



United in Hope- United for Humanity Online Workshop Debrief

We have witnessed an unprecedented level of humanitarian crisis across multiple conflict theatres around the world in recent years. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 unleashed an unparalleled humanitarian catastrophe with wide-spread refugee in flows across mainland Europe. Inter-twined with the above, are the aftershocks of the post U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 that has also been a catalyst for trans-national refugee outflows and a humanitarian catastrophe. There are also the ongoing historical conflict theatres and humanitarian hot spots in Syria, Yemen, Kashmir, and North Sudan which was triggered in 2023. Many people have also lost their lives as they have fled from war torn nations seeking refuge and safety in other countries. The 2023 floods in Libya which have left more than 10,000 people dead along with the 2023 earthquake in Morocco where more than 2800 people have lost their lives along with the escalation of the conflict in Palestine-Israel further adds to the list of humanitarian crisis hot spots.

A United in Hope-United for Humanity (UHUH) online workshop took place on 6th February 2024 where leading Inter-Faith practitioners, NGOs, Humanitarian Organizations, Charities, Peace Advocates and Social Activists came together to highlight the humanitarian plight-challenges and obstacles in selected conflict zones and humanitarian hot-spots around the world along with putting forward practicable recommendations and actions that can be undertaken to provide humanitarian aid and relief to these regions.

The workshop was also interspersed with moments of reflection, thoughts, and invocations from across the faith traditions and none for the multiple conflict theatres and humanitarian hot spots around the world.

The online workshop was convened by myself as part of my Euphrates Peace Practice Alliance Project. A recording of the workshop is available in *Appendix Item-5*. I am grateful for the support that the Euphrates team provided along with the contributions from all the panellists in bringing the workshop together.

This UHUH workshop debrief provides a summary of the key components, discussion points and recommendations that were put forward by the panellists.

I hope they are of benefit for any humanitarian or practitioner working to preserve and hold the principles and virtues of our shared common humanity.



Kaleem Hussain, Founder and Managing Director of Guidance Consultancy, Euphrates Peace Practice Alliance 2023 Alumnus.

United in Hope - United for Humanity

Kaleem Hussain FRSA	Guidance Consultancy	Moderator
Faisal Ilyas	Peace Hope Pakistan	Peace Education and Peaceful Coexistence
Anjana Dyal De Pewitt	American Red Cross	Inclusion and Peacebuilding
Dima Mahjoub	Network Dialogue	Diaspora Community Aid and Relief Challenges in Syria
Mohammad Shehadat	Refugee Advocate & Peace Activist. 2022 Kofi Annan Changemaker. Founder-Youth for Peace Initiative	The Miles Journey Ends with a Story
Prof. Abdul Rasheed Gatrad OBE	Midland Aid	Poverty Relief Challenges
Dr Hugo Slim	Senior Research Fellow, University of Oxford	Hope and Humanitarian Work in Climate Emergency and War
Bushra Khalidi	Policy Lead at Oxfam	Policy, Humanity & Reconstruction Dynamics in Conflict Zones
Tareq Layka	Syrian Education Activist	My Educational Journey, Challenges and Opportunities in Syria
Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg OBE	Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism, UK	Invocation of Peace
Father Nehme Saliba	Clergyman, Orthodox Church in Lebanon	Invocation of Peace
Imam Aboubakar Mohammed	Chief Imam, Cameroon	Invocation of Peace
Mabowunje Harrison	Musician and Singer, Birmingham, UK	Heal the World



Faisal Ilyas, Executive Director-Peace and Hope, Pakistan

Faisal Ilyas (FI) provided a talk and presentation titled “*Journey of Peace-Peace Education and Peaceful Co-existence.*”

FI started the presentation by focusing on what is tolerance and having the willingness to tolerate differences of opinion. Tolerance Day is celebrated every year on November 16th by UNESCO. Before tolerance there is conflict. We have different levels of conflict ranging from inter-personal-intra-personal, intra group-inter group and so forth. Sometimes you can have situations of positive conflict too.

FI talked about what is the mechanism to solve conflicts. This is achieved through starting to tolerate an opponent whom you disagree through a process of dialogue. Dialogue may or may not resolve the conflict as it is a process. The importance of listening during the dialogue is important to the process of conflict resolution.

Appreciating the diversity of our human and ecclesiastic existence is also crucial in the process of conflict resolution and promoting peaceful coexistence.

Intertwined with diversity, it is also important to develop harmony and cooperation in our society by working collectively.

FI concluded his talk by focusing on the way forward, how we should start tolerating our inner biases with patience and accept others with positive peace orientated tolerance.

