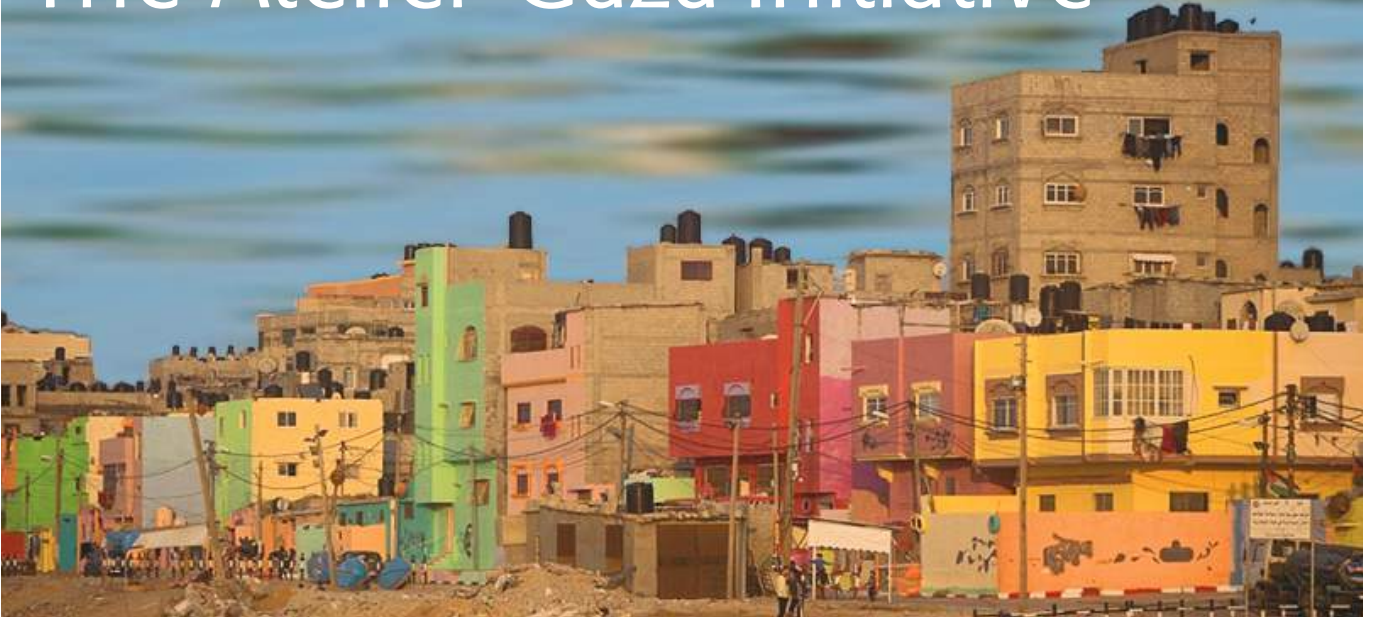


Creating Space for Freedom! The Atelier Gaza Initiative



We are a group of visual artists living in the Gaza Strip, who carry out volunteer artistic initiatives to help alleviate the current conditions in which our society lives. We intend to provide our society with fine art to reawaken their hope for life especially given the dire conditions in which we have been living after the 2014 war. The war has directly and tremendously impacted everyone in Gaza, but especially children, women, and the elderly. It has left them with scenes of death of their loved ones and destruction of their houses, and no hope for a better life. The Gaza Strip has become a giant mass of smoke and rubble and the color grey has dominated the landscape. A general atmosphere of sorrow and despair has taken over and the idea

We, as Palestinians, believe we have a homeland, so why live as refugees in another country forever?

of emigrating to Europe and the USA has become extremely popular, especially among young people. Emigration now seems like the only way out of the misery and the key to a good life.

