



جامعة
دار الكلمة

DAR AL-KALIMA
UNIVERSITY

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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

This past year has been incredibly heavy and challenging, particularly as we witnessed the unfolding genocide in Gaza. Yet, it was also a year filled with new opportunities, as we proudly inaugurated the Rami Zahi Khouri Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub.

The mix of fear and hope, the highs and lows, serves as a reminder to our young people that life offers no mercy to those who give up.

As for me, I am a survivor of the Nakba of 1948, born into a well-established family in Jaffa. After spending several years in Lebanon, I witnessed my father, a respected business and church leader in Jaffa, forced to work for a former employee at a difficult stage in life, simply to support our family's survival. It was a moment that profoundly impacted me and taught me that I would never allow such a situation to happen again.

During those years, we relied on UNRWA food aid, and with a winter coat provided by UNRWA, I eventually traveled to Germany to study.

Fast forward through several global moves, I returned to Palestine in 1994—an act I had promised myself I would fulfill once I could afford it. I came back to create jobs, give back after 34 years of absence, and embrace the beautiful partnership of home. Throughout these years, I have learned to remain humble, to be generous, and to support others with both humility and generosity. These principles have defined me and guided my journey.

Ideas come and go, and often we think they are invaluable. But the reality of life is that an idea is only as good as the plan behind it. Success lies in execution. Dar al-Kalima has demonstrated over the years that it is a socially entrepreneurial university, constantly nurturing bold ideas. But more importantly, it has the skills, determination, and management to turn those ideas into reality. As board, we are committed to ensuring that DAK continues to be a success story, a shining star on the hills of Bethlehem.

Zahi W. Khouri
Chair of the Board



FOREWORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

The academic year 2023/24 began with DAK organizing and hosting its 26th international conference, centered around the theme "Land, People, and Culture," with a particular focus on the Palestinian question. The year 2023 marked the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, the catastrophe during which hundreds of Palestinian villages were destroyed and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced and denied the right to return to their homeland.

More than 200 scholars, representing 25 countries and 61 universities, participated in our conference, offering a broad international perspective. The event fostered a dynamic, interdisciplinary, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural environment that encouraged valuable dialogue and exchange. The conference was a tremendous success, leaving a lasting impact on all participants.

Just two days later, October 7th happened. The genocide that followed in Gaza deeply affected our work. Within days, we had to transition all classes from in-person to online learning. Thanks to the experience we gained during the Covid-19 pandemic, this shift was relatively seamless. However, our students and staff, who had been glued to their screens for weeks, witnessing the horror unfold on TV and social media, began to show signs of severe trauma and stress. As the first and only university offering programs in art therapy, we quickly mobilized our experts to offer individual and group therapy for students, their families, as well as staff and faculty members.

In addition to these challenges, the worsening economic situation added further strain. Palestinian workers who once worked in Israel lost their jobs. The tourism sector, which represents 70% of Bethlehem's economy, collapsed with all hotels, souvenir shops, guides, and restaurants losing their income, a crisis that continues to this day. Moreover, government employees have only been receiving partial salaries for the past 40 months, making it increasingly difficult to collect the modest tuition fees from our students.

In Gaza, the situation was even more dire. All our staff, volunteers, and students were displaced. Our campus director was able to leave Gaza with her two children and, after several months in Cairo, secured an artist-in-residence fellowship in France. Despite her relocation, she continued to manage our Gaza program remotely. Tragically, Gaza lost many of its creative artists during this period, including several who had worked with us. During Holy Week in March 2024, Israeli airstrikes bombed our Gaza campus, reducing it to rubble.

Despite these profound challenges, nothing can deter us from our mission to educate the next generation of leaders in Palestine. On the contrary, these hardships have fueled our resolve. We organized several conferences addressing academia and theology in the wake of Gaza's devastation. We also intensified our advocacy efforts to challenge the prevailing narrative by sharing the stories of our people.

Amidst the turmoil, we were able to complete the construction of the Rami Zahi Khouri Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub and break ground on our next project, the Hospitality Educational Center. We successfully resumed our academic programs without interruption and strengthened our financial position, thanks to the support of our international partners.

This resilience would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of our strong board, dedicated staff, loyal partners, and the abundant blessings from above.

Prof. Dr. Mitri Raheb
Founder & President



DAR AL-KALIMA UNIVERSITY (DAK)

The 2023/2024 academic year began in September 2023 with great promise. One month later, specifically on October 7, 2023, the war on Gaza erupted and work came to a complete halt. All plans were put on hold; teaching was held online, reminiscent of the Covid period, as students and faculty could not safely come to campus, and student activities stopped. The financial conditions of our students deteriorated, and the university was forced to think of ways to support the educational process and future of these students. Employees took a 30% cut in pay for several months and efforts were made to raise funds for student scholarships. Both tactics proved effective, and most students were able to continue their education.

By the second semester, the war was still ongoing but we decided to continue teaching using a hybrid model in which students from Bethlehem attended classes face to face, and those who could not reach campus took their classes online. Teachers either taught face-to-face when circumstances allowed, or online when they could not reach Bethlehem.

Electronic Education for Gaza University Students

During the winter term 2024, DAK University joined the initiative of the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to provide online teaching to university students in Gaza. This initiative was motivated mainly by the commitment of higher education institutions in the West Bank to maintaining a sense of hope for young people in Gaza, where all universities had been destroyed, many faculty members and students killed, and the survivors displaced and living in tents with minimal access to basic necessities. A key challenge was to have students attend classes under continuous bombardment; internet access was not available for most of the time and students had to rely heavily on recorded lectures. However, the will of the students and the commitment of the faculty prevailed.

From May to August 2024, DAK offered 39 courses to give students in Gaza the opportunity to continue their learning. On the first day of open enrollment, more than 2000 students registered, although we had to reduce the number of students accepted due to capacity limitations.

Providing online education to students in war zones is extremely challenging. We faced many disruptions due to the instability of infrastructure/internet access of students; security concerns for their personal safety; psychological and emotional stress leading to inability to focus; and language barriers between international teachers and students. To mitigate these issues, sessions were recorded and uploaded to access at any time, and DAK Arabic-speaking faculty assumed entire teaching responsibility. The most crucial conclusion so far is that providing education during times of war demands that we adapt rapidly to the changing circumstances and be highly flexible to accommodate student learning during continual displacement (some students moved more than 11 times) and security concerns. Providing psychological support is an imperative, alongside a flexible curriculum to ease pressures. Also, providing students with alternative delivery methods (uploading courses so students can access them when they can) and regular conversations with them (mainly the coordinator and faculty) to support their mental health have proven indispensable.

At the end of the first semester, faculty members were asked to complete a report in which they listed and reflected on their engagement in this experience, and to evaluate each student who attended the lectures and submitted assignments. To teach the courses, a consortium of 27 professors (7 international professors from the UAE, USA, UK, Norway, France, Portugal, and Germany, as well as 20 Palestinian professors from DAK University) participated in the initiative. The registration office issued transcripts for all the students completing the courses and these transcripts were transferred to their home universities in Gaza.

FINE ARTS COLLEGE

CONTEMPORARY ARTS PROGRAM

The Contemporary Arts Program was initiated in September 2013 and offers students training in contemporary arts with three specialization tracks: the artistic track, the art education track, and the conservation and restoration of paintings track. During the 2023/2024 academic year, many students were enrolled in the art education track. Currently, efforts are underway to combine all three tracks into one to offer a degree that allows the artist to both produce art and teach at the same time, and to acquire all the skills needed to make their way in the art world.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Ways of Seeing Exhibition: Artist and faculty member Raeda Saadeh organized an exhibition entitled Ways of Seeing during the 2023/2024 winter semester. The exhibition ran throughout the semester in the form of a screen at the entrance to DAK University main building that was visible to all passing students, faculty, and visitors. The screen displayed the names of artists and images of their artwork according to a specific topic. A total of 50 artists were featured from 23 countries, including the Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Italy, China, Cameroon, Brazil, Palestine, Algeria, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Iran, Yemen, UAE, Oman, and Syria

The topics and artwork on display related to all the

university specializations. Ms. Saadeh's main goal was to enhance student cultural appreciation, inspiration, and creativity by viewing a variety of creative works that would prompt students to discover new ideas and techniques that they may not have thought about previously.

Graduation Exhibition: An exhibition of contemporary art by senior students was held to evaluate graduation projects. The projects included painting, ceramics and textiles, and were supervised by artist Raeda Saadeh. The exhibition was curated by Manar Idrissi, Dean of Student Affairs. The evaluation committee consisted of academic staff members at DAK and other universities, as well as male and female artists, namely Dr. Rehab Nazzal, Marwa Bakri, Bashar Khalaf, and Munther Jawabreh.

Samia Halaby Foundation (SHF) Fund: In spring 2019, the Contemporary Arts Program joined with artist Samia Halaby in a project called "Embrace Your Community, Empower the Palestinian Village" to support initiatives by students and graduates to work in their communities. The fifth round was announced in April 2024 and one project was awarded to two graduates who were given support to establish an atelier/workshop under the name of Athiri. The atelier is an artistic space specialized in ceramic arts, handmade arts, and drawing. It aims to provide a fully equipped creative environment for artists and creators of all ages, where they can learn and develop their artistic skills, and implement creative projects.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year, an upgraded Contemporary Arts curriculum will focus more on developing practical artistic skills to attract more talented students and improve the quality of its graduates.



FILM PRODUCTION PROGRAM

Film Production is a bachelor's program accredited in 2013 and offers students training in five tracks within film making, including directing, editing, cinematography, sound, and script writing. During the 2023/2024 winter term, the curriculum was upgraded to include all practical and theoretical skills of filmmaking.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Film Festival Participation:

the following is a list of student films shown at film festivals:

1- Cannes Film Festival: In an important Palestinian artistic achievement, the film ***The Deer Tooth*** by Film Program student Saif Hammash was selected by LA CINEF to compete in the 77th Cannes International Film Festival, in the Student Films category, along with 18 other films out of 2,263 international entries. It is worth noting that this is the second time that DAK University students have achieved a distinguished cinematic presence at the Cannes International Film Festival. The film ***Ambience*** by student Wissam Al-Jaafari won the Student Films category during the 72nd session of the festival in 2019.

