

The Palestinian Centre For Rapprochement Between People (PCR)



PCR
ANNUAL REPORT
2008

Prepared by:
George N. Rishmawi

Executive Director

PCR Annual Narrative Report For the year 2008

Table of Contents:

- I. Introduction
- II. Community Service Department
 - A. Young Advocates Program
 - B. Angelo Frammartino Educational Center – Education for All
 - C. Summer Camp “A La Calle, August 2008”
 - D. 20 Years Anniversary
 - E. Video Training Program
 - F. The Gaza War Activities
 - G. NNAC - Lebanon Meeting
 - H. Shepherds' Nights 2008
- III. Media Department
 - A. The International Middle East Media Center
 - i. Canada Trip – January 2008
 - ii. The Nakba 60Anniversary
- IV.
- V. The Alternative Travel Department
 - A. Siraj Center
- VI. Administrative Issues:
 - A. PCR Elections 2008
 - B. Staff Affairs
 - C. Finances

Introduction:

The Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People (PCR) continue to advocate the Palestinian just cause in local, Arab and International forums. In 2008 PCR has reshaped its work into three major departments.

1- The Community Service Department includes two projects, the “Education for All” program” and the “Young Advocates Program” (YAP). The education program is aimed at providing free-of-charge support classes for student of less fortunate families who need support to enhance their academic performance. So far, the program provided classes in Arabic and English in addition to non-curriculum activities such as communication skills, drama and art. The program attracted 25 young boys and girls, Christians and Muslims from the five schools in the town of Beit Sahour. The program is still running with funds from “A La Calle”, an Italian organization working for social change.

The Young Advocates program is a capacity building program that aims at preparing young Palestinians form more involvement in their society and in the civil based nonviolent resistance in Palestine. The program is a continuation of the community program launched in 1997. Around 30 young people from Bethlehem area were involved and received basic and advanced training in Human Rights, Communication Skills, Media and Web Design and Advocacy skills.

2- The Media Department contains the International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC).
[www.imemc.org]

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.

Recently, IMEMC Started to provide Spanish Language coverage as an attempt to outreach a wider readership. The Spanish edition of IMEMC is completely run by volunteers, from Barcelona, Palestine and other places.

3- The Alternative Travel department includes Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies.
[www.sirajcenter.org]

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.

I. THE COMMUNITY SERVICE DEPARTMENT

1- Young Advocates Program:

Background:

The Young Advocates Program is a training program that aims at equipping young Palestinians with skills needed for nonviolent struggle to end the Israeli occupation, through active advocacy.

The program also aimed at allowing young Palestinians to take active role in their community by increasing their interest in local politics and community needs.

The project included training courses in Human Rights, Communication Skills, Media and Advocacy Skills.

Human rights course (30 training hours):

Three lawyers offered the training from the Independent Commission for Human Rights in Bethlehem. However the main trainer was Farid Al-Atrash, and the other two were guest trainers, Yassir Salah and Ala' Ghanayim in the sessions, when talking about specialized topics.

In the first four sessions, covered 8 training hours, the participants were introduced to the International Humanitarian Law and the International Law for Human Rights, indicating similarities and differences, in addition to the main rules of the International Humanitarian Law and the violations by Israel. Students also learned about the conventions to protect Human Rights.

The Four other sessions, covering 10 hours, were dedicated to the international agreements against torture and children rights and the agreements to terminate all types of discrimination against women in addition to learning about the fair trial.

6 hours split on three sessions were dedicated for the Fourth Geneva convention for the protection of civilians in times of war, and the legal situation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the legal situation in Gaza Strip after the Israeli unilateral disengagement and Israeli reflections on that. Additionally, the legal situation of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the status of the "Administrative Detention" in the both international humanitarian law and human rights law was also tackled.

The last four sessions that covered eight training hours, were dedicated to discuss the United Nations and its important legal arm, mainly the International court of justice and its ruling regarding the wall Israel is building in the West Bank. The trainees were exposed to the legal situation of the wall and the nature of the ICJ ruling.

Communications Skills

The communication skills for Advocacy training was concluded around the end of June. Participants, who mostly are the same of the Human Rights training course, received 30 training hours in communication skills needed in advocacy work split over 10 sessions. The following topics and issues were handled in this training.

In the first two sessions, they participants were given an introduction to advocacy work with a theoretical background and example of successful advocacy work. Later, in the next two sessions, campaigning and lobbying were the focus.

The next six hours of the training were dedicated to group presentations. Participants were asked to prepare a presentation about different topics to present them to the rest of the group, a skill missed by many young Palestinians.

As media is an integral part of Rapprochement work, the participants were trained in how to give an interview and how to interview people, preparing for the next session on media. The participants did a role play interviewing each other.

Finally, the participants were given basic training in analyzing articles and pointing out weaknesses and strengths of the arguments.

Media Training:

Ten trainees attended the media training, which was conducted twice a week, 2 hours per session. Participants received 30 hours of training in the following skills.

- 1- Taking good footage using a video camera
- 2- Downloading the footage on a computer
- 3- Edit the footage using iMovie (Mac Application)
- 4- How to upload the video to the internet (You Tube and Google Video)
- 5- Creating a Blog on the internet and adding articles, images and videos to the blog (using Wordpress blogging software)



The training was attended by ten trainees due to technical limitations. Since this is a practical training, participants needed to use computers to practice what they learn. There were only ten computers available at the computer lab we rented for the course.

The trainees produced a short video clip featuring the training. They interviewed each other and downloaded the material to the computer, edited it and produced a short video clip about the training, including footage from last year's training.

Two of the trainees will be given further training at PCR and IMEMC and will contribute their skills to help with the work.