Anjana Dyal De Pewitt, American Red Cross

Anjana Dayal (AD) gave a wonderful, improvised talk on the topic of peace and inclusion focusing on inner peace and inclusion. AD mentioned about the loss of her mother in India on very short notice during COVID and being unable to travel to India to be with her. She talked about the fact that when she returned to work, despite physically being at work the pain and trauma of the loss made it extremely difficult to focus on work and wanting to fall into tears and go back to bed. Despite this, she continued to plough on with her work. Emphasis was placed on the personal peace practices that we have be it walks or mindfulness and to constantly check in with ourselves to acknowledge our inner selves. The need to focus on what are my aspirations and how are we actualising and expressing that.

AD then focused on inter-personal peace and our relationship with our families. How are we doing with our families. We can talk about global peace and all the different political rhetoric that is around in terms of our opinions on global events be it Biden, Trump or the Middle East which AD herself also has her opinions about where her home country is India. Am I actively listening to people by validating their needs and strengths. Is that peace only relevant in that war over there or is it relevant in my home or workplace. That colleague that I do not like and finding mechanisms for cooperation. Common ground is found at the inter-personal level. Then AD stressed that it is important to focus on the community. AD mentioned about an article she wrote for the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) based on scriptural reasoning. AD was able to carve out Seven different scriptural sources on the theme of forgiveness, compassion and love. It is easy to get entangled in the rhetoric and begin to normalise things when 25,000 people are killed somewhere. If we delve deep into religion in

terms of what our prophet said, what my God said, what my Guru said then it is hard to justify even one hostage that is taken away.

As we look at our communal peace, it is important to be grounded in the core values. Even if one is not religious that is fine. What are your belief systems that you took, religious or not. AD mentioned we need to dig deep in one's own value system and is what is unfolding in line with it. There is no hurry in getting entangled with political rhetoric. One can take those values from the inner, to the local and then the global community. We can plant those small gardens of peace and compassion and connect those gardens.

AD ended her talk with a short poem. The context of the poem emanates from dealing with the helplessness of when the war started in the Middle East. It is not just the Middle East, but it included so many different parts of the world in terms of whether it is wars or natural disasters. The poem is titled "*Unfair World.*"

Dima Mahjoub, Network Dialogue

Dima Mahjoub (DM) shared the story of her late father Dr. Mustafa Mahjoub, a dedicated doctor from Syria, based in Germany who passed away in 2023 at the age of 86 and how he was a source of inspiration in her life by leaving a remarkable legacy of compassion and commitment with a joint presentation titled "*The Journey of Humanitarianism and Diaspora Engagement.*" The presentation touched on the following core strands, dedication to humanitarian efforts in Syria, dedication to humanitarian cause beyond geographical and political boundaries, health as bridge to peace, what can I do to what can we do, faith motivated humanitarian work and inspiring others followed by shared relationship experience and resources.

A resonating theme that featured in DM's presentation was how the idea of helping others is not just a duty but a reflection of one's character and values intertwined with providing collective support and strengthening our communities. It also touched on how despite the difficult circumstances facing Syria from a political and economic perspective, her late father's apolitical drive to help people from a pure humanitarian prism provided the will and determination to assist people where there was a need on the ground based on a principle of staying connected to one's roots while contributing globally. The intergenerational actions inspired others in the diaspora to contribute to humanitarian causes and uphold similar values.

Mohammad Shehadat, Founder-Youth for Peace Initiative-Syria/ Switzerland

Mohammad Shehadat (MD) presentation was based on the proverb "*The mile's journey ends with a story*" where his organisation that he founded in 2019 focuses on celebrating cultural diversity and the values of peace amongst the refugee and host communities. MD explained how during his life, he has had to seek asylum on three occasions 2012-2022 (Jordan), 2022-2023 (Netherlands) and 2023 to present (living as a refugee).

MD focused on the Youth for Peace (YFP) initiative which emanated from the circumstances of refugees in Jordan by focusing on peace education and peace development amongst young

Jordanians seeking refuge by providing educational opportunities and youth leadership. The courses that are provided to the communities range from Self-Development, Coursera, edX platforms and UN Volunteers program. Many young girls and women participated in this initiative which was a great success. The main values of the organisation are of social responsibility, equality and diversity.

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg OBE

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg (RJW) started his talk by expressing a token of thanks to speak at the UHUH event and felt extremely privileged to listen to the contributions from the speakers. RJW was touched by the story of DM's late father, in particular the line "I only see people who need help" really chimed with something that has been on RJW's mind.

RJW stated that as part of the invocation for peace, that he deeply believes that as Judaism teaches through his experience with contact with people from different faiths and ages and also with the world of nature, with animals and even trees that God's spirit and presence resides in all of us. All human beings according to the Hebrew Bible are created equal but are different in the Image of God and every life is sacred. The horrors, the violence and the pain released against so many in our world is terrible. Anything we can do towards healing really matters.

