

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2003**

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## DESTRUCTION MAY BE... CONTINUITY SHALL BE...

On April 2, 2002 the Israeli Invasion of Bethlehem caused much destruction to the Lutheran compound and to the ICB building, furniture and equipment. In this context, the staff and beneficiaries of the ICB were determined to never give up on Bethlehem. The ICB is committed to continue to build and rebuild, to train and educate, to empower, to create life in the midst of despair, and to continue to call for justice and reconciliation in the midst of conflict and violence.

The year 2003 was a year which focused on rebuilding and completing our facilities. We were able to inaugurate two major facilities, Ad-Dar Cultural and Conference Center and Dar al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center.



AL-KAHF ARTS AND CRAFTS CENTER

**Art Workshops**

For the year 2003, as in previous years, the art workshops held at al-Kahf Arts and Crafts Center continued to operate very successfully and many of the local community benefited from what they had to offer. The art workshops concentrated on various art mediums, focusing especially on the youth but not solely. As part of the mission of the ICB, there is always the training for the unemployed, with special concentration on women, in order to enhance their employability and increase their chances of making a living with dignity. Below is a list of the various workshops that took place throughout the year 2003 and reports on Contemporary Art Workshop (#5) and Art Workshop by Samia Halabi (#6).

	Course	Instructor	Duration	Time	Age	F	M
1	Painting Workshop	Rimaz al-Araj	Oct.- Dec. 2002	Fridays	6 - 12	9	5
					12 - 16	6	2
2	Painting Workshop	Rimaz al-Araj	Jan. - March 2003	2 / week	Above 16	6	3
3	Painting Workshop	Eyad Obeid	1.3 - 30.5.03	2 / week	Above 16	7	2
4	Glass Workshop	Faten Nastas Mitwasi	Nov. 02 - June 03	3 / week	Above 18	6	2
5	<b>Contemporary Art Workshop</b>	Faten Nastas Mitwasi	2.5 - 20.6. 03	13 meeting	12 - 16	8	5
6	<b>Art Workshop</b>	Samia Halabi	16.6 - 19.6. 03	4 meetings	Above 13	3	6
7	Ceramic Workshop	Samaher Romi	14.6 - 12.7. 03	3 / week	Above 18	3	0
8	Painting Workshop	Rimaz al-Araj	15.7. 03 - Present	1 / week	Above 16	2	2
9	Mosaic Workshop	Carolina Zanelli	4.8 - 30.8.2003	5 / week	Above 18	2	6
10	Painting Workshop	Rimaz al-Araj	1.9.03 - Present	1 / week	16 - 18	3	3
11	Painting Workshop	Rimaz al-Araj	1.9.03 – Present	1 / week	6 - 15	4	2
12	Advanced Ceramic Workshop	Ghita Svensen	13.9 - 1.10.03	3 / week	above 18	6	
13	<b>University O.T.D.</b>	Abeer Jubran & Samaher Romi	11.9 - 18.12.03	1 / week	above 18	10	10
				<b>Total for 2003</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>41</b>
				<b>Grand total of all for 2003</b>			<b>101</b>

As for the year 2004, the plans for the art workshops include the following:

- Search for an alternative electric kiln for glass blowing that can be easily and safely operated.
- Introduce new beginner courses in all fields (ceramic, glass, mosaic) in order to train more people.
- Continue with the drawing and painting workshops and encourage all artisans to attend a beginner drawing course.
- Launch advanced courses in different fields for further training of the old and new artisans.
- Establish a new workshop of Jewelry (silver and bronze smithing) and begin training in this field.
- Concentrate on the Dar al-Kalima Academy, and set a system of workshops and a curriculum for courses for the future Academy students.

## **Students and Artists in BeitLahem (Bethlehem)**

*By Samia A. Halaby*

### **Results from Project BeitLahem**

In June of 2003 in BeitLahem (Bethlehem), I presented a short course on creativity. Nine artists of various ages participated. BeitLahem was then under Israeli siege and violent military attack on civilians occurred intermittently. Publicized Israeli withdrawal in July of 2003 was nothing but media mis-information. The siege was tightened even more bringing to near standstill life in BeitLahem. Israelis were also stealing the land all around the town and building an electrified wall to make the siege permanent. The whole is of horrific proportions. Look at the picture below taken from BeitLahem University. You see the electrified wall between us and the settlement in the distance. This settlement was built on the stolen land of Mount Abu Ghuneim (Har Homa). Notice the imperialist nature of its fortified architecture.



Thus it was that my teaching concerning creativity in art was being conducted among townspeople suffering the severe effects of a merciless siege. Palestinians are resisting this Israeli

terrorism by trying to continue conducting life as fully as possible. The intention of my teaching was to encourage self-reliance in artistic decision making, to encourage intuitiveness, and to encourage innovation in the selection of art materials. The project was posted in advance on the web. The advance response to my posting was very moving and indicative of the devastation of the siege. The organizers in BeitLahem begged me to post illustrative pictures as they did not have sufficient library material for the students to understand the context of the project. Please read the Project for BeitLahem and associated Project Pictures I and Project Pictures II which I posted in response. Below is the amazing group of Palestinians going to dinner together to toast our collaboration. They treated me to the specialties of Abu Shanab restaurant. I am proud of their heroic Soumoud and both honored by and grateful for their beautiful hospitality.



The artworks resulting were of high quality considering that we had only four consecutive days to work together. I was truly impressed by their sincerity and trust. For the youths among them, it was difficult to abandon the habit of fulfilling expectations. Yet in spite of varying degrees of acceptance, each and every participant made giant steps forward.



Firas Salman, "Forms of Art," 2003. Mixed media, 40 x 100 cm.

The youngest student was Firas Salman, 13 years of age, who worked a batch of found objects from around his home into a three dimensional assemblage -- a miniature theatre-like setting. He worked quietly, confidently, consistently, absorbed and happy. I am satisfied that he experienced something important and was glad that he shared it with the rest of us.



Ali Khalid Qaraq, untitled, 2003. Collage, 29 x 41 cm.

Next in age was Ali Khalid Qaraq, age 14, who proudly introduced himself as Artist Ali. I admire his confidence and hope that no one robs him of it too soon. As a young Palestinian male from Dheishe refugee camp, he is a primary target of Israeli State terror. Ali was the busy young man who had an important installation to create for an art opening during one of the nights of our session. During the little time he gave our project, he created a collage of parts cut out of magazines and calendars. The abstraction of his work was less his pleasure as an artist and more his trust in my urging him to experiment. He understood quickly how to proceed and understood that the picture plane did not need to be a hard rectangle.



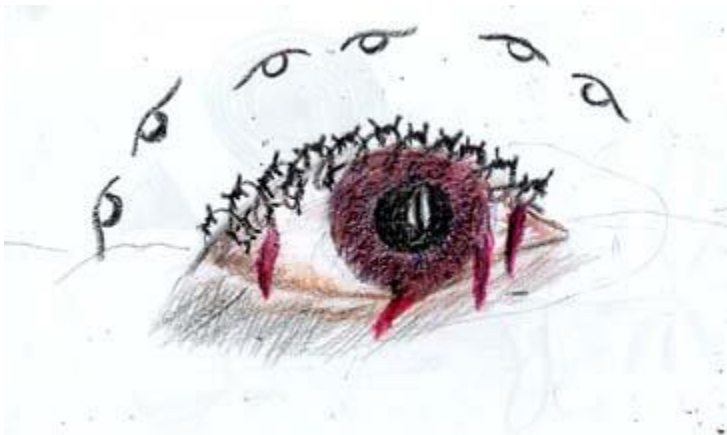
Rawan Gedeon, "Life," 2003. Papier Mache with mixed media, 20 x 10 cm.

Rawan Gedeon, 15 years, was also very busy preparing a video installation for the same exhibition as Ali. And indeed, her video regarding the death of her father under Israeli pressure, was incredibly mature and powerful. The work she did for our project was a papier mache assemblage with grapevine leaves. The sweet tenderness of the work presented in the picture below is wonderful.



Johnie Andonia, "Beginning of Creation," 2003. Stone with mixed media construction, 20 x 20 x 10 cm.

Johnie Andonia is very young for the extent of experience he has had as a painter. He is of a line of icon painters who are part of the history of BeitLahem. Johnie found it hard to abandon extensive experience and to travel with me in experimenting with process and found objects. I tried to give him a way out but he refused my offer and forged ahead. He brought bits of stones that are remnants from his place of work and he assembled them together into the work shown below.



Johnie andonia, untitled, 2003. Crayon on paper, 17 x 30 cm.

Johnie was delighted with his own break-through. I then encouraged him to try the same process not with assembled objects but with assembled images. The drawing of an eye presented below was among some of his experiments which he did not present to me. I found it after he left. Studying it one finds an impressive and mature combination of images which create a message larger than the mere combination of parts. The metaphor of the barbed wire for eye lashes which hurts and creates tears of blood is poignant and artistically mature. In Palestinian art, the eye as symbol of awareness is here used to express both suffering and knowledge of who imposes this suffering.



Tamer Mounir Mousa, "Abstraction in color and cloth," 2003. Mixed media 110 x 70 x 35 cm.

Tamer Mounir Mousa is also very young and just beginning to make art and to experiment. He is completely open to the ideas of the project and intuited immediately how to proceed. He gathered his materials quickly and spent the greater amount of time exploring these materials and resulting forms. In the end a beautiful piece with many allusions was created. It had the syntax of a window with objects on the window sill, or an altar with offerings, or a picnic on the stoop of a doorway. Tamer has wings wide open waiting for the wind to rise that he might fly.



Monther Jawabrah, "Siege," 2003. Mixed media, 180 x 150 x 190 cm.

Monther Jawabrah was a practicing and mature artist who created a piece with great freedom and gusto. He collected some of the abandoned shoes he said are found everywhere. They brought with them implications of Palestinians crossing Israeli closure points. Monther put some frames, chicken wire, mud, sack cloth, mud pies, shoes, and a discarded speaker together to create his piece. The crossing of the frames speaks clearly of Israeli imposed closure points. On the vertical path are shoes marching through the mud across a horizontal pathway where mud pies symbolize the cement road blocks Israelis place in the way. At the top right corner is the rusted speaker. All the participating artists immediately recognized the symbolism of the piece and associated the speaker with the hateful voices of Israeli soldiers yelling orders in their accented broken Arabic.





Ramaz Al Araje, "Mixed life: Solid, Living, and Dead" 2003. Stones, egg, and weeds, 40 x 25 x 20 cm.

Ramaz Al Araje teaches art at Terra Santa and Freres schools. Ramaz created several assemblage sculptures. The most powerful was the one where extremely fragile things are nested in extremely hard things. Stones and eggs in combination are so unexpected that one immediately feels the metaphoric allusion to the fragile condition of Palestinians under Israeli military terror. At the same time there is a palpable reaction to the work in our urge to protect what is fragile. This work and several other he made are unusual within the context of his work. Clearly, he put his trust in learning something outside his habits and created wonderful beginnings.



Nadira AlAraj, "Recess Time" 2003. Mixed media, 50 x 35 x 10 cm.

Nadira AlAraj is professor of operations management at Bethlehem University. She joined the course during a time of great pressure in her life. In addition to the difficulties created by the seige, it was exam week at her university. But it was relaxing, she said, amidst all the pressure to respond intuitively to the physical manipulation of found object and to follow the ideas they provoked in her. The experience began to suggest play and recess time. The resulting artwork is light hearted yet powerful. I look at the piece and it tells me of the delight of moving when still a child, of shapes freshly born, of flowers just after budding, of leaves in the spring, of skies and grass, and places of safety. It is a wonderful, beautiful work and I hope that she will sign and date it and take good care of it.



Samar Ghattas, work in progress, 2003. Mixed media, 20 x 30 cm.

Samar Ghattas is professor of art at Bethlehem University. Like Nadira, Samar also had the pressure of exam week as she spent four days with us. A mature artist with college teaching and exhibition experience, Samar was willing to share her time with us and committed herself to try something she has not done before. During each of the first three days she assembled different materials into a piece that could have been complete in itself. Then during the final hours she put all the parts together with the determination of one who might either sink or swim. The intellectual effort was greater than at the earlier stages.