In late November, the two trainees were selected from a number of applicants. The selection was based on a criterion set by PCR director and the Project Coordinator. The volunteers have to match most of the following conditions:

- 1- To have serious commitment to PCR
- 2- To have good skills in English Language or other languages
- 3- Should have taken at least three training courses at PCR
- 4- Any other qualifications they provide that can be helpful in PCR's work



Out of four applicants, Hussam Qassis and Rana Mousa were selected for the voluntary work. Hussam's main task is to provide help to the audio technician of IMEMC to help produce the audio reports, Palestine Today and This Week in Palestine, in addition to other office needs.

Rana's main task is to follow up with the Spanish volunteers who attempt to create a Spanish Version of IMEMC. Rana also translate some of the IMEMC items from English to Spanish. IMEMC's Spanish edition was launched in January 2008.

Advocacy Training:



The Advocacy course was offered by MR. Ghassan Andoni, the founder of PCR, currently the Director of the Public Relation Office in Birzeit University. 12 trainees have signed up for this course, during which they learned dialogue and analytical thinking skills. The course was given in 10 sessions, three hours each. Trainees were also exposed to how to prepare presentations and present them given time limitations. The training also included skills of logical thinking and logical arguments in addition to Role-Plays and news analysis.

Advocacy Practices and Activities

Several of the trainees are active in the "Stop the Bleeding of Bethlehem" campaign which has been founded by a number of active organizations in the Bethlehem area. PCR is a founding member of this campaign and is giving it a considerable amount of time.

Among these activist groups are various political factions and popular resistance groups who are active against the wall, settlements and land confiscation and all other forms of the Israeli military occupation in Bethlehem area.

This campaign is totally based on civil nonviolent resistance as its method for resisting the occupation. It succeeds because it utilizes the normal channels of interaction within the local communities in order to ensure maximum participation by the people in these activities.

This campaign also attempts to carry out ongoing active nonviolent resistance in the Bethlehem area as a whole.

Since launched in April, the campaign has organized together with the local residents of the Bethlehem villages several nonviolent activities on weekly basis in Al-Khader, Artas, Al-N'uman and Um Salamounah villages.

Artas demo: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wnf6VQQJb7w>

Replanting trees in Artas: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZfiLQY8hpE>

A number of the YAP trainees took part of the event organized on the 40 anniversary of the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Others setup stands in front of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem where they put photos from the Palestinian life under the occupation and distributed information to the tourists who are coming to visit the church.

The trainees will be encouraged to go to the nonviolent actions in Bethlehem and make short videos about them to be uploaded on the internet and on their blogs as well.

The participants of the YAP project, played an important role in organizing the annual Candle Procession for 2007. The candle procession was held in cooperation with the municipality of Beit

Sahour, in the form of a festival called, “Joy to the City Festival” held, Dec. 21-23, 2007. The candle procession was part of the program, in addition to lighting up of the Christmas tree in the town, a small bazaar, children activities and musical concerts and folklore singing and Dabka dancing.

Some of the young advocates participated in the activity organized by PCR and other local NGOs to protest the visit of the US. President, George W. Bush to Bethlehem.

2- Angelo Frammartino Educational Center



The Angelo Frammartino Educational Center was established in March 2008 with a major support of the Italian youth organization, A La Calle. The center hosted the first educational project named “Education for All. The project aimed at providing free support classes in Arabic and English languages for students who need support but can not afford to pay for these classes because of financial difficulties.

“Education for all” is an alternative education program that is basically a way to support Palestinian children who need extra lessons but can not afford it because of financial restrictions.

In PCR, the project is named in commemoration of the late Angelo Frammartino, a young Italian who was killed in Jerusalem some years ago. We want to send a message to all the world that killing Angelo is not based on any national background, but a mere criminal act.

Therefore, the Center is called, “Angelo Frammartino Educational Center”.

The project is supported by A La Calle organization from Italy and Oxfam-Great Britain. The idea was initiated by A La Calle in late 2007. Contacts have been made by PCR to the partners of Oxfam-GB network. The idea was positively received by the partners, and Oxfam-GB approved a grant to implement the project in six locations in the West Bank by the partners.



It is apparent that the students’ academic achievements



affect their charisma and their involvement in their community. Therefore, enhancing students’ academic situation will reflect positively on their community involvement.

The program suggests new ways of teaching, in addition to extra-curricular activities that aims at raising awareness of young students of things around them. Participants of this program will:

1. Receive support classes in relative subjects
2. Stay away from the streets, and will not stay at home do nothing
3. Start building community values at this critical stage of their lives

On the other hand, the project will provide jobs for Palestinian teachers and trainers, and will give a chance for children of less fortunate families to receive free-of-charge educational support.

The program will affect the students' behavior and the way they manage their time and their studies, therefore it will give them life skills, based on the belief that students who are not doing well in their academic life, can become better if they learn how to study.

The first three months of the program were co-financed by Oxfam-GB who also funded four other partner organizations to implement the same project in their regions. Therefore the project was implemented in Beit Sahour, Bethlehem, Al-Walaja, Jericho, Jerusalem and Beit Furik.

The partners were, Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center (Wiam), Bethlehem, Ansar Center Al-Walaja, Child Development Association (CDA), Beit Furik and Palestinian Vision, Jerusalem and Fasayel in the Jordan Valley.



The project had the following specific objectives:

1. Prepare teachers for new methods of education
2. Exchange experience among network member organizations
3. Enhance Communication skills for young Palestinians
4. Provide good alternative academic education
5. Introduce them to Civic Society and Democracy Values
6. Promote the use of Nonviolence in solving conflict on different levels
7. Increase their knowledge of Human Rights and History and current issues that the Palestinian Society is facing
8. Involve the youth in community activities

Specialized trainers from the Jerusalem Counseling center were hired to give training for the teachers before they start with the students, which provided the teachers with non-traditional methods.

3- Palestinian-Italian Summer Camp in Beit Sahour, August 2008



The activity was aimed at discussing four major topics and figure out methods for follow up on these topics. The topics were basically, Alternative Media, Nonviolence Fair Trade and the BDS, (Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions).

The activity had two parts, political informational tours, seminar, and discussions. The group toured different Palestinian areas through which the group met with a number of organizations, in Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jerusalem and Hebron.

