



# VIEW- ING PALES- TINE

## SEMINAR REPORT

*House of Literature, Oslo – Friday 16 September 2011*

PALESTINE IN INTERNATIONAL  
CULTURAL COOPERATION

**TrAP**

Office for  
Transnational  
Arts Production

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# INTRODUCTION

The seminar Palestine in International Cultural Cooperation was one of two seminars during VIEWING PALESTINE 2011 13 through 18 September in Oslo – a collaboration between Transnational Arts Production (TrAP) and Sabreen Association for Artistic Development.

The seminar highlighted the necessity and value of international cultural cooperation – visualised and brought forward the expectations and issues of Palestinian arts and culture in international cooperation; from a Palestinian point of view – and shared experiences between Palestinian and Norwegian partners.

Relevant issues/questions are:

Palestinian arts and culture in international artistic and cultural cooperation – how can it promote the development of new Palestinian arts?

How to bridge generations of artists; both in Palestine and internationally – to stimulate young and new voices in the art production?

What are the expectations and conditions of Palestinian artistic and cultural resources regarding future cultural cooperation with Norway?

Ms. Gunvor Mejdell (professor in Arabic language and culture at University of Oslo) was the excellent moderator of the seminar; clearly defining the themes of the day and their relevance also to social and political issues in addition to the arts.

Her Excellency the Palestinian Minister of Culture Ms. Siham Barghouti held the key note of the seminar, followed by representatives for all fields of arts – leading the seminar to interesting and deeply engaged discussions based on the presentations and also linking this seminar to the literature seminar earlier in the week, as well as all artistic presentations.

We also thank Diane Oatley, who perfectly mastered the assignment of giving a report based on the atmosphere of the seminar and its content.

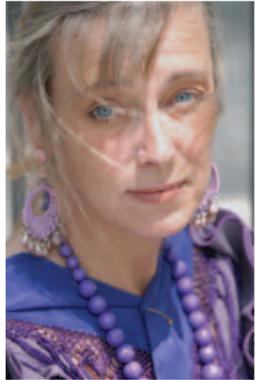
Quoting from the conclusion of this report:

The scope of the initiatives presented throughout the course of the day was nothing less than staggering, encompassing visual and print media, music, literature, filmmaking and the visual arts, through initiatives and collaborations within Palestine and internationally. The focus on young people with an eye towards the Palestine of the future was a recurring theme, and one which echoed perspectives from day one, regarding a focus on agency in defining the Palestinian story. Having thus established that voice, as it were, in the context of international collaboration it is tested and plied, and given further outlets of expression as well as making available mutual resources and providing concomitant inspiration.

Politics and nation-building are served by art, but art also opens up new perspectives on political issues and the very definition of national identity; the act of bringing art into an occupied territory not only “helps” those given the opportunity to experience that art. It becomes a gesture that reverberates with telling and aesthetic resistance, in highlighting issues around the definitions of art- and nation-as-institution, and the very borders according to which these are policed and preserved.

Transnational Arts Production (TrAP)

## REPORT BY DIANE OATLEY



Diane Oatley.

The second seminar of Viewing Palestine 2011 aimed at highlighting the necessity and value of international cultural cooperation with Palestine. Throughout the day a recurring theme was the aspect of narrative. Who is telling the Palestinian story? And by what means is it ensured that Palestinians are the active subjects of their own narratives, as opposed to being explained and defined by others. With this in mind, key questions for this day included, first, how can the development of Palestinian art in general, including the stimulation of new, young voices in that narrative, be promoted through international cooperation? And second, how should one go about building connections between artists, both within Palestine and internationally. This involved a focus on articulating the expectations and issues of Palestinian arts and culture in the context of international cooperation from a Palestinian perspective, the expectations and conditions of Palestinian artistic and cultural resources, and on sharing experiences between Palestinian and Norwegian partners.

