

With One Heart We Create Hope

Summer
Newsletter



2025

At the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre, we work with a unified spirit, our hearts coming together in service of Palestinian children with disabilities and their families, wherever they are. We walk beside them, step by step, and every step we take is filled with hope and a smile.

This Summer Newsletter stands as living testimony to our deep belief in the power of joint efforts and sustained care to bring real change into the lives of children and their families.

From Gaza, where our dedicated team continues their work under unimaginable conditions, to Jerusalem, where our educational and therapeutic services are carried out with precision and compassion, and across the West Bank, we are all working to strengthen and develop the capacities of our partner centers, especially in the field of autism.

This newsletter is not only a record of what we've achieved but also a window into inspiring stories and faces that reflect unwavering commitment. Within its pages, you will read about therapists who continue their education despite the blockade, children who regained their laughter after therapy sessions, and families who learned to be active participants in the journey of healing rather than spectators.

I write to you with deep gratitude for our team, who never believe in the impossible, for our local and international partners who believe in our mission, and for the mothers and fathers who, every day, make a difference in their children's lives despite all they face.



Violette Mubarak

General Director of the JPBC

Healing in the Midst of Hardship: Stories from Gaza

Our vision to bring services for children with disabilities and their families to Gaza, through the initiative “Heart to Heart-Jerusalem to Gaza” continues. Opened in June 2024, our Princess Basma satellite unit, based in our sister institution Al Ahli Arab Hospital, in Gaza City, provides rehabilitation and psychosocial services for children with chronic conditions and post-trauma injuries, including post-operative rehabilitation for children undergoing life-changing surgery as a result of the war.



By the end of 2024, our team of six staff had treated over 700 children both out of our rehabilitation unit and for two displaced therapists from their temporary shelters.

In 2025, we have been able to grow our team in Gaza to now eight members, a doctor, social worker, three physiotherapists, an occupational therapist, a speech and language therapist, and playworker. At the moment; our team sees on average 70-75 children every week, following a holistic multidisciplinary approach.

We have a specially designated team of staff based in Jerusalem who provide supervision and support for our Gazan staff, and both teams have together attended on line/in person trainings as needs emerged, such as working with children post amputation.

Today, in spite of the overwhelming needs, our Princess Basma Gaza team works tirelessly with the children and families, offering expert interventions to enable the best chance of recovery/development for Gaza's children.

"In the midst of the pain and suffering experienced by the children in Gaza, we hold on to hope and plant it in them every day through our work. When I see a child walk or even smile again after a therapy session, I feel like I am helping to restore a part of their humanity that was taken away by the war. One of the most moving moments for me was when, after months of sessions, a child with an amputated leg was playing with his peers again and laughing from the bottom of his heart. What gives me strength is the children's determination to live, and their clinging to hope despite everything.

My message to the world: the children of Gaza are not just numbers in the news; they are living souls who deserve to live with dignity and be given the chance to grow, learn and dream like other children around the world."

Ismael, physiotherapist

Therapy in Times of Conflict

Restoring Childhood



As the war continues, our greatest challenge lies in providing therapeutic and rehabilitative services to children under difficult conditions that directly hinder our ability to deliver the necessary care. The war has not only disrupted the continuity of services, it has also been a major factor in the deterioration of the health of many Palestinian children. There has been a notable increase in cases of malnutrition, contagious skin diseases, rickets, and cerebral palsy caused by premature birth, which itself is linked to declining maternal health and growth delays due to vitamin and mineral deficiencies ^{1,2}.

Harghandiwal, B. (2025). Impact of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza on children's health: evidence and recommendations for mitigation. Global Public Health, 20(1), 2495326.

Shatali, A., Rashid, F., Lubbad, I., Potterton, J., Geilen, B., Ali, S., & Sidhane, A. (2025). Meeting the rehabilitation needs of children with debilitating injuries and disability in Gaza. Eastern Mediterranean health journal= La revue de sante de la Mediterranee orientale= al-Majallah al-sihhiyah li-sharq al-mutawassit, 31(4), 219-225.

Our team at the therapeutic Unit in Al-Ahli Arab Hospital faces tremendous difficulties in ensuring the children's safety and maintaining their physical well-being under these harsh circumstances. Frequent and sudden service interruptions caused by the war hinder case follow-up and negatively affect children's progress. The situation is further complicated by parents' inability to provide a suitable home environment to implement the therapeutic guidance and instructions given for their children.