In Jerusalem the group had a tour with the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolition (ICAHN) who are specialized in organizing tours that shows the effect of settlements on the future of Jerusalem and the way Israel is controlling all aspects of life in the Palestinian areas in what ICAHD usually describe as "The Matrix of Control".

They also had a commemoration of Angelo Frammartino, a young Italian man who was killed by a Palestinian thief in Jerusalem in August 2006. The educational center that PCR established in 2008 was named after him upon request from the Italian donors, A La Calle.

The Italian activists had also visited Ramallah and met with some of the active groups in the area. They had a meeting with a representative of the Palestinian People's Party, after which they visited the village of Bilin and met with members of the popular committee against the wall and settlements in the village.



The group then has a meeting with the Alternative Information Center (AIC) in Jerusalem and listened to an explanation about the work of the organization.

The first day was about the BDS, a campaign launched in 2005, by the civil society organizations in Palestine calling for boycotting Israel and promoting divestment and calling for sanctions against Israel until it abides by International law.

Hazem Jamjoum from Badil Resource Center began the first day with a brief historic introduction to familiarize Italian attendees with the forces that led to the present conditions of occupation over the past hundred years. He then outlined strategies that ordinary Palestinians and citizens throughout the world can implement to bring about change and at the same time send a message to Israel that repressive policies that deny human rights and strangle the rights of Palestinians can not be tolerated.



The second part of the day was focused on Fair Trade, as a way to support Palestinian farmers and to support the BDS campaign. Nadia Harb from the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) gave a detailed presentation about fair trade and the work they do in PARC in this field.



Nadia said a resurgence of the 1987 program of promoting self-sufficiency during time of siege would be beneficial. During the Intifada, seeds had been provided to families suffering from closures and curfews and there was concerted effort to bring the community together for the mutual benefit for all. After Oslo in 1995, Nadia's role changed. Women's rights and education became the focus. She worked to change laws and develop pressure groups and to elect more women in public office.

The group then paid a visit to the nearby Deheishe refugee camp and met with activists from Ibdaa Cultural center who explained to them about the work of the center and the activities they organize for the youngsters in the camp.



The Second Day was focused on Civil Disobedience. In the morning, the group held a workshop about civil disobedience as a method to resist in justice. In the afternoon session, Dr. Jad Isaac, Director of the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ) also one of the founders of the Rapprochement Center gave the group a detailed presentation about the experience of the civil disobedience and the Tax Boycott in Beit Sahour during the first intifada.

In the Third Day a workshop about media activism occupied all the morning session. The workshop was facilitated and run by PCR' Director George Rishmawi. The focus of the workshop was mainly on the role of independent media in revealing the truth about the Palestine-Israel conflict. PCR's media project, The International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC) was the focus of the discussion.

In the afternoon, the group met with Israeli Journalist and Activist Amira Hass at Osh Ghrab site in Beit Sahour. Amira Hass also spoke about her experience and the role of media in the conflict.



On the fourth day, the day started with a nonviolence training to prepare the group to participate in the nonviolent action in the nearby Al-Masara village in Bethlehem. The group were given the basic information needed to participate in the action, including, but not limited to, the type of the action they are going to join, the problem the village is facing from the wall and the nonviolent tactics to face soldiers violence, in addition to safety precautions in case of being injured or exposed to tear gas or sound bombs.

The group participated in two actions in the afternoon, one in Al-Masara and one in Al-Khader village. They made it to Al-Quds newspaper in their action in Al-Masara carrying a Palestinian Flag and a sign calling for nonviolence.

Among the other activities the group had in Beit Sahour was a barbecue evening and a football game at Osh Ghrab public park.

4- The 20 Years Anniversary of PCR

The 20th anniversary of establishing PCR was celebrated on June 22, 2008 and was accompanied with the graduation of the Young Advocates Program Trainees and the Education For All Students.

The ceremony was held at the Shepherds Valley Tourists' Village in Beit Sahour. At least 200 people attended the ceremony, which started with the Palestinian national anthem and moment of silence in respect for the Palestinian martyrs. Mr. Fayyad Jibreen, the older member of the board of administrators, welcomed the audience and gave a detailed account of the history of Rapprochement.

The ceremony also included two short speeches by Mr. Bryan Lehman, director of the Mennonite Central Committee and Mr. John Preduix Brune, the country representative for Oxfam-GB. Both speakers commenced the work that PCR is doing and spoke of the distinguished relation with PCR.

“Kazar” group, local folklore dancing group, performed two wonderful folklore dances followed by “Tornado Lights” Rap group who made a very distinguished mixture of Arabic lyrics with accompanying Rap music.

The founders of PCR were offered a plaque with the 20th anniversary logo of PCR for the extensive work and effort they gave to establish PCR, as a thank you notice from the new generation to the older generation of PCR.

Before the graduation of the YAP participants and the Education for All program participants, two films were screened. The first was a 12-minute film about PCR produced by the IMEMC video production unit, and the second was about the YAP program produced by some of the graduates of the program. The film featured some of the participants who explain how they benefited from their participation in the program.

Following the graduation ceremony, the all the people who attended were invited for sweets and soft drinks.

5- The Video Production Training Project

Background:



The need for intensive and specialized media training is growing, as the advocacy program of PCR is advancing. Media production is one of the most competitive fields these days. The compatibility of the new technology with each other made it possible for video to be published on the internet with a fairly accepted quality.

Video is one of the very effective tools of advocacy, especially for a remote audience.

As an advocacy program, the internet is one of the major medium to reach a wider number of audiences to provide them with an alternative account regarding what is going on in Palestine as a result of the Israeli military occupation.

The training will help activists who take part in nonviolent actions in Bethlehem and Ramallah to provide video that can be posted on the internet, which will promote nonviolent resistance. Moreover, in several cases, footage taken by activists or citizen journalists have been used in Israeli courts to falsify alleged charges brought by Israeli police or military against nonviolent protestors.