We disagree. We, as Palestinians, believe we have a homeland, so why live as refugees in another country forever? From this point, we, as artists, decided to take part in changing this situation using our talents and our brushes. We went out to make a change and spark hope in people's lives. We went out to add color to the grey scenes of destruction surrounding us. We went out to rebuild a new Gaza, a colorful one. In our first initiative, *Gaza is the Prettiest of Cities*, we painted the rocks of Gaza Seaport in different colors. Thirty artists volunteered to participate in the initiative and we managed to change the grey color of the Seaport to red, purple, yellow, green, blue and white. We chose to paint this particular place because it is a very popular recreational destination for Gazans. In fact, it is considered one of the few destinations that are available for people that have not been ruined by the war. The initiative took ten days of continuous work, during which passers, visitors and fishermen participated. It was a great scene full of happiness watching children, women, and men share paints and brushes to color the rocks and feel a renewed sense of hope. Now the Gaza Seaport is one of the most beautiful places to see in Gaza.

As a continuation of our voluntary initiative which was a great success we decided to go out again and add colors to another place in Gaza. Our main goal this time was to interact more with citizens and get them involved in the project. We chose a neighborhood, Al Shati', one of the poorest and most densely populated refugee camps in the Strip. Residents of this camp are families who were forced out of their homes in 1948 and sent to the Gaza Strip. This new initiative was called *Gaza Ahla (Prettier Gaza)*. This



time, however, we received funding for tools and materials. Twenty volunteer artists took to the streets and alleys of this camp, after taking permission from the residents, and started painting and restoring the houses. Our work entailed repairing broken doors and windows, and collecting old car tires to be painted and use for decoration and as flower pots.

We were surprised by the overwhelming support and participation by residents of the camp. People of all ages and genders volunteered and together we managed to add color to a previously grey and gloomy refugee camp. There was a general atmosphere of happiness while everybody was helping to color and decorate their neighborhood, even if it only lasted a few days. Children especially enjoyed the experience.



As women artists in Gaza we aim to paint pictures that speak for us and present our message to the world. Each artist enjoys total freedom in the way she chooses to express her opinion and feelings especially that our freedom of traveling and seeing the world is restricted. Despite our feeling of living in a tightening prison that prevents us from interacting with the outside world and puts us down, we try to use our brushes to express our thoughts and feelings. We feel

that our brushes are the only things that give us hope and grant us freedom, even if only in our imaginations. We as creative women need a studio that brings us together and provides us with a place to present our art, so that the whole world can see it.

A 6 year old girl participating in *Gaza is the Prettiest of Cities* by painting a rock at Gaza Seaport, 2014.



View of Gaza Seaport after having been painted by 30 volunteer artists





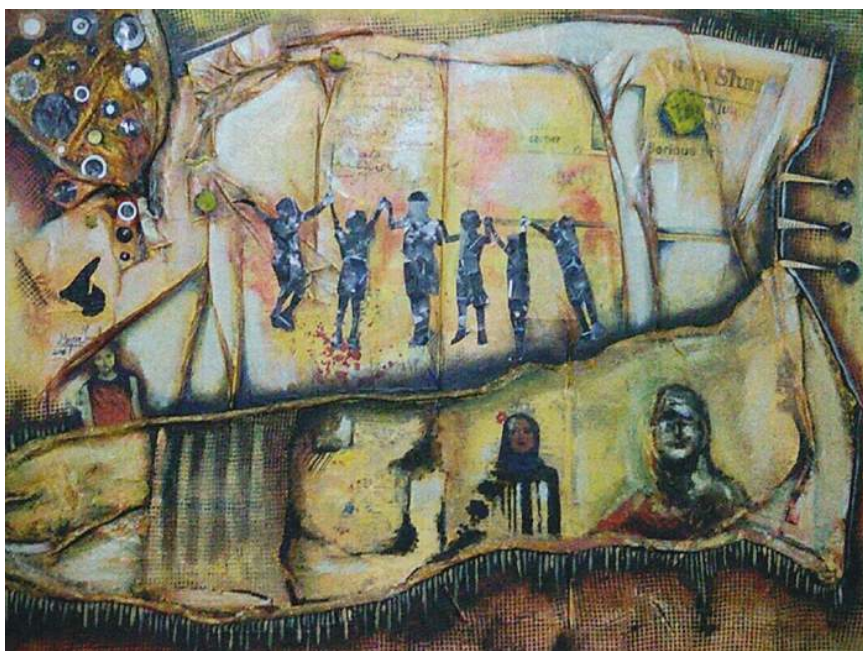
A group of children from Al Shati' refugee camp playing after participating in painting their houses during Gaza Ahla initiative.

