

# The Princess Basma Centre

**T**he Princess Basma Centre for Disabled Children treats, rehabilitates and educates children with special needs (up to 15 years), supporting all those who are in need. Located in East Jerusalem, the centre serves children with different disabilities in the city, the West Bank and Gaza. In addition it offers temporary live-in facilities where mothers of disabled children can learn about effective care-giving techniques.

The centre is working with Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian institutions to better coordinate cerebral palsy research, and is leading the effort to improve the diagnosis of autism cases in the West Bank and Gaza. Most recently, the centre is providing artificial limbs and physical therapy services for children permanently maimed or wounded during the recent crisis in Gaza.

The Princess Basma Centre is now one of the main national referral and resource centres for the disabled population in Palestine.

The centre told us, *“Being in East Jerusalem has enabled us to enhance our professional standards to meet the Israeli requirements, and thus introduced us to the world of international research. It has meant an increase in the quality of the services we can provide and has supported our status as*

*a respected resource institution.”*

They go on to say, *“However, our location is in itself both a privilege and a challenge. But we have been able to expand and share our professional expertise with Palestinian community service providers, through continuous on-the-job training, workshops, seminars and courses.”*

They have also committed themselves to lead, mentor and facilitate the provision of specialised services for the increasing numbers of children who are diagnosed with autism.

Princess Basma began the process by helping to establish a National Committee for Autism in Palestine – training their staff on different skills and methods used to rehabilitate these children.

They started admitting such cases to the centre in early 2009 – and are committed to making a difference in their lives, the lives of their families, and within their communities.

The first autistic cases were admitted to the centre in February of this year. Hani and Rami are eight years old twin brothers and they have resided in a small village in the north of Ramallah with their mother, since the age of three – when they were diagnosed with autism. Their father left the family and emigrated abroad, leaving Hani and Rami with their 23 year old mother, who had to deal with their problems on her own.

Only recently has she found help, at Princess



*Small group work is a key part of the children's rehabilitation.*



*Swimming therapy is especially enjoyed.*



*Making artificial limbs at the Princess Basma Centre.*



Basma, where she can get professional assistance and guidance, and the support she so desperately needs.

The twins received intensive therapy and rehabilitation for a period of six weeks at the centre – during which time they showed signs of improvement, and they continue to improve in their cognitive functions. They communicate more effectively with each other, with their mother and with the therapists, and are becoming more independent and confident.

As well as working with the boys, the centre gave their mother training to gain skills and confidence, to ease her interaction with her sons at home.

They have now all left the centre but a special education school was identified near their village for them to attend. Staff from Princess Basma visited the school and provided the teachers there with specific instructions and advice on how to deal with Hani and Rami.

There is now a beacon of hope for Hani

and Rami (and their mother), as well as for the hundreds of other vulnerable and marginalised children, and their families, affected by autism in Palestine – and the Princess Basma Centre is proud to be

involved in that work.

**BibleLands are also proud to be involved in this work in Jerusalem and the West Bank, supporting and resourcing the Princess Basma Centre. ■**

**For more information about the Princess Basma Centre you can visit our website: [www.biblelands.org.uk/about\\_us/israel](http://www.biblelands.org.uk/about_us/israel).**

*Children from the deaf class.*

