

# IMPACT REPORT 2023-2024





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# The Centennial of Birzeit University: 1924-2024

The year 2024 marked a significant milestone for Birzeit University as it celebrated its centenary. From its beginnings as a school in 1924, evolving into a college in 1953, and transforming into a university in 1972, Birzeit University has been a beacon of hope, resilience, and knowledge. As the first institution of higher education in Palestine, it has shaped generations of scholars and symbolized perseverance and pride for the Palestinian people.

In light of the ongoing genocide in Gaza, Birzeit University has decided to postpone its centennial celebrations and events initially planned for early 2024, including the annual graduation ceremony. This decision reflects the university's commitment to its ethical and national responsibilities. The delay coincides with the conclusion of the first cohort of the online distance learning program for students in Gaza, part of the "Rebuilding Hope" initiative. This initiative aims to support higher education institutions and enable university students in Gaza to continue their studies. Birzeit University remains dedicated to establishing a hub for collaborative efforts with Arab and international universities to support Gaza.

As Birzeit University prepares to launch its centennial activities from October 2024 to August 2026, it approaches this anniversary with a focus on revival. Joy will not be complete until the wounds of Gaza are healed and our resilient people are liberated. The university reaffirms its commitment to commemorating this centennial in alignment with its national vision, encompassing all Palestinian territories. Birzeit University maintains its role on the national, Arab, and international stages, dedicated to liberation from occupation.

The university stands at the forefront of Palestine's present challenges, drawing inspiration from its history and paving the way for a future yet to be fully realized. It continues its commitment to higher education and scientific research, addressing societal and global issues, strengthening international academic partnerships, and fostering development initiatives in health, energy, and community education.

Committees have been formed to commemorate the centenary, guided by core principles. They unite the university's members to lift our people out of injustice and strive for high-quality education and the liberation of knowledge. We will not celebrate in times of darkness, but we will echo the prophecy of Kamal Nasser, the first martyr of Birzeit University, born in Gaza in 1924. His prophecy of freedom and victory, despite delayed joy, resonates deeply with us. "The only ending song we know by heart is: 'We will not rest while the people are wounded and bleeding,' and 'The end belongs to the people, even if it is delayed... the people will ultimately triumph.'"





## Message from the Chair of the Boar

We present to you the impact report of Birzeit University for 2023-2024, reflecting a year marked by enormous challenges and hardships. During this time, our people have endured the harshest injustices and suffering, facing a genocide committed by the brutal occupation, which has shattered the very essence of humanity in Gaza. At the same time, a relentless campaign of siege, settlement-building, murder, and destruction has unfolded in the West Bank, aiming at creating an atmosphere of fear, insecurity and vulnerability. Despite this suffering, these hardships have fueled our resolve, strengthening our persistence and dedication to perseverance and rectification.



On this occasion, we reaffirm the university's commitment to fulfilling its national, intellectual, and academic mission, driven by loyalty and gratitude for the efforts that have supported its resilience and contributed to enhancing its educational and institutional capacities.

We express our sincere gratitude to our dear supporters and partners, both individuals and institutions, whose significant contributions have not only provided essential financial support to the university but also advanced the values of moral and intellectual generosity. These contributions, as important as the financial support they have offered with dedication and humility over the years, have been invaluable to the university's mission.

While we had planned to celebrate the university's centennial in 2024, the pain and suffering of our steadfast people in Gaza, and across the entire nation, have demanded our full attention and focus, and deprived us of the joy of any celebration. We have dedicated all available resources—though we recognize their limitations—to supporting the resilience of our beloved people and students in Gaza. This includes several initiatives,

with the "Rebuilding Hope" initiative being a cornerstone, through which we remotely connected with our sons and daughters in Gaza, welcoming them to Birzeit University under these exceptional and challenging circumstances. We chose not to replace Gaza's distinguished universities, but instead, we collaborated with them, sharing the responsibility to continue academic and research efforts during this hard time, until we rise again.

Despite the sorrow that weighs on our hearts, we continue to fulfill the mission of our university with pride and unwavering determination. We are committed to strengthening solidarity with the university's supporters, particularly its alumni, who are its most dedicated ambassadors worldwide. We call on them to unite in support of their alma mater, to continue their contributions, and to deepen both their material and moral efforts, ensuring that our beloved university remains a bastion of transformative knowledge and a guiding light for future generations.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the entire university community, our students, administrative staff, and the Board of Trustees whose contributions, engagement, and generous support have been instrumental in sustaining our university and ensuring its continued development and qualitative growth as a mainstay of the Palestinian people's resilience, dedication and endurance.

