

Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association and Oxford Ramallah Twinning

ORFA Registered Charity Number: 1155620

Annual Report April 2021 to March 2022



**ORFA and ORT AGMs Tuesday 20th September 2022
6pm Oxford Town Hall**



This Annual Report covers the period up to 31st March 2022. 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 2023: Palestine Unlocked, Unite the Union Cowley Car Factory Branch, Oxford District Trade Union Council and our many individual supporters. Mandala Theatre had been allocated funding which was carried forward, from Oxford City Council, to support the Artivism Digital Live Youth Theatre and the official Oxford Ramallah Twinning launch event which took place in both Ramallah and Oxford. Thank you also to the Ultimate Picture Palace for their presentation of the film 'Mayor'

Thank you to our ORFA Patrons who have continued to offer their advice, active support and to share their experience with us. For our small organisation this is key to our confidence going forward.

Information about Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association (ORFA) Website:
[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 (ORT joint Secretary).

Meetings: Monthly – every third Tuesday of the month 6.00 pm to 6.45pm at Oxford Town Hall (during period covered in this report held 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 partnership with ORFA . It is part of Oxford International Links and works closely with the City Council Twinning office. **Contact:** ORFA website www.oxford-ramallah.org - email via: orfa_orfa@yahoo.co.uk

Cover photo: Oxford Ramallah Twinning launch event with Mayor Musa Hadid in Ramallah

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 (on Zoom during the period covered by this report). Subgroups work together on projects.

For a second year we have had to cancel projects which were due to take place during Summer 2021.

The June 2020 and then June 2021 school link/dance visit to Oxford from the UNRWA school in Ein Areek did not take place due to Covid restrictions. Changes in staffing have taken place and the school is no longer in a position to participate. We are currently in discussion with our Ramallah partners about arranging a refocused visit from Am'ari Refugee Camp in Ramallah to take place in Summer 2023.

The **Palestinian History Tapestry** (<https://www.palestinianhistorytapestry.org/>) exhibition was moved from 2020 to October 2021 due to Covid restrictions. The tapestry uses the embroidery skills of Palestinian women to illustrate aspects of the land and peoples of Palestine from Neolithic times to the present. The Tapestry is a powerful representation of the history of Palestine. The **Palestinian History Tapestry** exhibition in the Long Room at the Town Hall was a huge success.

Mandala Theatre had planned to participate in the **Ashtar Youth Theatre Camp in Ramallah**. The visit was to include a **launch event in Ramallah** of the Oxford Ramallah Twinning. The funding was moved forward to July 2021 and the event became *Artivism*, a digital/live festival.

ORT/ORFA will be participating in an Oxford Links event that has been delayed for two years. Now rescheduled for 1st October 2022 and taking place at the Sheldonian, the aim of the day is to raise awareness of twinning through the presentation of films, music, talks and other arts.

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

“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 2019.

Nakba Meeting (on Zoom) May 18th 2021 - ORFA/ORT - We are grateful to our partners in Ramallah in the Al Am'ari Refugee Camp who gave a powerful and informative presentation about the Nakba. Members of the Women's Centre explained their families' experiences and showed a set of photos from the period. They were joined by an Oxford member who spoke about her family's experience of

the Nakba and their great loss as Palestinian farmers. The meeting linked political and familial memories of the Nakba and showed graphically how the disaster impacted on Palestinians.

Film showings: 'Mayor' - David Osit's film about mayor Hadid had three showings at the Ultimate Picture Palace on Cowley Road from **June 23rd to 26th June**. At the three showings we were also able to show 'Can We Speak About Palestine' a short film by Akram Salhab's (courtesy of Channel 4).

Mayor was released in cinemas across the UK. In the words of the director David Osit: *"I wanted to make a film that shifts the narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict away from intractable debate, and instead tells a story of a small town mayor dealing with small town problems amid a military occupation of his city."*

"We are living in an era when discussing the rights and humanity of Palestinian's has been written into legislation in – several countries - as an act of hate against another nation of people. Very quietly and obliquely, MAYOR challenges the logic of this assertion."