Samar Ghattas "Soft Roughness" 2003. mixed media, 60 x 60 cm.

Courage paid off; Ghattas swam. The resulting artwork was very much in her own mature style, yet possessed fertile promise of new directions. It seems like a great beginning where creative intuition is telegraphing through to the viewer.

I extend my thanks to Faten Nastas Mitwasi, Art Coordinator at Dar Annadwa Al +Duwaliyye (the International Center of Bethlehem) for her invaluable coordination of the project and to all those working with her. I extend my thanks to nine wonderful students who moved me in their heroic resistance to the ill effects of siege in BeitLahem. I hope to be able to spend time with them again and hope that the circumstances might be less difficult.

## Gallery

As for the 'Cave' Gallery, there were 12 exhibitions held throughout the year 2003. There was a special concentration, as in the art workshops, on promoting and encouraging young local talented artists to exhibit their works (ex. 2,3,4,7) which were met with wide appreciation from the local community and international visitors. In addition, the work to connect between local Palestinian artists and Palestinian artists in the Diaspora has started with having Ms. Samia Halabi, the renowned Palestinian artist residing in New York, exhibit at the 'Cave' Gallery. For next year, the concentration shall be on hosting international Palestinian and non-Palestinians for more intercultural exchange with the locals.

	Title	Artist	Country	Time	Type of work
1	<b>Christ in the Palestinian Context</b>	Group of 15 Artists	Palestine	6.2 - 4.3	Oil Painting
2	Premonition	Samar Ghattas	Palestine	8.3 - 31.3	Water Color
3	What's Next?	Eyad Obeid	Palestine	5.4 - 30.4	Oil Painting & Crayon
4	Restless	Monther Jawabre	Palestine	8.5 - 29.5	Oil Painting
5	Painting on Silk	Gabriela Baddour	Palestine	5.6 - 19.6	Painting on Silk
6	Contemporary Art	13 Youth from Bethlehem	Palestine	20.6 - 20.7	Installation, Video, Photography, and Painting
7	The Sky was Stabbed by the Antlers of the Deer	Samaher Romi	Palestine	24.7 - 18.8	Ceramic
8	Ad-Dar Inauguration Special	Group- Artists & Artisans	Palestine	2.9 - 31.9	Painting & All Crafts
		Group - Photographer	Finland		Photography
10	Songs of Bethlehem	Ghita Beck Svensen	Denmark	4.10 - 31.10	Painting
11	the Segregation Wall	Arij Institute	Palestine	9.11 - 30.11	Photos & Maps
12	Textures of Palestine	Samia Halabi	Palestine - USA	20.12.03 - 25.1.04	Painting

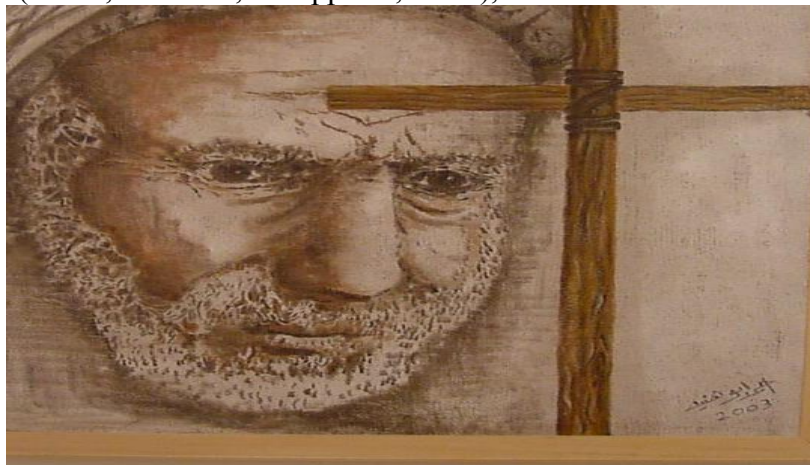
**Christ in the Palestinian Context Exhibition**  
**Feb. 6 – March 4, 2003**

For almost one year, al-Kahf Gallery was closed and neglected. However, today, it opens its doors once again. In spite of all the destruction, its walls are covered with colourful paintings. Regardless of the curfew imposed, it is hosting 16 Palestinian artists coming from different places all over the West-Bank; Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron. Some of them are well known, while others are still young beginner artists. What gathered them together was "Christ in the Palestinian Context", the topic of the exhibition. The artists are; Adibe Abu Said, Ahmad Abu Hania, Monther al-Jabri, Johnny Andonia, Akram Anastas, Nader Anastas, Zaki Baboun, Khitam Turkman, Vladimir Tamari, Taleb Dweik, Eyad Obeid, Ayed Arafah, Nabil Anani, Samar Ghattas, Tamer Munir, Adnan al-Zubaidi.

Actually, all these artists have participated in a painting competition about the same subject. Each artist searched deeply in the personality and life of Jesus Christ and expressed a part of it in relation to his/her own surrounding. This exhibition came as the final "conclusion" step of the competition, where names of the winners were announced during the opening ceremony. The winners were:

- |    |                      |                     |                 |
|----|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | "Last Supper"        | by Taleb Dweik      | from Jerusalem. |
| 2. | "Crucifixion"        | by Nabil Anani      | from Ramallah.  |
| 3. | "Entering Jerusalem" | by Johnny Andonia   | from Bethlehem. |
| 4. | "Pieta"              | by Ayed Arafa       | from Bethlehem. |
| 5. | "Untitled"           | by Monther al-Jabri | from Hebron.    |
| 6. | "Untitled"           | by Ahmad Abu Hania  | from Bethlehem. |

In cooperation with the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem, the six winners' paintings were sent to Sweden. There, they joined an international exhibition entitled "the Christ of the World". The exhibition toured and will continue to do so all over Sweden, in churches and museums, for one and a half year. It started in the Cathedral of Uppsala in June 2003 and shall end in January 2005. Countries from all over the world participated in this exhibition, mainly from the Far East (China, Thailand, Philippines, etc...), Latin America and Africa.



## THE 'CAVE' GIFTSHOP

### General Overview

The 'Cave' Gift Shop reopened in April 2003 after one year of closing due to Israeli invasion and destruction of its infrastructure and many other facilities within The International Center of Bethlehem. Several new items were introduced and, along with other hand-made products of the ICB, were displayed in a beautiful arrangement in the Gift Shop which attracted many people. These items were also uploaded into both websites of the Gift Shop and the Arts and Crafts Center:

[www.annadwa.org](http://www.annadwa.org) & [www.bethlehemchristmasmarket.com](http://www.bethlehemchristmasmarket.com)

The marketing of all the products and items produced at the ICB was done on both levels, locally and internationally. The stained glass "Angel" was once again the most sold item, where almost 6 thousand angels were produced during 2003. Many orders came from various countries in the world including USA, Germany, UK, and Norway.

Angels were not the only items ordered, for the website exhibits ceramics, calligraphy, olive wood, glass and embroidery items which were also very much in demand by our customers.

### Achievements

#### 1. Quality Control:

New items were produced by our artists in our workshops with better quality.

#### 2. Prices:

Prices were reconsidered and some had been adjusted, so as to be able to market the products on the local level.

#### 3. Website Update:

[www.annadwa.org](http://www.annadwa.org) and [www.bethlehemchristmasmarket.org](http://www.bethlehemchristmasmarket.org) were updated 3 times in the year 2003 which was in May, September, and December.

#### 4. Bazaars:

The 'Cave' Gift Shop participated in 3 Bazaars

- Olive Harvest Festival on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003.
- Christmas Market on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2003.
- Heritage Day Beit Jala in October 2003.

## NATIONAL MUSIC CONSERVATORY

In 1997 a coalition was forged between the ICB and the National Music Conservatory, which brought into existence the National Music Conservatory-Bethlehem Chapter, the first of its kind in the Bethlehem District.

Our Music program aims at creating a new artistic generation and reviving music as an art form that will enrich the cultural life of Bethlehem. It enhances both the traditional Palestinian music heritage and the western tradition, secular as well as religious music.

The students, whose number has reached last year to 114 students, learn to play instruments, take solfège lessons, music interpretation and come together to form different choirs and bands. One such band is called “Sunbula” which is an Oriental Music Ensemble composed of 7 students whose ages range between 14 to 18. “Sunbula” started performing to the public and is receiving very high claims and good responses from the community. A younger “Sunbula” group is in the making, whose ages range between 10-13.

The students can choose between qanon, oud or percussion if they want to learn classical Arabic instruments and piano, guitar, flute, violin, trumpet or saxophone for western music. One student participated in a Oud workshop in Amman during the summer, and two others in Sweden for violin.

A highlight of 2003 was the music competition that was conducted in June 2003. A report on this competition follows, written by Mr. Johannes Zang, an employee at the ICB.

### Music Competition

*By Johannes Zang*

When I returned to Bethlehem, following a forced one-month leave due to my German-sending agency’s response to the war on Iraq, the National Conservatory of Music, where I teach piano, guitar, choir, ensemble and theory, informed me that there would be a music competition in early May. Entitled “Marcel Khalife,” this competition would bring together the musicians from the three branches of the Conservatory which are in Ramallah, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. However, due to my being away, there was not sufficient time for my students to prepare the obligatory pieces. They had also missed the registration deadline.



This saddened me greatly as I would have loved to take my students who had not been to Jerusalem for years to that competition. To try to compensate them, I decided to have them compete between themselves.

On the first Friday in June, all of the guitar and piano students arrived for this ‘in-house’ competition. They had had about 4 weeks to work on the obligatory piece (for piano: Tik tik tik ya Imm Sliman; for guitar: Lullaby) and on a piece of their selection. The jury consisted of two German monks from Jerusalem who are musicians; Dia Rishmawi, the Director of the Bethlehem branch of the National Conservatory of Music; and myself.

It was an exciting day for all the participants. In the piano category we had two winners: little Loris from Beit Sahour and Abdallah from Bethlehem. In the guitar class Yousef won the first prize. Each received a cash prize of 20 Euros and a book. The other prizes included cassette tapes and mugs.

Everybody enjoyed this nice event and next year I will take all of my students to the “Marcel Khalife” competition in Jerusalem. I am very proud of my students who despite the difficult situation are very anxious and ambitious to advance on their instruments!



Bravo.

## OPENING OF AD-DAR CULTURAL AND CONFERENCE CENTER

### Stepping into Ad-Dar

*By Louise Bjerre Dalum*

*September 3rd, 2003*

*“Today we celebrate that a dream has come true. The building looks small but is large in its mission”*

With those words, Bishop Munib Younan launched the new Ad-Dar Conference and Cultural Center, Monday evening the 1st of September 2003.

Located in the heart of Bethlehem, Ad-Dar is of vital importance for the people of Palestine since it represents hope for a brighter future.

For Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, general director of the International Center of Bethlehem, it has been a dream come true. In his welcoming address, Rev. Raheb said,

*At a time when a wall of separation and apartheid is being*

*Built around Bethlehem, we are here investing in people who dare to cross boundaries. At times of bombing and shelling, we set new tunes, play new songs of freedom, justice, reconciliation and compassion,*



The inauguration event was attended by over 500 Palestinians and members of the international community. The celebration was under the patronage of H.E. Ms. Paula Lehtomaki, Finnish Minister of Foreign Trade and development, and H.E. Dr. Nabeel Kassis, Palestinian Minister of Planning.





*Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, Minister Ms. Paula Lehtomaki and Rt. Rev. Munib Younan at the official opening.*



Over 500 participated in the celebration

*It is a brilliant project. I am truly happy to be part of this. I wish this will be a place for dialogue and discussions amongst the Palestinian people,*

said Minister Lehtomaki, whose government, represented by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs back in 1998, generously decided to sponsor the design, awarded to the Finnish Architect Juha Leiviska, and the construction of the new center.

The long and awaited journey of the construction and finalization phases of the Center was met by a number of obstacles mainly the Israeli occupation and the infamous invasion of the city of Bethlehem in April 2002. This however did not discourage any of the people dedicated to the final realization of the project from joining hands and working together - under gun and tank points, continuous curfews, and total destruction - to revive the spirit of continuity and collect the shattered pieces of the dream, which is now realized here today.