Advocacy efforts are not limited to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, yet, they includes internal social problem that the Palestinian society is facing.

Training young Palestinians in producing short videos, including feature stories and Public Service

Announcements (PSA), will give them a good chance to be more involved in advocacy campaigns.



Public Service Announcements are short video clips that carry a message to be delivered to the public. By definition, a public service announcement (PSA) or community service announcement (CSA) is a non-commercial advertisement broadcast on radio or television, ostensibly for the public good. PSAs are intended to modify public attitudes by raising awareness about specific issues.



In a nutshell, almost any idea can be presented in the form of a short video that carries a message to the public. The training will equip those young people with the tools they need for the presentation of their ideas.

Students will choose to produce PSAs from the following topics, Children Rights, Women Rights, Human Rights in general, Violence Vs Nonviolence. The Educational System, environmental issues such as water, solid waste etc. Students will be encouraged to produce PSAs about Local issues as well.



Although most of the training will be in technical issues, yet, the training will also include elements needed as basis for the stories they are going to produce.

A basic human rights and advocacy training will be provided in order to help the students spot human rights abuses which can be material for their videos and to learn skills needed to expose these abuses to the public.

This training can be base for future citizen journalism which will allow young people to express themselves through video production.

As a practice, participants will produce a film at the end of the training in which they will send a message to youth in their age on issues of concern for the Palestinian people. This video can be posted on IMEMC site, You Tube. PCR will contact related organizations in the field and encourage them to screen the film for young people.

The video will consist of short interviews with young Palestinians regarding their view about the situation in Palestine and what do they want other youth in the world to know about Palestine.

The first day of the project was December 27, 2008. around 25 applied to the project, and only 12 Young males and females have been selected to participate. The participants are mainly from Beit Sahour, Bethlehem, Hebron, Bil'in and Ni'lin near Ramallah and Tiqua east of Bethlehem.

Priority was given for applicants according to the following criteria:

- 1- Potential to be involved in local advocacy efforts.
- 2- Potential to join IMEMC's video production unit
- 3- Level of involvement in nonviolent actions in their area
- 4- Involvement in advocacy organizations or groups which can help their organization

The project aims at giving training for young Palestinians to be qualified to produce short videos, in

addition, provide technical audio and video support for IMEMC. The trainees are expected to produce Public Service Announcement. Moreover, some of the trainees will contribute to the coverage of nonviolent actions in their regions.

Trainees will receive 20 training hours in Human Rights and Advocacy skills in order to be able to spot the human rights violations and to think about ways to advocate for the respect of human rights through video. Trainees will also receive 50 training hours in production Skills, (Story boarding, shooting Video, recording Audio, and still photography) and 30 training hours in Post Production skills (Graphics, Video & Audio Editing).

The project is expected to end in April 2009.

6- The War on Gaza Activities



PCR decided to take an active role regarding the Israeli military offensive against the Gaza Strip which started December 27, 2008. On the very same day of the war, PCR made contact with the active local organizations and arranged for a demonstration and a vigil in solidarity with the Gaza Strip at the Manger Square in Bethlehem. PCR efforts met with efforts from a number of other organizations in the area. Hundreds gathered randomly and marched from the Manger Square to the Rachel Tomb area, where the wall is built. The protestors took to the streets of Bethlehem

chanting slogans calling for an end to the Israeli offensive on the people of the Gaza Strip. The protest ended with some clashes between the Israeli troops stationed in the tower of the wall near Rachel Tomb with youngsters.

PCR participated and helped organize almost all the activities in Beit Sahour related to the Gaza war. On Monday, December 29, the Alternative Information Center in Beit Sahour (AIC) called for a vigil at Souk esh-Sha'ab in the town. PCR activists joined the protestor who comprised of Palestinians and Internationals. The group agreed to hold this vigil on daily basis and to light candles until the war ends.



PCR has also organized phone and email pools held at the office during which a number of local and international activists wrote email letters to officials and made phone calls to embassies and human rights organizations mobilizing them to act to stop the war crime that was being committed against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

PCR issued a list of 25 actions that people around the world can take to support the Gaza people and to help end the Israeli offensive. The list is available on PCR's Website (<http://www.pcr.ps/activities/actions-gaza.htm>) The list was widely circulated and posted on a number of websites.

7- The Nonviolence Network in Arab Countries (NNAC)

NNAC is a network that started in December 2007 in Amman, Jordan sponsored by NOVA, a Catalan organization based in Barcelona. It joins nonviolent activists and trainers from five Arab

countries namely, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. The network aims at promoting nonviolent methods as means for ending all forms of injustice. PCR is not only a founding member of the network, but among the few who initially thought of starting such a network.



PCR is represented in the elected steering committee of the Network by its executive director, George N. Rishmawi.

The steering committee contains two representatives from all the participating countries. In its first meeting in Amman, the steering committee approved that the host country for the network will be Lebanon and the coordinators of the steering committee were chosen to be Fadi Abi Allam, Lebanon and Muna Makhamra, Jordan.

The second steering committee meeting was in Beirut, November 7 – 9, 2008. In the 3-day meeting the committee discussed the Network's bylaws and statutes and applied for registration in Lebanon. The committee also approved the annual plan for the network which includes a Training for Trainers in nonviolence, to be held in Lebanon, and series of workshops on nonviolence in the five different countries.

The network has also developed a special website (www.acnv.net) to be used a platform for announcements and reports from the different countries and organizations involved in the network. The website is in both, Arabic and English and it includes a forum also in both languages which can give a very good opportunity for the network members to stay in touch and communicate and exchange their experiences.

8- The Shepherds Nights Festival – December 2008



The project aimed at 1- Highlight the need for protection of the lands where, according to the biblical story, the Shepherds received the good tidings of the Birth of Jesus. 2- Create an opportunity for local groups to perform for the local community promoting cultural events. 3- Promoting Fair Trade values by providing a platform for local vendors to present their products to the local community.