RJW moved on by stating that he has been thinking a lot about God's revelation because that is what they read in the Torah in the Book of Exodus last week. RJW was struck that we often think of God in the presence of light. At the beginning of the Hebrew Bible, God Makes light to dispel the darkness. RJW was surprised when he read the account of the Ten Commandments revelation on Mount Sinai as the Torah expresses it that how many expressions there were of darkness. God appears in the darkness, in the thick cloud in the midst of thunder and lightning. This made RJB think about where is God in the darkness which is a very painful, difficult and current question. *How do we find the presence of God in the dark?* It struck RJW that when they read in the Torah about the Ten plagues, the Ninth plague is the plague of darkness. It is described as a darkness so thick that nobody could see their brother or sister. In that darkness no one was able to be aware of their brother or sister. So that led RJW to feel that God's presence in the darkness is just our challenge. How do I see my brother or sister amidst all the scenes of this world which are so dark. How do I recognise the value, the life, the struggles, the suffering, the pain of people in places where not privileged to have it easy or to have the light. How does I see God's Presence beyond one's own darkness. The shadows that sometimes my own identity casts over other in the world. Do I see beyond that.

RJW's prayer is Help me and Help us see God not just in the wonder of the world and its beauty but also where it is in pain, where it is in trouble, where it is suffering, where it is wounded, where perhaps we fail to see God's Presence because of dispute or anger or difference. Help me to see God in the dark in the lives that I haven't yet recognised and help me to serve those lives exactly as DM stated about her late father that "he only sees people that need help and asks what can I do to help and what can we do to help."

RJW's prayer for peace is that God-Help us to see Your friends everywhere.

Professor Abdul Rasheed Gatrad OBE

Prof Abdul Rasheed Gatrad (ARG) shared a presentation titled “Bringing Hope and Serving Humanity” regarding the work of the charitable organisation that he is the president of called Midland International Aid Trust, UK (MIAT) which has been operational since 1992.

ARG started of his talk by stating that his presentation focuses on the themes that have been touched on during the UHUH event thus far, namely collaboration, cooperation and consolidation focusing on the topic of *“Poverty and Challenge.”*

ARG stressed that their charities basic mission is to provide education to get people out of poverty. If one can safeguard children by providing them with medical aid through operations for example then you can get them away from a life of begging and trafficking on the streets to one of attending school, human emancipation, and self-sufficiency. The charity MIAT was set up by two people Mr. Mohammed Aslam M.B.E and Professor Abdul Rasheed Gatrad OBE. PARG himself is a consultant paediatrician working in the Midlands looking after very sick children.

ARG focused his talk on the key challenges his charity faces as it is based on a model that nobody gets paid a salary. Some of the key challenges that are encountered include young people not wanting to join, issues with bank transfers to countries such as Pakistan, India, Palestine, Syria, country land locked, customs wanting bribes, building trust and working with other charities, sustaining educational journey, a lot of the health professionals that they work with have no basic education and once they get educated they leave for better jobs. There is a requirement to keep an eye on projects and a lot of the projects have been concentrated in Malawi and Pakistan despite the charity supporting many other countries around the world. The organisation is overseen by two people and as a small organisation it is impossible to keep an eye on everything. The charity has also supported and provided relief where there have been natural and humanmade disasters. In the last 30 years, it has raised around £3 million.

In some regions like Somila, the charity-built water pumps from one vicinity to another but when the floods arrived, they all got dismantled. This is an example of the challenges that they face.

Other problems the charity has faced over the years is people wanting to join to improve their CVs, equipment not used because people do not know how to use it or parts not available, difficulties in advertising, transportation, funds to sustain projects, religious beliefs around vaccinations, breast cancer awareness, language barriers and safety of people operating on the field from bombs in places like Syria.

MIAT has provided relief and medical help to over 20 countries during its lifespan.

ARG touched on the Jubaida Gatrad Maternity and Children’s Hospital which incorporates a cleft centre which took Ten years to build and provides treatment free of charge for the poor. The doctors and staff have been sourced from all over the world from a diverse range of background. There are challenges in terms of post-operative care but fortunately this now being managed. There is also the problem that when the hospital is providing free treatment, those that can even afford it don’t want to pay. 80% of the work the charity does is free

around the world and the 20% that are requested to pay do not like paying. In places like Malawi, to conduct cataracts operations there are huge distances that have to be travelled to in the villages. This includes adverts, language and following up post operation which is a problem as some of the operations do have complications.

In Pakistan and many other countries, there is no education about dental hygiene. MIAT works very closely with the Oak Tree Trust. The charity also provides basic medicines to pregnant mothers and the elderly in remote villages. The charity has also provided bicycle ambulances as a mode of transport during floods where bridges were broken in Malawi. Sometimes MIAT has to trust other organisations for delivery to assist those in need and this has been demonstrated in Prevention of River Blindness in Nigeria. In the case of Gaza, the only way the charity could get aid was through a charity called Medical Aid Palestine (MAP) which was before the escalation of the conflict on October 7, 2023.

The charity has also supported those affected by the floods in India. A key challenge in terms of decision making is who to give and not to give. The charity has supported water projects in multiple countries. There can be problems with animal excretion which leads to contamination. The charity built 1000 huts for the victims of earthquakes in Nepal.