2- Sarajevo Youth Film Festival on July 20, 2024: ***The Deer Tooth*** by Saif Hammash was selected to participate in the 16th Sarajevo Film Festival in the Youth category. The film will continue its round of festivals in the coming year.

3- Al-Ma'mal in Jerusalem: Two films by DAK student Hayat Labban were screened on May 16, 2024. The films were documentaries ***Shattered Memory and Crowned by Bay Leaves***.

4- Paris Palestine Film Festival on June 15, 2024: Two films were screened at the festival, including the documentary ***Shattered Memory*** by young director Hayat Labban, and a short narrative film entitled ***The Wall*** by young director Alaa Abu Zeina.

5- The film ***Siri Miri*** by Luay Awwad was awarded the Vimeo Staff Picked Award in 2024 and it made it to the Official Selection list at the following festivals:

- Al Ard Film Festival 2023
- Haifa Independent Film Festival 2023
- Palestinian Film Festival Amsterdam 2023
- International Amity Short Film Festival 2024
- CeCinema Film Festival 2024
- Leiden Shorts 2024

It was screened in the following festivals:

- Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival 2023
- Palestine Arts Film Festival 2023
- Kalam Aflam 2024

6- The film ***Born a Celebrity*** by Luay Awwad received the Award of Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Market and reached the Official Selection list at the following festivals:

- Cairo International Film Festival 2024

- Carthage Film Festival 2024
- Cairo Shorts Film Festival 2024
- Asian World Film Festival 2024

7- The film **Shattered Memory** by Hayat Labban participated in several film festivals:

- March 2024-DOCUMED-FESTIVAL CINEMA DOCUMENTAIRE MEDITERRANEEN - Tunisia (Official Selection).
- April 2024 - Prato Film Festival - Italy (Human Rights Best Short Film)
- April 2024 - Bizerte Cinéma Festival - Tunisia (Official Selection)
- May 2024 - Manassat Film Festival - Egypt (Official Selection)
- May 2024 - Egyptian Film Festival Club - Egypt (Official Selection)
- May 2024 - ZAWYA Cinema - Egypt (Official Selection)
- May 2024 - Falastin Film Fest - Edinburgh Scotland (Official Selection)
- June 2024 - Festival Ciné Palestine (FCP) - Paris, with talk (Special Mention)
- June 2024 - Jerusalem Arab Film Festival (Khazaen archive) - Jerusalem
- July 2024 - Station Beirut - Lebanon (Official Selection)
- July 2024 - Human Screen Festival - Tunisia (Official Selection)
- July 2024 - Toronto Palestine Film Festival - Canada (Official Selection)
- July 2024 - Free Palestine International Film Festival - London (Official Selection)
- July 2024 - Casole Film Festival - Italy (Official Selection)
- July 2024 - London Palestine Film Festival - London (Official Selection)
- July 2024 - Kotka Human Right Film Festival - Finland (Official Selection)
- July 2024 - Library Al Quds University - Jerusalem Old City, with talk
- August 2024 - Al Awdah International Film Festival - Palestine West Bank, Gaza (Official Selection)
- August 2024 - Videotitlan , Latin American Video Festival - United States (Official Selection)
- August 2024 - Kaffilm International Short Film Festival - Italy (Official Selection)

Films Distribution: Mad Solution, an important Arab film distribution company, distributed three films by DAK students during the 2024/2023 academic year. The films were ***The Deer Tooth*** by Saif Hammash, ***10 Minutes Less*** by Nisreen Yassin, and ***I was Born Famous*** by Luay Awad. The films continue to be screened at festivals and have won several awards.

Looking Ahead

DAK University is seeking to re-establish its connection with CILECT (The International Association of Cinema, Audiovisual and Media Schools), which ended in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic. DAK University was offered the status of Observer and, within a few years, can attain full membership. Thus, the Film Program will benefit from the Observer status and will move to become a full-functioning member in CILECT.



PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAM - MUSIC

The Performing Arts Program is a bachelor's degree program that was accredited in 2016. It offers students education in two tracks: music performance and theater performance.

Key Achievements

- A performance for cancer patients at Al-Hussein Hospital, upon the request of the Ministry of Higher Education, by students Ibrahim Danho and Omar Swaiti during the fall semester.
- A concert by guitar student Wassim Tahoun at the Land, People and Culture conference in September 2023.
- A concert by the Amwaj Choir entitled "Dalia, Voice of Exile" took place at DAK in June 2024. Faculty member Ramzi Shomali is the pianist for the choir. This was the first public appearance for new students who joined the choir in April. The concert was a 75-minute musical tapestry dedicated to the people of Gaza.
- A student with visual impairment was enrolled in the program and was offered a full scholarship. To support and provide her with quality education, DAK University hired a teaching assistant who is also a musician with visual impairment. He was able to teach the student notes on Braille, a new experience for her.

Looking Ahead

An upgraded Performing Arts Program in Music is being delivered to incoming students of 2024/2025 to improve the quality of graduates.



ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN COLLEGE

The Architecture and Design College aims to cultivate and sustain an environment at DAK that increases diversity of knowledge, deepens design imagination and creativity, and advances a sense of affiliation among students and faculty, along with the extended Palestinian community.

The Design and Architecture College, the largest faculty of Dar Al-Kalima University, comprises four programs as follows:

INTERIOR DESIGN PROGRAM

The Interior Design Program is dedicated to fostering creativity, innovation, and sustainability in interior design. Our mission is to prepare students to become adaptive and thoughtful designers who understand the relationship between space, functionality, and aesthetics. We provide a comprehensive educational experience that emphasizes technical skills in parallel with critical design thinking. We empower students to create meaningful spaces that enhance the quality of life.

Key Achievements

Graduation Projects: In the 2023/2024 academic year, 21 students successfully implemented comprehensive design solutions within 21 design topics. The following aspects were taken into consideration: innovative design solutions; research and conceptual development; space planning; material selection; color therapy; lighting design; and sustainable design practice.

Engaging Students with Field Training:

33 students completed field training in 24 different design firms from Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Hebron and Ramallah. Students participated in a variety of projects during their six-week training in summer 2024.

Engaging Students with Innovative Training Sessions:

20 interior design students participated in two courses on laser scanning and using AI in design organized by the Rami Zahi Khouri Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub.

Student Design Projects: Many creative student design projects were worthy of note:

- . 2nd year students designed a student dorm interior design facility at DAK.
- . 3rd year students designed innovative hospitality interior design projects to enhance the tourist experience in the Bethlehem area. Student Lina Amleh recreated landmarks destroyed in Gaza city as part of her hospitality project.
- . 4th year students designed actual zero cost pieces of furniture and produced many innovative one-to-one products from discarded but sustainable materials.



Challenges and Solutions

During the 2023/2024 academic year, several challenges that arose were resolved as follows:

- Updates to the Interior Design Program: it is critical to remain current and introduce students to new technology. We initiated a new elective course on Advanced Computer Applications to introduce students to Revit Software and to the Lumion Rendering Engine.
- Financial constraints: due to the war in Gaza, many students had financial difficulties registering and moving forward with their studies. DAK worked strenuously to secure funds to sustain 140 students enrolled in the Interior Design Program.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year, we aim to engage students with local industries, textile factories, and local handicrafts as a means for them to physically produce their own designs.



GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM

The Graphic Design Program equips students with the basic principles and advanced skills in visual communication. It offers specialist courses in printing and packaging, and in multimedia and animation, to prepare graduates for diverse careers in the creative industries. Through practical education and field training, the program ensures a seamless transition into the labor market.

Key Achievements

Curriculum Development: The program introduced a newly developed curriculum combining Printing and Packaging, and Multimedia and Animation specialties. New courses such as 3D printing, information design, and advertising design will equip students with cutting-edge skills for global markets.

Field Training Program: 18 students participated in field training with local companies across Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Ramallah, and gained valuable hands-on experience in printing, animation, and multimedia. Despite obstacles like closures, students completed an average of 160 hours of training which enhanced their readiness to move into the industry.

Graduation Projects: 24 students completed innovative projects tackling societal issues through design. These projects included a health campaign for children, eco-friendly packaging for local businesses, and an animated educational series for children with special needs.

Collaborative Projects: Students collaborated with the Dar al-Majus organization and other partners to solve real-world design problems. They earned positive feedback for their efforts and gained practical experience.

Graphic Design for Advocacy: Students expressed their support for Gaza by creating impactful designs as part of course assignments during the war. This initiative allowed them to channel their emotions into meaningful visual messages that reflected their dedication to using graphic design as a tool for advocacy.

Challenges and Solutions

One of the challenges faced by the Graphic Design Program was the outdated curriculum that no longer met the needs of the evolving design industry. To address this challenge, the curriculum was updated and three tracks were combined into two academic specialties: Printing and Packaging, and Multimedia and Animation. New courses and skills such as 3D printing and information design were added to prepare students for opportunities in the job market.

Another challenge was to attract more students, and we began work on a promotional video showcasing the Program's achievements, projects, and opportunities. The video is currently in development and will be launched soon.

Looking Ahead

In the coming years, we aim to strengthen collaboration with programs from other universities and to engage more with the local community. We also plan to create a new design and innovation lab equipped with advanced tools like 3D printers, CNC cutters, digital printers, silkscreen tools, and AR/VR technology to enhance learning and creativity. Additionally, we are ambitious to launch a continuous learning program that will offer specialized courses for graduates and professional designers to keep them updated on the latest trends and skills in the design field.



THE DESIGN PROGRAM

The Design Program equips students with a strong foundation in design principles, followed by specialization in fields such as product design, packaging, fashion, and multimedia and animation, combined with training and industry experience. The Program prepares graduates to excel in diverse creative sectors and to contribute to innovative design solutions.

