

International Center of Bethlehem

Annual Report 1998

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From the General Director

Greetings from Bethlehem and the International Center of Bethlehem

The International Center of Bethlehem celebrated its third anniversary last year and what a year it has been. The number of people who visited and used the services of the Center has exceeded 29,000 men, women and children, both Palestinian and non-Palestinian. We hope that this number will continue rising as the year 2000 approaches.



As one of the most active cultural centers in the Bethlehem area, the ICB continued in 1998 its tradition of innovation and growth. The services and programs that the Center provides for the community and visitors expanded to include the Arts, Crafts and Music program. Through art workshops for children and adults, exhibitions, musical performances, dabke dancing, theater performances and the showing of films the Center is actively participating in the strengthening and the shaping of an important dimension of Palestinian culture, namely Art. Other activities of the Center included intercultural encounters, conferences, workshops, lectures, intensive course for Palestinian guides as well as many other activities.

In 1998 we also celebrated the publication of the book *Bethlehem 2000-Past and Present*, which is authored by Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb and Professor Fred Strickert. This work, which was published in English and German, provides a view of the Bethlehem area that is comprehensive, integrates the contemporary with the historical, and encompasses the living stones along with the ancient ones.

Our biggest accomplishment in 1998 has to do with *The Dar al-Kalima Academy for Interreligious and Intercultural Studies*. In November of 1998, we signed an agreement with The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland to finance the construction of the auditorium of Dar al-Kalima at al-Madbassa square. Furthermore, the Church of Sweden Mission is financing the renovation of art workshops and art gallery on the same site. The renovation and construction work is scheduled to begin on April 5, 1999. Construction on the Mountain Murair site, where the model school and the educational facilities of Dar al-Kalima will be located, is scheduled to begin in May of 1999. We will continue working in 1999 to achieve our complete vision of the Dar al-Kalima Academy, thus ensuring that this educational institution, which will promote intercultural dialogue, contextual theology, music and art, will play a role in empowering our people to face the challenges of the 21st century.

The devotion and commitment of the Center's staff has made the success of our mission possible. I thank them all. I would also like to thank the board members and friends of the Center, both local and international, who generously volunteered their time and effort. Their continuous support for our endeavor has made our work easier and more enjoyable.

Therefore, it is with great pleasure that we submit to you our third annual report, covering the period of January 1, 1998 to December 31, 1998.

Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb

Cultural Activities

Art

Art Coordinators

Two new staff members have joined the ICB family to plan the expansion of the Arts, Crafts and Music program at the International Center of Bethlehem. Ms. Faten Nastas, who graduated in 1998 from Bezalel Academy for Fine Art and Design in Jerusalem, is a Palestinian artist from Bethlehem. Ms. Nastas participated in a number of exhibitions at home and abroad and is active in the contemporary art world. Mr. Jan-Peter Hempel, who graduated in 1997 from Hochschule fuer Bildende Kuenste in Dresden, is an artist from Germany. While working as a free lance artist, Mr. Hempel was the artist in residence at the ICB between November 1997 and February 1998.

"The First Christmas -Christmas in Bethlehem" Exhibition

"Christmas in Different Cultures" is a series of exhibitions organized and exhibited by the International Meeting Point of Turku, Finland. These exhibitions aim at showing how different cultures observe and celebrate Christmas. The first exhibition in the series featured Bethlehem, which is certainly one of the most significant and influential cities in the world with regards to Christmas. The Bethlehem exhibition, entitled "The First Christmas- Christmas in Bethlehem," took place at the International Meeting Point of Turku, Finland between November 29th, 1998 and January 6th, 1999.

The International Center of Bethlehem collected and mailed materials such as photographs, written texts, and video films that reflect the way the Palestinians celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem. The International Meeting Point of Turku oversaw the arrangement and supervision of the exhibition.

The Secrets of Byzantine Icons

A public lecture given by Mrs. Vassiliki Tsirou-Marcantonatou was held at the ICB on Tuesday, October 20th, 1998. The lecturer gave a historical and technical introduction, explaining the process of icon drawing. Mrs. Tsirou-Marcantonatou also showed slides of some of the most important symbols and secrets of the Byzantine Icons, namely the charming icons of Stavronicita monastery of the Holy Mountain "Athos" in Greece. The lecture was attended by more than 80 people of different backgrounds including diplomats, artists, and clergymen.



Art Workshops for Children

The founding of the Art Workshops for Children program at the International Center of Bethlehem aims at: a) Developing the artistic, creative, aesthetic, and physical potential of the children as well as their artistic knowledge. b) Introducing the children to self-based learning, which enables them to discover their creative strengths, talents, abilities, and interests. c) Encouraging the children to express their thoughts and feelings in various ways. d) Showing the children different alternatives that they have when planning their future professional lives. e) Promoting the children's self-confidence by acknowledging their work. f) Contributing to the individual development of each child.

Art Workshop Series

With the above aims in mind, the International Center held a series of painting workshops for children in 1998. Four workshops were supported by the Swiss Embassy and organized by the Swiss Cultural Attaché, Ms. Natalie Boesch. The first two workshops were held in January, the third in April, and the fourth in June. A total of 113 children from Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Dehaisha Refugee Camp and the surrounding villages participated in these workshops. The children came from different socio-economic and religious backgrounds and their ages ranged between six to fourteen years.