Erik Fosnes Hansen from Norway Arts Council gave a brief welcoming address congratulating the organisers and participants on the great success of the seminar. He then introduced the seminar moderator, Professor Gunvor Mejdell from the University of Oslo. Gunvor reflected upon the fact that Oslo had at this time for almost a week been "Viewing Palestine" through a broad and diverse programme presenting various aspects of contemporary Palestinian cultural creativity, represented by visiting artists, writers, poets, journalists, and others working in arts and culture. She commented that during this week the density of Palestinian intellectuals in Oslo probably rivalled that of Ramallah. She stated that the scheduled events taking place outside of the framework of the seminars, including musical encounters, poetry recitals, and prose readings, represented diverse expressions of aesthetic resistance, and went on to specify some of the highlights from these events: Ibrahim Nasrallah's beautiful and moving poems of the resistance and lyricism tradition, Samer Abu Hawwash's seemingly everyday/everynight sensitivity, a style that referred less directly to the Palestinian issue, but with an underlying melancholy and feeling of pain. She recalled then the young Palestinian poet Zakariya Muhammad, who had insisted on writing poetry about "life and death, about an ant for that matter" in order not to let the Other control his poetry. This statement, as mentioned by way of introduction, was to become a theme for the day, in the sense of Palestinians as the active, creative subjects of their own narrative and with an emphasis on daily life, as opposed to the often absurd hardships inherent to the experience of living under occupation. This found expression for Mejdell in the short story read by Mahmoud Shukair, which was in her words "a masterpiece of irony and everyday humour".

She then went on to speak of the University of Oslo's involvement with cultural issues, outlining the activities of the section for Arabic studies. She encouraged Palestinian writers to send her their work so her students could have the opportunity work with and translate these into Norwegian. She extended her thanks to the organizer, Transnational Arts Production, mentioning the dedication of Eli Borchgrevink, and her prime contact into the Palestinian artistic community, Said Murad, musician and composer, and the founder of the Sabreen Association for Artistic Development. Mejdell explained that the word Sabreen, in Arabic, means the patient, those who do not give up. She commented that apparently the members of Sabreen live up to their name. She then quoted the "grand old man" himself, Mahmoud Darwish: "We Palestinians have an incurable ailment: Hope. Hope for liberation and independence – hope for living a normal life – a life where we are neither victims nor heroes". She closed by re-emphasising the theme of the day: Cultural cooperation between institutions – on equal standing.



Moderator:  
GUNVOR MEJDELL  
professor in Arabic  
language and culture  
at University of Oslo

## Cultural specificity and diversity in open interaction

Professor Mejdell then introduced the Keynote speaker for this day, Her Excellency the Palestinian Minister of Culture Siham Barghouthi. The minister opened giving special thanks to TrAP and its Palestinian partner the Sabreen Association for their joint efforts towards building bridges between intellectuals, for allowing Palestinian artists to present their cultural products, and in so doing deepening and promoting relations between Palestinian and Norwegian culture. She emphasised that it was important to note the special relationship between Norwegians and Palestinians also at the formal level and how the programme Viewing Palestine 2011 is just one of the components of a Palestinian–Norwegian programme which has been ongoing for many years at both governmental and non-governmental levels and in many fields, but especially in the field of arts and culture. The minister then specified that interaction and collaboration between all cultures must be based on mutual respect and equality, in accordance with international legitimacy and international law as a common denominators for all nations.

She expanded upon this by stipulating that cultural diversity is one of the rules of international law according to the charter of the United Nations and other agreements that control cultural cooperation internationally. On the basis of this, each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved and that every people has the right and the duty to develop its culture. As such, any attempt to deny the voices of people by force is in violation of international law, against civilization. She made the point that the globalisation of culture is an attempt to circulate a mainstream culture, to generalize in a way that implies cultural domination. This is being facilitated now by technological advances, and the dominance of a particular culture is produced by powerful interests. Thus, we face a complex situation, and this is a position that highlights the necessity of encouraging interactions between cultures while at the same time retaining cultural specificity.

She then went on to expand on the particular specificity of the Palestinian culture, which since 1948 has been affected by the catastrophe socially, politically, and economically. She pointed out that one of the most important consequences in the case of Palestine of the absence of social or economic unity has been a predominance of cultural production that doesn't require institutional structures, such as poetry, the novel, short stories, literary criticism, caricature and pictorial art. She clarified that every gathering of Palestinians has taken place under the influence of different political, economic, logical and cultural fields, according to the policy of the particular country or society in which Palestinians are living. This has in turned produced a need to create a flexible structure for linking cultural institutions within the homeland and the diaspora. The Ministry's strategic plan for the heritage and culture field 2011-2013 thus sought to create forms of cooperation between the official institutions, the circle of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the unions, and the popular associations to institutionalize the cultural work. It has been important renew faith in Palestine culture as a unified culture.

