

EXPANDING ACCESS TO EYE CARE IN THE WEST BANK

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and special news from
the SJEHG community

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*CEO Update:
Achieving remarkable milestones across the Group*



**St John of Jerusalem
Eye Hospital Group**

JERUSALEM SCENE

Spring 2025
Treatment for all, regardless of
ethnicity, religion, or ability to pay



Sir Andrew Cash OBE KStJ, Chair SJEHG, cuts the ribbon at the opening ceremony for the new Nablus Day Hospital

CONTENTS

3	CEO UPDATE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES	16	SAVING SIGHT BANQUET AT MANSION HOUSE: A NIGHT OF SUPPORT AND CELEBRATION
4	EXPANDING ACCESS TO EYE CARE IN THE NORTHERN WEST BANK	17	CELEBRATING A DECADE OF POSTGRADUATE PROGRESS AT SJEHG: THE SOA
8	ACROSS THE WEST BANK: NEWS FROM SJEHG HOSPITALS AND CLINICS	18	COMMUNITY NEWS
10	VISION OF HOPE: GAZA HOSPITAL REOPENS AND EYE SURGERIES RESUME DESPITE DEVASTATION	20	ACCOLADES AND AWARDS
12	PATIENT SUCCESS STORIES	21	LEGACIES AND OBITUARIES
14	STAFF NEWS	22	MERCHANDISE
		23	ORDER FORM



**YOUR SUPPORT
KEEPS OUR VITAL
SIGHT-SAVING
SERVICES RUNNING**

CEO UPDATE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

DR AHMAD MA'ALI KStJ, PhD, MPH, BSN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Welcome to the Spring edition of Jerusalem Scene! Since my last update in November 2024, St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group has continued to make remarkable progress - despite ongoing challenges.

In 2024, the Hospital Group set a new record for service delivery, providing eye care to over 175,000 patients. This extraordinary milestone stands as a testament to the dedication of our teams and the resilience of those we serve.

The Gaza war has now entered its twentieth month, resulting in a dire humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless, we have continued our emergency medical intervention and treated more than 30,000 patients in Gaza in 2024. We have also recently completed renovations of the hospital's ground floor, which will enable us to re-establish our service provision.

Another mega achievement has been the successful re-establishment of our surgical services in partnership with Al Quds Hospital in Gaza City, making us currently the only provider of retinal surgery in Gaza. You can find more updates on Gaza page 10.

We continue to pray for an end to all hostilities so that we may fully restore our services to pre-war levels and play our part in rebuilding Gaza's devastated healthcare system and health infrastructure.

As for the Jerusalem Hospital, we have treated more patients than ever before and continue to advance our service provisions at the Kufr Aqab Centre, improving access for patients who otherwise would not have

been able to reach the Jerusalem Hospital.

In Hebron, the Hospital has also reported record numbers, including the undertaking of major sight saving surgery. We have plans to expand our surgical work to include paediatric surgery which will again enhance patients' access to essential services.

As we expand our reach to patients in need, the Hospital Group has remained committed to maintaining the quality of its services and as a result we have prepared our Hebron Hospital for the forthcoming Joint Commission International accreditation (the global gold standard for healthcare). Meanwhile, our Jerusalem Hospital, first accredited in 2013, is set to undergo its fifth JCI accreditation review in June 2025.

Another landmark achievement this year was the opening of our new Nablus Day Hospital on 16th March 2025. Since then, the hospital has already provided care to over 2,500 patients. We will soon begin surgical procedures to address the backlog of cases from the northern districts. You can learn more about the Nablus Hospital on page 4.

Our Child Vision Screening Programme, launched in October 2023, is now fully supported by the St John Priory in the USA, which generously provided additional funding in February 2025 to extend the project. The programme plays a vital role in screening the vision of both preschool and school-aged children. So far this year, 25,000 children have been screened, with 2,200 referred to the Hospital Group for further treatment, including surgery.

A significant recent advancement is the introduction of an afternoon clinic at the Jerusalem Hospital - a first-of-its-kind service for local residents. Currently operating two days a week, the clinic has been well received and is expected to expand to daily afternoon sessions in the near future.

The achievements of such remarkable milestones have been made possible thanks to the generous support we have received from our global partners. We are most grateful for the heartfelt generosity of so many of our loyal supporters and friends.

I very much look forward to sharing further updates with you in the next edition of our Jerusalem Scene.

Eye care provided to over
175,000
patients in 2024

Nablus Day Hospital has
provided care to over
2,500
patients since
16th March 2025

25,000
children screened
so far this year



EXPANDING ACCESS TO EYE CARE IN THE NORTHERN WEST BANK

SJEHG OPENS NEW DAY CARE HOSPITAL IN NABLUS

Dr Ahmad Ma'ali (centre) with, L-R, Guest at the new Nablus Hospital opening ceremony; Hiba Al Khaleel, Optometrist; Haneen Shehab, Records Office Clerk and Rula Absa, Records Office Clerk

On Sunday 16th March, the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) proudly opened its newest day care hospital in the city of Nablus, the commercial and cultural hub of the northern West Bank. Open five days a week from 7am to 3pm, the hospital brings much-needed surgical and specialist services to over 1.2 million people across the six northern governorates of Nablus, Salfit, Qalqiliya, Tulkarm, Jenin and Tubas.

This fully accessible, state-of-the-art facility marks a major milestone in SJEHG's mission to deliver high quality, charitable and accessible eye care to all, regardless of background, religion or ability to pay.

SJEHG's CEO says, "Establishing a surgical day hospital in Nablus is a landmark achievement for our organisation. For many, this is the first time world-class charitable eye care is available close to home. This facility is not just a new hospital - it is a bold step towards closing the gap in health inequality in the region and delivering on our philosophy of taking quality eye care to those who cannot reach us."

Since opening, the Nablus hospital has treated over 2,500 patients - including over 450 children. Plans are now underway to expand the range of services, moving from general clinics to cataract surgery and ultimately offering a full spectrum of ophthalmic surgeries.