Key Achievements

Change of Study Plan: DAK's Vice President of Academic Affairs and design department faculty held intensive meetings aimed at improving the Design Program, including more practical and technical studios (years 1-4). These will primarily benefit fashion design students. The new plan will be implemented during the 2024/2025 academic year.

Graduation Projects: On June 28, 2024 the first Design Program graduates presented the culmination of a four-year journey in the form of a fashion show. The project titles were *"Free Prisoner"* by Dunia Ahmad; *"Hope among Fabric Threads"* by Raneen Tamimi; *"Effect"* by Zainab Danadne; *"Difference and Convergence"* by Ruqqayah Amayrah; *"Eve"* by Hala Al Amleh; and *"Country Girl"* by Katia Nasser.

Educational Field Trips: Students participated in three field trips to further consolidate acquired skills and learned theories. A field visit was organized in Hebron for second-year students as a part of the Introduction to Textiles course. Students visited the Herbawi textile factory, al-Zaro, and al-Qawasmi factories. A second field visit was held in Bethlehem to the Wonder

Cabinet Institute for first-year students as a part of their History of Design course. Students were introduced to design elements and features used in creating the Wonder Cabinet building and other design projects. Traditional Palestinian versus modern architecture were compared. Wonder Cabinet extended an invitation for DAK students to volunteer at the institute and/or take advantage of the spaces and residences on offer. A third visit was organized to the workshop of Palestinian sculptor Fawzi Nastas in Beit Jala as part of the Introduction to Sculpture course for first-year students.

Other Activities: Films *The True Cost* and *Child Labor Behind Global Brands' Best-Selling Perfumes* were screened at Wonder Cabinet on June 26, 2024, as part of the weekly film screening program. Curated by Dar Al-Kalima design instructor Diana Munayer, the screenings were followed by a public discussion on the human and environmental impacts of fast fashion and the beauty industry.



Challenges and Solutions

The transition from in-person to online learning during the first semester prompted by the war on Gaza posed challenges for practical courses. Thankfully, the instructors effectively addressed these challenges between semesters by offering intensive classes.

Another challenge is the rarity of teachers specialized in the field of fashion design. Possible solutions could be to invest in our graduates to continue graduate studies and attract them to join our academic staff. Graduate Katia Nasser has been accepted to an MA degree in Fashion Design at Pratt Institute in New York in September 2025.

Looking Ahead

The curriculum will be monitored constantly and updated to further enhance graduate readiness to enter the job market. The addition of fashion design studios and recruitment of additional teachers would attract more potential students to enroll on the program.



THE ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM

The Architecture Program is a new, five-year BA degree at DAK University that started in September 2023. The program was designed to fulfill the national strategy of creating young, talented, and skilled graduates who can contribute to the development of architectural design in Palestine. The program offers a comprehensive education in accordance with international standards and sensitivity to the preservation of the Palestinian context and culture.

Key Achievements

Field Visits: Several field visits took place to historic sites and significant architectural buildings in Bethlehem to broaden the students' imagination and vision as an introductory stage for the art of architecture.

Illustrations and Drawings: Below are illustrations and drawings made by first-year architecture students, and which demonstrate the quality of teaching and delivery.

Looking Ahead

The Program will establish and maintain relationships with relevant design professions to respond academically to changes in design practice and markets. It will also coordinate and cooperate with national and international academic institutions in the field of architecture.

CULTURAL MANAGEMENT COLLEGE

CULTURAL AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PROGRAM

The Cultural and Sustainable Tourism Program is a dynamic and vibrant academic unit that offers a BA degree in Cultural and Sustainable Tourism. This unique Program prepares students for careers in tourism management roles across multiple types of organization such as the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and various tour guide associations.

Key Achievements

- Dr. Ghassan Nagagreh, Program Coordinator, delivered a paper at the Land, People and Culture Conference at Dar al-Kalima University in October 2023.
- Ms. Amina Shalalda, a graduate of the Program, was selected to present her graduation project at the International Congress of History and Archaeology of the Middle East, to take place in June 2025 in France. Her contribution will be under the title UNESCO's Role in Palestine.

Challenges and Solutions

Several challenges arose during the 2023/2024 academic year. Planned activities and field trips were halted by the war on Gaza and all classes moved online during the fall semester 2023. In the second term, conditions improved and it became possible to hold in-person classes and engage in some field trips.

The existing program and curriculum had to be altered, especially as the war dramatically affected the tourism industry. Faculty members began an intensive process of evaluating the Program, addressing outdated topics, and incorporating new ones. They are currently preparing a new plan to be submitted during 2024/2025 for approval.

Looking Ahead

Plans are set to expand the Program to include archaeology and tour guiding courses in the future, providing students with a flexible degree and options after graduation.



SPORTS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Sports Management Program offers a BA degree in Sports Management. This unique Program prepares students for careers in sports management roles across multiple types of organization such as gyms, sports clubs, and recreational facilities.

Key Achievements

- Nine students graduated with a BA degree this year, marking the first graduating class since the establishment of the Program.
- Local agreements were signed allowing DAK University to be represented as an official member of the national sports unions. This will open opportunities for students and faculty.

Challenges and Solutions

During the 2023/2024 academic year, the program faced tremendous challenge- due to the war and all classes were held online to ensure the safety of students and faculty. As such, the Program could not organize any sports or in-person activities. Activities were partially resumed during the second semester.

Looking Ahead

Plans to expand the Program are set to include more practical courses and to involve students in different national championships.



GRADUATE STUDIES AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH COLLEGE

The College of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research in Art, Art Therapy, Interior Design, and Management of Cultural Institutions is committed to advancing knowledge, creativity, and innovation through interdisciplinary research and graduate programs that explore the diverse expressions of art and culture. Its mission is to cultivate a community of scholars and artists dedicated to preserving cultural heritage, fostering cross-cultural understanding, and addressing global challenges through the transformative power of art and culture.

Key Achievements

- 39 graduate students (26 art students, 13 management) registered for thesis/project and academic and artistic advisors were selected to ensure the successful completion of student projects.
- Eight graduate students (six from management of cultural institutions and two from art programs) completed their graduation theses/projects discussions and examinations.
- Six students graduated successfully (five from management of cultural institutions and one from the art program).

- Key policies were developed to manage graduate programs, including supervision policy, supervision forms and guidelines, and writing and organizing MA theses.
- Partnership with Saint Paul University in Canada (SPU) was initiated.
- A fourth graduate program in interior design was accredited.

Challenges and Solutions

A key challenge was the level of English language and writing skills of students, a problem common to almost all students in Palestinian universities. The challenge was addressed by practicing writing projects in coursework, reading research articles for the courses on offer, organizing research workshops, and intensive meetings and supervision with students. Students were encouraged to consult with outside researchers and academics in their related areas of interest.



Looking Ahead

In the coming academic year, program coordinators and committees will review evaluation templates and guidelines prepared by the dean to assess and enhance the different programs. This review will be completed by the end of April 2025. These plans will be presented via a workshop format to allow internal and external stakeholders to finalize and validate their programs. This will strengthen the relevance to Palestinian culture and context to best serve Palestinian graduates.

In addition, the graduate program committees will develop effective recruitment and communication strategies to attract new students for the four existing programs. The College will build a roster of competent thesis supervisors, art project technical supervisors, and PhD professors, in addition to researchers in the different areas in which the College specializes.



TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE (TCC)

The Technical Community College provides vocational and practical training programs with 11 associate diploma degrees and two professional diplomas. The degrees on offer during 2023/2024 were Culinary Art and Management; Jewelry Art; Music Performance; Still Photography; and Community Performing Arts. The College seeks to build effective partnerships with the private sector to ensure the employability of its graduates, as well as with local and international communities, to enhance visibility of student artistic expression.

Key Achievements

- An exhibition was held in winter 2024 for first-year photography students as a final assessment in the studio course. Nine students participated in this exhibition with different themes and topics.
- Students of the Community Performing Arts Program performed four contemporary dance shows at the end of the winter semester 2024. Each show had its own theme and message.
- The College produced a short promotional video for the Community Performing Arts Program. This was disseminated on social media and on the DAK University website.

- Graduation projects for the Culinary Arts and Management, Still Photography, and Jewelry Art programs were showcased at the end of the winter term 2024 in a public presentation of student designs.

- A fruitful synergy was forged between Still Photography and the Community Performing Arts Programs. Faculty staff worked together in developing joint courses and projects following intensive meetings in November 2023.

- Students of Culinary Art and Management received field training of 400 hours that enabled them to work in the field and engage with the private sector. One of the remarkable activities during the academic year was the preparation of a traditional Palestinian breakfast in a large buffet.

Looking Ahead

For the coming academic year, the College will focus on inviting entrepreneurs in relevant specialties to share their experiences with students to inspire and motivate students further. Master classes and workshops will be offered for culinary, photography, and jewelry students to introduce new and innovative techniques and designs.



GLOBAL EDUCATION AND EXCHANGE

The Office of Global Education and Exchange was established in 2022 to provide an innovative vision and strategic leadership in advancing international relations with global universities. The office facilitates and coordinates all international academic partnerships and outreach programs, in addition to overseas mobility (of DAK University students and faculty), and services for international students and scholars from partner universities.

Key Achievements

- Currently DAK University has active partnerships with 12 universities, including three from Uzbekistan, one from Hungary, two from Finland, two from Belgium, one from Germany, one from the Netherlands, one from the USA, one from Columbia. Six more MOUs are pending, including one from Italy, one from Denmark, one from the USA, one from Hungary, one from France, and one from the UAE.
- A two-year agreement was signed with DAAD under which archeology professor Dr. Jutta Haser was seconded to DAK to teach at the Cultural and Sustainable Tourism Program, with an option to extend the agreement for another year.

