

## Disability Under Siege final conference

### *Education for young people with disabilities in Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan*

Online via Zoom

Zoom/registration link <https://bham-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/88655142411>

09.00 – 14.10 UK time

11.00 – 16.10 Palestine and Lebanon time

12.00 – 17.10 Jordan time

## Introduction

Join us online for the Disability under Siege final conference on Tuesday 4 and Wednesday 5 February 2025 ‘**Education for young people with disabilities in Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan**’.

The Disability under Siege Network + is a multidisciplinary programme aiming to transform education provisions for children with disabilities in war affected states, specifically Palestine (Gaza and West Bank), Lebanon, and Jordan. By bringing together a wide range of experts from across the Middle East region and the UK, the network has undertaken transformative research and practical interventions that support disability inclusivity, accessibility, understanding and resilience. There is also a strong focus on arts and culture as a way of increasing representation and changing perceptions of disability in the region. The programme is funded by UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), under the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF).

The final conference marks the culmination of five years of extensive research, networking and impact collaborations across Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. The event aims to bring people together from across the sector including disability activists, practitioners, people with disabilities, academics, and community leaders. We will share new research findings and best practice, discuss the current context and how we address urgent priorities going forward. Sessions will incorporate dynamic discussions, arts and cultural showcases, and policy and practice dialogues, designed to foster collaborative solutions and amplify the voices of those most affected by the intersection of disability, education and war.

The conference is not only a celebration of what has been achieved to date, but also an opportunity for continued advocacy, innovation, and solidarity in pursuit of inclusive education for children with disabilities in regions of war.

Language and signing interpreters, as well as captioning, will be in place for the duration of the conference to ensure the event accessible to all.



We recognise that the conference is occurring during a time when the regions we are working in are facing significant challenges. Our thoughts are with all those affected by the ongoing war in these regions.

## Programme

### Day 1 – Tuesday 4 February 2025

Time (UK)	Session
09.00 - 09.15	<b>Welcome and overview of Disability under Siege project</b> Professor Dina Kiwan, Principal Investigator of the Disability under Siege Network+, University of Birmingham UK <i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i>
09.15 - 10.00	<b>Keynote</b> Dr Laila Atshan, Psychologist and disability rights advocate <i>“Disability way below the margin: people with disability in situations of war”</i> <i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i>
10.00 - 10.15	<b>Disabled voices from Palestine</b> Screening of a powerful short film featuring students living with disabilities from the Islamic University of Gaza, detailing their experiences during the war over the past year. <i>(in Arabic, with English subtitles)</i>
10.15 - 11.15	<b>Inclusive education in a time of war and displacement: Challenges and resilience in Gaza</b> Exploring ways in which organisations and people with disabilities have shown resilience and found solutions to challenges in inclusive education the war in Gaza. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professor Nazmi Al-Masri, Islamic University of Gaza (Chair) <i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i></li><li>• Naim Kabaja, Disability Inclusion Consultant, Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children <i>(in Arabic, with English interpretation)</i></li><li>• Nesma Al-Ghoula, IUG Disability Services Centre <i>(in Arabic, with English interpretation)</i></li><li>• Loai Abu Saif - Disability Programme Lead, Medical Aid for Palestinians <i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i></li></ul>
11.15 - 11.30	<b>Break</b>



