



# THE Khalidi Library

Jerusalem  
Established in 1900



## **Impact Assessment Report**

**The Khalidi Library: Preserving Palestinian Heritage,  
Protecting the Future Project**

**Funded by British Council Cultural Protection Fund (CPF)**

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**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of the Cultural Protection Fund (CPF) or any institution referred to in the report.

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## Executive Summary

### Background

The Al-Khalidi Library is a historic private library owned and endowed by the Khalidi Family and is located in the Old City of Jerusalem. Founded in 1900, it is home to one of the finest collections of Islamic manuscripts in the region, with over 5,500 volumes spanning ten centuries. The library played a crucial role in Jerusalem's intellectual renaissance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In recent decades, the library faced threats from environmental degradation, insufficient storage facilities, and potential property confiscation. To address these issues and ensure the preservation of this invaluable cultural heritage, the library collaborated with the British Council Cultural Protection Fund (CPF) on a major restoration and digitization project from 2018-2020.

### Methodology

The assessment methodology aligned with the DAC criteria and involved:

- Intensive review of project documents, background materials, and contextual documents
- Interviews at initiation and conclusion with library staff, management, and diverse stakeholders including local schools, academics, and media.
- Incorporation of perspectives from international visitors, researchers, and journalists
- Fieldwork and site visits to directly observe operations and impact.
- Development of an in-depth case study on the library
- An ethical, inclusive approach gathering a multitude of viewpoints.

### Key Findings (on output level)

The evaluation, conducted from July-September 2022, found that the project had a significant impact on the Al-Khalidi Library and the wider community.

- **Cultural Preservation:** The project helped to revive and protect this endangered cultural heritage site. The exhibition effectively highlighted Palestinian heritage in Jerusalem and restored over 100 manuscripts.
- **Capacity Building:** Four individuals were trained in manuscript conservation over one year, developing local expertise in preservation.
- **Community Engagement:** The library rebounded after the pandemic with over 400 visitors in 2022. Media partnerships were fostered to raise awareness of the library's significance.
- **Sustainability:** Capacity building, digitization, and community engagement enhanced the library's sustainability. Recognition as a heritage organization added a layer of legal protection, while international collaborations opened up new funding opportunities.

### Conclusions (on impact level)

The Al-Khalidi Library preserves the cultural essence of Jerusalem and stands as a symbolic of Palestinian identity. The CPF project, in its first round of support, is found to be one of the main pillars that contributed to revive the library after a long period of neglect and vulnerability to external and environmental threats, and it significantly inspired international credibility. This project, together with the early fundamental initiatives such as HMML digitization project, set the corner stone for a flourished future and sustained protection and promotion of the cultural

heritage the Khalidi Library represent. Such investment initiatives, paved the way for further development, attracting major donors for improvement projects until this date.

While challenges remain around annexation threats and financial sustainability, the library has reasserted its role as a vibrant hub. Ongoing priorities are capacity building, community engagement, and strategic partnerships to carry this living heritage forward and promote it through research and communication. The project highlights the power of collective memory in reclaiming cultural narratives. Investment in the protection and promotion of cultural institutions remains critical for safeguarding pluralism and diversity in Jerusalem.

### **Recommendations**

The evaluation put forth recommendations to build on the project's momentum and ensure a sustainable future for the library:

- Expand the conservation laboratory with advanced equipment to further preservation efforts to over 1000+ manuscripts in the library and possible support neighboring libraries as per the model established during the ALIPH grant
- Develop an extended, comprehensive training program in preservation strategies.
- Utilize the library's role as an educational centre through more scholarly events and discussions.
- Improve operational capacity by monitoring and evaluating library initiatives.
- Foster youth engagement through targeted programming.
- Invest further in IT infrastructure for digitization and accessibility.
- Support other vulnerable cultural institutions in Jerusalem and the region.
- Develop further the international collaborations around digitization and research.
- Incorporate intellectual works by eminent Khalidi scholars.
- Develop biographical chronicles exploring the Khalidi family histories.
- Ensure basic financial sustainability through fundraising especially via the 501c registered "Friends of the Khalidi Library (FKL)".

In essence, an integrated approach is needed across preservation, management, community outreach, partnerships, and future planning. This will cement the library's role in society in the longer-term but would require further financial investment to do so.

## Historical Significance and Background: Khalidi Library- A Beacon of Jerusalem's Cultural Legacy

The Khalidi Library, Al-Maktaba Al-Khalidiyya, situated in the heart of Jerusalem's Old City, is a beacon of historical and cultural significance. Founded in 1899 by Hajj Raghīb al-Khalidi, a leading Jerusalem intellectual, it was designed to enrich local education. Over time, this establishment transformed into a regional treasure trove of rare books and manuscripts, reflecting subjects as diverse as history, law, literature, and religion.

Deeply embedded in the heritage of the esteemed Khalidi family, the library's inception echoes their commitment to intellectual endeavours and public service since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This lineage, boasting scholars, judges, and leading political individuals, manifests the family's enduring significance in Jerusalem's history.

The Khalidi Library's evolution mirrors the larger socio-political shifts in Palestine and the Middle East. Among the waning of the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of European powers, and the blossoming of Arab nationalism, this institution emerged as a paramount hub for knowledge preservation and dissemination, thus fuelling an intellectual renaissance.

Originally within the Khalidi family's residence, the growing collection soon required more expansive quarters. By 1900, it found a home in a historical Mamluk-era edifice that previously served as both a school and a hospice. Today, with over 1,200 manuscripts, 5,000 printed books, and thousands of significant archival materials, it ranks among Jerusalem's most culturally rich private libraries. While its heart lies in Arabic-language works, its shelves also display French, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, and Hebrew texts. Beyond books, it safeguards crucial archives, such as letters and photographs, encapsulating the region's multifaceted history.