Designed and equipped in line with Joint Commission International (JCI) standards, the hospital offers a range of general and subspecialty services including Vitreoretinal, Glaucoma, Cornea, Paediatric Ophthalmology and Oculoplastic clinics. The project has been in planning for almost two years and reflects SJEHG's long term commitment to expanding sustainable, local eye care provision across the region.

Expanding Access to Eye Care in the Northern West Bank

Bringing the hospital to life wasn't without its logistical challenges - including security concerns and political unrest preventing contractors from reaching the site as well as supply chain disruptions that delayed the arrival of imported equipment - but thanks to the tireless efforts of SJEHG's Facilities Manager Ahmad Awadallah and his team, it became a reality.

The opening was marked by a special ceremony on Saturday 10th May, attended by SJEHG's Chair, Sir Andrew Cash KStJ; Order Hospitalier, Mr David Verity KStJ; Executive Head of the UK Office, Harriet Wheeler; and other key supporters, partners, and local dignitaries. Guests included Ms. Bethany Randle, the Australian Representative to the Palestinian Authority; Nigel Heath, US Prior; Rev'd Niall Johnston of the Knights Templar; the Governor of Nablus district and Mayor of the city; as well as representatives from local healthcare providers and NGOs.

Guests toured the new facilities and met the dedicated team of doctors, nurses, and administrators who will be delivering care on-site. The Nablus Hospital is led by our experienced Anabta team, under the direction of Dr Islam Al Hashash, Medical Lead, and Hani Abualhaija, Nurse Manager. The team comprises 16 healthcare professionals, including five nurses, three doctors, three optometrists, as well as an accountant, two clerks, a driver, and a cleaner.

Speaking at the event, Sir Andrew Cash said a few words before officially cutting the ribbon to mark the opening.

This remarkable achievement would not have been possible without the generosity of our donors and the invaluable support of our partners. Special thanks go to the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, The Fred Hollows Foundation, The David & Molly Pyott Foundation, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the St John Priory in the USA, and the Knights Templar Benevolent Fund, whose belief in our mission helped bring this project to life.



SJEHG staff and supporters at the opening ceremony for the new Nablus Hospital



Guests tour the new Nablus Hospital facilities



Nablus Hospital plaque



Nablus Hospital facilities



Nablus Hospital facilities



Nablus Hospital facilities



“As Chair, I am more convinced than ever that our mission is vital...”

A First-Person Reflection by Sir Andrew Cash KStJ, Chair of SJEHG

Standing at the opening of our new hospital in Nablus, I felt a profound sense of pride - not just in the building itself, but in the extraordinary people who made it possible. In all my time as Chair, I don't think I have ever felt such a powerful sense of what this organisation stands for: resilience, compassion, and an unshakeable commitment to those we serve.

This new facility is far more than bricks and mortar; it stands as a symbol of hope and progress - a tangible promise that, in this time of immense need in the Holy Land, high-quality charitable eye care will continue to reach those who need it most, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or ability to pay.

It was deeply moving to meet the

staff - many of whom have served with us for years - and see their pride in this state-of-the-art space. The warmth with which the local community welcomed us reminded me once again why our work here matters so much.

In speaking with our Head Nurse, Hani Abualhaija - a father of six who lives in the Jenin refugee camp - I was deeply moved by his story. Hani began his journey with us in 2002 as an ophthalmic nurse and, over the past 23 years, has trained across multiple disciplines, steadily rising through the ranks. From inpatient wards and surgical theatres to outreach and management, he has dedicated his career to serving his community. After leading the team in Anabta for many years, he now heads our staff in Nablus. He told me that when he started, he never imagined something like this would be possible - a modern, fully equipped hospital serving

the north of the West Bank.

Hani's story is just one among many, but it encapsulates the spirit of St John: a dedication that spans decades, transforms communities, and changes lives.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the extraordinary generosity of our donors and partners. Your support has not only enabled us to move our services to Nablus but has also helped us elevate the standard of care we can provide.

As Chair, I am more convinced than ever that our mission is vital - and that, even in the face of ongoing challenges, we are making tangible, lasting change.

Thank you for standing with us.

Andrew Cash

Chair, St John of Jerusalem Eye
Hospital Group

In the first quarter
of 2025 alone, over
44,000
outpatients were treated –
40% of them children.



ACROSS THE WEST BANK: NEWS FROM SJEHG HOSPITALS AND CLINICS

Young beneficiary of the Child Vision Screening Programme

Caring for a Population of 3.7 million

Across Jerusalem and the West Bank, SJEHG's network of hospitals and clinics continue to deliver vital eye care services to a population of around 3.7 million people.

Following an overall decline in 2024 due to the closure of our Gaza Hospital, surgical activity is now on the rise - up 24% compared to the same period last year. Notably, major operations for children have increased by an impressive 60%.

A Shift towards Community Care

Reflecting global best practice and local needs, SJEHG continues to evolve its model of care – prioritising outpatient and community-based services wherever possible. This helps reduce the burden on inpatient facilities while bringing care closer to those who need it most.

Jerusalem Hospital

At our flagship hospital in East Jerusalem, outpatient numbers are up by nearly 8% compared to early 2024. Surgical activity is also on the rise, with a 19% increase in major surgeries and a 28% jump in cataract operations.

To help manage demand, we've introduced twice weekly afternoon general clinics. These extra sessions are designed to ease the morning rush and give Jerusalemites more flexibility in accessing the care they need. We'll look to expand these afternoon clinics further as we continue to assess patient needs.

Hebron Hospital

Hebron Hospital continues to thrive, with a 5% rise in outpatient visits and a 33% increase in cataract surgeries so far this year.

We're now exploring the introduction of general anaesthesia on-site which would allow us to offer paediatric and other specialist services locally – saving families the trip to Jerusalem and making access to care faster, easier, and less stressful for many.

Kufr Aqab Clinic

Since opening in 2022, our Kufr Aqab clinic has rapidly become a vital access point for patients who cannot reach Jerusalem. In the first quarter of 2025, we treated over 2,800 patients – up 3% from the same period last year.