<b>11.30 - 12.30</b>	<p><b>Inequalities of knowledge production</b></p> <p>Exploring the challenges and opportunities when conducting disability focussed research and leading organisations that advocate for and support people with disabilities in Palestine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Dina Kiwan, University of Birmingham (Chair) <i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i></li> <li>• Dr Rula Ghanndour, Birzeit University <i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i></li> <li>• Dr Suzan Mitwalli, Birzeit University <i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i></li> <li>• Shatha Abu Srour, Palestinian Disability Coalition <i>(in Arabic, with English interpretation)</i></li> <li>• Hamzeh Naser, Head, General Union of People with Disabilities, Ramallah <i>(in Arabic, with English interpretation)</i></li> </ul>
<b>12.30 - 13.00</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lunch break</b></p>
<b>13.00 - 14.00</b>	<p><b>Evolution of the Disability Movement in Lebanon: progress since the 1980s, Emergency Crisis Response during the war, and the media's role in documentation.</b></p> <p>A history of the disability movement in Lebanon, the movement's current role during the ongoing emergency situation in the country, and the role of the media in documenting these efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Itab Shuayb, Centre for Lebanese Studies</li> <li>• Ibrahim Abdullah, President of the Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i></p>
<b>14.00 - 14.10</b>	<p><b>Closing remarks</b></p> <p>Professor Dina Kiwan, Principal Investigator of the Disability under Siege Network, University of Birmingham</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i></p>



## Day 2 – Wednesday 5 February 2025




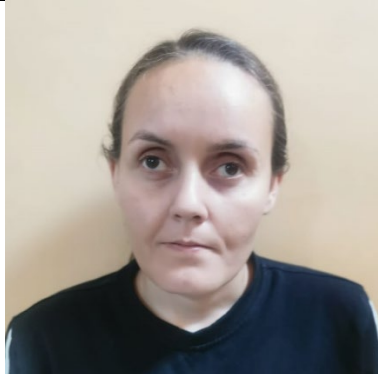
Time (UK)	Session
09.00 - 09.15	<b>Welcome to Day 2</b> Professor Dina Kiwan, Principal Investigator of the Disability under Siege Network <i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i>
09.15 - 10.00	<b>Keynote</b> Professor Maha Shuayb, British Academy Bilateral Chair Education in Conflict at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge and the Centre for Lebanese Studies.  <i>“Why Disability Still Matters Less? Battling with Ableism and Depoliticization in Traditional and Radical Agendas.”</i>  Despite the rise of rights-based movements such as #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and LGBTQ+ rights, disability remains the least represented intersectionality in both liberal and radical discourses and campaigns. While debates around gender and race—especially within radical scholarship—are firmly rooted in political struggle, disability, which is largely absent from these discussions, has increasingly been depoliticized. Under the influence of liberal thought, disability has come to be viewed primarily as an issue of services and, at best, identity, with the politics of power and justice remaining peripheral to these conversations.  <i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i>
10.00 - 11.00	<b>Performing Rights: Speculative Practices &amp; Knowledge Production in the Arts</b> Premiere of the "63 Days of Sit-In" documentary film highlighting the making of the performance by Basta Theatre Collective. The play narratives the 63-day sit-in movement where activists with disabilities in Palestine advocated for their rights to full health insurance. The film highlights the journey and dedication to empowering marginalized voices, fostering dialogue on social justice, and promoting community resilience. The film will be followed by a fascinating discussion with the film and performance creators and main actor from the performance.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professor Anthony Downey, Birmingham City University (Chair)</li><li>• Hussam Ghosheh, Founder &amp; Artistic Leader of Basta Theatre Collective</li><li>• Sabine Abusaada, Curator and co-researcher, 63 Days of Sit In</li><li>• Hamad Samamreh, main performer, 63 Days of Sit In</li><li>• 63 Days Sit-In short film screening <i>(in Arabic with English subtitles)</i></li></ul> <i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i>