*The reception took place outside in Al-Waha, the garden*

In Ad-Dar, today, people of various walks of life have at least one thing in common: Culture. Rev. Raheb best described this in his words,

*“What we are celebrating today is more than a building. We are investing in a community. We are creating a cultural movement.”*

## **AD-DAR CULTURAL AND CONFERENCE CENTER INAUGURATION**

**by**

**Finnish Minister of Foreign Trade and development Ms. Paula Lehtomaki**

Yours Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It a great honour for me to be here today to participate in the inauguration of the Ad-Dar Cultural and Conference Center and bring you all a warm greeting from the people of Finland.

An official inauguration in this case marks the result of many years of intense effort on the part of many people. Today our joint effort finally bears fruit.

This project is of great importance for us. It brings together so many elements important both for the Finns and the Palestinians.

Already the location of the center holds particular significance. The town of Bethlehem possesses a multi-faceted character; it is comprised of religious, historical and a cultural dimensions. Bethlehem is town of symbolic prominence and one of the most religiously significant sites on earth. It is of great importance for the Palestinian people and the Middle East region. Bethlehem has special meaning for all the believers of the world and for the international community as a whole.

We know all this from the history books, but we don't want to experience the glory of the past only. We hope that Bethlehem is the place where the history and the future will meet. With the Ad-Dar Center we want to be part of the future which hopefully brings hope and peace for all the people in this region. Unfortunately, the town of Bethlehem, has also suffered greatly during the last few years. There has been a halt in its natural development and progression. People in Bethlehem, like rest of the Palestinians need - and deserve the support and engagement of the international community in their efforts to live a normal human life. Behind our support to this project is an understanding that we have to respond to needs of these people.

The International Center of Bethlehem shares our vision in this respect. By serving the local community it responds to many needs. But in addition to that, it also has an important mission in promoting a dialogue between cultures and religions - a dialogue that is precondition for peace in this region. This new building will, I'm sure, strengthen Bethlehem International Center's efforts to achieve its goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As was mentioned in the outset, this event marks the result of many years of intense effort on the part of many people. I would like to recognize each and every one of you, but I'm afraid that it is

practically impossible. There are so many of you who have contributed to this work. However, there are some people who I have to mention.

First of all, the founder and General Director of the International Center of Bethlehem, Dr. Mitri Raheb. He worked very hard while selling this project to our Government. During this mission he received valuable support from Bishop Yunan, who we actually consider to be one of us - a true Finn. He knows our country and the Finnish people better than most of the Finns themselves. Today I am extremely happy that we took on their offer.

I also want to praise the architect - academician Juha Leiviskä - who by planning this building has created another masterpiece. Although - according to my opinion - this building has some strong Finnish features it blends beautifully with its surroundings.

This project was originally initiated as a part of Bethlehem 2000 programme. The planning and preparation for this major event was an immense endeavour by the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority. You, Minister Kassis, played a central role in the whole Bethlehem 2000 project. I want to thank you personally, and the whole Palestinian Authority for the support and excellent cooperation during these years.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In his book, Bethlehem 2000 – past and present, Dr. Raheb writes also about the name of this town. "Bethlehem suggests a place where the stranger is welcomed and where there is food in abundance, even amidst the rugged desert landscape." Today I have learned that this interpretation is so true. I want to thank you all for the warm welcome I have received.

Thank you

## EVENTS

### **Revived Cultural Life in Bethlehem**

The International Center of Bethlehem has played a major role in reviving the cultural life in Bethlehem and has created a unique cultural ambiance in the city. Throughout the year 2003, the ICB hosted 53 events which varied between musical concerts, theater plays, film screenings, documentary film screenings, children's activities, book readings, song & dance performances, and an international festival. The Center was filled with people coming to enjoy their time and take a break from the stressful life they go through everyday. The number of audience attending the different events was very high. We had up to 6000 attendees, not including those who participated in the different workshops, courses and exhibitions.

A major event that took place in the year 2003 was the grand opening of the newest addition to the ICB's facilities, the state-of-the-art performance hall Ad-Dar Cultural and Conference Center, with a capacity of 350 seats. The opening took place on September 1<sup>st</sup> in the presence of many VIPs and officials including Ms. Paula Lehtomaki, the Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, and Dr. Nabeel Kassis, the Minister of Planning for the Palestinian Authority.

Since the opening of the new facilities at the ICB, a number of major events took place such as *The Songs of Freedom Festival* organized in cooperation with Yabous Productions in Jerusalem between July 21-29, 2003 in an attempt to revive the cultural life and break the imposed discontinuity between Bethlehem and the rest of the world. For four nights and through the power of music, the local community had a chance to enjoy listening to international music groups from France's "Erik Truffaz Quartet", Spain's "Luar Na Lubre", Palestine "Zimar" and Chile's "Quilapayun". Like never before during the past three years, people came to participate, and were given a chance to overcome their political and social worries. They were allowed a slight beam of light to enter into their hearts. The groups and concerts were all hosted at Ad-Dar, a unique place with the latest sound and light equipment which offers a remarkable atmosphere enabling both the audience and performers to enjoy themselves.

Another major event which is not an often occurrence here is that an Arab writer/novelist from abroad visits Palestine. Borders and other politically-based reasons usually keep them away, disconnecting them at least physically, from the Palestinian people. However, to Ahdaf Soueif, a prominent Egyptian writer/novelist who lives in Britain, physical obstacles did not stand in her way. The International Center of Bethlehem had the honor of receiving Ms. Soueif. Meeting Ahdaf was an experience which enabled the audience not only to get in direct touch with a prominent woman writer and novelist who produces superb articles and novels, but also to better understand what it is like to maintain one's identity when living in mixed cultures and civilizations.

Finally, the ICB hosted the famous British singer Jane Birkin who performed with her musicians her new album *ARABESQUE*. The event was memorable and unforgettable for all the people who attended the concert. The event was organized in cooperation with the French Consulate General

and the French Cultural Center in Jerusalem. Ms. Birkin dazzled the audience with her music and style and all the attendees left pleased and content.

Considering that the political situation in the Bethlehem area was volatile at times, the ICB managed to organize many events and can consider its varied program in 2003 a very successful one.

### **The activities for the year 2003**

<b>N°</b>	<b>Type of event</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>N° of audience</b>
1.	Organ Concert	Father Ralph	January 5 <sup>th</sup>	30
2.	Documentary screening	Palestine is Still the Issue	February 1 <sup>st</sup>	30
3.	Concert	Mahab Al-Ruh	March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	80
4.	Documentary screening	I am a Little Angel by Hanna Musleh	March 15 <sup>th</sup>	40
5.	Book Launching	Earthquake in April by Suad Amiri	April 10 <sup>th</sup>	20
6.	Piano Concert	Lamees Audeh	May 2 <sup>nd</sup>	65
7.	Concert	Sheikh Imam Group	May 10 <sup>th</sup>	130
8.	Concert	Singer Pur	May 20 <sup>th</sup>	70
9.	Concert	Reem Banna	May 30 <sup>th</sup>	70
10.	Film Screening	When Maryam Spoke out	June 5 <sup>th</sup>	60
11.	Concert	Ibrahim Attari	June 6 <sup>th</sup>	35
12.	Jazz Concert	Nils Mille	June 13 <sup>th</sup>	40
13.	Lecture	The Art of Palestine by Samia Halabi	June 17 <sup>th</sup>	25
14.	Classical Concert	OPUS	June 19 <sup>th</sup>	30
15.	Violin & piano Concert	Spanish Duo	June 28 <sup>th</sup>	50
16.	Fun Day for kids	Inad Theater	July 11 <sup>th</sup>	100
17.	Theater Play for kids	Ghandoura & Friends by PNT	July 18 <sup>th</sup>	100
18.	Songs of Freedom Festival	Erik Truffaz Quartet	July 21 <sup>st</sup>	100
19.	Songs of Freedom Festival	Luar Na Lubre	July 24 <sup>th</sup>	250
20.	Songs of Freedom Festival	Zimar Group	July 26 <sup>th</sup>	100
21.	Songs of Freedom Festival	Quilapayun	July 29 <sup>th</sup>	250
22.	Running day for kids		July 25 <sup>th</sup>	150
23.	Film Screening	Bowling for Columbine	August 16 <sup>th</sup>	50
24.	Grand Opening of Ad-Dar		Sept. 1 <sup>st</sup>	400
25.	Graduation	ICB Students	Sept. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	100

26.	Film Screening	Harry Potter	Sept. 4 <sup>th</sup>	150
27.	Dance performance	Al-Funoun Dance Troup	Sept. 6 <sup>th</sup>	150
28.	Concert	East West Dialogue Group	Sept. 8 <sup>th</sup>	100
29.	Documentary Screening & Discussion	Crossing Qalandia	Sept. 11 <sup>th</sup>	60
30.	Theater Play	Stories Under Occupation	Sept. 13 <sup>th</sup>	250
31.	Book reading & discussion		Sept. 16 <sup>th</sup>	20
32.	Film screening for kids	JONAH	Sept. 19 <sup>th</sup>	50
33.	Theater Play for kids	Nakhleh Esheber	Sept. 26 <sup>th</sup>	150
34.	Film Screening & discussion	Tales from Arab Detroit	Oct. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	150
35.	Concert	Italian Accapela	Oct. 4 <sup>th</sup>	40
36.	Dance performance	Edition Special	Oct. 7 <sup>th</sup>	180
37.	Film Screening for kids	The Jungle Book 2	Oct. 10 <sup>th</sup>	60
38.	Documentary Screening	GAZA STRIP	Oct. 17 <sup>th</sup>	50
39.	Concert	German Group	Oct. 18 <sup>th</sup>	80
40.	Writer's presentation	Ahdaf Soueif	Oct. 21 <sup>st</sup>	200
41.	Theater Play	Our Dreams have no limits	Oct. 25 <sup>th</sup>	160
42.	Film Screening	Two Weeks Notice	Oct. 31 <sup>st</sup>	50
43.	Theater Play	Nakhleh Esheber	Nov. 4 <sup>th</sup>	300
44.	Lecture + exhibition about the Segregation wall	ARIJ	Nov. 9 <sup>th</sup>	100
45.	Documentary Screening & discussion	Ford Transit	Nov. 12 <sup>th</sup>	80
46.	Theater Play	The Earth Gods	Nov. 21 <sup>st</sup> & 22 <sup>nd</sup>	150
47.	Theater Play for kids	Miladeh & Ramadan Journey	Nov. 26 <sup>th</sup>	50
48.	Concert	German Duo	Dec. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	50
49.	Film Screening	Whale Rider	Dec. 5 <sup>th</sup>	10
50.	Concert	Jane Birkin	Dec. 10 <sup>th</sup>	400
51.	Family Concert	National Music Conservatory	Dec. 12 <sup>th</sup>	100
52.	Documentary Screening	Rana's Wedding	Dec. 12 <sup>th</sup>	60
53.	Talent Show	Ballet recital + music recital	Dec. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	300
			<b>TOTAL 5875</b>	



Luar Na Lubre Band



The Egyptian Writer Ahdaf Soueif



Theater Play "The Earth Gods"

## THE BETHLEHEM MEDIA CENTER

### **Volunteers**

The Bethlehem Media Center received 3 volunteers in the year 2003 who worked mainly on helping to establish the Bethlehem Media Center's website, [www.bethlehemmedia.net](http://www.bethlehemmedia.net).

**Omar Tesdell:** An American of Palestinian origin. Omar worked on three different tasks: designing the layout of the media website, collecting information and material for the media website and conducting a media club in the Summer Academy.

**Louise Dalum:** a Danish journalist who came through the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Israel and Palestine (EAPPI). Louise worked on providing features, interviews and articles for the media website as well as producing a TV ad for the Bright Stars Program.

**Frank Wright:** a retired US journalist from Minneapolis, Minnesota with an extensive journalistic experience working with Star Tribune for 45 years. His experience included being Washington Bureau Chief, Managing Editor, and Associate Editor/Foreign Correspondent 1984-98, reporting from more than 60 countries, including many assignments in the Middle East. Frank's contribution to the Media Center was through writing articles and establishing networks.

