

Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association and Oxford Ramallah Twinning

ORFA Registered Charity Number: 1155620

Annual Report April 2020 to March 2021



**ORFA and ORT AGMs Tuesday 16th November 2021
6pm online Zoom Meeting**



This Annual Report covers the period up to 31st March 2021. Events after this date will appear in next year's Annual Report

Thank you to **all** our friends and contacts in Palestine who continue to support our friendship and twinning link and welcome us so warmly in Palestine. And a big thank you **to all** the many organisations, individuals and groups in Oxford who help in so many ways to ensure that our work continues.

Thank you to our funders who made our projects possible this year and those funders who have enabled us to carry forward money for delayed projects, which will now take place in 2022: Palestine Unlocked, Unite the Union Cowley Car Factory Branch, Oxford District Trade Union Council and our many individual supporters. We had been allocated funding, which we hope can be carried forward, from the City council to support our Twinning launch and youth theatre work with Mandala and Ashtar Theatres.

Information about Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association (ORFA)

Patrons: Iain Chalmers, Mahmoud Hawari, Karma Nabulsi, Sir Stephen Sedley, Avi Shlaim and Yasmin Sidhwa.

Trustees: Barbara Schofield (Treasurer), Tony Richardson (Chair), Joe Carter.

Meetings: Monthly – every third Tuesday of the month 6.00 pm to 6.45pm at Oxford Town Hall (currently on Zoom). Subgroups work together on projects.

Contact: Via the website www.oxford-ramallah.org, email: orfa_info@yahoo.co.uk

Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association has been working since 2003, and became a registered charity in February 2014

Information about Oxford Ramallah Twinning (ORT)

In March 2019 the official Twinning Agreement between Oxford and Ramallah was signed by Mayor Colin Cook and Mayor Musa Hadid at Oxford Town Hall in the presence of the Palestinian Ambassador Husam Zomlot.

Oxford Ramallah Twinning works in tandem with ORFA and is within the umbrella of Oxford International Links and works closely with the City Council Twinning office.

Contact: Via ORFA website www.oxford-ramallah.org, email: ort_info@yahoo.com

Chair: Tony Richardson **Treasurer:** Barbara Schofield, **Secretaries:** Joe Carter and Avril Alexander

Meetings: Monthly – every third Tuesday of the month 6.45pm to 7.30pm at Oxford Town Hall (currently on Zoom). Subgroups work together on projects.

Cover photo: Dabke 2018 by Aleksandra Magdziarz - shown in Oxford International Links Photography Exhibition and in Oxford Covered Market 2020

Like most organisations we had to cancel or adapt projects which were due to take place during the Summer 2021.

The planned June 2020 school link/dance visit to Oxford from the **UNRWA school in Ein Areek** did not take place. And plans were not put in place for Summer 2021 due to travel restrictions. We had a range of events and visits planned for when the young dancers, counsellor, headteacher and teacher were here. We had also planned activities to help support the cost of the visit and to develop future projects. We are interested in hearing from schools that might like to link with an UNRWA school in Palestine. We are still hoping that this visit can take place in the future.

The planned exhibition of the **Palestinian History Tapestry** was moved forward again due to restrictions and will take place in September 2021 in Oxford Town Hall. (<https://www.palestinianhistorytapestry.org/>).

The **Mandala Theatre in Oxford** had planned to participate in the **Ashtar Youth Theatre Camp in Ramallah** which was to be delayed a year to 2021. We had secured funding from the council to support the young people's visit. The visit was to include a **launch event in Ramallah** of the Oxford Ramallah Twinning. The proposed Lord Mayor, Mark Lygo, had intended to be part of this visit. The visit had to be cancelled BUT see more details, in this report, about the plans for a Digital/Live Festival in June/July 2021.

ORT was due to participate in an Oxford Links event which was to take place at the Sheldonian in April 2021. This was to be a live stream event including twin cities if possible. The aim of the day was to raise awareness of twinning through the presentation of films, music, talks and other arts. This had to be cancelled again.