<b>11.00 - 11.15</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>11.15 - 12.15</b>	<p><b>Comparative perspectives of disability inclusion in education and society</b></p> <p>An exploration of research perspectives of approaches to and inclusion of students with learning and physical disabilities from primary, secondary and Higher Education settings in Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan.</p> <p>The session will examine inclusion-related perspectives, experiences, policies and practices in schools and the extent that mainstreaming strategies have been adopted by higher education institutions to safeguard the right to education for people with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Maha Shuayb (Chair)</li> <li>• Dr Maha Khochen-Bagshaw, Senior Inclusive Education Specialist</li> <li>• Dr Said Awad, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Al Quds University</li> <li>• Dr Bahaalddin Serhan, Islamic University Gaza</li> <li>• Dr Grace Khawam, Lecturer in Public Health and Disability Activist, Faculty of Health Sciences, American University of Beirut</li> </ul> <p><i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i></p>
<b>12.15 – 13.00</b>	<b>Lunch break</b>
<b>13.00 – 14.00</b>	<p><b>What does the future hold for disability education and inclusion?</b></p> <p>The Disability under Siege Research Team will engage in a question-and-answer session on the many challenges and opportunities for education and inclusion of people with disabilities in 2025 and beyond.</p> <p>Themes to be discussed include cultural shifts, capacity building, awareness and advocacy, policy and practice, conflict contexts, collaboration and partnerships. The aim of this session is to continue the positive momentum for the understanding and advancement of education and inclusion for young people with disabilities, beyond the conference and after the conclusion of the Disability under Siege Programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Dina Kiwan, University of Birmingham (Chair)</li> <li>• Professor Nazmi Al-Masri, Islamic University of Gaza</li> <li>• Professor Anthony Downey, Birmingham City University</li> <li>• Dr Itab Shuayb, Centre for Lebanese Studies</li> </ul> <p><i>(in English, with Arabic interpretation)</i></p>
<b>14.00 - 14.10</b>	<b>Conference close – Dina Kiwan</b>



## Speaker Biographies

	<p><b>Ibrahim Abdullah</b>  <b>President of the Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD)</b></p> <p>Ibrahim is President of the Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities and Dean of Inclusive Education at Al-kafaat University, where he teaches on human rights and disability. He is also a Member of the Executive Committee for the National Council on Disability.</p>
	<p><b>Sabine Abusaada , Curator and co-researcher, 63 Days of Sit In</b></p> <p>Sabine is a master's student in developmental and educational psychology at the University of Padova. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Jacobs University Bremen, Germany. Her work focuses on liberating psychology in Palestine, psychosocial support, and activism with Refugees Welcome Italia. She also has experience in the cultural and artistic sector in Palestine, where she worked in resource and artistic coordination with institutions and collectives such as the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center and Basta Theatre Collective.</p>
	<p><b>Loai Nizar Abu Saif</b>  <b>Disability Programme Lead, Medical Aid for Palestinians</b></p> <p>Loai is a highly experienced professional with over seven years of expertise in the nonprofit sector and four years in the private sector, specializing in disability inclusion. He holds a master's degree in project management from COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Pakistan, and a bachelor's degree in Business Administration (English) from Al-Azhar University, Gaza.</p>
	<p><b>Shatha Abusrour</b>  <b>Disability activist, the occupied Palestinian territory</b></p> <p>Shatha has worked for various non-government organizations and international agencies on issues related to the rights of persons with disability in Palestine and in the Arab Region. Her goal is to contribute towards fostering her country's freedom and inclusive development at the human, social, cultural and policy levels.</p>





**Nesma Al-Ghoula**

**Coordinator of Disability and Inclusion Services Center, Islamic University Gaza**

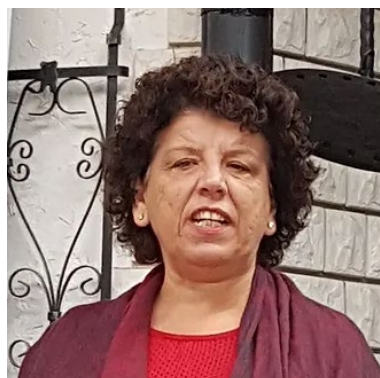
Nesma works as a coordinator for the Disability and Inclusion Services Center at the Islamic University, where she focuses on empowering students, training them on modern programs, and facilitating their integration into university life. Nesma aims to overcome all challenges faced by students with disabilities during the learning process, according to their specific field of study.