"Can We Speak About Palestine" This showing of 'Can We Speak About Palestine' included an ORFA addition of an introduction and additional interviews with Palestiinians who live or have studied in Oxford and have links to ORFA and our sister organisation Palestinian History Tapestry. **Akram Salhab's film** explores the legacy of British colonialism on Palestinians today. We hear from young Palestinians about the restrictions they encounter when speaking about Palestine and their Palestinian identity. The film includes an interview with Israeli historian Avi Shlaim, a patron of ORFA. The film makes clear links with the Black Lives Matter movement. **The film was also shown as part of the Amnesty Human Rights Festival. Please watch it on our website.**

Artivism International Digital/Live Theatre Festival at Oxford Ramallah Twinning Launch and Launch Events Artivism and the Oxford Ramallah Twinning

Mandala Theatre Company in Oxford and Ashtar Theatre in Ramallah collaborated to organise the Artivism Youth Theatre Festival. The inspiring launch took place at The Ultimate Picture Palace in Cowley Road on **1st July**.

The screenings of the plays began with filmed introductions from the Lord Mayor of Oxford, Councillor Mark Lygo; Mayor of Ramallah, Musa Hadid; and the artistic directors of Mandala and Ashtar Theatres.



- Mandala Theatre Company's production of *Blood Oil*, written by Sean Burn and directed by Yasmin Sidhwa
- Ashtar Theatre's performance of *The Brainwashers Conference*, an adaptation of *Turandot* by Bertolt Brecht directed by Iman Aoun

After the screenings we had a fantastic live and online Q&A session with the young actors from both plays - with Ashtar joining on line.

The festival, Artivism, was funded by the British Council and hosted by Mandala Theatre Company and Ashtar Theatre between 1-7 July. It included a series of workshops in which the actors and young local people linked up with groups from around the world to create a truly international and dynamic youth theatre festival.

Official Launch - Twinning with Ramallah

Oxford and Ramallah were officially twinned with the signing of a twinning agreement in Oxford Town Hall in March 2019. As part of the Artivism Festival, we arranged the Oxford Ramallah Twinning Launch with both the Mayors. Their recorded messages of support were played at the UPP cinema as part of the Artivism Festival.

The Lord Mayor of Oxford, Councillor Mark Lygo, said: "The Artivism Festival is a celebration of cultures and community – the very essence of what the twinning is designed to nurture.

"The links between the cities of Ramallah and Oxford started before the twinning, and it was these links that led to the cementing of our relationship by officially having Ramallah twinned with Oxford.

"The last 15 months have been incredibly difficult for the world with the pandemic but this has not stopped the exchanges between our cities. Virtual events have taken place and three schools have been twinned.

“This demonstrates that despite restrictions the will of the people of both cities to interact and create ever stronger bonds is undaunted.”

The Mayor of Ramallah, Musa Hadid, said: "Our relationship with Oxford is a special one since it's based on our communities.

“This festival is a celebration of the ongoing connection that, although only dates back a short period, is already very close.

“Together with the city of Oxford, we have managed to link our schools to enable students to exchange their experiences. We have also, despite a worldwide pandemic, succeeded in collaborating in many virtual festivals.

“This shows how human bonds are stronger than any obstacle – be it viral or Israeli occupation. Our exchanges reflect the quality of ties that bond both cities, demonstrating a human solidarity that exceeds border.”

The ORT Launch party in Oxford was made possible through the support of the British Council and Oxford Ramallah and Oxford City Council's in kind support. Friendship Association. Mayor Mark Lygo and Cllr Lubna Arshad celebrated with us.



Oxford Ramallah Twinning launch event with Mayor Mark Lygo in Oxford

We are very grateful to all the people who helped with the event; Delnavaz and a London-based band performed and we listened to beautiful music.

The event was at Flo's in the Park, with delicious food from the Palestinian restaurant, Za'atar Bake on Cowley Road and Baklava from Damascus Rose Café. Ali, Iris and Hatem performed Dabke for the guests.

This was a great cultural celebration of the friendship links we have between Oxford and Ramallah. A huge thank you to everyone who helped to make this such a great success!

