

BibleLands

..... Overseas Partner Fact Sheet.....

Rawdat El Zuhur School



How it all started

Rawdat El Zuhur was founded by Elizabeth Nasir, a Christian social worker and daughter of a Palestinian clergyman, who was shocked to see so many homeless and unwanted girls wandering the streets of Jerusalem. She began a home for destitute girls in her own house, where they were able to learn such things as housekeeping, literacy, embroidery, religious education and music. There were 25 girls in the first home, some of whom are pictured, left.

Slowly the situation of the country changed and 15 years later, having felt that she had helped to alleviate the destitution, Elizabeth Nasir responded to the request of the girls' families, who felt the need for formal education. Not only was there an urgent need for Palestinian education for girls but for boys also, especially the under-privileged. As a result, the school of Rawdat El Zuhur was founded.

Elizabeth Nasir called the school Rawdat El Zuhur, meaning 'Garden of Flowers', because she wanted it to be a happy place where the children could grow and learn in safety.

Key facts

- Founded: 1952
- Location: Jerusalem, Holy Land
- First BibleLands grant: 1976
- BibleLands' Grant: £42,276 p.a.

Current Activities

The school has a maximum enrolment of 250 children, aged from 4 – 12 years. However, the security situation in Jerusalem makes it impossible for some students to travel from their homes to the school each day, so the current enrolment is around 230 children.

Many of the children are from low income families, so their school fees only cover a fraction of the actual cost of running the school. Rawdat el Zuhur relies heavily on donations to keep its doors open to these children.



Teachers emphasise learning as an enjoyable process and encourage extra-curricular activities that help develop students' skills and talents in this way. The school follows the government curriculum and languages include not only Arabic, but also English and French.

Rawdat El-Zuhur has always had a special emphasis on music. In the 1950s, Elizabeth Nasir used a manual record player and taught dancing, to help the girls overcome their previous sad experiences. Today, students can learn to play musical instruments including the zither and oud (*right*) and enjoy performances for special occasions such as Mothers' Day and end of year celebrations.



The school runs a joint annual summer camp with the Helen Keller Centre (BibleLands' school in East Jerusalem). This unique experience provides an opportunity for visually impaired and sighted children to enjoy a variety of activities together.

Each new child at Rawdat School is tested for dyslexia and other learning difficulties before they start, so that any remedial work can begin during the summer holidays prior to their first term at school. The school uses the services of the Spafford Children's Centre (another of BibleLands' Overseas Partners) for this, and for other special educational and medical needs.

The school has extended its work to include the whole family. Staff meet parents regularly and make frequent home visits, enabling the school to further support the children, their parents and the local community.



Rawdat El Zuhur school describes itself as "a haven for Palestinian children". In spite of the pain and devastation in the Middle East, the school continues to make every effort to rekindle the hope for justice and peace in the hearts of young children and their families, through its distinct methods of education.

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