**Professor Nazmi Al-Masri**

**Co-Investigator, Disability under Siege, Islamic University of Gaza**

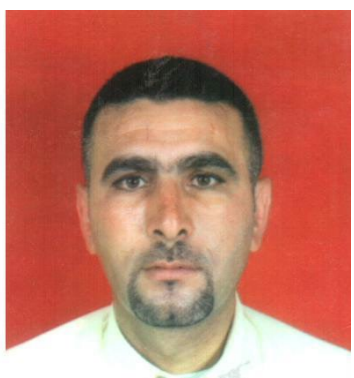
Nazmi is Professor of Language Education at the Islamic University of Gaza, Palestine. His primary research focuses on the integration of technology in language education, multilingualism and intercultural communication, and inclusive education for persons with disabilities. He has served as Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator on numerous multidisciplinary international projects, including Disabled Voices from Gaza, Culture for Sustainable and Inclusive Peace, and Welcoming Languages: Refugee Language in Scottish Education.



**Dr Laila Atshan**

**Psychologist and disability rights advocate**

Laila is a Palestinian psychologist specialising in counselling people with disabilities as well as refugees, prisoners and survivors of political violence. She has 30 years' experience in the field and has worked with UNICEF and many other organisation across the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America. Throughout her career, Laila has been a strong advocate for the promotion and implementation of disability and human rights in the context of conflict.







**Dr Said Awad**

**Faculty of Educational Sciences, Al Quds University**





Said currently holds the position of Coordinator of the Special Education Master's Program at Al-Quds University, and previously worked as Head of the Special Education Department at the same university. He is known for his outstanding contributions to developing early intervention programs and improving language skills for children with hearing disabilities and he has published many scientific research papers in the field of teaching methods and special education.






	<p><b>Joelle Boutros</b>  <b>Researcher, Centre for Lebanese Studies</b></p> <p>Joelle works on the history of social movements in post-war Lebanon. She also served at the Legal Agenda's Archiving and Documentation Department, writing and documenting key cases and historical incidents related to social and judicial movements in Lebanon. Her research tracks the history of The Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities (LUPD), its evolution and development, tactics used and its role in promoting the full inclusion of people with disabilities in society from the 1980s to the present day.</p>
	<p><b>Professor Anthony Downey</b>  <b>Co-Investigator, Disability under Siege, Birmingham City University</b></p> <p>Anthony Downey is Professor of Visual Culture in the Middle East and North Africa at the Birmingham School of Art. Anthony is affiliated with several research projects exploring the politics of global contemporary art practices, digital media and image production, knowledge production and visual culture, and how cultural practices relate to migration and human rights across the Global South.</p>
	<p><b>Dr Rula Ghanndour</b>  <b>Researcher, Institute of Community &amp; Public Health (ICPH) at Birzeit University</b></p> <p>Rula is currently completing her PhD addressing adolescents' menstrual health among Palestine Refugee camp dwellers. She worked previously as a research and teaching assistant at the ICPH. The primary aim of Rula's research is to understand the lived disability experience of Palestinian West Bank adolescent girls aged 15-18 years old, to understand their daily lives at home and in their communities.</p>
	<p><b>Hussam Ghosheh</b>  <b>Founder &amp; Artistic Leader of Basta Theatre Collective</b></p> <p>Hussam Ghosheh is a writer and theatre activist who lives and works in Ramallah and Jerusalem. He is the initiator and the artistic director of Basta Theatre. His artistic practice consists in employing the arts, especially theatre, in societal change and informal education, presenting his works in the streets and public spaces in Palestine and abroad, on stage, and digital media.</p>