She stated that there are many figures who have led the cultural resistance in Palestine, far too many to name here, and that Palestinian culture is also diverse and open, interacting greatly with all other cultures. This week serves as a window for this. She spoke of how Jerusalem had been a spiritual, cultural centre for the Palestinian people, and how the occupation has been attempting to obliterate the cultural identity of this city. Jerusalem is being subjected to a process of Judaification and fragmentation, to prevent it from becoming a capital of the Palestinian state. She closed by explaining the Ministry's vision concerning the cultural cooperation, which declares that the renewed creative demographic of Arab national culture shall respect and uphold aesthetic, religious, political, and intellectual diversity. Again, this culture is open to other cultures, with an emphasis on preserving the heritage and history of the Palestinian people and developing citizenship contingent upon the values of equality, social justice and the human dignity.



Keynote: Minister of  
culture, Palestine, ms.  
Siham Barghouthi

## *Musical cooperation – sabreen and concerts Norway*



*George Ghattas from the Sabreen Group has BA degree from Bethlehem University in Business Administration and A post Graduate degree in Development from Kimmage Manor Dublin.*

The following presentation by George Ghattas from the Sabreen association for artistic development, and Kjell Thoreby from Concerts Norway (Rikskonsertene), Norway was entitled Building inspiration and competence – Music cooperation Sabreen/Concerts Norway (Rikskonsertene). Sabreen the association, a not for profit organization that started operations in 1995 was paralleled with a shift in paradigm in Palestine regarding music and music education with the deployment of the Palestinian authority, greater interests in Jerusalem-based origination dealing with culture, and an evolving and developing national cultural and educational policy. George outlined the organizational development of this initiative, a long-term process involving competence building, resource development, musical productions, promotion and networking, lobbying and policy change. This culminated in the development of a ten-year strategy under the programme “Music for Everyone”, which is endorsed by the Ministry of Education in Palestine as well as the Ministry of Culture and supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NORAD and NRO Office in Jerusalem) since 2002.

George then stated how much he had appreciated Mejdell’s comment about Sabreen meaning patience. But as he explained that in addition to being patient, Sabreen is also about being stubborn. This became particularly apparent when the musicians of Sabreen made the all-important decision to become fulltime musicians, which particularly with an eye towards the lack of infrastructure in Palestine, is a very concrete and critical decision. He explained how in Jerusalem, one has to be patient, because apart from being beautiful it is also occupied. He made the point, also in reference to the Minister’s former comments, that Jerusalem is more than ancient monuments; Jerusalem is more the actual interpretation of the culture that is inside this city, which has become more and more isolated, first, by the occupation, and then by the famous wall. This insight gave further nuance to the discussion of Palestinian identity and geography from the first seminar day, specifically, how the Palestinian culture is in fact kept alive by just this ongoing reinterpretation, interaction and redefinition.

He then explained that the current cooperation with Concerts Norway is the result of 25 years of evolution, and a series of processes. The cooperation between Sabreen and Concerts Norway started with 3 small projects, during which both parties were testing each other out. There has been a consistent emphasis on mutual exchange: Palestine is not being “helped” by Norway; to the contrary, as expressed by parties in this context, the experience has been that cultural co-operations of this type benefit both parties. The focus has been on the accumulated specialization of Sabreen as well as that of Concerts Norway within a context of international cooperation. Having said that, the relationship was not a proposition and an opportunity for funding; rather it was about creating the opportunity, and then developing relations which would make possible its funding and realization. Kjell Thoreby spoke of how in the context of cultural collaboration each party must make their own personal impact, and of the importance of mutual respect. He showed a clip from a Norwegian school, in connection with a school concert tour with Arabic musicians, and Norwegian children singing together with them, in collaboration with Concerts Norway. The tour was a part of a community music programme intended to develop the musicians’ skills and enrich their experience, as well as to introduce Norwegian students to Palestinian and Oriental music.