In addition to partnering with universities around the globe, the Office of Global Education and Exchange is responsible for two key programs:

THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM

The Fulbright program from the USA offers competitive, merit-based grants for students, scholars, teachers, professionals, and groups. Grants are available for US citizens to go abroad and for foreign (non-US) citizens to go to the USA. The main aim of the program is to strengthen ties through international educational and cultural exchange programs between US universities and universities from 160 partner countries. The main component of the program that we have benefited from and aim to build upon is the Fulbright Specialist Program, which sends US faculty and professionals to serve as expert consultants on curriculum, faculty development, institutional planning, and related subjects at academic institutions abroad for a period of two to six weeks.

Prior to the war on Gaza, DAK hosted the acclaimed artist and academic, Professor Theodora Skipitares, an Art and Design Education professor at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, for three weeks in September 2023 via the Fulbright Specialist Program.

While at DAK, Professor Skipitares worked with students and faculty members of the Department of Fine Arts, giving workshops on shadow theater and puppet making. She also visited local theaters and gave workshops to staff. The enthusiasm and resourcefulness of DAK students and faculty

impressed Professor Skipitares, especially their production of art that is intentional and mindful of the local context.

Plans to host another professor from Pratt Institute, namely Professor Shireen Suliman from the Fashion Design program, to work with students and faculty did not materialize because of the war and the halt imposed on all travel to the West Bank by American professors. As a commitment to the friendship forged with the Pratt Institute, Professor Suliman worked online with students and faculty on the students' graduation projects. This connection also encouraged DAK Fashion Design program graduate Katia Nasser to apply for the MA program in Fashion Design at Pratt Institute; she was accepted and was given a substantial scholarship to attend the Institute for the 2025/2026 academic year.

The Erasmus+ Program

As part of the Erasmus + Program, DAK University has partnered with several European universities. Exchange programs due to take place in 2023/2024 were put on hold and should resume in the 2024/2025 academic year.

Challenges and Solutions

The main challenges to the program were because of the war, which effectively stopped DAK University from connecting face to face with professors and students from outside universities. Nevertheless, we continued to work with our partners throughout the year and acquired new ones with the aim of restarting activities once the war ends and people can visit Bethlehem again.

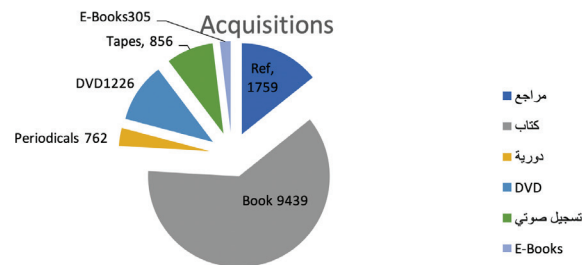
Looking Ahead

Alongside the MOUs and collaboration with different universities, we look forward to signing more MOUs in 2024/2025 and activating Erasmus exchange programs, especially for DAK students and faculty. We look forward to reactivating the Fulbright Program and welcoming new faculty members during the 2024/2025 academic year.

LIBRARY

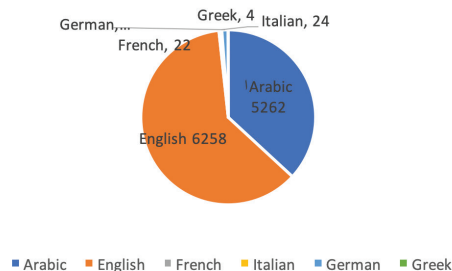
The 2023/2024 academic year saw further acquisitions of library resources, both physical and online, especially as MA students began work on theses and needed substantial support. The library was able to meet the new needs of students and faculty members, in addition to its usual work of providing library services to DAK University faculty, students, and employees.

Type of Acquisitions



Number of Titles by Language

Number of Materials According to Language



Key Achievements

- The library became a member of PALICO - Palestinian Academic Libraries Association on April 1, 2024. This is an association that provides free services to Palestinian academic libraries.
- DAK subscribed to a set of electronic databases through the PALICO pool.
- Obtained temporary free subscriptions to electronic databases (Al-Manhal, EBSCO).
- Linked and downloaded all faculty members' materials to the library system, making these materials available in electronic form 24/7.
- Increased the placement of e-books on the library page.
- Established links to international libraries that provide full-text collections. This has had a positive impact on the academic level of students.

Looking Ahead

During the coming year, the library will undertake projects to develop information services for students and faculty members. These projects will expand the library's electronic collection, provide the largest possible number of books with full text, and subscribe to several specialized magazines and electronic databases on a permanent basis.



Student Affairs

The Student Affairs Unit was greatly affected by the war on Gaza as students and faculty could not come to campus, and in-person teaching was replaced by online classes. As a result, student events were not held during the fall semester 2023. Once it became possible to return to campus in February 2024, the Unit organized several student activities as follows:

STUDENT LECTURES AND EVENTS

- An online lecture under the title How to Read the Psychological Situation in Times of War was held on March 19, 2024.
- A series of online lectures was initiated to help students deal with the ongoing trauma of war on Gaza. The series included lectures presented by the Art Therapy Program faculty to students and participants in the Healing War Trauma project. The aim was to help students cope with the situation by highlighting psychological and mental challenges and developing mechanisms to overcome them.
- An event to distribute student scholarships took place on April 24, 2024. An impressive 45% of all students at DAK University received scholarships that varied

between academic excellence and financial aid grants. The granting of scholarships demonstrates DAK's unwavering support for its students during their academic journey.

FILM SCREENINGS

- A film screening event took place on April 3, 2024, initiated by the DAK Cinema Club. The screening included films directed and produced by students and graduates of the DAK's Film Production Program and included the following films:

-By the Sea, directed by Wisam Al-Jaafari.

-A Short Film About Kids, directed by Ibrahim Handal.

-Born Famous, directed by Loai Awad.

-In the Middle, directed by Mahmoud Hamdan.

-Mar Mama, directed by Majdi Al-Omari.

- A screening of the film Vibrations from Gaza, followed by a discussion with director Dr. Rehab Nazzal, took place on May 8, 2024. The screening was organized in collaboration with the Rami Zahi Khouri Hub. The discussion revolved around the director's experience in filming and directing the film in Gaza, as well as the production stages and development of the idea. The film highlights the stories of children with hearing disabilities and the impact of war on them. The concept of the film

emerged following the director's participation in a program to rehabilitate children with hearing disabilities, caused during wars on Gaza, through the arts.

- A screening of the film Janin Jenin by director Mohammed Bakri took place on June 5, 2024. This film is a sequel to the director's previous work entitled Jenin Jenin, which Israel banned from showing. After the film screening, a discussion with Bakri took place about the documentary and his work in the field of cinema, as well as his artistic experience in general.

DANCE PERFORMANCES

A dance performance by students of the Community Performing Arts Program took place on May 10, 2024 for fellow students. The performance preceded their end of semester performance to which family members and friends were invited.

EXHIBITIONS

- The opening of the Takatuf Exhibition for the Arts Program's MA students took place on April 5, 2024. This collective exhibition addressed important issues and brought together the talents of DAK graduate students. The exhibition enabled students to express their feelings and questions during a difficult time faced by the Palestinian people and shed light on the impact of the Israeli bombardment and the resilience of Palestinians. The exhibition was not only an artistic expression but also aimed at conveying a global message about the need for solidarity, hence its name, to stand against the realities of oppression and tyranny. This project is seen as a step towards the comprehensive construction of a society that confronts all forms of discrimination, including colonialism, and demonstrates the power of art as a means of expressing hope and calling for change.
- The graduation exhibition for BA Contemporary Art students was opened on July 12, 2024. The event was also an evaluation of the Exhibition Management course as these students were responsible for curation and organization. The Smith Hall and adjoining studio were utilized and arranged to suit the various artistic works exhibited, which included conceptual art, videos, and ceramics.

REGISTRATION

Enrolled (Academic Year 2023/2024)

College	Degree	Program	Percentage
Technical Community College	Associate Diploma	Community Performing Arts	1%
	Associate Diploma	Culinary Arts & Management	6%
	Associate Diploma	Documentary Film Production	0%
	Associate Diploma	Jewelry Arts	3%
	Associate Diploma	Music Performance	0%
	Associate Diploma	Photography	3%
	Continuous Education	Culinary/Jewelry/Photography/Music	2%
Arts	Bachelor	Contemporary Arts	3%
	Bachelor	Film Production	6%
	Bachelor	Performing Arts	3%
Tourism & Cultural Management	Bachelor	Cultural & Sustainable Tourism	4%
	Bachelor	Sport Management	3%
Architect & Design	Bachelor	Architectural Engineering	2%
	Bachelor	Design	6%
	Bachelor	Graphic Design	17%
	Bachelor	Interior Design	26%
Graduate Studies	Master	Arts Therapy	2%
	Master	Management of Cultural Institutions	5%
	Master	Visual & Performing Arts	8%

Gender Distribution of Students (2023/2024)

Gender	Percentage
Females	63%
Males	37%

Graduates 2024

College	Degree	Program	Percentage
Technical Community College	Associate Diploma	Jewelry Arts	5%
	Associate Diploma	Music Performance	1%
	Associate Diploma	Culinary Arts & Management	14%
	Associate Diploma	Documentary Film Production	2%
	Continuous Education	Culinary Arts & Management	1%
Arts	Bachelor	Performing Arts	2%
	Bachelor	Film Production	3%
	Bachelor	Contemporary Arts	6%
Tourism & Cultural Management	Bachelor	Cultural & Sustainable Tourism	3%
	Bachelor	Sport Management	7%
Architect & Design	Bachelor	Graphic Design	22%
	Bachelor	Design	6%
	Bachelor	Interior Design	22%
Graduate Studies	Master	Visual & Performing Arts	1%
	Master	Management of Cultural Institutions	5%

Distribution of Students by Governorate (2023/2024)

Governorate	Percentage
Hebron	14%
Jerusalem	13.3%
Bethlehem	63.3%
Jenin	0.7%
Ramallah	3.5%
Salfit	0.6%
Tulkarm	0.6%
Palestinians from the 1948 territories	2%
Qalqilya	0.2%
Nablus	1.8%

DAR AL-KALIMA UNIVERSITY CONFERENCES

During the 2023/2024 academic year, three international conferences were organized: one in Bethlehem, Palestine and two in Istanbul, Turkey. The following is an overview of these conferences.