A key challenge for a charity that works for our common humanity is understanding what people need rather than thinking what they might need. This due diligence is crucial to be effective on the ground. This was pertinent in providing blankets to the Rohingya in Bangladesh. PARG has written a book titled "*Moments in Time*" where the money generated from the book's fundraising was utilised to build home for Rohingyas. When travelling to remote places in flood ridden areas, there is also the risk that the volunteers can catch diseases such as malaria. PARG stressed that his philosophy has been to always try to get aid and relief to the remote places rather than the cities. The charity also teaches people through medical training so that they can assist people on the ground in places like South Africa. Safety and security of volunteers who are assisting can be a challenge and on occasions security guards need to be provided to ensure their safety. The charity has also provided sewing machines to empower women in Malawi and ensuring the machines remain functional in terms of general upkeep can also be a challenge.

ARG concluded his talk by stating what this whistle stop tour has demonstrates is that when one embarks on the journey to provide aid and relief to the needy around the world, there are a lot of logistical problems that have to be overcome.

Dr Hugo Slim, Senior Research Fellow, University of Oxford

Dr Hugo Slim (HS) commenced his talk by stating that he would share a short reflection on the theme of “hope” which is in the title of the session. To think about hope from the prism of the climate emergency and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predictions and the experience of increasing heats, floods, and droughts. So many people are beginning to fail in a feeling of hope about the future. As several people have said already, the wars and devastation of various societies around the world in Sudan, Ukraine, Gaza, Israel-all these places now are also leading people to question hope.

Between climate emergency and war, HS stated that he thinks there is a sense amongst some people that there is no good future and that there is no hope. It is an emotional and a moral challenge to all of us in the world and to all people. And also, to humanitarians, who for some of us work with those people.

HS touched on the darkness that Rabbi JW spoke about and the feeling that you are hopeless in several of these places and people watching these places from afar. I thought I would try and do two things. One is to think about what is hope. Secondly, where can we find hope in these situations such as the darkness that Rabbi JW spoke about.

First of all, what is hope. It only really exists in uncertainty, in moments of darkness perhaps. If I am uncertain about something or confident about the future, I am generally content about the present, I don't feel the need to hope. So, we should expect to find hope in uncertainty and in extreme difficulty. Another important thing to say about hope is that it is a virtue. It is a moral strength we have to cultivate and practice. It's not an emotional optimism, a cheerful nature. It is a commitment we have to make that goodness does exist. That somewhere and somehow goodness is present. We have to accept with a certain amount of realism that we hope life is like this and can be very bad. But it is not only bad and not always bad. Standing in that moral commitment is a daily practice, a habit that FI and others talked about earlier. It is a commitment and a place to stand.

So, it is a conviction hope in the worst of times that life is good and better than death and that God is with us somewhere in the suffering we feel, and we watch other people feeling. So, if that is hope, where can we find hope, where might we find hope. One has to be honest straight away and say that sometimes we cannot find hope, it is not there. Situations can be hopeless. HS stressed that he is sure that some of the people in some of the wars today, people who are having their houses flooded for the fourth or fifth time, or facing another cyclone, second one this year, they may well think their situations are hopeless. They may really feel that. People do feel the end of hope sometimes. They can be truly numb, distraught, and simply just surviving and many of you may have seen people like that or had moments like that yourself.

It is interesting too that this idea of hopelessness, some people looking at climate emergency today and thinking about the ethics of climate emergency think that actually saying we have no hope is better than living in a false hope. We will be fine, it won't be that bad, we will get through it. So, some people are saying it is actually important in thinking about something as big as climate emergency to free ourselves from hope, to not be deluded and distracted by hoping. Because when we free ourselves from hope, we can then focus our attention on trying

to come up with new ideas to think things from the beginning again and to try and design a future in which we can then hope.

In Gaza, Israel and Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar and places which are experiencing such terrible war where can we find hope? Where can people find hope? HS is not really sure as he has never had to experience such terrible things. But I can imagine, and I think I know a little from working in wars along time ago that perhaps we can find hope in actions. We can, probably if we are suffering find hope in small acts of sympathy, in small acts of understanding and these in a sense loving acts remind us perhaps deep down for a moment of the world being another way and of the fact that there are good things in the world even now, even so small.

HS stated he thinks we can also find hope in the looks that people give us. Sometimes words can't really help, but the authenticity of the look which we meet the eyes of people. Which we look upon their pain and feel it in our faces with them that too can perhaps remind people of goodness in the world and remind them that hope is possible.

HS thinks, listening to ARG it is very clear as well that in doing good things- food, water, medical help, shelter. In doing these good things we may indicate hope, remind people of hope and remind them that the world is not just as they feel it now.

The other thing from HS's experience in humanitarian work, very often the place that he found hope was in what he was doing but in the extraordinary courage, dignity in which people were suffering. So, in fact, HS often found hope bizarrely in the people he was trying to help and who reminded him of hope and reminded him of the good things and gave him hope because of the way they lived in their suffering.

