

Bestowal by King's College London of a Doctorate of Science *honoris causa* to Professor Rita Giacaman by The Right Honourable the Lord Geidt, Chairman of Council

Professor Rita Giacaman has been a faculty member at Birzeit University in the West Bank of the Occupied Palestinian Territory **since 1978**. Her extraordinary work has set a global standard for the provision of public health in war and post-conflict settings.

Her vision, skill and dedication has led both to the foundation of the renowned Institute of Community and Public Health, and the Women's Studies Institute at Birzeit University. Professor Giacaman's life work has been focused on the protection and improvement of health in a context of military occupation and war, through interdisciplinary research. Her research has shaped policy and led to new healthcare approaches, as well as educational programs to build the workforce capacity.

As a **researcher-activist** Rita Giacaman describes herself as standing with one foot in academia and one foot in the field. Over the years she has fundraised, campaigned and built a loyal, dedicated and skilled team who have developed sustainable research and intervention programs focusing particularly on women health workers in village primary care settings. This has led to the establishment of a healthcare worker school which is now accredited by the Palestinian Ministry of Education as a junior college. Professor Giacaman has shown the world that research is not only possible in places where war and violence are endemic, but can have meaningful long term impact across a wide range of areas; from improving water and sanitation; to conducting cutting-edge research to improve medical treatment and social care in fields as diverse as women's health, mental health, and non-communicable diseases such as cancer.

Her intellectual work has left an impressive landmark. Professor Giacaman has developed new research frameworks and interpretative models that bring public health into communication with philosophy and social science. Engaging with philosophers such as Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu as well as concepts such as structural violence, social suffering, biopolitics and necropolitics, she has effectively exposed the effects of political violence and deprivation on people's behaviour, health and wellbeing, as well as their steadfastness, hope and demands for change. She has worked with local and international experts to develop, test and validate scales that capture accurately the impact of conflict on people's health and wellbeing, particularly multidimensional measures of quality of life, humiliation, deprivation, insecurity and stress. These new measures are revolutionary in that they capture the dynamic nature of war and hardship whereby those exposed oscillate between "ease" and "dis-ease" depending on the political, economic and social situation.

King's has both benefitted enormously from and been an active partner in Professor Giacaman's work through long-standing relationships with scholars and students in the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine, in particular with Dr Hanna Kienzler. Her steadfast collaboration has been vital in that her insights and experience have helped shape the knowledge and skills of the next generation of scholars, as they seek to address contemporary issues of conflict and health, ultimately to alleviate and prevent human suffering.

Dr Hannah Kienzler and Professor Richard Sullivan