Palestinian History Tapestry Exhibition organised by PHT and ORFA/ORT

Long Room Oxford Town Hall - 24th to 28th September 2021

Exhibition in Oxford Town Hall of the Palestinian History Tapestry

In September 2021, ORFA was very pleased to be able to work with its partner, the Palestinian History Tapestry (PHT) project, on setting up and running a special public exhibition of images from the PHT in Oxford Town Hall. All ten of the original panels stitched by women from the Al Amari camp women's centre (in El Bireh, Ramallah) were among the 47 images included in the display, which comprise almost half of the embroideries so far created for this spectacular tapestry project.



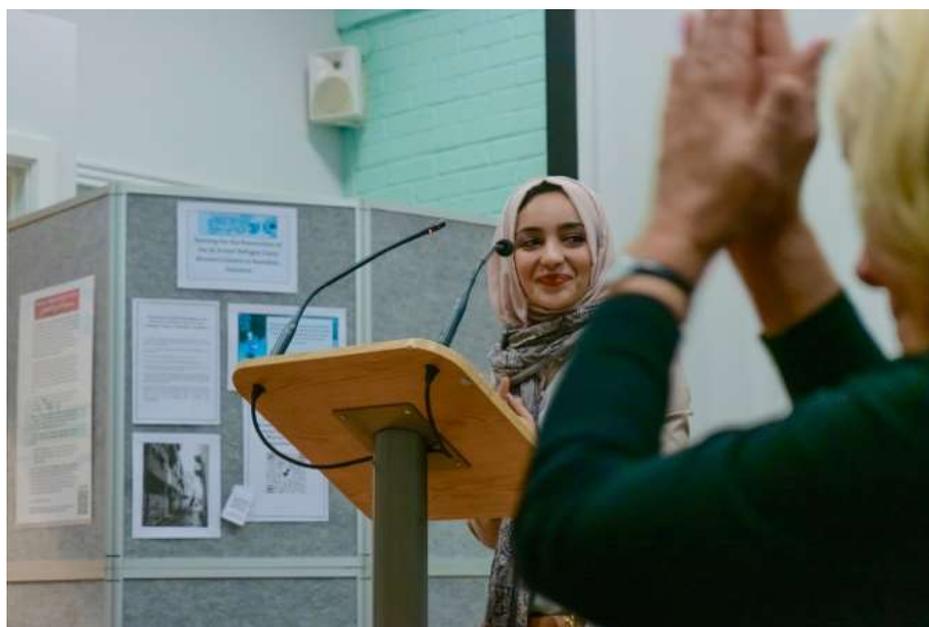
The exhibition in the centre of Oxford was a wonderful opportunity to raise public awareness, not only about Palestine's rich culture and history, but also the all-pervasive violations of human rights and attacks experienced by Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation. Powerful images, carefully selected by members of the PHT, demonstrated ongoing Palestinian steadfastness (Sumud) and resistance to the continuing Nakba and to what the PHT project describe as continuing attempts to uproot Palestinians and their identity as a people.



Volunteers were available throughout the four days to talk with visitors about both ORFA and PHT and to promote public support for basic human rights and the upholding of international law in the context of Palestine. The exhibition was visited by over 350 people and the response to it was overwhelmingly positive and appreciative.

The opening night of the exhibition was well attended. Excellent speeches by Nikki Marriot and Tony Richardson of ORFA, Jehan Alfarra, representing the Palestinian History Tapestry project, Steve Goddard, deputy Lord Mayor and Avi Shlaim, Emeritus Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford and a patron of ORFA, all provided educational context to the exhibition. The full report can be found on the ORFA website and via this link

https://sites.create-cdn.net/sitefiles/61/8/1/618166/PHT_Exhibition_Report_Final_PDF.pdf



Dabke at the Little Amal Visit to Oxford – October 2021

We were requested by the Story Museum to be one of the partners with them to support the visit. Little Amal was an amazing International project which raised awareness of the situation for refugees who have to flee their countries and highlighted the impact on children. Little Amal is a puppet of a 10 year old girl who walked into 200 towns and villages on her journey which started in Syria.