“*Kinan is now able to walk and even climb stairs, but we, along with him, still face many challenges. Limited resources, such as access to proper nutrition and basic supplies like diapers, make daily life harder for us. Moreover, Kinan receives therapy at your Centre, then we go back to live in a tent, which is not helping him to walk properly.*”

Kinan's father – Gaza

Even so, we remain committed to providing services with the utmost care. As one united team between Gaza and Jerusalem, we strive to ensure ongoing communication and support. Weekly video meetings are held between the Gaza and Jerusalem teams to exchange expertise, enhance the quality and efficiency of services, and provide moral, technical, logistical, and medical support from the Jerusalem staff.

Despite it all, our goal remains unchanged: to restore every child's right to healthy, proper development and to offer them the chance for a better future. Our services continue against all odds, and we believe that the direct and ongoing collaboration between our teams is the key to our success in this vital humanitarian mission.

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In the difficult conditions of war, the biggest challenge is to maintain the health of our children and ensure the continuity of therapy despite all obstacles. Our daily communication between the teams in Gaza and Jerusalem is key to sharing expertise and providing the necessary support so that together we can restore every child’s right to their childhood and health.

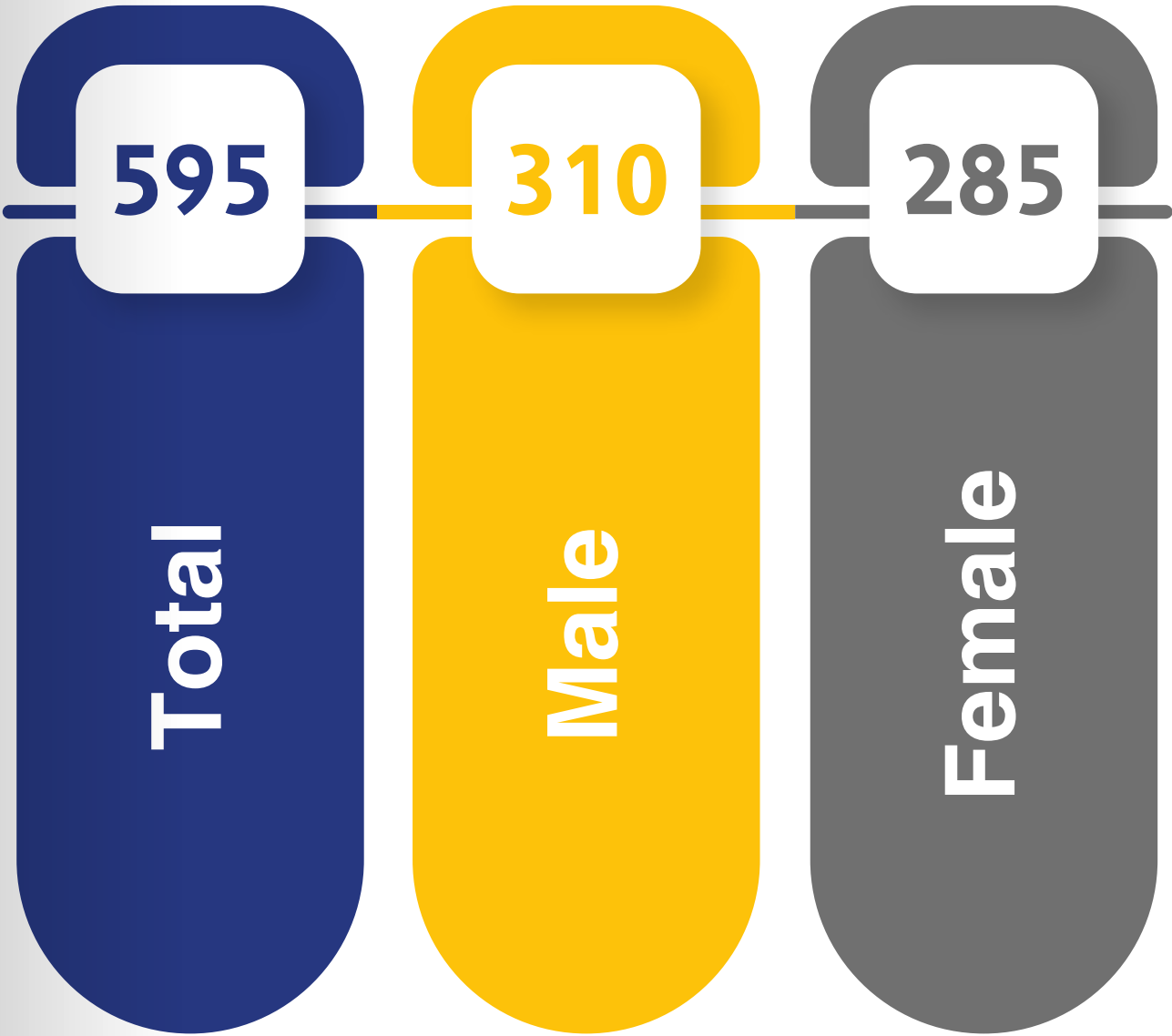
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Dr. Saeed, General Practitioner in our therapy unit in Gaza