Gaza Ahla (prettier Gaza) initiative, in which we volunteered to paint and redecorate Al Shati' refugee camp. The image depicts one of Gaza's poorest residential neighborhoods.



We are in need of a center (atelier/gallery) where we, as female artists who are constantly judged and criticized by our society, can gather and work in freedom and peace. We need a place where we feel free and serene to escape to in the midst of fighting and destruction that surround us. The blockade on Gaza has taken away many basic rights and things that we are passionate about. For example, we are not able to participate in international events and festivals to showcase and market our work, which is our main source of income. The atelier will give us some level of the freedom that male artists enjoy in a society that tends to ignore and belittle us.

Despite our feeling of living in a prison that prevents us from interacting with the outside world and puts us down, we try to use our brushes to express our thoughts and feelings



Top: Artwork by Maysa' Yusuf; Below left: Artwork by Dalia Abdalrahman

Creating Space for Freedom – The Atelier Gaza Initiative

The studio we would like to open would be equipped with an exhibition hall and a workshop. We envision that it will be an open space for all the female artists in Gaza to express their feelings in the form of visual arts, and additionally use it to showcase their work.



Any female artist of any age will be welcome at this studio, and we hope that the sense of comfort and freedom this place will give us will reflect on our work and will result in pure and admirable art. We plan to call it *Atelier Gaza*.

We need a free space for female artists to develop their skills and reflect on their thoughts and feelings in the midst of war and chaos in the form of visual arts. There is no place in Gaza that is allocated for art work and exhibitions, even though there have been some organizations that provide occasional support for artists.

Most importantly, Atelier Gaza will be a center for female artists to produce their art without judgment or family pressure; a safe haven or a place for self-expression and personal freedom. The center would also serve as a place for meetings and sharing



