

Palestine Cafe Utrecht
Opdrachtbrief

Diversity and inclusion department
Municipality of Utrecht
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Palestine Cafe Utrecht Opdrachtbrief

1 Overview of Palestine Cafe Utrecht

Stichting Palestine Café Utrecht originated as a grassroots community group committed to standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people. We come together across different backgrounds to build a supportive community and educate on Palestine and Palestinian culture.

We organize events to create space for learning, connection and collective care. These are varied in nature, ranging from workshops to dinners, film screenings, cultural events, storytelling nights and much more. Founded in February 2024, in the wake of the escalated genocide in Gaza, Palestine Cafe provides a space for those who wish to come together and stand with Palestine. Through our projects and events, we aim to counter erasure and build a stronger culture of informed and active solidarity, towards Palestine and the broader Palestinian diaspora. We do this by building a community rooted in care and solidarity, creating educational spaces which centre Palestinian voices and deepen collective understanding, providing a safer space for Palestinians to gather and support each other, and to celebrate and share Palestinian culture as an expression of identity, resistance and joy.

We are continuing to build and nurture this community, to provide a space of support for Palestinians and those standing in solidarity with Palestine in Utrecht.

2 Development of this Opdracht application

This application is the result of ongoing conversations between members of the Palestinian community and the municipality, about the necessity of greater support since the start of the genocide in Gaza. The Palestinian community at large felt they were not well represented in the municipality and there was a call for greater attention to and support for them, both politically and financially. Linda Voortman, alderwoman for diversity and inclusion, acknowledged these calls and wished to work towards providing a safer space for Palestinians in the city. These discussions also took place within the context of the wider development of diversity and inclusion policies in the Utrecht municipality. More specifically, with the “Beleidsnota Inclusie en Diversiteit 2024-2033”, Utrecht is working towards being a city that stands for equality, justice and human rights. Within this policy framework, the municipality has also called for stronger partnerships with civil society organisations, particularly those representing minority groups. It is at this junction that the relevance of collaborations with Palestine Cafe was brought into discussion.

The recognition of the need for a stronger line of communication between the municipality and the Palestinian community, as well as the need for clearer and more developed avenues of support, led to the opening up of conversations with Palestine Cafe Utrecht and the municipality. Our role as a civil society organisation, doing work for and around Palestine, led the municipality to recognise the possibility of connecting with our organisation. This occurred most specifically, with the direct line of conversation opened up between Palestine Cafe and the municipality, principally the diversity and inclusion department. Through these conversations with ^{5.1.2.e} and the diversity and inclusion team we recognised the different possibilities for how the municipality can possibly support our work, for and with, the Palestinian community in Utrecht.

It is from these discussions that we have outlined this Opdracht brief. As per our conversations with the municipality, we wish to keep providing different events and initiatives, as well as to expand the reach of these projects around the city.

3 Project themes 2026-2027

In this section, we will outline what types of projects we wish to run in the year 2026-2027 and how these can help us to address our overall organisational aims, as stated in section 1. These projects broadly fall under five main focus areas, with varied events occurring within the projects themselves. These five categories are: Palestinian art, culture and heritage; community support for Palestinians in Utrecht; educational events about Palestinian history, culture and political realities; community meeting spaces for Palestinians and Arabic speakers; community gatherings and memorials.

Firstly, this coming year, we wish to further develop projects and events which platform ***Palestinian art, culture and heritage***. For us, this is an important project focus, given the role of art, culture and heritage in bringing the Palestinian community together around shared practices, experiences and histories and providing a space for this in Utrecht. Additionally, through organising such cultural projects, we are also able to increase the visibility of Palestinian culture and to share this with other communities based in Utrecht. This would particularly be the case with hosting art and cultural exhibitions in different spaces around the city, to share different aspects of Palestinian history and culture with a wider audience. We will have four projects under this theme, namely two exhibitions: “HeART of Gaza” (section 4.1.1) and “Palestine History Tapestry” (section 4.1.2), as well as Tatreez (section 4.1.3) and Hakawati night (section 4.1.4).

Secondly, we wish to provide ***community support for Palestinians in Utrecht***. The primary focus of this project will be to support Palestinian newcomers in the city of Utrecht and the Netherlands more broadly. This will focus on different avenues of support, including psychological support, legal advice, how to access housing, and more generally how to navigate the Dutch healthcare and education systems. Having such a focus will allow us to provide more direct material support in the form of resources and a support network for the Palestinian community. We will have one project to address this focus area, namely, Palestine community support (section 4.2.1).

Thirdly, we hope to keep developing spaces of intercultural awareness and connection, through hosting various ***educational events about Palestinian history, culture and political realities***. This project's focus will enable us to provide spaces of education, which can build and encourage awareness about Palestine and Palestinian society. In this, we will discuss historical and contemporary social and political realities, from an intersectional perspective. We will do this through various events throughout the year, however, the ones most important within this project overview are film screenings (section 4.3.1) and the Palestine Queer Cinema event (section 4.3.2).

