



# 1for3 News

\* Water \* Health \* Education \*

\* الماء \* الصحة \* التعليم \*

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## COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS SERVE PATIENTS DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

Even as the Covid-19 emergency persists in Aida, 1for3's Health 4 Palestine (H4P) Community Health Worker (CHW) program continues to serve community members in Aida on issues related to chronic disease, trauma-informed mental health care, and community organizing. Its members are steadfast in pursuing health as a human right and continue to perform home visits on a regular basis.

Announcement for a contest for the Palestinian Embroidery, with the hashtag, #Stay\_at\_Home.

Before the Covid-19 struck, early 2020 had seen an increase in the number of patients served—now well over 100! The program also added community organizing activities including a community advisor board meetings and patient satisfaction surveys.

In recent weeks, energy has turned to managing the Covid-19 pandemic. In Palestine, the health system is burdened by lack of trust, fractured care systems, and the oppressive policies of the occupation. This added crisis of Covid-19 has tested the resolve of communities and those that care for them. H4P and its diligent CHWs that carry out its daily work are focusing on addressing this pandemic so as to stop the spread of disease by educating the community, providing remote care by telephone, and limiting social interaction without compromising their goals: to serve alongside the community and to treat the whole of the individual.

As described by one of H4P's CHWs, Ashgan Eweis, the community is understandably tense on the possibility of spreading such an infectious disease. With the guidance of the CHWs, community members are diligent in observing quarantine, only going out for food and medicine, providing an example for how the world should act.

The team communicates with UNRWA and has disseminated their recommendations to the community. The CHWs have been bringing medications to those that are home quarantined and providing comfort and care over phone calls and remote instruction from the office at Lajee Center. CHWs are heading efforts to donate food and medication as well. While community members remain indoors, people find themselves out of work and facing a reality of financial struggle. Now more than ever, CHWs become essential: to coordinate, to provide care, and to serve.



Video still from a video encouraging healthy practices.

## ROOFTOP GARDENERS CONCEPTUALIZE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AIDA CAMP

The Environment Unit at Lajee has always seen rooftop gardens as serving multiple purposes. They provide a way for families to grow healthy food. They are a way for refugees dispossessed of their land to reconnect with Palestinian agriculture. And they make small green spaces for families to cherish even in the crowded space of the camp. Building on these goals, the Environment Unit, led by Shatha Al-Azzeh, is exploring the concept of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is defined by Grassroots Online as “the right for all people to decide what they eat and to ensure that food in their community is ecologically, socially, economically, and culturally appropriate.” For leaders at Lajee, a crucial clarifying perspective was that people can be food secure in prison, as prison provides them with calories, but food sovereignty means that communities make decisions about what they eat.



*Participants discuss food sovereignty.*

To this end, Lajee hosted a focus group with rooftop gardeners—all women between the ages of 35 and 55—about their vision of why rooftop gardening is important and how they would imagine food sovereignty in Aida. One participant expressed that food sovereignty is not just about food but also concept of land ownership, agricultural independence, cultural preservation and health. They lamented that in the current situation, Israel controls their food system.

Participants also dreamed ahead to the future. While the rooftop gardens do not (yet) produce enough food for large families to be self-sufficient, they have experimented with ways to increase yield. They find rich emotional benefits to spending time in the garden. One woman suggested a “Feminist Agricultural Cooperative Society,” where, by renting fallow land owned by others in the camp, women

could grow food for themselves and for sale. They discussed how food sovereignty is impossible while military occupation continues. Still, wrote Shatha Al-Azzeh, they can implement “practical ways to pass on knowledge about Palestinian food traditions and farming.” They look forward to returning to this project after the quarantines end. Meanwhile, the women grow beans, mint, sage, onions, radishes, and winter greens just outside their doors.

### A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NIDAL AL-AZRAQ:

We made the painful decision to postpone the Walk for Water, originally scheduled for May 2, for the health and safety of all. While we do not know if it will be possible to gather again later this year, we do know that the people in Palestine need support today, more than ever. Our team is on the front lines of managing this crisis by distributing public health information, caring for housebound patients with chronic illness, and even providing home delivery of library books. Rooftop gardens are more important than ever. I am humbled to report that many of the employees we support have decided to pool a portion of their salaries to give to those most in need in their community. We know it is not an easy time to give or to ask others to give, but please know every little bit counts. We would still like to honor our May 2 Walk date and will be in touch soon with ideas on how to do this. Please also share this newsletter and our Facebook materials and ask others in your network to join you in supporting 1for3 by sharing [this link](#) the link to your personal fundraising page. We are grateful for all you do! Finally, we thank our generous and visionary sponsors for their support.

Jeff Boshar, Bay Financial Associates LLC

