamal Abu Zakia, and human rights advocate Farid Al-Atrash (Director of the Independent Commission for Human Rights in the West Bank).



Challenges and Solutions

Due to its highly specialized focus, the program faced challenges in attracting new student enrollment. In response, the program adopted a more inclusive title and broadened its academic framing to appeal to students interested in managing a wider spectrum of cultural and institutional contexts, thereby expanding its reach while maintaining its core expertise.

Looking Ahead

The program aims to enhance its relevance and sustainability by broadening its academic scope, increasing enrollment, and strengthening partnerships with cultural and institutional stakeholders.

ARTS PROGRAM

The Master of Arts Program aims to empower the Palestinian community by cultivating academically accomplished and artistically distinguished artists who engage creatively in local and international cultural life, while preserving and promoting Palestinian cultural identity worldwide.

Key Achievements

Student Academic and Artistic Achievement

Despite the severe political instability affecting the

context, MA students demonstrated notable academic and artistic achievement. They completed their studies with distinction, producing projects that reflected strong creative and analytical capacities. Graduates continued to contribute actively to the cultural sector through participation in exhibitions, festivals, research, teaching, and artistic production at both local and international levels.

Student Success

Munther Jawabreh, a distinguished Palestinian artist and MA student, joined the university faculty, marking a remarkable personal and academic journey. His trajectory reflects resilience, lifelong learning, and the transformative role of arts education.

Takatuf 2 Exhibition

In 2024, the first edition of Takatuf challenged the role of art amid genocide and escalating violence against Palestinians, and the MA student artists at Dar al-Kalima University responded with diverse visual expressions that transformed trauma into creative resilience. Fifteen months later, following one of the most destructive wars on Gaza and ongoing displacement in the West Bank, Takatuf 2 continued this dialogue, giving 11 MA artists and the children collective Rommana a space to voice the suffering,



steadfastness, and aspirations of the Palestinian people. Through photography, sculpture, video, sound, weaving, and digital installations, the works depicted the Palestinian experience, particularly the targeting of children, while asserting that art in dark times is an act of hope and resilience. The exhibition reclaimed indigenous practices and histories, demonstrating that creativity not only reflects reality but actively mobilizes, empowers, and transforms it. Selected works from both Takatuf 1 and Takatuf 2 were also showcased internationally in the Takatuf: From Salish Seas to Palestine exhibition at the Contemporary Art Centre (Centre A) in Vancouver, Canada where photographs of selected artworks were exhibited and sold, further amplifying the artists' voices on a global stage.



Challenges and Solutions

The program operated under continued political instability, movement restrictions, and economic pressure on students, which limited mobility and participation in external artistic opportunities. To address this, the program increased the use of available campus spaces flexibly, strengthened local collaborations, and invited visiting and external experts to compensate for mobility limitations, ensuring continuity in both academic and artistic quality despite constraints.

Priorities for Next Year

As previously noted, the program intends to broaden its academic portfolio by moving forward with the launch of the MFA program once approval is obtained from the Ministry of Higher Education and the required human and financial resources are in place.

TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE (TCC)

CULINARY ARTS AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The program aims to prepare and upskill individuals from the Palestinian community across different regions, building professional competencies in the culinary and beverage sector in collaboration with local restaurants and industry partners.

Key Achievements

Student Enrollment and Diversity

In the 2024/2025 academic year, the Culinary Arts and Management Program enrolled nearly half of all TCC students, demonstrating strong interest and engagement in the program. The cohort reflected a diverse student body, with broad geographic representation across Palestine: 17.9% from the northern governorates of Tulkarem, Nablus, and Jenin; 23% from the southern governorate of Hebron; and 58.9% from the Bethlehem governorate. This enrollment highlights the program's growing reach and its ability to attract students from across the region.

Showcasing Palestinian Culinary Heritage

Students demonstrated high technical and

presentation skills by preparing and serving a traditional Palestinian breakfast as an open buffet at Illiyyeh Restaurant. The event was attended by university students, faculty, and staff, who commended the quality of food, service, and organization.



Catering Engagement

Culinary students played a central role in providing catering services during Orientation Day (Fall 2024), an event jointly organized by Dar al-Kalima University and the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education. This provided students with hands-on professional experience in large-scale food service.



Professional Industry Assessment

The Culinary Arts and Management Program hosted Master Chef Joseph Asfour (Jerusalem) to evaluate students' final projects. His expert feedback and professional critique significantly contributed to refining students' culinary techniques and industry readiness.



Looking Ahead

The program will focus on organizing on-campus entrepreneurial initiatives that encourage students to transform their culinary skills into small business ventures.

COMMUNITY PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAM

The Community Performing Arts Program aims to develop students' technical skills, body awareness, and artistic expression through dance. It also promotes cultural heritage, appreciation of diverse dance styles, and fosters community engagement through collaborative and public performances.

Key Achievements

Professional Student Performances

In Fall 2024, students staged five professional-level performances at DAK University Theater, fully designing and executing all aspects, including theater lighting, sound systems, costumes, and dancer training. This showcased their technical skills, creativity, and ability to manage complex productions independently.

Promotional Material

A video highlighting student performances was produced to showcase the program and its achievements, providing a visual record of student work and program outcomes.

Field Training and Community Engagement

During Spring 2025, each student presented performance sketches at cultural and community centers in Bethlehem and Ramallah. These field

presentations allowed students to connect directly with local audiences while applying their training in real-world settings.