We have adapted to the changes and still had a busy and productive year.

The ORFA Winter appeal raised £2100 for families living in Am'ari refugee camp.

"We thank Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association, a lot, for the help and support since in Am'ari camp health is going down because of the rise in the number of infected people. The government and the UNRWA cannot support us fully since they have financial problems."
Women's Centre Am'ari refugee camp January 2021

A huge thank you from Oxford to those who worked so hard in Am'ari to purchase and distribute the goods to support families and to all those in UK who contributed.



Naifa with a box of supplies

ORFA's 2020 winter appeal raised a total of £2100 to support families in Am'ari Refugee camp, where the Coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated an already difficult situation. The money from Oxford has been used to buy olive oil, winter clothes and blankets for families affected by Coronavirus in the camp.

ORFA worked with the Women's centre, a key democratic and non-aligned institution in Am'ari camp, to identify what was most urgently needed and to distribute items to families in need.

Refugees in the camp, who live between the pandemic and the occupation, have difficulty in self-isolating due to overcrowded homes with several generations living together. Many workers are daily paid and unemployment is high. The pandemic is having a disproportionate impact on this disadvantaged community and there are many young children in the camp living with inadequate resources.

A first payment of £1000 was sent in November 2020 and a second payment of £1100 was sent in January 2021.

Some of the items distributed to families: clothes for children, blankets and olive oil



Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association and Palestinian History Tapestry Project partnership

In August 2020, the Oxford-Ramallah Friendship Association welcomed the Palestinian History Tapestry (PHT) Project as a formal partner of the Association, and an agreement was signed by both parties in August 2020:

Partnership of Palestinian History Tapestry Project [PHT] with Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association [ORFA]

The aims and objectives of the Palestinian History Tapestry [PHT] Project are:

- 1. To record an insufficiently appreciated history of Palestine and Palestinians.*
- 2. To extend the traditional craft of the Palestinian needlewomen to illustrate this history.*
- 3. To generate income for Palestinian needlewomen and their families.*

It has been agreed that the PHT Project should formally become a partner with the Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association [ORFA]. ORFA is a charity registered in the UK, which has built grassroots links between people in Oxford and the UK and Palestine, with the aim of reducing the sense of isolation that comes from life under occupation.

The aim of the joining is to strengthen the support in Oxford and elsewhere for Palestine and Palestinians.

PHT will continue to function as before, responding to guidance and recommendations from the current PHT sub-groups, on which it depends for continuing and developing its work. The PHT Project will raise its own funding.

Signed: Jan Chalmers (PHT) Nikki Marriott (ORFA) August 2020

ORFA has worked with the PHT Project for many years and ORFA is delighted that the link with this important Project has now been formalised in this way. We believe that this will strengthen the work and support for Palestinians in Oxford and elsewhere, further raising awareness of Palestinian heritage, history and rights enshrined in international law.

<https://www.palestinianhistorytapestry.org>

The PHT Project has strong links with Oxford. The Project was conceived by Oxford resident, Jan Chalmers, who first came across the beauty and power of Palestinian embroidery when she worked in Gaza for two years as a nurse with UNWRA. With the help of Palestinians and friends in the UK and in Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon, the Palestinian History Tapestry has been established and developed into an important, award-winning project. Women from the Women's Centre in the Al Ama'ari refugee camp in Al Bireh/Ramallah, long-time partners of ORFA, are among the embroiderers who have contributed panels and ideas to the Tapestry.

As the 10th anniversary of the PHT Project approaches in 2022, a new phase is being developed with a predominantly Palestinian leadership team. We envisage the strong links with Oxford remaining. ORFA is proud and excited to be supporting and jointly organising a major exhibition of the Palestinian History Tapestry in Oxford Town Hall from **24th September until 28th September 2021**. If the pandemic situation allows, we hope that it will be possible to bring one or two stitchers from Palestine to Oxford and hold events with various community groups during this week. (The exhibition had to be postponed from its original June dates because of continuing Covid-19 restrictions.)



Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association and Oxford Palestine Solidarity Campaign joint online meeting: The Journey of a Young Female Stateless Palestinian Refugee with Basma El Doukhi

"A huge thank you to Basma, for her interesting, inspiring and thought-provoking talk."

Basma explored individual and collective stories and experiences. Basma asked "Can you imagine living in exile and in a camp as a stateless person for more than 70 years, while being denied your basic human rights and any future foreseen durable solutions? Have you thought about Palestinian refugees living in the camps of Lebanon?"

Basma spoke about human rights and the solutions for refugees in Lebanon. Focusing on her journey and that of her fellow refugees. This was a story of resilience and strength, both collective and individual.

Oxford Ramallah Twinning – Oxford International Links

“ORFA works in tandem with Oxford Ramallah Twinning and raises awareness through bringing groups and individuals from Palestine to share their stories with residents of Oxford. City twinning is an act of city diplomacy which aims to give citizens the chance to engage with their respective cultures and foster friendship, understanding and networks.” *Middle East Monitor news item 2019.*

Oxford International Links exhibition with theme of ‘Women and Photography’

The Photo Oxford 2020 Festival was organised by the charity Photography Oxford, and finally, after a necessary postponement due to Covid 19, took place from 16 October - 16 November 2020. As part of this Festival, there was an Oxford International Links photography exhibition with contributions from each of Oxford's eight twin cities. The Oxford International Links exhibition was curated by Oxford residents Irmgard Hueppe and Simon Murison-Bowie. ORT submitted 15 photographs from which 10 were chosen for the exhibition. The exhibition took place online with one picture printed and displayed in the Covered Market, central Oxford. A huge thank you to Aleksandra Magdziarz for her fantastic photographs of the Oxford Dabke visit in 2018 and organising the photos for the exhibition. **(See cover)**

Potential Visit to Palestine by Mayor of Oxford – The current Mayor of Oxford, Mark Lygo, is keen to visit Palestine and is in communication with Ramallah Municipality re such a visit. However, due to Covid travel restrictions plans are currently on hold.

Twin City signs continue to be popular -The Twin City signs, which were unveiled in October 2019, continue to be popular with residents. These are positioned on the main roads as one enters Oxford. We have had many comments, from across Oxford communities, about how good it is to see the signs showing the Twinning between Oxford and Ramallah Palestine.



Mandala & Ashtar Theatre - International Digital and Live Theatre Festival plans for 2021

ORFA and ORT plan to work closely with the Artivism theatre project outlined below and particularly to arrange the official launch of the **Oxford Ramallah Twinning**.

A joint application, to the British Council, made by Ashtar Theatre, Ramallah and Mandala Theatre, Oxford to organise a project for the Summer of 2021 has been agreed. The aim is to run a digital and live space theatre exchange between young people age 16 – 25 years, with local Oxford communities and Ramallah.

Between April - July 2021, young people and staff from Oxford and Ramallah will work on digital platforms to meet, share, plan and produce an innovative digital festival for young people that is interactive, informative, and heartfelt. Taking place in Oxford and Ramallah from Thursday 1st to Wednesday 7th July 2021, including:

- A digital/ live **civic launch of the Oxford/Ramallah Twinning** bringing both communities together with food and music to share connections with a focus on young people and community initiatives.
- International creative workshops - working in the digital and live space to create a shared bi-lingual performance to end the exchange.
- Shared digital screenings of each country's performances.
- Online Panel discussions focused on *Artivism* – exploring why and how we use art to make a difference in the world – Involving guest panellists to give an International perspective. The panel will focus on:

experiences of the Pandemic (young people in Gaza have been in 'lockdown' for the last 2 years), mental health, responses to the global Black Lives Matter movement

Dance - Ramallah based dancers contributed to the Dancin' Oxford short film.