LAND, PEOPLE AND CULTURE CONFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

Following its academic and contextual traditions, Dar al-Kalima University held its 26th international conference from September 28 to October 5, 2023, under the theme of land, people and culture. The conference had particular focus on the Palestinian question as 2023 marked the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, the catastrophe in which hundreds of Palestinian villages were destroyed and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to flee their homes in Palestine and have been denied the right of return ever since.

As the only university in Palestine specialized in art and culture, DAK University has launched various undergraduate and graduate academic programs, and a wide range of professional diplomas. These programs develop understanding and engagement with culture and art industries, research, and publishing as a contribution to the global discussion on formation of identities and effective communication within cultural experiences across the globe.

The idea to hold a conference on this theme was pertinent. Studies on colonialism, migration, and identity formation outside the "motherland" are increasing in number and scope, including studies on culture and histories of indigenous nations, heritage and material cultures, and decoloniality/postcolonial research within fields of cultural studies.

In recent years, several papers, doctoral theses, and books have been published focusing on aspects of decoloniality/postcolonialism, culture and identities. The conference provided a forum in Palestine for the sharing of such research and promotion of scholarly debate, interaction and dialogue among Palestinian researchers and other international participants. This international conference proved to be an essential step towards enhancing further academic and cultural interaction within the cultural sphere.



ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The participation of over 200 scholars from 25 countries and 61 universities gave the event an international scope and perspective, and fostered an essential, interdisciplinary, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural environment and dialogue. Unfortunately, several scholars from the global south could not obtain a visa from Israel to attend the conference. DAK not only created space for academic discourse, but also for cultural and artistic experiences representative of Palestine. From speeches on behalf of the Minister of Higher Education and the Higher Presidential Committee for Church Affairs, to panels ranging from Palestinian diaspora literature, mapping the Nakba, decolonizing architecture, and the ethics of archaeology, to post-colonial theology, a fine arts exhibition and even cultural tours, there was a full and enriching itinerary centered around Palestine.

The main aim of the conference was "to spark international scholarly debate and dialogue on Palestinian culture and heritage, and to facilitate further discussions on the issue of culture, decoloniality, postcolonialism, material culture and identities".

The conference exceeded all our expectations (see feedback from participants below).

The conference ended on October 5, two days prior to the October 7 event. Most of the participants were already back in their home countries, except for a few who had to be evacuated by their embassies.

The contrast between the atmosphere at the conference and that after October 7 could not have been greater.

For three days, the scholars presented over 60 papers in twenty panels with several sub-themes (program attached):

- Land, people and material culture under the scope of heritage and archeology.
- Land, people and settler colonialism from an international perspective.
- Land, people and religion: the role of religion in settler colonialism and resistance.
- Land, people and race.
- Land, people and visual art before and after the Nakba: the role of visual culture in constructing memories and narratives.
- Land, people and performing arts: historical and contemporary analyses on performing art and formation of identities.

The conference program was conducted in English with several panels in Arabic.

EXCURSION

Ahead of DAK's 26th International Conference on Land, People, and Culture, a two-day cultural tour allowed conference participants to view different cities, villages, and stories through a Palestinian social, cultural, political, and historical lens. As such, it was an intentional precursor to the conference theme of Land, People, and Culture. Whether it was learning of Israeli settler colonialism's impact on Palestinian land and history from a former member of the Knesset, eating maqloubah for lunch and kanafeh for dessert (famous Palestinian dishes), or learning from an Arab human rights activist, every stop on the tour highlighted Palestine. The tour began in Jaffa, went to Ein Hod, Nazareth, the Upper Galilee, Magdal Shams, the Golan Heights, Jerusalem, and concluded in Bethlehem where the conference continued the critical responsibility of educating on Palestinian history and current realities. It was an impactful tour for all participants, and especially for Palestinian participants living in the diaspora.

Palestinians from the diaspora expected that DAK would provide a safe space to discuss occupied Palestine.

As such a space is often not available in the west, specifically the USA and Europe, there was excitement to participate in decolonial/anticolonial discourse on a

context deeply related to Palestinian identity. There was also the fear of racial profiling and discrimination at Ben Gurion airport. As Palestinians in diaspora, it is tough to comprehend the need for a visa from the occupier, Israel, to visit occupied Palestinian ancestral lands. It is a constant reminder of the ongoing Nakba, the displacement and erasure of Palestinian land, people, and culture, both physically and metaphorically.

The tour was powerful on multiple fronts. Outside of its educational component that allowed Palestinians in diaspora to learn more and even share their own stories and experiences with the land, the tour provided the opportunity for them to see parts of occupied Palestine for the first time. Some had been prevented by the Israeli occupation from visiting some locations, even sites integral to their own family history. The opportunity to visit invoked feelings of shock, wonder, melancholy, and ultimately, gratitude. Gratitude not just to DAK for creating the opportunity but for intentionally cultivating a safe space where participants could learn from each other's academic work and personal stories of colonialism. DAK ultimately provided the opportunity for everyone to learn from and empower one another while situated in the Palestinian context.

CONNECTING TO THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Running concurrently to the cultural tour was the Black Jerusalem tour group centered around "exploring the sites, stories, and symbolism surrounding this sacred space through the lens of a Black and African diasporic experience." The Bayan Islamic Graduate School provided this inaugural tour, led by Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III (Senior Pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ) and Dr. Rami Nashashibi (Executive Director, Inner-city Muslim Action Network and MacArthur Fellow). Black Jerusalem partnered with DAK's Land, People, and Culture conference to expose tour participants to academic discourse about Palestine's past and present under Israeli occupation, ultimately collaborating with Black Jerusalem's itinerary of painting a holistic and accurate picture of the Holy Land today.

Black Jerusalem's tour guides and some tour participants contributed to DAK's conference in panel sessions and musical performances. This successful partnership enhanced DAK's motto "that we may have life and have it abundantly." Whether it be giving Palestinians in diaspora the opportunity to come to the land of their familial and cultural ancestry, or the Black Jerusalem tour group reframing Jerusalem and the Holy Land through a Black and African lens, both groups

contributed to the fruition of our vision to strengthen and grow.

PUBLICATIONS

It was clear from the outset that this rich conference must be documented. Each of the twenty panels was videoed and made available on the university website: <https://www.daralkalima.edu.ps/en/video>. Selected papers are scheduled for publication via DAK University Press later in the year.

Several scholars wrote articles about their time in Bethlehem. Here are some English-language articles:

<https://johnculbert.wordpress.com/2023/10/28/the-view-from-dar-al-kalima/>
<https://baptistnews.com/article/on-building-walls/>
<https://www.daralkalima.edu.ps/en/news/1696180819>

TESTIMONIALS

The following are some testimonials by participants in their evaluation forms:

"The diversity of the conference was surreal. Compared to other academic conferences I've attended; it was empowering to witness academics speak about their studies pertaining to Palestine in connection with their Palestinian identity or the identities and stories of their own communities. Being in a space not dominated by whiteness

but instead permeated with ethnic diversity was a game changer."

-anonymous

"I appreciated learning more about the Palestinian context. Before traveling here, I had limited knowledge but after attending the cultural tours, conference, and festival, I am more informed on the Palestinian experience and can even draw connections to the South African history of apartheid and the black South African current reality."

-anonymous

"Dar al-Kalima University went above and beyond for the conference. As an academic, some conferences can be focused solely on academic papers and discourse, but Dar al-Kalima added elements of culture and art that made the experience holistic. It went beyond academia to capture and share the artistic and cultural expression of Palestine. For this, I am grateful to have gotten to witness it."

-anonymous

"It was monumental to not only visit Palestine but share my own story as a Palestinian in diaspora. Dar al-Kalima University not only provided this important space but empowered us all to share our stories."

-anonymous

THE WEST, PALESTINE, AND THE REST: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN AN AGE OF GENOCIDE CONFERENCE

Dar al-Kalima University and the Institute for Palestine Studies convened a conference titled The West, Palestine, and the Rest: Knowledge Production in an Age of Genocide in Istanbul, Turkey, between May 17 and May 19, 2024. In light of the genocide in the Gaza Strip, the intensification of settler colonial and necropolitical violence across the map of historic Palestine, and the suppression of Palestinian and pro-Palestine voices around the world, the two organizations saw the need to convene a space for reflection on the importance of centering Palestine and Palestinian liberation. As the genocide unfolded, major academic institutions were competing to issue statements condemning, demonizing, and dehumanizing the Palestinian people, thus providing justification to Israel's genocidal campaign. Israel has destroyed more than 60% of the educational facilities and all 11 universities have been completely wrecked. Palestinian intellectuals have been systematically targeted. Entire generations are left out of

school and struggling to gain access to the basic amenities of life. Cultural institutions, theaters, archives, libraries, mosques, and churches have been destroyed.

This genocide in Gaza is not exceptional to the history of Israeli violence or (settler) colonial violence in general. The conference tackled the implications of this dehumanization not only for Palestinians but for the oppressed, indigenous, and colonized around the world. With the performative prominence of notions of decoloniality and the decolonial in Western academia, the question arises of whether decolonization is actually the desired goal? What responsibilities do intellectuals, artists, and academics have in the face of genocide and ethnic cleansing? How are the liberal notions of 'academic freedom' and 'free speech' eclipsed by race, gender, class, and nationality, deeming certain communities unworthy of advocacy and speech? How do we convene spaces for knowledge production that resist censoring pressures and assert Palestinian liberation and self-determination? How do we collectively think about protecting and supporting students, professors, artists, activists, and practitioners

who take a staunch stance against dehumanization and oppression?