The Viewing Palestine project is then a module of an expanded cooperation, where all participants are dealing with a personal vision for Palestine, a point which echoed some of the final conclusions of Tuesday’s seminar. George elaborated that the way in which Palestinians look at this, and choose to perceive it, enables them to enhance and increase all the spectrums between all of us. He suggested that the multi-art aspect highlights that perhaps it is also time to find roots, to create some kind of mechanism within the Ministry of Culture for this kind of collaboration, not a governing agency but more of a reference or council in that they have now proven that they can truly produce and create change. The time is ripe to do so with the Ministry of Culture’s endorsement.

He then went on to specify further that despite the importance of talent and creativity, the

question remains: Is this in itself sufficient for creating a broad, successful artistic movement? It is well known that such a movement could not be created without a strong artistic circle that includes adequate infrastructure. Talent, educational facilities and resources that include teachers, books, and venues to experience and express this talent are only the beginning. The next step is to provide the infrastructure necessary for production; publishing houses and possibilities for recording and organizing performances. The role of the print, broadcast, and electronic media is no less important. Also, outreach and communication with other Arab and international cultures, through joint festivals, meetings, art exhibitions, and recordings, are needed as well, along with the existence of laws and an institution that protects rights on writing, publishing, and distribution. The above are preconditions for a complete artistic circle, with art production forming the backbone for the renaissance and dissemination of art.

## Art is a way to imagine the world otherwise: Picasso in Palestine



*Khaled Hourani, the international academy of arts Palestine in Ramallah*

Khaled Hourani from the International Academy of Arts Palestine in Ramallah then gave his presentation about this institution's experiences with international cultural cooperation, specifically in the context of the Picasso in Palestine project. This presentation provided interesting insights on not only some of the challenges inherent to international arts collaboration with Palestine, but also the wide array of resonances and insights produced by these. In concrete terms, the Picasso in Palestine project, conceived and initiated by Hourani, entailed the transport of Picasso's artwork *Buste de femme* (1943) to Palestine and its exhibition there. More than this however, in the words of Hourani, "Picasso in Palestine is an art project that aims to probe mechanisms, procedures, obstacles and requirements in getting a painting of this kind to Palestine. By doing so, it sheds light on the contemporary reality of Palestine and gives the art project the power of the impossible. Picasso in Palestine is about institutions in different locations, the value and funding of art and on human relations and the media. The adventure starts when the art work leaves for Palestine but does not necessarily end when it safely arrives back home." This journey represents a development through which Palestine moves from being a region that, again, things are "done to" by others, to establishing itself through agency, in this case in relation to the world of modern contemporary art. For indeed, why shouldn't Palestine be a touring site for unique historical and artistic works? This question was the starting point for this two year artistic project involving extensive research, preparation and management.

In the words of Hourani, "The significance of this project is not only that this is the first exhibition of its kind ever to take place in Palestine or the magnitude of Picasso per se, but is as much about Palestinians' yearning for and appreciation of art. This project fundamentally exposes the Palestinian people's aspiration to live equally like other nations and to have unrestricted access to art." This was an insight that was repeated on a number of occasions throughout both seminar days, both in terms of the importance of artistic expression that reflected daily life, ordinary concerns and needs, but in keeping with this, having access to creative expression as a means of resistance, identity construction and survival.

As is often the case, however, the personal is also political. Hourani explained that on another level the implications and effects of this artistic project exemplify a highly political message by bringing such a renowned and highly priced international art work into a country that is under occupation and completely unstable. The project also provoked questions around the concept of the 'museum space' challenging common assumptions: the museum's relevance as an institution to the sovereign state, and its cultural and national indications. He then showed a short video that is also available on Youtube, entitled "The Popular Picasso piece", which contained interviews and footage from the exhibition itself, complete with security guards and visitors.

