



PCR

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Annual Report 2010

Introduction:

The Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between People organized and got involved in organizing a number of activities through the year to help achieve its goals set forth when founded back in 1988.

The major development in PCR's work was the establishment of the fourth department which the Advocacy Department. Therefore, PCR has four major department that work on a high level of coordination in order to achieve the goals of the organization.

Mission:

PCR works to bridge the gap between Palestinians and peoples from all around the world, informing the public about the reality in Palestine, and empowering the community.

Goals:

- 1) Promote arriving at a just and peaceful Palestine
- 2) Promote harmony and rapprochement within society and between societies
- 3) Raise awareness, Provide accurate and first hand information about Palestine
- 4) Enhance civic duty and civic responsibility especially for empowering youth, women, and for marginalized segments of our society.

Report of the work done by the four department of PCR.

I. The Media Department

[www.imemc.org]

The Media Department contains the International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC). Being a joint Palestinian-International effort, IMEMC combines Palestinian journalists' deep understanding of the context, history, and the socio-political environment with International journalists' skills in non-partisan reporting.

IMEMC provides fair and comprehensive coverage of events and developments in Israel-Palestine.

In the course of the year, IMEMC produced around 257 audio reports of Palestine Today and This Week in Palestine.

IMEMC recorded an average of 3 million hits per month during the year 2010 with an average of 100 thousand hits per day. The site also recorded an average of 42 thousand unique visitors per month. This is an increase of around 30% of last year where IMEMC had a record of 2 million hits per month.

During the year, IMEMC produced 2645 news stories with an average of 7 stories per day, covering Israeli attacks in the Palestinian areas, Palestinian internal issues and Political developments on the peace process, human rights issues, and other topics. More than 20 percent of the reports were about the popular nonviolent activities in the Palestinian territories, which IMEMC is committed to its promotion.

IMEMC is read mainly in North American, but other parts of Europe and the Middle East and Asia have their share as well. The statistics indicate that 36% of our audience are from North America,

19% from Iran, 7% from the UK and the rest 38% are from other parts of the world.

The site ranks 409 thousand in the world, and 208 thousand in the US.

Note: Most statistics above are from Alexa.com

IMEMC hosted around 20 volunteers during the year 2010 from, UK, Ireland, US Spain and the US, with a maximum of three months for some and minimum of two weeks for others.

We believe the raise in the number of hits is due to the better quality of the reports because of hosting international editors. Also in the late 2010 IMEMC started to utilize Facebook and twitter social networking to promote IMEMC reports.

In addition to the increased re-broadcast of IMEMC reports by some Radio stations in the US and Canada and the UK.

In 2010 IMEMC focused on utilizing the social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter. There are currently almost 500 followers on twitter @imemcnews and the number is increasing. Many of the followers re-tweet our postings which reach to more people of course. This has contributed to the increase in numbers of visitors to the site.

All news reports published on IMEMC website are automatically published on Facebook and Twitter via RSS feed service.

IMEMC is planning to build an iPhone Application that utilizes RSS feed in order to reach more audience. This is expected to generate some income, though not much. The iPhone application is part of a bigger Citizen Journalism project that will be submitted to the Knight Foundation news challenge.

The project will provide a chance for individuals to contribute news tips to IMEMC which will be filtered, verified edited and published on IMEMC. The project has a budget of around \$200,000.00 USD. We are awaiting a response from Knight Foundation. Check out project presentation at www.newsti.ps (it stands for NewsTips)

There is always a need for International volunteers, not only to edit news stories, but also to contribute stories to IMEMC, because IMEMC is not a Palestinian site only, it is a joint venue for International and Palestinian journalists.

II. The Community Service and Development Department

This department aims at empowering young Palestinians in various fields to prepare a young leadership that cares. It also aims at providing a good environment for Christian and Muslim youth, males and females to work together for a better future.

The CSDD have successfully implemented three projects during the reported period.

1- Education for All Project

The Education for All project continues to provide almost free-of-charge classes for students who need support at the local schools of Beit Sahour. There are around 20 students from four schools in Beit Sahour.

Students are given Arabic, English and Mathematics Classes on weekly basis. Each student receives 12 hours of classes per month to help enhance their academic performance at school which in turn contributes to the educational processes and to reduce illiteracy among Palestinian youth.

The project is funded partially by the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church and the Italian Organization A La Calle as part of the Angelo Frammartino Educational Center which was established in PCR in 2008.