The conference convened 22 scholars from seven countries, with a considerable number of young Palestinians from the diaspora.

Several recommendations were made, including the importance of documenting the destruction of educational and cultural facilities in Gaza, developing online educational platforms for scholars and students at the universities in Gaza, and planning a second such conference in 2025.



THEOLOGY AFTER GAZA CONFERENCE

DAK convened a mini-international conference from May 21 to 24, 2024, entitled Theology after Gaza. This conference followed DAK's successful 26th international conference on Land, People and Culture in October 2023. The conference, convened at short notice, came as an urgent theological response to the genocide taking place in Gaza and was in cooperation with the Council for World Mission as its first DARE Middle East conference. The conference offered an intellectual forum where Palestinian and Middle Eastern scholars could meet with international colleagues, with emphasis on scholars from the global south, to share experiences, insights, and research on the failures of theology during the war on Gaza, and the implications for religious research in general from a decolonial perspective. A total of 22 conference papers and proceedings were submitted, and a book is to be issued in September 2025 as a Cascade book with Wipf and Stock publishers in the USA. Considering Israeli restrictions on some scholars, Istanbul, Turkey, was chosen as a venue for the conference.

Gaza is a crucial litmus test for international morality and ethical standards in the twenty-first century. The Israeli onslaught on Gaza has exposed deep biases and blind

spots in the West and most of the Western establishment, political class, and churches have provided blanket support for Israel politically, militarily, economically, legally, and theologically. Alleged commitments to human rights, universal values, and principles of non-violence have fallen by the wayside when it comes to the Palestinian people. The genocidal war on Gaza has also made it abundantly clear that for the past century, the people of Palestine have been fighting not just the Zionist movement and the State of Israel, but an entrenched colonial order headed initially by the British empire and more recently by the USA with European backing. It should come as no surprise that it was left to South Africa, a prime victim of settler colonialism and apartheid, to institute proceedings of genocide against the State of Israel at the International Court of Justice, while the countries that rallied in support of Israel were all, without exception, countries with a settler colonial past.

In light of this settler-colonial reality and moral collapse, instead of opposing the genocide of the Palestinians and speaking truth to power, the leaderships of major academic institutions in the West (SBL as one example) competed to issue statements condemning and demonizing the Palestinian people, thus providing moral

support to Israel. Faculty members, students, academic associations, student groups, and others who campaigned against the genocide and refused to toe the pro-Israeli line have been threatened with loss of employment, suspension, doxing, and other forms of reprisal and harassment. Meanwhile, the ideals of academic freedom and freedom of speech have come under threat on an unprecedented scale.

Participants at the conference presented 27 papers discussing the following questions: What responsibilities do theologians and scholars of different faith traditions have in the face of genocide and ethnic cleansing? Do theologians and scholars of religion have moral duties beyond the traditional one of speaking truth to power, especially since it is evident that the powerful know the truth but choose to ignore it? How can these external pressures be resisted, and the prophetic role of theology be asserted? How have notions of "antisemitism" been weaponized to silence advocacy on behalf of the Palestinian people, and how can this weaponization be resisted? How can scholars and researchers in vulnerable positions, including students and precarious academics, be protected against reprisals? What kinds of theological research are scholars obliged to undertake in the face of genocidal

aggression? What role can scholars from the global south play against the weaponization of scriptures by western theology, the State of Israel, or certain Islamic groups or countries? What steps are needed to decolonize theology and knowledge production?



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

The DAK Training Center in Gaza was established in 2020 to empower the next generation of young, talented individuals and artists in Gaza by presenting them with opportunities for learning and professional development, incentivized community engagement, livelihood support, and possibilities for local and international exposure through DAK networks. Just prior to the war on Gaza in 2023, the DAK Gaza Training Center provided courses for more than 300 participants and reached more than 1600 children through outreach activities led by the young artists. It also organized 10 collective exhibitions and provided more than 25 young artists with production scholarships and financial awards.

The Center's activities came to a complete halt once Israel launched its horrific war on Gaza in October 2023, a war that is unprecedented in scale in terms of the loss of life and injuries, destruction of infrastructure, and the devastation of any semblance of survival. The DAK

Training Center in Gaza was not spared and was destroyed in April 2024. The work team, volunteers, and beneficiaries were forcibly displaced from their homes, and it was extremely difficult to reach anyone as services, including the internet, were cut off and their security was jeopardized. We grieved the loss of some volunteers and beneficiaries, promising young artists who had a brilliant future ahead of them.

And yet, as resilience runs deep in Palestinians, the destruction of the Center only had a temporary impact. After several months of shock, we sprang into action in January 2024, focusing on promoting activities that support displaced children and their families through art and movement-based activities designed to alleviate psychological crises and foster community resilience. These activities were carried out in collaboration with a team of artists, trainers, and volunteers across various governorates of Gaza.

The steps taken to resume the work of the DAK Gaza Training Center involved the following:

- Assessing the situation in different localities with the help of staff, volunteers, students, and beneficiaries.
- Developing an emergency plan to complete suspended projects.

- Strengthening collaboration with international and local partners to support affected communities.
- Gradual reactivation of fieldwork in alignment with improvements in security and service conditions.

Through activities targeting children and their families, we sought to provide safe spaces for children to express themselves psychologically, enhance community interaction and integration, mitigate psychological trauma, and improve mental health for children and their families, with constant supervision and guidance from the faculty of DAK's Art Therapy Program. The locations in which the activities were implemented included shelter schools, displacement centers, residential communities, and children's kindergartens distributed across all governorates of Gaza (Gaza City, North Gaza, Deir al-Balah, Nuseirat, Bureij, Khan Younis, Rafah). The activities were varied: painting with colors, pottery making and clay molding, recycling and creating artistic models, mural painting in public areas, dancing, music, interactive storytelling, and other psycho-social activities.

During the reporting period, more than 36 volunteers and artists participated in implementing unique activities in different cycles and areas. Despite all challenges,

including difficulties in securing materials and safety concerns, DAK staff in Gaza carried out a remarkable job of coordinating activities and finding solutions to the lack of supplies, such as recycling empty food tins. Around 6,750 children were reached.

Testimonials from Volunteers and Children

1. Mohammed al-Kurd (artist):

"In Deir al-Balah, I managed to gather children under the shade of a safe space, where they began painting and expressing their feelings freely. The atmosphere was filled with joy."

2. Shaima al-Hadeed (artist):

"It's an indescribable feeling of happiness to see the joy on children's faces during the activities."

3. Reem (12 years old):

"I learned new things like sewing hair ties and working with cardboard. I hope these activities will come back again."

Looking Ahead

The needs are great, and it is vital to expand the activities to include more volunteers and beneficiaries. This will ensure wider coverage of targeted areas. It is also necessary to provide additional supplies to support the continuity of artistic expression, strengthen cooperation with local and international entities, and amplify the program's impact through sustained support.



HEALING WAR TRAUMA: ART THERAPY AND EMERGENCY PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS INITIATIVE

As the only higher education institution in Palestine that offers an MA degree in Art Therapy, and highly skilled faculty, researchers and staff, DAK University introduced a critical initiative entitled Healing War Trauma. This initiative is designed to empower Palestinian children and youth to cope with the psychological trauma caused by the war on Gaza through art therapy and psychosocial support. Activities included group counselling sessions to caregivers, basic psychosocial and coping skills training to trainers (mainly students and volunteers), psychosocial activities for children and youth, awareness-raising lectures and meetings for caregivers (such as families, medical personnel, etc.) and communities, and publication and distribution of a practical psychology and mental health guide for the general public. The project focused on children and youth in the Gaza Strip and Bethlehem Governorate.

The initiative was fully cemented during the summer of 2024. However, prior to that, two main cycles were implemented as pilot projects to test the validity and effectiveness of the approach. These pilots proved to be extremely impactful and life changing to all those engaged in this initiative.

The results of the pilot projects were the following:

1. A total of 296 caregivers (149 in Gaza and 147 in the West Bank, mainly Bethlehem) received group counselling sessions, with 12 sessions provided in Gaza and 12 in the West Bank. These sessions focused on caregivers in direct contact with children and youth who are experiencing severe trauma and psychological difficulties, including parents (particularly mothers), staff, faculty, volunteers, teachers, medical personnel, etc. and aged 18 to 45 years. These caregivers represented different localities, so the sessions were carried out in a hybrid format (both online and in person) to ensure that areas within Gaza included the north, middle and south, and within the West Bank included Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

The sessions were assessed via pre-post subjective evaluations. Although we cannot draw generalized conclusions due to the relatively small sample size, the results were as follows:

-There was a statistically significant improvement in participants' understanding of essential psychological issues following the sessions.

-There was a statistically significant reduction in participants' overall stress levels post-sessions.

-Although the increase in participants' overall motivation was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), the results presented a promising trend based on the existing sample.

2. A total of 130 students and volunteers (48 from Gaza and 82 from Bethlehem) were qualified to provide basic psychosocial

and coping skills techniques using art therapy. These students and volunteers already had a background in art-related mediums as they included students of the DAK MA Art Therapy Program, students of the DAK Gaza Training Center, trainers of the Dar al-Kalima Society, and other artists/youth leaders. However, it was necessary to upgrade their capabilities, particularly their psychological first aid skills, as well as detecting and working with trauma in the Palestinian context. These students and volunteers ranged between 25 and 40 years old, and were very effective in their delivery upon completing the training.

3. A total of 38 students and volunteers (18 from Gaza and 20 from Bethlehem) were selected to lead the planned psychosocial activities. The selection was based mainly on availability, diversity of backgrounds including their artistic medium, and the safety conditions in the proposed localities. The remaining trainees will be enlisted for future activities and programs.