The project consisted of two days of activities on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day that included concerts and activities.

On December 24, the activities were mostly of a festive nature and were held on two parts. The first part started with the annual Christmas service in the YMCA Shepherds Field cave, while the second part was held at Al-Sous hall in the town. At the hall, theater, folklore dancing and singing groups performed to nearly 800 people.



المكان:
YMCA

الزمان:
24/12
25/12

ليلة ٢٤/١٢
SHEPHERD'S
NIGHTS

**ليالي الرعاة
Shepherds' Nights
2008**

24/12

حكاية الميلاد - مظلة الرعاة YMCA 4:30
Christmas Mass - Shepherds Cave

مظلة للأطفال مع مسرح الحكاية 6:00
AMM Theatre (Children Show)

المنطقة الفلسطينية ريو الينا 6:50
Riox El-Banna

فرقة لهد الصيود للديكة 9:00
Al-Ghail Al-Jahed Dabka Group

مجموعة مارياكنا - ريو الينا 8:30
Marziyika Concert for Nassr Syim

فرقة كزار للديكة 9:10
Kazar Dabka Group

25/12

مظلة مسيرة التعمود 4:00
Candle Procession Starts
and ends in Ubi Church
المظلة خواتم

ترايم الميلاد مع مسند اوزو 5:00
Srd Zanz (Christmas-Cadral)

مجموعة كنيسة الزوم للكاتوليك 5:30
Greek Catholic Church Choir

مظلة لورنادو الميسر للوات 6:00
Tomato Lights Rap Group

Light a Candle for the Land of the Shepherds
انضمت شموع من اجل ارض الرعاة

MERRY CHRISTMAS

www.yamca.org.uk/shepherdsnights.com

شركاءنا

الجمهورية العربية السورية
مركز تنمية المجتمعات المحلية
الجمعية الوطنية للتربية والثقافة والفنون
الجمعية الوطنية للتربية والثقافة والفنون

الجمهورية العربية السورية
مركز تنمية المجتمعات المحلية
الجمعية الوطنية للتربية والثقافة والفنون
الجمعية الوطنية للتربية والثقافة والفنون

ليالي الرعاة ٢٠٠٨

ليلة ٢٤/١٢ تحيطة العقيقة الفلسطينية
في الـ ٢٠٠٨ - تحت مباحث
بالإضافة الى مرقه محلية

مع ٢٥ / ٢٤ مظلة مسيرة التعمود مع مظلة الرعاة كروم الـ
انضم نخبة من اجل ارض الرعاة

مركز تنمية المجتمعات المحلية
الجمعية الوطنية للتربية والثقافة والفنون



Shepherds' Nights 2008
is sponsored by

ليالي الرعاة ٢٠٠٨
مرفوعة

الجمهورية العربية السورية
مركز تنمية المجتمعات المحلية
الجمعية الوطنية للتربية والثقافة والفنون

الجمهورية العربية السورية
مركز تنمية المجتمعات المحلية
الجمعية الوطنية للتربية والثقافة والفنون

NBC Arab Live Association
مرفوعة البرهويل
جست اناطوليت

We thank them all for their generous support
نشكركم جميعاً بتأييدكم والتقدير

Shepherds' Nights 2008
is Organized by

ليالي الرعاة ٢٠٠٨
تنظيم من

YMCA

SIRAJ
سراج

www.yamca.org.uk/shepherdsnights.com

www.yamca.org.uk/shepherdsnights.com

www.yamca.org.uk/shepherdsnights.com

**ليالي الرعاة
SHEPHERD'S
NIGHTS**



In addition to the performing groups, local vendors were invited to present their products. The festival hosted, Aseela Women's Cooperative who primarily produce hand-made soap and Turthuna Al-Aseel women Society who produce a variety of hand-made stuff and food among other things, in addition to four other local vendors.



Brochures and material about Fair Trade were circulated for the audience and the hosts of the event were consistently encouraging the audience to check out and buy from the local vendors.

On Christmas day, despite the cold and the rain over 300 people participated in the Candle Light Procession. This annual event always starts in the land of the Shepherds and always carries a message of peace and freedom. This year we proceed from the area of the Greek Orthodox Shepherds field (called Al-Ra3wat in Arabic) to Ush Ghrab. This was significant symbolically and politically, especially that Ush Ghrab is targeted by Israeli settlers.



The mayor of Beit Sahour, religious leaders, and other notable who made remarks at these events asked the International community to shoulder their responsibility and pressure Israel to comply with International law and Human Rights. They called for ending the brutal siege on Gaza, for dismantling the suffocating apartheid wall (that even separates us from our holy sites in Jerusalem), for ending the occupation, and implementing all UN resolutions including the rights of refugees. The speeches were followed by artistic performances and choirs singing Christmas Carols.



Most of the audience were of the local community of Beit Sahour, and the Bethlehem area in General. The festival provided a good chance for the local community to hear about fair trade through the material and brochures circulated during the festival. In addition, we believe that we have set a precedent by promoting Beit Sahour as a destination. Based on the results of this project, "Shepherds Nights" is set to become an annual event to be organized in Beit Sahour

which will attract both, local and international audiences.

The weather was a major problem that we faced in organizing this event.

The first day of the event was supposed to be held outdoors at the football field of the YMCA sports center, however, because



of the weather and the unexpected conditions, the organizing committee of the festival decided to hold the activities in Al-Sous Wedding Hall.

Rim Al-Banna, who was supposed to be the highlight of the event, was unable to come due to a problem that happened with the taxi that was suppose to bring her from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Al-Banna was supposed to be in Beit Sahour for preparations and sound check at 4:00 pm as her performance was supposed to start at 7:00 pm. However the taxi arrived at her house at 5:30 which made it very hard that she comes to Bethlehem, an estimated drive of three hours, consequently she refrained from coming, which was very disappointing to the audience who were expecting her to come on stage instead of one of the organizers informing them that she is not.