Thanks to continued demand, the centre has already doubled in size. Plans are now underway to expand again, with an additional 100 square metres of clinical space due to be added by June. The upgraded facility will allow for more subspecialty clinics, including paediatrics.

Muristan Screening Services

Reopened last year, our clinic in Jerusalem's Old City offers weekly screening services every Wednesday. Designed for residents, particularly the elderly and shopkeepers, this service is a lifeline for those who may struggle to travel to the main hospital.

West Bank Screening Services

SJEHG's two mobile teams now cover more than 400 locations across the West Bank. One van operates from Jerusalem, serving central and southern areas, while the other is based in Nablus and covers the north. Teams typically see around 70 people per session.

The numbers speak for themselves: in 2024, mobile outreach treated over 53,000 people – a 156% increase from 2023. Nearly half were children, thanks to the Child Vision Screening Programme launched last year. Around 9,000 patients were referred to hospital for further treatment.



Members of the community outreach team



Eye examination, Kufr Aqab Clinic



Gaza Hospital Staff, May 2025

Twenty months after the conflict began, life in Gaza remains unimaginably hard. With the collapse of the ceasefire agreement on the 17th of March 2025, there have been renewed land incursions by the Israeli army in the northern and southern regions of Gaza with intensified air strikes. Tragically, around 1,500 people have lost their lives since the escalation of hostilities. Additionally, the closure of all border crossings by the Israeli authorities has led to a severe humanitarian crisis, with critical shortages of food, fuel and medical supplies across Gaza.

Despite these challenges, our dedicated teams remain steadfast in providing primary eye care under the most difficult of circumstances. Currently, 28 members of our staff are actively providing care, and are safe and unharmed. Meanwhile, seven team members remain in Egypt, with their return to Gaza unlikely until a stable and long-lasting ceasefire.

Since the outbreak of the war, our dedicated teams have provided eye care services to over
45,000 PATIENTS

Phase 1 of our Medical Response Plan in Gaza began in April 2024 with stations across northern, central, and southern Gaza providing primary eye care, in partnership with UNRWA, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), and the WHO.

Services offered include comprehensive eye exams, treatment for infections and chronic conditions such as glaucoma, management of other eye diseases, and essential public health screenings like blood pressure and glucose monitoring.

Phase 2 launched in late September 2024, focusing on the treatment of diabetic retinopathy - the leading cause of blindness for those over 50 in Gaza. This logistically challenging phase involves administering Avastin injections to the back of the eye alongside laser therapy.

The greatest challenge lies in stabilising ophthalmic patients who have had limited access to healthcare for over a year.

We are now in Phase 3 of our Plan, focussing on rehabilitating the SJEHG Gaza Hospital and restoring surgical services. There have been some significant developments in this phase over the past few months - read on to learn more.

Renovation of Gaza Hospital

Our Gaza Hospital officially reopened on Saturday 10th May, after basic renovations were completed on the ground floor of the building. The Gaza Hospital is aiming to operate 5 days a week with two clinics – one general, and one for diabetes and other subspecialty services.

However, the renovation process faced significant challenges – a shortage of building supplies in Gaza made materials both scarce and very expensive. For example, broken windows in the outpatient clinic have had to be temporarily replaced with nylon, as glass is virtually impossible to obtain locally. The Hospital's reopening was also delayed due to difficulties sourcing a generator to power the clinic. Despite these challenges, the staff in Gaza are proud and pleased to be able to provide vital services to those who need them most.



Gaza Hospital manager Walid Shaqura and nurse in the newly refurbished Gaza Hospital, May 2025



Refurbished Gaza Hospital desk and waiting room, May 2025



Gaza Hospital desk and waiting room prior to renovations, November 2024

Restarting Surgical Services

After a long period of interruption, our teams performed the first major eye surgery in Gaza on the 30th of April 2025. Working with Al Quds Hospital, and in partnership with the PRCS, this milestone marks a significant step forward.

SJEHG CEO Dr Ahmad Ma'ali shared his thoughts on this fantastic new development:

“Since the start of the war, retinal surgery has not been available in the Gaza Strip and many patients who require urgent retinal procedures – including removal of intra-ocular foreign bodies (shrapnel), repair of severe ocular trauma and those who have severe diabetic related retinal diseases – have gone untreated, resulting in permanent loss of their vision.

“To embark on such an ambitious initiative is considered

a mega achievement despite all the difficulties and extremely challenging circumstances under which our teams operate. We anticipate up to 10 surgeries will be performed every week in Gaza.

“Thank you to our dedicated team of doctors and nurses who continue to give hope to the neediest people in the Holy Land.”



First VR surgery in Gaza, April 2025



Walid Shaqura, Gaza Hospital Manager

Life in a Warzone

Despite some fantastic developments in our ability to provide eye care in Gaza, daily life for both patients and staff remains precarious. Many of our team members have been displaced multiple times, including Gaza Hospital Manager Walid Shaqura: “I’m currently living in the middle of Gaza, which is considered the safest place for now. In the north and east of the Strip, the situation is critical. Every minute we hear the sound of heavy bombardment all around us.”

Walid has managed to make some partial repairs to his own home, but, as we found with rebuilding the Hospital, the raw materials simply aren’t available or are prohibitively expensive. Reflecting on the extent of the damage, Walid says:

“No home in the Strip has escaped from the attacks, all require partial or total reconstruction. And, even if we rebuild, there is no guarantee the buildings will survive future attacks.”

Along with widespread destruction of buildings and essential services, one of the most pressing issues facing Gazans is starvation. With border closures and ongoing blockades, food supplies in Gaza are extremely limited and expensive. According to UN reports from April 2025, over 1.2 million people – over half the population – are facing acute hunger, and 30% are experiencing “catastrophic food insecurity”, the highest level of hunger recognised globally. This crisis, of course, deeply affects our staff and patients, something that Walid is keen to emphasise:

“We must be optimistic that the war will end soon. Everyday there is more than 50 fatalities, many are women and children, in addition to the absence of food.