Seminar Projects

At the end of Spring 2025, students presented seminar projects that combined artistic performance with fieldwork experiences. These projects reflected a comprehensive, holistic learning process and the outcomes of two years of intensive study and practice.



Challenges and Solutions

Due to the ongoing war in Gaza and the broader socio-political situation, student enrollment in the program remained low, limiting participation and visibility. To address this, the program produced a promotional video showcasing student performances, highlighting their achievements and technical skills, and aiming to raise awareness and attract future students.

Looking Ahead

The program will strengthen outreach and promotional efforts to attract more students and broaden participation in its activities.



JEWELRY DESIGN PROGRAM

The Jewelry Design Program aims to develop students' technical skills in jewelry design, fabrication, and finishing, while fostering creativity and innovation through both contemporary and traditional practices.

Key Achievements

Student Exhibitions

By the end of the Spring 2025 semester, the program showcased seven distinctive silver jewelry sets designed by graduates, highlighting their artistic proficiency to DAK students, staff, faculty, and the wider community, including industry stakeholders.

Challenges and Solutions

The program faced significant challenges this year, as field training in Hebron, the hub of major jewelry factories, was complicated by road closures and restrictions due to Israeli military procedures. Many jewelry factories in Bethlehem were also closed because of financial difficulties caused by the war on Gaza and the decline of the local tourism industry. To address these obstacles and ensure students still gained practical experience, the program successfully conducted field training within the DAK jewelry workshop, allowing students to continue

developing their technical skills and hands-on expertise despite the difficult circumstances.

Looking Ahead

The program aims to conduct field visits to jewelry factories in Hebron to provide students with direct, hands-on industrial experience and enhance their practical training.



PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM

The Photography Program aims to elevate the photography profession in Palestine by developing high levels of professionalism and expertise, empowering graduates to pursue employment opportunities at the national, regional, and global levels.

Key Achievements

Studio Upgrade

During Fall 2024, the photography studio was upgraded and equipped with advanced cameras, lighting and supporting equipment, providing students with the tools needed to edit and produce professional-quality photographs.

Student Assessment

The program hosted two professional photographers from Jerusalem, Ms. Saja Qutteineh (MA graduate from the UK) and Ms. Rawan Jolani (Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design), to assess students' final projects. Their expert feedback provided valuable insights and had a significant impact on the students' artistic development.

Looking Ahead

The program plans to organize next year an exhibition to showcase students' still photography work, providing them with a platform to present their art to the wider public and professional audiences.



LIBRARY

The library supports teaching, learning, and research at the university by providing access to students and faculty to diverse print and electronic information resources. It also enhances effective information access through electronic databases and specialized information services.

Key Achievements

Expansion of Electronic Databases and Academic Resources

The library subscribed to three new electronic databases, including Research4Life, expanding access to more than one million additional books, research papers, and scholarly articles. This significantly strengthened academic and research support for students and faculty.

User Training and Research Support

Ongoing training sessions and guidance were provided on the use of library services and electronic databases, with particular focus on graduate students. These efforts improved research skills and effective academic resource utilization.

Development and Updating of Library Policies

Library policies and usage procedures were reviewed

and updated to enhance service quality, accessibility, and alignment with academic and institutional standards.

Challenges and Solutions

The main challenge during the reporting period was the limited budget available for electronic database subscriptions. To address this constraint, the library prioritized high-impact and essential resources, such as Research4Life, and worked to maximize their value and use through targeted training and guidance for faculty members and graduate students. In parallel, the library strengthened partnerships with academic and research institutions and introduced AI-supported programs to enhance access to and effective use of information resources.



REGISTRATION

This annual report presents a summary of academic and student-related statistics for the Academic Year 2024–2025. The data reflects the department’s role in managing admissions, academic programs, student records, and graduation processes.

There were 180 teaching days and 19 examination days.

Admissions and Academic Progress

- Number of applications received: 213
- Number of students admitted: 171
- Number of students enrolled: 566
- Number of graduates: 148

These figures indicate a strong admissions yield and successful progression of students toward graduation.

Academic Staff and Offerings

- Number of academics: 99
- Number of courses offered: 485
- Number of academic programs offered: 19
- Total student–course registrations: 5,504

The wide range of courses and programs reflects the university’s commitment to academic diversity and comprehensive educational offerings.

Scholarships

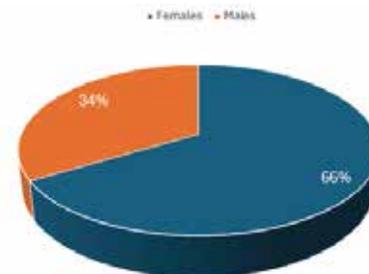
- Number of scholarships granted: 357

During the Academic Year 2024–2025, DAK offered a wide range of scholarship types aimed at promoting academic excellence and ensuring equitable access to higher education. These included honors scholarships, encouragement scholarships, scholarships for students with special needs, in addition to many financial aid awards. This comprehensive scholarship system reflects DAK’s commitment to supporting students academically and socially, and to reducing financial barriers to education.