Ms. Sabine Fritzsche, a Swiss-German artist from Basel, conducted the first three workshops. Ms. Fritzsche has seventeen years of experience in art education and art therapy for children. Biblical stories were the focus of the first two workshops, while the third workshop examined the nature of the land. Ms. Samar Ghattas conducted the fourth workshop, which focused on the Palestinian culture and identity. Ms. Ghattas, a Palestinian artist from Bethlehem, has been teaching art for the past five years at different schools in Bethlehem as well as at the Bethlehem University. During the fourth workshop, excursions to cultural institutions and a public exhibition of the children's works were organized. The best paintings of the children were chosen and printed as postcards, which are sold at the International Center of Bethlehem.

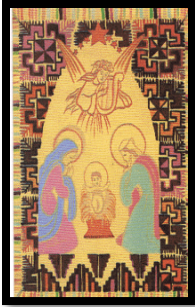


Expressionist Painting Workshop

In cooperation with the town of Strasbourg, the organization Proche-Orient Terre de Paix-Strasbourg, the Committee of Bethlehem 2000 and the Ministry of Culture of Palestine, the International Center of Bethlehem held a painting workshop for children from August 16-19, 1998. Sixty-six children from Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour and the surrounding villages participated in this workshop. The children were divided according to age into three categories: 5-7, 8-10 and 11-15 years old. The director of the painting workshop was the French artist Sylvie Villaume from Strasbourg. Sylvie is a well-known sculptor, who has had many exhibitions in France and Germany. She started similar painting workshops with groups of children in Ramallah, Gaza and Strasbourg. The children's paintings were studied and analyzed by a committee of artists and psychologists in Strasbourg. The results of the analysis will be published during the year 1999.

Local Artists' Network

One of the main projects that our two art coordinators have been working on is the creation of a network of local artists. Such a network is necessary for building a forum for artists and art lovers where they can discuss issues concerning art as well as express themselves and their creativity. In our annual report, we would like to highlight few of the artists who are part of this group.



Ms. Samar Ghattas is a Bethlehemite artist, who graduated from the Ukraine Academy of Fine Art in 1993. She teaches art at Bethlehem University as well as in two schools in Bethlehem.

Mr. Rimaz Araj is a Bethlehemite artist, who has been politically active and who spent many years hiding from or being detained by the Israelis for his political beliefs. At the moment, Mr. Araj is a free lance artist, dedicating all of his time for art projects. He makes his living by producing various small art pieces, which are sold to tourists in our gift shop.



Mr. Adel Nasser is a calligrapher from Bethlehem. Mr. Nasser was a teacher of the English language, but now he is retired and is dedicating his time to improving and developing his unique style of painting calligraphy on textile. Mr. Nasser uses biblical texts for his Arabic calligraphy paintings.

Mr. Zaki Baboon is a Bethlehemite painter, who has his own style of oil painting. He paints miniatures, using very bright colors that are painted thickly on the material. The subjects he chooses for his works vary and they range from biblical to social. Mr. Baboon is the artist whose paintings were chosen for the MZK Calendar for the year 2000.





Hayat Yasser & Issa Sahourieh are two artists who participated in the stained-glass workshop that the ICB offered in 1998. Both of these artists were unemployed but now are working at the Center's workshop producing stained-glass pieces, which are sold in our gift shop.

To encourage these artists, the ICB is holding artistic and technical workshops, in addition to organizing lectures and discussions with local and international artists. The ICB is also preparing a gallery and a gift shop, which will be called "The Artists House" where Palestinian artists can find a home for their art and work.

Stained-Glass Workshops

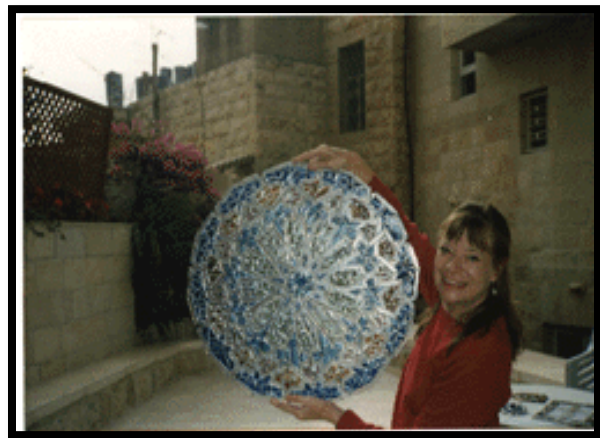


For the first time in Bethlehem, three stained-glass workshops were held at the International Center of Bethlehem. The first two workshops were held for two months, from October 19, 1998 to December 10, 1998. The third workshop was for one month, from November 11, 1998 to December 11, 1998. The three stained-glass workshops aimed at: a) Reintroducing the stained glass technique to the local people in Palestine. b) Qualifying the participants to produce small pieces for sale to tourists. c) Creating new job opportunities. d) Using cheap, local glass (i.e. broken bottles, blown glass of Hebron, etc.). Out of the large number of individuals who applied to participate in the three workshops, twenty-four people were selected. The selection process was based on the applicant's skills, talents, seriousness as well as the intent to make a career from stained-glass making. A personal interview with each applicant was conducted as part of the selection process.