Total number of children who received therapies at our satellite unit in Gaza strip is 595 through multiple admissions.

This statistic reflects the time period from January 1st, 2025, to June 30th, 2025.



Learning in Times of Conflict: From the Field to Education

In times when daily challenges grow and safe spaces shrink, the stories of individuals who continue to strive and move forward become a true source of inspiration and hope.

From within our Satellite Unit at Al Ahli Hospital, we shine a light on two remarkable journeys of team members; Musa, a social worker, and George, a play and activities specialist, who, despite difficult circumstances, have continued to pursue both academic and professional growth.

Balancing dedicated professional service to children and their families with higher education and future ambitions, Musa and George embody resilience, commitment, and a deep belief that investing in people and in their own growth must never stop even in the most challenging environments.

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Willpower creates miracles, especially in the conditions we live in here in Gaza. I chose to study Strategic Leadership and Management because I believe real change begins with conscious, strategic leadership. Despite power cuts, poor internet access, and the difficulty of balancing work and study, I continue forward, driven by a strong sense of responsibility to the children and families I serve.

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Musa - Social Worker at the Princess Basma Centre

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Change starts with deeply understanding people's pain. Studying during conflict, with frequent internet and electricity cuts, has been difficult, but I held onto my routines because they gave me a sense of stability. What I learn is never just theoretical; I apply it every day in my work at the JPBC's Satellite Unit. My dream is to build sustainable psychosocial support programs, especially for children and women in Gaza.

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George - Play and Activities Specialist at the Basma Centre



The Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre: Generations of Steadfast Vision and Continuous Growth

“ I joined the Princess Basma Centre in 1990, and the work back then was very different. We used to care for 60 to 70 children who lived within the Centre. As nurses, we shared many responsibilities from providing healthcare to preparing meals, and we worked together like one family. The work was filled with warmth and joy, and I quickly grew attached to the team and leadership.

At the time, the Centre had a primary school up to sixth grade, along with rehabilitation services. In 1995, a major shift occurred when the Centre adopted the Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) model. Children would come for treatment and return home, while we empowered families to support their children and integrate them into society. I was part of the field visits to children's homes, which strengthened our relationship with families.

Over the years, I witnessed the Centre's growth from obtaining ISO³ certification to earning JCIA⁴ with constant improvements in the quality of services. For me, working at the Princess Basma Centre was never just a job.

It was a reflection of my deep commitment and belief in the Centre's mission and vision.

This sense of belonging also came from the way we treated children and their families like our own. The strong bonds between staff members across generations created an exceptional professional atmosphere. I saw my colleagues as siblings, and as I grew older, I came to see the newer staff as my children. We were all united by one goal: to serve children with disabilities and their families.

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Monira – a recently retired nurse that worked at JPBC for 35 years.

Retirement of a Respected Nurse



A glimpse of a farewell gathering organized by the staff of the JPBC to honor our colleague, Nurse Monira Hindi, after 35 years of dedicated and faithful service in the nursing department.

³ International Organization For Standardization

⁴ Joint Commission International Accreditation

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I inherited strong values from the generations who came before me at the Centre; values such as mutual respect, the exchange of knowledge, and true collaboration between experienced and new therapists. These values still accompany me today, and I make sure to respect every colleague, regardless of their position, because our work is grounded in patience, integrity, and a strong sense of responsibility when delivering therapy sessions.

Over the years, the Centre has clearly evolved both in terms of infrastructure and work environment. The number of therapy rooms has increased, and they are now better adapted to meet the needs of children with disabilities, taking into account their safety and comfort. The Centre also continues to organize training sessions that support the professional growth of staff on both individual and team levels.

My dream is to expand therapeutic methods to include music, art, drama, and even animal-assisted therapy. I am committed to continuing my education to enhance my profession and develop my skills.