Fourthly, we wish to also provide ***community meeting spaces for Palestinians and Arabic speakers*** more broadly, to be able to share in community together. We feel this is a necessary project focus, given the possibility to allow for further community building and safer spaces for Palestinians and Arabic-speakers in Utrecht. This will allow for stronger connections and communication to build across these communities, offering new and developed relationships and support systems. The projects included in this focus area are the Arabic-speaking community events (section 4.4).

Finally, we wish to keep hosting larger *community gatherings and memorials*, through which the Palestinian community and those who wish to stand in solidarity, are able to gather, grieve and be together, on societally significant days for Palestine and Palestinians. The event we will host with this focus is Nakba Day (section 4.5.1).

4 Project plan 2026-2027

This section outlines an overview of each project being run through the year 2026-2027, as organised by the five key themes.

4.1 *Palestinian art, culture and heritage.*

4.1.1 HeART of Gaza

[HeART of GAZA: Children's Art from the Genocide](#) is a travelling exhibition project that displays drawings made by children from Gaza, along with their stories. The project originated as a collaboration between ^{5.1.2.e} and ^{5.1.2.e} in Gaza and Ireland respectively, and has developed into a decentralized fundraising campaign across different locations worldwide. The proceeds of the fundraising continue to support “The Artist’s Tent”, a children’s art space in Deir al Balah, Gaza, which ^{5.1.2.e} and his team set up.

We are hosting an opening event of a new exhibition on the 8th of May 2026 in “Buurtcentrum De Dreef”, Utrecht Overvecht, which will be displayed for a time of 6 months. During that time we will host one drawing workshop together with social workers from the neighbourhood center, that addresses families and children in Overvecht. We are using the network of the neighbourhood center to reach out to the community in Overvecht and establish relationships with people of a wider audience and different spaces that are part of the cultural fabric of Utrecht.

We will reach out to two more neighbourhood centers from ‘Dock’ Utrecht in other parts of the city (for example Lunetten, Kanaleneiland or Leidsche-Rijn), in 2026/2027, with the aim to display the exhibition there as well. During the respective exhibition periods of a few months, in both neighbourhood centres, we will host an opening event and one additional workshop per space, for example, a children's drawing workshop or community dinner and discussion.

4.1.2 Palestine History Tapestry

As a foundation, we want to create space for the [Palestine History Tapestry](#) by giving more visibility to Palestinian artistry and embroidery and the people behind it. The Palestine History Tapestry is a project in support of women’s work and livelihoods, through the creation of embroidered tapestries that teach about Palestinian history. Embroidery is an important part of Palestinian culture and identity, and the tapestries produced in the Palestine History Project carries stories and traditions that deserve to be shared.

We will exhibit the tapestries in one space in Utrecht, where they can be exhibited for a period of a few months. Possible spaces for this exhibition are the Stadhuis Utrecht, ZIMHC Theater Stefanus, or other cultural spaces. We will host one opening event at the start of the exhibition, in which we can explain the project, the artwork and the histories it hopes to share. The preparations for this project start in August 2026 and the opening will therefore most likely take place in winter 2026/27.

4.1.3 Tatreez

We organize Tatreez workshops to celebrate and preserve Palestinian cultural heritage. Tatreez is traditional Palestinian embroidery, and carries a rich history and has been passed down through generations as a form of cultural expression and identity.

By bringing people together to learn and practice this craft, we want to create a space for connection and dialogue through art. The workshops are also a way to make Palestinian art more visible within our communities, showing that culture is a meaningful way to express and share solidarity. We will organise two Tatreez workshops in 2026/2027, one in October 2026 and one in February 2027. These workshops will be in collaboration with other creative initiatives and held in Moira Expo.

4.1.4 Hakawati night

A Hakawati night is a traditional storytelling gathering, rooted in an ancient Palestinian tradition where communities come together to share and listen to stories. It is a living tradition that brings individual Palestinian voices and experiences to life, from the past to the present.

By organizing these storytelling evenings, we want to create space for both ancient and current Palestinian stories to be heard. It is a way of understanding the daily lives and experiences of individuals, and a natural and human way of sharing culture and history with one another. We will organise one storytelling event, in November 2026. This event will be held in either BAK basecamp or Wishing Well West, depending on their availability.

4.2 *Community support for Palestinians in Utrecht.*

4.2.1 Palestinian community support

The primary focus of this project is to support Palestinian newcomers in the city of Utrecht and the Netherlands more broadly. We wish to create spaces through which they are able to more directly access support and advice, that help in their arrival in the Netherlands. This will initially start with discussion circles, whereby we seek to understand the primary needs of the community, and thus, adjust the following events accordingly. The project will include offering psychological and emotional support, through making connections with professionals in the field, organising events to provide more direct advice on how to navigate the Dutch education and healthcare system and how to access housing.