“We need the world to know how much we are suffering. Thank you all for your continued support and efforts to help minimise this suffering.”

Help Walid and the team
to continue delivering
essential eye care
services by donating now:



PATIENT SUCCESS STORIES



Meet Zakieh Janazreh

Zakieh Janazreh, a 66-year-old widow from Hebron, noticed her vision growing blurry, making everyday tasks increasingly difficult. Concerned, she visited St. John Eye Hospital in Hebron, where she was diagnosed with cataracts. She was scheduled for her first cataract removal surgery on her left eye at the Group's main hospital in Jerusalem.

Zakieh's journey wasn't an easy one. She relies on her eldest son, who is battling cancer, for support. Despite his own health challenges, including ongoing chemotherapy sessions, he accompanied his mother from Hebron to Jerusalem to ensure she received the care she needed.

Recognising Zakieh's

"Thank you for not only improving my sight but also supporting me and my family when we needed it the most."

difficult circumstances, SJEHG stepped in to cover the cost of her second surgery on her right eye through the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) project, easing the financial burden on her and her family during an already challenging time.

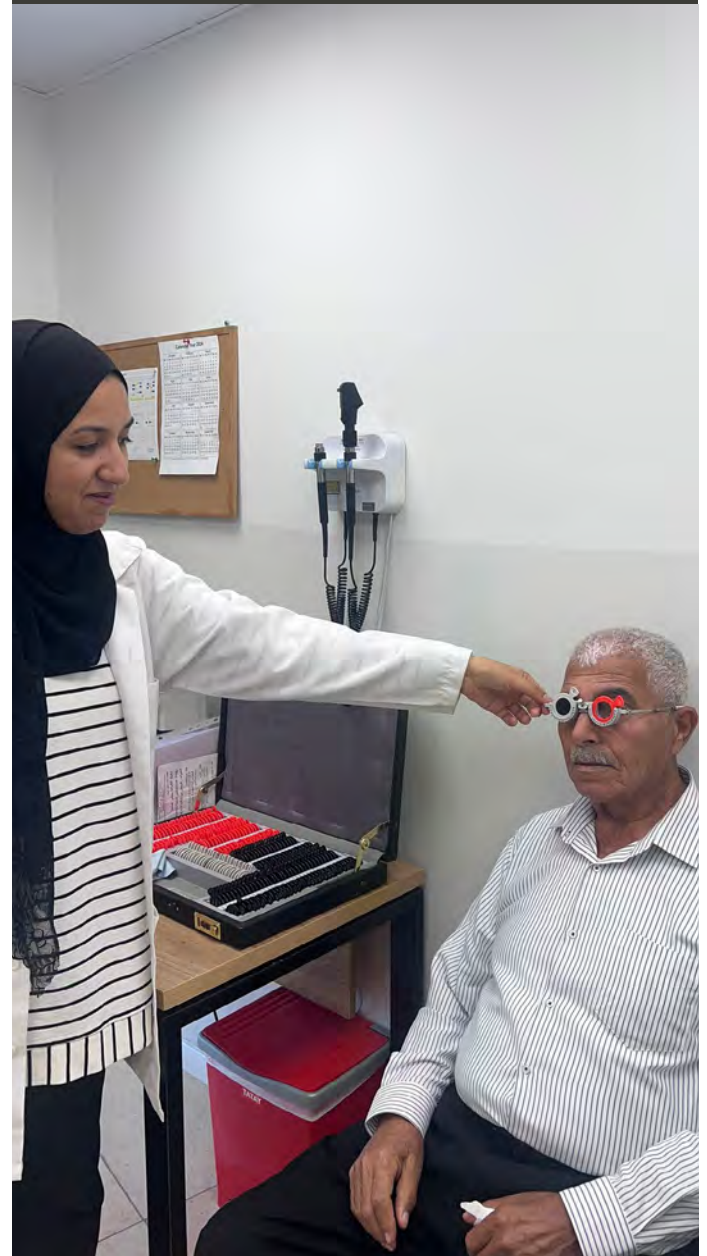
Today, with clear vision restored in both eyes, Zakieh expressed heartfelt gratitude to St. John Eye Hospital and the QFFD, saying, "Thank you for not only improving my sight but also supporting me and my family when we needed it the most."

Meet Sameer Bshari

Sameer Bshari, a 77-year-old retired car mechanic from Ramallah, had struggled with poor vision for the past year and a half due to cataracts, a condition that developed alongside his diabetes.

With basic and secondary education, he completed a diploma in car mechanics at the Lutheran Union, while his wife, also educated to a similar level, remains unemployed. Together, they raised three sons and a daughter.

Recently, Sameer underwent cataract surgery, an experience he described with deep gratitude. He praised the hospital staff for their kindness and expressed appreciation for the hospital's support in covering part of the surgery cost, sharing that it felt like they had "saved his life and his sight."





Meet Hasan Mohammad Ali Ishtaiwi

Hasan Mohammad Ali Ishtaiwi, a 54-year-old taxi driver, resides in the town of Bet Eiba near Nablus. His ability to navigate the roads safely is essential for earning a living and supporting his family of four.

However, as his vision began to deteriorate due to cataracts, life became increasingly difficult. Driving particularly became challenging, and Hasan feared he might lose his ability to provide for his loved ones.

Seeking help, Hasan turned to the St. John Eye Hospital clinic in Anabta. There, he was diagnosed with cataracts in his right eye. He was referred to the main hospital in Jerusalem where he underwent a successful surgery to remove cataracts

with the cost generously covered by the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD).

Following the procedure, Hasan experienced a significant improvement in his vision. "I'm very happy to follow up at St. John Eye Hospital. The services and team are excellent," Hasan says. Now, he can drive his taxi confidently, even at night, ensuring his family's livelihood is secure.