Thus we had to make last minute changes in the program which created a little chaos and confusion.

On the second day, rain was the major obstacle. The boy-scouts groups who were supposed to lead the procession could not join because their equipment is sensitive to water and rain would pose serious threat.

II. THE MEDIA DEPARTMENT

The International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC)

IMEMC continued to be an alternative media source for news in Palestine. At the beginning of the year, IMEMC started to produce news in Spanish. The spanish section of IMEMC is entirely done on voluntary basis.



As part of the YAP project, Rana Mousa a PCR activist volunteered to start the Spanish edition of IMEMC and managed to recruit some volunteers to do the job. The Spanish section is not a fully independent section of news, it is basically a translation of the English reports. Since it fully depends on volunteers, IMEMC was unable to get all the English news reports, and Human Interest storied translated. Only a selection of the English reports is translated into Spanish and posted on the Website.

IMEMC provided an intensified coverage of the news in Gaza with field reports from its correspondent in Gaza Rami Al-Meghari, despite of the lack of communication with him because of the disturbance on the internet and the phone network during the war.

During the first ten days of the war on Gaza, the website received around 2 million hits, generated by around 50,000 unique visitors. In normal days, this is the amount of hits IMEMC receives in one full month.

Throughout the year, IMEMC has produced 292 audio reports 52 of which were “This Week in Palestine” and 240 reports of “Palestine Today”.

In January of 2008, IMEMC director, George Rishmawi went on a speaking tour in Canada in

which he met with a number of campus Radio stations in Montreal, Ottawa, Kingston and Toronto.

The trip was organized and funded by Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) who usually organizes similar tours in order to inform and educate the Canadian audience about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The one-week tour was titled "Covering occupation from Grassroots" and it included speaking engagements at universities in Montreal, Ottawa, Kingston and Toronto.

http://sphr.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=133:qcovering-occupation-from-the-grassrootsq&catid=63:sphr-current-events-and-activities&Itemid=106

An idea emerged during the visit to provide a special radio event on May 15, which marks the 60th anniversary of the Nakba.

In coordination with 10 international radio stations in Canada, the USA and UK, 18 hours of broadcast has been produced and aired on most of the radio stations.

The following Radio Stations have confirmed carrying the unprecedented Nakba-60 Broadcast which was aired simultaneously on all the participating stations from Midnight until 6 pm (EST).

CANADA

- 1) CKDU Halifax, Nova Scotia
- 2) CFUV 101.9fm Victoria, BC
- 3) CHRY 105.5fm Toronto, Ontario
- 4) CKUT 90.3fm Montreal, Quebec
- 5) CFRC Kingston, Ontario
- 6) CILU 102.7FM Thunderbay, ON

UNITED STATES

- 1) KBOO Portland, Oregon
- 2) WPFW Washington, DC
- 3) WRNC in Ashland, WI

United Kingdom

- 1) Radio Resonance, London

The broadcast included interviews with Nakba survivors, to tell their stories of becoming refugees in their homeland. In addition, the shows hosted Palestinian, Israeli and International political analysts, activists, writers and journalists to talk about the Nakba and also to talk about 60 years after the Nakba.

More info http://www.imemc.org/index.php?obj_id=2196

IMEMC has also continued to provide the unique reports on nonviolent resistance in Palestine. Almost all events organized by the popular committees against the wall and settlement in villages of Bil'in, Ni'lin, Al-Ma'asara, al-Khader, Jayyous, etc, were covered on IMEMC. In addition, special feature stories were produced in cooperation with Free Speech Radio News (FSRN) in the US.

III. THE Alternative TRAVEL DEPARTMENT SIRAJ CENTER



Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies

Starting in January 2008, PCR opened the Alternative Travel Department, known as Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies. Siraj aims to create links between Palestinian people and people from around the globe through educational tourism, interfaith and ecumenical dialogue, and culture and youth exchange programs.

Through its many local connections, Siraj works directly with communities and organizations in Bethlehem and the West Bank.

One of the main achievements of the year 2008 is the agreement signed between PCR, through Siraj and the Arab Women Union (AWU) in Beit Sahour to develop the Guest House of the AWU and renovate it to have more rooms and a proper reception and better facilities. In addition, a training course in Hotel Management will be provided in order to select staff for the guest house. It is expected that training course and the construction work will start in April of 2009 and end in September. The training course is conducted by the Hotel Management Institute at Bethlehem University.

Siraj seeks to educate visitors and empower the local community through the following programs:

Youth Exchange Programs

Siraj encourages youth exchange programs with young people from all over the world, to promote personal dialogue that will help them in their future work for peace and justice. The Youth Exchange Program is divided into two sections: high school students and university students. This program fosters face-to-face interaction between youth from all over the world and the youth of Palestine and the Holy Land.

Sister Ship Programs

Siraj wants to create Sister Ship programs that will establish real and lasting relationships between Palestinian community organizations and organizations from all over the world—church to church, high school to high school, youth center to youth center. Through its many connections in the Holy Land, Siraj will facilitate these projects until they run on their own.

Theology Seminars:

Theology seminars will be offered three times a year, unless otherwise scheduled by large parties. Topics will include: how to approach the Old Testament from a local Christian perspective, and how religious scripture and theological study can inform peace, human rights, and social justice work. The aim of these seminars is to promote inter-religious dialogue and spiritual growth. In addition to seminars and lectures, we will visit the key sites of Biblical history, get to know local Palestinian families, and meet with various organizations to learn about past and current religious, cultural, and political movements—culminating in a spiritual pilgrimage to remember.



Christian Programs

Let Siraj plan your visit to the Holy Land! In addition to offering guided tours of all key Christian sites--Church of the Nativity, Gethsemane, Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the room of the Last Supper, the Sea of Galilee, Mount of the Beatitudes, the Jordan River, and more--the Christian program also

includes shared worship with local churches, accommodation and meals with local families, and insightful meetings with grassroots organizations and church leaders.