The workshops' participants came from diverse backgrounds and from different places, which enriched the workshops themselves. The participants consisted of seventeen women and seven men. Four participants were housewives and eight were unemployed. The other twelve were artists, art teachers, graphic designers and calligraphers. As for their place of residence, fourteen came from Bethlehem, two from Beit Sahour, three from Beit Jala, one from Jerusalem, one from Nazareth, one from Shafa Amer, and two participants came from Al-Walajeh and Wad Foukin, which are two villages in the Bethlehem district. Out of those who participated in the workshops, ten will continue their training. At the moment, they have been given a temporary working place at the Center as well as tools and materials, so that they can go on producing stained-glass pieces and developing their own style and capabilities. Moreover, the International Center of Bethlehem will help them in marketing these pieces in its upcoming Arts & Crafts Gift Shop.

The workshops were supervised by the American artist Corinne Whitlach. Corinne chose to spend her sabbatical from her job in the USA here in Bethlehem, sharing with Palestinians her expertise and ideas regarding stained-glass art.

In addition to conducting the stained-glass workshops, Corinne gave a public lecture entitled "The Art Glass Industry" on Tuesday, November 24, 1998. The lecture included a variety of slides showing the development of the stained-glass industry. The lecture aimed at promoting the art of stained glass among artists and people who did not have the chance to attend the workshops.



Corinne played an important role in finding sponsors for the workshops, which enabled her to buy and bring the needed tools and materials with her from the United States. With her help, the International Center of Bethlehem was able to realize the first step in establishing a stained-glass workshop. The second step that we are currently working on is to create a permanent infrastructure for a well-equipped stained-glass workshop, where our trainees can advance their creative potential as well as market their products to tourists and locals alike.

Upcoming Art Projects

The art coordinators at the International Center, Ms. Faten Nastas and Mr. Jan-Peter Hempel, started their work at the ICB in August 1998. From the beginning, they began with long-term planning for future projects. These projects include:

- Creating a network with local artists aiming at establishing periodic meetings and activities. The ICB is also working on creating ties to international artists in order to organize joint Palestinian-International projects. Two workshops for children, which will take place at the International Center of Bethlehem in the years 1999 and 2000, are the first step towards realizing these joint projects. The Center will host the Dutch painter Ms. Katja Stienen in July 1999, and the Belgium painter Ms. Lise Brachet in February, 2000.
- Planning the different workshops of ceramics, wood carving, glass blowing, stained glass, mosaic construction, painting, clay and plaster sculpting, and etching. In addition to establishing a plan for running the workshops, Faten and Jan-Peter have been busy searching for the suitable tools, equipment, materials, and artists to activate these workshops.
- Preparing the Arts & Crafts Gift Shop, which will open in April 1999.
- Working with the architect responsible for the renovation of the Exhibition Hall, to meet the needs of the ICB's art program, and preparing for the opening of the Hall on December 15, 1999.
- Organizing programs that coincide with the different plans of the Bethlehem 2000 projects.

Music

Dabke Troupe

The Graduates' Club has continued training and performing the Palestinian folkloric dancing "al-Dabka" for visiting groups at the Center. The Troupe, which is preparing to participate in the cultural events scheduled for the Bethlehem 2000 celebrations, is being trained by Mr. Ra'fat Qassis and Mr. Hazim Sababa.



Oriental Choir

A choir group has been formed at the International Center to perform Middle Eastern folkloric songs. The choir, which is directed by Mr. Diya' Rishmawi, is rehearsing to perform at the Center's cultural evenings as well as the Bethlehem 2000 celebrations.



Ihya' Baladna - The International Center of Bethlehem

The ICB has collaborated with Ihya' Baladna group and formed the Ihya'Baladna-The International Center of Bethlehem which is mainly concerned with the youth in the Bethlehem district and aims at strengthening the youth's relation with their cultural heritage through sponsoring different programs and activities. These activities include:

- Training a group of young men and women to perform Palestinian folkloric dance and songs.



- Organizing lectures, workshops, films, and field trips to historic and tourist sites to the members of the performing group. By doing so, we aim at raising the group's cultural awareness as well as deepening their knowledge of the past, present, and future Palestinian situation.
- Sponsoring annual festivals to which Palestinian, Arab, and international artists will be invited. These festivals will strengthen the cultural ties between the different peoples as well as revive the cultural life in the Bethlehem district.

Theater and Film

Theater and film were a strong feature of our work in 1998. Organized by Ms. Rana Khoury, three theatrical plays were held on March 6 and July 3, 1998. The first two plays, held on March 6 and performed by the '**Inad Theater** group, were *Waraqa min al-Ramla* and *Fil ya malik al-Zaman*. The first play commemorated the 50-year loss of Palestine and the plight of nearly one million people who became refugees as they were forced to leave their homes with the creation of the state of Israel. The second play was concerned with the theme of dictatorship and totalitarian rule. The third play, performed by the **Ishtar Theater** group on July 5, was called *Shu'un Abu Shaker '98*. This play dealt with the question of patriarchy as well as with Israeli-Palestinian relations.