Hasan is also excited about SJEHG's expansion into Nablus, making access to eye care even easier for the Palestinians in the six governorates in the northern West Bank. He expressed his gratitude to SJEHG and the QFFD for making this life-changing surgery possible, saying, "Thank you for giving me my vision back and helping me return to my daily life."

"I'm very happy to follow up at St. John Eye Hospital. The services and team are excellent," ...Thank you for giving me my vision back and helping me return to my daily life."



L-R: Walid Khateeb, Head of Nursing & AHPs; Ali Rashid Asfour, Dr Ahmad Ma'ali

Ali Rashid Asfour leaves after 48 years

Ali first visited St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem in 1976 as part of the Sinjel Tennis Team, playing a match against the Hospital staff. The visit left a lasting impression, inspiring him to complete his high school exams and apply for the Practical Ophthalmic course.

In 1977, he joined the St John family. Within six months of starting his course, Ali was sent to the Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem for three months of general nursing training.

After completing his training, Ali started working full-time at the Jerusalem Hospital across all departments for five years before being moved to the outpatient department, under matron at the time, Mrs Parks (Ali remembers her being very strict!)

When Ali got married in 1979, all the St John nurses attended his wedding party. He has particularly fond memories of

receiving an extra week of holiday from the matron to celebrate his marriage!

After undertaking an ophthalmic course led by Sister Mary Manariuos, he became a senior ophthalmic nurse. From 1988 until his retirement Ali worked in the Theatre complex on all kinds of ophthalmic surgeries, such as strabismus and cataracts, as well as unique surgeries like orbital exenteration (a surgical procedure involving the removal of the entire contents of the eye socket).

In recognition for his service to the Eye Hospital, Ali was invested as a Serving Brother in September 2014 in Jerusalem.

Ali is an excellent teacher and has trained many SJEHG doctors and nurses. He feels a great sense of loyalty to the Hospital, saying that his work at SJEHG enabled him to build his home and raise his four sons (one of whom is now an obstetrician) and two daughters. Ali now has twenty-five grandchildren and is

very active in his village and is part of the medical community union.

Ali is a very important figure and advisor in the SJEHG theatre complex, and he will be deeply missed by both colleagues and patients. We wish you well for your retirement, Ali!



Ali's retirement party, Jerusalem Hospital

AWARDS

Internal Clinical Fellowship in Vitreoretinal Surgery

Presented by Mr David Verity

Dr. Muath Natsheh, Ophthalmologist

Ophthalmic Medical Residence Training Certificate

Presented by Mr David Verity

Quasi Yousef, Ophthalmologist

Ahmad Salhab, Ophthalmologist

Ophthalmic Nursing Diploma (for Staff Nurses who have completed the 2025 Ophthalmic Nursing Course of Al Quds University)

Presented by Ms Helen Winterton

Tareq Abuarra

Aya Manassrah

Ameer Faraj

Areej Mafrareh

Rana Elyan

Naser Smadi



Ophthalmic Nursing Diploma 2025 Cohort

Baroness Audrey Emerton DBE DL Cup for Quality Services to Nursing 2025

Presented by Ms Helen Winterton

Nasrallah Khalilieh, Manager of School of Nursing and Quality Department

Sheenah Davies RRC DL (Davies Plate: Gaza)

Employee of the Year 2025

Presented by Ms Helen Winterton

To all staff in Gaza

Dr. Iyad Habil, Medical Director

Strudwick Prize for Member of Staff

who has Contributed Most to the

Hospital Over the Year

Presented by Ms Helen Winterton

Fathi Qaisi, Medical Engineer



Dr Iyad Habil pictured with Ms Helen Winterton



Fathi Qaisi with Ms Helen Winterton

Magauran Cup: To the Doctor who has Made the Most Contribution to the Services Provided by the Medical Department During 2025

Presented by Ms Helen Winterton

Dr Marina Doulani, Ophthalmologist



Dr Marina Doulani with Ms Helen Winterton

Victoria Sheffield Cup for Research

Presented by Dr Ahmad Ma'ali

Dr Mahmoud Gabajah, Resident

St John Efficiency Award

Presented by Dr Ahmad Ma'ali

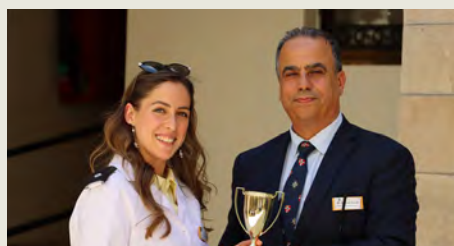
Salah Halabieh, Cleaner

Employee of the Year (the SOA Prize for Dedication and Commitment to the Work of St John)

Presented by Dr Ahmad Ma'ali

Suzanna Majaj, Nurse in Charge,

Kufr Aqab



Suzanna Majaj with Dr Ahmad Ma'ali

MEDALS

Long Service Medal

Presented by Sir Andrew Cash

Dania Omari

Ahmad Khanafseh

Mahmoud Hamoudeh

Samir Bsharat

Naeem Edwan

Iyad Shobaki

Majed Edwan

First Bar & Second Bar

Presented by Sir Andrew Cash

FIRST BAR

David Dahdal

Mohammad Abu-Sumri

Inshirah Abu Tair

SECOND BAR

Wasim Derani

Saed Salameh

Khawla Zaiter

Ahmad Awadallah

Amer Muhsen

Hani Razzouq

Third Bar & Gold Bar

Presented by Mr David Verity

THIRD BAR

Nasrallah Khalilieh

GOLD BAR

Maureen Meo

Marline Katanasho

Vernise Banourah

Jamil Abu-Hani

Younes Abdel-Jawwad

Rula Said

Ra'ed Bannourah



SAVING SIGHT BANQUET AT MANSION HOUSE: A NIGHT OF SUPPORT AND CELEBRATION

L-R: SJEHG trustee Jamie Ingham Clark KStJ, The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Alastair King KStJ DL, SJEHG CEO Dr Ahmad Ma'ali KStJ, HRH Princess Raiyah bint Al Hussein of Jordan, HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCV O GCStJ



The Egyptian Hall, Mansion House



SJEHG Chair Sir Andrew Cash OBE KStJ welcomes guests



Arabella Dorman (right) with her painting 'What Now?'