The last thing to say about hope is that sometimes we don't know it until much later. Very often you hear people say as they look back over a time of suffering, they will say I did not know it then but that was the moment when something changed and I was reminded that a future is possible, that a life is palpable. I was too sad to see it then but now as I look back, that's the moment it was. So bizarrely, we find hope backwards very often. We find hope later in the future perhaps where we might expect to find hope in the future. And it is a hope that we find later by having survived a terrible present.

HS thinks it is so important that we are *United in Hope* and that there will be times when situations are hopeless but that does not mean that hope is not there and that good things are not there and that we will be and can be reminded of those things.

Bushra Khalidi, Policy Lead at Oxfam

Bushra Khalidi (BK) talk focused on the topic of *Policy, Humanity and Reconstruction Dynamics in Conflict Zones*. BK gave her talk as close to the epicentre of the current conflict in Gaza being physically present in Ramallah in the West Bank on her Birthday for which we were immensely grateful for her taking time out to join us.

BK commenced her talk by stating that she will be reflecting on the work that they have been doing at Oxfam. She is the policy lead for the Occupied Palestine Territories (OPT).

BK wanted to provide an overview of the unprecedented humanitarian situation that we are seeing in Gaza. What this means in the broader context of being in the OPT and touch on the work that Oxfam does in terms of humanitarian aid and the development work and the big campaigning and advocacy component that Oxfam have as well as part of their programmes and ethos at Oxfam.

BK then wanted to talk about the challenges they have been facing as humanitarian workers in the Gaza response and tell people more about her personal experience of living in Palestine and doing humanitarian work for Palestine as a Palestinian and what are the conditions needed for real genuine, meaningful reconstruction for this place and region.

Most of the speakers have touched upon Gaza in some way in their presentations because of how unprecedented the crisis in Gaza has unfolded. We are seeing the highest level of death rates in the 21st century in any conflict. 250 Palestinians in Gaza killed a day in the last Four months or so. 70 per cent of homes in Gaza have been damaged and destroyed. 70 per cent is an enormous number. We have 1.7m people displaced and displaced not just one, twice, three times. Some people Six times. All BK's colleagues in Gaza are displaced, some are living in tents.

BK has her father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law in Gaza and nephews who are also living in a tent. It is an unprecedented situation for her, her family members and those in Ramallah who are watching their screens and her team who are working and trying to respond to this crisis.

The Israeli military campaign and Israel's systematic policies of collectively punishing Palestinians by restricting aid entering the Gaza strip, cutting of electricity and water to the Gaza strip has rendered an entire population destitute and homeless. Half of Gaza's population are children. Not only has it rendered it homeless and destitute, but it has also rendered the entire Gaza strip uninhabitable to the point that a new assessment has just come out saying that it would take up to Ten years for Gaza just to recover and take up to Seventy years to rebuild Gaza back to how it was on 6 October 2023. So, it is a very bleak picture and grim outlook for Gaza but also for the broader region because that has a ripple effect on the West Bank but also for neighbouring countries. Now the fear is that if the military campaign continues towards the south, the Israeli military campaign continues to pummel through Khan Younis and Rafah. There is a fear that there will be a forced transfer of an entire civilian population through the borders or extreme massacres happening as a result of this.

Right now we have a situation where we have a completely collapsed health care system in Gaza with Two hospitals partially running with very limited fuel supplies allowed in everyday to run those hospitals and a few of the shelters, UNRWA run shelters. We have a

situation where there is no de-salination happening in Gaza, there is no wastewater treatment happening. There are just two water connection points from Israel that have been turned back on by Israel but only at 15%. People are living on 1-3 litres of water a day, mostly unpollutable water and not necessarily meant for drinking.

As humanitarian workers, what BK and her teams have been calling for since the first week of the hostilities is for a permanent and immediate ceasefire. Because that is the only way that we are able to deliver aid affectively. At this stage we have 300 health workers that were killed in Gaza in the last Four months. BK's own teams are all displaced and trying to survive. Therefore, they are unable to go and deliver parcels of food under relentless bombs and military incursions. On top of that, the restrictions are that specific items are not allowed into the Gaza strip. There is a Three-layer verification process for trucks where they have to go through an Israeli verification process before coming into Gaza. They have closed most of the crossings. Israel has only allowed the Kerem Shalom border crossing but there are Six other crossings that border with Israel. The delivery of aid is a drop in the ocean to what is needed.

In a wider context as Oxfam, we also operate in the West Bank. Before 7th October, and a lot of the programming was around economic justice. We also have a lot of women empowerment projects and gender justice projects where Oxfam provides micro-financing for women cooperatives in agriculture and different industries as well as the textile industry in Gaza. Oxfam also have the humanitarian portfolio the one which is activated now in Gaza, which is the response portfolio.