The library had suffered from negligence for many years, making it vulnerable to attacks, wilful damage, and the theft of its cultural treasures in one of the most troubled areas of Jerusalem. However, since 2012, the appointment of new custodians following a long-term internal struggle ushered in a new era for the library. These capable scholars and professionals “Mutawallis (Custodians)” raised the library's profile and reinstated its role as one of the original and largest cultural heritage institutions in Jerusalem and the wider Palestine. The custodians rightly prioritized urgent protection and safeguarding projects with parallel initiatives, much of which were supported by the first round of CPF grants. This funding was a pillar in the revival of this unparalleled cultural heritage.

In parallel, the historic building underwent restorative measures, fortified by modern climate controls to shield the collection from environmental adversaries. The library further embraced its role as a communal intellectual hub, orchestrating public events, collaborations, and research partnerships to stimulate cultural dialogue.

The Khalidi Library, beyond being a reservoir of Middle Eastern intellectual, social, and religious narratives, affirms Jerusalem's undying role as a source of knowledge and intercultural



dialogue. With its unwavering dedication to preservation and accessibility, the library not only immortalizes the Khalidi legacy but also accentuates the intrinsic value of cultural institutions in a diverse society. Among Jerusalem's shifting landscape, the Khalidi Library remains a steadfast symbol of scholarship and cultural connectivity thanks to the essential investment and seed support by CPF, with an impact that lasted until recently and is expected to continue for decades to come.

### Project Background: Khalidi Library Revitalization

The primary objective of the project was to reinstate the Khalidi Library as a public institution accessible to researchers and specialists and the broader local community. Historically, the Library was fundamental in safeguarding and promoting the cultural heritage of Jerusalem. The project's core intent was to restore this role and legacy and to re-spread an important part of the Holy City's history and cultural heritage

#### Project previous initiatives:

In 2012, the Custodian Committee (three custodians) took over management and promptly addressed pressing concerns. By 2016, the entire manuscript collection of 300,000 images (600,000 pages) had been digitized with the support of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML) in the United States for multiple purposes, including protection and promotion on content as vital cultural heritage of Jerusalem. Recognizing the deteriorating state of the Mamluk-era buildings sheltering the library, the committee secured funding and expertise to fortify and refurbish the structure, ensuring its preservation in parallel.

The CPF supported project was among the premier initiatives emphasizing the cultural significance of the library. Its success served as a cornerstone for securing financial support for the Khalidi Library and other cultural institutions in Jerusalem. Notably, the library voluntarily expanded its responsibilities, playing a pivotal role in a consortium to preserve Jerusalem's vast cultural history.

#### Main Project Objectives:

1. **Digital Cataloging:** Developed and implemented a local electronic Library Management System for digitally cataloging the Khalidi manuscript collection.
2. **Security Infrastructure:** Designed to protect against intentional damage or unauthorized access. This included fire prevention, video surveillance, and alarm systems across the library's premises.
3. **Conservation Laboratory:** Established the first manuscript conservation and restoration laboratory in the region, which is equipped for restoring manuscripts. This lab continues to benefit other historic libraries in Jerusalem.
4. **Documentation:** A thorough examination of the library's history, its collection, archival material, and Jerusalem's broader history was undertaken.

5. **Exhibition:** A permanent exhibition was curated, highlighting manuscript replicas and the library's historical significance.

#### Intended Outcomes:

The project was driven by the following key outcomes:

1. **Outcome 1 - Heritage Preservation:** Safeguard endangered cultural heritage by investigating, documenting, and instigating protective and restorative measures, thereby stopping irreversible loss.
2. **Outcome 2 - Skill Development:** Equipping local experts with the skills to preserve and highlight cultural treasures and driving economic restoration through their business insight or specialized knowledge.
1. **Outcome 3 - Community Engagement:** Foster an environment where locals recognize, value, and understand the role of their cultural heritage in society and its economic impact.



## Evaluation Overview: Khalidi Library's Cultural Heritage Initiative

### Purpose and Evaluation Framework:

The Khalidi Library, with generous support from the British Council Cultural Protection Fund (CPF), inaugurated an evaluative initiative titled "The Khalidi Library: Preserving Palestinian Heritage, Protecting the Future." This assessment seeks to identify and showcase exemplary practices in the conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage. Additionally, it endeavors to collect, systematize, interpret, and disseminate this knowledge.

### Principal Evaluation Objectives:

The main objectives were to critically analyze the Theory of Change and to evaluate the mid-term impact of the project designed and implemented under the CPF strategic umbrella. This particular project was funded by British Council Cultural Protection Fund's inaugural grant cycle. As such, a salient objective was to gauge the sustainable advantages of investments in the cultural heritage domain, transcending the direct outcomes of the funded endeavour.

### Core Evaluation Questions:

1. To what extent did the project ensure valuable cultural heritage content to the local community?
2. To what extent the project made cultural heritage the Khalidi Library represents available to the cultural heritage community (locally and internationally)?
3. How have people's perceptions of the library changed?
4. To what extent had the project established the capital and human capacity of the library and how it was sustained following the project?
5. To what extent the project helped the Khalidi Library to engage within the wider local cultural heritage sector
6. What is the current status of the Khalidi Library and how it evolved until present time? What is the long-term effect of CPF funding on the sustainability of the Khalidi's operations in support of cultural heritage.
7. Form a local community perspective, how best can CPF, and possibly other international donors, support cultural heritage in Jerusalem as a core of a protracted conflict.
8. To what extent had the project taken gender balance and inclusion.