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Roleen, Speech and Language Therapist, working at the JPBC for 24 years

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Since joining the Princess Basma Centre three years ago, I found myself in a warm and supportive professional environment that welcomed me as one of its own. What drew me to the Centre was its strong reputation in the field of rehabilitation across Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, as well as its deep history and commitment to developing partner institutions in different regions. From the very beginning, I felt I wasn't alone, there were always people ready to support and guide me, even without me having to ask. The team truly works as one, united by a shared goal: serving the best interests of the children and their families. This support strengthened my self-confidence and developed my skills, and now I try to pass on that same spirit to those who come after me. I believe that my work is not just a job, but a mission, and I constantly think about how I can improve the services I provide to maximize their impact. My dedication to this work is the path to my growth, both at the Centre and in life.

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Issa- Occupational Therapist- working at JPBC for 3 years

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My journey with the center began through the Clinical Training Program at JPBC, just a student eager to learn and gain experience. Everything was new to me, but I immediately found a supportive environment that embraced me, trusted in my potential, and treated me as part of the team, even before I was officially hired. During my internship, I learned not only clinical skills but also the importance of compassion, respect, and teamwork.

Today, as an occupational therapist, my role has completely evolved. I now carry real responsibility, not only for the children I work with but also for their families, my colleagues, and the institution as a whole. I contribute meaningfully to building tailored therapeutic plans and witnessing progress firsthand.

This place doesn't just nurture therapists, it nurtures professionals who understand the value of human connection, family engagement, and ethical practice. The ongoing mentorship and encouragement I received, gave me the motivation to grow, and now I hope to offer the same to others starting their path.

I truly see myself as part of this journey, because I believe what we do here is not just a job, it's a vocation. Every step forward a child makes, every smile from a hopeful parent, reminds me we are doing a great thing for those children.

”



Zain – previous trainee and newly appointed as Occupational Therapist at JPBC.



Therapy That Transforms Lives

Community-Based Rehabilitation



The Importance of Community-Based Rehabilitation in the Palestinian Context

Since 1995, the JPBC has adopted the Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) approach as part of its vision to support children with disabilities and their families. This includes improving access to healthcare, inclusive education, social integration, and participation. Over the years, the Centre has become the National Referral Centre for rehabilitation in Palestine.

The approach focuses not only on therapy, but on ensuring the child remains at the heart of their community.

A Philosophy of Inclusion and Empowerment

CBR is not merely a therapy model, it is a philosophy of inclusion. It shifts the focus from institutional, isolating models to community-centered approaches that see disability not as a problem to be hidden, but as a human rights issue to be embraced. Children remain part of their environments, enabling true social participation and adaptation.

Services Objectives

- Promoting inclusive integration of children with disabilities into their local communities.
- Advocating for social justice and equal opportunities for all.
- Challenging and changing negative perceptions about disability.
- Supporting children in developing life skills and independence.
- Empowering families to actively participate in the rehabilitation process.

Current Strategic Approach

At the heart of our Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) strategic approach lies a triangle of interconnected support: the child, the family, and the community. Recognizing the limited access to quality services, financial burdens, and shortage of specialized facilities, particularly in the West Bank, our approach bridges these gaps through early identification, outreach, and holistic care. We work closely with partner centers to ensure children with disabilities are assessed, referred to the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre or to other appropriate local centers when needed, and receive comprehensive rehabilitation services. Communities are engaged through the Outreach Program, building the capacity of local staff and raising awareness, thus ensuring sustainability and inclusiveness. Families, especially mothers, are empowered through the Mother and Family Empowerment Program, gaining tools and training to become active participants and even shadow therapists in their child's care. When families return home, they are not left alone. Our multidisciplinary team continues to support them through the Follow-Up Program, ensuring consistent care and guidance every step of the way. This strategy not only improves children's development and quality of life but transforms families into advocates and communities into safe, supportive environments where children with disabilities can thrive.

Future Potential

This approach offers a holistic model of care, allowing children to remain in their own environment empowered to adapt and thrive long after their therapy sessions end. Unlike closed institutional models, CBR reflects the child's real-life context and prepares them for sustainable inclusion.



Our Expanding Vision for Autism Services in the West Bank

Developing the Outreach Program



The Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre believes that every child has the right to access high-quality diagnostic and early intervention services, including children with autism, regardless of their geographic location or social circumstances.