Student Demographics

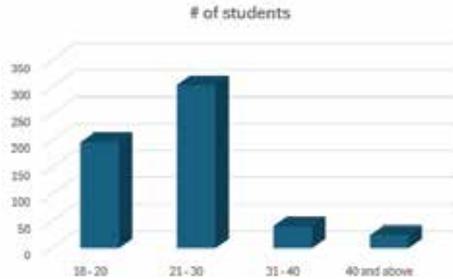
Gender Distribution

- Female students enrolled: 376 (66.4%)
- Male students enrolled: 190 (33.6%)



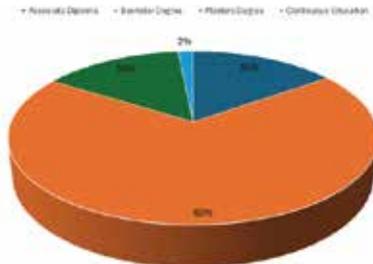
Age Distribution

- 18–20 years: 197 (35%)
- 21–30 years: 304 (54%)
- 31–40 years: 41 (7%)
- 41 years and above: 24 (4%)



Distribution by Degree Type

- Master's Degree: 82 (14%)
- Bachelor's Degree: 389 (69%)
- Associate Diploma: 86 (15%)
- Continuous Education: 9 (2%)

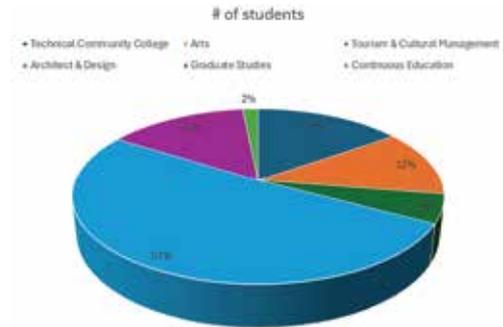


Most students were enrolled in bachelor's degree programs, demonstrating strong demand for undergraduate education.

Student Distribution by College / Faculty

- Graduate Studies: 82 (14.5%)
- Design & Architecture: 289 (51.1%)
- Arts: 70 (12.4%)
- Tourism & Cultural Management: 30 (5.3%)
- Technical Community College: 86 (15.2%)
- Continuous Education: 9 (1.6%)

Enrollment data shows that the College of Architect & Design hosts the largest proportion of students, followed by the Technical Community College and Graduate Studies.



Governorate Distribution of Students

- Bethlehem: 357
- Jerusalem: 85
- Hebron: 75
- Ramallah: 16
- Nablus: 9
- '48 Palestinians: 8
- Jenin: 7
- Tulkarm: 4
- Salfit: 3
- Jericho: 1
- Qalqilya: 1

This distribution highlights Bethlehem and Jerusalem as the primary regions of student enrollment, while also reflecting the university's reach across multiple governorates.



STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening Administrative Excellence through Artificial Intelligence Workshop

Istanbul, Turkey | August 22–23, 2025

From August 13 to 17, 2025 a staff development workshop was held in Istanbul, Turkey, bringing together 23 administrative staff members for an intensive training focused on the integration of artificial intelligence in university administration. The workshop explored practical ways in which AI tools can enhance efficiency, streamline workflows, and support data driven decision making across administrative departments. Through a combination of sessions, hands on exercises, and collaborative discussions, participants examined how emerging technologies can improve communication, reporting, project management, and institutional planning. The training also encouraged staff to critically reflect on the ethical use of AI and its potential to transform administrative practices in higher education. Beyond the professional training, the workshop also provided an opportunity for staff to strengthen relationships, foster a sense of community, and explore the rich history and cultural heritage of Istanbul. By equipping participants with practical skills and strategic insights, the workshop aimed to strengthen institutional capacity and foster a culture of innovation and adaptability within the university's administrative structures.



DAR AL-KALIMA UNIVERSITY CONFERENCES

During the 2024/2025 academic year, three conferences and workshops were organized. The following is an overview of these events.

Understanding Christian Zionism and its Effects on Christians in the Middle East Conference

Dead Sea, Jordan & Baptism Site – Bethany Beyond the Jordan | January 23–27, 2025

Overview

The international conference “Understanding Christian Zionism and its Effects on Christians in the Middle East” was held at the Dead Sea and the Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” from January 23–27, 2025. Organized by Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem in partnership with the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, the conference took place under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad and with the support of local churches.

The gathering brought together more than 60 scholars, religious leaders, journalists, and public intellectuals from 17 countries to examine the theological foundations, political implications, and lived consequences of Christian Zionism for Christian communities in the Middle East.

Key Highlights

The conference opened with a keynote address by Rev. Prof. Dr. Mitri Raheb, who emphasized the significance of the consultation as the first international gathering bringing together leading scholars to examine the impact of Christian Zionism on Middle Eastern Christians, an area that remains under-researched. He underscored the conference’s decolonial approach and announced plans to develop a global anthology on Christian Zionism.

In his address, His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad reflected on the urgency of the conference in light of regional developments, particularly the situation in Gaza, emphasizing the



need for continued dialogue, awareness, and engagement in pursuit of justice and peace.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III highlighted the importance of Christian unity and stressed that theological interpretations that justify violence or occupation contradict the core teachings of Christianity.

Journalist Peter Osborne addressed the political influence of Christian Zionism and its growing impact on international policy debates.



Outcomes and Future Directions

The conference was widely regarded as a major success, receiving an average participant evaluation of 4.88 out of 5. Participants praised the high level of scholarship, the diversity of perspectives, and the professional organization of the event. Many noted that the conference provided an important platform for understanding the theological and political dimensions of Christian Zionism and its impact on both regional communities and global geopolitics.

Participants recommended expanding opportunities for interactive dialogue in future gatherings, including roundtable discussions and collaborative workshops. They also proposed several

follow-up initiatives, such as organizing webinars and post-conference publications, developing academic curricula on Christian Zionism and liberation theology, strengthening interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims, and producing accessible educational resources on the topic. Additional suggestions included interdisciplinary engagement with historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists to address related historical and cultural questions.

