

[https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local\\_news/an-entire-city-bearing-witness-albuquerque-kite-project-represents-children-killed-in-gaza/article\\_59dea818-cece-4d77-8e44-45877ff53634.html](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/an-entire-city-bearing-witness-albuquerque-kite-project-represents-children-killed-in-gaza/article_59dea818-cece-4d77-8e44-45877ff53634.html)

## 'An entire city bearing witness': Albuquerque kite project represents children killed in Gaza

★ Follow Lily Alexander

By Lily Alexander [lalexander@sfnewmexican.com](mailto:lalexander@sfnewmexican.com)

May 1, 2026





Sarah Ruth Finkel, the artist behind the Community Kite Project for Gaza, instructs community members on how to fold origami kites, each one with the name and age of a child killed in Gaza, at the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque on Tuesday.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

## Takeaways

The local Community Kite Project for Gaza will eventually be composed of 21,907 white kites to represent each of each of the Palestinian children killed in Gaza between October 2023 and September 2025.

The white kites were inspired by a poem by Palestinian writer and professor Refaat Alareer, who was killed by an Israeli airstrike in Gaza in late 2023. The poem, “If I Must Die,” instructs the reader — in the event of Alareer’s death — to buy cloth and strings and make a white kite with a long tail, so it

## ALBUQUERQUE

Hundreds of white paper kites hung around the church.

Each was marked with a name and an age. Each had a dangling tail made of white string.

Thousands more would have to be made before the kites attained the artist’s goal: to represent each of the 21,907 Palestinian children killed in Gaza between October 2023 and September 2025.

“That’s just the confirmed deaths,” artist Sarah Ruth Finkel told a crowd at Albuquerque’s First Unitarian Universalist Church.

“There are still many children under the rubble that cannot be identified.”

The local Community Kite Project for Gaza was showcased at an

would resemble an angel for a child in Gaza to see.

The first several hundred kites of the project were showcased at Albuquerque's First Unitarian Universalist Church on Tuesday evening. The church recently started its Justice in the Middle East chapter.

#### MORE INFORMATION



**Iran war on many minds as thousands turn out in Santa Fe for 'No Kings 3'**

New Mexicans express dueling views on Iran war at Albuquerque rallies

New Mexico federal lawmakers united in condemning Iran strikes

open house at the church on Tuesday evening. But it began in June, when Finkel brought chalk and a list compiled by the Qatari news network Al Jazeera of children who had been killed in Gaza to the Albuquerque Art Walk. She wrote the names and ages — zero through 18 — of these children on the sidewalk.

“The response I got from Albuquerque was just overwhelming,” Finkel said. “I had people giving me tearful hugs. I had one woman ask, ‘Let me write the names with you,’ and she took chalk and went down on the sidewalk and got her beautiful outfit dirty to write the names with me.”



Antoinette “Noor” Khader, founder of Among the Rubble Collective, reads a poem titled “Why is Palestinian Blood So Cheap” during an event for the Community Kite Project for Gaza at the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque on Tuesday.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican



The project soon evolved into white kites, inspired by a poem by Palestinian writer and professor Refaat Alareer, who was killed by an Israeli airstrike in Gaza in late 2023. The poem, “If I Must Die,” instructs the reader — in the event of Alareer’s death — to buy cloth and strings and make a white kite with a long tail, so it would resemble an angel for a child in Gaza to see.

Finkel started by writing on the origami kites by hand, but said she quickly realized it would not be finished in her lifetime at that rate. A friend who had a printing press offered up its use, and Finkel printed out the children’s names and ages.

Along the way, many different people and organizations have participated in the kite-folding, Finkel said. She estimated the number of volunteers as “dozens,” and more joined in Tuesday as Finkel showed them how to do it.





A group gathers among hundreds of white kites, each one with the name and age of a child killed in Gaza, during the Community Kite Project for Gaza at the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque on Tuesday.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

“It started with this list and a simple origami kite, and it’s turned into an entire city bearing witness together and grieving together this immense loss,” Finkel said. “We fold kites in community to process our collective grief so that we can approach our work for a free Palestine in a good way.”

## ‘Get involved’

The Israel-Hamas war started after Hamas militants stormed into Israel from the Gaza Strip on Oct. 7, 2023, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251 others. Israel launched a retaliatory offensive that has killed an estimated more than 70,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, devastating Gaza and led to a famine last year. Multiple scholars and human rights groups have accused Israel of genocide, a charge the Israeli government has denied.

The war has divided the American public. While the government under both presidents Joe Biden and Donald Trump has largely backed Israel, polls show support for Israel among the general public has been declining since the war began. About two weeks

ago, both of New Mexico's U.S. senators joined most of their Democratic colleagues in an unsuccessful effort to block further arms sales to Israel.

A ceasefire agreement in October 2025 ended the two-year war between Israel and Hamas — although Israeli strikes have continued with more than 800 Palestinians and four Israeli soldiers having been killed since the agreement, according to Reuters.

Tuesday's event at the First Unitarian Universalist Church was a collaboration between the Community Kite Project for Gaza and the church's recently started Justice in the Middle East chapter. The church also operates several other social justice groups.



Community members learn how to fold origami kites, each one with the name and age of a child killed in Gaza, during the Community Kite Project for Gaza at the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque on Tuesday.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

“You don’t have to believe or read or be convinced of anything — you come and you be whoever you are and work on the issues that are important to you,” said Nancy Harmon, a retired teacher and a member of the Justice in the Middle East chapter. “So it leaves it wide open to the individual.”

The chapter is oriented toward education and getting people involved in active, organized resistance, said Jerilyn Bowen, another member. Bowen said she hoped the open house would encourage people to act on feelings of horror about global conflicts.

“A lot of people have to get over a hump to get involved actually, partly because we’re such an individualistic culture,” Bowen said. “No one person is going to solve anything, but if you just get involved in something that matters to you — and there [are] so many different ways you can do that so that you’re working with other people and creating a community.”

## ‘An issue of humanity’

The open house also served as a fundraiser for project partner Among the Rubble Collective, an Albuquerque initiative led by



Palestinian American singer and poet Antoinette “Noor” Khader that raises money to help Palestinian families in Gaza. The organization takes on different projects in Gaza and is currently working to evacuate a family of 12, Khader said.



Rows of origami kites each featuring a name and age of a child killed in Gaza hang in the lobby of the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque during the Community Kite Project for Gaza event Tuesday.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

Khader, who has family in the West Bank, said Egypt is charging Gazans who are attempting to leave thousands of dollars. In 2024, NPR reported the evacuation cost was \$5,000 per adult and \$2,500 per child.

“I feel that it’s not a political issue, but an issue of humanity,” Khader said. “Because everywhere we go, we have an obligation to protect children — whoever they are, wherever they are.”

Though the white kites hang in the church now, Finkel hopes they will eventually be displayed in public institutions.

“Imagine all the hands that it took to make these kites,” Finkel said. “That is the art. That is all these people that have continued to not look away from Palestine.”

---

Lily Alexander is a Santa Fe New Mexican reporter through a fellowship with the New Mexico Local News Fund.

---

Lily Alexander