## Prospects of cooperation in filmmaking

Hayyan Jubeh, a broadcasting journalist, currently from the BBC and a theatre director, actor, playwright and filmmaker then gave his presentation which was entitled Prospects of cooperation in filmmaking – In search for the right route. Hayyan prefaced his presentation by making reference to the success of both the Picasso in Palestine project and the Sabreen association. He explained that regretfully, the cinema has not had a similar success story. In spite of the fact that there are many working in this medium who have had breakthroughs, generally speaking, this is not the case. As an example of a success story he told of the now famous film director Rashid Masharawi who had had only 6 years of schooling, was a labourer, and went on to become a famous film director. He was however, as Hayyan pointed out, exceptional for his generation.

Hayyan then went on to outline a sketch of the evolution of film in Palestine. Initially he stated, there were news/film directors who came to Palestine wanting to see the confrontation, clearly, face to face. In this context, the soldier was the protagonist, the child with the stone was the villain, the antagonist. Alternatively, there was the opposing version of this story in which a poor child confronts soldiers armed only with a stone. A debate emerged during this period as a result regarding whether the act of throwing a stone constitutes a terrorist act, a debate which also Palestinians took part in.

Then the Oslo Accord arrived and there was a revolution in the visual media. Suddenly cameras were available for everyone, and anyone could become a filmmaker. The video medium emerged. Money was pumped into Palestine and Israel and everyone wanted to see joint projects between Palestine and Israel. Everyone thought that peace was close at hand. These projects all failed, none of them were memorable.

Hayyan explained that the reason for this failure was that nobody talked to the Palestinians and asked what they wanted; they were the elephant in the room. Rather than telling their own story, they were being discussed by others. There were two versions here, the first that Palestinians want and are reaching out for peace. The second version was that Palestinians continue to victimize themselves. Hayyan explained that both of these perspectives are real but again, nobody asked the Palestinians what they thought.

As such the cinema in Palestine has not been a success story. A mess was created that remains, none of the filmmakers know where to go to achieve collaboration in their filmmaking. Even now there is no special fund for cinema. He then made an appeal to the Ministry of Culture, stating that the cinema in Palestine needs a fund. As he put it "We have a right to see the creative projects of the many talented individuals realised and the ministry has a responsibility to help them."

Palestinian author Huzama Habyeb took the floor and suggested that as a filmmaker, the most important element is to have a script – and in that Palestine has an abundant national literature, epic stories, that can be transformed into scripts, why isn't an initiative started for this? She pointed out that movies reach far more people, most cover Palestinian issues from the inside, but what about the diaspora, outside of the USA, the Middle Eastern countries? She proposed that as a filmmaker he had a responsibility here, why didn't he do something about it. Hayyan replied that as Palestinian filmmakers, they have no screenplay writers. As a rule, the director will write, and in that context he will go to his own experience and try to write about it, and avoid novels written by others. Hayyan also pointed out that one feels also a responsibility not to touch the great writers of literature. It is also easier to defend own ideas with regard to budgeting, and funding. He stated as well that many films have touched the diaspora of Jordan and Lebanon, but that those living outside of these areas don't know them because the access is limited in a very concrete sense.



*Hayyan Yacoub Jubeh is a theatre director, actor and filmmaker, also a journalist and playwright.*

## Musical interlude with hiphop group G-town



G-Town

The hip-hop group G-town played on a number of occasions and at various venues during this week, and seminar participants were also fortunate enough to have the opportunity to experience them as well on this day. Muhammed al-Moughrabi, a young Palestinian refugee from Shu'fat refugee camp located in Jerusalem in the occupied Palestinian territory, launched the group G-town – with the G standing for Ghetto – in 2002, together with musician Fadi Amous. They were the first to play hiphop music in Jerusalem and utilize this form of expression to transmit the feelings of being a refugee and sentiments towards their homeland, the world and the Middle East in general. The group has been successful internationally and their contribution on this day, poetic, heartfelt and immediate, served as a living canvas which implemented and brought home to all those present not only the importance of the issues under discussion, but as well the beauty, inspiration and potency of Palestinian art from the new generation. International in scope but grounded in personal experiences from daily life, the musical expression of G-town served to embody in its own particular idiom, as subject of own narrative, many of the issues of this day.