Conclusion

The conference served as an important platform for critical reflection, dialogue, and collaboration among scholars and religious leaders from around the world. It strengthened international networks committed to examining Christian Zionism and supporting the presence and witness of Christians in the Middle East. The discussions and recommendations generated during the conference will help guide future research, educational initiatives, and advocacy efforts in this field.



Young Theologians Workshop – Dar al-Kalima University

Istanbul, Turkey | August 22–23, 2025

Dar al-Kalima University organized a two-day workshop for emerging theologians in Istanbul on August 22–23, 2025. The gathering aimed to foster a regional network of young scholars and provide a platform for discussing new theological perspectives arising from the realities of the Middle East.

Although 48 invitations were issued, travel restrictions and visa denials limited participation to 15 young theologians from five countries, namely Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Armenia. Participants represented diverse Christian traditions, including Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Lutheran, Maronite, Coptic Orthodox, and Coptic Catholic, alongside Muslim participants. Gender representation was balanced, with seven women and eight men. Despite the smaller number, the discussions proved rich and highly productive.

The workshop opened with remarks by Rev. Prof. Dr. Mitri Raheb, who emphasized the importance of building a regional network of young theologians. The sessions addressed pressing theological and social issues facing the region, including migration, war and violence, the Gaza crisis, Christian Zionism, women's leadership in the Church, political theology in the Arab world, and the future of Christian communities in the Middle East. Participants presented research engaging themes such as liberation theology, Orthodox hermeneutics, interfaith dialogue, and the role of theology in contexts of conflict and social transformation.

The discussions highlighted how emerging scholars are rethinking theology in light of contemporary realities such as occupation, war, migration, and gender justice. Participants also explored the role of art, culture, and historical memory in shaping theological reflection in the region.



The workshop concluded with plans to strengthen this growing network through regular communication, online meetings, and future consultations. Participants also proposed organizing larger regional gatherings in the future while maintaining smaller annual meetings. In addition, the group agreed to collaborate on a collective academic volume, to be published initially in Arabic, highlighting the voices and contributions of a new generation of Middle Eastern theologians.

The workshop demonstrated the importance of investing in emerging scholars and affirmed Dar al-Kalima University's commitment to nurturing theological reflection rooted in the lived realities of the Middle East.

Christian Zionism in the Nordic Context Conference

Aarhus, Denmark | May 27–28, 2025

Dar al-Kalima University co-organized an international conference in Aarhus, Denmark, titled "Christian Zionism in Contemporary Religious and Political Discourse in the Nordic Countries." The conference brought together scholars, church leaders, and policy experts to examine the theological, political, and social dimensions of Christian Zionism within the Nordic context. The event also contributed to an ongoing academic and public discussion on the role of religion in shaping political attitudes toward Israel and Palestine.

Over two days, participants explored key themes such as the mapping of contemporary Christian Zionism within and beyond Nordic folk churches, the relationship between ethnonationalism and biblical interpretation, and Christian Zionist narratives concerning Islam and Palestinians. Additional sessions examined how Israel–Palestine is discussed in Nordic parliaments and political parties, the positions of churches regarding the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, current humanitarian



support for Palestine, and the challenges facing human rights and international humanitarian law in the aftermath of October 7.

The conference provided an important platform for critical dialogue and academic exchange, strengthening cooperation between Dar al-Kalima University and partners in Northern Europe while contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersection of theology, politics, and international relations. A follow-up consultation was recommended to take place in Oslo in 2026.



RELIGION AND STATE – MIDDLE EAST

The Religion and State – Middle East program, in operation for over sixteen years, aims to foster more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies in the Middle East by promoting gender equality, human dignity, justice, and freedom. Through its activities, the program advances actions aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG #5 (Gender Equality) and SDG #16 (Promote Just, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies), contributing to transformative social change in the region.

During the reporting period, the program operated amid unprecedented regional instability, seeking to preserve academic freedom, sustain intellectual exchange, and amplify marginalized voices through innovative platforms.

Key Achievements

Sustaining Knowledge Production Amid Crisis

Despite severe regional disruptions, the program maintained its core intellectual output through the continued publication of TELOS Middle East, the region's first online theological journal. During the reporting period, several issues were successfully published, including the December 2024 volume "Religions, Culture and the Body," featuring 11 peer-reviewed articles published bilingually in Arabic and English and authored by 5 women and 6 men, and the June 2025 volume "War, Religion, and Culture in the Levant," offering timely reflections on war, resilience, justice, resistance ethics, and Palestinian women's lived religious experiences. These achievements were made possible through the commitment of a diverse editorial board of nine scholars, the majority affiliated with CAFCAW.

Advancing Regional and Global Scholarly Dialogue

Preparations for the program's second regional conference marked a significant milestone. Initially conceived as an international conference titled "Decolonizing Power: Rethinking the Politics of Art



and Religion," the initiative generated over 128 abstract submissions from scholars and artists worldwide. A multidisciplinary committee selected 50 participants across theology, religious studies, visual arts, indigenous studies, ethnic studies, and trauma studies.

Following the withdrawal of Harvard University due to political pressures affecting academic institutions in the United States, Dar al-Kalima University and CAFCAW swiftly adapted, relocating the event to Germany and reframing it as a high-level roundtable titled "The Role of Religion and the Arts in Promoting Resilience in Contexts of Compounded Crises," scheduled for October 2025. Approximately 26 participants from across project countries are expected to attend, ensuring continuity of scholarly exchange despite geopolitical constraints.

