

FRIENDSHIP AND TWINNING DURING COVID-19



**BRITAIN PALESTINE
FRIENDSHIP AND
TWINNING NETWORK**

TWINNINGWITHPALESTINE.NET



MAKE FRIENDS BUILD SOLIDARITY INSPIRE HOPE

It's been a year since we've been able to host our friends from Palestine and since we've been able to travel to see them. Despite the many challenges of the last twelve months, friendship and twinning groups have continued to be in touch, to build friendships, support projects, run events, and raise awareness, understanding and solidarity too. This resource is designed to offer some ideas for events, ways to be in touch, and inspiration as we head into year two of twinning and friendship in the time of Covid-19.

ONLINE TOOLS TO USE

These are all free to use if you have the internet, and you can pay for additional functionality if you need to.

- Zoom (up to 100 people free, for 40 minutes)
- Facebook calls and messenger
- Whatsapp groups
- Whatsapp video calls (up to 4 people)
- Skype
- Google hangouts

These can be used for messages, calls, group meetings and face to face events here in the UK and with friends in Palestine. If you have any problems using any of them but would like to know more please get in touch. Lots of BPFTN members have been using these over the last year so there is expertise to be shared!



DON'T FORGET GAZA...



For those of us in the UK the restrictions of the last year will eventually be lifted. We will be able to travel to Palestine again and see our friends in the West Bank. Some of them may also be able to travel too. For people in Gaza, the blockade will continue, with no end in sight. Remote friendship and twinning is really the only option for people there. We want to encourage more links and friendship with Gaza - some of our members have had links there previously and another is exploring building a link with a community there, as well as the one they have in the West Bank. We'd love to hear from you if you're interested in links with Gaza.

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IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES

Many of these activities have been done by BPFTN groups in the last year so if you want to organise something similar and would like to know more, [please get in touch](#) or ask a question in the [BPFTN Facebook group](#):

- Make use of your existing mailing lists: with permission, send reports, recorded events, photos and updates from Palestine, and opportunities to support groups via newsletters and well timed emails to people on your supporter list. Be mindful of not overloading people - a few well timed and full newsletters a year is better than writing for the sake of it more regularly.
- Art, food and music are still art, food and music: groups have sold Palestine related art, Christmas cards, Zaytoun food and Palestinian products such as Abuarlrous Soups from Hebron and Cross Stitch4Palestine, and had online events with Palestinian food and music at the heart of them or part of them - using video clips, live performances, recipes and stories. Children have taken part in remote painting projects and womens' groups and farmers from places in the UK and Palestine have connected over Zoom.
- Voices from Palestine: lots of groups have organised webinars with speakers from Palestine, either from their friendship and twinning group or community, or from other Palestinian experts to talk about specific topics. Palestian friends are always invited.
- Shared interest links between people: one group is exploring how to connect individuals from the UK and Palestine through their shared personal interests, such as gardening or music.
- Virtual tours: this could be on a big scale, with a tour and introduction to the whole of Palestine done remotely via videos, interviews, photos, and info, or you could do one just for your community or twinning and friendship link, to show people where they live what life is like for your Palestinian friends - all in partnership with them, of course, and vice versa, sending a video of your town, community or group.
- AGM and committee meetings: these can still happen, but online. If members have issues accessing or using online tools, there's help available, or you can use group phone calls. Invites to AGMs have been shared, meaning you can attend other BPFTN member groups AGMs to hear what they've been up to and say hello to friends.

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- Use the time to build your profile: lots of groups have used this last year to update or build their website, and social media pages, just like BPFTN has done! You can invite people to join or like your group and page and build a website using a free template.
- Quiz nights: the biggest lockdown trend in town! Plenty of online fundraising quizzes have taken place, with people paying a small fee to register.
- Pick a project: if you want something to focus online events on, and to do some fundraising too, then working with your community / group in Palestine to identify a practical project you can work on together, remotely, is a good way to build momentum. Groups have raised money for things like tree planting (oranges and olives), a domestic abuse project, schools in the communities they are linked with, PPE equipment, transportation and bins!
- Tree twinning: one group has organised for a tree in their two communities to be twinned symbolically, with a plaque to mark this in both places.
- Letter writing and messages of friendship and solidarity: continuing to be in touch with friends in Palestine is important - it doesn't have to be a big event, friendship in any way you can do it, is more important than ever.
- Calls to action, lobbying and advocacy: on top of Covid19 our friends in Palestine continue to live under military occupation, deprived of many of their human rights. Groups have continued to encourage members to write to MPs, sign petitions, and take part in other actions to support Palestinian human rights.
- Online parties: groups have had Christmas and birthday parties online sharing stories and festivities together with friends in the UK and Palestine.
- Build a new link! It's been done, in more than one place, this year, all remotely. Why not think about extending your friendships or reigniting them if they've gone quiet?





ADVANTAGES OF ONLINE FRIENDSHIP

Whilst many of us have been required to move our activities online because of Covid-19, and this doesn't come without its challenges, it's worth highlighting the potential benefits to this:

- It's easier to get people from Palestine involved - many people have working internet and phones they can use, or can access to be in touch with you.
- It levels the playing field - before maybe there might have been one or two Palestinians at an event occasionally. Now more of them can join you, every time.
- You can reach more people here - with lockdown in place, people are looking for online activities and something new and different.
- Affordability - not everyone can afford to travel to Palestine to meet friends and take part in friendship and twinning activities there, but most can afford to join a Zoom meeting, making this much more accessible to people here in the UK as well.
- Variety and sharing audiences - people in friendship and twinning groups have been able to join other member groups activities here in the UK, learning and participating in online events in a way that would be less likely if events were in person.



If you have ideas, comments, things to add, requests for help or anything else - please get in touch with us: palestinetwinning@yahoo.com

TIPS AND TRICKS...

- If you're doing an event with lots of friends in Palestine, don't forget translation might be needed, and take account of time differences
- Get people to register for events in advance, with the name on their online account, so you can keep an eye on the guest list, numbers, and manage risk of detractors
- With people's permissions, record events and put them on your website / social media or email them round to supporters - if people can't be there live, they can always listen afterwards
- For a big online event, assign one or two people the role of running the technical side of things - this person should be different to the host of the event itself - and have strict timings agreed in advance which you stick to (not unlike an in person event).
- For smaller online meetings and conversations, have cameras on if possible for some face to face time