### **Services to Journalists and Media Personnel**

As part of its programs, the Bethlehem Media Center offered a number of services to international, regional and local journalists and media personnel. Most of the services focused on preparing itineraries, providing information, arranging for interviews and using facilities. Some of the main clients were: BBC (England), Christian Monitor (US), National Public Radio (US), WDR German Radio and TV, Publik-Forum (Germany) and many others.

### **Launching of the Bethlehem Media Net Website**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of December the Bethlehem Media Center officially launched its media website [www.bethlehemmedia.net](http://www.bethlehemmedia.net) with valuable features, points of view, Christian voices, professional photos, and many other topics and categories. The site has received excellent feed back. And on an average day it is visited by 75-180 unique visitors.



Summary by Month										
Month	Daily Avg				Monthly Totals					
	Hits	Files	Pages	Visits	Sites	KBytes	Visits	Pages	Files	Hits
<a href="#">May 2004</a>	806	512	354	30	74	15655	60	709	1024	1612
<a href="#">Apr 2004</a>	1689	1189	286	90	1622	503870	2721	8599	35695	50696
<a href="#">Mar 2004</a>	1515	1083	264	77	2263	378709	2407	8210	33599	46984
<a href="#">Feb 2004</a>	1909	1303	270	72	2296	417737	2102	7832	37806	55384
<a href="#">Jan 2004</a>	1516	1022	252	71	1550	352665	2227	7820	31710	47002
<a href="#">Dec 2003</a>	3598	2493	569	128	2880	848279	3980	17660	77285	111566
<a href="#">Nov 2003</a>	142	82	30	9	182	30813	289	925	2463	4264
<a href="#">Oct 2003</a>	159	63	32	8	50	11740	186	707	1406	3504
<b>Totals</b>						<b>2559468</b>	<b>13972</b>	<b>52462</b>	<b>220988</b>	<b>321012</b>

Monthly Statistics for December 2003	
Total Hits	<b>111566</b>
Total Files	<b>77285</b>
Total Pages	<b>17660</b>
Total Visits	<b>3980</b>
Total KBytes	<b>848279</b>
Total Unique Sites	<b>2880</b>
Total Unique URLs	<b>447</b>
Total Unique Referrers	<b>536</b>
Total Unique User Agents	<b>584</b>

## Other Activities

### Volunteers Training Workshop

On June 30 - July 1, 2003, 17 people from 9 local NGOs/CROs gathered in the Naim Nassar Hall for a workshop on “Building a Society of Volunteers.” This training was sponsored by the Middle East Association of Training and Retreat Centers \*(*MEATRC*) and hosted by the International Center of Bethlehem, a founding member of MEATRC.

As part of MEATRC strategic plan for 2000-2005, capacity building for the different member centers and other centers that MEATRC sees as potential members has been identified as a priority. The issue of effective recruitment of volunteers to help these centers grow has been the focus for the year 2003.

Carol Sansour and Rev. Sandra Olewine provided the leadership for the workshop on behalf of The International Center of Bethlehem. Al-Liqa, also a member of MEATRC, participated and was joined by representatives from the Arab Educational Institute, Bethlehem University, the Peace Center, Sabeel Liberation Theology Center, Wi’am, and the YMCA Rehabilitation Center.

Day One focused on the theory and history of volunteerism, covering topics such as: what is volunteerism, the history of volunteerism in Palestine, the importance of volunteerism in building civil society, the characteristics of volunteers and the ethics of volunteerism. Day Two focused on practical considerations for strengthening volunteer programs. The discussion centered on the experiences of local institutions in their volunteer programs, and how to recruit, select and train volunteers.

Throughout, the discussion was lively. While the experience of the participating institutions with volunteers differed, all expressed a need to improve how they deal with volunteers, including better orientation and training for them. In the evaluations, everyone expressed keen interest in more training in this area, particularly focusing on how to motivate volunteers in Palestinian society.

ICB was excited to be able to offer this initial training and looks forward to providing more resources for our community.

\* *MEATRC* is an association of a number of centers that address spiritual and social concerns in their communities and work in the fields of training and human resource development. Founded in 1994, MEATRC centers seek to accomplish their common vision through networking, sharing of ideas and working together, thus serving the churches and the community in the Middle East. The centers of MEATRC are located in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Cyprus and Palestine.



## **Candlelight Vigil in Bethlehem**

In response to the call of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and many faith-based organizations around the world, a candlelight vigil in cooperation with local institutions was organized to say NO TO WAR and YES TO PEACE on Sunday, March 16.

Over 300 people from different walks of life silently participated in the vigil which started at al-Madbassa Square near the ICB and the Christmas Lutheran Church compound, and passed through the old city of Bethlehem to finish at the Nativity Square. The vigil ended by a short prayer calling for peace and justice.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS 2003

A commitment to engage the local community to assume a proactive role in shaping their future is at the heart of the work of the International Center of Bethlehem. With the objective of empowering the local community, training future leaders, and developing human resources, ICB has planned, launched and implemented several programs in Information Technology and Communications in 2003:

- ~ **Distance Learning Program:** The Distance Learning program at the International Center of Bethlehem is the first of its kind in Palestine. The program was initiated in order to provide a virtual means of communication between students and teachers as a result of continuous closures and curfews on Palestinian towns. The program was implemented in October of 2003, and the ICB currently provides home internet access and email accounts to 600 students in 3 schools in Bethlehem. In addition, training workshops have been carried out and an ongoing training program has been established with the objective of training school teachers and students to use Information Technology in the educational process.
- ~ **Prometric Testing Center:** The International Center of Bethlehem has formed a partnership with Prometric to become the first and only authorized Prometric Testing Center in the southern part of the West Bank servicing the entire Bethlehem and Hebron areas. The center will deliver in 2004 technology-based testing and assessment services for information technology industry certification, as well as academic admissions and professional licensure/certification.
- ~ **Internet Club:** The Internet Club at the ICB facility was opened in the end of 2003 providing computer hardware and software resources, Internet access and training courses to the local community with focus on children, youth, and women.
- ~ **Bethlehem Media Net:** The building and design of Bethlehem Media Net website, as well as regular updating and maintenance. Bethlehem Media Net was established to provide alternative media reporting that highlights and displays the human everyday life of the Palestinian people. It was launched in December of 2003.  
[www.bethlehemmedia.net](http://www.bethlehemmedia.net)
- ~ **Hardware, Software and Network Administration and Support:** Continuously installing, upgrading and maintaining the IT infrastructure at the Center, as well as providing user support and help for all information technology related work and programs of the various departments at the ICB.
- ~ **The International Center of Bethlehem Website:** Regular updating of the ICB's Home Page at [www.annadwa.org](http://www.annadwa.org). In addition, plans and first draft designs and information organization layouts have been made for a new look and structure of the website, to be launched in June of 2004.
- ~ **Membership System & Application:** The computer application for the membership system was developed in 2003 in order to provide the ICB with recording of information on the use of ICB facilities and participation in the ICB programs, as well as encouraging the formulations of a community of active ICB members. Such accurate information allows the ICB staff and administration to carry out structured

evaluation of the use of our services, and thus better future planning. The membership application system provides information storage on members of the ICB and recording all use of facilities, attendance of events, and participation in training courses and programs. The system also provides reports and analysis of any specific data desired.

- ~ **Summer Academy:** Since 2000, the Summer Academy at the International Center of Bethlehem has included an IT component. At the 2003 Summer Academy, about 170 students aged 8-16 participated in a computer course, in which they learned theory and practices of the use of computer applications and web design programs.
- ~ **IT Training for ICB and MEATRC Employees:** A workshop in charge of providing basic IT training to the employees of the four MEATRC centers in Palestine (Middle East Association of Training and Retreat Centers). The aim of this workshop is to help the employees maximize effectiveness of work through optimal use of computers.
- ~ **IT & Communications Training Courses:** Plans and implementation strategies have been laid in 2003 in order to start offering training courses at the beginning of 2004 in Information Technology and Multimedia Communications. The training programs aim at the development of human resources and equipping the local community to assume a proactive role in shaping their future. The courses will be offered in Internet Basics, Microsoft Office Tools (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, and Outlook), Graphic Design, Web Site Design, and preparation courses for standard Prometric tests.
- ~ **Outreach:** The International Center of Bethlehem plans to work with more schools and teachers in Bethlehem area in the year 2004 through providing international standard computer training and extending its IT services to school students in the rural areas.

## DAR AL-KALIMA ACADEMY

The Dar al-Kalima Academy is an institution of higher education in Palestine whose mission is to provide high quality educational opportunities to students from the different sectors of the Palestinian society. The Dar al-Kalima Academy is concerned with spreading values of democracy, free expression and critical thinking so as to create a civil society in Palestine that is aware and free. The Dar al-Kalima Academy seeks to offer training in the following fields:

- Music
- Arts & Crafts
- Media
- Communications
- Languages
- Teachers Training
- Cultural Management
- Tourism
- Christian Ministry

During the year 2003, the focus was on languages, teachers training in the field of information technology, and media.

### **Mission of the Dar al-Kalima Academy**

1. Create an educational institution in the Bethlehem region that is concerned with the student's intellectual development in terms of creative thinking and technical abilities, through offering a curriculum that is designed for the 21st century.
2. Meet the economic, cultural, social, and educational needs of the Palestinian society.
3. Contribute to the enrichment of the intellectual and cultural life in Palestine through providing the young people with necessary training as well as academic and vocational skills.
4. Provide alternative educational opportunities to what already exists at institutions of higher learning in Palestine. Hence, new job opportunities for Palestinian students will be created
5. Provide a comprehensive and broad curriculum that depends on the creative skills of the students.
6. Encourage human productivity and creative skills to enable people to shape their future through their work.
7. Create a forum where young Palestinian men and women have the opportunity to study with people from other religious and cultural backgrounds. This shall promote the ideals of pluralism, mainly tolerance and respect for the thinking and beliefs of others.
8. Create an infrastructure necessary for the rejuvenation of the cultural life in Palestine and the reshaping of the Palestinian cultural identity that suffered at the hands of the Israeli occupation.
9. Provide young Palestinian men and women with vocational training that meets international standards in fields such as tourism, media, music, communications, cultural management, as well as arts and crafts.

10. Conserve and revive traditional Palestinian handicrafts that are slowly dying out, as well as evolving the handicraft industry to meet the international standards.
11. Encourage active communications and the establishment of a network between educators, theologians, journalists, musicians, artists from Palestine and the rest of the world.

## **Programs**

### I. Languages

The languages program at the Dar al-Kalima Academy has initiated language courses for adults during the year 2003. There were intensive German and Italian courses, both beginners and advanced, held several times per week. Ms. Augusta La Piero from Italy conducted the Italian courses for a period of 4 months. As for the German courses, they were taught by Mr. Nidal Abu Ayyash, and were held jointly with Goethe Institute. The Dar al-Kalima Academy has creatively utilized its modern facilities in its teachings: i.e the computer lab and as an internet provider in distance learning.

The language courses were held due to the following reasons:

1. The vision and mission of the Dar al-Kalima Academy is to reach out to other peoples and cultures and language is an important tool in communicating with other cultures.
2. The Dar al-Kalima Academy aims to develop human resources, one way of which is teaching languages.
3. Offering better qualifications for people interested in pursuing their education and finding jobs.
4. Most of the participants of the German courses were students who wanted to continue their education in Germany, and therefore wanted to enroll in our courses in order to acquire the language prior to their departure. Most of them were from nearby villages as well which do not offer such courses.
5. Most of the participants in the Italian courses were students who are working or wanting to work in the tourism field, especially as guides. And therefore it was of utmost importance to provide these courses for them.

### II. Teachers Training

**Training Workshops on the Use of Information Technology in the Educational Process:** The ICB has been offering for the past 3 years training to teachers at 3 schools, and is integrating other schools in the workshops. The objective is to train school teachers and students and encourage them to use computers and Internet as a tool of communication, information sharing, collaborative learning, resources and data gathering, and conceptual learning and demonstration.

### III. Media

#### **Peace Journalism Training**

16 journalists participated in the first training activity offered by the Dar al-Kalima Academy at the Bethlehem Media Center which was in the form of a two-day seminar, between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2003. The training was on Peace Journalism and was conducted by the prominent journalists and activists Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick. The aim of the training was to help journalists:

- Understand the impact and influence of different patterns of reporting on the course of events
- Identify War Journalism and Peace Journalism and learn the basics of conflict analysis
- Practice constructing Peace Journalism reports
- Develop skills to deal with trauma personally and with interviewees in conflict zones

### **Bright Stars Media Club**

One of our main objectives is to empower youth to become future leaders through giving them the means to express themselves publicly on issues of concern to them.