There were also a number of film screenings. Two of the films that were featured, *The Battle for Jerusalem* and *In Search of Palestine*, dealt with the question of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees. The narrator of *In Search of Palestine*, Professor Edward Said, was an important figure to us at the Center for the year 1998. A study circle was formed to examine and discuss his writings. Other films that were shown at the Center were *Ba'al wa al-Mawt*, a movie re-enacting the Palestinian Canaanite epic; *Samir*, a film which examines the Iraqi-Jewish community in Israel; and *Women in the Sun*, a film about violence against Palestinian women.

Storytelling for the Children of Bethlehem



Mr. W. Erlbruch, an artist from Germany, visited our Center for a two-hour program for children on Saturday, November 15, 1998. The program consisted of story telling and drawing the story's characters simultaneously. It was an enjoyable event for our young children, for whom this was a unique experience. Our staff member, Mr. Daoud Nassar, narrated the story in Arabic, while

the children watched Mr. Erlbruch draw its characters. Approximately 80 children from Bethlehem participated in this event.

Public Lectures, Outreach Programs and Seminars

Public Lectures

Several public lectures took place throughout the year 1998 whose aim was to promote further awareness among the local community.

Palestinian refugees and the commemoration of al-Nakba or "The Disaster" (the calamity that struck the Palestinians in 1948 with the creation of the state of Israel and the forced eviction of thousands of Palestinians from their homes) was a major theme. Dr. Norma Masriyye gave a lecture entitled " 50 years after al-Nakba" on February 19, 1998 for the Graduates' Club. Also Dr. Rosemary Sayigh, an authority on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, spoke on June 6, 1998 on this issue. The film, "In Search of Palestine" concentrated on al-Nakba as well. Other issues that were focused upon ranged from the role of American churches in US politics towards the Middle East to the tasks, achievements, and impediments of the Palestinian Legislative Council to dairy products to the art glass industry.

The different programs of the International Center of Bethlehem, including the Women's Studies program, the Graduates' Club, and the Art, Crafts and Music program organized these lectures.

Civil Education and Democratic Development Workshops

Together with the Civic Forum organization, six workshops focusing on civil education and democratic development were conducted during the period of January 1, 1998 to September 15, 1998. Eleven participants took part in these workshops, mainly from our Graduates' Club. These participants had the opportunity to practice what they learned from these six workshops when the Graduates' Club held its annual elections on September 4, 1998.

Town Meetings

During the year 1998, the Center has actively been working to promote the building of a civil society, in line with its mission statement. Through various means of communication, and by way of networking with various local institutions that work on similar issues, the Center was able to reach many people and communities.

Representing the ICB, Ms. Rana Khoury together with representatives of the Civic Forum and six other local institutions that work on democracy issues and sustainable development, held two town meetings where a large number of the local community was present. The first town meeting, held on June 6, 1998, focused on the health situation in the Bethlehem District, and whether the services that are provided are sufficient in terms of quality and quantity. Officials from the Ministry of Health and various health institutions were invited to address the issue.

The second town meeting, which took place on September 5, 1998, was about local elections. The Minister of the Palestinian Local Government, Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, and the four elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council from the Bethlehem district were present. They spoke about the need to hold elections at the municipalities and village councils, and the obstacles that are preventing such elections from taking place. The meeting had a sizable attendance of around 400 persons. A previous workshop had taken place at the International Center of Bethlehem, in which all institutions that organized these two town meetings were trained in how to conduct a town meeting.

Workshop on Christian-Muslim Relations in Palestine

The International Center of Bethlehem, as part of a study that is being conducted for the project "Christian Theological Education in Muslim Societies", held a three-day workshop in Amman, Jordan on the theme of Christian- Muslim relations in Palestine. The workshop took place between July 31 and August 2, 1998, and was attended by twelve people as well as the facilitators Dr. Mitri Raheb, Dr. Nuha Khoury, and Ms. Viola Raheb.



During the workshop, the socio-economic and political contexts in Palestine have been critically examined to assess their importance to the Christian-Muslim relations. Involved in the analysis were important factors such as identity, national ideology (Arab and Palestinian nationalism) and cultural factors. The validity and importance of examining Christian and Muslim relations through a contextual approach rather than a doctrinal one has been confirmed by the results of the study that will be published at a later date.



The Workshop included a visit to the city of Jarash, where the participants took part in an important annual cultural activity that takes place in Jordan during the summer, namely the Jarash festival. In addition to visiting the ancient Roman city, the participants were able to enjoy the singing of Elias Karam, which provided an added awareness of the importance of culture as a unifying force between the two religious communities and across the Middle East in general.

Teachers' Workshops

"Towards a new school-education in Palestine"

A workshop for teachers entitled "Towards a new school-education in Palestine" was conducted by Professor Hans Buehler from Germany. Thirteen teachers from all ELCJ-schools (10 women, 3 men) took part in this workshop, which was coordinated by Mr. Yaqub Qumsiya, ELCJ Schools' Director and Ms. Viola Raheb, ELCJ Schools' Director Assistant. A comprehensive analysis of the difficulties in the existing school system, as identified by the participants, revolved around the following themes: "student", "teacher", "curriculum", "teaching methods", "school administration", "society" and "others". As a result of the analysis undertaken, a wide variety of visions for a new school-education in Palestine emerged and three working groups were designated to work on the following issues: **1.** administrative measures **2.** in-service training **3.** open school and the creative student.