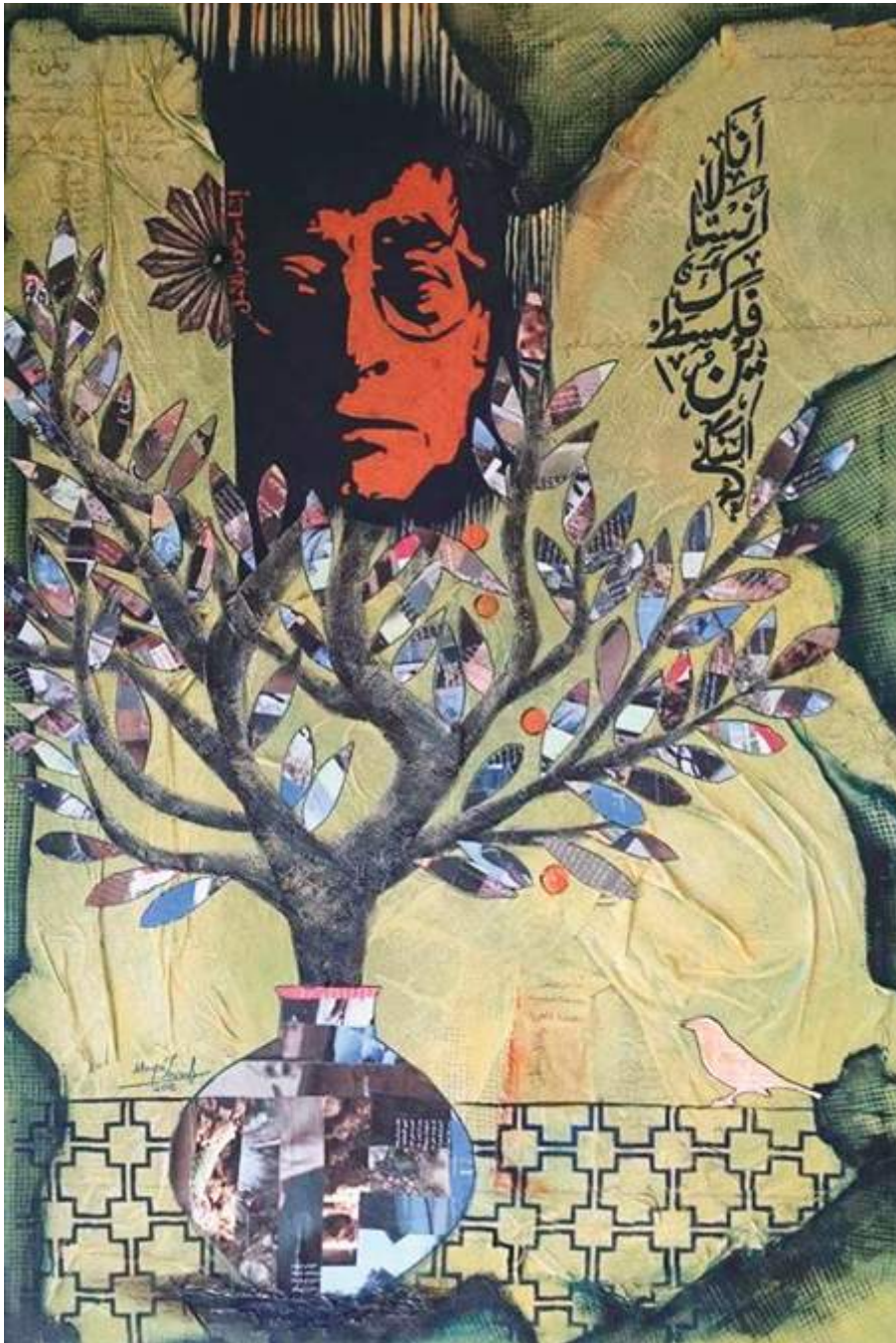
Artwork by Dalia Abdalrahman



Left: Artwork by Sharifa Al Ghsein and right, by Maysa Yusuf

thoughts and experiences in the field of visual arts. A place that can serve for constant display of artwork is highly needed. The center would be open to all artists of all ages.

Artwork by Maysa Yusuf



Artwork by Sharifa Al Ghsein



The collage on the first page shows in the foreground a part of the refugee camp Al Shati' which was painted and renovated by artists and helpers during the initiative Gaza Ahla

Description of the requested gallery

#	Item	Details	Description	Cost	Number	Total Cost	
1	The gallery	House rent for 5 years	One level building that contains an exhibition hall, and attached room and a garden	\$400/month	60 months	\$24000	
2	Miscellaneous items for preparation	Wall paint	To paint the place with a color that is suitable for exhibitions	\$1000	1	\$1000	
		Lighting	Various lighting equipment	\$3000	-	\$3000	
		Furniture (desk, shelves, chairs, stools, AC, tables)	Chairs		\$25	20	\$500
			Stools		\$25	10	\$250
			AC (2 ton)		\$1000	1	\$1000
High wood tables (150x300cm)			\$100	4	\$400		
3	Art tools and equipment	Easels	Wooden easels	\$25	25	\$625	
		Paint and brushes	Acrylic and oil paints + brushes	\$15	200	\$3000	
		Canvases	Canvases sizes 100x100-100x150 cm	\$30	200	\$6000	
4	Appliances	Laptop	With adequate specs	\$1000	2	\$2000	
		Camera	Professional	\$1000	1	\$1000	
		Fan	Portable	\$50	2	\$100	
5	Utilities	Electricity		\$40	60 months	\$2400	
		Water		\$5	60 months	\$300	
		Phone and internet		\$40	60 months	\$2400	
Total						\$47975	

We envision the gallery to be a one level building with a garden and a hall that is suitable for exhibitions. The hall should be equipped with lighting directed at the walls, where the artwork would be showcased, and should also air-conditioned.

A separate room, attached to the main hall would serve as a place for workshops and meetings of artists.

In addition, some furniture such as easels, tables and chairs are needed.

If you want to donate to the project, please transfer to the following bank account:

PalästinaKomitee Stuttgart e.V.
 BW Bank
 IBAN: DE32 6005 0101 0008 5926 13
 BIC: SOLADEST600

Purpose: Atelier Gaza Initiative

Donors will receive a donation receipt.

(PalästinaKomitee Stuttgart e.V. is a non-profit organisation, registered with the city of Stuttgart)

PAKO PalästinaKomitee Stuttgart e.V.
 palaestinakomitee-stuttgart.de
 de-de.facebook.com/PaKo.Stuttgart

V.i.S.d.P. PalästinaKomitee Stuttgart e.V. c/o M. Kunkel, Rosengartenstr. 80, 70184 Stuttgart, Germany