Strengthened Visibility and Public Engagement

The program expanded its global outreach through digital dissemination and international collaboration. In January 2025, it supported the organization of a global conference on Christian Zionism in Jordan, addressing its impact on Christian communities in the Middle East. Conference outputs, including recorded lectures and compiled papers, are scheduled for publication and online dissemination through DAK, CAFCAW, and partner platforms in late 2025.

Beneficiaries Reached

- Over 60 scholars, artists, and researchers engaged through journal publications, conferences, and roundtables.
- Middle Eastern theologians, artists and cultural practitioners and activists, with particular attention to bilingual (Arabic–English) accessibility.
- Global academic and faith-based audiences reached through digital publications and conference outputs.



- DAK and CAFCAW leadership and networks, strengthened through international representation and advocacy

Challenges and Solutions

The reporting period was marked by unprecedented regional instability, including the continued war on Gaza, Israeli military escalation in the West Bank, a full-scale war between Israel and Lebanon, and heightened regional insecurity affecting Jordan and neighboring countries. These conditions made it impossible to implement national capacity-building workshops, originally planned as a core activity.

In response, the Steering Committee took a strategic decision to postpone the workshops to 2025/2026, prioritizing participant safety while preserving program integrity. Dar al-Kalima University and CAFCAW demonstrated institutional resilience by shifting toward digital platforms, international venues, and adaptive formats that ensured continuity of scholarship and dialogue despite physical and political constraints.

Looking Ahead

In the next year, the program will prioritize the implementation of the national capacity-building workshops that were postponed due to regional instability, while convening the international roundtable scheduled for October 2025 in Germany and ensuring the publication and dissemination of its scholarly outputs. At the same time, the program will continue to expand TELOS Middle East as a leading bilingual platform for critical theological discourse, strengthen transnational academic partnerships that protect intellectual freedom and sustain scholarly exchange, and further position Dar al-Kalima University as a regional anchor for decolonial, justice-oriented scholarship.



GAZA TRAINING CENTER: EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CREATIVE LEADERS IN GAZA

The Dar al-Kalima University Training Center in Gaza, established in 2020, aims to empower a new generation of talented young individuals and artists by providing opportunities for learning and professional development, incentivized community engagement, livelihood support, and local and international exposure through DAK's academic and cultural networks. Following the destruction of the Center in April 2024 amid the ongoing war on Gaza, staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries were forcibly displaced, while communication became severely constrained due to widespread electricity and internet outages and heightened security risks. In response, the Center reoriented its work toward psychosocial support and community initiatives utilizing art as a tool for healing, learning, and social connection amid prolonged crisis, displacement, and destruction across the Gaza Strip.

The following section presents a brief overview of activities implemented between September 2024 and August 2025. While psychosocial interventions are addressed in a dedicated section of the overall DAK annual report, the initiatives outlined below highlight artistic and cultural programming that positioned art as a critical community-based intervention for children, youth, women, and other marginalized groups living under extreme humanitarian conditions.

Key Achievements

Community Art Initiatives

A total of 32 community art initiatives were implemented across Gaza, with a diverse range of artistic fields including visual arts, performing arts, crafts, storytelling, animation and artistic recycling, and community engagement methods thus transforming temporary and fragile spaces into sites of creativity and psychosocial relief.



Significant Reach Despite Crisis Conditions

The program reached over 970 direct beneficiaries, including children, youth, women, and persons with disabilities, across 44 community, displacement, and temporary locations, exceeding initial expectations given the security, mobility, and infrastructure constraints.

Inclusive and Trauma-sensitive Programming

Artistic activities were intentionally designed to include people with physical, hearing, and visual disabilities, orphans, and displaced families, reinforcing art as an inclusive platform for participation, dignity, and self-expression.

Capacity-building through Adaptive Learning

An online workshop on natural color production engaged 25 artists and art students and volunteers in Gaza who are carrying out psychosocial activities, addressing shortages of art materials by promoting sustainable, locally sourced alternatives. Despite electricity and internet disruptions, participation remained consistent through flexible facilitation and follow-up.

Success Story

One community initiative transformed recycled rubble and discarded materials into collective art pieces displayed in temporary exhibitions, allowing displaced children to narrate their experiences visually. Facilitators noted that “children who initially refused to speak began sharing their stories through color and form,” underscoring art’s role as a non-verbal pathway to healing.

Beneficiaries Reached

- Total direct beneficiaries: More than 8,276 persons (including 7280 participants of the Healing War Trauma Initiative and 996 participants from other programs).
- By program component:
 - Healing War Trauma Initiative (Sept 2024 – June 2025): 7280 participants.
 - Community Art Initiatives (Nov 2024–Apr 2025): 510+ participants.



- Summer Community Art Initiatives (Jul–Aug 2025): 461 participants.
- Online Natural Colors Workshop: 25 artists and art students and volunteers.
 - Target groups: Children, youth, women, artists, art students and volunteers, people with disabilities, and displaced populations residing in camps, shelters, and temporary housing across the Gaza Strip.

Challenges and Solutions

The program was implemented amid severe challenges, including constant displacement, lack of safe spaces amid life-threatening conditions, hunger and material shortages, limited access to electricity and internet, and high psychological stress among participants. These constraints were addressed through adaptive and flexible delivery, including the use of alternative and recycled materials, online and hybrid learning models, decentralized implementation across small and mobile locations, and simplified activity designs that maintained therapeutic value despite limited resources.