The workshop participants decided to undertake concrete steps towards a new school-education. As a first step, the participants will work on making the learning environment in their schools more attractive for the students and teachers.

"Awareness Building for Tourism"

A workshop under the title "Awareness building for tourism" was conducted by Ms. Rana Khoury, Mr. G. Sayej, Ms. Viola Raheb, Mr. M. al Hurani, and Professor Hans Buehler. Twelve teachers from all ELCJ-schools (7 women, 5 men) participated in this workshop. The workshop was conducted using the methodologies of "contextualization" and Paul Freire's "education for liberation". The issues that were focused upon during the workshop were: **a)** "Tourism, culture, education and liberation" **b)** "the Christian-Muslim Dialogue" **c)** "didactic criteria to constructing an open curriculum: a historical and a systematic approach".

As a result of this workshop, a list of tourist sites in Palestine were identified as possible locations for tourism awareness-building. A four-dimensional model was also constructed as a basis for an open curriculum for the "Nativity Church in Bethlehem".

Intercultural Encounter

The Cologne International Women Conference

Three young Palestinian women, under the leadership of our staff member Ms. Jihan Nassar, represented the International Center of Bethlehem in a ten-day seminar in Cologne, Germany from June 26 to July 5, 1998. The other participants in the seminar were young women between the ages of 16 to 21, who came from Hungary, Finland, England, Turkey, and Germany. The different social and cultural backgrounds of the young participants presented an important and interesting challenge for all who were present. The focus of the seminar was on the following: **1.** Presenting the participants' countries to one another from a social, cultural, political and economic perspective. A



special emphasis at the seminar was placed on women's issues, interests, and needs.

2. Visiting several social institutions and organizations in Cologne that deal with women's issues and concerns. **3.** Discussing personal experiences and future hopes of the participants.

A discussion on the topic of "Women on the Internet", accompanied by a presentation of German Women Internet Magazine, resulted in the decision to create a similar magazine on the international level. How to implement this idea will be discussed at the next meeting, which will take place in Turku, Finland from August 6 to August 15, 1999.

The International Youth Exchange Conference in Cologne

A group of six young Palestinians, under the leadership of Ms. Jihan Nassar, participated in a twelve-day conference in Cologne, Germany from July 9 to July 21, 1998. The conference participants were active young women and men from Africa, England, Italy, Hungary, Israel, Finland, Yugoslavia, Palestine, and Germany. The program included siteseeing tours, recreational activities, as well as visitations to youth centers, social organizations, and museums.



Graduates Visit to Germany



A group of seven Palestinians from the Graduates Club of the International Center, led by Ms. Rana Khoury, visited Germany during the period of July 20 to August 2, 1998. The group, which comprised of five women and two men, were introduced to life in Germany through their homestays with German families in Mengen and Rottenburg. The visit, which was sponsored by the Evangelisches Jugendwerk Biberach, focused mainly on the German cultural life and included visitations to cultural organizations, schools that teach music and art, musical instruments' factory, recycling factory, and a cancer hospital for children. The visit also included public lectures by our graduates, who gave

presentations on the situation of Palestinians in general and the situation of the graduates and youth in Palestine in particular.

Human Rights in the Palestinian Experience

On the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, a conference focusing on the Palestinian experience was held in Lund, Sweden in November 4-8, 1998. Ms. Abeer Eweis represented the International Center of Bethlehem at this conference, which was organized by the Diocese of Lund in cooperation with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The participants in the conference were from Palestine and Sweden. Among the issues discussed at the meeting were the Palestinian experience regarding human rights and the consequences that the declaration of a Palestinian state on May 4th, 1999 might have on these rights. The conference participants included theologians, human rights activists, and church leaders. A representative of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivered a paper on the position of Sweden regarding the Palestinian question



and the establishment of a Palestinian state. The conference also explored the relations between the youth from the two countries and the possible ways of strengthening these relations. As a next step, a gathering for the youth from Sweden, Palestine and Norway will take place to further the relations between the Palestinian and Scandinavian youth. The meeting will be held in Bethlehem from April 16 to April 22, 1999.

Authentic Tourism

Authentic Tourism Coordinator

Our Staff member **Mr. Daoud Nassar** returned from Germany after receiving a degree in Tourism Management. Mr. Nassar finished a year of continuing education in the Tourism field from the University of Bielefeld. Mr. Nassar rejoined his colleagues in the Authentic Tourism program and is now working on developing new programs for groups visiting Palestine.



Intensive Course for Palestinian Guides

"It is never too late to learn something new." This became the favorite slogan of the Intensive Course for Palestinian Guides in its first year. This attitude reflects the situation of a country whose tradition in guiding pilgrims was interrupted for over 30 years and a country that is developing new forms of education and communication. "We never had a chance to learn this," is a typical sentence that reflects the increased consciousness of the students and their hunger for knowledge. Since the course introduced new approaches to learning, new content and new techniques, the students had to make many adjustments.