Events were organised in Oxford and **the final part of her visit here was a community Dabke Dance** in Christchurch Meadow. **This was organised by Ali and Hatem and over two hundred people participated in the Dabke. This event, at the end of the visit, was an impactful way to bring people together and celebrate Little Amal's visit.** These events in Oxford were highly important as they reflected Oxford's status as a City of Sanctuary.



The Community Dabke Dance in Christchurch Meadow, Oxford

Mayor Mark Lygo's Visit to Palestine – 20th to 25th February 2022

We were delighted that Mayor Mark Lygo and his wife were able to visit Palestine, at very short notice, as Covid restrictions were lifted.



The Ramallah Municipality arranged a fantastic welcome and programme for them. They were very busy and learnt about the separation wall on a Wall Tour. They visited Hebron Old City and the United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights. They made a visit to Bethlehem to see areas of annexed land with the YMCA Olive Tree Campaign. In Jerusalem they visited the British Consulate and met with residents in the Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood to hear first hand about the situation.

Mark also met with Defence for the Child International and heard from them about the Israel government's designation of DCI Palestine as a terrorist organization. It is a Human Rights organisation that supports children. They were informed of the raids on DCI offices and the removal of equipment including computers by the Israeli forces. Please take time to read about DCI Palestine and find out more about their important work.

[Defense for Children Palestine](#)

The **Palestinian History Tapestry** kindly donated an embroidered image of a British Mandate postage stamp with an accompanying text in Arabic for Oxford Mayor Mark Lygo to present to the Mayor of Ramallah during Mark's visit.

Cultural visits included Ashtar Theatre (close partners of Mandala Theatre in Oxford), the Edward Said Music Conservatory, Mahmoud Darwish Museum, Yasar Arafat Museum, and the Municipality Cultural and Social Affairs Department.

The Mayor's programme included an important visit to Al Am'ari Refugee Camp.



Mark Lygo visiting Al Am'ari Refugee Camp

“We were very pleased with the visit of the Mayor of Oxford to Al Am'ari Camp and the Al Am'ari Womens Centre. It was a wonderful visit. We were all happy in the way the Mayor was informed about the real suffering of the refugees in their distance from their original cities and villages in Palestine. We thank you for your wonderful efforts with us and we thank the Mayor and his wife for the visit. Greetings.” From the Women's Centre Al Am'ari Refugee Camp.

Oxford Medical Teaching in Gaza: A talk by Consultant Surgeon Nick Maynard, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust - Wednesday

January 26th 7.30pm 2022 (Zoom). Oxford Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association were very pleased to host a meeting, **Oxford Medical Teaching in Gaza**, with Consultant Surgeon Nick Maynard from Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust

Nick works at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust and trained at Oxford University, Guy's Hospital, London, and Melbourne, Australia. He is President of the Association of Upper GI Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland, and is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of IMET 2000 (The International Medical Education Trust).

Nick first visited Palestine in 2008, and since then has travelled each year with fellow Oxford Consultants to Palestine to teach medical students in the West Bank and Gaza. Since 2012 he has led a group of Oxford Consultants specialising in surgery, medicine, paediatrics and obstetrics and spends a week in Gaza each October with students from the Islamic University of Gaza and Al Azhar University.

The meeting showed us a devastating picture of the the health situation in Gaza. We were honoured that Terrance English and other medics from Oxford also contributed

to the meeting. We were very grateful for the time they took to explain the extraordinary work that is completed with medics in Gaza.

Funding - repairs to the Kindergarten in Al Am'ari Refugee Camp

The kindergarten is based in the Womens Centre. £3000 were raised by Richard English who completed a sponsored half marathon in October 2021. The funds raised were sent after the end of the financial year and so the transfer will appear in our next annual accounts.

British Palestine Friendship Twinning Network Conference – March 2022

An ORFA delegate attended the national twinning conference in March. There are now 40 groups affiliated; many lively actions have been completed despite Covid travel restrictions.

We have been able to participate in the bigger events, organised by Sheffield Nablus, and London Unite with the Shu'fat refugee camp in Jerusalem. There are specific campaigns, such as planting Olive Trees.