On Wednesday 5 February 2025, SJEHG hosted the Saving Sight Banquet at London's Mansion House, in the presence of HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCV O GCStJ.

Presented by The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Alastair King KStJ DL, and Sir Andrew Cash OBE KStJ, Chair of SJEHG, the event was held to raise vital funds for the Hospital's sight-saving work across the Holy Land.

We are thrilled to share that, thanks to the generosity of our supporters through the banquet, auctions and associated donations we have raised over £400,000 to date.

Distinguished guests included HRH Princess Raiyah bint Al Hussein of Jordan, His Most Eminent Highness Fra' John T Dunlap, Grand Master of Order of Malta, as well as, former and current trustees, and longstanding supporters.

The evening began with a special Freedom of the City of London ceremony for SJEHG CEO Dr Ahmad Ma'ali KStJ – a fitting tribute to his outstanding leadership and the Hospital's enduring connection to the City.

Guests enjoyed a drinks reception in the elegant Salon followed by dinner in the grand Egyptian Hall, where each of the 25 tables was named after one of the Eye

Hospital's departments or clinics. Grace was led by Rt Rev Tim Stevens CBE GCStJ, Prelate of the Order of St John, followed by welcome remarks from Sir Andrew Cash.

The evening featured moving speeches, including a powerful and personal address from Dr Ma'ali, who received a standing ovation. He and Mr David Verity KStJ, Order Hospitaller, also shared updates on the Hospital's recent progress and vision for the future.

Both HRH The Duke of Gloucester and HRH Princess Raiyah reflected on the historic and ongoing partnership between the Eye Hospital, the Order of St John, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The Lord Mayor, Alderman Alastair King, spoke about the City of London's enduring commitment to the Hospital's legacy.

A highlight of the evening was the Live Auction, led by celebrity auctioneer Alexandra Aguilar, raising over £140,000. Artist Arabella Dorman moved guests with the story behind her painting *What Now?* inspired by her visit to SJEHG's Gaza Hospital; the piece sold for £10,000.

The evening concluded with thanks to the guests, organisers and chefs, and everyone who made the event such a resounding success. In Dr Ma'ali's words:

"For Faith, For Service to Humanity. Thank you."



2024: SOA Masterclass in Artificial Intelligence (from left to right: Prof Adnan Tufail, Dr Michael Dan, Prof Geoff Hinton, Prof Allan Slomovic, Dr Michelle Khan, Prof David Verity)

In 2015, a new chapter began for the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG). Recognising the need for a coordinated international platform to support its postgraduate training and global reputation, a dedicated professional body was formed. While volunteers had always been plentiful, there was no formal way to organise their expertise or promote the Hospital's remarkable clinical work worldwide.

This association of surgeons grew into what is now the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group Ophthalmic Association (SOA) – a registered subsidiary of SJEHG since 2020. Governed by its own Board and supported by an international Clinical Council, the SOA works to connect, educate, and elevate the Hospital's professional network across the globe.

Today, the SOA includes five international hubs (North America, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia Pacific) and 12 local chapters, plus a vibrant young professionals' group called iYouth. Since its launch in 2021, iYouth has run events like the popular iWalk, raising funds and awareness for SJEHG.

With over 40 events held, both in-person and online, the SOA has raised vital

support for SJEHG's frontline medical and nursing teams. These efforts help fund surgical fellowships, support research projects, provide equipment like digital cameras for premature babies' eye screenings, and even cover staff salaries. Thanks to these events, over 1,000 healthcare professionals worldwide have learned about – and now often contribute to – SJEHG's mission.

SJEHG staff have also taken centre stage, sharing their expertise in over 35 international presentations. Highlights include the 2019 NeuroOrbital Masterclass and the 2024 Congress on Artificial Intelligence, featuring pioneering scientist Prof. Geoffrey Hinton as keynote speaker.

While the SOA is not a fundraising body, it has inspired significant donor support through its global network. It also promotes learning opportunities not only for doctors, but also for nurses and allied health professionals, like the recent partnership with SOA-Sweden that enabled staff to train at St Erik's Hospital in Stockholm.

As the SOA marks 10 years of service, they extend heartfelt thanks to all our supporters. Your generosity has helped build an internationally recognised network that uplifts every aspect of care at SJEHG.



SOA Asia-Pacific Hub inaugural event, 2017



SOA meeting in Jerusalem, 2020



SOA USA meeting at the US Investiture, New York, 2024



The Bishop's Waltham Garden Fair 2025

COMMUNITY NEWS

It's been a busy few months in the SJEHG community! As well as our landmark Saving Sight Banquet (which you can read more about on page 16), our supporters from across the globe have been working hard to raise money and awareness of SJEHG, from bake sales to choir concerts, talks and more.

Support from the English Priory

County Hospitallers, who are local ambassadors for the work of the SJEHG, have again got fundraising in their sights and the first few months of 2025 have seen efforts to kickstart this again.

We are immensely grateful to the St John County Priory of Hampshire for raising funds for the Eye Hospital at their 23rd annual **Bishop's Waltham Garden Fair** on the 11th of May, helping to support the work of Huda, an orthoptic assistant working in paediatric outpatients in the satellite eye care clinics of Hebron and Anabta. This year, they raised approximately £10,000, thanks to lots of visitors and the wonderful stall holders.

We also thank Rev. Dr. Robert Beaken, currently County Hospitaller and Chaplain of Sussex, and formerly of Essex, who has, with the support of his Parochial Church Council, encouraged his parishioners to support the work of the Eye Hospital Group through their Lenten Giving.

We are deeply grateful to the St John Fellowship for their unwavering support of St John Eye Hospital Group over the past forty years. From the very beginning, the Fellowship and its Branches across the country have played a vital role in championing our work.