In 1995, the project proposal of the International Center stated the aims of the Intensive Course: 1. To train Palestinian guides to provide tourists coming to the Holy Land with a comprehensive picture of the entire country. 2. To empower Palestinians to become a voice for the voiceless, thus creating among tourists and pilgrims an awareness and understanding for the issues of peace and justice. 3. To introduce and promote the idea of a woman guide into the Palestinian tourism sector, thus influencing Palestinian society to become more gender-sensitive. 4. To economically empower women by training and equipping them with necessary skills to enable them to find jobs. 5. To introduce a new approach to guiding which is socially-responsible by emphasizing three categories, namely: (a) visiting the West Bank, especially sites that have been neglected so far, (b) giving a face to the land through encounters with the "living stones" of the local church and Palestinian society and (c) introducing visitors to the social and cultural realities of life in Palestine. 6. To produce material for future courses. We had to face few challenges in pursuing these aims. Most of our students have had to work in addition to studying in order to provide for their families. 50% of the students have no job or have

temporary employment, not a surprising fact, since the number mirrors the situation of unemployment in the entire West Bank. We continue to look for scholarships and funding to help students with these economic challenges.

Israeli permits are another obstacle. No permits have been issued by the Israeli administration for guiding courses in the past. The safe-passage to Gaza, which was agreed upon in the Oslo-accords, has not been implemented yet and travel permits between Gaza and the West Bank are difficult to obtain. Until now we had to work with the "19-hours-permit," which allowed some students to enter Israel for limited amounts of time to visit sites and participate in field-trips. In September and October of 1998, no permits were issued at all. Some field-trips had to be delayed to the end of the year.

In regards to content and methods of teaching, we tried to further enforce the intensity of the course. We believe that a new Palestinian tour-guide should be able to translate his or her culture to foreigners. Therefore, critical thinking skills were developed in a workshop on women in Palestinian society. The confines of society were explored and steps were taken to portray Palestine in a realistic fashion.

One of the most challenging experiences of the year was the students' visit to Jewish families in Jerusalem to experience Shabbat. Ten students took part of this experience, which offered exposure to Jewish religious practices. The International Center believes that it is crucial for tour guides to develop a wider understanding of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

A great emphasis was put on field-trips and excursions. In this way, we offered beyond doubt the best hands-on experience for the students. The different backgrounds of guides and lecturers mirrored the various approaches to presenting and seeing the Holy Land. This feature of the course provided the greatest learning experience, combining all aspects necessary for becoming an effective tour guide.

Individual and group research was another integral part of our work. For our excursion to the Palestinian village of Teqoa, the biblical hometown of the prophet Amos, we cooperated with the mayor, Suleyman Mufarreh. Here we could explain to him some possible approaches to the historical heritage in the village and the monastery of the Laura of St.Chariton in nearby Wadi Kharetoun. Another example of group work is a project in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, where two students prepared visits to all Christian communities and their churches, to the Iskendar Khoury-house and the monastery and vineyard of Cremisan.

The International Center was part of several networks through the Intensive Course. We informed the working-group for tourism-circuits about our research. The working-group for guide education dealt with different problems and future perspectives for Palestinian guides in the tourism industry. The International Center presented two project-proposals, "Discover Palestine", an introductory course for professionals and novices in tourism and "Rediscover Palestine from Within", a refresher course for licensed guides with an emphasis on new methods and sites in the West Bank.

The Center has also started, in cooperation with Dr.Manfried Wüst (Goethe-Institute Ramallah), to evaluate candidates for a language-course for tourism in German. Twelve candidates were selected to take part in this language course. The Center also began negotiations with representatives of the Ville de

Romans-municipalities for a course in French.

The Intensive Course for Palestinian guides were also invited by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) together with Bethlehem Bible College guide students, Bethlehem University's guide students, and the Arab Tour Guides' Union to work out a core-curriculum for future Palestinian Guides. This project will serve as a base to educate guides for the meantime and to develop a unified curriculum in the future.

Still a lot of work remains. We need to continue negotiations with MOTA to introduce a defined and quick licensing process for well educated guides. We are working now on a new course for women guides for guests and visitors of Bethlehem 2000 events. We are hopeful that this course will provide a solution for the problem of lack of qualified tour guides to accompany the Bethlehem 2000 projects.

After our initial experiences with the Intensive Course for Palestinian Guides, we plan to make a few adjustments. Lecturers combined with workshops will be increased and field-trips will be more intensively combined with subjects of workshops. Dr. Ulrike Bechmann's workshop on the traditions and symbols of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock is an example of such blending of knowledge and practicum. We hope to acquire some excellent teachers and lecturers who are committed to contributing to this method of learning. Another important project is to develop the collected material into a manual for education and use in the field, containing details of the sites and connected narratives and facts for background information. With this, we want to set a standard in the systems, methods, and content of our training courses.