In addition to academic education, students are exposed to skill enhancement training such as communication and community service. They visit functional organizations in Beit Sahour, to learn about the community service work and also encouraged to volunteer at some of these organizations in order to become more involved in the community activities.

Students also help PCR in its annual activities, especially the Shepherds Nights Festival which includes the annual candle procession PCR organizes since 1990. (More detailed report of the Shepherds below)

Feedback reports from all the schools and some of the teachers indicate that the students' performance has enhanced as a result of their participation in the project. They have encouraged PCR to keep this program for more years.

Many of these students were unable to take private lessons because they can not afford them. Students have to pay 40 Shekels per hour for a private class, and 30 if they are part of a group. Meanwhile, in PCR students pay 40 per month for 12 hours of classes.

In addition, the teachers in the project do not repeat what the students study in school, they pre-test the students at the beginning of a new semester and build a supporting program based on their test, then make a post-test in order to see progress.

80 percent of the students indicated good progress because their enrollment in the program. PCR is planning to upgrade the project to include more students, as it currently can accommodate students of the Eighth grade only, as recommended by the schools.

However, the new plan includes a follow up with the same students in the ninth grade to make sure they learn new studying habits which will positively reflect on their academic performance.

Preparations for a new academic year will start soon to recruit new students for the year 2011/2012. If funding is secured, the new phase will start in October and new students will enroll for a new year and the older students will continue with PCR for additional course.

2- The Shepherds Nights Festival – 2010

The Shepherds' Nights Festival 2010 is the third annual festival developed as a joint initiative between PCR and the Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) in 2008. Before being a festival, it was a traditional candle procession that PCR has been organizing since 1990.

The festival has become an annual event in Beit Sahour and has become part of the Christmas Week events in the Bethlehem region. The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has listed the festival in its tourist booklet as part of the events for tourists to attend when they are in Bethlehem.

In Addition, the Beit Sahour municipality has also listed the festival as part of Beit Sahour's major events during the Christmas week.

This is believed to be a major success and a match of one of the goals of the festival is to make this festival a permanent annual one, that would attract international tourists. However, the festival did not only attract international tourists, it also attracted local tourists, from other West Bank regions and from Palestine 48.

“I am very amazed this year, when I remember last year's festival, I can see, better preparations, better organizing and much better and bigger audience.” These were the words of the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Dr. Khuloud Deibis, the patron of the festival, in the opening ceremony.

As usual, the festival included three Shepherds' nights 23, 24, and 25th of December.

This years festival was funded by, The Holy Land Handicraft Cooperative Society in Beit Sahour (HLCS), The Pontifical Mission for Palestine, the World Vision and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), in addition to some individual donors. In addition, Radio Orient in Bethlehem sponsored the audible advertisements. However, the fund was not enough to cover all the expenses and we had to cut down some of the advertisement activities and other plans in order to lower the costs.

The goals set forth for the project are to promote Beit Sahour as a tourist destination and create events that would keep tourists in Bethlehem area longer around Christmas time which in turn is expected to support the local economy and allow more chances for understanding between the visitors and the local community. In addition, the project aims at encouraging cultural events and promoting locally made products to the public, and send out a message from the Palestinian people to the rest of the world. The festival also aims at bringing joy to the children of Bethlehem where the baby Jesus was born to bring peace to the world.

Outputs in relation to the program objectives, both on direct and indirect beneficiaries and on gender, also comment on impacts/results/achievements in relation to these objectives.

The Shepherds Nights' Festival 2010 has met to a high degree the goals and objectives set forth for this project. The 2010 festival witnessed a huge progress compare to the 2009 festival on all levels. On one hand, the number of tourists who attended the festival was more than triple the time the number who attended last year in total. We have received a number of calls from Hotels and tour operators confirming that they will send groups to the festival. In addition, a group of 80 French nationals who came to Palestine to participate in a week of nonviolent activities organized by the Rapprochement Center, JAI and some other organizations and groups from different parts of the West Bank, have also attended at least two nights of the festival.

We strongly believe that the high number of tourist participation is due to two major factors. 1- The festival was mentioned in the booklet of the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities that is issued specially for Christmas activities and 2- We have sent flyers to hotels, tour operators and also announced the festival in This Week in Palestine, which is seen by most of the internationals living and visiting in Palestine. Moreover, moving the location of the festival to a more central location made it a lot easier for people to attend and gave chance to by-passers to stop and take a look and maybe stay.