Hiking and Cultural Programs

This program is for travelers who want a unique and intimate encounter with the geographic landscapes and authentic culture of the Holy Land. From village to village, home to home, desert to desert, shore to boat, you will pass through olive orchards and sheep pastures, ancient ruins and Biblical cities, stopping for lunch in locals' homes and witnessing traditions that have lasted for thousands of years.

Local Host Family Programs

Siraj can arrange short or long term accommodations with caring, hospitable local families, sure to be an enriching experience for both parties. While living in a Palestinian home, you will learn some Arabic (or practice what you already know), enjoy delicious food, tea, and sweets, and have a unique firsthand encounter with the life and culture of Palestine. In addition to sharing yourself and your culture with your host family, you will be helping them economically, since they will be compensated at a fair and reasonable price. The host family option is available for both tour groups and individuals.



Fact Finding Programs

The aim of this program is to educate international visitors—whether students or journalists, authors or activists—about the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict by providing safe and secure tours of West Bank conflict zones, facilitating dialogue with people who have been and are directly affected by the conflict, and setting up meetings with prominent peace activists, political officials, and human rights organizations from both sides. Program participants will be able to meet with representatives from B'Tselem, Ittijah, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Temporary International Presence in Hebron, Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, The Right of Education Campaign, and The Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People. Participants can also visit various refugee camps and unrecognized villages, and attend lectures and events in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Ramallah.

Interfaith Programs

Siraj is committed to creating mutual understanding and tolerance between people of different faiths; and the Holy Land is the perfect place to establish common ground. It is, after all, the origin of the world's three most popular monotheistic religions. Siraj can facilitate meetings with any number of Palestinian and Israeli faith-based groups, arrange shared worship and interfaith seminars, and educate visitors about current inter-faith campaigns for peace and justice in Palestine and Israel.

Siraj is also a co-founding member of the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism (PIRT). PIRT is a network of organizations, associations and public bodies committed to work for responsible tourism to the Holy Land and to act as advocates for this approach to tourism. We are committed to transforming the current tourism patterns in the Holy Land by encouraging pilgrims and tourists to include Palestinian cities, towns and villages in their itineraries in order to achieve a more equal distribution of tourism revenues to all people in this land.

Based on our belief that both tourists and hosts can be enriched by human encounters through tourism, we invite travelers to meet the Palestinian people and explore their culture. We strive to create opportunities for local communities to become involved in tourism activities and to earn a fair income from the process. We believe that protecting and preserving the environment is of utmost importance, and thus we are searching for less harmful ways of providing tourism services. We call on all service providers to commit themselves to responsible business practices and to renounce exploitative behavior. Our objective is to promote a just and responsible tourism in Palestine that benefits the Palestinian people, pilgrims, tourists and all other stakeholders in tourism in the country without harming local communities.

There is no doubt that the most significant achievement of PIRT in 2008, was issuing the Code of Conduct for Palestinian Tourism Sector.

The Abraham Path Initiative:

Siraj is one of the main partners in Palestine for the Abraham Path Initiative (API). The Abraham Path (Masar Ibrahim al Khalil) is a route of cultural tourism which follows the footsteps of Abraham / Ibrahim through the Middle East.

The story of Abraham / Ibrahim's journey, which has been kept alive for some four thousand years in the landscape and memory of this region, records the origin of a spiritual tradition shared by more than three billion people in the world today.

By retracing this journey, the Abraham Path provides a place of meeting and connection for people of all faiths and cultures, inviting us to remember our common origins, to respect our cultural differences, and to recognize our shared humanity.

The path also serves as a catalyst for sustainable tourism and economic development; a platform for the energy and idealism of young people; and a focus for positive media highlighting the rich culture and hospitable people of the Middle East.

The Palestinian Summer Celebration Program:



Siraj also offers a unique experience for internationals to not only visit Palestine, but to live Palestine, through its Summer Celebration Program. The program offers a chance for internationals to stay in Palestine for two months during the summer and live with Palestinian families. They will also have a chance to study Arabic and learn how to cook Palestinian food, and dance Palestinian folklore dance, “Dabka” and also learn about the Palestinian society from within. The program is in partnership with Bethlehem University, therefore students receive a certificate for the credits they study during the two months.

Below is an example of one of the participants of the 2008 Palestinian Summer Celebration
Nathan Dannison's Experience

Image My experience with the Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies began when the director of the stateside non-profit agency I work with, Playgrounds for Palestine, brought the program to my attention. I'm in the West Bank to explore potential playground build sites and initiate builds at Osh Ghrab Park and at the Bet Jala Arab Orthodox Club.

I often travel abroad for work and study and was prepared for the usual complications of making contacts, finding a place to stay, and spending countless hours trying to find the right people to show me the historical sights and features around my new home. Siraj remediated all of these impediments. George Rishmawi and the staff at the Siraj Center immediately began setting up contacts to help with my playground project. Furthermore, they recommended that I spend my time volunteering at a local organization beyond the scope of my normal work.

I mentioned that I am certified emergency medical technician. Mr. Rishmawi went out of his way to get me an interview with the volunteer coordinator and public affairs director at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Ramallah. I received a placement at the Bethlehem Red Crescent working with an ambulance crew. Working with the medics at the Red Crescent provided me with a means of meeting people far outside the normal scope of the expatriate experience.

Immediately upon my arrival in Bethlehem, the staff at the Siraj Center welcomed me to my new family - the Siraj family - with a shared meal and introductions. I was immediately impressed by their professionalism as well as their honest desire to integrate me into the community of Beit Sahour without delay. I was introduced to my host family, the Salsas, and discovered another world of cultural exposure opened before me. The two months I spent living with the Salsas - eating together, meeting their friends and extended family - has provided me with insight and an understanding of the local culture that is oftentimes precious and rare for Westerners traveling abroad.