Looking Ahead

Building on the strong demand and demonstrated impact of community art interventions, the program will prioritize repeating and expanding artistic and psychosocial activities to reach greater numbers of community members including children, youth, and women across Gaza.



HEALING WAR TRAUMA: ART THERAPY AND EMERGENCY PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS INITIATIVE

As the only higher education institution in Palestine offering an MA degree in Art Therapy, Dar al-Kalima University, through its highly qualified faculty, researchers, and staff, launched a strategic initiative entitled Healing War Trauma in 2023. The initiative aims to support Palestinian children and youth in coping with the psychological impact of the war on Gaza through culturally grounded, trauma-informed psychosocial and arts-based interventions. Program activities included group counseling sessions for caregivers; psychosocial and coping-skills training for facilitators, primarily students and volunteers; structured psychosocial activities for children and youth; community awareness lectures and meetings involving families, medical personnel, and local stakeholders; and research. The initiative has focused on children and youth in the Gaza Strip and the Bethlehem Governorate.

Key Achievements

- 8,270 children and youth reached (ages 6–18), far exceeding the original target of 1,500, reflecting both urgent community need and strong trust in the program’s approach.
- 405 psychosocial art therapy activities implemented across Bethlehem and Gaza, utilizing creative modalities such as drawing, storytelling, drama, music, sports, crafts, and recycling to promote emotional expression and resilience.
- 40 trained facilitators mobilized (30 women, 10 men), including university students, teachers, artists, social workers, and volunteers, many from the same communities served.
- 438 caregivers engaged through 18 community awareness sessions, strengthening family and community capacity to support children’s mental well-being.
- Expanded inclusion of children with disabilities and increased engagement of community leaders and village council members, enhancing sustainability and local ownership.



- Programming was tailored to local realities. In Gaza, sessions addressed acute needs, including stress management during bombardment, first aid, and memory preservation through storytelling. In Bethlehem, activities emphasized communal resilience, social cohesion, and emotional self-care, with outreach extending to refugee camps and marginalized villages.

Success Stories

"These sessions gave our children space to breathe and express what they cannot say with words," shared a caregiver in Gaza.

A student facilitator noted, *"Supporting children through art also helped me process my own fear and loss during the war."*

Beneficiaries Reached

- Children and Youth: 8,270 total participants
 - Gaza: 6,075 children in shelters, camps, hospitals, and temporary safe spacesMany participants experienced repeated displacement, food insecurity, and exposure to violence; several were children with disabilities or war-related injuries.
- Bethlehem: 2,195 children across five partner schools, a summer camp, refugee camps, and marginalized villages
- Students and Volunteers: 40 trained facilitators aged 20–40 gained applied experience in trauma-informed psychosocial support and art therapy, strengthening both community outreach and professional development.
- Caregivers: 438 caregivers (371 women, 67 men), including mothers, teachers, healthcare workers, volunteers, and community leaders, participated in mental health and resilience-building sessions.



Challenges and Solutions

The program faced significant challenges, including severe security and mobility restrictions, repeated displacement of families, widespread food insecurity, inadequate infrastructure in Gaza, and emotional exhaustion among facilitators and caregivers. In response, the program adopted a flexible and decentralized delivery model, relocating activities to safer and mobile locations, redesigning sessions to be shorter and less resource-intensive, recruiting facilitators from within the communities served, and integrating ongoing psychosocial support and mental health check-ins for facilitators through Dar al-Kalima University faculty and psychologists.

Looking Ahead

Building on the lessons learned during this reporting period, the program will prioritize repeating and scaling the psychosocial arts-based intervention to reach a similar or greater number of children and youth in Gaza and Bethlehem, responding to the sustained and growing mental health needs resulting from prolonged conflict and displacement. Future implementation will incorporate the adaptive delivery models developed during the crisis, including decentralized programming, localized facilitation, and flexible scheduling.

The program will also strengthen structured support mechanisms for facilitators and caregivers, enhance inclusive approaches for children with disabilities, and further integrate community leaders into psychosocial response efforts to reinforce local ownership and sustainability, and ensure continuity of care in highly volatile contexts.





THE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Adult Education Program advances Dar al-Kalima University's commitment to lifelong learning, social responsibility, and community empowerment by strengthening Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in Palestine, in partnership with DVV International and municipal adult education centers. Implemented between May and October 2025, the program affirmed the critical role of adult education as a cornerstone of community resilience, civic engagement, learning and local development amid ongoing social and economic challenges.

Key Achievements

Institutional Sustainability and Capacity Building

The program supported four municipal ALE centers (Al-Karmel, As-Samu', Al-Yamoun, and Beit Furiq) in developing comprehensive sustainability plans, strengthening governance structures, financial diversification strategies, and long-term planning. Specialized technical support guided centers toward more resilient operational and financial models that are responsive to local realities.

Community Engagement and Volunteerism

The program implemented five "Mujawarat" sessions and 5 community initiatives in Bethlehem Governorate. These activities engaged 104 students and volunteers, promoting active citizenship, volunteerism and teamwork, and lifelong learning. Initiatives addressed tourism, the environment, arts, and food culture, reinforcing the role of adult education in local development.

Municipal Networking and Collaboration

A networking workshop held in Ramallah in July 2025 brought together representatives of four partner municipalities, adult education centers, and program coordinators. The workshop strengthened inter-municipal cooperation and initiated an emerging coordination framework to support sustainability and joint programming beyond the project period.