### Implications of the Findings:

The insights derived from this evaluation not only provide a tangible measure of the enduring benefits for stakeholders like the British Council in their cultural heritage investments but also illuminate pathways for forthcoming endeavours in the realm of cultural heritage protection. By

underscoring successes, challenges, and distilled wisdom, we aim to enrich the canon of best practices in this pivotal domain.

## Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The evaluation process, thoroughly carried out from July to September 2023, was constructed to delve deep into various facets of the library's operations based on the globally respected Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria. This comprehensive approach ensured that the evaluation would scrutinize several vital parameters, including the relevance of the library in today's context, the effectiveness of its current operations and its broader impact on the community and scholarship, and the sustainability of its initiatives and resources for the foreseeable future.

To undertake this monumental task, the evaluation team adopted a participatory methodology, ensuring a holistic and inclusive approach. This methodology was developed to incorporate various perspectives and voices while upholding the highest standards of ethical considerations throughout the process. A critical part of this approach involved an intensive review of a wide array of existing documentation associated with the library, including project reports, historical background materials, and current contextual documents that encompass the library's rich tapestry of resources and heritage.

The process also welcomed open dialogues and exchanges through a series of interviews conducted at both the initiation and the conclusion of the evaluation period. These interactions facilitated deeper insights into the library's functioning and its influence on various stakeholders. Not only did the evaluation team engage with the custodians of the Al-Khalidi library, but the staff and management also provided their unique perspectives, painting a well-rounded picture of the institution's internal workings.

To further enhance the depth of the evaluation, a case study was diligently compiled, offering detailed insights and narratives that encapsulate the essence of the library. This case study represents as a significant segment of the final report, illuminating the library's intricate connection with local and international communities.

Moreover, the evaluation team expanded their outreach by involving a diverse group of multinational individuals who interact with the library in various capacities as a direct result of reviving the library under the CPF grant, which allowed access for diverse local and international collaboration. This encompassed local and international visitors who frequent the library, academics deeply entrenched in research facilitated by the library's resources, and journalists who covered news stories and developments concerning the library. Notably, media personnel from recognized agencies like Euro News and Al-Jazeera were also engaged to glean insights into the library's representation in local and international news circles.

In addition, fieldwork constituted a crucial element of this evaluation. Through structured meetings and exchanges, the evaluation team could gauge firsthand the impact of the library on its immediate and global intellectual communities.

By adopting such a multifaceted and ethical approach, ABC Consulting aims to present an evaluation that is not only profound but also resonates with the rich history, present significance, and promising future of the Al-Khalidi Library. Through this initiative, both organisations aspire to foster a path that would see the library soaring to new heights, maintaining its relevance, and expanding its `

### Summary of Project Theory of Change

1. **Protection Infrastructure:** Initiating robust security measures, including fire prevention, video surveillance, and alarm systems, will lead to a safer environment for both the library's resources and its patrons, ultimately resulting in a well-protected cultural and historical library site.
2. **Manuscript Care:** Implementing conservation and restoration practices ensures that historical manuscripts are not only preserved but also have an extended lifespan. This contributes to the safeguarding of historical manuscripts for future generations.
3. **Library Management:** The introduction of advanced management and catalogue software streamlines operations and enhances user experience, fostering a deeper connection and appreciation of the library's resources by patrons.
4. **Resource Centre Establishment:** By developing the library as a local resource centre for manuscript preservation, it can achieve sustainable management and financial autonomy. This strengthens the library's role as a vital local repository.
5. **Library History Documentation:** Thoroughly researching and recording the library's history deepens the understanding of its significance and context, enriching its cultural value to the public.
6. **Conservation Capacity Building:** Setting up a conservation lab and training both staff and the community safeguards and reinforces cultural heritage, ensuring its endurance in Jerusalem.
7. **Restoring Khalidi Library's Role:** The library's restoration as a public and accessible entity fosters increased appreciation, patronage, and support, solidifying its reputation as a centre for culture and learning.
8. **Heritage Showcase:** Exhibiting the vast Arab and Muslim heritage raises awareness and appreciation for the region's rich cultural history, positioning the library as a central figure in cultural preservation and promotion.

In essence, through strategic initiatives spanning protection, restoration, documentation, and engagement, the project aims to not only preserve but amplify the library's cultural significance, fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of Jerusalem's rich heritage.

### Validation of Project Theory of Change:

1. **Holistic Approach:** The ToC incorporates a variety of critical areas that are essential for the protection, preservation, and promotion of Palestinian and Arab cultural and heritage. These areas range from security to conservation, knowledge transfer, and engagement.
2. **Emphasis on Technology and Modern Techniques:** Recognizing the importance of advanced management and catalogue software, as well as conservation labs, indicates forward-thinking and adaptation to modern requirements.
3. **Community Engagement:** The ToC stresses the role of the community in preserving heritage, whether through accessing the library, understanding its significance, or getting involved in conservation processes.

## Context Analysis of the Khalidi Library in East Jerusalem

**The Heritage and Significance of Khalidi Library** Established in 1900, the Khalidi Library stands as a testament to the rich history and cultural legacy of Jerusalem. This family-endowed - public library, the first of its kind in Arabic in Palestine, is deeply intertwined with the illustrious lineage of the Khalidi family, a Jerusalem pillar since the 14th century renowned for its scholars, judges, and political influencers. The foundation of the library by Hajj Raghیب al-Khalidi in the late nineteenth century was a culmination of the family's enduring commitment to education, intellectual growth, and public welfare. This establishment's significance is further magnified against the backdrop of the epochal shifts occurring in Palestine and the broader Middle East, marked by the decline of the Ottoman Empire, European colonial influence, and the rise of Arab nationalism. Amid these changes, the Khalidi Library emerged as a beacon of knowledge, playing a pivotal role in the region's intellectual and cultural revival.