The guides and drivers provided by Siraj are of the highest caliber - university educated historians and teachers - who themselves live in the Bethlehem area and can oftentimes take a simple tour of a historical site far beyond the bounds of a textbook experience. By introducing the Siraj students to local business-owners, laborers, educators and others, they succeed in making relevant historical locations that date back many thousands of years.

Any tour guide can explain the various architectural, archaeological and cultural traditions associated with, for example, the Church of the Nativity. Siraj guides introduce their students to the church's relevance to the people of Bethlehem today. They discuss the intricacies, difficulties, and celebrations that face the population charged with caring for this ancient structure. The teachers and guides from Siraj sought to bring these incredible sights into a contemporary context - something invaluable for a student of the 21st century.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that the Siraj Center also provided me with something I have rarely found with organizations that provide similar services. It provided flexibility. Siraj creates a full, meaningful itinerary for its students without locking them into courses, tours or volunteer experiences that aren't interesting or engaging for each student. The Siraj coordinators were constantly engaged in discussion with each student regarding their new interests. I remember - at one point I wanted to deviate from the program to visit a potential build site north of Jenin.

The director of Siraj, George Rishmawi, arranged the travel and even accompanied me up to Jenin, showing me the sites along the way. I was surprised and touched by his commitment to my West Bank experience - to go so far out of his way to make sure that I was able to visit the places I wanted to. This personal attention to each student is the primary reason I recommend Siraj to my

peers and coworkers back in the U.S. Every Siraj student lives, works, and learns in the Holy Land, but the staff at Siraj guarantees that this is not a homogeneous, boxed, cookie-cutter experience. Everyone here seems to have their own unique Siraj experience, whether it is for a week, a month, or a summer.

I will continue to recommend Siraj to students I meet here in Palestine, as well as my peers back home. I have accomplished my goals here in the West Bank - new doors have been opened to me - and I cannot wait to begin planning my return to my new family and friends here in Beit Sahour.

*Nathan Dannison,
Grand Rapids,
Michigan, USA*

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

A. New board of administration for PCR

The General Assembly of PCR held its annual meeting to evaluate the work of PCR during the past two years and to elect a new board of administration to lead the centre for the coming two years.

During the meeting, the previous narrative and financial annual reports were presented to the GA who voted in approval unanimously.

The GA has also approved the external auditor for the centre, El-Shayeb Accounting and Auditing Corporation, headed by Mr. Issa Abu Farha El-Shayeb as the official external auditor.



The current (old) board of administration declared its resignation paving the way for new members to take the lead.

10 GA members ran for the 7-member board of administration, however, three of them have later announced that they rescinded their candidacy in favour of other members to achieve maximum diversity in the board.

The current board has a very diverse and homogeneous group at the same time, since all of them have been involved in a way or another in supporting PCR activities and work during the past years. The board consists of, two females, two Muslims, four young people, two from the founders of PCR.

The current board has a very diverse and homogeneous group at the same time, since

Thus, the following are the newly elected member of the board of administration for PCR.

Name	Position
Dr. Mazin Qumsieh PhD.	President
Ms. Fida Ghareeb	Vice President
Mr. Eyad Abdullah Joma	Treasury
Ms. Dina Awwad	Secretary
Mr. Michael Rishmawi	Member
Mr. Fayyad Jibreen	Member
Mr. Saher Sous	Member

B. Staff Affairs:

The creation of the Alternative Travel Department required new staff members to be added to the PCR family. Therefore, Rapprochement Center has the following on its staff as of December 31st, 2008.

1. George N. Rishmawi, Executive Director
2. Saed Bannoura – Chief Editor of IMEMC News
3. Ghassan Bannoura – News Producer and Audio Technician
4. Rami Al-Meghari – Gaza Correspondent for IMEMC News
5. Hussam Qassis – Coordinator of the Education for All Project
6. Nisreen Qumsieh – Secretary and Book Keeping
7. Samer Jaber – Coordinator of the Video Training Project
8. Ghaida Rishmawi – Daily Operations of Siraj Center
9. Michael Awad – Director of Siraj Center (Unpaid)
10. George S. Rishmawi – Promotion and Marketing Coordinator
11. Liana Khair-Awwad – Communication Officer
12. Rana Mousa – Coordinator of the Spanish Version of IMEMC (Unpaid)

Both Siraj and PCR hosted a number of volunteers during the year. Some of those volunteers stayed for a week and other stayed for three months. The volunteers were mostly internationals from different nationalities however, some local volunteers have also contributed their time to support PCR's work.

C. Finances:

below is the Balance Sheet for the Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People, as of December 31, 2008 audited by Issa Al-Shayeb Auditing Office. Certified CPA and Auditor, approved by the general Assembly of PCR on October 12, 2008.

El-Shayeb Accountancy &

Auditing Corporation

C.P.A. Auditors

Bethlehem - Tel Fax 2743025

**The Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People
Beit Sahour
Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2008**

<u>ASSETS</u>	<u>USD</u>	<u>USD</u>
Current Assets:-		
Cash in Hand & Banks-PCR	\$21,370.82	
Cash in Hand & Banks-Siraj	\$11,930.49	
In Advance Rent	\$400.00	
		\$33,701.30
Fixed Assets:-		
Fixed Assets	\$40,255.13	
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	-\$19,924.27	
Total Fixed Assets		\$20,330.86
Total Assets		<u>\$54,032.16</u>
<u>LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS</u>		
<u>Current Liabilities :-</u>		
Star 2000	\$3,518.80	
Delayed Checks	\$1,600.00	
Total Current Liabilities		\$5,118.80
Siraj Deposits		
George S. Rishmawi Deposit	4,809.52	
Michael Awad Deposit	4,809.52	
Total Deposits		\$9,619.04
<u>Other Liabilities:-</u>		
End of Service Compensation	\$10,650.00	
Total Other Liabilities		\$10,650.00
<u>Net Assets :-</u>		
Net Assets as of 1/1/2008	\$12,193.61	
Add, Change in Net Assets 2008	\$16,450.71	
		\$28,644.32
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS		<u>\$54,032.16</u>