Their dedication is felt in every coffee morning, open garden, cream tea afternoon, and carol service collection. Through these community events, and by sharing our story with others, they raise

not only vital funds but also awareness of our mission. Every modest sum collected contributes meaningfully to our ability to provide life-changing eye care in the region.

Guild of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital

In December last year, the Guild of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital hosted a **Christmas Carol Service at St Cuthbert's Church**, including a special message about the work of SJEHG from Executive Head of the UK Office, Harriet Wheeler. We thank Fr. Paul Bagott, St Cuthbert's director of music Quintin Beer and the rest of the team at St Cuthbert's for a wonderful service, and to all those who attended for their support and generous donations.

In February this year, the Guild also hosted **Stories Behind Our Favourite Hymns** at St Cuthbert's Church, offering guests a wonderful evening of music and storytelling. St Cuthbert's Choir delivered beautiful performances, while Pam Rhodes - Songs of Praise's longest-serving presenter - shared fascinating insights into the history and meaning behind a carefully curated selection of hymns, many with themes linked to the Eye Hospital.

Members of the Guild have also hosted two talks in aid of SJEHG, starting with **'Dancing in the Dark: A War Artist's Journey'** by Arabella Dorman at the



SJEHG's Executive Head of UK Office, Harriet Wheeler, speaks at the Christmas Carol Service

Mall Galleries in March. Georgie Brooks also organised a fantastic talk in Stroud: **'Palestine: Can Hope Triumph Over Experience?'** by former SJEHG trustee and Consul General of Jerusalem, Richard Makepeace, with both events raising essential funds for the Saving Sight in Gaza appeal.

Knights Templar

The **Knights and Dames of the Vision Beautiful** have now raised over £57,000 for SJEHG through their incredible physical challenges, including, most recently, a 48-hour remote relay of exercise. They have more than doubled their target of £25,000 to cover the cost of the Large Steam Autoclave in the new Nablus Day Hospital and are continuing to raise money for essential equipment and services for the Eye Hospital Group. You can help them to hit their current target by donating at: <https://www.justgiving.com/team/Vision-Beautiful>

Provincial Priory of Hertfordshire



Provincial Prior of Hertfordshire Alastair White receiving the Bronze Swift award in recognition of their commitment

We are deeply grateful to the Provincial Priory of Hertfordshire for their ongoing support and generous pledge to raise £10,000 annually for ten years as part of their Centenary Appeal in support of Gazan nurse, Mayson Daban.

Provincial Priory of Durham

We extend our sincere thanks to the Provincial Priory of Durham, who will be celebrating their 50th anniversary on 19th July with a special service at Durham Cathedral. As part of their celebrations, Durham has set the ambitious goal of raising £100,000 over five years in support of SJEHG – a remarkable commitment for which we are profoundly grateful.

Global St John Family

In May, we were delighted to reconnect with the leadership of the **Alliance of the Orders of St John** during their Joint Meeting with the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. We are deeply grateful for the Alliance’s ongoing financial support. Our Chair, Sir Andrew Cash, delivered a powerful presentation on the work of SJEHG and the profound impact of the ongoing conflict in Gaza. The week concluded with a dinner hosted by St John International at the Orangery, attended by HRH The Duke of Gloucester.

We’re also looking forward to catching up with members of **Johanniter International (JOIN)** at their Annual General Meeting in Malta this May. Since its founding in 2000, this European network-uniting the four Protestant Orders of St John and their affiliated charities-has played a vital role in coordinating advocacy, fundraising, and strategic support for SJEHG across Europe, helping to advance our shared mission of delivering life-changing eye care in the Holy Land. A special thanks go to St John Malta for their fundraising concert last year, which raised nearly £10,000 in support of our work. They will be hosting another concert this year on the 9th of June in aid of the Eye Hospital.

Our thanks go as well to our colleagues at Johanniter in Austria for their ongoing fundraising appeal supporting children’s vision screening.

Guild of Young Freemen

The Guild of Young Freemen have selected SJEHG as its first permanently supported charity. The partnership was formally unveiled at the Guild’s Inaugural **Christmas Banquet** on Friday, 29th November 2024. This landmark decision, approved unanimously at the Guild’s Michaelmas Court meeting, secures their support for the next 12 years, extending through to the Guild’s 60th anniversary in 2036.



L-R: Dr Fraser Peck CC, Court Assistant, Guild of Young Freemen; Harriet Wheeler, Executive Head of UK Office, SJEHG; Ms Grace Abba, Master, Guild of Young Freemen; Mr Rafael Steinmetz Leffa, Middle Warden, Guild of Young Freemen



Inspired by the work of our wonderful SJEHG community?

Sign up to become a Friend of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group here:

UPCOMING EVENTS

Palestinian Fundraising Dinner for Nablus

14th June 2025

Our Lady of Victories Church, Kensington, W8 6SF, 6.30pm-10.30pm



The Guild of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group are hosting a very special Palestinian fundraising dinner in aid of our new hospital in Nablus. Featuring a buffet of delicious Palestinian delicacies, plus entertainment, it promises to be a fantastic evening, and we hope you will be able to attend. Held at the beautiful Our Lady of Victories Church in Kensington, tickets for the event are £80pp, with tables of 8 available.

Tickets available here: <https://billet.to/1ya3y/newsletter>

In Conversation with Dr Ahmad Ma’ali

16th July 2025

Apothecaries’ Hall, City of London, EC4V 6EJ, 6.30pm-10.30pm



Join us for ‘In conversation with Dr Ahmad Ma’ali’, where the CEO of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) will be talking to award-winning BBC journalist, writer and broadcaster, Samira Ahmed.

Hosted in collaboration with three of our most valued supporter groups – the Guild of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital, iYouth, and the Guild of Young Freemen – this special evening at the beautiful Apothecaries’ Hall, London, offers a unique opportunity to hear first-hand about the vital work of SJEHG, with a particular focus on the Hospital’s response to the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Your £40 ticket includes two complimentary drinks on arrival, canapés, and a seat in the Great Hall for the conversation. All proceeds from the event will go towards SJEHG’s sight-saving work in the Holy Land.