With this in mind, the Centre is committed to expanding its impact across the West Bank through its Outreach Program, which aims to build the capacity of local partner centers to

provide specialized and comprehensive services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Therefore, two partner centers in Hebron have already benefited, and during the current year, support will be extended to two additional partner centers in Ramallah and Jericho to establish autism units within their facilities.

Through this initiative, we strive to create supportive environments in every West Bank governorate by offering equal opportunities for children to receive early intervention, educational and therapeutic support, and by empowering families to take an active role in their child's rehabilitation journey.

We work hand in hand with our partners to develop autism classrooms, train multidisciplinary teams, and provide ongoing technical supervision, ensuring sustainability, quality, and long-term impact.



Mother And Family Empowerment Program

Empowering Families: A Pillar of Sustainable Care



At the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre, the Mother and Family Empowerment Program (MFEP) plays a vital role in ensuring that children with disabilities receive consistent support beyond the therapy rooms. Through workshops, training, and empowerment, families especially mothers, gain the skills to care for their children confidently at home. In recent years, JPBC has placed increasing emphasis on involving fathers as well, recognizing their critical role in the therapeutic process. Today, many fathers are stepping in with commitment and purpose.

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At first, I was almost alone among the mothers. But it became a challenge, I wanted to prove I could do it. I now know how to support my daughter physically, with exercises and guidance

Being present during sessions helps your child feel safe and respond better. As a father, you also learn how to continue the therapy at home. That makes all the difference.

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Tuqa's father, Abu-Dis



The MFEP continues to be a cornerstone of JPBC's model, empowering families to become active partners in their child's rehabilitation and promoting lasting resilience especially in hard times.

Supporting Every Child's Potential Child Development Services

The Follow-Up Program

At the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre, the Follow-Up Program provides families with continued support after their child's discharge, using Telemedicine to stay connected. Through regular online sessions, families receive personalized guidance to help them apply therapeutic plans at home. This ongoing connection allows our team to monitor the child's progress, offer practical solutions to challenges, and adapt therapy plans as needed. By staying actively involved, we

ensure that each child's development remains on track, and that families feel confident, supported, and empowered throughout their caregiving journey.



At the Princess Basma Centre, our Child Development Services offer specialized, holistic care for children with disabilities and developmental challenges in East Jerusalem as outpatients. With a licensed Child Development Unit and a dedicated multidisciplinary team, we create individualized treatment plans that empower children to grow, participate, and thrive in their families and communities.



Stephanos... When Hope Becomes Reality

Although he has not yet received a formal diagnosis, the Child Development team at the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre quickly stepped in to provide early intervention services for Stephanos, who showed signs of speech and motor delays. To date, Stephanos has received 24 therapy sessions throughout the year, including speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. Within a short period, clear signs of progress began to emerge. He started distinguishing basic concepts such as "big and small" and "tall and short," and learned to identify kitchen tools, body parts, and animals along with their sounds. The changes went beyond cognitive development, they extended to his ability to communicate, his independence, and his growing confidence when speaking to others. From the moment she was advised to take her son to the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre and benefit from the Child Development Program, Stephanos's mother, Marian, didn't hesitate.

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"I registered him without a second thought,"

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she says, explaining that the Centre's closeness to their home, the respectful and professional staff, punctual scheduling, and the commitment to upholding children's rights all made the decision an easy one.

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It's a wonderful feeling to see my child changing for the better, developing quickly, and catching up with his peers. The most important achievement for me was his ability to become independent and speak confidently in front of strangers.