**Location and Infrastructure** Nestled in Tariq Bab al Silsilah in Jerusalem's Old City, mere steps from the primary entrance of Haram al-Sharif, the Khalidiyya complex comprises three distinctive structures. The main edifice dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, preserving the legacy of the Khawarizmian emir warriors pivotal in reclaiming Jerusalem from the Crusaders. Adjacent to this is the 15<sup>th</sup> -century Mamluk Annex, which houses printed materials and rare books, complemented by the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman lodgings for visiting scholars.

**The Library's Rich Collection** The library prides itself on an expansive collection of over 5,500 volumes, predominantly from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This includes a remarkable assembly of Arabic manuscripts, the most extensive in Palestine and among the world's finest private collections. The oldest among these is a millennium-old title. The library's treasure trove includes over 1,200 manuscripts, 5,000 printed books in various languages, and invaluable family and official papers from the Khalidi lineage. Noteworthy are the rare and original Ottoman era Annual Yearbooks, which offer insights into the socio-economic conditions of the time, and a unique collection of works from celebrated authors like Ibn Khaldun, al-Muradi, and al-Jabarti.

All manuscripts have undergone meticulous conservation efforts and are housed in acid-free containers equipped with climate-monitoring systems, ensuring adherence to global preservation standards.

**Preservation and Challenges** Over the decades, the Khalidi Library faced many challenges, from environmental degradation and insufficient storage facilities to regional political upheaval. The post-1967 era brought additional pressure from the Israeli government's attempts at property acquisition.

To combat these threats, the library initiated significant preservation projects, in collaboration with Minnesota's Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML), digitizing approximately 600,000 manuscript pages. Locally, the library has honed its expertise in manuscript digitization and offers these specialized services to other entities. Concurrently, structural and climate control improvements have been implemented to ensure the physical preservation of the collection.

**Engagement and Services** Beyond its preservation efforts, the Khalidi Library is a vibrant hub for researchers and scholars. The annex offers a conducive environment for study, and the

library frequently hosts public events, such as lectures and exhibitions, to foster intellectual discourse. Dedicated staff provide invaluable research assistance, source collation, and insights into the library's vast history and resources. Offer public space to introduce an essential part of Jerusalem's cultural heritage to local and international visitors. (Mention alternative tourism)

In conclusion, the Khalidi Library is not just a repository of books but also a living testament to Jerusalem's rich past, reflecting an essential part of the city's identity. Through its preservation endeavours, protection mechanism, and commitment to public engagement, the library ensures that this invaluable cultural heritage remains accessible and revered for generations to come. As researched, this would have been possible without the seed support of the Cultural Protection Fund, which marks one of the main initiatives aimed at reviving over 1,000 years of heritage.

## Evaluation Findings

The impact evaluation has made significant findings regarding the significance and content of cultural heritage related to Jerusalem and Palestine. But, above all, the CPF project along with the persistence and perseverance of the then new custodians (since 2012), the library has eventually turned from a closed and neglected place with buried treasures under the dust exposed to the various threats, to a lively and active cultural heritage landmark sought by local and international scholars and institutions taking its original role in the Holy City's cultural heritage space.

### 1. Relevance

#### Significance

In the vibrant heart of Jerusalem, the Khalidi Library is as a living testament to the city's deep-seated historical, cultural, and social narratives.

Situated a mere 140 meters from the historic Bab Al-Silsilah, this monumental library forms a crucible where centuries of Islamic heritage in Jerusalem are preserved and celebrated. As the city's second oldest Mamluk building, it resonates with the echoes of the past, housing not only a sacred mihrab but

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“The location of the library is its most fascinating feature. Located in the heart of the old city and near Al-Haram Al-Sharif, it is considered an important historical artifact and source for history research. Its significance mainly lies in its close link to the religious establishment of Jerusalem and the political elites of the city, and I think the available collection reflects that, as most books are related to Islamic studies, in addition to many Shari’a Court and waqf documents. “

Professor Eugene Rogan – Director of the Middle East Centre, UK

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also safeguarding the resting places of the Khawarizmian rulers This fact, brought to light by an interviewed journalist, magnifies the building's historical reverence. Moreover, its architectural magnificence extends through time, encompassing an annex from the 15th-century Mamluk period, which harbors ancient printed works, and Ottoman living quarters from the 18th and 19th centuries, once a haven for visiting scholars immersed in intellectual pursuits.

#### Cultural Value

Over countless centuries, the Khalidi Library has emerged as a magnetic hub, drawing scholars, researchers, clerics, and jurists from varied walks of life. It was conceived with the noble aspiration of nurturing the intellectual fervour of the local community. As a repository of wisdom, it holds the largest private collection of manuscripts, dating back an astonishing 1200 years, offering a tangible connection to the rich intellectual lineage of the region. Within its confines, one finds a veritable treasure trove of around 2,000 manuscripts in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish languages, a compendium housing approximately 5,500 volumes, and historic newspapers that whisper tales from the past. In addition, an expansive collection of family archives breathes life into eras gone by. A custodian of the library remarked that its distinctiveness lies in the harmonious amalgamation of time and place with the dynamic roles embraced by its benefactors have, making substantial contributions to the documentation of their historic epochs.

#### Insights into Social Life and Traditions

The library also stands as a gateway into the vibrant social life and traditions that marked Jerusalem during the waning years of the Ottoman rule. The preserved family archives, particularly the correspondences, paint a vivid, multi-hued tapestry of Jerusalemite society in the 1900s. These documents, highlighted by a journalist, serve as an invaluable social inheritance, offering a spontaneous and detailed portrayal of the intricate dynamics of life during that period. Through these



correspondences, we are granted an intimate glimpse into familial dynamics and a deeper appreciation of broader Palestinian traditions and customs, offering readers a rich narrative that transcends time.