In cooperation with Radio Bethlehem 2000, 8 young students had the opportunity to create 2 programs to be broadcasted on local radio delivering young people's views on various topics and issues, after participating in a course that equipped them with the necessary skills for these programs.

The course which consisted of 8 workshops included training in the following:

- 1- The definition of media
- 2- Types of programs
- 3- Information gathering, selection and research
- 4- Interview and presentation techniques
- 5- Structure items and programs
- 6- The role of the producer, the editor and the reporter/presenter
- 7- Team management
- 8- Issues of morality, conscience, and responsibility

Students showed interest and capability in media and could easily be identified as young journalists.



## DAR AL-KALIMA HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER

Even though the political situation in Bethlehem and the curfews in the first half of 2003 slowed down the work on the Health and Wellness Center, the work on the site never stopped. The official inauguration of Dar Al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center took place on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Local and international guests, including our sponsors Wheat Ridge Ministries from the USA, attended the Inauguration.

Adopting a holistic approach to health and development and aiming at broadening the concept of wellness in the Palestinian society, the programs of the Dar al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center emphasize prevention, education, and practicing healthy living. The main target groups of our programs are children, youth and women.

The medical facilities at the **Health and Wellness Center** are composed of several clinics and a multipurpose room to accommodate health awareness meetings, workshops and training sessions. In addition to the medical facilities, the **Health and Wellness Center** is equipped with a swimming pool, a sauna room, as well as several fitness rooms.

The main programs and facilities that the Health and Wellness Center offers are the following:

- An Audiology and Balance Department with state of the art equipment, which was opened on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003 and has been receiving patients since.
- A basic health and fitness program for the Dar Al-Kalima School, including sports activities such as swimming and karate.
- A variety of fitness programs for the community including fitness machines, gym room, swimming pool, sauna, aerobics training, karate and ballet training courses, as well as yoga courses.
- The karate and swimming classes for the Bright Stars program for children between the ages of 6 to 16.

## Audiology and Balance Program 2003

The Audiology and Balance program is the first program that started its operation on May 15<sup>th</sup> of 2003. The help of Wheat Ridge Ministries, through a generous donation from the Mill Neck Foundation, made this project feasible. Equipped with the state of art equipment, the audiology clinic provides assessment and rehabilitation of the hard of hearing to all age groups, but with a special emphasis on children. The ultimate goal of the program is to conduct a national survey of the hearing problems among our Palestinian children to help parents and educationalists avoid the educational problems that may occur.

The audiology clinic provides the first of its kind dizziness testing, using VIDEO-NY-STAG-MOGRAPHY, which helps medical doctors give a more accurate diagnosis to the patients as to the cause of the dizziness.

Since the opening date of May 15, 2003 until the end of the year 2003, the Clinic has accomplished the following:

1. Working days	172
2. Patients examined and/or rehabilitated	1836
3. Patients below the age of 15	924
4. Number of female patients	859
5. Number of male patients	977
6. Number of hearing aid fitted	140
7. Assessment of dizzy patients	118
8. Children seated for the BSER test after being sedated	97
9. The number of social cases helped by the clinic	20

### Area of Referrals

The goal of the audiology clinic is to serve the needy hearing impaired in all of Palestine. However, due to the current political unrest and the closure that is imposed on Palestinian cities, few patients reach our clinic from the northern part of the country. The statistics of the clinic showed that the majority of referrals come from the greater Bethlehem area with a relative weight of 75% of clinic referrals. Hebron area comes in the second place with 19.6% of clinic referrals. Only 6.3% were from the midlands and the northern part of the country. In order that our services become accessible to the aforementioned areas, an outreach program for audiology was established in 2003 with the Augusta Victoria hospital, providing services for East Jerusalem and its surrounding areas. In addition, our future ambition is to run a similar program on a monthly basis in Ramallah.

## The Audiology and Balance Program's Activities

The Audiology and Balance Program's motto is to detect the hearing-impaired children at an early stage so that they can acquire their language at an early age and to live side by side among their normal hearing peers. Towards this direction, the audiology clinic has conducted two days of screening hearing program at Dehaisheh Refugee Camp and in Batteer village to the west of Bethlehem.

It is our aim not only to provide comprehensive services for the hearing-impaired population, but also to ensure advanced and up to date services to this particular group. Therefore, the clinic is keen to upgrade the skill of its staff by encouraging them to enroll into advanced courses held abroad and related to the field of audiology. Last Year the head of the Program attended two short courses related to the assessment of the dizzy patient, one at Southampton University and the other at ICS medical in Chicago.

### **Dar al Kalima Audiology Clinic** by Susan Bertoni

Overlooking the streets of southern Bethlehem from atop a grassy hill called *Jabal Murair*, or "Mountain of Bitterness," the Dar al Kalima Health and Wellness Center is dedicated to sweetening the lives of local community members.

The Health and Wellness Center contains within it medical clinics (general, dental, optical, and audiological); sports and recreational facilities (a gymnasium, swimming pool and a workout room), and a multi-purpose room for training workshops and meetings. The Center's aim is to promote healthy lifestyles and address existing health problems.

The Dar al Kalima Health Center is unique both in its holistic approach to health and in the special services it offers the public. It contains the only audiology clinic in the West Bank and Gaza that diagnoses hearing loss as well as balance problems associated with the inner ear. The Audiology and Balance Division of the clinic is open weekdays from 8 to 4 p.m. and Saturdays until noon.

Michel Rahil, Msc, is the chief audiologist at the clinic. He speaks with a steady cadence which reflects his philosophy and practice of careful diagnosis and treatment.

*About how many patients do you see daily?*

"We see about thirteen to fifteen patients per day. I give at least half an hour per person. Whoever claims to see more patients in less time is not giving enough time to their patients."

*Who comes to your clinic?*

"Most patients are from the greater Bethlehem area, though a small number come from Hebron. We see mostly children with middle ear infections or hearing loss caused by a number of factors:

hereditary deafness exacerbated by intermarriage, deafness acquired from hyperthermia, neonatal jaundice, meningitis, and Waardenburg syndrome, a genetic disorder which affects skin, eyes, and hearing functions.

“I get about one or two patients a day referred to me by an ENT doctor. This dizziness is caused by a viral infection or by a condition called BPPV (benign paroxysmal positional vertigo). BPPV causes approximately 13% of most dizziness cases; it occurs when calcium carbonate particles are displaced within the ear through head trauma or – in the elderly – a lack of blood flow.

“The treatment for BPPV is non-invasive and simple, but it requires study and training to do it correctly. Once he or she lies down on the floor, the patient’s head is tilted to realign the calcium carbonate particles within the ear. If this does not work, our clinic then refers the patient to a neurologist.”

*You yourself are not a doctor. Do you ever do the work of doctors because of access problems?*

“Absolutely not. I don’t interfere with the work of ENT doctors; I know where my work begins and ends and where their work begins. I diagnose. I explain the degree of hearing loss, and refer patients to other doctors for medical care.

“We have a good reputation and strong relationships with doctors. We follow up with our patients, type reports, and keep records of everyone we see. Before a family leaves with a report, they get a full explanation of the patient’s condition.”

*What about hearing aids?*

“Yes, we also fit patients for hearing aids at this clinic. One thing that is **extremely** important – and I can’t emphasize this enough – is that in fitting a child for a hearing aid, you **must** set it at the correct amplification. Too high of an amplification will damage the ear and can cause hearing loss; amplification that is too low will prevent language acquisition. Kids will not tell you that their hearing aids are too loud.”

Michel’s expertise is not confined to Mount Murair. Every Tuesday he sees patients at Augusta Victoria hearing clinic on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. He also consults with the Eppheta School for the Deaf in Bethlehem, checking the students’ hearing and counseling parents.

In his counseling sessions to parents and teachers, Michel explains that even minimal degrees of hearing loss, often caused by frequent middle-ear infections, can impair language acquisition in children. For this reason, he advocates sending hearing-impaired children “who can express themselves” to schools, and equipping them with what is called a Microlink FM System – a receiver in the child’s ear connected to a microphone on the teacher. The system phases out background noise and lets the child focus solely on the teacher’s speech, thus improving understanding and language processing. Unfortunately, installing such a system costs 7500 shekels (approximately 1700 US dollars), a fee that few families in Bethlehem can afford.

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This morning, a young patient named Bayan is brought into the clinic in the arms of her father, followed by an anxious-looking young woman in *hijab* and an older man in his fifties, who is holding Bayan's small jacket and pink fleece hat.

Bayan, eleven months old, is the first child of Ahmad, 23 and his wife Leila, 18. Mahmoud, the older man, is Bayan's paternal grandfather. They came from the village of Beit Fajar, which lies sixteen kilometers south of Bethlehem. Bayan was referred to Michel by her general practitioner to detect a possible middle ear infection among her cold symptoms.

Mother, father, and grandfather all stare intently at Bayan, who squirms on her father's lap, her face flushed and nose running. Michel bends over Bayan so that he is eye level with her and raises his eyebrows in greeting. Keeping eye contact with the child, he asks, "What's the problem with the little one?"

Her family members answer in waves: "She's always crying...isn't sleeping well...she's been like this for a few days."

Michel nods, sterilizes the end of his otoscope, and looks into Bayan's ear. Almost immediately she begins to cry, then scream, clutching her father's jacket with outrage. Yet she keeps her head still, somewhat quelled by Michel's words: "It's OK, sweetie, good girl. It's almost over. Shhhh..."

Michel then instructs Ahmad to sit in a chair with Bayan in his lap. Jumana, Michel's clinical assistant, crouches in front of them and focuses the child's eyes on a spinning toy top dancing across the table in front of her. She is mesmerized and does not note Michel standing behind her until he shakes a rattle to the left of her head, then to her right. The sounds break her attention: she turns her head accordingly, thus ruling out problems in detecting low, medium, and high frequency decibels.

Michel sits back down at his desk and invites the family to sit around. He folds his hands and leans forward, making eye contact with all sitting in front of him. "There is no problem with her ears. She just has a seasonal cold."

At this piece of news, the tension is broken: the men shake Michel's hand and Leila lets out a relieved sigh and smiles for the first time on this visit. Ahmad reaches into a thin envelope and pulls out the 35 shekels (approximately \$7.80) owed for the visit. Leila and Mahmoud stand up to help Bayan into her jacket and pull her pink hat over her head and ears before they go out into the damp, misty air of February.

The next two patients, Ali and Sena', ages three and four and a half, arrive at the clinic accompanied by their mother and grandmother. . The women and children's wind-burned cheeks and tanned, taut skin betray hours of exposure to the winter elements. Their home village of Ta'ame, located east of Bethlehem, depends almost solely on herding and agriculture

Michel explains that besides frequent middle ear infections and the accompanying wax buildup, the children face a much more serious problem: both have undergone bilateral hearing loss so that they are now 90% deaf. Deafness runs in the family, says Michel. Furthermore, hearing loss at this level renders hearing aids useless. It is clear that the children are unfamiliar with sign language.

The extended family of Ali and Sena' have promised funds to help them receive cochlear implants, which run \$35,000- \$40,000 per patient in the United States. As Michel explains this possibility, mother and grandmother smile hopefully, looking up to the sky in short prayer.

During the conversation, the children gnaw on lime lollipops and play a silent game of hide-and-seek, darting and scuffling between the skirts of their mother and grandmother. For now, they seem blissfully unaware of their condition and its potential remedy.

*ANERA has helped Dar Al Kalima Health and Wellness Center procure equipment donated by Wheat Ridge Ministries that is essential to the operations of the Audiology Department, including a VNG (Video Nystagmographic) machine (designed to diagnose types of dizziness); an audiometer, a tympanometer (to assess the function of the middle ear), and a hearing aid test box.*

-B-

## The Wellness Facilities and Programs

### Facilities

In terms of the wellness facilities, the **Dar al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center** is equipped with an indoor swimming pool, a sauna room, a fitness room and a Gym. The plan includes outdoor facilities, gardens and a natural reserve open for the whole community as a place for rest and exercise.