This year the festival was attended by a remarkable audience from Palestine 48. we have targeted this audience by publishing an Ad in Panet Website, that has a huge audience among the Palestinian community in Israel.

In addition, the number of local audience was also huge this year. We have rented 1000 chairs and in the three nights, the 1000 chairs were full and on the third night and many were standing. Many others attended for sometime and left, and others replaced them.

This year, we hosted 10 vendors, compare with 6 last year. We had two food booths, handicrafts products and olive wood products as well, in addition to one Olive Oil products booth from Nablus and another women cooperative society from Beta village near Nablus, in addition to two handicraft booths silver & glass and needle work in addition to a cotton candy booth.

Issa Abu Sa'ada, one of the vendors who had a food booth said that in these three days he earned a one-month worth income compare to his work in the School Cantina.

Also, the falafel booth owner, Hanna Hayek estimated his income in the three days to around 10 days of regular sales in his falafel Kiosk downtown Beit Sahour.

These were the two booths with the highest sales, while the other booths had much lower sales, however, they managed to introduce their products to the public, and encourage boycott of Israeli products.

While the first and last day of the festival were cultural and political, the second day of the festival was dedicated to Christmas. The first part of the day was dedicated to the children. A special children show brought joy and happiness to the children who danced and jumped to the music and the songs of a clown and his two assistants who came from Nazareth to Bethlehem specially for the festival. Roni Rock and his group "Keifak Hey" made a great day to the participating children for over one hour during the cold weather. Children came with their parents and brothers and sisters to attend the show, which was not only amusing but educational at the same time.

At the end of the show, at least 550 children received Christmas gifts from the festival. The gifts included Chocolate, nuts and a story. The story is about the Palestinian refugees, especially designed for children by the Badil Resource Center in Bethlehem to educate the Palestinian children about the right of return of the Palestinian refugees to their land through simple cartoons and simple words.

The kids were very happy with the show, and many of them expressed joy and delight for seeing Santa and Roni Rock and the group.

We interviewed kids after the show and their reactions were great. Aseel said the best part was Santa giving them the Christmas Presents, while Siwar Qmsiyeh, a six year old girl said "I was very happy when I was dancing with Santa and 'Ammo Roni' and we jumped and sang together for the birth of the baby Jesus." "I really hope this happens again," she added.

Her cousin Jiad said this Christmas was the best Christmas he had, and added that hey enjoyed a lot when he was dancing with Roni and with Santa.

The evening was concluded by an Italian Jazz group and the Shepherds Ecumenical Group from Beit Sahour who brightened and warmed the dark cold night with their chants and Christmas carols.

The festival's last day, the Candle Procession completed the triangle, by lighting a candle to the Palestinian state. The candle procession which was organized on the last day of the festival carried the theme of statehood as a main slogan, "Light a Candle for the Establishment of the Palestinian State".

The march started from the Greek Orthodox Shepherds' Field and went through the town to end at the Festival's site at the Greek Catholic School. People lit candles and marched accompanied by the four scout groups in town creating a very huge parade.

At least three thousand people, Palestinians and Internationals marched together lighting candles for the Palestinian state. This was the twentieth candle procession to be organized by PCR and it was connected to the first procession of 1991 when the South African freedom fighter Archbishop Desmond Tutu visited Beit Sahour and stated that there can be no peace in the region without the establishment of a Palestinian state.

There was live video coverage and transmission on a screen through the three nights of the festival with four cameras, long shot, medium shot, handle camera and a camera on the crane which allowed covering and documenting every single incident in the festival from various angle.

A video containing all the events of the festival was produced and will be burned on DVDs, in addition all the digital material is stored to be used for advertising the 2011 festival. The video comes on regular 3 DVDs and we are trying to burn it on a high capacity DVD to lower the number and keep the quality if possible.

Despite the success of the festival, it suffered financial difficulties. Since our tendency is to get funding from the private sector as much as possible and lower the dependence on foreign aid organizations, we were in contact with a number of companies for funding.

We believe that the fairly low turnout in 2009 was a main factor why the local private sector did not contribute much to the festival. However, the media sponsor Radio Orient managed to convince some of his customers to advertise on the screen in the festival, and we believe this is going to be one of the important sources of funding for the festival in 2011.