4. A total of 3065 children and youth aged 6 to 15 years received psychosocial support through art therapy, thereby strengthening their capacities to cope with the trauma and fears resulting from continuous exposure to violence. The trained students and volunteers carried out intensive psychosocial activities for groups of 25. During some activities, there were 40 to 50 children and youth participating, particularly in Gaza as spaces were highly condensed in shelters or displacement camps and centers. The activities ranged from music and dance therapy techniques (such as feelings dance, emotion card, mirror and follow the leader) to

art and mural painting, art recycling, storytelling, and pottery. The children and youth were divided by age and represented localities within the Gaza Strip (including North Gaza, Gaza City, Deir Balah, Khan Younis and Rafah) and Bethlehem Governorate. The participants responded extremely positively when asked for feedback and shared how these activities had helped to release anxiety and fears.

5. A total of 159 people (96 females and 63 males) participated in five awareness-raising meetings held in Bethlehem and led by two experts. The meetings informed caregivers about mental health during conflicts and reducing the stigma of psychosocial issues. As a result, caregivers (including parents, teachers, trainers, school administrators, and others in direct contact with children and youth) were empowered to take proactive measures to ensure mental health for the children and youth they interact with. The meetings were conducted in collaboration with five local NGOs and youth centers. It was not possible to implement the same activity in Gaza during that period due to the challenge of getting adult groups together and online for lectures during constant interruptions and displacement. Also, access to the internet in shelters and other spaces was problematic. Volunteers who conducted psychosocial activities for children and youth connected with many of these communities to share information and techniques acquired from their own training and experience.

6. A short guide authored by a leading Palestinian expert on art therapy and DAK faculty member Dr. Nawras Kurzom was published as part of the initiative. The Practical Guide to Music Therapy presents a series of psychological musical

applications selected from the psychosocial activities used during the pilot cycles, the author's practical practice, and from recent scientific studies. The way in which these applications are presented is designed to benefit those interested in different fields, including non-practitioners. This guide also considers the local context, which differs from the Western context in which most of these musical-psychological techniques emerged. Although Arab heritage is full of examples of the use of music in psychological treatment (such as Al-Razi, Ibn Sina and others), today we do not find an applied guide in Arabic language that specialists and non-specialists can use in contexts that interest them. This guide attempts to bridge the gap and generate critical resources in Arabic. The choice of music is also deliberate as in the absence of other materials, music is always available, particularly in times of war. A larger volume of a book (in English) will be prepared as a resource for all academics and practitioners worldwide who deal with trauma cases, particularly in war zones.

While not part of this initiative, it is important to mention that DAK provided psychological first aid, release sessions, and other interventions, which are still ongoing, to many other groups and communities. In the West Bank, it catered to four categories of people: its 550+ students, its 150+ faculty and staff, families of students and faculty/staff, and more than 1000 of its beneficiaries of other programs, including the Dar al-Kalima Society's 1000+ children and youth and the Ajyal Senior Care Program's +200 senior citizens. The same is true of Gaza since DAK had established a critical presence in Gaza through its Training Center. The Center accumulated tremendous

experience in employing the arts for psycho-social and mental health support in the past. In May 2021 when the people of Gaza were subjected to Israeli airstrikes, the Center engaged in recovery efforts and offered art therapy to thousands of children, families and artists. More detailed information about such work can be found in the section on the Gaza Training Center.



THE STORIES OF PALESTINE PROJECT

The Stories of Palestine project seeks to enhance civil society engagement in preserving, reinforcing, and promoting Palestinian culture. Its specific objective is to strengthen the contribution of Adult Education Centers (AECs) in Palestinian rural and marginalized areas to foster cultural education and action. The project is a collaborative initiative between Dar al-Kalima University and DVV International, in partnership with the following eight adult education centers:

- 1- Women's Center al-Thouri Silwan (AWC), Jerusalem.
- 2- Gaza Community Centre for Youth and Adult Education at Atfaluna Society, Gaza Strip.
- 3- Khuzaa Community Centre for Youth and Adult Education at Bait Almostaqbal Association, Gaza Strip.
- 4- Mawasi Community Centre for Youth and Adult Education at the University College of Applied Science, Gaza Strip.
- 5- Arraba Community Centre for Youth and Adult Education, West Bank.
- 6- Assamou Youth Cultural Centre, West Bank.
- 7- Karmel Community Centre for Youth and Adult Education, West Bank.

8- Yamoun Community Centre for Youth and Adult Education, West Bank.

The completion date for the project was set for February 2024. Multiple events were planned to mark the culmination of this unique initiative and celebrate its achievements. However, the war on Gaza launched in October 2023 made it impossible to carry out further activities, especially since three of the eight adult education centers in the project are located in Gaza.

One highlight of the project during the reporting period was the mobile cultural festival that took place in Germany and Austria from September 16 to 23, 2025. A total of 20 participants joined the trip (11 female, 9 male), representing project staff, coordinators of the partnering adult education centers, students of the music program at DAK University, and representatives of DAK University and DVV International.

The aim of the festival was to raise awareness of Palestinian cultural heritage through local cultural expressions prepared by the eight adult education centers. These included short films by Palestinian youth, a collection of local folkloric songs compiled in a publication, master classes/workshops (including teaching Palestinian embroidery and dabka folkloric

dance), photography and painting exhibitions, culinary tasting, and crafts and artwork. A musical performance with the participation of 11 musicians and singers was organized with students from the DAK music department and a group of artists from Austria and Greece.

The festival toured three German cities (Cham, Furth im Wald, and Bad Kotzting) and two Austrian towns (Vienna and Eichgraben), with audiences of more than 750 people. The audience comprised local community members, artists, lecturers, teachers, and higher education students.



RELIGION AND STATE - MIDDLE EAST

The aim of the Religion and State Program, in operation for more than 15 years, is to contribute to more peaceful and inclusive societies in the Middle East that ensure gender equality, human dignity, justice, and freedom. The program seeks to implement actions that embody the UN's Sustainable Development Goals #5 (gender equality) and #16 (promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies).

During the reporting period, the program completed its fifth phase and began its sixth cycle. It faced challenges due to the war on Gaza during the last quarter of 2023, and several activities were halted until it was possible to resume in mid-2024. Given the resilient nature of this program, work carried on and delivered outstanding achievements. Some of the year's highlights that contributed to positive change are the following:

Culture, Religion, Higher Education, and Digital Transformation Workshops

Four national workshops were organized in Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Egypt during September 2023, following the June 2023 roundtable with the same

theme. These workshops aimed to initiate dialogue among women and youth of these critical topics and to build partnerships. In total, 87 participants, 48 female and 39 male, enrolled in the training and represented a wide range of political, socio-economic, educational, professional and religious backgrounds.

Culture and Digital Transformation Conference

The first of three regional conferences planned for the sixth cycle was organized as a roundtable over a two-day period, June 7-8, 2024, in Larnaca, Cyprus. The roundtable, entitled Religion, Culture and the Body, comprised 15 participants (10 women and 5 men), who were scholars, academics, practitioners, artists, and administrators from multi and interdisciplinary academic fields, civil society organizations, religious-based institutions, universities, cultural institutions, national human rights/women's rights groups, and sectoral bodies from Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and diaspora communities in Europe and North America.

The round table had multiple objectives, the most important of which were to foster and deepen open, inclusive dialogue, mutual respect, diverse perspectives, and critical and interdisciplinary discussions; identify challenges and propose solutions;

promote collaboration among academics, religious institutions, cultural organizations, and technology experts, and facilitate the exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices; and encourage interdisciplinary research, innovation and publications on the topics addressed by the roundtable.

The roundtable was structured into three main thematic sessions with verbal interventions by participants in English and Arabic, some including visual and audio-visual presentations, group workshops, formal and informal discussions, and introductory, plenary, and concluding sessions. The themes were the following:

I- Gender Representations/Agency and Gendered Bodies: Investigating how gender is represented and negotiated in MENA cultures, and the agency individuals have over their gendered bodies - exploring contemporary challenges and opportunities faced by women in MENA and diaspora communities.

II- Framing, Utilizing, and Controlling Bodies: Examining the ways bodies are framed and controlled by religious, social, political, and economic systems in the MENA region, and the impact of repressive legal frameworks/practices on bodily autonomy. Analyzing the role of bodies in acts of resistance against

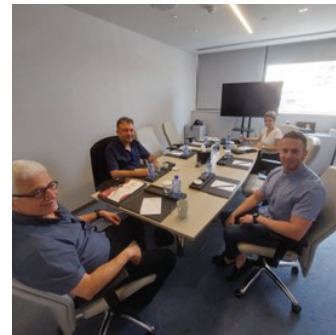
occupation and war, as well as the ways bodies are oppressed and exploited in conflict zones.

III- The Body, Socialization, and Technology: Investigating how societal norms, cultural practices, and religious beliefs influence the socialization of bodies in the MENA region, and the implications for individual autonomy and self-expression. Exploring the intersection of technology and the body in MENA, including how digital platforms shape perceptions of bodies, identities, and relationships.

To effectively address the themes of the roundtable, the participants proposed several recommendations and future actions that have the potential to generate significant impact both in the short and long term. Some of these recommendations include intellectual exchange and critical thinking, networking and collaboration, promoting arts and culture as a vehicle to raise awareness and foster dialogue on these themes, developing educational initiatives, and utilizing media and technology to reach broader audiences.

Publications

Papers from the Culture and Digital Transformation conference were published.



RAMI ZAH K HOURI INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP HUB

The Rami Zahi Khouri Hub at Dar al-Kalima University aims to create a vibrant and interactive incubator for young Palestinian entrepreneurs who are DAK students, graduates or faculty members. Its work includes organizing training, providing mentorship, and offering networking platforms to support young entrepreneurs with specific knowledge and skills to create and develop self-generating businesses (SMEs) that can strengthen arts and culture in all sectors in Palestine.

Key Achievements

A total of 103 youth participants benefited from RZK-Hub programs and activities between September 2023 and August 2024: 88 young women and 15 young men. A total of 50 DAK students and graduates participated in various programs and activities: 70% students and 30% graduates. Eight faculty members were involved in the hub: two in podcast training, two in the laser scanning studio and four in mentoring entrepreneurs. In addition, 45 participants from the PPU- Hebron University

engaged in collaboration with RZK Hub at the Hackathon Day for Gaza during May 2024.