Integration of Academic and Community Learning

Dar al-Kalima University served as the academic anchor of the program, hosting training workshops, 'Mujawarat' sessions, and applied youth initiatives. University students, particularly from tourism, arts, and culinary programs, played an active role, establishing a practical model linking academic learning with community-based education, now integrated into future student volunteer pathways.

Beneficiaries Reached

- 104 direct participants (students and volunteers).
- Over 100 community members engaged through local initiatives.
- Women comprised over 60% of participants.
- Four municipal ALE centers strengthened institutionally and operationally.
- University students engaged as a new core constituency in community learning.

Challenges and Solutions

Despite the intense, dire political situation which resulted in movement restrictions and security challenges for the young people, the program adapted through digital coordination and flexible implementation, enhancing staff competencies in online facilitation, documentation, and monitoring.

Looking Ahead

Future priorities include operationalizing sustainability plans, expanding thematic community learning including digital skills and community entrepreneurship, strengthening municipal co-ownership, enhancing university–community integration through structured student engagement and developing a digital monitoring and evaluation system to track long-term social and economic impact.



THE RAMI ZAH KHOURI INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP HUB

The RZK-Hub at Dar al-Kalima University advances youth-led entrepreneurship by serving as an incubator for creative and social enterprises generated by DAK students, graduates, faculty, and community members through training and capacity building, mentorship, networking and seed funding.

Key Achievements

Youth Entrepreneurship and Capacity Building

Between September 2024 and August 2025, the RZK-Hub supported 46 young entrepreneurs, the majority of whom were women, reflecting the Hub's strong commitment to women's economic empowerment. Participants included 31 Dar al-Kalima University students and 15 graduates and artisans, representing a diverse cohort at different stages of their entrepreneurial journeys. As part of the program, 15 students successfully completed a three-credit Entrepreneurship course and developed final business project proposals, four of whom advanced to the incubation phase, where they received targeted support to further develop and implement their enterprises.

Academic and Faculty Engagement

A total of eight faculty members actively contributed to the RZK-Hub's activities, with six providing mentorship and specialized training to emerging entrepreneurs and two supporting the podcast production program. This faculty engagement played a key role in bridging academic knowledge with applied entrepreneurial practice, reinforcing the University's commitment to experiential learning and community-oriented education.

Strategic Partnerships

During the reporting period, the RZK-Hub significantly expanded its institutional partnerships and



resource base, strengthening the sustainability and reach of its programs. This included securing a seven-month RISE Grant from Build Palestine for the 2025–2026 academic year, which will support the continued development of youth-led enterprises. The Hub also deepened its collaboration with Turquoise Mountain (TIM), which provided comprehensive training and awarded grants to selected entrepreneurs. In addition, a new partnership with the MISHKAL Project was established and is scheduled for implementation in Fall 2025, further broadening the Hub's programmatic scope and opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs.

“Lilies of Gaza: Women Artists in Times of War” Book

In August 2025, Dr. Inas Deeb, Manager of the RZK-Hub, in collaboration with Ms. Rana Batrawi, Manager of the Dar al-Kalima Gaza Training Center, published *“Lilies of Gaza: Women Artists in Times of War”* in Arabic and English. The book documents the artwork and stories of 22 women artists from Gaza, preserving their creative voices amid ongoing war on Gaza.

As the artists expressed: *“This historical and first-time documentation protects our artistic lives, gives us hope, motivates us to continue creating, and preserves our humanity.”*

From Training to Market Growth

On July 4, three student entrepreneurs, Abeer Brigia, Shatha Safieh, and Mahera Nassar, were selected by a professional jury to receive enterprise support grants. Shatha Safieh shared: *“After completing the Growth Program at RZK-Hub, I learned to manage my business more professionally. Today, I sell more because I am proud of my products.”* Abeer Brigia also noted that the grant enabled her to purchase a computer and produce her own designs, reducing costs and expanding her product line.

RZK-Hub Podcast

Seven podcast episodes were produced by 13 trained students and graduates, reaching hundreds of listeners through RZK-Hub's social media platforms and amplifying youth perspectives on creativity, entrepreneurship, and resilience.



Beneficiaries Reached

- 46 direct youth beneficiaries (students, graduates, and artisans).
- 15 student-led business project proposals developed through academic coursework.
- 4 emerging enterprises supported through incubation and grants.
- 13 students and graduates trained in media and storytelling through the podcast program.
- 22 women artists from Gaza supported through documentation and publication initiatives.

Women constituted over 85% of direct beneficiaries, underscoring the Hub's role in advancing inclusive economic participation.

Challenges and Solutions

Amid limited economic opportunities and restricted access to local and global markets, young entrepreneurs continued to face significant barriers to sustaining and growing their enterprises. In response, the RZK-Hub prioritized hands-on training, targeted seed grants, and personalized mentorship, while leveraging digital platforms to enhance market access and visibility. This integrated approach enabled participants to professionalize their businesses, strengthen their production and branding capacities, and reach wider audiences despite ongoing constraints.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead to the 2025–2026 academic year, the RZK-Hub will focus on advancing the implementation of its strategic plan, with particular emphasis on deepening incubation support and enabling business growth for emerging enterprises. The Hub will continue to expand and diversify its partnerships to strengthen funding streams and mentorship opportunities, while further integrating entrepreneurship support within Dar al-Kalima University's academic programs. At the same time, the RZK-Hub will work to enhance its visibility as a national platform for youth-led innovation and creative enterprise in Palestine.