We would like to offer our thanks to the supporters of the Intensive Course for Palestinian Guides: the World Day of Prayer-German Committee, The Creative Ministries of Presbyterian Women-Thank Offering in the USA, and the Evangelic Church of the Palatinate. We also would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the lecturers from Palestine, Great Britain, Sweden, United States, Canada, Israel and Germany for their commitment and contributions. A special thanks also to all the institutions in Palestine and abroad which helped in numerous ways to make the course possible. In the International Center many colleagues were directly involved; Dr. Nuha Khoury, Viola Raheb, Dr. Mitri Raheb and Andreas F. Kuntz as lecturers; Rana Khoury, Majed Ishaq and Andreas F. Kuntz as organizers with the support of Francesca Sabella

Visiting Groups

The interests of the groups who visited or stayed with us in 1998 were diverse. Mainly, our visitors were interested in study tours that would give them a better understanding of the daily life of Palestinians in Palestine, the political situation and conflict, as well as Palestinian traditions. These tours included visiting sites in the West Bank, having encounters with people, hearing lectures and taking part in seminars. Many groups also cooperated with the ICB to design their own tours, which focused on particular issues and interests, such as education. Such groups are usually very interested in background information and in studying the situation closely through seminars, lectures, as well as meeting with different organizations and church congregations.

During the summer, the groups that visited us were mainly youth-exchange groups. The program for these

groups included siteseeing, intensive encounters with Palestinian youth, as well as volunteer work.

This year we also had an increasing number of groups from church congregations. More and more congregations traveling on "standard tours" through Israel notice that there is something missing from their trip and wish to add to the standard program an alternative program in the West Bank.

Many of the groups who have had a program organized by the International Center of Bethlehem in 1998 scheduled one or more study days into their itinerary. A number of groups that visited the International Center of Bethlehem in 1998 focused their trip around seminars.

Finally, the International Center expanded its programs in 1998 to include programs in the north of the West Bank, hikes in the surrounding Bethlehem area as well as programs that leave room for spiritual and cultural experiences.

Publications

Bethlehem 2000 - Past and Present

This account of Bethlehem is the first of its kind. The book contains 120 impressive color photographs with narration, depicting the diversity and charm of the town. Bethlehem's history, culture, religion, and sites are presented in detail. In addition, special attention is given to the inhabitants of Bethlehem: their everyday life under Israeli occupation and changes since the beginning of Palestinian self-government in 1995.

The book is available in both English and German. The English edition includes a foreword written by President Yasser Arafat. The German edition includes a foreword by President Yasser Arafat and the German politician Hans-Juergen Wischnewski.

The authors of the book are Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb and Professor Fred Strickert. The photographer is Mr. Garo Nalbandian.

Mitri Raheb, born 1962 in Bethlehem, received his doctorate in theology from Germany. Today he is the pastor of the Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem and the General Director of the International Center of Bethlehem.

Fred Strickert, born 1948, is professor of Religion at Wartburg College, Waverly (Iowa / USA). He specializes in New Testament studies, biblical archaeology and Palestinian Christian issues.

Garo Nalbandian, born 1943 in Jerusalem, is currently one of the most famous Palestinian Photographers. He lives in East Jerusalem.

Dar al-Kalima

DAR AL-KALIMA ACADEMY, BETHLEHEM 2000



Background

The 2000 year anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem will be celebrated in various ways between Christmas 1999 and Easter 2001. Therefore, The Palestinian Authority (PA) and the UNESCO have set up an Emergency Action Plan for the Bethlehem Area with about a hundred projects amounting close to USD 150 million. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) joined the Bethlehem 2000 Program by financing the construction of an extension to the Palestine Academy for Interreligious and Intercultural Studies, the Dar al-Kalima Academy (DAK).



The Academy, which already exists, will work on two sites, (a) Center for Music and Art, located in the downtown area of Bethlehem, and (b) School for Intercultural Studies, located outside the old city on the Mureir Mountain. The new extension will provide the Center with a

multi-purpose hall for conferences, concerts, exhibitions and similar functions, as well as a cafeteria-restaurant, both with the necessary auxiliary services.

The main goals of Dar al-Kalima are:

- * Creating a forum where encounters between people from different backgrounds and religious faiths can take place. The Academy will be a forum for a dialogue that will enhance the peace process and foster humanity's search for justice and peace.
- * Encouraging active communication between Palestine and the rest of the world.
- * Helping to shape the Palestinian cultural identity through the development of disciplines such as music and art.
- * Encouraging the establishment of a network between educators, musicians and artists from around the world.
- * Restoring to Palestine the place it occupied earlier on the map of theological thought. The Academy will contribute to the revival of old and the development of new theological traditions in the South in general, and in the West-Asian countries in particular, using a contextual and cross-cultural approach.

Center for Music and Art - Madbaseh Square Site

The first site for The Dar al-Kalima is a compound composed of buildings of different ages and types. The compound is located at Madbaseh Square, between Paul VI and Najajreh Streets. On the compound there is a Lutheran church, built by Germans in late last century, as well as offices, meeting rooms and a youth cellar, all recently renovated. A primary school and a kindergarten, in a partially renovated old building at Paul VI Street are part of the compound. Moreover, a guesthouse for some 20-25 persons and staff housing is situated in the middle between the church and the school yard. At both narrow ends of the plot there are commercial spaces and except for the school yard, the space is full with complicated 2-3 level structures with many staircases and corridors. Buildings are generally in good shape and well kept.

The new extension will occupy most of the school yard, leaving only a small patio and compulsory narrow zones between the neighbors. Building requires that the school and the kindergarten to be moved elsewhere. Plans for this are well ahead and financing is being provided by German sources.