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*“What makes this library distinguished from other libraries is the interdependence of time and place with the social, political, and cultural roles that the library owners held. Their gifts of numerous volumes, research, and correspondences have contributed significantly to the documentation of the historical period they lived in. as reported by one of the library’s custodians.”*

Professor Raja Al Khalidi –Custodian of Al-Khalidi

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## Political Distinctions and Relations

The Khalidi Library stands as a repository of complex political narratives that weave through the societal fabric of the Ottoman era. It illuminates the intricate dynamics of the Khalidi family's connections with the monarchy, showcasing their significant standing within society. The extensive archives shed light on the nuanced levels of freedom of expression that existed at the time, capturing moments of political turbulence, including when the Khalidi lineage faced dismissals over minor altercations with the governing bodies. Noteworthy are the analytical insights provided by the philosopher Youssef Diaa Al-Khalidi, who had dialogues with Herzl, the founder of political Zionism. These correspondences offer a counter-narrative, refuting claims surrounding Palestinian awareness and reactions to the burgeoning Zionist project.

## The Library: A Pillar of Resilience

In a region marked by conflict and restricted Palestinian statehood, the Khalidi Library emerges as a beacon of resilience as a witness on the original Arab presence, history and identity in Palestine. It holds within its archives potent narratives that could challenge claims regarding Jerusalem's ownership, emphatically showcasing the deep-rooted and culturally enriched existence of Palestinian Arabs in the region — a perspective emphasized by both journalists and the director of the Middle East Centre at St Antony's College. The library's tenacity, evident in its continued operation amidst extreme conflicts, signifies a powerful act of resistance. It stands defiant, a beacon of knowledge and cultural heritage in Jerusalem, demanding not only preservation but also rightful recognition and celebration.

## Challenges and Preservation

Despite grappling with numerous adversities, including potential confiscation threats and environmental decay, the library remains unyielding in its commitment to safeguarding this precious cultural heritage.

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*"The survival of such a library in an area of extreme conflict is in itself a sign of resilience and an act of resistance. It is the only library in Jerusalem that still opens its doors, and is steadfast despite the surrounding dangers. It is considered a landmark in Jerusalem that has to be preserved, improved, and fought for."*

Professor Raja Al Khalidi –Custodian of Al-Khalidi

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Current challenges include potential annexation threats to the National Library of Israel and internal management hurdles. Yet, nestled in Jerusalem's heart, the library continues to radiate knowledge, echoing the city's illustrious past and fostering a rich intellectual tradition. Through its unwavering dedication to protecting its

prized collections, the Khalidi Library pays homage to its ancestral lineage and highlights the pivotal role that cultural institutions play in nurturing and sustaining diverse, inclusive communities, thus ensuring that its vibrant narratives resonate through future generations.

## 2. Effectiveness and Impact

### The Project's Central Focus and Exhibition Dynamics:

The project firmly rooted its foundations in unearthing and highlighting the rich and nuanced Palestinian and Muslim heritage deeply ingrained in Jerusalem's historic tapestry. Orchestrated under the meticulous supervision of curator Jack Persekian, the project developed into a full-fledged exhibition, narrating a powerful story of heritage and culture through the artifacts displayed.

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*"It is a small-scale exhibition but its impact is huge in terms of representing Arab Jerusalemites to tourists and offers a testimony of Palestinians presence and history in Jerusalem."*

Ms. Freja Holland, International Visitor

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One visitor encapsulated the essence of the project, noting its monumental impact despite its smaller scale, offering a vivid representation of Arab Jerusalemites to tourists and standing as a testament to the Palestinians' historical and contemporary presence in Jerusalem. The library's custodians played an integral role in this representation, exhibiting a staggering collection of around 2000 manuscripts with Arabic titles, coupled with 50 Ottoman and 20 Persian titled manuscripts. This diverse collection was further enriched by a plethora of correspondences, official papers, and family contracts that offered insights into the legal fabric of that era.

Furthermore, the library enriched its collection with an impressive array of 2,500-3,000 rare books in various languages including, German, English, and French, showcasing the Khalidi family's generosity and cultural affluence. These elements collectively crafted a vivid tapestry portraying the socio-cultural dynamics of the Ottoman era in Jerusalem, echoing the deep-rooted relationships and significant cultural stature enjoyed by the Khalidi family during that period.

### Manuscript Restoration and Preservation Challenges:

Preservation emerged as a focal point of the project, underlined by the establishment of a restoration lab dedicated to safeguarding the library's most fragile and significant manuscripts. The restoration journey, however, was fraught with challenges. A noted issue was the absence of locally readily available restoration materials, prompting an intricate international procurement process involving vendors from London, Israel, and the United States.

Despite these hurdles, the initiative witnessed the complete restoration of 100 manuscripts, a painstaking process that entailed page-by-page restoration conducted in a priority-based manner. The establishment of a unique conservation lab in the heart of the old city has further contributed to more conservation of endangered manuscripts beyond the project timeframe, and will continue to do so for the remaining significant portion of manuscripts that await restoration,

### **Training and Skill Development:**

The project embraced the necessity of fostering skill development, launching a comprehensive training initiative that saw the nurturing of four individuals in the restoration process over a year. This initiative provided invaluable insights into the techniques of cleaning, binding, and restoring manuscripts.