To each of you, I extend my sincere thanks, deep appreciation, and warmest regards.

**Hanan Ashrawi, Ph.D**  
Chairperson, Board of Trustees





Message from the University President



First and foremost, we must express our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support and exceptional generosity, especially given the difficult circumstances faced by our Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. On behalf of the Birzeit University family, we extend our sincere thanks for standing by us during this challenging time.

In addition to its many usual tasks and roles, and in line with its academic, societal, and national commitments, Birzeit University launched the “Rebuilding Hope” initiative this year to support our students and universities in Gaza. This initiative includes online teaching, research cooperation, and institutional synergy, fostering community solidarity with your generous support as its cornerstone. Your contributions reflect Palestine’s unity and help us stand steady in the face of the sufferings inflicted by the persistent occupation. Additionally, your support reinforces our resolve to fulfill our academic and intellectual mission and to create a university environment that contributes to building a brighter future for the next generations.

Birzeit University is built on the principle of the right to education, essential for shaping the future of individuals and communities. This right enables students to enhance their intellectual and scientific skills, preparing them to contribute effectively to society. While the university is formulating ambitious plans for future development and strives to provide an educational environment that upholds students’ rights and encourages creativity, it faces ongoing challenges, including frequent raids by occupation forces and the arrest of students. These challenges strengthen our commitment to educate generations capable of confronting adversity with determination, through an academic and humanitarian approach that contributes to a brighter future for Palestine.

Your support forms a solid foundation that enables the university to fulfill its academic and societal missions. We deeply appreciate your generosity and look forward to continuing this partnership to sustain the academic development of the university, ensure its financial stability, and enhance its capacity to support all students in need.

We extend our sincere gratitude once again and pledge to continue working tirelessly to promote the right to education. We hope that our supporters will continue to help us in creating a better future for our students and Palestine.

**Dr. Talal Shahwan**  
University President





On behalf of Birzeit University, its students, faculty, and staff, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation for your ongoing and generous support. Your unwavering commitment and generosity have been instrumental in helping us achieve our mission of providing quality education and fostering intellectual growth.

Your kind contribution is a cornerstone in enhancing our educational and research efforts, improving our capacity to provide exceptional education, and creating new opportunities for our students to achieve their academic and professional aspirations. Ultimately, this shapes a brighter future for the next generations.

Birzeit University has long been a beacon of knowledge, creativity, and innovation. Thanks to your support, we have achieved numerous academic accomplishments that fill us with pride. We greatly value your trust in our university and look forward to continuing our partnership. Your investment in education is an investment in a better future, not only for our students but also for Palestine. We believe that the challenges facing higher education in Palestine today require collective effort and cooperation, and your continued support reflects your strong belief in the university's mission and noble objectives.

We remain dedicated to our mission of delivering high-quality education, advancing scientific research, and serving our community. Given the exceptional circumstances in Palestine and the economic challenges many families face, your support is more crucial and urgent than ever.

Once again, thank you for your generosity and kind support.

**Dr. Yaser Amouri**  
VP for Advancement



# Impact Highlights 2023-2024

Key Figures and Insights

The past year has been extremely difficult for all Palestinians, as the "Israeli" occupation continued to commit genocide, perpetrated forced displacement, and caused deliberate starvation in the Gaza Strip. This is alongside the ongoing apartheid, settler colonialism, and systematic Israeli policies aimed at erasing Palestinian identity in the rest of Occupied Palestine.



In the face of this genocide and collective

punishment against all Palestinians, universities play a prominent role in overcoming these challenges. Palestinian higher education institutions, students, and infrastructure have been severely impacted over this past year. Students in the Gaza Strip have lost one year of education. The deterioration of the economic situation resulted in many students becoming entirely deprived of their education. Yet despite all the challenges affecting our students, your support allowed us to remain steadfast and resilient. Thanks to every donor, we have been able to provide partial and full scholarships to all talented students who needed support during this tough time.

Your generous support to the university contributes to the personal and academic development of the students, as well as for the future of Palestine. It provides an immediate and impactful solution to help our students carry on with their higher education despite the challenges they face.

Birzeit University sincerely appreciates the generous support from our friends and donors during the 2023-2024 academic year. Your gracious and selfless contributions have significantly advanced our mission and brightened the future for our students.

Your support is invaluable, and together, we can make a meaningful difference and foster positive change in the lives of students and Palestinians everywhere.

**Safaa Halahla**  
Director of Advancement



## Purpose



Scholarships

**\$4,464,060**



Academic and  
development projects

**\$2,051,459**



Endowment

**\$302,504**



Annual Fund

**\$19,665**

Total

**\$6,837,688**







## The Scholarship Program



The scholarship program is a top priority for us, as it directly impacts our students' lives and futures. This report details the scholarships provided by our generous supporters during the 2023-2024 academic year. It shares inspiring stories from our students and celebrates their achievements and remarkable initiatives.