The Global Dance Film 'Spring Awakening' went live on the 7th March 2021 on the Dancin' Oxford YouTube page. You can find it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mp4GZSrQaqI&list=PL5M4zO7waZNM6V1bJlclqIYtUx381oLEo&index=7>

The council received 70 films from dance groups in Oxford and twin cities Padua, Ramallah, Perm, Leiden, Wrocław and León.

Music – A Ramallah based musician, Muntasser Jebrini, leads on line workshop 22nd November 2020 Twin Cities were invited to join Tandem Workshop - There was a, very much, appreciated contribution from a musician based in Ramallah. The online participants learnt a Palestinian song with musician and teacher, Muntasser Jebrini.

This was the third of four digital music workshops that Tandem ran, throughout the Autumn, in partnership with Ethno England and Oxford Contemporary Music. The workshop was from Ramallah in Palestine with the wonderful musician Muntasser Jebrini, teaching a traditional song. Supported by Oxford City Council and Arts Council and Tandem.

Environment - Oxford Botanic Gardens to celebrate 400 years

We are delighted that Mazin Qumsiyeh has been invited by Oxford University and is able to speak at the Oxford Botanical Gardens 400 year celebration. As part of the celebrations a forum will host speakers from international Botanic Gardens with special invites to Oxford's Twinned Cities. This will most probably take place, on line, in September 2021. Mazin Qumsiyeh is Professor of Biodiversity and Sustainability, Bethlehem University, Occupied Palestine and Professor, Founder and (volunteer) Director at Palestine Museum of Natural History. Mazin's information: <http://palestinenature.org> facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PIBS.PMNH>

Sheffield - Nablus Trade Union Meeting We have begun a relationship with the twinning group in Sheffield. As part of this Tony attended a zoom meeting they had with trade unionists from Nablus, official union, plus firefighters, and leading trade unionists from UK. this is a strong developing group. TR

Annual Financial Report April 2020 - March 2021

ORFA Accounts:

Financial period start: 02 April 2020

Financial period end: 01 April 2021

Income and expenditure

Carried forward: £5853.71

Income: **£3,955.39**

Spending: **£3,180.84**

Total (balance) on 1 April 2021: £6628.26

Main points:

1. Most donations are received now through the Localgiving (gift aid automatically processed):
2. Donations were received by ORFA to specifically support the Winter Appeal
3. Charity Commission Annual Return 2020/2021 to be submitted with the figures as shown here.

DATE		CREDIT	DEBIT	BALANCE
18/03/2020	Donation through localgiving	44.15		5853.71
16/04/2020	Donation through localgiving	44.15		5897.86
22/04/2020	Donation through localgiving	11.15		5909.01
13/05/2020	Donation through localgiving	44.15		5953.16

