

Spotlight on the **Defenders Initiative**



Empowering Future Legal Advocates through International Simulations

Sharek Youth Forum, in collaboration with UNFPA, under the framework of Youth Lead Program Funded by EU, and with the support of all Palestinian universities, recently launched the Model of International Court of Justice (ICJ) Simulation under the Defenders initiative.

This intensive program aims to enhance the capabilities of Palestinian youth in addressing humanitarian crises, focusing on the ongoing genocide in the Palestinian Territories.



Program Overview

The Defenders program is specifically designed for law students from Palestinian universities, offering them a unique opportunity to engage in high-level legal training. Participants competed to present and write the most compelling legal arguments addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, with a spotlight on the ongoing genocide. The program included 40 participants, divided into teams representing various governorates and camps in Gaza, ensuring a collective focus on the region rather than individual institutions.

Training Components

The training regimen was rigorous, combining online sessions, coaching, practical exercises, and face-to-face simulations over one month.



Online Sessions

During the online sessions, participants received personalized guidance from well experienced speakers, including:

- **Ambassador Dr. Omar Awadallah:** Shared his extensive experience in the North Africa case against Israel.
- **Prof. Mohammad Mousa:** Provided insights into the current situation in Gaza and its alignment with international law.
- **Dr. Ashreaf Abu Haya:** Offered expertise in preparing legal evidence, building arguments, and presenting evidence.
- **Dr. Bader Zamareh and Dr. Mohamad Shtayah:** Imparted their knowledge of international law.

These experts enriched the participants' understanding of legal advocacy and international law principles, fostering their ability to analyze complex legal problems and present persuasive arguments.



Face-to-Face Training

The three-day face-to-face training focused on refining arguments developed during the online phase. Specialized workshops on advocacy techniques, presentation skills, and public speaking equipped participants to confidently present their cases. Practice sessions in the Moot Court at Al-Istiqlal University in Jericho provided a realistic courtroom environment, helping participants overcome any hesitation about standing in a courtroom setting.



Simulation Day

The program culminated in a simulation day at Al-Istiqlal University, where a panel of eight distinguished professors and doctors of law and international law evaluated the presentations. Each team showcased their advocacy skills, demonstrating both legal acumen and emotional resilience.

The realistic courtroom environment and the presence of a highly qualified judging panel provided a high-pressure setting, testing the participants' abilities to the fullest. Team Gaza emerged victorious.



Outcomes and Impact

The Defenders initiative significantly enhanced participants' legal reasoning, argumentation, and drafting skills necessary for effective advocacy. Through comprehensive pre-and-post assessments, trainers noted substantial improvements in the participants' ability to apply legal principles and argue cases effectively, particularly in humanitarian law and international human rights contexts.

Looking Ahead

The success of the Defenders program has garnered praise from law faculties across Palestinian universities, recognizing it as a transformative educational endeavor. Plans are underway to replicate this model in individual universities, offering law students further opportunities to engage in enriching and practical experiences. This initiative aims to foster a deeper understanding of international law and advocacy among future legal professionals.



