

## Network News

### Shubbak Festival 2023 Art & Disability under Siege

Pictured: Sync Arabi participants Rawan Barakat, Yara Qwareiq, Diana Saleh and Jeries Thaligah

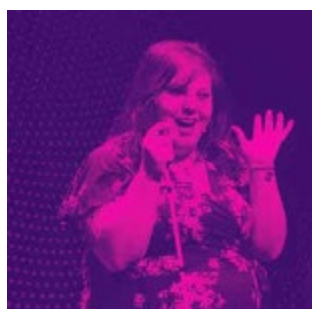


The Shubbak Festival is the UK's largest biennial festival of contemporary Arab culture, bringing new and unexpected voices alongside established artists to London every 2 years. This year, Professors Dina Kiwan and Maha Shuayb of the Disability Under Siege Network were in conversation with four participants from Sync Arabi, a leadership programme funded by the British Council and run jointly by Sync Leadership, Art 2 Heart - Palestine and Shubbak. The discussion focussed on the challenges and opportunities of living and working at the intersection of disability and geo-political instability. For further information about this and other events please [visit the Shubbak Festival website](#).

### AM Qattan Foundation Disability and Arts Pilot

In partnership with the AM Qattan Foundation in Ramallah, Palestine, the Disability Under Siege Network have been working together to commission 4 disability in arts and culture projects in the region. Hosted and guided by the AM Qattan Foundation, the pilot projects explored a range of media and art forms to generate immersive spaces for the codesign and production of disability-led projects, to develop public understanding of disability in contexts of conflict and crisis and enhance local, regional and international capacities to address issues of access, and participation. The projects are:

**“No Cheri” is a stand-up comedy performance performed by Sharihan Hadweh**, an actress with visual disability. The show was produced by Al-Harah Theater in partnership with Qader for Community Development, and is based on the stories and daily challenges of Sharihan as a person with disability where she taps on the very basic rights of people with disability in a black comedy way.



Six performances of “No Cheri” were organized in cooperation with several universities and local community organizations in Bethlehem and Hebron. Through Al-Harah Theater, Sharihan was invited to perform in Shubbak Festival in the UK in July.

Al-Harah continues to build on this remarkable experience with Sharihan, and a new performance was produced in February 2023 titled “Darkness and Light” handling the issue of women with disabilities, marriage and pregnancy vs. social stigmas. Sharihan is the actress starring in this performance along with two actors. The performance was opened in March 2023.



**Dar Al-Kalima University opens an art exhibition entitled Resilience, by artist Samar Ghattas.**

The project is an artistic forum which brought together three emerging female artists with disabilities, Randa Mansour, Walaa Masalmeh and Lana Kawash who attended workshops, led by Samar Ghattas, to enhance their artistic skills and create their artworks in different artistic styles for [exhibition at Dar Al-Kalima University in Bethlehem.](#)



Artist Faten Fawzi Nastas Mitwasi, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Dar Al-Kalima University, emphasized “the importance of these projects in motivating and supporting an authentic segment in our Palestinian society, which has latent capabilities and talents, which unfortunately increases our suffering and adds physical disabilities to many of us. Our role as artists and academics is to resist the occupation through art and to strengthen the role of art in raising the immunity of Palestinian society and strengthening its steadfastness.”

**“Love Language”, by artists Basel Almaqosi & Maysaa Yousef**

This project brought together 100 children of the Jabalia Rehabilitation Association, an independent non-profit Palestinian NGO, working with persons with disabilities, to produce works of art using different artistic techniques acquired during several artist-led workshops. The children were able to choose their own topics they wanted to draw, discuss their ideas and develop their art techniques with Basel and Maysaa. Their artwork is being displayed at the Jabalia Rehabilitation Association in Gaza.

Such initiatives are important to children with disabilities living with conflict, they are able to express their opinions and ideas freely and acquire new skills that enhance the value of individual work and cooperation with others in the group. Moreover, the children learned new ways of enhancing their self-confidence and channelling their negative energy and fears into something positive and creative.

All artworks are displayed on [Maysaa Youself’s facebook page.](#)



## “A thank you note” by Fida Salem Muhammad Shafei from [Passion for Arts and Crafts](#), Nablus, West Bank

Artist, Fida Shafei, led a group of 10 children with hearing impairments in the design of a mosaic to honour the life and work of the prominent Palestinian journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh, who was killed while reporting in 2022. After many training workshops, the children mastered the art of mosaics and created a portrait of Shireen. The mural stands in Nablus as a “thank you note to the Martyr of truth Shireen Abu Aqleh, not only as a distinguished journalist but also a loving and loved human being”. The image of Shireen represents the experiences of children living under occupation. This project is a major step to make art inclusive, and alter stereotypes of children with disabilities and spark conversation on their unlimited potential within the community, not just in Palestine.



