



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

Address by Italian Universities for Palestinian
Students Project (Iupals) scholarship recipient

Majd Rami Hussein Swidan

Opening of the 804th academic year

Monday 30 March 2026, Aula Magna "Galileo Galilei"

**Intervento della studentessa borsista
del Progetto Italian Universities
for Palestinian Students, Iupals**

Majid Swidan

Magnificent Rector **Daniela Mapelli**,

distinguished authorities,

professors,

fellow students,

and honoured guests,

It is a profound honour to stand here today at the opening of the 804th academic year of the **University of Padua**, one of the oldest and most respected universities in the world. For more than eight centuries, this university has been a symbol of knowledge, freedom of thought, and scientific discovery.

Today, I am grateful to speak not only as a student of this university, but also as a recipient of the **Italian Universities for Palestinian Students Project (IUPALS)**. This initiative represents much more than a scholarship. It reflects an extraordinary collaboration between Italian universities and institutions that believe education must continue even in the most difficult circumstances.

Through the IUPALS project, universities across Italy—including the University of Padua—opened their doors to Palestinian students whose studies had been disrupted by war. This partnership created an opportunity for us to continue our education and protect our academic futures.

I come from Palestine, where the war has deeply affected the lives of many students. Universities have been disrupted, campuses damaged, and thousands of young people have seen their educational paths suddenly interrupted. Many talented students today are unable to continue their studies—not because they lack motivation or ability, but because circumstances have taken that opportunity away.

For students like me, the IUPALS initiative became a bridge during a time of uncertainty. And it is thanks to the commitment of universities such as the University of Padua that this bridge became a real path forward.

Arriving in Italy and joining the University of Padua was both exciting and challenging. I arrived about one and a half months after the semester had already started. Like many international students, I had to adapt quickly to a new country, a new academic system, and a completely different environment.

What made this transition possible was the support we received from the University of Padua. From the beginning, the university did not leave us alone. Professors, administrative staff, and support offices guided us step by step, helping us adapt both academically and personally. Their commitment showed that a university is not only a place where knowledge is taught, but also a community that supports its students.

With this support, I worked hard to catch up with my studies. Despite arriving late in the semester, I prepared for three exams and achieved full marks in two of them. For me, this result represents more than academic success. It represents resilience, opportunity, and the powerful impact that supportive institutions can have on students' lives.

My field of study is molecular biology, a discipline that seeks to understand life at its most fundamental level. Science has the power not only to expand knowledge, but also to improve human health and address global challenges. Universities like the University of Padua create environments where research, innovation, and international collaboration can flourish.

Education has always been a powerful force for peace, development, and understanding. When universities open their doors to students from different cultures and backgrounds, they create something extraordinary: a global community united by curiosity, respect, and the shared pursuit of knowledge.

Standing here today, I represent not only my own journey but also the hopes of many Palestinian students whose dreams are still waiting for an opportunity. I hope that one day they too will have the chance to sit in classrooms, conduct research, and contribute to science and society.

To the University of Padua, to the institutions behind the IUPALS initiative, and to all the professors and staff who support us, I express my deepest gratitude. Your commitment to education and international solidarity has given many students the chance not only to study, but to continue believing in the future.

As we begin this new academic year, may the University of Padua continue to inspire generations of students to pursue knowledge with curiosity, courage, and responsibility.

And may education always remain a bridge between cultures, a source of hope, and a path toward a more peaceful world.

Thank you.