The indoor swimming pool runs programs for children, women, men and families. Those who need the relaxation benefits that the sauna provides, use the **Dar al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center's** sauna that was added in December of 2003 and which is located in the pool area.

The fitness room, which opens though out the opening hours free of charge for the members, contains exercise machines concentrating on the cardiovascular system. We received the machines in late September and the number of the people who used them in the last three months of the year reached 266 people.

The Gym room that the Center has was designed to take into consideration the different ages and interests of the different target groups that the Health and Wellness Center serves. The programs that take place regularly at the gym room include Karate, Ballet, Yoga and Aerobics.

As part of the infrastructure additions to the Health and Wellness Center, the outside gate, the parking lot as well as the patio behind the swimming pool was constructed. Landscaping around the patio and along northern entrance of the Health and Wellness Center was finished in 2003. The landscaping is the first step towards founding the nature reserve with half a million plants planted on the site.

## Programs

To help the community members stay fit and to lessen the stress that all of us suffer from in our society; we have developed in 2003 programs for all ages, from toddlers to the elderly.

### **1. Dar al-Kalima Model School Extracurricular Program (ECP program)**

The Health and Wellness Center offered classes in karate and swimming for the children of Dar al-Kalima School as part of the School's extracurricular program. All the school's students, numbering 240, had regular swimming classes since September 2003 until December of that year.

### **2. Bright Stars Program**

The Bright Stars program is one of the ICB's main programs. Dar al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center runs part of the program on its premises. Each Friday children between the ages of 6-16 gather at the Health and Wellness Center for swimming and karate classes, each according to his or her talents and gifts. In 2003, the number of the participants in the karate and swimming classes reached 920 children.

### **3. Bethlehem Schools' Swimming Program**

The Dar al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center started in 2003 a program for school children from the Bethlehem school district, where each participating school brings one class each week for swimming lessons. In December of 2003, the number of schools that participated in the program was three and the number of children that took advantage of the program was 90. In 2004, we look towards increasing the number of participating schools, to provide our services for as many children in the Bethlehem district as possible.

### **4. Yoga Program**

A new and innovative program for women has been introduced in October 2003, namely yoga. The number of women participating in the program reached 184.

### **5. Aerobics Program**

A special evening program for women, combining aerobics with swimming and fitness machines, started at the Health and Wellness Center in September of 2003. In December, the sauna was built in the pool area and was included in the aerobics program. From September to December 2003, the number of participants in this program reached 492 women from Bethlehem and the surrounding areas.

## Dar al-Kalima School

**2003**

The Dar Al-Kalima School on Mount Mureir in Bethlehem opened its doors in September 2000. The school's main goal is to be a model school that implements a holistic learning approach. Such approach utilises special teaching and learning methods. Our educational philosophy can be summarized by the five C's: Critical thinking, Creativity, Communication, Christianity, and Commitment to strong Palestinian identity.

In 2003, the student body at the Dar al-Kalima School was as follows:

**Table A1**

Name	Total no. of Students	% Boys	% Girls	%Christians	% Moslems
<b>Dar Al-Kalima Bethlehem</b>	238	61%	39%	43%	57%

As for the Teachers and staff of the School, both full time and part time, their numbers were as follows (The part-time employees/teachers have been added to the totals as fractions according to the load they are assigned).

**Table A2**

Teachers	22.2
Administrative Staff	2.5
Support Staff	3.5
Total →	28.2

In 2003 there has been a great deal that was accomplished at the Dar al-Kalima, both on the educational and the infrastructural levels.

### **Among the highlights of the year are the following:**

1. Given that one of Dar al-Kalima School's major goals is to be inclusive of all grades including the terminal cycle, which, among other things, prepares the students for the government exam (the Tawjihi) we introduced the 11th grade scientific stream at Dar al-Kalima (DAK) School in September of 2003, which was approved by SEC, CC and



Synod. In September of 2004, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade scientific stream will be introduced as a continuing step. The school administration carried out a financial and feasibility study.

## 2. The Distance Learning Project

In September 2003, the students and staff of the Dar al-Kalima School have joined the Distance Learning Project. To prepare for the project, the teachers of Dar al-Kalima received computer-skills training in the spring of 2003. Upon completion of this training, which is 60 training hours, more advanced PC application courses may be designed for the staff and implemented once funding is sought and obtained.

## 3. Teachers Upgrading Courses/In-Service Training

The teachers of the Dar al-Kalima School participated in several upgrading and training courses during 2003. They are the following

**Table A3:** Teachers Upgrading Courses

<i>No.</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Estimated no. of hours required</i>	<i>Actual no. of hours completed to date</i>
1	Children's Literature	30	30
2	Drama in Education and Teaching	26	26
3	Learning/Teaching Aids	30	30
4	Pedagogy	30	30
5	Classroom Administration	30	30

Certificates for teachers completing the workshops planned have been prepared and issued by the SEPDO.

4. The EED provided a grant to the school, which enabled it to further the development of the educational environment in both the classrooms and the school as well as the development of teaching aids in both the curricular and extra-curricular programs.

The following were the achievements that were made possible through this grant.

### A. Upgrading of the computer lab

To upgrade and develop our computer lab, we purchased computers & a server, which greatly enhanced the communication between our teachers and students and between our students and the outside world.

The computer training that both teachers and students at Dar Al-Kalima School received throughout the 2003 has provided a great medium of

communication between teachers and students, especially during curfews. The distance-learning program is currently undergoing further development.

As part of the extracurricular activities, correspondence with foreign partners in Germany, the UK, the USA, Australia, and other countries has become a major trend in our communication network and an indirect aspect of the learning process. Students are now in direct contact with students in these foreign institutions using the Internet. Continuous improvement and development of this program is underway, supervised in part by some of our qualified staff, and in part by volunteers.

Finally, the use of computers plays a substantial role in implementing the computer curricula and enriching resources for all curricular and extra-curricular programs.

**B. Increasing the resource materials available for the vocational studies, as well as the science and math labs**

Various teaching aids were purchased for the Math and Science departments to be used in the Science and Math lab, for the curricular education, and in the Vocational, Maths and Science Clubs under the extra-curricular program.

Being a model school, we, at Dar Al-Kalima, emphasize learning through practice, experience, and observation. These are enhanced through the development of the laboratories in the school.

**B. Building up of the music and language departments**

Since music is an essential part of the extra-curricular program at Dar Al Kalima, equipment and instruments for the music department were purchased. These included a keyboard, a set of drums, and flutes.

In addition, we purchased a stereo sound system with 18 headphones and a microphone for the use of language and visual courses in the listening corner.

**D. Improving the classroom mini-libraries**

In 2003, we purchased 12 cupboards and a number of shelves to install in the classrooms to shelve books for the students to use. A number of books for various subjects were bought and placed in each classroom library. These books are being used as resources for all educational programs, and in enriching the "reading awareness" program.

We also installed shelves in the daycare section to hold the children's utensils, bags, and other items.

**F. Sports Equipment and Toys**

Due to the lack of some basic sports and recreational equipment for the children, it was necessary to equip the school with such items as indoor swings and sports activity equipment.

**G. Furnishing of the multi-purpose room and the newly added 11<sup>th</sup> grade**

The multi-purpose room was furnished with wooden chairs to be used in various school activities (lectures, music, and other events). This is in addition to accommodating the students in the morning prayers.

Furthermore, and due to the expansion process both in number of students and in number of classes, new hexagonal and split tables were purchased for the 11<sup>th</sup> Grade.

**H. Installation of curtains and sunshades**

Curtains and sunshades were purchased for classrooms and for the multi-purpose room, respectively. This has provided protection against the scorching sunlight and extreme heat in most classrooms during the spring and summer months.

**I. Installation of kitchen equipment for the cafeteria**

The kitchen that was installed for the use of the kindergarten and different classes in the extra-curricular program is also being used as a cafeteria for both students and staff.

## DISTANCE LEARNING

### **Communicating Under Curfew A Unique & First of its Kind Distance Learning Project in the History of Palestine**

The experience of Bethlehem with invasions and 24-hour curfews has taken its toll on the regular attendance of schools by students, especially in 2002 and the early part of 2003. This resulted in the deterioration of the educational process significantly. For example, the students of the Dar al-Kalima Model School have lost around three months of schooling during 2002 alone. The fact that the children experienced difficulty in getting to and back from school has inspired the International Center of Bethlehem to seek a solution that would make students' access to their teachers and their studies more regular and less interrupted. Hence, the idea of the Distance Learning project was born.

The ICB undertook an innovative and critical project that made it possible for the students of Dar al-Kalima Model School, the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahour and Talitha Kumi to continue their education unhindered by the curfews. The project entailed setting-up of a communications system to facilitate distance learning so that the students and teachers can be in contact. As such, the physical barriers imposed arbitrarily on the students attempting to reach their classrooms can no longer stop them from getting educated.

The Distance Learning project was built on the success of an already existing project, namely the Bethlehem-on-Line project. Each student became part of different relevant e-groups through his/her assigned e-mail account. Teachers have the responsibility of guiding the students through the educational material and through the discussion groups emerging from each e-group. Technical support is provided by the ICB to offer solutions for the technical problems that may arise.

The project, which involved installation of servers and modems capable of handling the large number of users, meant that the ICB had to become an internet provider as well in order to offer the students and teachers cheap internet service to enable them to participate in the program, given the deteriorating economic situation of the Bethlehem are residents. This way, each student has an internet access at home 24 hours/day for only 1 US\$/month whereas the same service is offered by other internet providers for 25 US\$/month. So far almost 650 students are getting their internet access through the ICB and are able to communicate even under curfew. Our mission is not to let the Israeli occupation drive us into hopelessness but rather overcome all the hurdles through creativity, determination and innovation.

To prepare the teachers for this new method of teaching and to enable them to carry out this project successfully, the ICB is offering intensive training program for the teachers on the Internet and e-communications. The ICB was now invited to replicate this innovative project at other schools throughout Palestine.

## YOUTH WORK

### Summer Academy 2003

The Summer Academy 03 took place mainly on the premises of Dar al-Kalima School / Health & Wellness Center on Mureir Mountain. Over 173 kids, ages 6 to 16, from the Bethlehem region took part in its unique and exciting program. There was a variety of choices, all in all 18 different clubs which were run by local and international experts. Each participant was given the chance to choose among the clubs he/she preferred the most. Then a final program was given out with 5 clubs for each participant.

The courses that were offered included Sports, Karate, Swimming, Dabkeh, Glass Fusing, Ceramic, Chess, Band, Ballet, Choir, Theatre, Painting, Graphic Design, Collage, Media, Computer, Environment, and Tourism. A great demand was on the computer courses, swimming courses, and karate training, the latter two offered for the first time in the Summer Academy.

In addition, every Friday the participants experienced some cultural activity such as a theatre performances at Ad-Dar Cultural and Conference Center where two of the famous local theater groups, Inad and Palestine National Theatre, performed to the children. Also, field trips and picnics were organized to different locations within the Bethlehem district.

The final day celebration was overwhelming. Exhibitions of paintings, ceramic work, glass fusing made by the participants were on display. Also, different performances in dabkeh, music, karate and other activities took place. It was a success.

The Summer Academy 03 succeeded in employing 23 experts, among whom 3 internationals. In addition, over 15 local volunteers participated and offered their assistance to the students and experts.

One highlight of the Summer Academy 2003 was the city run that was organized to take place in the old city of Bethlehem. Here is a short summary of this activity.

### 1st Bethlehem City Run

Friday, July 25th was an exciting morning in Bethlehem as the 1st Bethlehem City Run finally took place. The International Center of Bethlehem had originally scheduled the event for March/April 2002. Tragically, due to the numerous bombings, invasions and curfews we had postponed it indefinitely. But, on this Friday in July 2003 over 100 children joined in a race through the Old City.

Eighty-five children and youth pre-registered, coming to the Madbasseh Square to pick up their numbers that morning. To our delight, an additional 28 children came to register just minutes before the race was due to begin. It meant a 30 minute delay in



starting, but it was well-worth it to be able to include more eager participants. Most of the students were members of the ICB Summer Academy which offered 18 different clubs including “running”.