## Culture in the building of a Palestinian state



Cecilie Willoch, the Head of the Cultural Section in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign affairs

Cecilie Willoch, the Head of the Cultural Section in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then gave her presentation, in which she spoke of the Norwegian Government's main goal in the Palestinian Territory, namely to contribute to the building of a Palestinian state. She specified that culture is viewed as an important cornerstone in this process, as it provides unity and a sense of national identity. She emphasised that support to the Palestinian cultural sector is in line with Palestinian national plans, in particular an Arabic national culture which maintains the Palestinian narrative. She outlined some strategic objectives such as increased reading among children, an infrastructure which enhances cultural production and a cultural fund. She then stipulated concrete initiatives under implementation, such as support of the establishment of the International Art Academy in Ramallah, and the Palestinian Cultural Fund. The latter has entailed supporting the Palestinian Ministry of Culture in the development of a grant mechanism whereby the Ministry can manage a fund through which a variety of cultural activities can receive some financial assistance. Many of these activities take place in marginalised areas that otherwise have limited access to such financial support. This support will benefit individual artists, and contribute to building an infrastructure through which both professionals and amateurs can find means of creative expression.

Willoch then mentioned the important work being done by the Tamer Institute, in the field of rights to education, identity and freedom of expression, and their promotion of reading and writing in the occupied territories. She highlighted Sabreen's collaboration with Concerts Norway, and the Ministry's collaborations with UNESCO. She then went on to detail the findings of NORAD's recently released evaluation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cultural section's Strategy for Culture and Sports Cooperation with Countries in the South. This evaluation verifies that Norway has made important contributions to the development of the Palestinian cultural sector, by both building and strengthening institutions working with visual arts, literature, music, cultural heritage and multi-culture, and concluding that that the Palestinian Territory is the best and most significant example studied when it comes to building a cultural infrastructure.

## Bridge-building and a united Palestine

After Willoch's presentation the floor was then opened for questions. Susan Abulhawa commented that one glaring issue for her is the disconnectedness between Palestinian writers around the world, and that Palestinian art and culture in the diaspora is just as important as in Palestine. She then asked whether there were any plans to promote bridge building between Palestinians. Willoch agreed that this was a very pertinent question. She explained that she was not permitted to make promises of this nature, but added that "As we get to know one another, the needs and the challenges, all good ideas will be taken into consideration as we make future plans." Journalist Mohammed Omer then took the floor, first of all thanking her for her interesting perspectives and stating how much he appreciated the investment on the part of Norway. He then commented that she had spoken for about 20 minutes but had said the word "Gaza" only once. His point was that he was sensing a reinforcement of the division between the Palestinians, specifically in terms of what he referred to as "a very poor representation from the Gaza strip for whatever reason". He said that he had hoped that the Norwegian government would ensure better overall representation.

Willoch replied that although she was not entirely surprised that political questions arise in a context like this, the Norwegian government is not responsible for the programming. In that TrAP has done the programming this was a matter that she was unable to comment on. The Palestinian Minister of Culture on the other hand, offered her perspectives on this point. She explained that when they at the Ministry talk about Palestine, they mean Palestine as a whole, as a nation, not the West Bank or Gaza. The Ministry of Culture is for all of Palestine. All areas are represented and receive funding. She emphasised her concern about this, in that Gaza in particular has many poets and novelists, as well as artists working within the plastic arts, and that a certain amount will be given to Gaza. She stated that the Ministry never thinks that there is any division: Palestinian culture is one, inside the nation or outside the nation, this is one culture, regardless of the differences between one place or another.

These points found further resonance in the subsequent presentation by Susan Abulhawa. She opened by stating that the conference highlights the need for Palestinians "to find ways to bridge the geographic gaps that not only separate us, but also separate our culture into many languages and many cultures". She maintained that this is a challenge, in terms of the implication of disconnectedness, which is tragically unique in terms of artists from one country, and also an advantage. It is an advantage because it contributes to the expansiveness of Palestinian culture. She noted that many of the participants were meeting one another for the first time and how it has been a great honour for her to get to know fellow Palestinian writers from all over the world. The question becomes in her words, "how do we harness that richness, that expansiveness". She specified that this is also a challenge for the international committee that supports the Palestinian artists, for the artists themselves, for the Ministry of Culture in Palestine, which should take its mandate from Palestinian artists – not the other way around. In sum, how should Palestinians go about bridging the gaps between one another? She held that this is one of the biggest challenges Palestine has as a cultural community. Palestine is an ancient culture, and now an ancient transformed culture.