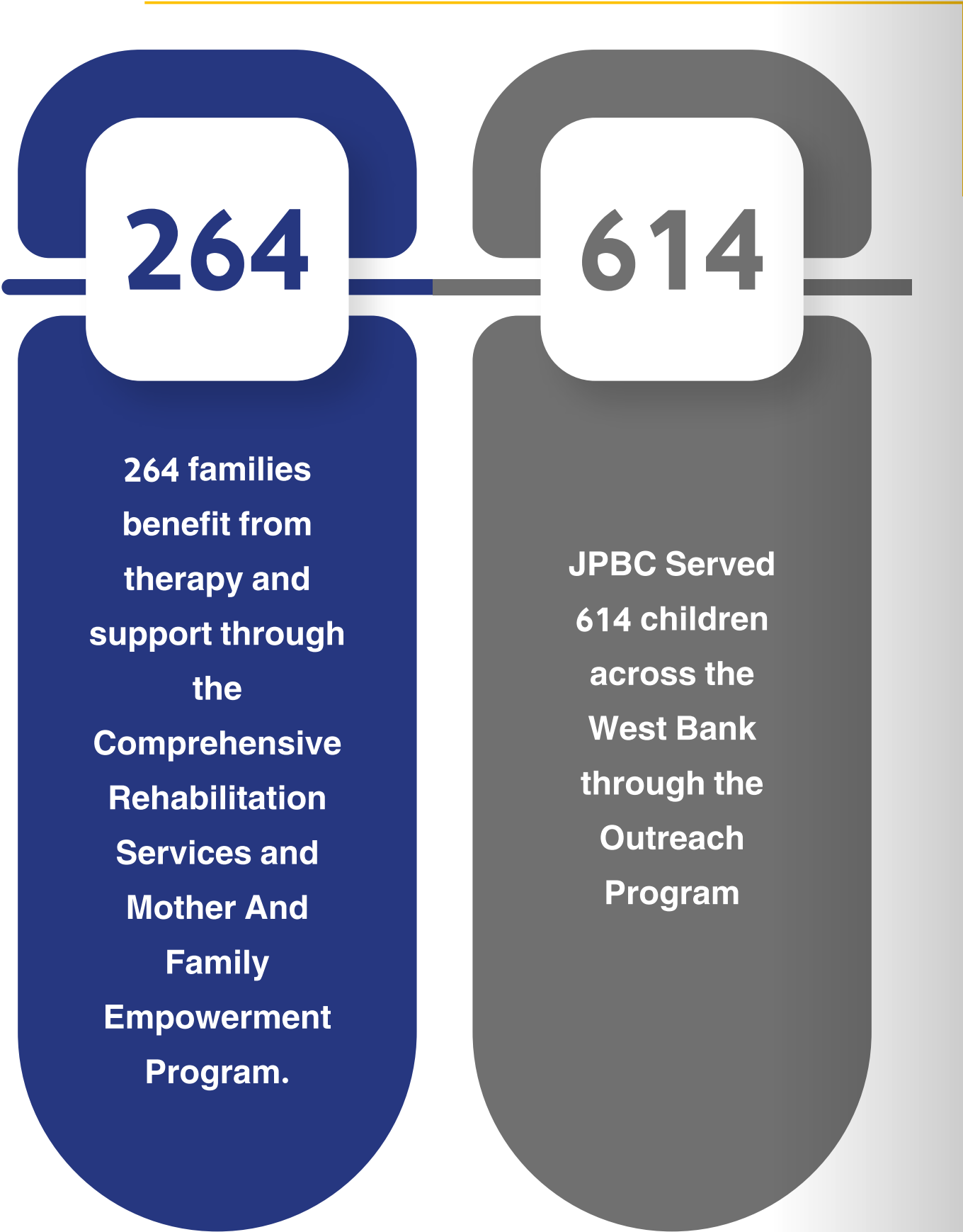
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Marian Stephanos mother

Stephanos is no longer the shy child he once was. Today, he enjoys engaging with others, shows a clear social spirit, and loves to cooperate and play with his peers. For his mother, the therapeutic support hasn't just improved her son's abilities, it has transformed their lives and opened new doors of hope for both of them.

Statistics at a Glance

This statistic reflects the time period from January 1st, 2025, to June 30th, 2025.



Mother's Day

A glimpse of the Princess Basma Centre's Mother's Day celebration in Jerusalem, which included a variety of group therapeutic activities.

International Engagement at JPBC – First Half of 2025

During the first six months of 2025, the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre received a total of 45 visitors, primarily from the UK and the USA. These visits were organized as part of seven distinct groups, reflecting growing international interest in the Centre's mission. Notable visitors included U.S. Episcopal bishops, Methodist leaders, leader in training, and representatives from long-standing JPBC partners such as Embrace the Middle East and UMCOR. The Centre also received clergy from the Diocese of Southwark. These visits provided valuable opportunities to share JPBC's work, strengthen partnerships, and promote global solidarity with children with disabilities and their families.

The General Director of the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre Participates in the Women Mentoring Women Conference



Mrs. Violette Mubarak, General Director of the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre, participated in the Women Mentoring Women conference held from February 25–28,

2025, at the Center for Anglican Communion Studies, Virginia Theological Seminary. As a distinguished speaker and active contributor, Mrs. Mubarak shared powerful insights on the realities of women's lives in Palestine and highlighted the critical work of the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre. Her presentation emphasized the importance of supporting healthcare and education initiatives in Palestine, especially under the challenging conditions of ongoing conflict.

