



## **Pontifical Mission, Jerusalem Field Office**

*the papal agency for Middle East relief and development*

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### **Pontifical Mission - Jerusalem**

#### **Funding Proposal**

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**Project Title:** Gaza Christian University Students Program, Gaza Strip

**Project Holder:** Pontifical Mission – Jerusalem

#### **Brief Overview of the Project Area:**

The Gaza Strip's Christian community, a modest population of only 1,100 people amongst 2 million, have been deeply affected by political and economic disparity. Israel's war with Hamas which took place between 2009-2014 in addition to a 14-year blockade and access restrictions have destroyed local industries, businesses and commerce, upended livelihoods and exasperated an already high unemployment and poverty rate. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered even greater disparity as living wages have been reduced and households are now struggling to cover basic living costs.

Many Palestinians still hold the belief that an education is the only guarantee to quality employment and a better way of life. Decades ago, the Palestinian education system was regarded as one of the finest in the Middle East. Today, the system struggles to maintain this standard because of Israel's occupation and its political and economic impact. Nevertheless, Palestinians are determined to receive an education at all costs. Current estimates indicate that more than 30% of the Palestinian population are enrolled in school full-time. Yet, lowered wages and rising living costs puts most university students, especially in the Gaza Strip, at a great disadvantage. Students and their parents struggle to cover annual school tuition fees, in addition to semester schoolbooks and transportation costs. The lack of paid tuition overtime has also negatively impacted local universities' ability to function and has severely restricted university budgets. Universities that once had student loan and scholarship programs for students in need are now either limited or cancelled. Other universities that have managed to maintain scholarship programs are barely able to cover a recipient's tuition fees. In recent years, universities took drastic measures to oust indebted students, enrolling new students that have the means to pay their tuition on time. Students who are eager to earn their degree and work, are in fact held back by poverty and mounting debt.

For Christian university students, many are becoming more pessimistic about the overall situation in the Gaza Strip and if the opportunity arises, would emigrate abroad with the likelihood of never returning.

#### **Appeal to support Christian University Students in the Gaza Strip:**

Donor support is required to help young Palestinian Christians earn their bachelor's degrees at local universities in the Gaza Strip. The PMP's ongoing scholarship program, "Gaza Christian University Students Program in the Gaza Strip" aims to financially assist 24 Palestinian Christians enrolled at universities and colleges located in the Gaza Strip, covering annual tuition fees (Bachelor's degree) for the next four years. Students who are selected to join the program are selected based on their previous high school GPA, intended field of study, and considers current household socioeconomic factors.

The project is supervised by the Pontifical Mission – Jerusalem staff based in the Gaza Strip. The project’s coordinator collects annual tuition financial statements from the respective universities and students’ own accounts to determine the students’ progress each semester. Students who fall below an average GPA of 60 are automatically withdrawn from the program.

**Project Budget:**

The Pontifical Mission – Jerusalem requests assistance from the *Knights of the Holy Sepulchre Jerusalem Lieutenancy of the Netherlands* in the total amount of **€17,500** that support the education of 5-6 Palestinian Christian university students who intend to enroll at local universities and colleges in the Gaza Strip for the next four years (2020 – 2024).

In reference to the project, please find two tables below that highlight project details: the project budget and donor contributions towards the project.

**Pontifical Mission – Jerusalem  
Project Budget: Gaza University Student Scholarship Program  
(2020 – 2024)**

<b>Project components (KHS/H):</b>	<b>Total Cost in Euro:</b>
• Average student per semester	€400
• Total (4 years) per student	€3,200
• Support for 5 students (total 4 years)	€16,000
• Project & financial supervision and reporting	€1,500
<b>Total Proposed Budget:</b>	<b>€17,500</b>

**Pontifical Mission – Jerusalem  
Gaza University Student Scholarship Program  
Donor Contribution for the 24 Students**

<b>Project overall Budget:</b>	<b>Total Cost in Euro:</b>
CNEWA – Pontifical Mission	€33,250
Friends of the Holy Land	€33,250
Dutch Lieutenancy	€17,500
<b>Total (4-years):</b>	<b>€84,000</b>