We hope this report highlights the profound impact of your generosity and reinforces Birzeit University's importance as one of your key priorities, especially in the realm of academic scholarships. These scholarships not only support our students and their families but also empower the university to navigate challenging economic times. Your contributions are vital in helping us provide opportunities for our students to excel and make a difference in their communities.





### Highlights of the 2023-2024 Scholarship Program

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the university's friends and supporters contributed \$5.53 million in scholarships to approximately 3,337 students. Notably, 1,210 students received scholarships for academic excellence.

The university places a strong emphasis on supporting female students, who make up 63% of the total student population. Approximately 66% of the scholarship recipients were female. Additionally, 40 students with special needs received scholarships, ensuring inclusivity.

Your contributions have empowered our students to pursue their academic and professional aspirations, shaping a brighter future for themselves and their communities.

### Endowed Scholarship Fund

Birzeit University established its Endowment Fund in 1999 to ensure financial sustainability, support development goals, and maintain academic excellence. The university firmly believes that all students deserve access to education, regardless of their circumstances. Therefore, need-blind admission is crucial to our mission, enabling us to provide financial aid to students and allowing them to pursue their goals without worrying about financial obstacles.

Proceeds from the Scholarship Endowment Fund support the university's financial aid program and ensure that it remains unaffected by any overarching economic difficulties or funding gaps. As part of Birzeit University's endowment strategy, a portion of the returns is used to provide scholarships to students, while the remaining funds are re-invested into capital to ensure the endowment's sustainability and growth over time.



● **Ruwwad Scholarship**

Ruwwad is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping marginalized communities through education, youth volunteer programs, and civil society initiatives. It focuses on fostering initiative and addressing urgent community issues with local participation. Ruwwad’s core programs include Child Development, Youth Empowerment, and Community Support.

Founded in 2005 by Fadi Ghandour, Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya aims to leverage leadership and creativity to support young talent and combat social inequality in the Arab world.

Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya has awarded numerous scholarships to Birzeit University students, particularly from marginalized areas like Bidya, Budrus, Qibya, Ni’lin, and Shuqba, in recognition of their community involvement through volunteer work.

● **Cultures of Resistance Network Scholarship**

The Cultures of Resistance Network, founded by Brazilian filmmaker and activist Iara Lee, is dedicated to fostering global social change through creative activism. Over the past decade, Lee has directed and produced numerous feature-length documentaries and short films that address issues of social justice, human rights, and political activism. Her work has made a significant impact worldwide, highlighting the power of art and media in driving social change. Currently, she serves as the director of the Cultures of Resistance Network Foundation.

The Foundation aims to support organizations, activists, and artists committed to creating a more peaceful and democratic world. It promotes global solidarity through creative nonviolent resistance movements, emphasizing the importance of education as a fundamental tool for achieving lasting peace, democracy, and social justice. The Foundation believes that access to education fosters critical thinking and empowers individuals to become active participants in shaping the future of their societies.

In 2021, the Cultures of Resistance Network Foundation established a grant at Birzeit University, providing 50 scholarships to female students. This initiative enables them to pursue higher education and achieve their academic and professional goals. By investing in the education of young women, the Foundation fosters individual empowerment and contributes to broader societal change, promoting equality and opportunity for future generations.







### The Samira Khatib Tuffaha Endowed Scholarship

The Samira Khatib Tuffaha Endowed Scholarship was established to offer young Palestinian women the opportunity to pursue higher education and build a better future. This scholarship is awarded annually based on financial need, covering the full cost of education and prioritizing applicants from areas facing the threat of displacement due to Israeli occupation.



Mrs. Samira Khatib Tuffaha was born in Al-Bireh, Palestine, in 1936, during the British mandate. After completing her high school education, she chose to become a school teacher to address the educational needs of her community. Over the next eight years, Mrs. Tuffaha taught at a high school in Al-Bireh, then went on to work at elementary schools for girls in Sinjil and Silwad. At the age of 24, she became the principal of the school before immigrating to the United States in 1963.

Mrs. Tuffaha believes that education is the most powerful tool for empowering young women and that they should have access to educational opportunities that were once unavailable in Palestine. With this vision in mind, and in partnership with Birzeit University, she established this endowed scholarship to support young women in Palestine.



### Mariam Foundation Scholarship

The Mariam Foundation is the first Arab organization dedicated to fighting cancer and serves as the official representative of cancer patients in Palestine. The foundation provides care and support to cancer patients and their families, easing the challenges of the treatment journey to help them overcome the disease.