We will create two information booklets to support these aims: one focused on navigating Dutch social services, including practical step-by-step information on accessing health care, education and housing, and the second one focused on emotional support and socio-cultural wellbeing, including professional and community resources. We will host 3-5 events throughout the year, depending on the demand, we predict these to occur in September 2026, December 2026 and March 2027. These events will provide a discussion on needs, as well as sign-post to relevant initiatives, institutions and community-led resources. These will be held in community centres in different areas of the city, such as in the Centre, Lombok, Overvecht, this is to make the events more readily available to different people. The booklets will be made available during the events and in our meeting space, and we will also distribute them to other relevant groups and spaces in Utrecht to broaden their reach.

4.3 Educational events about Palestinian history, culture and political realities

4.3.1 Film screenings and educational events

We organize these programs because we believe that culture and education are important ways to learn about Palestinian history, identity, and daily life. The films and educational events share perspectives that are rarely seen in mainstream media, helping to create a better informed and more inclusive society. By coming together to watch, listen, and talk, we want to encourage understanding and open conversation within our communities. Film and education are effective ways to connect people and help them learn about the experiences of others in a meaningful way.

Our educational program takes place alongside the film screening in the form of lectures and discussions, which offer background information on Palestinian culture and history, and provide space for an open conversation about current events and developments in Palestinian society. We will organise two educational film screenings in 2026/2027, one in autumn 2026 and one in spring 2027. One of these screenings will be held in Bak Basecamp, in their large auditorium. The other will be a smaller community event held in Moira expo.

4.3.2 Palestine Queer Cinema

Palestine Queer Cinema is an annual film screening event showing a selection of short films by filmmakers committed to queer liberation and in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The films are pre-selected and supplemented by artist Q&A's by the coordinators of [Queer Cinema for Palestine](#), and subsequently, hosts around the world organise their independent screening events during Pride Month in June. The campaign further supports artists and production companies that boycott the TLVFest, a film festival that actively facilitates Israeli Pinkwashing.

With our screening in Utrecht, which will take place on June 27th, at BAK basecamp, we hope to platform the voices of queer Palestinians and stand against the occupation's weaponization of queer rights. We further see this event as an occasion to strengthen our connection with the wider LGBTQIA+ community in Utrecht and give a stage to upcoming poets and storytellers committed to queer and Palestinian liberation to share their art with us.

4.4 Community meeting spaces for Palestinians and Arabic speakers

4.4.1 Arabic nights

An evening dedicated to bringing Arabic speakers together through their shared language. Language is an important part of cultural identity, and these evenings create a welcoming space where people can connect, share stories, and feel at home in their own language.

By organizing these nights, we want to celebrate the Arabic language as a living part of Palestinian and broader Arab culture, and to strengthen the sense of community among Arabic speakers within our city. We will organise two Arabic nights in 2026/2027, one in June 2026 and one in September 2026. These will most likely be held in Moira expo, which will provide a more regular community meeting time and space for Arabic speakers.

4.5 Community gatherings and memorials

4.5.1 Nakba Day

We organize an annual Nakba Memorial to remember the loss of Palestinian lives and the displacement of Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes and country in 1948. By marking this day in a visible and public way, we want to make this history accessible to everyone in our community and beyond.

The memorial is a moment to stand still, mourn, and show respect. Around the commemoration, we also create space for speakers to share their perspectives and experiences. In this way, the program combines mourning, education, and reflection. Through this memorial, we hope to contribute to a broader awareness of Palestinian history and to support the recognition of Palestinians' right to return to their homes.

This year, the Nakba Day Memorial will take place on 15th May 2026 at Domplein, Utrecht, in collaboration with Utrecht for Palestine and Utrecht Medics for Gaza. The event itself will include a wreath-laying memorial, speeches, artistic performances, and an information stand.

5 Financial plan description and overview

The attached spreadsheet outlines our financial plan for projects running within the year 2026-2027. This includes the overall costs we expect to make, the internal organisational costs, and the cost breakdown per project (in this order on the spreadsheet tabs).

The financial overview per project can include multiple recurring events for that project. For projects with multiple events, we have clarified in section 4 and in the chart below, how many versions of the event we wish to run and in which timeframe. This plan presents a breakdown of the costs for these projects through the use of the following categories: venue and logistics, guests/workers compensation, materials, transport expenses, food and drinks, volunteer compensation, and other expenses. For projects with multiple events, the costs are already multiplied and include the full year's spending (see tab 1 in the Opdracht spreadsheet).

Opdracht project planning

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