During her visit to Virginia, Mrs. Violette was also warmly welcomed and hosted by some of the JPBC's longstanding partners and supporters. These included Mrs Eileen Spencer, the Executive Director of the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and some of its board members, and the congregation of St. Mary's Arlington, under the guidance of Father Andrew Merrow and Cinda Tipple. We wish Father Andrew every blessing in his retirement and pay tribute to his ministry of over 40 years, which always had room for his Palestinian brothers and sisters.



Equipping a JPBC Playground

Spaces for Healing, Learning, and Connection



As part of its ongoing strategy to modernize its services and facilities, the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre (JPBC) recently completed equipping the Child Rehabilitation Centre playground, which is designed for children with disabilities visiting the Centre with their parents /care givers. These vibrant, inclusive play areas offer joy, especially for children receiving intensive services through JPBC's Comprehensive Rehabilitation services, during which they stay at the Centre for two - three consecutive weeks.



Amneh, the mother of Elias from Hebron, shares her experience:



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This playground is wonderful. We've been here before when it was different, with fewer tools and games. Now, it's transformed, and we're truly enjoying it. My son, Elias, is having so much fun, and for me, it serves as more than just a play area. It's a therapeutic space where I work toward my child's therapeutic goals, applying strategies recommended by his therapists. For example, today we used a toy car to create a speech game: Elias pretended to be the driver, taking me on a ride while practicing communication skills. In addition, I also use the time spent here with the other mothers. The new space has given us more opportunities to connect, share stories, and support one another.

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Our Inclusive School



Our Inclusive School serves children from East Jerusalem and provides education to students with disabilities who study side-by-side with children without disabilities.

The school is a unique model of inclusive education serving children with disabilities from Jerusalem from Kindergarten up to 12th grade. The school has an average of more than 400 students on role, one-third of whom are children with disabilities. Many of these children receive rehabilitation services at the Child Rehabilitation Centre attached to the school as part of a Student Therapy Program.

In the academic year 2024/2025, the school served 436 students and ran 17 inclusive classes and 7 special education classes. The special education classrooms serve as key stations for delivering individualized support, promoting inclusion, and meeting the diverse needs of each child.

Extracurricular Activities

The Jerusalem Princess Basma Inclusive School is committed to organizing a variety of extracurricular activities aimed at supporting inclusive education and strengthening school spirit and a sense of belonging. These activities have included the academic year opening event, Palestinian Heritage Day, educational fun days, technology-focused events, celebrations of national and religious occasions, school trips, and sports activities. These initiatives have had a notably positive impact on students' mental well-being, enhancing their social integration and academic motivation, particularly among students with disabilities, who make up 30% of the student body.

Parents have expressed their appreciation for these efforts and their desire for them to continue.