Another problem that faces the festival every year, is the timing. While there is no way the timing of the project can be changed, we will continue to have problems with volunteers and the weather. The preparation time for the festival is almost the same time students, in schools and universities are sitting for their exams, which leaves PCR and YMCA staff alone in the field until December 23, which is the first day of the festival. However, we think next year we will have to hire some people to do some of the work. This year, due to budget limitations, we could not hire extra people to help.

Although the weather was relatively good this year, yet, on December 24, it was humid, and cold at night which made it difficult for most people to sit on the chairs as they were wet. We will try to provide some gas heaters next year to make things easier. The cold weather caused some people to leave after the first concert.

3- The Young Film Makers

Starting on June 24, 2010 PCR held its second photography training seminar for young Palestinian film makers, which was funded by the Youth Fund of the UN-Habitat. Rami Rishmawi, an aspiring professional photographer, who worked and studied in Egypt, near Cairo, and who plans to further pursue his studies in Europe (perhaps in London or Paris), led this 25 training hours photography training program, which ended on July 8. Three sessions per week were provided, each session was about four hours long; from 2-6 pm.

This program is an educational and capacity building project at the same time, that is aimed at average Palestinian youth, both males and females. It strives to empower them to use their acquired skills for a potential future career and to be more effective and active in their communities through photography and media. This is crucial, as the photography and media fields are growing and becoming more demanding in Palestinian life and culture. Women photographers are especially needed in the more conservative Palestinian communities.

There are 10 youth who are part of the program. They were both Christian and Muslim males and females aged 15-18. They came mainly from the Bethlehem the. These youth were informed about this seminar through various advertisements that were posted on local television channels as well as on the internet and were selected based on their interviews and applications.

The training took place in the PCR's "Meeting Hall," where participants were provided with a folder containing all of the essential training information and materials, including a blank notepad. In addition, each participant was paired up and sat behind a desk with a desktop computer and a digital camera used during the training sessions.

The main purpose of this training program was to provide the young men and women a thorough overview on how to correctly utilize digital cameras. The PCR specifically purchased 3 brand new digital 2010 Canons from funds provided by the Youth FUND of the UN-Habitat—in addition to their 3 older Canons—for this photography training seminar.

The youth first gained a detailed background and explanation of the course, as well as a detailed introduction to the importance of media and video production as a tool of empowerment by the Executive director of PCR, George N. Rishmawi. The introductory workshop was also focused on the ways the trainees may use the skills they are going to learn in through the project. Then, after Rami Rishmawi's explanations and visuals of how to physically operate a digital camera, explaining all of the options and features, the youth were able to use the cameras, in pairs. They were instructed to take mainly portrait and outdoor shots, playing with shadows and sunlight. They were able to do this for three days, starting June 29 and stopping on July 3. Beginning on July 3, they were taught how to upload and edit their photos using the Adobe Photoshop CS3 program.

The training also included editing skills using Adobe Premiere CS3, one of the simple and developed video editing software. The students produced short films about issues of their own concern and interest. The video editing was concluded in 30 hours.

By the end of the project, 10 young Palestinian males and females, Christians and Muslims learned the basic skills of video production on a small scale. They learned the main elements that composes a still image, video and how to put these images and video together to send a message or express oneself in any topic of interest.

<p>PLANNED ACTIVITIES</p> <p><i>Please list the key activities that were planned for the first period of the project.</i></p>	<p>REALIZED ACTIVITIES</p> <p><i>Please list the key activities that were actually carried out for the first period of the project.</i></p>	<p>OUTPUTS</p> <p><i>Please list the outputs of each activity that was carried out during the first period of the project and indicate if there were any changes from the original plan of activities.</i></p>	<p>TIME FRAME</p> <p><i>Please indicate when each activity was implemented and any changes from the original plan of activities</i></p>
<p>1. Setting selection committee and criteria, this to include members of the board of administrators and the project coordinator.</p>	<p>Committee was selected and comprised of Project coordinator, PCR Exc. Director, two board members.</p>	<p>Two trainers were selected to provide Photography and and video production training.</p>	<p>Selection of trainers was done by June 10, 2010.</p>
<p>2. Purchase of needed equipment, Computers, Cameras, Tripods</p>	<p>Bidders submitted their price quotations and one vendor was selected, by the board of administrators</p>	<p>Three Computers, three Video Cameras, Three Still Cameras and three tripods were purchased and all software were installed. The purchase was at two stages, computers first then Cameras and Tripods.</p>	<p>All purchase of equipment was done by June 21, 2010</p>
<p>3. Announce in TV and Radio Stations and selecting the participants</p>	<p>An announcement in the Local TV station and a Committee was selected and comprised of Project coordinator, PCR Exc. Director, two board members.</p>	<p>10 students were selected to join the project out of 18 applicants.</p>	<p>Selection of participants was done by June 20, 2010</p>
<p>4. Introductory workshop</p>	<p>An Introductory workshop was conducted on June 23, by the Executive Director of PCR, George N. Rishmawi</p>	<p>Students are aware of the goals of the training and expect to get training in shooting and editing still images using Adobe Photoshop CS3 and shooting and editing video using Adobe Premiere CS4. Participants became also aware of the nature of the project and the donors in addition to the time frame and the time of the sessions.</p>	<p>Done on June 23, 2010</p>