For many years, the Mariam Foundation and Birzeit University have collaborated on the "Mariam Joy" project, which offers daily companionship to cancer patients. This initiative provides volunteer companions from university students for children undergoing cancer treatment, who often arrive at hospitals without family members due to the restrictions of the occupation. The goal is to provide emotional support, play with the children, and alleviate the difficulties and pain of long treatment stays in the absence of their families. In recognition of their support, volunteer students receive scholarships.

Since its inception, the Mariam Joy Project has provided emotional support to over 3,000 children with cancer, through the efforts of more than 500 volunteer university students who received scholarships for their service.





## Testimonials from Scholarships Recipients



**Jinan Farhat**

French Language



Like many Palestinian families living under occupation, my family has endured challenging living conditions, especially during the recent brutal attack on Gaza. Reaching the university was often difficult due to the numerous checkpoints imposed by the occupation. Despite these obstacles, I remained determined to pursue my goals. Your generous scholarship not only covered my tuition but also provided me with hope and motivation to continue striving amidst these hardships. I am deeply grateful for your support, which has profoundly impacted my life. Thank you again for your generosity.



**Mohammed Dar-Asi**

Business Administration



I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for your kind support. The scholarship provided me with a valuable opportunity to pursue my dreams and goals, while boosting my enthusiasm and confidence to continue my studies. I am committed to working diligently and wholeheartedly to earn the trust you have placed in me and to excel in my field. I promise to do my utmost to prove myself worthy of this trust. Thank you once again for this incredible opportunity and your generous support.







**Malak Khatib**  
Mechatronics Engineering



I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for granting me this opportunity to complete my undergraduate studies at Birzeit University. I chose to major in Mechatronics Engineering due to my deep passion for the field and my aspiration to contribute to the development of my community through both academic and professional achievements. Thank you once again for your generous support, which has not only assisted me but also alleviated the financial burdens on my family. This scholarship has been a powerful motivator for me to persevere and work diligently toward achieving my goals.



**Majdal Ladadweh**  
Accounting



I am writing to extend my sincere gratitude to all the donors for their generous support of Palestinian students at Birzeit University. Your contributions reflect a strong commitment to empowering Palestinian youth and recognizing education as a vital foundation for development and progress. Your support extends beyond financial aid; it is a powerful expression of solidarity with the just cause of Palestine and our people's right to education and growth. You have instilled hope and confidence in students, reminding them that they are not alone in their academic and professional journeys. We thank you deeply for this generous and impactful support.



**Student at Birzeit University  
(from Gaza)**  
Engineering



I want to express my deepest gratitude to the donors for their generous support. Their contributions have been crucial in helping me achieve my academic and professional aspirations, while also easing the financial burden on my family. As a student from Gaza, this scholarship is particularly meaningful. It not only enables me to pursue higher education but also empowers me to contribute to the reconstruction of Gaza and support my family there. Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in my potential.



**Raghad Saleem**  
Public Administration



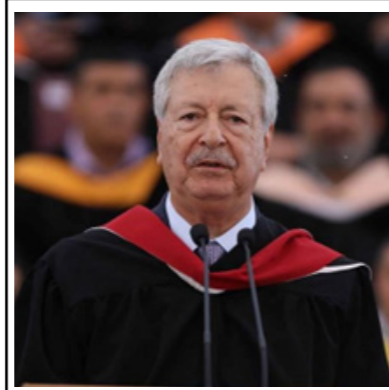
I am writing to sincerely thank you for your generous scholarship. Your support has eased my financial and emotional burdens, allowing me to focus on achieving my academic goals. Especially in these difficult times, your help has been invaluable, and I deeply appreciate your commitment to supporting Palestinian students. Thanks to your generosity, I am able to continue my studies with renewed hope and determination.







Mr. Waddah Barkawi  
Chair of the Committee



Mr. Samir Abdulhadi



Dr. Anis Kassim



Mr. Samir Aweidah



Dr. Rima Khalaf-Hunaidi



Dr. Atallah Kuttab



Mr. Sa'ad Abdulhadi



Mr. Ibrahim Barham



### The Advancement Team

Safaa Halahla

Suzan Daana

Laurance Theodory

Kawthar Abu Khalil

Hadeel Hijaz

Mohammad Shobaki

Hussam Abumazen



# Honorary Doctorates





## Tarek Omar Aggad and Zahi Khoury

Birzeit University has proudly conferred honorary doctorates in humanities upon distinguished businessmen Tarek Omar Aggad and Zahi Khoury. This recognition honors their pioneering efforts, substantial community contributions, and unwavering support for Palestine, particularly Birzeit University.