PALTISANA PROGRAM

The Paltisana Program is an artisan incubator established at Dar al-Kalima University in 2020. The program empowers Palestinian artisans by providing a collaborative space and professional support to develop artisanal products in design, production, packaging, promotion, and marketing, while strengthening the sustainability of traditional crafts. To date, 112 artisans have joined the program.

Key Achievements

Capacity Building for Artisans

Paltisana organized six specialized trainings during 2024/2025, benefiting hundreds of local artisans in traditional and contemporary craft skills. Trainings included bead embroidery, Tahreereh embroidery, vegetable wool dyeing, a Tatreerz competition for puppets, and a 10-day copper engraving course implemented in partnership with the Palestinian Ministry of Culture and supported by UNESCO. These activities strengthened both traditional knowledge and product innovation.

Student–Artisan Creative Collaboration

The program linked university students with community artisans through creative production initiatives. A Fine Art graduate student illustrated the story “Issa Flies (A Sunbird’s Christmas Journey)” (2025), while a Graphic Design graduate student edited it, in partnership with ELCA Sumud Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). In addition, a Christmas card for Germany (2025) was designed by a Fine Art graduate.

Product Development and Market Visibility

The Paltisana website was redesigned and upgraded, significantly improving digital visibility and marketing. New products were added (92), spanning olive wood, embroidery, ceramics, glass, mosaic, silver, stone, gold-plated crafts, straw, and leather products, expanding the diversity and market reach of artisan goods.



Handcrafted Heritage Featured in Major Events

Artisans produced handcrafted gifts representing Palestinian heritage for major events, including an international conference in Jordan and a high school guidance day in Bethlehem Governorate. These activities strengthened the visibility of Palestinian crafts in educational, cultural, and international settings.

Design Competition in Traditional Palestinian Embroidered Dress for Puppets

A competition for DAK Fashion students focused on designing traditional Palestinian embroidered dresses for puppets. The three-stage process (training, design sketching, and final production) connected traditional Palestinian embroidery techniques with contemporary design education.

Challenges and Solutions

The program faced ongoing challenges related to limited market access and broader economic pressures that affect artisan livelihoods. In response, it strengthened digital marketing efforts through the redevelopment of its website, diversified product lines to reach wider audiences, and expanded networking efforts with cultural and international institutions to open new promotional and sales channels.

Looking Ahead

The program plans to expand artisan training programs, increase international market access through digital platforms and partnerships, and deepen collaboration between students and artisans to sustain Palestinian craft heritage while advancing design innovation.





CONSTRUCTION

A Landmark Day: New Facilities Inaugurated at Dar al-Kalima University

On March 12, 2025, Dar al-Kalima University marked a significant milestone with the inauguration of two state-of-the-art facilities that expand the university's academic capacity and further strengthen its role in community development.

The Hospitality Educational Center (HEC)

The new Hospitality Educational Center (HEC) in Bethlehem is designed to advance education in culinary arts, sustainable tourism, and hotel management, fields that are vital to the region's economy. The 10,000-square-foot green-energy facility includes classrooms, a teaching kitchen, a training restaurant, and supporting spaces that provide students with hands-on professional training.

Completed over two years at a total cost of \$1.7 million, the center was made possible through the support of international partners in the United States and Germany. The facility enables Dar al-Kalima University to modernize its curricula according to international standards, strengthen its dual-learning approach, expand student exchange opportunities, and deepen partnerships with international academic institutions.

The center represents a significant investment in the future of hospitality education in Palestine. In a region where tourism accounts for nearly 70% of Bethlehem's economic activity, the facility will help prepare students for careers in hospitality and tourism while fostering entrepreneurship and professional development.



In addition to its academic impact, the center promotes innovation through sustainable design, including solar energy, and supports new learning opportunities such as digital and internationally collaborative programs. It also expands access to professional education for both women and men, contributing to inclusive economic growth and the development of the local private sector.



Rami Zahi Khouri Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub (RZK)

The Rami Zahi Khouri Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub, a 700-square-meter facility sponsored by Dar al-Kalima University board chair Mr. Zahi Khouri in memory of his late son, Rami, was completed in just over a year at a total cost of \$600,000.

The Hub is designed to strengthen the university's capacity to cultivate entrepreneurship, innovation, and problem-solving skills among students and faculty, equipping them to address societal challenges and economic opportunities. Aligned with Dar al-Kalima University's strategic vision, the Hub establishes the institutional structures, policies, and processes necessary to make the university a catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurship in the creative industries.

Focusing primarily on the arts, the Hub leverages creative disciplines as a medium for social and economic impact. It fosters highly skilled, socially responsible, and entrepreneurial graduates while promoting practical approaches in social entrepreneurship, enabling stakeholders to identify opportunities, generate income, and build sustainable ventures. Unlike many nonprofit or educational initiatives, the Hub's emphasis on the arts allows for programs and initiatives that are scalable, replicable, and sustainable, creating vibrant spaces for innovation that extend beyond the university into the wider community.



SPECIAL THANKS

- ACT/Church of Sweden
- Bread for the World/ Churches helping Churches
- Bright Stars of Bethlehem
- Center for Church-Based Development (CKU)
- Consulat Général de France à Jérusalem
- Dar al-Kalima Förderverein
- DanChurchAid (DCA)
- DVV International
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)
- Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (EMW)
- Holy Land Christian Society
- Olive Branch Media – Common Pictures LLC
- Palestinian American Women's Association (PAWA)
- Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Stiftung Benevolentia
- Swedish Friendship Association
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ
- Zahi Khouri





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