## Network Research

### New comparative education research commissioned

The Disability under Siege Network is pleased to announce that they have commissioned a third, large-scale Research and Engagement project entitled “**Insights into government initiatives concerned with building inclusive schools in Jordan and Lebanon**”, led by Dr Maha Khochen-Bagshaw and co-investigators Dr Asma’a Zakarya Ali Al-Mallah and Dr Bassel Akar. This is a 12-month research project investigating government inclusive education initiatives in four mainstream schools in Jordan and Lebanon, and the extent these schools promote equity and inclusion principles. The ultimate goal is to use the findings from these countries to conduct cross country analysis to understand the similarity and differences in approach and provision.

Persons with disabilities, from and working within, these selected schools in both countries will act as co-researchers, supporting the development of research methods (including drawing, performance, photography, storytelling, questionnaires and in-depth interviews), data gathering, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, the experiences of teachers and students with disabilities in ‘inclusive schools’ will be explored and by engaging and consulting those directly concerned. It is hoped that this research will produce context specific and culturally sensitive evidence of barriers to and enablers of equitable and inclusive education, which can then be used to make recommendations for high impact, sustainable future developments in inclusive initiatives within these countries.



## Early Career Researcher leads participatory research project

Suzan Mitwalli, researcher at Birzeit University, continues her work into ***A Human Centred and Community Based Participatory Research Approach to Education Among Young People with Disabilities Living Under Occupation***. After conducting many focus groups with directors of Al-Karamah Disability Rehabilitation Society in al-Jalazon camp, the Birzeit research group formed a participatory action group in al-Jalazon camp with young people with disabilities to act as co-researchers on the project and to assist with interviewing young people with disabilities in the Ramallah governorate on their lived experiences. It is hoped that the findings from this valuable research will highlight the lived experiences of young people with disabilities and produce policy briefs in both Arabic and English that highlight the gaps in the educational policies and practices related to integration of people with disabilities in school.

## **#DisabledVoicesfromGaza – narrative methodologies with media and information literacy (MIL) to empower university students with disabilities in Palestine**



**#disabledvoicesofgaza** research team are now entering the third phase of their project, “*Training of Trainers*”. The training focusses on empowering 100 Palestinian university students with disabilities living in besieged Gaza, Palestine, to effectively communicate and produce narratives about their lived experiences. Mainly UNRWA registered refugees, these students will gain skills and experience in narrating stories of their lives during ongoing conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic using creative and storytelling methods bolstered by media and information literacy (MIL) training.

Dr Nazmi Al Masri and colleagues from the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), together with Iain Overton of the charity Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) gave a series of training modules which aimed at giving the participants (mainly students with disabilities from IUG) the necessary skills to build similar pedagogical programs using the same training materials in order to train other students at IUG and other local Palestinian universities in Gaza.

### **De-institutionalisation under Siege:**

#### **A network for deinstitutionalisation of persons with disabilities in the Middle East**

Earlier this year the Disability under Siege Network was awarded £100,000 by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to establish a unique and innovative network of policymakers including, UN organisations, disability activists and NGOs, people with disabilities, family members, and institutions themselves, using creative arts and humanities methods in order to capture lived experiences and views on disability and de-institutionalisation.

This area is under-researched but highly significant and timely given the UN’s work since 2020 on developing guidelines on deinstitutionalisation for persons with disabilities. It is estimated that up to 15% of people with disabilities live in institutional care globally - 150 million people (UN, 2018), and this is likely to be an underestimate. Empirical evidence has shown that institutionalisation results in negative outcomes for children and adults, which has been further heightened during the Covid-19 pandemic, where there were disproportionate numbers of deaths of persons with disabilities in care institutions.

The proposed network on deinstitutionalisation for people with disabilities in Lebanon and Palestine (West Bank and Gaza) plans to mobilise arts and humanities methodologies (e.g. narrative methodologies led by our Project Partners, Narrative4; visual arts and performance methodologies and Qattan Foundation in Palestine and Lebanon). The main aim is to engage the public and other stakeholders to understand the issue of deinstitutionalisation with cultural outputs including e.g. narrative projects, short films, participant-led performance, participant-led 'Institutional living' exhibition and a photo competition.

The inaugural meeting of the De-Institutionalisation under Siege Network will take place online on **Thursday 21st September at 10am UK Time** - all are welcome!

Topic: De-Institutionalisation under Siege Inaugural Meeting  
Time: Sep 21, 2023 10:00am UK Time



Join Zoom Meeting

<https://bham-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/84729588745>

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## Communications and Media

For any further information or details about the Disability Under Siege project please visit our website at [www.disabilityundersiege.org](http://www.disabilityundersiege.org) or email us directly at [disabilityundersiege@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:disabilityundersiege@contacts.bham.ac.uk)



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