Success Stories

The first success story is that of Sarah Abu Madi, one of DAK's MA students and a committed entrepreneur, who completed phase one of her project and moved on to the second growth phase. She succeeded in developing a sustainable business model for her art center called Rumanna, which works with children from al-Samen village. We partnered with Build Palestine to include Sarah in their fellowship program as a social impact enterprise.

The second success story is of Ameer Zabaneh, a DAK film production graduate and RZK Hub member. Together with a small team of DAK graduates, he launched a new startup called Kawader, a film rental platform. Ameer and his team turned the challenge of a shortage of professional filming equipment into an opportunity. Today they are the first and only platform that leases high quality equipment and invests the income to support the film industry by opening calls for film production in Palestine.

The final success story is the 40-hour podcast production training of 14 participants, including DAK

students, graduates, and faculty members. The goal of the training was to enable all participants to produce their own podcast series on issues that promote innovation, entrepreneurship in Palestine, the visibility of young entrepreneurs, the work of the RZK Hub, and other issues.

These success stories are only a sample of the work carried out at RZK. As one graduate commented, "Now we really feel that we are entrepreneurs because we started to share our story and tell others why and how we succeeded... our enterprise becomes an inspiring one to others. Today we feel proud of what we are doing."

Challenges and Solutions

One of the challenges faced by RZK Hub was how to support young artists in Gaza. This summer, RZK worked with 35 women artists from Gaza to collect their artwork for sale on different platforms so that their visibility and economic conditions can be enhanced. It was not easy as communications were constantly interrupted due to inconsistent internet and electricity services. To help connect and enable the evaluation of the artwork before putting it for sale, RZK formed a committee of jurors comprised of Gaza Center staff and DAK Bethlehem faculty. The committee evaluated the work and made

connections according to different time schedules. A digital location was created to help artists to share their work.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year, the RZK Hub will collaborate with other accelerators and institutions that support entrepreneurship projects and startups, particularly in the arts and social enterprises. Also, RZK will launch a new call for the 2024/2025 entrepreneurship training program. It will include up to 15 highly committed entrepreneurs (1\3 students, 1\3 graduates and 1\3 from outside the university) who have already developed their business plan and need further training and mentoring in the second phase - the growth phase. The participants will work intensively on the growth of their projects to become more developed and sustainable SMEs. The showcase event will be at the end of July 2025.

A special year will be dedicated for artists from Gaza, especially women artists. Support will be offered through different tracks: RZK will conduct online training for 25 artists (who have already registered) at the beginning of 2025 and their work will be documented in a digital book. A third track will be to place their work

online on different platforms to help sell copies of their art pieces. Finally, podcast production will continue with the aim of creating a community of entrepreneurs, artists and educators who raise pressing issues that promote entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity.



PALTISANA PROGRAM

The Paltisana Program is an incubator for artisans from Palestine established at DAK University in 2020. Since then, a total of 100 members have joined Paltisana since it provides a supportive space for local artisans to meet and discuss their issues and needs. It also offers capacity building services that are vital to develop artisanal products in terms of design, production and packaging, and the promotion and marketing of products.

The main highlights of the Paltisana Program during 2023/2024 were the following:

- A three-day wheat straw training by Salma Bozyeh held in February 2024.
- A two-day paper recycling training by Al Basma Centre in April 2024.
- A new project, in collaboration with the Rami Zahi Khouri Hub, launched during April to June 2024 called Home Décor. The project provides capacity building to designers to create a high-end product for installation in homes and included as a new product on the Paltisana website. A total of four designers enrolled and three of

their products have been displayed on the Paltisana website www.paltisana.org.

- A three-day jewelry-making training by Amal Thawabteh took place in May 2024.
- As part of the Paltisana Award 2024, held in collaboration with the Rami Zahi Khouri Hub, a 50-hour training was offered to 15 artisans between July to September 2024 to create a high-end product for entry in the final awards. The training focused on five components: design/creative thinking, photography, digital marketing, presentation skills, and pricing. The new products produced are already displayed on the Paltisana website: www.paltisana.org.
- One of the participants of the Paltisana Award was Afnan Omar from Gaza. During the war on Gaza, Afnan lost everything, including her home, designs, and all her belongings. With our help and support, Afnan joined the training online and was able to send us her design sketches for earrings. A local artisan from Bethlehem helped in crafting and producing the pieces. Today, Afnan sells the products labelled "My Home" on our online platform.



AJYAL SENIOR CARE PROGRAM

Ajyal is an Arabic word that translates into "generations" and is the name of our unique senior care program based on the Community Nursing Framework; a concept first introduced to Palestine by DAK University. It offers a holistic perspective towards health, healing and personal wellbeing. Unlike traditional dependency models, it is proactive in nature and explores the contributing potential of the elderly in Palestine to re-engage them in society as active citizens.

While the war on Gaza hindered the implementation of activities for this program, there were highlights during the reporting period as follows:

- Aside from the many psychosocial activities organized by DAK University, an additional series of psychological support sessions were conducted in cooperation with the Guidance and Training Center for Children and Families. A total of eight sessions were facilitated by psychologist Rania Mukarker focused on the impact of the war on Ajyal members, especially as it triggered painful memories for many of what they had experienced during the 1948 Nakba when they were displaced from their homes and never returned.

- A three-hour meeting, in cooperation with Bethlehem Governorate, took place with Judge Scarlett Bishara to discuss recent legislation on women's civil and church rights. Many members expressed thanks for raising their awareness as they did not know of these laws and updates.

- The program manager, Raeda Mansour, travelled to the USA from May 8 to 23, 2024, where she attended the Annual Parish Nurse Conference at Concordia University in Wisconsin. Ms. Mansour made three presentations:

- Walking with Care Providers to Develop Better Care for People with Dementia.

- Walking with the Elderly - Needs and Updates of the Ajyal Ministry.

- Walking with Peers Around the World When You are the Only Parish Nurse in Your Country.

While in the USA, Ms. Mansour also travelled to North Carolina to visit the Trinity Oaks Senior Living Community in Salisbury. She toured the entire Trinity Oaks campus and Trinity Living Center, sharing ideas and information with SLC teammates on each stop. She attended two Sunday services at St. John's Church and spoke in each about the Ajyal ministry in Bethlehem. The visit permitted further exposure to professional ways of

dealing with people who suffer from memory decline and dementia in advanced stages and promoted opportunities to network and build partnerships with both Trinity Oaks and St. John's.

- Although the war disrupted the annual calendar, critical activities continued, including 34 visits to home-bound Ajyal members; nine medical awareness sessions on topics such as rheumatism, breast and ovarian cancers; eight spiritual gatherings; and eight joint meals.
- Four major workshops were conducted: a two-day psychological relief workshop in cooperation with the Muftah Foundation; a one-day stress management workshop in cooperation with Anar Organization; a one-day stress relief workshop in cooperation with International Medical Corps (which was replicated to the entire group of Ajyal members at a later date); and a one-day nutritious eating workshop in cooperation with the Bible Society.



DAK UNIVERSITY PRESS

Dar al-Kalima University Press published three books between September 2023 and August 2024:

1- Decolonizing Palestine: The Land, The People, The Bible

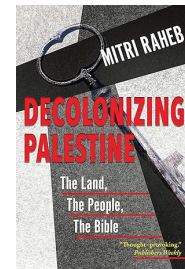
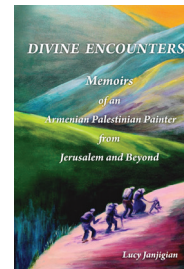
by Dr. Mitri Raheb.

2- Divine Encounters: Memoirs of an Armenian Palestinian Painter from Jerusalem and Beyond

by Lucy Janjigian.

3- Jaffa & the Present Absence: A Collection of Loss

(The Art Collection of Zahi W Khouri).



CONSTRUCTION

THE HOSPITALITY EDUCATIONAL CENTER (HEC)

Design Stage

Engineers challenged reality to create this project using an intelligent design and technology to ensure that the dome in the structure generates minimal harmful effects on the ecosystem. Environmental impacts were minimized by the wise choice of building materials such as eco-friendly glass to minimize energy consumption and advanced insulation techniques.

DAK University always adheres to up-to-date international specifications and safety measurements, including energy saving designs such as DAIKEN VRF air-conditioning systems and LED lighting. Natural lighting, ventilation, and solar energy are used to generate electricity.

Construction Stage from March 25, 2024

From design to construction took several stages. Starting with the formwork steel reinforcement installation, then casting concrete and waterproof materials for foundations, beams, columns, slabs, and walls. Next was the fabrication and assembling of the steel structure and steel sheet

installation for the mezzanine floor. Then block building for the walls took place, sika application, floor tiling, gypsum board installation, mechanical and electrical installation, plaster and painting works.



THE RAMI ZAHY KHOURI INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP HUB (RZK)

The Rami Zahi Khouri Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub project is located on the second floor of the library building at DAK University with a total area of 765 square meters. It consists of the following:

- 4 classrooms with a total area of 172.0 m² (total capacity of 90 students)
- 4 office spaces with a total area of 55.0 m²
- Big entrepreneurship hall with a total area of 215.3 m²
- Student space with a total area of 175.0 m² (total capacity of 75 students).

The project is expected to welcome students during the 2024/2025 academic year.



SPECIAL THANKS

- ACT / Church of Sweden
- Betlehems Venner
- Bread for the World / Churches helping Churches
- Bright Stars of Bethlehem
- Center for Church-Based Development (CKU)
- Consulat Général de France à Jérusalem
- Council for World Mission (CWM)
- Custodia di Terra Santa
- Dar al-Kalima Förderverein
- DanChurchAid (DCA)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)
- Holy Land Christian Society
- Pontifical Mission Jerusalem (C.N.E.W.A.)
- Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Shepherd Society
- UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People
- United Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ
- Zahi Khouri