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*“The problem with this training is that it only lasted for a year when it should have continued over a period of 4-5 years to allow trainees to continue practicing under the supervision of a specialist. Additionally, training should not have been restricted to the restoration process, but also to the long-term preservation of manuscripts. Trainees should learn how to measure documents and produce appropriately sized boxes, and store each document separately in order to protect it from external damage.”*

Ms. Shayma Al Budeiri, Staff at Al-Khalidi Library

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### **Digital Initiatives:**

Considering restrictions hindering access to Jerusalem for individuals holding West Bank

IDs, the digitalization of manuscripts and books surfaced as an imperative avenue to facilitate wider access. The call for an enhanced online presence was strongly echoed, advocating for an optimized website and bolstered digital resources to increase online visibility and foster a collaborative network with private libraries, paving the way for a unified virtual library experience. This digital frontier stands as a beacon of accessibility, ensuring that researchers unable to visit physically can still immerse themselves in the rich resources the library offers.

### **Enhancing Library Resources and Public Interaction:**

The library has emerged as a vibrant nucleus for cultural exchange and learning in the community, fostering active engagement with local schools and individuals. Despite the setbacks of the pandemic, which saw a dip in visitor numbers in 2021, the library rebounded strongly in 2022, drawing an impressive tally of 413 school students and 164 individual visitors.

### **Media Engagement and Community Bonding:**

The library has emerged as a significant nexus within the media spheres, drawing in reporters and nurturing promising partnerships. One journalist, who had the opportunity to engage personally, shared their rewarding journey, underscoring the open communication and collaborative spirit they experienced during their engagement with the library personnel. It has been highlighted by several media channels that they have been surprised of the history and content of the library, hence the importance of media engagement and awareness, which in return will educate and raise awareness of the library nationally and internationally. ’

### **Conclusion**

Investment infrastructure ... for the protection and pave the way for continuous preservation and protection.

The project has indeed made significant progress in highlighting the Palestinian heritage embedded in Jerusalem’s historical fabric. This is a monumental step towards preservation and representation although there are still opportunities for further development and expansion. The road ahead calls for further investments in restoration projects, staff strengthening, and a more in-depth community engagement strategy, all of which promise a brighter and more fulfilling future for the library’s role in cultural preservation and education. The investment made available through CPF has allowed the creation of foundational infrastructure and capacity building, which paved the way for further advanced interventions for preservation, protection and promotion. Thanks to the CPF’s engagement, the library has developed its resource mobilization and attracted additional donors to support the library..

### 3. Sustainability

Project sustainability was recognized in these domains:

#### 1. Building Sustainable Skills Through Capacity Building

The project is a beacon of light that steers Al-Khalidi's journey towards an era of redefined cultural heritage preservation. One of the of the library's custodians acknowledged the project as a pivotal "steppingstone for Al-Khalidi's future work in cultural heritage preservation".

#### 2. Conservation for Future Generations

The project shines as a beacon of hope and resilience, standing firm against the tides of time to protect the cultural legacies embedded within the fragile pages of history housed within the library. A restoration specialist remarked on the incredible ability of these documents to portray "the social and cultural context of the Jerusalem

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*"The manuscript restoration experience offered by the BC would be a stepping stone for Al-Khalidi's future work in cultural heritage preservation/"*

Mr. Shayma Khader Salameh, Director pf Al-Khalidi Library

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community during the Ottoman rule", reflecting the deep-rooted Palestinian presence in the region. The project envisages a future where these manuscripts are not confined to the present but transcend time, providing a window into the past for "future generations". Digitization plays a pivotal role here, acting as a safeguard against the relentless passage of time.

#### 3. Strengthening Digital Conservation

In this digital era, the library seeks to embrace technologies that could immortalize rare manuscripts. An expert at the Centre for Heritage Revival and Islamic Research, encapsulated the essence of this move by highlighting that digital preservation ensures the longevity and wider accessibility of these invaluable documents. This transformation has garnered the collaborative efforts of renowned restoration specialist, Rami Salameh and Shaima Al-Budairy, working diligently to encapsulate Jerusalem's vibrant cultural history in a digital format, thereby paving the way towards a technologically sustainable future.

#### 4. Engaging the Youth

The sustainability of the project is intricately linked to the engagement of the youth, who are the custodians of the future. An international visitor brought to light the pressing need to cultivate a deeper connection with the younger generation. This can be achieved through an array of engaging activities including, "presentations, lectures, and workshops on manuscript restoration and digitization". This move not only fosters a sense of ownership and pride but also ensures the seamless transition of knowledge and skills to hands capable of carrying forward the library's mission with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

#### 5. Boosting Library's Local Relevance

The project has unequivocally propelled the library to a position of significant prominence within the local community. The resurgence of the library as a vibrant public space, celebrated as the "queen of Jerusalemite libraries" by a researcher, marks a period of Renaissance where the library transformed into a haven of knowledge and a catalyst fostering community pride in its rich cultural heritage.

#### 6. Collaboration and Partnership

In an effort to forge a resilient network that thrives on collective efforts, the library has collaborated with esteemed organisations like the centre for Heritage Revival and Islamic Research. Such partnerships resonate with the ethos of cooperation and resource-sharing, cultivating a fertile ground for the library to envision and strategize its future trajectories in unison with other cultural repositories.

## 7. Financial Sustainability

Financial robustness is a critical pillar supporting the overarching framework the project. The British Council emerged as a beacon of hope, instilling faith and financial vigor into the veins of the library project. Yet, as a journalist noted, the library should venture into avenues of self-sustainability, fostering a culture of localized fundraising initiatives that diminish reliance on international aid and foster a community deeply invested in the library's prosperous future.