The honorary doctorate from Birzeit University is a prestigious accolade, awarded to individuals whose exceptional contributions align with the university's mission. This honor underscores the university's commitment to fostering high-quality education and preparing graduates to become leaders in their communities.

**Tarek Omar Aggad** has made significant contributions to Birzeit University, continuing the legacy of generosity established by his late father, Mr. Omar Aggad. Tarek's philanthropic efforts include funding the restoration and maintenance of the Faculty of Engineering building and supporting the installation and operation of a solar energy system for the faculty. Additionally, he facilitated a memorandum of understanding with the Arab Palestinian Investment Company (APIC) to enhance collaboration in academic, vocational, and student training, particularly in economics, business administration, marketing, finance, and accounting.

**Mr. Zahi Khoury** has also made a profound impact on Birzeit University through his generous contribution to the university's Endowment fund. He established the "Rami Zahi Khoury Professorial Chair in Entrepreneurship," a permanent position dedicated to advancing research and academic



work in entrepreneurship. This initiative aims to create a comprehensive framework for entrepreneurship at Birzeit University, fostering innovation and entrepreneurial skills while providing students with a supportive environment. It helps students develop social responsibility, creative thinking, and the practical experience needed to excel in entrepreneurship.

**Tarek Omar Aggad** is a prominent Palestinian businessman, serving as the Chairman and CEO of the Arab Palestinian Investment Company (APIC), which he co-founded in 1994. He oversees various businesses under Aggad Investment Company (AICO), a leading Saudi holding company with diverse operations. Aggad is a member of the board of directors for several major companies across Palestine, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, including the Bank of Palestine, the Palestinian Electricity Company, and the King Hussein Cancer Foundation. In 2001, the World Economic Forum in Davos recognized him as a Global Leader of Tomorrow.

**Zahi Khoury** is a Palestinian businessman from Jaffa. He is the former founder, chairman, and CEO of the National Beverage Company and a key founder of several major publicly traded companies in Palestine, including Padico and the Palestinian telecommunications company. He also served as CEO of Jawwal. Khoury holds numerous executive roles and board memberships across various institutions and companies. He is a founding partner and general partner of the Ibtikar Fund, President of the NGO Development Center in Jerusalem, and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Dar Al-Kalima University in Bethlehem. In recognition of his achievements, he was awarded the 2015 Business for Peace Award in Oslo and the Cavaliere Merit from Italy. Khoury was also a finalist for the 2017 Global Thinkers Forum, served on the Carter Advisory Board in Palestine, and was the local chair of "Partners for a New Beginning," an initiative of the Aspen Institute, and the Palestine Business Committee for Peace and Reform in Washington.



## Annual Giving Campaigns

### “Rebuilding Hope” Initiative

Birzeit University launched the “Rebuilding Hope” initiative in May 2024 to enable students in the Gaza Strip to continue their studies remotely. This initiative aims to address the devastating impact of the genocidal assault and begin the process of recovery, as Palestinian higher education institutions, students, faculty, and infrastructure in Gaza have been deliberately targeted by the Israeli occupation. Coordinated with Gaza’s higher education institutions and personnel, the initiative seeks to strengthen the resilience of all components of the higher education sector. It entails the following key interventions:

- 1. Online Distance Learning** in Coordination with Gaza Universities: Birzeit University faculty have volunteered to teach and co-supervise graduation projects and graduate theses, in addition to supervising projects and dissertations.
- 2. Infrastructure and Institutional Synergy:** This component aims to upgrade the physical and digital infrastructure at Birzeit University and academic institutions in the Gaza Strip. It also assists researchers and students in accessing the necessary knowledge to complete their academic journey.
- 3. Transformative Research:** This involves conducting research and studies on the impact of the assault on Gaza through partnerships among researchers at universities in Gaza, Birzeit University, and global partners. The research aims to rebuild Gaza structurally, socially, culturally, and environmentally, using appropriate and relevant means consistent with indigenous resources and Palestinian identity and sovereignty.

The first module of the online distance learning program commenced on May 7, 2024, with 3,800 students from the Gaza Strip participating. Of these students, 78% were still in Gaza, while 22% were outside. A total of 136 professors from Birzeit University, along with four professors from Gaza who were outside the strip at the time, volunteered to teach these online courses.



## Ramadan Campaign

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During the holy month of Ramadan, Birzeit University launched a campaign to support students in need, with 186 donors generously contributing to this cause. This year's campaign was especially significant, as it took place amidst challenging economic conditions facing the Palestinian society, which have severely impacted students. Thanks to the kindness of our donors, scholarships were provided to the students most in need of assistance.

