

THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK'S LENT CALL 2025



*Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me,
and do not stop them; for it is to such as these
that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'*

Matthew 19:14

Week 4: The Princess Basma Centre in Jerusalem



The Princess Basma Centre helping children in Jerusalem.

The Princess Basma Centre has been supporting children since 1964. It opened primarily to care for children who needed physiotherapy, due to widespread polio in the Palestinian community. When the Centre opened many of the children had to travel long distances to get there, and so they lived at the Centre during school term time and at times during the holidays if their families could not look after them. The Centre also provides schooling for children to support their educational needs.

Over the last 60 years the Centre's work has evolved, but the purpose has remained the same – to offer rehabilitation care for children. The Centre now also provides outreach services in the community, as well as care for adults.

Since 7 October 2023, when the conflict between Hamas and Israel escalated, the Princess Basma Centre has become a crucial part of the effort to care for those

who have been injured and displaced by the violence in Gaza.

On 2 February 2025, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimated that at least 17,000 children in the Gaza Strip were unaccompanied or separated from their families. This corresponds to 1% of the overall displaced population, which is estimated at 1.7 million people. The Princess Basma Centre has been able to offer help to some of the children who have been injured and displaced.

Shaam's Story

Shaam (pictured above) was born in spring 2023, a few months before the war began.

Shaam and her mother were displaced from their home and separated from the rest of their family. They are now living in Deir Al Balah.

Shaam had multiple injuries, including burns, and fractures of her right leg and skull. Her injuries and the trauma that she has experienced at a very young age,

Raising money to support projects that help children and young people recover from trauma and which encourage their mental wellbeing.

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Malak during her physiotherapy session.

mean that she does not engage well with her surroundings. She also has breathing difficulties and poor motor control.

Shaam is being treated by Al Zahraa', an occupational therapist at the Princess Basma satellite centre. Al Zahraa' is also supporting Shaam's mother. They are living in a temporary shelter and Shaam's mother faces many challenges as she cares for Shaam and tries to find appropriate medical treatment.

Malak's Story

Malak, aged 5, is currently displaced in Gaza City. Malak has experienced a great deal of trauma. She suffered an injury to her leg, which meant that she has had to have it amputated above the knee. She has also lost members of her family and her home.

The Princess Basma Satellite Team is working with Malak to try to help her to regain mobility. Malak says: *'I wish you could help me get my leg back, so I could walk like other children, run and play freely, and even go to the market by myself like I used to.'* Her favourite things are drawing and singing. Before her injury she used to enjoy playing on the trampoline and she very much hopes that trampolining might be somehow possible again one day.

Despite the daily challenges, Malak works hard on her rehabilitation programme. One real difficulty for her and for other children who have been injured by the war is that there is little or no access to customised prosthetics, splints and braces which would help with their rehabilitation.

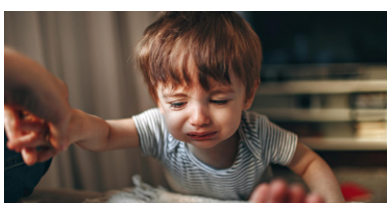
There is such a huge lack of equipment and medical supplies in Gaza that the World Health Organization has created a special task force to seek to try to deal with the problem. The Princess Basma Centre is part of the task force and has a trained local prosthetist ready to for when supplies do eventually become available.

The Centre's Work

- In Gaza in 2024 staff from Princess Basma treated 415 children at their satellite unit at Al Ahli Hospital. 215 boys and 200 girls.
- The team conducted 4000 therapy sessions, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy and psychological support.
- They also worked in displaced areas, where people were living in temporary shelters and tents. 225 children received therapy: 125 boys and 100 girls.
- They treated and cared for 319 children with chronic disabilities and 96 children with acute cases resulting from the ongoing conflict.

As you can see, the Princess Basma Hospital is looking after many children with physical difficulties. But it is also important that the children receive psychological help to enable them to deal with all that they have seen, heard and suffered.

Please pray for them and consider whether you can contribute to their work.



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