She then went on to speak about her uneasiness regarding the UN resolution, in that in her mind political decisions have been made by a small group that represents only a portion of Palestinian society and excludes the rest. In the context of the UN bid issue, nobody has seen or read it, and this bid reinforces this disconnectedness, in that the bid represents a monumental decision that affects all Palestinians. She pointed out that it is only when the world opinion shifts that Israel actually takes action or becomes concerned and that this was something to keep in mind. The last time there was a shift, the Oslo Accord was the result, which had the effect of cutting off the shift in public opinion, and the ramifications were disastrous.



Susan Abulhawa, writer, "Mornings in Jenin" has been translated to Norwegian and published in Norway through Aschehoug.

## Narrative voices of Palestinian youth



Renad Qubbaj –  
director of Tamer  
Institute.

Renad Qubbaj the director of the Tamer Institute for Community Education, gave the subsequent presentation. The Tamer Institute was founded during the first intifada in 1989 with a vision "To create a healthy learning atmosphere among children, youth, parents and educators focusing on human growth aspects". Renad specified how the democratization of Palestinian creativity was certainly an important motivation leading to the creation of Tamer Institute. She opened her presentation by stating that freedom of expression is one important condition for creativity; therefore, producing art under colonialism is a major obstacle to artistic creation. Yet, it remains the main motivator for artists seeking their fundamental existence and identity. However, any search for identity within a closed environment can only lead to cultural ghettos, isolation and limitation. She held that this is the main challenge faced by Palestinian artists who need to balance between the expression of their national identity, creation and needs on one hand, and universal identity and creation on the other.

She pointed out that both the solidarity movements with Palestine and the activities of the Palestinian diaspora have fed the promotion of Palestinian art. The exchange and interaction between Palestinian and international artists, solidarity movements throughout the world, in the Palestinian diaspora and the Palestinians living under occupation lead to enhancing and promoting the inner sentiment as well as the capability of Palestinians to survive the oppression of the Israeli occupation, as well as creating a better understanding of the Palestinian cause and identity on the international scene. It was therefore natural for activists to defend creativity and promote it in the most effective way: through Palestinian children and youth. The Tamer Institute is convinced that writing is an excellent way for youth to articulate their feelings, ambitions and hopes. Yaraat, meaning "the young pens", is the name of a literary newspaper for young people produced under the auspices of the Tamer Institute, but envisioned, run and managed by youth. She told of how during the second Intifada, the same team of youth decided to establish Voices from Palestine. They felt that they needed to speak out and hear the voices of many others around the world. In addition to writing, the Yaraat and the Voices teams organize events that include readings, storytelling, theatre, poetry, dance and music as well as summer camps and cultural evenings.

Renad went on then to give concrete examples of other projects and artists. For 23 years one key project has been the promotion of reading through libraries and children's book publishing as a means of compensating for the losses created by occupation through the creation of spaces within the society for reading, writing, learning, and discovering or in other words "Tools for creativity". Tamer is a main publisher as well as a promoter for children's books, publishing books written by adults and children in Palestine, for the benefit of children, but also with a main objective of promoting the artistic expression of local writers and illustrators. Tamer also publishes translated books.

In Renad's concluding comments she stated that although Palestinian art has its recognized stars, it is only by encouraging further international exchange and enhancing freedom of expression that Palestinian art will succeed in achieving artistic excellence on a broader scale within Palestinian society. The Tamer Institute has certainly made a serious contribution towards the realization of this objective. She finished by thanking the Norwegian people and government, for their respective moral and financial support of the Palestinian cultural sector.