There is a great project to give you an idea of how Oxfam works in non-emergency situations and how we use humanitarian framings and frameworks to help development projects and build resilience in communities. There is a small community in the Jordan valley, in the Area C of the West Bank, which is an area controlled by the Israeli military where Palestinian communities live. These are the most vulnerable and poorest Palestinian communities that live in Area C. They are marginalised areas, mostly hurting communities and Bedouin communities in those areas lives there and they are always at risk of forcible transfer. 2023 was a record number of forcible displacement of communities in the West Bank by Israeli forces. This is a constant daily reck that Palestinians live in here in the West Bank. What we did is, there was this farmer who had this land and wanted to grow it. His sons, nephews and young men in his family were working in settlements, this is an area where there are a lot of illegal settlements, in Area C where a lot of the settlers live and the area which is considered illegal land by the UN. A lot of Palestinians work in those farms on the settlements. So, Oxfam provided solar panels to this farmer, a water irrigation system and rehabilitated a water well, an old water well that was on his land. So this farmer was able to grow an entire 25 acre of land of palm trees, beans and depending on the seasons, peppers and was able to bring his families, the young men and his family back on his land and working the land together and paying them a salary and getting them out of the settlements. One day, the settlers decided to damage the solar panels and broke them. Oxfam came back and we fixed the solar panels, we put fencing around the piece of land as a measure of deterrence from settlor violence.

On December 12th 2023, the army came and demolished all of the irrigation systems, all of the palm trees, all of the solar panels and the entire thing because apparently they are not

allowed to have any permanent structure because it is Area C and it is getting controlled by the Israeli army and therefore Palestinians are not allowed to build any permanent structures and according to Israeli military law, solar panels are considered a permanent structure. There comes a question as a development, humanitarian nexus organisation in terms of what do we do and risk another demolition from the Israeli army. How do we adapt our strategies that maybe we would use in other places to this very complex, highly politicised environment where it is not just the humanitarian situation, but it is also a political situation. This is what we are seeing in Gaza as well. When we say we cannot deliver aid effectively without a permanent ceasefire, it means that we cannot have a humanitarian solution without a political one i.e. a humanitarian solution that accompanies a political one. It cannot substitute a political solution because we have been substituting which is just a band aid on a bleeding wound and now the wound is gushing. The humanitarians cannot do anything at the moment. They are only delivering about 10-30% of what Gaza needs at the moment. This is because the operational space is completely obstructed by the bombs and by the hostilities, by the restrictions on aid.

From a personal point of view, having family there working for humanitarian organisations and BK's family being rendered from a beautiful home in Gaza with a garden, beautiful boulevards, cafes and life, that to be gone in a click of a finger and for her to be sitting here advocating for Palestine on behalf of my organisation on behalf of humanitarian principles and seeing the impunity that Israel is acting upon where it has violated all major international laws, has committed atrocity crimes in Gaza. The ICJ has noted that there is a plausible risk of genocide happening in Gaza, therefore when does this impunity stop! When does accountability start! For BK, there is no reconstruction or rebuilding and there is no real humanitarian, principles humanitarian approach at least to the OPT without accountability and without justice. That is the premise of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Right now, it is being tested at the highest levels.

BK thanked all for listening to her talk.

Father Nehme Saliba, Clergyman-Orthodox Church in Lebanon

Father Nehme Saliba (FNS) graced the event with an invocation of peace with a presentation on the topic of Inter Religious Dialogue (IRD) in Service of Wellbeing.

FNS stated that as a priest in Lebanon, he has so many different roles. He is a Christian in the Greek Orthodox Church of Mount Lebanon. He is serving especially the youth as a trainer in dialogue at the KAICIID Centre. He is also a professor holding a PhD in inter-religious dialogue from St. Joseph University of Beirut. FNS specialises in religious freedom and civil marriage from a Christian and Islamic point of view, especially in Lebanon. As a priest, FNS also has a Youtube channel. You can guess from this that FNS works a lot closely with the youth. FNS also works with so many NGOs, especially in the IRD field.

As a priest, they would just perform prayers. After the 1990s and finishing the civil war in Lebanon, they had to be engineers trying to build the church again. Later on, they became economist during the economic crisis in Lebanon. Now they are focusing on the psychology working with youth and with so many different parts of Lebanese people that they suffer a lot.

FNS stated that they are living in a big city, and they are all depressed. If you would like to study depression on a big scale you can visit Lebanon for sure.

One of FNS's initiative, using the IRD is to let us sit and talk. Let us from all denominations in Lebanon, have a talk and introduce ourselves collaborating with each other and trying to find how to build bridges between Lebanese and Syrian citizens living in Lebanon.

FNS also uses inter-religious dialogue in order to service the ecosystem and the economic situation in Lebanon by trying to find new talent by cleaning our streets. FNS stated that they are from different dominations emanating from Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian extractions. Young people trying to clean the presidential streets. Lebanon until now does not have a President of the Lebanese republic. So, it was a sign for them to just to act with the youth and let their voice be very loud.