The Church of Sweden will finance the rehabilitation of a part of DAK old buildings for workshops through SIDA's NGO-funds.

Project Preparation

The MFA, through the Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Department for International Development Co-operation, identified the project during the summer and autumn of 1997. A project identification mission sent by the MFA to visit Jerusalem and Bethlehem, with Dr. Juhani Forsberg of the Church Office for International Relations and Veikko Vasko- Architect SAFA as consultants, made a more detailed appraisal in October-November 1997. Consequently, MFA decided on 20 April 1998, in connection with a visit to Finland of the General Director of DAK, Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, to finance the project, excluding

loose furniture and equipment, with an overall budget of FIM 5 million. Also, it was decided that an invited architectural competition would be organized.

Architectural Competition



The competition was organized as an invited architectural competition following the rules of the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA). The purpose of the competition was to find an architecturally outstanding solution for a small extension consisting of a multi-purpose hall, restaurant and kitchen with the necessary foyers and auxiliary services. Also, the competition aimed at finding a suitable Finnish architectural office to carry out the building design and supervision, in collaboration with a Palestinian architectural and engineering office from Bethlehem.

Facilities

New Construction Area

I- Performance Hall

- 1) A multi-purpose hall with a minimum seating capacity of 300 persons, with an elevated stage
- 2) Backstage and side stage spaces
- 3) 2 changing rooms and 2 toilets for the performers
- 4) 2 rooms for simultaneous interpretation for 1+2 languages
- 5) Control room for audio-visual facilities, including cinema
- 6) Storage room(s) for e.g. chairs and tables
- 7) Foyer
- 8) Toilets

The Performance Hall will be suitable for folklore dancing, musical performances, theater plays, film presentations, panel discussions and lectures.

II- Restaurant

- 1) Restaurant with a seating capacity of 100 persons, with a possibility of extending it to a seasonal outdoor dining area.
- 2) Kitchen
- 3) Cool storage room for food and beverages
- 4) Dry storage room
- 5) Storage room for other purposes
- 6) Staff dressing, washrooms and toilets
- 7) Garbage disposal facilities

8) 2 toilets for clients

III- Reception Area

1) Entrance hall with reception serving the whole compound

2) Lobby spaces as appropriate

3) Staircases and a lift, as appropriate

4) Toilets

IV- Bar

1) Bar with a capacity of 20 persons with a possibility of extending it to include a seasonal outdoor cafe, the capacity of which is 80 persons.

2) Service kitchenette with washing and a storeroom

3) Storage for outdoor furniture

4) Toilets

Renovation Area

I- Ground Floor

1) Art gallery

2) 8 workshops for artists

II- First Floor

1) 8 administrative offices

2) 2 staff meeting rooms

3) Kitchenette

4) Toilets

5) Storeroom and cleaning closets as appropriate

The winning design was by the architectural firm Vilhelm Helander, Juha Leiviska, Arkkitehdit SAFA, from Helsinki, Finland. The construction work is scheduled to begin by April 1, 1999 so as to be able to finish the project in time for the Bethlehem 2000 celebrations.

Summer School 1998



The 1998 summer school, which was five weeks long, continued a tradition that started in the 1960s. One hundred and twenty children from the Bethlehem District participated in this summer school, which was held under the theme **Our Palestinian Heritage**. The summer school offered children between the ages of three to twelve a number of recreational and educational activities that were designed to strengthen the ties that these children have to their culture. These activities were led by a team of Palestinian teachers and a volunteer from Germany. The main activities that the children participated in

included music, dabke dancing, sports, and fine arts. At the end of the summer school, the children and teachers organized a festival, where the children performed several dances and songs. Moreover, the children exhibited the different art works that they produced with the help of a local Bethlehemite artist. Other highlights included sports competitions and weekly field trips to different parts of Palestine.



Upcoming Projects

A Study on Interfaith Marriage

Dr. Ibrahim Ata has conducted a study on interreligious marriages in Palestine and their effect on children. The findings of Dr. Ata, which are based on interviews with 150 married couples from all over the West Bank, will be published during the year 1999.

Internet Club Bethlehem

The ICB, in association with the Department of Design at the University of Applied Science in Cologne, will establish an Internet Club in the fall of 1999. The main objective of this project is to promote the cultural identity of the people of Bethlehem through setting an on-line center for cultural exchange.

To begin with, the Internet Club will facilitate virtual student-exchange and on-line lessons, on an exchange basis, with different partner schools world-wide. The Internet Club will also offer women the opportunity to carry out research, work together and learn from other cultures by preparing presentations about their own cultural background to others.

People active in the political and the cultural fields will also be trained to use the internet. This training will help them to carry out their work more effectively and efficiently. Moreover, the inhabitants of Bethlehem, tourists and visitors of the ICB will be able to use the internet to access the world-wide web.

Due to economic and political restrictions, many people in Bethlehem rarely get to travel. The Internet Club is one way of overcoming these restrictions, since it will allow its users the advantage of establishing contacts with people from other parts of the world as well as exchange with them information on their different cultural backgrounds.

Also, since the media in Bethlehem is still restricted, access to the internet will provide alternative sources of information. Finally, the Club will improve the access to the internet for many people and will promote wider use.