Birzeit University's Zakat Program, established in 2014, plays a crucial role in supporting students in need through Islamic Zakat funds, gifts, and donations. The program encourages charitable individuals to contribute their Zakat to provide scholarships or living expenses to orphaned or underprivileged students. Your contributions during Ramadan have made a profound difference in the lives of these students, helping them continue their education and build a brighter future.

## Staff Giving Program

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The Birzeit University Staff Giving Program is a vital initiative that underscores the importance of community support in empowering underprivileged students. This program thrives on the generous contributions from the university's academic and administrative staff, reflecting their commitment to fostering educational opportunities. Since the beginning of this year, 117 employees have participated in the campaigns launched by the Advancement Department, demonstrating the collective effort and solidarity of the BZU community in making a significant impact on students' lives.





## Academic and Development Projects

Birzeit University is dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment that offers a unique and enriching university experience for all students. To achieve this, the university continually enhances its campus infrastructure, including buildings and facilities, while also advancing academic initiatives. Additionally, the university prioritizes the preservation of its green spaces, which make up approximately 70% of the campus area, and strives to implement environmentally sustainable practices throughout the campus.

### Al Multaqa Building

Birzeit University has significantly enhanced its campus infrastructure thanks to the generosity of its donors. Al Multaqa Building, covering an area of 1,250 square meters, was constructed with generous donations from Mr. Shouky Shaheen, Dr. Omar Naim Abdulhadi, Mr. Zahi Khoury, Mr. Salim Edde, Dar Al-Handasah, and Mr. Samir Naim Abdulhadi. This building is designed to provide essential facilities for the entire university community, including students and faculty. It features computer labs equipped with state-of-the-art technology, cafeterias, collaborative spaces for students, and areas designated for research.

### Emergency Water Storage Reservoir

A 4,500 cubic meter water storage reservoir was constructed with a generous donation from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. This reservoir is crucial for storing emergency water and managing shortages, especially during the summer months when water cuts are a recurring problem in Palestine. It ensures that the university can effectively cope with water supply disruptions, providing a reliable source of water for the entire campus community.



## Celebrating Student Achievements

### Architecture Project Wins First Place at Abu Dhabi University

Mustafa Salim and Maha Mustafa, students from Birzeit University's Department of Architectural Engineering and Planning, secured first place in the 11th edition of The Undergraduate Research and Innovation Competition at Abu Dhabi University. Their graduation project, titled "Reviving the Villages of Northwest Jerusalem," was supervised by Professor Mohammad Abu Al-Rub. The winning research examines the historical relationships that once defined the northwest Jerusalem countryside, which have been disrupted by Zionist colonial policies. These policies stripped the area of its identity, turning it into rural pockets isolated by bypass roads, settlements, and the apartheid wall. The project proposes architectural solutions to restore the region's productivity and address its social and economic challenges.

This competition is the largest of its kind in the Gulf, Middle East, and North Africa region, bringing together scientific research from undergraduate students. This year, nearly 600 research papers from 77 universities participated. It serves as a platform for university students to showcase their research across 28 fields, including engineering, business, education, arts, social sciences, natural and health sciences, and innovation. The award jury commended Mustafa and Maha for the quality of their work, the originality of their theses, and their development as independent researchers. Their achievements reflect positively on the program's reputation both in the Arab world and internationally.





## Engineering Project Among Top 10 in Global UN Metaverse Competition

A team of students from the Department of Engineering and Technology, including Youna Nawahda, Abdullah Odeh, Mahdi Shoman, Narmin Al-Sheikh, and Rawan Sous, was recognized among the top ten global projects in the United Nations Metaverse competition. Organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in collaboration with the United Nations International Computing Center (UNICC), the team's project, titled "Discover the Treasure: Enhancing Education through Time Travel Adventure," was selected for its innovative approach.