Another initiative that FNS coordinates is *Together, we can live*. We can find a place where we can all sit and talk and have a decent life, especially after the current economic situation and crisis in Lebanon where all the people are now totally poor.

FNS also coordinates the *IRD and Gender*, to try and sit together to address the gender issues in Lebanon and find ways to talk about it. This is a very debated topic and controversial one in Lebanon. Implementing dialogue on so many different fields other than just the direct target of dialogue between two different religious denominations. Just getting the dialogue concept and implementing it in so many different areas.

A special initiative was that of taking *IRD as a Trauma Healing*. Trauma healing method after the Beirut blast. There are lots of things to or to work with implementing dialogue and specially making some connections between religious leaders trying to go on social media together. Trying to build a very safe space where all can talk and express themselves without any fear. The situation is so hard now in Lebanon after the problem that all the speakers have mentioned. We are trying to survive on a personal level, FNS's son finished his Baccalaureate Grade 12 in the US. We used to travel early after we finished our master's degree, maybe doing our studies in Europe or the US. Now early students, they decided to go outside of Lebanon. They cannot stand life here. FNS's daughter is in Holland trying to finish her Grade 12. She is know applying for American universities. It is very hard on a personal level, social, community and all levels.

FNS said they are fighting very hard. FNS stated he was so depressed during the war in Gaza. Because where is the truce and where is the conflict resolution. All we learn about-human rights has vanished just in one click. FNS is in the process of regaining his strength again, participating in some zoom meetings/ events like the UHUH one just to bring some faith again and trying to find another map or another way to continue his message in this life.

FNS concluded his presentation by expressing a token of thanks and also thanking the panellists for their inspiring lectures and he hoped to meet the contributors in person maybe another time or maybe in Lebanon.

Tareq Layka, Syrian Educational Activist *

Tareq Layka (TL) gave a powerful presentation about his educational journey having left Syria and resided in Europe and the UK as a refugee where he had to overcome multiple hurdles to complete his higher education qualifications. TL is a dentist, activist and peacebuilder. TL touched on the difficulty in being able to access suitable sources of funding, loans to pursue higher education studies since there are many sanctions that are placed on Syria which function as a barrier for students to be able to pursue their studies.

TL had to resort to crowdsource funding at times to help with assisting him to pursue his higher education studies where he was pursuing an MSc in Global Health and Social Justice at Kings College London. TL has also given an inspirational Ted Talk titled "*Opportunity isn't knocking can you build your own door*" which acts as a source of inspiration and hope for educational activists and pioneers emphasising the point that where there is a will there is a way.

The key message in TL's talk was that it is important to improve the educational funding options for people who have had to flock conflict zones such as Syria to other parts of the world to improve their life chances. It was also stressed that, although it has been Thirteen years since the conflict in Syria started; the humanitarian challenges are still very much prevalent all be it that it does not get much media spotlight these days.

Sheikh Aboubakar Mohammed, Association for the Promotion of Peace

Sheikh Aboubakar Mohammed (SAM) started his talk by expressing a token of appreciation and thanks to be able to speak at the UHUH online event and share his own experience.

SAM stressed that he is a Sheikh from Cameroon. He stressed that he has been trying for a long time to help people who are living in difficulties. He stated that he has also been trying to meet people from different religious backgrounds. SAM stated that he is a Muslim, but his observation is that the human race across the globe is facing unprecedented challenges as a result from social conflicts that arises from political, cultural, ethnic, racial, geographical and religious dimensions.

SAM explained that they have an example in Cameroon with Boko Haram. He himself as a religious leader need to play a role in the world to make it a more peaceful and better place to live in. SAM explained that he has done some research work on this topic titled "*A Reflection on the Culture of Peace from the Islamic Faith Tradition*", which is available to read in the Appendix-Item 4.

SAM is also engaged in meeting people from different backgrounds ranging from Christians, Muslims and people from traditional faiths and cultures. SAM referred to the importance of scripture, how the teachings elucidated in Quran and the life and example of Prophet Muhammad can guide us. In many places and verses, one can find many examples of how we can live together and how we can fight against injustice in society. SAM then went on to explain that there is a problem in Cameroon especially because Islam has been victim of all kinds of prejudice and stereotypes which is fuelled by an international network of propaganda using powerful channels of communication across the world as the source of modern violence and a threat to world peace. In SAM view, on the contrary, Islam has an important role to

play in geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic spheres regarding local and international trade, behaviour between peoples and all national issues facing humankind. This is what SAM uses to explain to people.

SAM stated he would like to meet the speakers who have contributed to the UHUU event in person and provided an invitation to all to visit Cameroon because there is a lot of work to be done and he cannot cover all the points in a short space of time.

SAM concluded his talk by stating that he also struggles in conflict solving problems in many ways. He prays to God to Guide us and Guide all humankind.