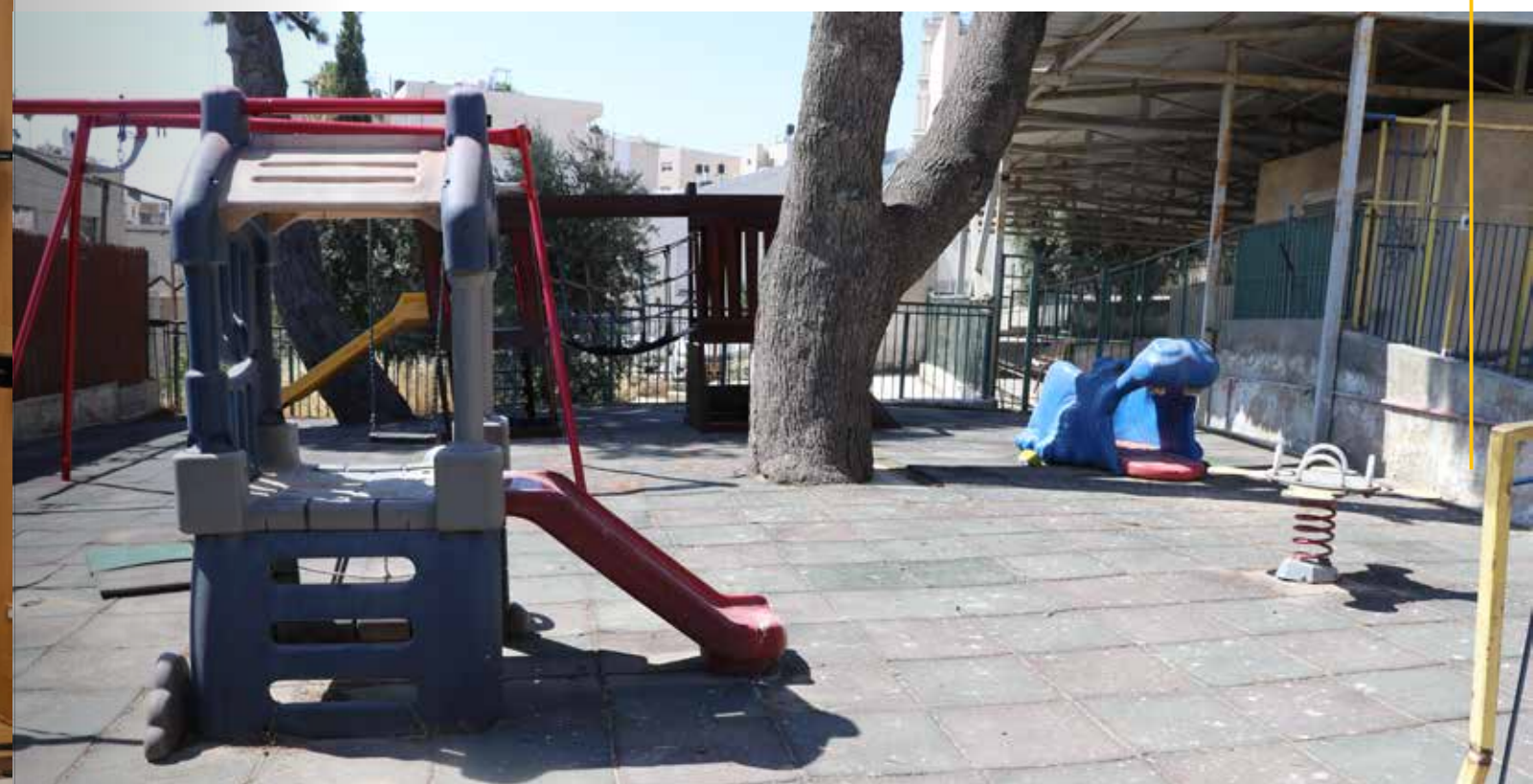
Graduation of the Sixteenth Cohort

The Jerusalem Princess Basma Inclusive School celebrated the graduation of its sixteenth cohort of Tawjihi students (arts stream) in a special ceremony that reflected the spirit of inclusive education and integration. The event featured heartfelt speeches by Reverend Wadie Far, representing Archbishop Hosam Naoum; Mrs. Violette Mubarak, General Director of the Centre; and Mrs. Shireen Saeed, School Principal. All emphasized the importance of education as a tool for resilience and building the future, while commending the Centre's commitment to supporting students, especially as one-third of them are students with disabilities. The school's key achievements this year were also highlighted, including the opening of a new Life Sciences stream, the expansion of the kindergarten section, and the renovation of the school playground to ensure full accessibility for all.



Renovated Playground Enhances Inclusive Learning at JPBC

JPBC has recently renovated one of its main playgrounds near the kindergarten classrooms of the Inclusive School. The upgraded space offers a colorful, sensory-rich environment that supports both play and developmental learning for all children, including those with disabilities. This step reflects JPBC's ongoing commitment to inclusive, child-centered education.



A Day of Creativity and Excellence at the Princess Basma Inclusive School

The Jerusalem Princess Basma Inclusive School hosted a vibrant Open Day filled with creativity, innovation, and pride. The event welcomed students' families, school principals, and friends of the school to celebrate the talents and achievements of its students.

Throughout the day, students presented a variety of educational and scientific displays covering all school subjects. The atmosphere was filled with enthusiasm and pride, reflecting the dedication of both students and staff.



Our Strategic Goals Moving Forward

- Continue expanding our reach across the West Bank and the J2 area.
- As a Resource Centre share our experience in autism with other four partner centers in the West Bank, and upgrade their capacities.
- Conduct mapping initiatives in two governorates.
- Strengthen our partnerships with local and international friends.
- Sustain and develop our work in Gaza .





We will continue to envision that all Palestinian children with disabilities have access to quality health services and inclusive education, can participate and influence, have hope and opportunities. This vision is being enhanced through our different programs that you can learn more about by visiting our website www.basma-centre.org

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