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*"It would be fantastic if there were coordinated efforts with other libraries that are not family waqfs or as well-funded as the Khalidi library inside and outside Jerusalem city. Now that the library is relatively secure and functions legally, it could cooperate with other Palestinian cultural institutions such as Birzeit University's Museum which contain Tawfiq Kanan's holdings, or Al-Ahmadiyya Library in Acre".*

Professor Jens Hanssen, University of Toronto, Canada <sup>of</sup>

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## Conclusion

The project is on a path to holistic sustainability, weaving together diverse and interconnected domains that work synergistically. It fosters skill development, spearheads digital conservation initiatives, and facilitates deep-rooted community engagement, all of which are supported by strong collaborative partnerships. In the future, the focus should be on financial independence, youth engagement, and leveraging the collective strength of local communities and global partners.

## Overall Conclusion

The Khalidi Library, deeply rooted in the heart of Jerusalem, serves as a luminary of the city's rich historical tableau, preserving its Islamic essence, diverse cultural nuances, and its multifaceted social tales the past. It is more than a mere guardian of the past; it stands as a resolute emblem of Palestinian resilience, identity, and cultural pride.

Inside its venerable walls lies an expansive collection that provides a panoramic view of Jerusalem's journey through time. Ancient manuscripts, chronicling centuries of knowledge, coexist with deeply personal family correspondences that shed light on intimate moments and shared histories. Each piece tells a story, painting a vivid picture of the city's ever-evolving socio-political landscape, and the indelible mark left by its inhabitants.

Among the vibrant mixture of Jerusalem's history, the revitalization of the Khalidi Library emerges as a particularly poignant chapter. This revival is not just a physical restoration; it is a reclaiming of space and narrative in the midst of a city that has seen its share of cultural ebbs and flows. By proactively exhibiting manuscripts and embracing digitization, the library has broadened its reach, ensuring that these treasures are not only preserved for posterity but are also made accessible to a global audience, connecting people across continents to Jerusalem's rich heritage.

The project has essentially addressed the route of the issues that the Khalidi Library was facing, especially after a long period of negligence and vulnerability. While the funding was at a moderate level, it impactfully helped in reviving the library and the history and cultural heritage behind it and paved the way for further development and building credibility in the international cultural heritage sphere, attracting leading foundations and making them aware of the importance of the Library in the City's cultural heritage fabric and diverse identity. A number of following projects entailing further development and improvement followed the seed protection and revival funding of the CPF including, a major project by ALIPH, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Welfare Association. The library, with its extensive outreach and in-house activities, is still drawing the attention of organisations, scholars, researchers, and alternative tourism agencies. All of this had led the Khalidi Library to host an international conference with world renowned scholars presenting part of the treasures of the library and its significance to the cultural heritage.

However, the journey has not been without its challenges. From the intricate processes of conservation to the broader issues of asserting cultural identity in a city rife with political complexities, the library's revitalization stands testament to the power of collective memory and determination. Training programs in manuscript conservation and other capacity-building initiatives highlight a forward-looking vision, ensuring that future generations are equipped to carry forward this legacy.

In the broader narrative of Jerusalem, the Khalidi Library has repositioned itself not just as a silent observer but as an active participant, championing the Palestinian cultural narrative, thanks to CPF, which provided the seed support for the Khalidi to become a beacon of focal cultural heritage in Jerusalem and Palestine against a backdrop of potential annexation, legal intricacies, and the ever-present risk of historical erasure.



## Outcomes Following the CPF Project

CPF's financial and academic support has been instrumental in securing additional funding from ALIPH (USD 344,152) and Arab Fund projects through the Welfare Association (USD 155,000 not including renovation cost), as well as in strengthening the Friends of Al Khalidi Library (FKL). This support has not only ensured the library's sustenance and effective content protection but also fostered connections with international donors. This network has proven invaluable for spearheading various developmental, academic, research, and promotional endeavours which celebrate and conserve Jerusalem's cultural heritage.

A significant milestone worth noting is the Khalidi's persistent effort over three years to gain recognition as a cultural heritage organisation in Israel. Despite facing bureaucratic hurdles, given its identity as an Arab institution, the Khalidi finally secured this designation. This accomplishment adds another layer of protection against any external political or security challenges.

## Future Endeavours

Building on the newfound organisational recognition, both the FKL in the U.S and The Khalidi Library non-profit are collaboratively crafting a comprehensive three-year cultural and academic blueprint. This strategy is set to be co-funded by the FKL (for core activities) and supplemental fundraising efforts. As per our preliminary discussions, the strategic plan encompasses:

- **International Collaborative Initiatives:** Design a global cooperative program dedicated to the conservation of manuscripts and archives. This will address preservation needs despite the climate change and potential security concerns.
- **Research Fellowships:** Launch a fully-funded, global research fellowship, inviting scholars from around the world to contribute their expertise.
- **Outreach Expansion:** Bolster the Khalidi's outreach efforts by partnering with a diverse range of local and international institutions, scholars, and overseas libraries. Special emphasis will be placed on promoting alternative tourism.
- **Digital Advancements:** Augment the library's digital infrastructure to facilitate broader virtual access, ensuring that Khalidi's exclusive collections are universally accessible.
- **Content Enrichment:** Incorporate intellectual works from eminent Khalidi scholars, such as the esteemed Prof. Walid Al Khalidi.
- **Biographical Chronicles:** This series dives deep into the histories and narratives of the Khalidi family lineage.

The Al Khalidi custodians anticipate that these forward-looking initiatives will foster greater awareness, appreciation, and engagement with the Khalidi's invaluable contributions to cultural heritage.

## Recommendations

The Khalidi Library, as a cornerstone of Jerusalem's rich history, necessitates a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to ensure its preservation, growth, and continued relevance in today's changing world.