In the end, 113 children from the Bethlehem area between the ages of 6 - 16, finally took part. Depending on their age bracket, the children ran between 1 lap (400 meters) to 4 laps (1600 meters). From Madbasseh Square they rounded to Haret-El-Fawaghreh Street, through a small side street, with the QAWS, in front of Dar Annadwa and the Lutheran Church on Paul VI ST.

Having never been in a race before, some of the children discovered it was not easy to find a pace which one could keep up for the whole distance. Some started too fast, falling back in the 2nd or 3rd round. But, whether at the front or struggling to finish, all the children were encouraged by people watching on the way, being cheered along just for participating. Many passersby stopped to watch and clap as the children raced around the town. A special word of thanks must go to the Palestinian police who blocked the streets to ensure a safe run for all.

The first 3 boys and girls in each category received certificates and prizes, like caps, CD's, books and shirts which were donated by German individuals and the United Methodist Church. All in all it was a lot of fun. The race was such a nice experience that now the students are eager to train for the 2nd Bethlehem City Run next year!

Johannes Zang, the race director and finisher of various marathons, discovered a number of 'running' talents. He reported there were some who “might be able to run for Palestine in the 800 or 1500 meter races in the Olympics in 4 or 8 years once some appropriate training was offered.”



## **Guatemala Trip – ARK PROGRAM**

10 students from the Dar al-Kalima Model School in Bethlehem with two supervisors from ICB traveled to Guatemala from November 16-29, 2003 to participate in the project Art Resources for Kids (ARK), a program begun by ICB and partners in the U.S. and Guatemala.

The program is intended to bring together marginalized children from the three places to share and learn from one another's experiences. The initial plans for the program, developed in 2001, called for a gathering in Bethlehem in 2002, one in Guatemala in November 2003, and one in the U.S. in 2004. The meeting in Bethlehem was canceled due to the political situation.

While in Guatemala, there were many sessions and gatherings that highlighted the similarities and differences between the three peoples, namely, the Palestinians, the Native Americans, and the Guatemalans. History in particular was a focus, but also the current situation that was portrayed through sketches, power point presentations, and proverbs. Some of the highlights of this trip were the exchanging of experiences through worship with Native Americans. It was noted that the relationship between the Palestinian students and Native Americans, African and North Americans were stronger than that with the Guatemala members due to the language issue. Another highlight was the funny poem composed by one of ICB supervisors, Mr. Sami Abu Ghazaleh, which integrated all of the 56 participants' names in the ARK Program. The Palestinian traditional wedding was also a hit.

In summary, it was noted that most students were able to interact with other nationalities, different cultures and backgrounds. Many of them started new and everlasting friendships, developing the sense of belonging and being a part of one big family. They all look forward to seeing each other in the US in August 2004 for the second phase of the ARK project.

Below is an article that was written by Frank Wright describing the students' ordeal prior to their arrival to Guatemala.

### **Getting to Guatemala: God's Curse**

**By Frank Wright**

For many people, international travel is easy.

If you have the money, you pick up the phone and call your travel agent or key your desired reservation into your computer. And off you go.

But not if you are a Palestinian living in the Israeli-occupied West Bank or Gaza Strip. As Layla Asfoura, a staff member of the International Center of Bethlehem (ICB), put it after

accompanying 10 Palestinian teenagers to a peace conference in Guatemala: “If God wants to curse someone, he has only to let him be born Palestinian.”

The Guatemalan travel experience demonstrates how the Israelis regularly make international travel almost impossible. And Spain and the United States were not hospitable either.

The first rebuff from the Israelis came hours before scheduled departure Nov. 14 for the students and the two staff members going with them, Asfoura and Sami Abu Ghazalleh. Their application to fly from Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv was denied. The ICB was forced to pay cancellation fees to Continental Airlines for all 12 seats.

The fallback was to split the group in two, the two students who had Israeli-issued Jerusalem IDs and the rest, who had only West Bank cards.

The Jerusalem pair tried again for Ben Gurion. This time they got as far as the airport counter, where they were asked for their Spanish transit visas. It was an unexpected request for a document not required of Israeli travelers. Even though the Palestinians would be in the Spanish airport only two hours, without that piece of paper they could not board the plane in Tel Aviv. They were sent home again. Two more cancellation fees.

The third try from Ben Gurion, on tickets stopping only in the United States, was successful. The pair made it to Guatemala without further interference.

As for the others, they turned to Jordan as their exit point. The Israelis gave the special permission required to leave the West Bank via that route. The Palestinians left early on their 30-mile trip across the Allenby Bridge at the border on their way to the Amman airport. But they were held up at the Israeli checkpoint on the way out of Bethlehem and again by the Israelis at the bridge. By the time they reached Amman, the trip had taken more than 11 hours.

Even so, the arrival in Amman was a taste of freedom for Palestinians who had never left the Bank and who for three years had not even been able to go to Jerusalem, only three miles from home.

But even more antagonism lay ahead. The group left Amman on time, made their connection in Paris and reached Miami, in the United States, in good order. There, another almost disastrous roadblock confronted them.

Upon arrival they were separated from other passengers, fingerprinted, individually photographed and held in custody for six hours by airport security until their flight to Guatemala was boarding.

At that moment, the ICB supervisors were asked to produce not only names and addresses of their hosts and contacts in Guatemala, which they had, but also phone numbers, which they did not have. Without providing the phone contact immediately, they were told, they would be sent back to Jordan.



Abu Ghazalleh, thinking fast, called Rana Khoury, deputy general director of the center, at home. It was 2 a.m. in Bethlehem. Half awake, she ran to her computer. She punched it up. It came to life agonizingly slowly. Fortunately, when it lit up, she poked the right keys for the Guatemala trip and found the number, passing it on to Ghazalleh just in time. At last, the harassed travelers were safely on their way to Guatemala.

“Most of these students have never been outside Palestine,” Khoury said later. “And this is the first impression they receive of the rest of the world—that they are viewed as criminals.”

## **Germany Trip - EUROMED PROGRAM**

After a series of applications and appeals for travel permits, and following a 48-hour trip through Israeli check-points and travel via Jordan, 5 enthusiastic young Palestinians -accompanying an ICB staff leader- safely arrived in Germany to participate in “Creative Cooperation”.

The International Center of Bethlehem is one of the five partner organizations in planning and implementing “Creative Cooperation”, which is a youth exchange project under the European Commission’s youth programs.

The project took place in Stuttgart, Germany between 12<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 2003, with the participation of 30 young individuals ages 20-25 representing 5 different countries; Germany, Turkey, France, Portugal, and Palestine.

“Creative Cooperation” was designed with a focus on creativity and art expression as a common ground between the different participating cultures. Participants of different backgrounds were able to communicate and cooperate to find -through arts- common peaceful grounds to express their collective feelings and concerns.

The project was an opportunity for young individuals from 5 different countries to meet, interact, develop their creativity skills, experience other cultures, share feelings and concerns, and plant seeds for international understanding.

Through the various workshops and through intercultural learning, “Creative Cooperation” has provided means to convey accurate views of realities, promote critical thinking, produce informed leaders with broad visions, and encourage deeper understanding and active measures for peace and dialogue.

As a result of the success of the project, the International Center of Bethlehem is now a partner in founding, planning and implementing “Creative Cooperation II: Arts and the Environment”. The second phase is to take place in Portugal in August of 2004, where 7 other young Palestinians will have the opportunity to such a rewarding experience.

## AUTHENTIC TOURISM

### **Reflections from an Advent Visit to the Holy Land "But Why Would You Want to Go THERE?"**

December 26, 2003  
*by Charles P. Lutz*

A dozen of us spent most of the middle two weeks of Advent 2003 in the land where our Lord entered human history 20 centuries ago. We were on the ground where Jesus walked for 10 full days, the 12th through the 21st of December. (An additional three days, 10-11 and 22 December, were filled mainly by to/from air travel.)

Before going, we repeatedly heard one rhetorical question: "That's where Palestinians and Israelis are always killing each other-why on earth do you want to go there?"

Good question. And the several answers to it provide a convenient way of summarizing our group's experience during the visit. We went to:

1. "Run Where Jesus Walked": The Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, enjoys saying that Christian pilgrims come to the Holy Land in order to "run where Jesus walked." For the past three years, that land has welcomed very few tourists, Christians or otherwise, but those who find their way to the Holy Land, including our dozen, do tend to rush from biblical site to biblical site. We spent most of our first four days doing just that. We flew from the U.S. into Amman (biblical Ammon), capital of Jordan. Then we visited Petra (in biblical Edom), the ancient city carved out of red rock. While Jesus probably never got to Petra, it did exist as a thriving Nabatean community during his days on earth.

Next we saw the ruins of Jerash in Jordan, one of the 10 Greek towns of the Decapolis. This region, which includes modern Amman and Beit Shean, is located to the east and south of the Sea of Galilee and mentioned in the gospels as the area "beyond the Jordan" that Jesus did visit (see references in Matt. 4:25, Mark 5:20, 7:31).

We crossed the Jordan River to enter Israel via the Sheik Hussein Bridge, a few miles south of the Sea of Galilee. I'm sure our crossing took longer than any made by Jesus; he didn't need to get approval from Israeli security people. Procedures weren't too onerous, though-much less intense, for instance, than I've experienced at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport. As group leader, I was grilled for 15 minutes about the group's identity and purpose in coming. Since we were, nearly all of us, a gang of seniors, our 26-year-old, Julie Luttinen, raised security eyebrows. I was able to explain, adequately I guess, her presence and she was allowed to enter with the rest.

In the Galilee we visited these sites associated with Jesus: Nazareth, Capernaum, Tabgha, and the Mount of the Beatitudes. On our way to Jerusalem we stopped at two other biblical-tourist sites, Megiddo and Caesarea Maritima.

Once in the Jerusalem-Bethlehem area, we saw more locales connected with our faith stories: the historic churches (Holy Sepulcher and Nativity, Lutheran churches in Jerusalem, Beit Sahour, and Bethlehem), the Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane, the entire Old City of Jerusalem (where we were lodged for three nights).

## 2. Learn from Seekers of Peace and Human Rights

But seeing physical property was not our top priority. Visiting with people was, particularly people who are working for a just and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We had many such visits during our six days in the Jerusalem-Bethlehem vicinity. Meeting with the Israeli organizations was especially gratifying since it underscored that many Israeli Jews are working diligently to defend the rights of Palestinians. The groups [with websites or e-mail addresses]:

\* Rabbis for Human Rights. Arik Ascherman, U.S.-born, now an Israeli citizen, who leads RHR, spoke with us movingly about his group's conviction that Judaism demands just treatment of "the other, the stranger and sojourner" in the Promised Land. RHR regularly stands in solidarity with Palestinians in defense of their human rights.

\* Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions. Jeff Halper, another U.S. native (born and raised in Hibbing, Minnesota, alumnus of Macalester College in St. Paul), took us on a tour of East Jerusalem to see how Palestinians are being removed to make room for Israeli settlements. Jeff said the Israeli-built wall that slices through Palestinian territory is not primarily for security reasons but is intended to create unilaterally a new border, thus stealing more land and water resources from a future Palestinian state. [www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org)

\* Joint Coalition of Women for a Just Peace. Gila Svirsky, also U.S.-born and bred, spoke for the Israeli women's groups that regularly do public protests opposing the occupation and oppressive policies of the Israeli government. They are committed to a two-state outcome and Gila remains hopeful that it will one day happen. Gila's e-mail: [gsvirsky@netvision.net.il](mailto:gsvirsky@netvision.net.il).