Tickets available here: <https://billet.to/1201587-newsletter>

If you have any questions about our events, please email info@stjohnseyehospital.org or call 020 7253 2582



Pictured L-R: Paul Raymond Clement OStJ, Dr Elin Minerva Bohman MStJ, Robert James Ingham Clark KStJ, Sir Andrew Cash OBE KStJ (Chair SJEHG), personal banner bearer of Sir Andrew Cash, Diane Corner OBE OStJ, Professor Lyndon da Cruz OStJ

His Majesty the King has granted admissions to, and promotions in the Order of St John. In an Investiture held at the Priory Church of St John the Baptist, Clerkenwell, on Wednesday the 14th of May 2025, the Lord Prior, Professor Mark Compton AM GCStJ, invested the following postulants:

As Knight of Justice

Robert James Ingham Clark: For his long service on the ceremonial staff, on the Eye Hospital's finance committee, as a trustee of the St John Eye Hospital Group and chair of its Investment and Guild Liaison Committee.

As Officer

Paul Raymond Clement: For fundraising efforts towards the St John Eye Hospital Group.

Diane Corner OBE: For her service to the St John Eye Hospital Group

Professor Lyndon da Cruz: For his service in the clinical development of the St John Eye Hospital Group ophthalmic education, research and innovation.

As Member:

Dr Elin Minerva Bohman: For her service in developing a relationship between the Order of St John of Sweden and the St John Eye Hospital Group.

Freedom of the City for our CEO

Prior to our Saving Sight Banquet on Wednesday the 5th of February 2025, we held a very special Freedom of the City of London ceremony for our CEO, Dr Ahmad Ma'ali KStJ. This recognition celebrates his outstanding contribution to SJEHG and its historic ties to the City of London.

The ceremony was attended by a selection of our valued supporters, past and present trustees, and members of the royal family. Dr Ma'ali was deeply moved by the City's appreciation of the Hospital's work. We were also delighted to hear that Dr Ma'ali now has the right to drive sheep and cattle over London Bridge, should the opportunity arise! Congratulations to Dr Ma'ali on this well-deserved honour!



Dr Ahmad Ma'ali receiving his Freedom of the City of London

LEGACIES & OBITUARIES

LEGACY- DAVID CHEESEMAN

27 May 1937 – 22 May 2024

David was a lifelong supporter of St John. Starting in the cadets, he performed many first-aid duties over the years, instructing in the history of the Order and in first aid, then later as an officer in Surrey. He ran Walton and Oatlands Division for many, many years.

He was an enthusiastic supporter of the Jerusalem Eye hospital although all his attempts over the years to visit failed due to external events. At his funeral in June gifts to the Eye Hospital were given in his memory. He had survived his wife of 59 years, Joan who he was devoted to, but died peacefully at home after a long spell in hospital. He is survived by his two sons and five grandchildren.



OBITUARY - MARIANNE BANNAYAN

21 February 1937 – 6 April 2025

Marianne Bannayan, wife of Nazar Bannayan, the Administrator of the Jerusalem Eye Hospital for many years, passed away in Jerusalem on the 6th of April, aged 88, just before Easter. She leaves behind Nazar, her devoted family and countless friends both from within St. John and beyond.

She had been suffering from mobility problems for some time but was consistently cheerful, witty and positive; her great, good humour never left her.

Marianne was the consummate Jerusalemite: part Greek, part Swiss, a polyglot, a storyteller, an artist whose own watercolours decorated her living room in the Greek Quarter of the Old City. She was an invaluable member of the St. John of Jerusalem family, generously hosting with Nazar countless overseas guests visiting the Hospital.

Their warm hospitality was enjoyed by friends and visitors through all the upheavals and quiet times they experienced in their traditional stone

house, a haven of welcome for us all. She was also the essential volunteer who prepared baskets of bright red eggs offered to the Greek Patriarchate every Orthodox Easter.

Nazar recalls the story of Marianne's courage and tenacity during the first Gulf War when scud missiles were flying over Jerusalem. There was a staff shortage in the Hospital since many employees couldn't leave the West Bank due to curfews and travel restrictions.

Despite these restrictions, also imposed on Jerusalem, Marianne managed to get to the Hospital and volunteered throughout the war in whatever capacity was needed. For this and years of quiet, dedicated service she was awarded a Serving Sister medal of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John.

She is greatly missed.

We thank the Bannayan family and Geraldine Ohannessian, member of the Guild of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital and friend of Marianne, for this wonderful tribute to a life well lived.



Marianne Bannayan with husband Nazar

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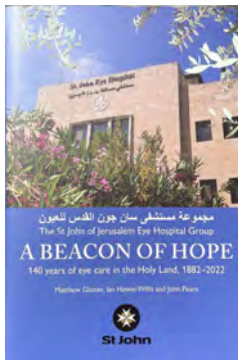
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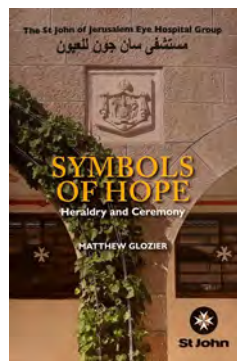
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£36



'Symbols of Hope: Heraldry and Ceremony', paperback

£25



SJEHG Luxury Pen

£5.50



St John Eye Hospital Silk Tie

£25



Tabard (Orange)

£5



Cream Tote Bag

£3.50

Item	Cost Per Unit	Number of	Total (£)
Blank Card: St John Logo, pack of 10	£10		
Blank Card: SJEHG Coat of Arms, pack of 10	£10		
Blank Card: Swifts of Hope, pack of 5	£5		
'A Beacon of Hope: 140 years of eye care in the Holy Land, 1882-2022', paperback	£36		
'Symbols of Hope: Heraldry and Ceremony', paperback	£25		
SJEHG Luxury Pen	£5.50		
St John Eye Hospital Silk Tie	£25		
Tabard (Orange)	£5		
Cream Tote Bag	£3.50		
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St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group

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