01/06/2020	Deposit for Town Hall's hire for Palestinian History Tapestry exhibition in 2021		855	5098.16
03/06/2020	Donation through localgiving	11.15		5109.31
17/06/2020	Donation through localgiving	241.99		5351.3
18/06/2020	Donation	20		5371.3
19/06/2020	Donations	514.4		5885.7
01/07/2020	Donation through localgiving	11.15		5896.85
09/07/2020	WOCA (returned fee for renting venue in 2020 due to events' cancellation)	101		5997.85
15/07/2020	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6042
28/07/2020	Donation through localgiving	58.65		6100.65
12/08/2020	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6144.8
25/08/2020	OCVA membership for 2020		25	6119.8
09/09/2021	Create Net BR		69.84	6049.96
09/09/2021	Donation through localgiving	11.15		6061.11
16/09/2021	Localgiving membership fee		96	5965.11
16/09/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6009.26
30/09/2021	Donation through localgiving	11.15		6020.41
14/10/2020	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6064.56
22/10/2020	Donation through localgiving	11.15		6075.71
04/11/2020	Donation through localgiving	197.04		6272.75
11/11/2020	Donation through localgiving	148.18		6420.93
19/11/2020	Donation through localgiving	399.48		6820.41
25/11/2020	Donation through localgiving	409.01		7229.42
03/12/2020	Donation through localgiving	98		7327.42
09/12/2020	Donation through localgiving	29.54		7356.96
17/12/2020	Donation through localgiving	392.94		7749.9
21/12/2020	Donation through localgiving	68.74		7818.64
29/12/2020	Donation through localgiving	167.78		7986.42
30/12/2020	Donation through localgiving	98.84		8085.26
31/12/2020	Donation through localgiving	178.04		8263.3
12/01/2021	Donation through localgiving	83.43		8346.73
20/01/2021	Donation through localgiving	98.44		8445.17
05/02/2021	Donation through localgiving	29.38		8474.55
10/02/2021	Donation through localgiving	165.51		8640.06
15/02/2021	Winter Appeal money transferred to Women Centre		2100	6540.06
17/02/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6584.21
03/03/2021	Donation through localgiving	34.9		6619.11
15/03/2021	Britain Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network (subs)		35	6584.11
18/03/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6628.26
		£3,955.39	£3,180.84	
		income	expenses	

Through the Charity Commission ORFA charity is classified as:

- Working in the area of education and training, arts/culture/heritage, human rights/religious or racial harmony or diversity.
- Working with the general public/mankind.

ORFA's Charitable Objects are copied below as adopted: (CONSTITUTION ADOPTED 18 OCT 2011 AS AMENDED ON 19/11/2013)

1. TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS (AS SET OUT IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUBSEQUENT UNITED NATIONS CONVENTIONS AND DECLARATIONS) BY ALL OR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING MEANS:

- RAISING AWARENESS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE ISRAELI - PALESTINIAN CONFLICT IN GENERAL;
- RESEARCHING AND MONITORING ABUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND INFRINGEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW;
- EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS LAW;
- PROMOTING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW;
- WORKING TO ELIMINATE ABUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND INFRINGEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW;
- WORKING TO OBTAIN AND PROMOTE REDRESS FOR THE VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND THEIR FAMILIES AND INFRINGEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW.
- PROVIDING SUPPORT TO AND RELIEVING NEED AMONG THE VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND INFRINGEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW AND THEIR FAMILIES.

2. TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC IN THE UK AND PALESTINE, IN PARTICULAR IN RAMALLAH AND ITS ENVIRONS BY ALL OR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING MEANS:

- TO PROVIDE EXTRA-CURRICULAR EDUCATION TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE, INHABITANTS AND REFUGEES;
- TO FOCUS ON IMPROVING THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THOSE IN NEED, ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH AND REFUGEES.
- TO ASSIST IN PROVIDING DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY EDUCATIONAL TEACHING MATERIAL, BOOKS AND TOOLS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE EDUCATION OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUTH AND REFUGEES.
- TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY BASED EDUCATION THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS AND RESOURCES.
- TO HELP THE COMMUNITY BUILD SUSTAINABLE AND LOCALLY MANAGED EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES.
- TO BRING PEOPLE FROM THE COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS TO OXFORD TO FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION IN A WAY THAT IMPROVES THEIR SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES AT HOME AND ABROAD.
- TO PRESENT MATERIAL IN VARIOUS FORMS TO EDUCATE PEOPLE IN OXFORD ABOUT THE CULTURE AND ORDINARY LIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF RAMALLAH.
- TO SEND GROUPS AND DELEGATIONS FROM OXFORD TO PALESTINE AND IN PARTICULAR TO RAMALLAH AND ITS ENVIRONS TO IMPROVE THEIR AWARENESS AND TO BUILD COMMUNITY BASED / INDIVIDUAL CONTACTS BETWEEN OXFORD AND RAMALLAH.