While the Khalidi library is currently devising a strategy and considering various development, the impact assessment recommends the following development,

1. The need for lab expansion and further development, including acquiring advanced equipment and machinery, was highlighted as a vital step to further bolster the preservation efforts.
2. Develop an extended training timeline and a more rounded curriculum that encompasses long-term preservation strategies, an essential tool in safeguarding the library's invaluable historical resources.
3. Utilize the library prospective role as a vital educational epicentre, advocating for the addition of more scholastic events and intellectual discussions, an initiative that holds the potential to elevate the library's status as a central hub for historical and cultural learning.
4. Improve operational and management capacity, including monitoring and evaluating library strategies and initiatives. The library custodians have reflected on this by including capacity building for internal management as part of the new organisational status.
5. Amplifying outreach efforts through youth engagement to foster deeper ties with the community and specifically targeting youth programs, which will cement the library's role for future generations.
6. Invest further in IT and digital platforms and infrastructure for protection, safeguarding and promotional purposes.
7. Support for Broader Cultural Institutions: The library's narrative emphasis the importance of bolstering cultural institutions at large, securing them as living testaments to history, knowledge, and identity.
- 8.

In essence, the Khalidi Library's restoration should be a harmonious blend of preservation efforts, management enhancements, community engagement, strategic partnerships, and forward-looking planning, ensuring its brightness for generation to come.

## Annexes

### Annex 01 Case Study Analysis: Al Khalidi Library – A Beacon of Palestinian Heritage

**Background:** The Khalidi Library is an embodiment of Palestinian cultural heritage. Established in the 1900s by Ragheb Khalidi, the institution was not merely a library but also a symbol of Arab resurgence and empowerment against foreign dominance in the region. While its primary mission was to encourage learning and rejuvenate interest in Islamic classics, its broader implication lay in its political and cultural significance in the Palestinian narrative.

**Significance of the Collection:** Housing the most extensive collection of rare Arabic manuscripts in Palestine, some of which date back 1,200 years, the library serves as a physical testament to Palestinians' long-standing cultural roots in Jerusalem. Beyond the manuscripts, the assortment of old newspapers and the Khalidi family archive makes the library a living chronicle of Palestinian history, countering the settler-colonial narrative and the subsequent challenges to Palestinian identity and heritage.

**Challenges Faced:** The library's significance meant that it became a target for various forms of aggression and theft, especially during historical events like the '48 Nakba. Attempts by the Israeli antiquities authority to appropriate parts of its collection and the continuous threats posed by settlers brought the library's safety into question.

**Revival and Modernization:** Recognizing the importance of preserving this treasure trove, the Khalidi administration, in collaboration with the British Council and CPF, embarked on a transformative journey. This included:

1. **Digitalization:** With the installation of library management and catalog software, the library took a significant step towards modernization, ensuring the protection and accessibility of approximately 1800 manuscripts.
2. **Restoration:** The establishment of a restoration lab and associated training programs heralded a new era for the library. Four individuals were trained in diverse areas like bookbinding, restoration, paper chemistry, and archival techniques. This not only helped preserve the manuscripts but also strengthened the local skill base.
3. **Community Engagement:** The inauguration of the library exhibition in 2018 opened its doors to a diverse group of visitors, including students, researchers, foreign tourists, and journalists. This was not only a testament to the library's rich heritage but also a platform for engagement and education.

**Impact and Outcome:** The project had multi-dimensional impacts:

- **Skill Development:** Training individuals in the restoration lab ensured that the library was not only preserving its current collection but was also building capacities to maintain its assets in the future.
- **Community Ownership:** Engaging local residents in the restoration process and exhibitions fostered a sense of ownership and pride in their heritage. The surge in visitor numbers is a testimony to the project's success and the library's renewed significance in the community.
- **Digital Accessibility:** By digitizing the centuries-old collections, the project made the library's treasures more accessible to scholars and the public, ensuring that the history it encapsulates remains relevant and approachable.

- **Promoting Resilience:** All these efforts converged to keep the library's doors open, acting as a beacon of cultural preservation, community engagement, and resilience among adversities.

**Conclusion:** The Khalidi Library's revival is not just about preserving manuscripts. It's a story of a community reclaiming its history, heritage, and identity. Through collaboration, resilience, and a commitment to knowledge preservation, the library stands as a testament to the undying spirit of the Palestinian community.

## List of the interviewees

- Professor Raja Al-Khalidi (Custodian), Director of MAS Institute,
- Mr. David Dahdal (Advisor of Al-Khalidi Library)
- Mr. Raja Al Khalidi (Khalidi Custodian),
- Professor Mohammad Ali Al Khalidi – Institute for Palestine Studies
- Mr. Khader Salameh – Director, Al-Khalidi Library
- Ms. Shayma Al Budeiri – Librarian, Al-Khalidi Library
- Professor Eugene Rogan – Director of the Middle East Centre, UK
- Ms. Miral Quteina – Palestinian Journalist
- Hiba Aslan – Palestinian Journalist
- Ms Nassab Adeeb – Palestinian Researcher
- Mr. Qasem Harb – Palestinian Researcher
- Mr. Aziz Al-Assa – Palestinian Researcher
- Professor Eugene Rogan, International Researcher, UK
- Mr. Idris Al-Khalidi – Volunteer at Al Khalidi Library
- Professor Jens Hanssen – International Researcher, University of Toronto, Canada
- Professor Vincent Lemire – University of Paris Est
- Ms. Jesica Holland, International Visitor
- Ms. Freja Hawat, International Visitor
- Mr. Mohammed Asmer, Tour Guide
- Mr. Ziad Khadash, School Teacher