\* B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. Rachel Greenspahn, still one more U.S. native (Denver area) who's trying to protect the rights of Palestinians, she outlined her agency's work to document Israeli government violations of human rights. On Israel's "Separation Barrier," B'Tselem says: "Israel has the right to protect its citizens from acts of violence. If it requires a barrier to do so, however, it must construct it on its own territory." B'Tselem has an excellent publication, "Land Grab," dealing with the illegality of Israel's settlement activities in the West Bank. [www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org)

\* International Solidarity Movement. Ghassan Andoni, executive director of Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People, is a Palestinian who teaches at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank and is a cofounder of ISM. It coordinates training and placement of internationals in accompaniment programs with West Bankers. ISMers conduct nonviolent direct actions in which internationals often become human shields between Israeli military or settlers and Palestinians. We met with Ghassan at his office in Beit Sahour, the Shepherd's Field town just east of Bethlehem. E-mail: [rapprochement@palsolidarity.org](mailto:rapprochement@palsolidarity.org) Web: [www.abusalib@p-ol.com](http://www.abusalib@p-ol.com)

\* Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. While we had no formal meeting with EAPPI spokespersons, several of our group members, by happenstance, were able to join a conversation with EAPPI volunteers one evening in Old City Jerusalem, and we heard positive references to EAPPI in several settings. A joint venture of Palestinian churches and the World Council of Churches, EAPPI brings volunteers for a 3-month minimum to be with Palestinians in various accompaniment roles. Two Minnesotans served as Ecumenical Accompaniers in 2003. Some among our dozen have indicated interest in applying for EAPPI service. Web: [www.pepm.org/accompaniment.html](http://www.pepm.org/accompaniment.html)]

\* IBDAACultural Center, Dheisheh Refugee Camp. Though not exactly a peace or human rights organization, this center in Bethlehem's large camp for Palestinian refugees focuses on international cultural exchange. Its dance troupe performed in the Twin Cities (at Roseville High School) in the summer of 2003. IBDAAC also has a women's handcrafts cooperative, from which some purchases were made by our group during our December visit. Web: [www.dheisheh-ibdaa.net](http://www.dheisheh-ibdaa.net) E-mail: [ibdaa@hotmail.com](mailto:ibdaa@hotmail.com)

### 3. See Humanitarian Work Done in Christ's Name

We visited five programs that receive financial support from U.S. Lutherans through Lutheran World Relief and/or Lutheran World Federation. Some of these programs are funded by other international church aid agencies, such as the U.S. Catholic Relief Services.

\* LWF Secondary Vocational School. A program operated by Lutheran World Federation for the past half-century in Beit Hanina, just north of Jerusalem. It provides training for both young women and young men, a total of 200 taking two-year courses in such crafts as electronics, carpentry, plumbing, and auto mechanics. Director is Randa Hilal Nassar E-mail: [lwf-svs@palnet.com](mailto:lwf-svs@palnet.com)

\* Peace Center for the Blind. This program helps Palestinian women who have vision difficulties to integrate into regular society with work skills. Its director, Lydia Mansour, lost her sight at age 2 (measles). She's a Christian who believes God has called her to this ministry, which serves both Muslim and Christian women.

\* Augusta Victoria Hospital. Located on the Mount of Olives, this hospital has provided needed medical services to Palestinians since 1950. Current administrator is Craig Kippels, a Roman Catholic with St. Paul roots who is also the Lutheran World Federation representative supervising all LWF programs in the Holy Land. AVH is fighting for financial survival because the Israeli government is trying to impose taxation on its operation. E-mail: [ckippels@avh.org](mailto:ckippels@avh.org)

\* Rehabilitation Program, YMCA. This program in Beit Sahour works with persons throughout the Palestinian territories who have been permanently disabled during the Second Intifada (and their families and communities). Director is Nader Abu Amsha E-mail: [nader@shepherdsfieldymca.org](mailto:nader@shepherdsfieldymca.org)].

\* Bethlehem Media Center. An effort that focuses on telling, both locally and internationally, the stories of Palestinians, this program also trains young Palestinians as media professionals. For more, see closing paragraph under "Local Christians," below. The Media Center is just one of many creative ministries conducted by Bethlehem's Christmas Lutheran Church. They surely deserve to be listed under "work done in Christ's name." Organized through that congregation's International Center of Bethlehem, they are international in both staffing and financial support.

\* Ministries of International Center of Bethlehem. The ICB serves to coordinate a broad range of activities, from pilgrimage visits by international church groups (including ours) to programs serving local Palestinians. Among them is Dar al-Kalima School (K-11 with Grade 12 to be added next year, enrolling roughly half Muslims, half Christians)

Dar al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center (with special health programs not available elsewhere in Bethlehem area) Conference and Culture Center offering events for local and international audiences Guest house with sleeping rooms and food service for up to 26 persons and a gift shop and public restaurant. For more information, go to ICB Website: [www.annadwa.org](http://www.annadwa.org).

#### 4. Meet, Worship with, and Give Support to Local Christians

This is, in my judgment, the most important reason of all for Christians to visit the Holy Land. Today's Christians are a declining breed on the biblical landscape. They feel abandoned by their sisters and brothers in the international Christian community. That's been true particularly since the Second Intifada erupted in the fall of 2000. The local Christians are hungry for fellow believers from around the world to come and, as Lutheran Pastor Mitri Raheb of Bethlehem puts it, "See beyond the dead stones of the ancient ruins. We want you to meet the living stones of the Body of Christ who are here today." The few Christians who do still visit are mostly Christian Zionists, typically from the United States. They spend nearly all their time in Israel proper, expressing support for Israeli government occupation policies. Rarely do Christian Zionists have any contact with local Christians in Palestine. One who organizes Christian Zionist visits told Martha Allen in a (Minneapolis) Star Tribune interview in June 2003 that "her group spent a lot of time helping some Palestinian Christians, but [we] eventually backed off...because the rhetoric [we] were dealing with was so anti-Israeli." In that same article, Pastor Raheb was quoted as saying that Christian Zionists "regard us as not the true Christians."

One of our group's explicit intentions was to meet and worship with Holy Land Christians. We did so in both Israel and Palestinian territory. On our first Sunday, at Christ Anglican Church in the old city of Nazareth, we joined with a small group of worshippers. Indeed, our 12 outnumbered the locals. They were delighted to have us with them and following worship we socialized for close to an hour. The following Sunday, Advent Four, we were at Christmas Lutheran in Bethlehem for worship. Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan preached. The service was followed by conversation with parish leaders over lunch, for which we were Christmas Lutheran's guests. It was a grand way to conclude our Holy Land visit. We were impressed by two things: the high educational level of this cross-section of Palestinian Lutherans (many have advanced degrees from universities abroad); their commitment to staying in Palestine despite the economic and political difficulties they face.

We were able also to meet with several expatriates working with Palestinian churches. Three of them are U.S. Lutherans serving for extended periods: Mary Jensen, a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America who is a communication aide to the local Lutheran bishop, Munib Younan; Russell Siler, an ELCA pastor who is serving the English-speaking congregation at Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem; Andy Willis, a Twin Citian and 2003 St. Olaf College grad who is an assistant to Charlie Haddad, director of the Palestinian Lutheran schools.

We were also pleased that we could connect with Barbara and Frank Wright. Members of Lutheran Church of Christ the Redeemer in Minneapolis, they were ending a month of service as volunteers with the newly-launched Bethlehem Media Center. Frank, before retiring from foreign-correspondent duties with the Star Tribune, had often done in-depth reporting from the Holy Land and Barbara had sometimes accompanied him on those visits. Their Minneapolis congregation has had a sister-parish tie to Christmas Lutheran in Bethlehem since 1989. Barbara spent her month in Bethlehem collecting and archiving church statements on the Israel-Palestine situation from around the world. Frank worked to get the media center on-line and wrote several stories for its website [www.bethlehemmedia.net](http://www.bethlehemmedia.net). Note especially his "Christmas in Bethlehem 2003-a Gift?"

On our last evening in Bethlehem, we joined about 400 children and adults for a cultural program in the new auditorium next to Christmas Lutheran Church. Funded with over US\$5 million from the Finnish government, it is the only facility of its kind in the south half of Palestine. Among those attending were some 100 internationals who'd spent the day decorating Bethlehem for Christmas. It was called "a service for peace" and was organized jointly by the International Relief Friendship Foundation and the International Center of Bethlehem. Streets, shops, and other buildings throughout the city were decked out gaily.

In an article on the ICB website [www.annadwa.org](http://www.annadwa.org), a shopkeeper, Tawfic Kattan, is quoted: "I felt bad because I haven't any decoration in my shop and I am a Christian. The reason why I haven't done anything is because life in Bethlehem is very hard right now. I don't have any hope for the future anymore. But if people come from outside to try to cheer me up, I will certainly not refuse. I thank you instead."

Mr. Kattan's comment underscores the importance of visits to the Holy Land by folks from other parts of the world. Not just at Christmas time but throughout the entire year. It is a powerfully meaningful way of showing love to neighbors half a world away.

Helping the economy by buying tourist services and gifts is important. Yet our simple presence is even more important. But is it safe? Our group never felt any physical danger. And, almost universally, we were warmly welcomed by all with whom we had contact-Israelis, Palestinians, and the internationals who live and work there.

Bethlehem and other Palestinian cities we visited were not under curfew (a demeaning kind of house imprisonment) when we were there. Still, the daily lives of the people under continuing military occupation seemed more oppressive than in previous years. The omnipresence of young Israeli soldiers with automatic weapons, the tanks and helicopters, the concrete barriers and watchtowers at checkpoints-all added up to an overpowering reminder that the Palestinians

are not in control of their own existence. And to top it off, the obscenity of the Wall cutting through the West Bank, separating Palestinians from Palestinians and further robbing them of physical resources and dignity.

Our visit was full of deep impact on all of us. Some called it a life-changing experience. All of us are grateful to God that we had the opportunity. We return home filled with energy to tell the story, to support local Christians and others who are working so hard to meet basic human needs and in the quest for a just peace, and to urge others to make the same kind of visit in months and years to come.

PS: Some additional websites that are useful:

[www.cmep.org](http://www.cmep.org) (Churches for Middle East Peace, coalition of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant denominational offices in Washington, DC, specializing in education and advocacy on federal Middle East policy)

[www.elca/middleeast/index.html](http://www.elca/middleeast/index.html) (ELCA Division for Global Mission's site for Holy Land concerns; coordinator Ann Hafften can be reached via e-mail: [annahfften@mindspring.com](mailto:annahfften@mindspring.com))

[www.lwr.org/study/holyland/112303\\_young.html](http://www.lwr.org/study/holyland/112303_young.html) (Lutheran World Relief page that includes reports by members of our group on programs visited in the Holy Land)

[www.stopthewall.org](http://www.stopthewall.org) (site of Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign)

[www.pengon.org](http://www.pengon.org) (site of Palestinian Environmental NGOs, with particular focus on environmental damage caused by Israeli settlements and the wall).



## GLOBAL SERVANT LEADER

### **Preparing Global Servant Leaders International Centers' Network**

The International Centers' Network, comprising of the International Center of Bethlehem, Luther Center in Wittenberg and Mexico Center gathered in Dallas, Texas during 2003 for their first meeting. The three centers are recognized by the ELCA as a Life Long Learning Centers.

The three existing centers share strategies for the training and transformation of global servant leaders. The hope is that by developing a shared vision and connections between the three centers, these centers can be bridges and points of contact in the international church.

#### **What does it mean to be an International Center?**

These centers have a commitment to faith transformation that can occur when one experiences God in another context and culture. There is a sense that “we need the other to know ourselves.” The shared commitment of the three centers is to bringing people to a deeper understanding of the reformation movement.

Each of the three centers has its unique gifts, and there is commitment to letting the uniqueness of each speak. One of the ways of doing this is by being true to the context of each center and letting that context do the teaching. Each also is working with reformation as a living heritage, a movement that allows them to be bridge builders. The focus, therefore, is certainly on transforming individuals and also transforming the church. The centers may be part of the Holy Spirit's work of readying the church for whatever new forms it will need to take in order to be part of the global village, always asking the questions “What does the church need to be for today? What is God doing now?” Therefore these centers are a window through which we can look to see the world. These three centers offer three different views.

In order to be these kinds of centers—and to be this kind of church—we must be willing to lose ourselves in the process of re-forming. What remains constant is the core Lutheran identity of being a reforming movement in the Christian church.

- Bethlehem as a place of **Formation**.
- Lutherstadt Wittenberg as a place of **Reformation**
- Mexico City as a place of **Transformation**

The Mission Statement of the International Centers presently reads:

*Encountering people and places of formation, reformation and transformation to become Global Servant Leaders in a changing/tumultuous world and a changing/searching church.*

A 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting is scheduled for the network to take place in Mexico City in 2004.