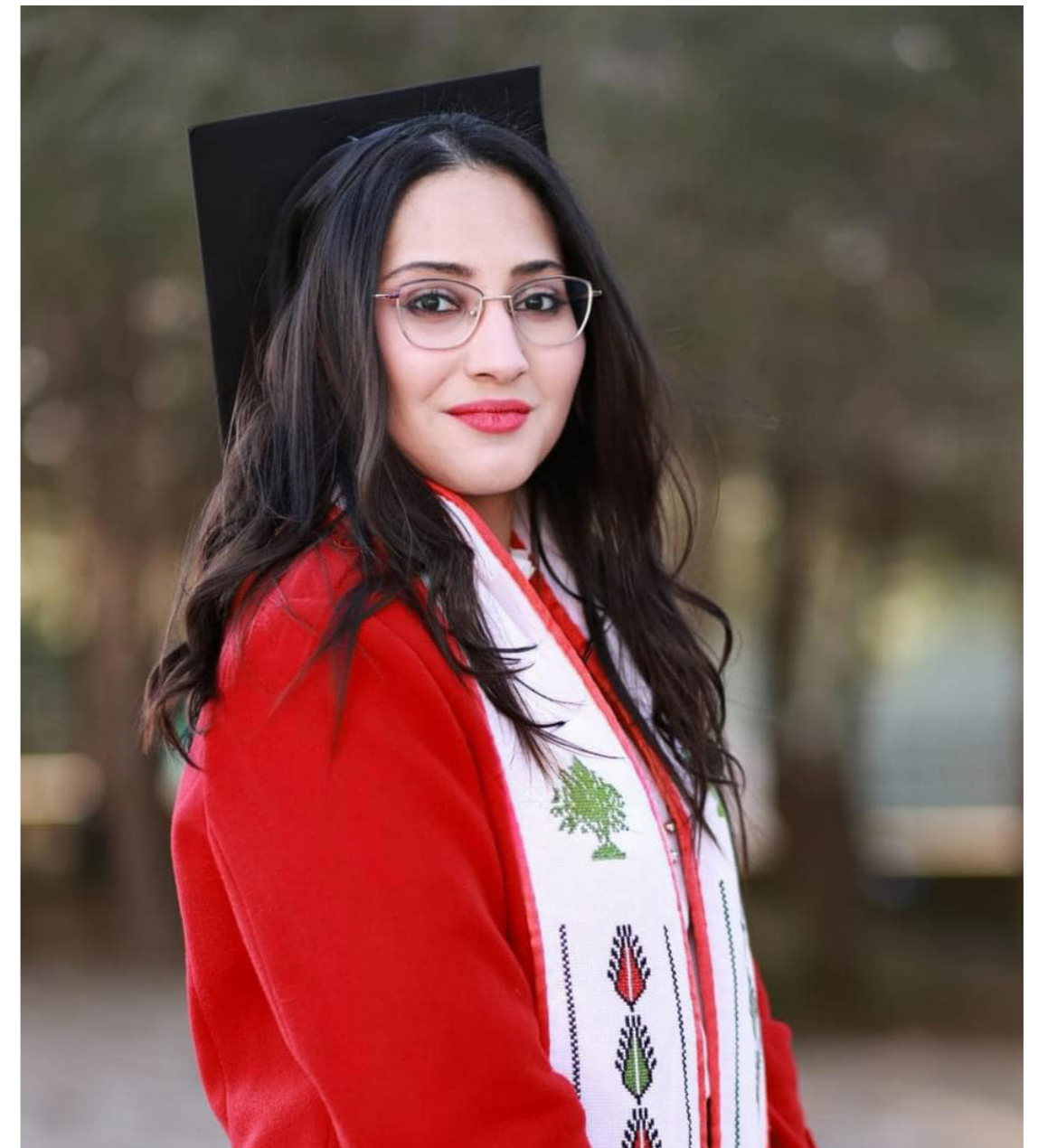
The project is a platform designed to assist Palestinians in learning about the occupied territories through virtual reality, utilizing artificial intelligence and internet of things technologies. It features virtual historical characters that provide explanations about archaeological sites and their origins. The project was developed through collaboration between students from the Computer Science and Computer Engineering departments, who completed their work in the Virtual Reality Lab. It was supervised by Dr. Jihad Kmail from the Architectural Department and supported by the Innovation and Development Unit.



## Student Wins Best Oral Presentation at 6th Undergraduate Research Conference

Lian Abu Hatab, a student from the Department of Languages and Translation, participated in the Sixth Undergraduate Research Conference at Al-Quds University, where she won the Best Oral Presentation Award in the Humanities category. Her research, titled "Challenges of Machine Translation of English-Arabic," was recognized among entries from universities across Palestine and the region.

The conference received 82 abstract submissions, which were evaluated by a specialized committee. It featured around 50 presentations, including both posters and oral presentations, with broad participation from Palestinian and Arab students across various fields of study.





# Alumni Engagement Program

The Alumni Engagement Program at Birzeit University is crucial for maintaining strong connections with our alumni community. This program encourages alumni to contribute their time and skills, enhancing their capabilities while building stronger relationships with the university and fellow graduates. It also provides a platform for alumni to support the university, particularly the scholarship program, demonstrating their solidarity and commitment to the university's mission.

To update your information, please scan the QR code.