The Twinning has a paid organiser, which has been very useful, but one donation is coming to an end, so they are appealing for money.

We as a group have found our accumulated twinning work useful towards helping the Mandala group visit and contacts for our members who went with them.

It has strengthened us to be part of national twinning.

Demonstration and Rally - Sunday 30th May 2021 - Help the World Oxford with support from PSC organised a demonstration which marched from Cowley Road to bonn Square. Over 3,000 people attended. ORFA representatives were able to speak briefly at the rally.

Palestinian Event organised by Help the World Oxford (in Cheyney Field) – 15th August 2021. We had a stall at the event and many people gave details for the mailing list. ORFA representative spoke briefly.

Annual Financial Report April 2021 - March 2022

ORFA Accounts:

Financial period start: 02 April 2021

Financial period end: 01 April 2022

Income and expenditure

Carried forward: 6628.26

Income: 4329.73

Spending: 2192.92

Total (balance) on 1 April 2022: 8765.07

Main points:

1. Most donations are received now through the Localgiving (gift aid automatically processed): £3744.98
2. Donations were received by ORFA to specifically support the school dabke visit and Palestinian History Tapestry exhibition: £584.75
3. Charity Commission Annual Return 2021/2022 to be submitted with the figures as shown here.
4. The accounts show £3000 in donations as sponsorship for Richard English's fundraising half marathon. This amount was transferred by WU to the Women's Centre in April 2022 and will show in the 2022-2023 account.
5. The payment from the Story Museum (19/1/2022 - £100) is for the Little Amal Dabke performance by Oxford Dabke Group. ORFA also agreed to support the performance with the payment of £100 to the Oxford Dabke Group. They have requested that ORFA keep their £200 in our account at present.

DATE		CREDIT	DEBIT	BALANCE
18/03/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6628.26
14/04/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6672.41
13/05/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6716.56
16/06/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6760.71
30/06/2021	Website domain renewal charges (JC)		38.38	6722.33
13/07/2021	OCVA membership for 2021		25	6697.33
22/07/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6741.48
23/08/2021	Flyers and leaflets for Pal History Tapestry exhibition 23-29.09.21 (A. Magdziarz)		30	6711.48
25/08/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		6755.63
17/09/2021	Oxford Town Hall's hire for Palestinian History Tapestry exhibition 23-29.09.21		855	5900.63
22/09/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		5944.78
29/09/2021	Donation through localgiving	88.38		6033.16
07/10/2021	Donation through localgiving	478.44		6511.6
11/10/2021	Localgiving membership for 2021		96	6415.6
13/10/2021	Donation through localgiving	88.02		6503.62
20/10/2021	Donation through localgiving	877.1		7380.72
27/10/2021	Donation through localgiving	639.59		8020.31
04/11/2021	Donation through localgiving	253.68		8273.99
05/11/2021	Stall HTWO Event £54+ORT launch donations to ORFA £34.25+donations to support PHT Exhibition £259	347.25		8621.24
08/11/2021	Fee for a copy of bank statements		2.5	8618.74
10/11/2021	Donation through localgiving	167.82		8786.56
17/11/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		8830.71
24/11/2021	Part of a cash donation given to PHT Exhibition and then given to ORFA by PHT	137.5		8968.21

01/12/2021	Purchase/Hire of 14 panels to the Town Hall for PHT Exhibition		480	8488.21
22/12/2021	Café Flo hire on 1/07/21		230	8258.21
30/12/2021	Donation through localgiving	44.15		8302.36
19/01/2022	The Story Museum Dabke Dance	100		8402.36
19/01/2022	Donation through localgiving	162.79		8565.15
16/02/2022	Donation through localgiving	44.15		8609.3
09/03/2022	Donation through localgiving	547.66		9156.96
11/03/2022	Britain Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network (subs for 2022)		35	9121.96
16/03/2022	Donation through localgiving	44.15		9166.11
31/03/2022	Payment for NM for stitched logos - Women Centre Sewing Project		401.04	8765.07
			4329.73	2192.92

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.