

Zahrat Al-Yasmeen (ZAY) Kindergarten, located in Bethlehem in the West Bank of Palestine, was established in 2021 through a collaboration that included local leaders, educators, and community members, along with international partners, to provide a welcoming, developmentally appropriate program for four- and five-year-olds. Together, they designed a space rooted in the community's needs and hopes for children from the Aida and Al-Azza refugee camps.



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The care invested in creating the space is reflected as deeply in the nurturing, child-centered approach that defines the school's daily life. Teachers emphasize play, music, art, and community building, helping children develop confidence and social skills. In an environment marked by occupation, limited resources, and frequent disruption, the kindergarten is a place where resilience is nurtured, joy is palpable,

and resistance thrives as a result. The very act of creating and sustaining this school asserts that children deserve stability, opportunity, and a space to grow, even under these conditions.

Friends of Zahrat Al Yasmeen (FZAY) was created in 2025 by educators and activists to build a community of care and support for the children and their teachers. In October 2025, members of FZAY visited the school, providing an opportunity to strengthen relationships with teachers. We observed vibrant classrooms and engaged in collaborative problem-solving with ZAY staff.

Through a connection with Terrapin, the makers of Bee-bots, a FZAY member secured a discount to purchase these programmable robots and accompanying mats. The October delegation delivered the materials to the school and facilitated professional development sessions, working with teachers to brainstorm ways to use them in the classroom. This STEM initiative is one of the many ways FZAY has directly impacted the school.



Family Engagement at Zahrat Al Yasmeen

During the delegation's visit, family members spoke about how eager their children are to attend, even during holidays or vacation. Parents emphasized their appreciation for the school's focus on both social-emotional growth and academics, noting that children learn to respect each other while feeling respected by the entire school staff. Families also said they feel heard and valued, and that their voices matter. These close home-school ties result in active parent involvement and strong communication which are especially critical given the ongoing safety challenges, including incursions by Israeli soldiers and the detention of family members.



These strong bonds between families and Zahrat Al Yasmeen staff enabled education to continue even as schools in the West Bank were closed due to the war.

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On April 13th, Zahrat Al Yasmeen re-opened its doors. In the first week, educators emphasized engaging students in joyful play and connection as they shared their fears of the daily bombings when they were sheltering at home.

Here are photos of the children's return to their school community:



Your generous contribution will allow ZAY to continue to fund a school that receives no government funding

The school:

- Graduated 100 children in just four years.
- Employs 7 trained teachers.
- Currently enrolls 78 students on temporary full scholarship due to the economic impact of military occupation and settler violence.
- Provides inclusive education, with 16% of its students identified as having disabilities since its founding.
- Delivers hands-on culturally responsive learning, including lessons in nutrition, cooking, and environmental awareness.
- Offers students one-on-one trauma support from teachers and therapists.
- Features a newly added play yard that reinforces the school's educational philosophy.

Yes! I will transform lives by giving monthly:

- ☐ \$20 Sensory toys to support a range of learning needs
- ☐ \$40 Books/educational materials
- ☐ \$50 Friends Circle - *unrestricted giving*
- ☐ \$75 Solidarity Circle - *unrestricted giving*
- ☐ \$100 Towards teachers' salaries
- ☐ \$170 per month to support one child's tuition for a year

Or choose your own monthly giving amount:

☐ \$ _____

Or make a one-time gift:

☐ \$ _____

*Thank you for supporting
Zahrat Al-Yasmeen Kindergarten*

You can contribute to Friends of ZAY in one of two ways:

- Use the QR code below:



- Mail a check to: 1for3, 58 N. Border Rd., Winchester MA 01890
In memo line, please write: Friends of ZAY

Thank you!