**Standing with Hadeel Hijaz: Head of Alumni Program**

Our dear colleague, Hadeel Hijaz, was arrested by the Israeli occupation on Sunday, June 30, 2024, while returning to Palestine. Hadeel graduated from Birzeit University's Faculty of Business and Economics in 2014. She is currently enrolled in the master's program in Economics and has been working at the university since 2019.

Hadeel is responsible for the alumni program at the university and has organized various alumni events and activities in Palestine and abroad over the years. Her arrest is a continuation of the occupation's policy to restrict the operations of Palestinian academic institutions and diminish their societal impact. Birzeit University and its Advancement Department strongly condemned this violation, called for her immediate release, and demanded the protection of the rights of those working in the Palestinian education sector. Hadeel was released in January 2025 as part of the Gaza ceasefire deal.



## Birzeit Graduates Shine on Forbes' 30 Under 30 List

Forbes magazine has recognized Birzeit University graduates Tala Al Sharif, Diala Khashan, and Majd Al Tawil on its 2023 list of the most creative and innovative young individuals in the Middle East under thirty. They were honored for their significant efforts to make a meaningful impact.



**Tala Al-Sharif (class of 2017);  
Ahmad Badarneh**

Birzeit University was not just an academic institution for me; it was my childhood dream. I always desired to share Palestine's stories with the world and become a journalist who could make a difference. Twelve years ago, I wrote "Journalist Tala Al-Sharif" on the wall of my room, followed by the name Birzeit University. These words always motivated me to pursue my dream.

At Birzeit, I discovered new paths that shaped my journey. In 2018, I launched the Female Chimeras

platform, aiming to document the stories and experiences of Palestinian women through media. I have captured over 60 photo stories that present the creativity of Palestinian women across diverse fields.

In 2019, the platform was ranked among the best initiatives in the Arab world. In the same year, I returned to Birzeit as an inspiring speaker at the TEDx conference, where I shared my journey and the work of the Female Chimeras platform. In 2023, I was honored to be named in Forbes Middle East's list of the most creative and innovative young people under 30, in the Social Impact category.

The significance of this recognition lies in the fact that it allows our voices, both as women and as Palestinians, to be heard globally. While our suffering continues, we find strength in our struggle, our story, and our narrative, which we are determined to share with the world. Our story is not just a reflection of our past, but a symbol of our cause, our identity, our hope, and our future. From our humble dreams, we will shape a beautiful reality that is destined to unfold.



**Diala Khashan (class of 2014);  
Majd Al Tawil (class of 2019)**

As a child, if you had asked me what I hoped to achieve in my late twenties and early thirties, I could never have imagined seeing my name listed in Forbes alongside renowned international figures. Yet, here I am today, sharing my story—the story of a successful Palestinian woman who faced countless challenges, overcame them, and turned her dreams into reality.

When I was named to Forbes' list of the most creative and innovative young people in the Middle East under thirty, I was overwhelmed with joy and immense gratitude. This achievement was beyond anything I could have dreamed, and it stands as proof that dreams can come true, even in the darkest circumstances. For years, being on this list was a dream I held close to my heart.

The path I walked was not easy; it

was filled with obstacles and hardships, but I never gave up. I kept moving forward, facing each challenge with determination, knowing that success would come, even if it took time. Amid these challenges, the idea of Vatrin emerged. Establishing a business in Palestine's tough economic and political climate proved to be incredibly difficult, and I wanted to help others navigate that journey. Thus, I turned the obstacles I faced when founding my first company into solutions through the creation of the Vatrin app.

Today, Vatrin is a thriving platform that helps small business owners in Palestine and beyond create online stores, showcase their products, manage orders, and process payments. It is an honor to contribute to the success of entrepreneurs, helping them turn their dreams into reality. I truly believe that when we work together, we can accomplish the impossible.

I have learned that success is rooted in patience. Living in Palestine has taught me to persevere, to search for opportunities even when doors seem closed, and to remain steadfast in pursuit of our dreams. My story may be inspiring, but it is not unique. There are countless Palestinians, driven by ambition, who achieve remarkable things every day. I encourage you to keep moving forward, no matter the obstacles you face, because life rewards those who work hard, even in the toughest of times.



## Graduates Fingerprint Program



The “Graduates Fingerprint” program, launched in the 2012-2013 academic year, encourages graduating students to support their peers in need. This initiative allows final-year students to donate all or part of their insurance deposit. Over the past 11 years, more than 3,620 graduates have participated, creating a lasting impact. An endowed scholarship was established to ensure the sustainability of their contributions. During the 2023-2024 academic year alone, 476 students donated to the program. We are grateful to all these students for their support.



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