Mabowunje Harrison, Singer from Birmingham, UK

Mabowunje Harrison (MH) concluded the UHUU Online workshop event with a beautiful rendition of the song "*Heal the World.*"

Key Recommendations/ Lessons Learnt

1. Importance of having trusted partners when providing aid and relief in conflict zones.
2. Importance of allowing free, secure, safe and unfettered access to humanitarian organisations to provide aid and relief in affected areas without political interference.
3. The importance of having a multi-faceted back up contingency partnership comprised of civic, NGO, faith, UN and political actors that can assist in providing timely solutions to the challenges and obstacles for aid and relief work is of paramount importance.
4. Countries that are affected by the epicentre of conflicts, it is of paramount importance that logistical support and ease is provided to aid and relief organisations that wish to assistance to the needy in a timely manner.
5. It is important to not assume what aid and relief is needed in conflict zones but conduct on the ground and inter-connected due diligence observation and analysis via trusted partners before providing the necessary support.
6. Transparency of operational work that is being conducted is important in building trust and confidence that aid and relief is being reached to those in need.
7. There are various dimensions and angles of hope that can inspire one towards positive action even in situations where it feels like there is no hope!
8. One can be inspired by the resilience and resolve of the people who are suffering in conflict zones to continue to provide the sustained support that is needed.
9. Diversity, inclusion and the humanitarian principles are of paramount importance when providing relief and aid in conflict struck areas.
10. Communications between different stakeholders along with being agile to adjust to changing circumstances is a crucial skill to have when working in humanitarian work.
11. Medical aid, Mental health and psychological support are all critical in providing support to regions where there have been natural disasters and that are mired by conflict.
12. Education, language, and welfare support is crucial when working in providing aid and relief based on the cultural, religious sensitivities, and multi-generational footing.
13. It is important to explore the opportunities there exist in using AI technology to provide aid and relief in conflict zones.
14. The role of inter-faith organisations in providing collective solidarity, hope and support for conflict, human made and natural disaster zones around the world is an important moral, spiritual, psychological, and physical support mechanism that needs to be used effectively in the epicentres of conflicts and the various networks that exist globally.
15. The role and importance of inspirational leaders in providing hope to provide aid and relief in conflict, human made, and natural disaster zones is of fundamental importance.
16. To utilise effectively the role of celebrities and key icons in raising awareness of the humanitarian plight of those impacted by conflicts in multiple ways across the world.
17. Recognition and appreciation of individual and organisations who are engaged in self-less humanitarian work around the world is of critical importance to encourage and motivate others to continue the good work.
18. Post conflict reconstruction, project management and best practice multi-partnership support is crucial to ensure a speedy pathway towards rebuilding societies mired by disasters and conflicts. It is important to use the experience of organisations, states,

and agencies who have experience of post conflict reconstruction based on a contextual regional and localised approach of engaging the locally impacted communities on the journey.

19. To engage with the financial and monetary bodies that can provide philanthropic support to conflict zones based on humanitarian norms and welfare principles.
20. The importance of financial services institutions and payment providers to be flexible to assist those in need in a timely manner whilst remaining compliant with international legal frameworks.
21. To establish trusted frameworks, bodies and support mechanisms that can provide oversight in eliminating nepotism, corruption, malpractice and maladministration.
22. In all conflict zones, to have collaboration and engagement with Environment, Health and Sustainability organisations to ensure that a healthy environment can materialise from situations of conflict, especially in the post-conflict reconstruction phase.
23. To engage and collaborate with multiple organisations at a state and non-state level in conflict affected areas who have experience in creating enabling environments to foster sustainable peace.
24. To develop a trusted network and alliance of good will allies that can provide and assistance across multiple platforms and divisions (logistical, communication, media and financial etc) in conflict affected areas around the world.

Disclaimer- The views and opinions expressed during the UHUU Online Workshop are exclusively those of the panellists and do not necessary represent the views of Guidance Consultancy or The Euphrates Institute.

Appendix

1. Dima Mahjoub (Syria/ Germany), Mohammad Shehadat (Syria/UK)- The Journey of Humanitarianism and Diaspora Engagement.



DM & MS The
Journey of Humanitar

2. Muhammad Shehadat Workshop Presentation, The Mile's Journey end with a Story.



Mohammad's
Presentation.pdf

3. MIAT- Bringing Hope and Serving Humanity (1992-2024)



MIAT Bringing Hope
Serving Humanity.pdf

4. A Reflection on the Culture of Peace from the Islamic Faith Tradition, His Eminence Sheikh Aboubakar Mohammed, Cameroon.



peace document 3
(1).pdf

5. [United in Hope - United for Humanity.mp4 - Google Drive](#) -Online Workshop Video Link. **TL segment has been removed upon request.*

6. IRD- In Service of Wellbeing- Father Nehme Saliba.



IRD in service of
Wellbeing.pdf



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