		The trainers attended the workshop and communication was established between the trainees and the trainers and the project coordinator.	
5. Still Photography and editing training	25 training hours of Still photography were given split on 6 sessions, 4 hours each in addition to an extra session for one hour.	10 Trainees know how to shoot still images using digital still cameras. Trainees shot very good images and downloaded them to the computer and edited them using Adobe Photoshop CS3.	June 26 – July 8, 2010
6. Shooting and Editing Video	80 training hours of video production were provided, including shooting and editing video were given, split on 20 sessions of 4 hours each.	10 Trainees learned how to shoot video, download it to the computer and edit it using Adobe Premiere CS4. Trainees started to produced 3 films.	July 10 – August 07, 2010
7. Final conclusion workshops to complete videos and graduation	Final editing workshop was held to allow the students to finish their production. Graduation Date assigned to August 26.	Three short films were produced by the students with guidance from the trainers. Graduation Ceremony was held in Ush Ghrab Peace Park in Beit Sahour. Films produced by the trainees were screened to the audience and students spoke about their experience in the training. Trainees were awarded Certificates and DVD's of the needed software.	Done by August 26, 2010

III. The Advocacy Department

[www.palestinejn.org]

The advocacy Department of PCR, started during the war on Gaza December 2008 – January 2009. It started as a simple effort to help the people of Gaza by networking with people from different international solidarity groups to apply pressure on their governments to stop the war in Gaza.

The idea was further developed through the year 2010 and created **The Palestine Justice Network** which aims at networking people together in countries around the world in order to create pressure groups and solidarity groups to support the legitimate right of the Palestinian people.

The network organized a campaign in December during which a week of nonviolent activities was organized in cooperation with around 10 local Palestinian organizations and popular resistance groups.

The group implemented nonviolent activities in a number of West Bank locations, in Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah area and Jerusalem. 81 activists, mainly from France joined the campaign in addition to some other internationals who live and work in Palestine.

Immediately after the campaign was over, a master plan was suggested for July 2011. The plan was to get 1000 internationals to join a week of nonviolent activities Starting July 9, the seventh anniversary of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling regarding the illegality of the wall, and the sixth anniversary of the Palestinian Civil Society call to action upon which the BDS movement was established.

Contacts have been made with around 30 local organizations and popular resistance groups and preparations started for the July campaign.

IV. The Alternative Travel Department

[www.sirajcenter.org]

The alternative travel Department runs the Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies, a project that has been running in PCR since 2008.

Siraj organizes an annual summer program, known as Palestine Summer Celebration. This extremely successful project gives participants have an opportunity to live with Palestinian Families, learn Arabic, volunteer at Palestinian NGOs, learn Palestinian culture (e.g. folklore dancing), and eat and cook Arabic food. These individuals also visit remote areas, tour the wall, the seam line, visit with Palestinians and Israelis inside and outside the Green Line. Siraj brings Palestinians and Internationals in its unique way at other times of the years and sometimes in unconventional tourism. One Peace Cycle projects brought European cyclists on a tour of the West Bank and another one for hikers.

In August of 2010, Siraj took over administrative responsibilities of El-Beit Guest House from the Arab Women Union (AWU) based on the agreement signed between PCR and AWU in 2008, upon which the guest house was renovated and remodeled to host more guests. The guest house has 15 rooms, so it is able to accommodate 30 guests. The guest house has been renovated with funds made available from Spanish organizations through The Palestinian-European Cooperation Association (ASECOP).

(more information about the guest house can be found at www.elbeit.org)

[END]