	<p><b>Professor Rita Giacaman</b>  <b>Co-Investigator, Disability under Siege, Birzeit University</b></p> <p>Rita is Professor of Public Health at the Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University, West Bank, in occupied Palestinian territory. The founder of the Institute, Rita's current work focuses on the development of measures to assess psycho-social health which are relevant and appropriate for context, and ways in which interventions could generate active and positive resilience and resistance to ongoing war-like conditions, especially among youth.</p>
	<p><b>Naim Kabaja</b>  <b>Disability Inclusion Consultant and Director, Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children</b></p> <p>Naim is an inclusion and capacity building consultant at Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, Gaza, he works closely with students with and without disability, families, and teachers to ensure that every child has access to the tools and resources they need to continue their education during the current war against Gaza.</p>
	<p><b>Dr Maha Khochen-Bagshaw,</b>  <b>Senior Inclusive Education Specialist</b></p> <p>Maha is an international consultant specialising in inclusion and equity in education. She is interested in promoting access to and quality of education for all children with focus on those at risk of exclusion. To this end, she researches, trains and advises on inclusive education related policy and practice. Her work covers a range of countries in Europe, the Middle East, North and East Africa as well as Central Asia.</p>
	<p><b>Dr Grace Khawam</b>  <b>Lecturer in public health, a doctoral researcher in disability studies and a disability rights activist</b></p> <p>Grace is also a PhD researcher at Oxford Brookes University and holds a Doctorate in Pharmacy, a Master's degree in Public Health, and a certificate in Global Mental Health from Harvard University. She is a Steering Committee Member of the Disability Hub in Lebanon, and her aspiration is to challenge the common misconceptions around intellectual disability and to push for a shift in discourse, which would focus on the rights, agency and contribution of youth with intellectual disability to society.</p>



	<p><b>Professor Dina Kiwan,</b>  <b>Principal Investigator, Disability under Siege,</b>  <b>University of Birmingham</b></p> <p>Dina is Professor of Comparative Education at the University of Birmingham, her research focuses on citizenship and inclusion and is interdisciplinary and comparative in scope. Dina's interests centre around sociological and politico-philosophical examinations of inclusive citizenship through the lens of education policy, naturalisation policy and migration policy, in the context of pluralist/multicultural societies, and also societies in conflict.</p>
	<p><b>Suzan Mitwalli</b>  <b>Academic researcher, Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH), Birzeit University</b></p> <p>Suzan's main research interest is mental health, and she has worked for many years on an intervention research with the Community Based Rehabilitation organization (CBR). She has experience in both quantitative and qualitative research and community-based interventions.</p>
	<p><b>Hamzeh Naser, Head, General Union of People with Disabilities, Ramallah</b></p>
	<p><b>Hamad Samamreh, main performer, 63 Days of Sit In</b></p> <p>Hamad is from Al-Dhahiriya, south of Hebron and is a human rights activist advocating specifically for people with disabilities. A graduate in social service, he works in advocacy and is the head of the Al-Balad Youth Association. Hamad is the main actor in <i>63 Days of Sit-In</i> and has been a member of Basta Theatre Collective since 2020.</p>



	<p><b>Dr Itab Shuayb</b> <b>Co-Investigator, Disability under Siege, Centre for Lebanese Studies</b></p> <p>Itab is an inclusive design specialist, access consultant and activist at the Centre for Lebanese Studies. She has led a number of architecture projects and awareness campaigns in Lebanon focusing on improving accessibility and promoting inclusive environments for diverse users. Her vision is to promote inclusive design to become mainstream in the built environment and in services used by people with disabilities.</p>
	<p><b>Professor Maha Shuayb</b> <b>Co-Investigator, Disability under Siege, Centre for Lebanese Studies</b></p> <p>Maha Shuayb is the British Academy Bilateral Chair Education in Conflict at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge and the Centre for Lebanese Studies and Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies since 2012. Maha is a founding member and the former president of the Lebanese Association for History and also a co-founding member of the Disability Hub, a collective initiative that aims to promote research and advocacy around disability in the Arab World.</p>
	<p><b>Dr Bahaalddin M. A. Serhan</b> <b>Director of Disability Services &amp; Inclusion Center, Islamic University Gaza</b></p> <p>Bahaalddin's work focuses on providing critical interventions and support for persons with disabilities during crises and currently co-leads then initiative "Emergency Rehabilitation and Immediate Intervention Program for Persons with Disabilities (ERP)". He also collaborated with colleagues on a significant study titled "Mainstreaming Strategies and the Application Mechanisms in Higher Education Institutions", which aims to promote inclusivity for persons with disabilities in academic environments.</p>