## Youth media – self- empowerment and a vision for the future

Hania Hani Arafat Bitar, the Founder & Director General of The Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA), presented the final paper of the day, entitled Specialized Youth Media: Empowerment, Advocacy & Beyond. PYALARA is an independent Palestinian youth NGO established in 1999 that targets Palestinian children and youth, between the ages 13-25 in the different Palestinian areas including West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip. Hania explained how young Palestinians live under severe political, social and economic situations, within a vicious circle that is characterized by factors including a lack of hope, isolation, displacement/emigration, checkpoints, extremism and the Separation Wall, poverty and unemployment. PYALARA's response to these factors is geared towards the creation of young Palestinian leaders who are aware of their rights and duties as equal citizens capable of producing social and political change, and effectively participating in building a democratic society through specialized media, lobbying and advocacy. For the past 12 years, PYALARA has been working on rebuilding the resilience of young Palestinians through activating their role in the society, improving their psychosocial well-being, and granting them independent media forums for self-expression.

Hania expanded on this explaining that a major cornerstone of PYALARA's modus-vivandi is the usage of media, whether print or visual, to enable young people to address issues related to their well-being in the different Palestinian areas as a means of expressing their problems, needs and concerns. In its modest but rich experience, PYALARA has succeeded in reaching young people in very underprivileged areas, raising their awareness about their rights, empowering them with the skills needed to make their voices heard and mobilizing them to make use of the specialized youth media outlets to approach decision-makers, spread awareness and lobby for their causes.

PYALARA has managed over the past years to develop its own intervention methodology that is based on a peer-to-peer approach. What is special about such approach is that key-messages are delivered via empowered young men and women who are very close in age to the targeted beneficiaries and who are selected, trained and empowered to deliver from the same targeted under-privileged areas. This has the effect of creating localized young leadership and maintaining the sustainability of interventions.

As such, an important impact of the PYALARA programme is enabling creativity and innovation by creating local heroes and leaders. The programme methodology capitalizes on the concept of role model influence to generate attitude transformation amongst Palestinian youth, and also aims at influencing the attitudes of groups of Palestinian youth with regard to how they perceive themselves in society, their role, and their value system. As Hania explained in closing, when those role-models start to believe and to adopt values with respect to gender equality and legal rights, and together start revising laws, regulations and advocate for their rights, their influence and impact on their local communities and their peers becomes definitely stronger.

There was a short discussion following this presentation which returned to the issue of filmmaking initiatives in Palestine. Two main points were presented. First, the need for funding and programmes for young, talented filmmakers was re-emphasised. Second, how to best collaborate within Palestine in terms of handling the diversity of needs and areas of specialisation. Hayyan took the floor once again, and pointed out that there are many, many talented individuals in Palestine, and in a direct appeal to the Ministry of Culture, he asked, why not help them out, specifically, where are the programmes to help young filmmakers? Renad spoke up in response to this appeal, stating that she felt that being in Oslo and hearing Palestinian young people is a kind of inspiration for everyone. She stated that she was sure that this is what motivates all of them, but beyond that definitely solutions are found in individual ways. In Gaza now there are people there who consider filmmaking an important form of artistic expression – when they come to the Tamer Institute with specific needs, efforts are made to develop an environment for that, to help them develop their creativity, but in terms of professions they must also work at developing skills and talent.

Hania Bitar then added her perspective on this point, stating that she actually had a different



Hania Hani Arafat Bitar  
is Founder & Director  
General of The Pales-  
tinian Youth Association  
for Leadership And  
Rights Activation –  
PYALARA is a Palestinian  
media and  
communication  
oriented youth NGO,  
set up for all Palestinian  
youth.

opinion. She clarified that she believed in organisations who respect own specialisations and focus on developing these. Whenever one is working with people of course they have different hobbies or talents, and there will be a diversity of wishes. She offers what she is specialised in offering. It was her opinion that in this way the different organizations complement each other in terms of financial resources, and instead of competing. And in a society in crisis, it was important to complement rather than to compete. Renad responded by stating that she agreed with her about specialisation and focusing, but that the children at the Tamer Institute for example, now document things from their mobile phones, so it becomes natural to introduce the concept of film. The challenge becomes how can they try to encourage and introduce any concept about any issue, so the children are exposed to a wide range of possible media, and with the technology now this is possible. On the whole the emphasis is on the objective of broadening one's knowledge base.

### *Sharing experiences from Palestine to Norway*

The day was concluded by a short panel discussion between art academy students from, respectively, Norway, who had been to Ramallah, and students from Ramallah who were in Norway to take part in a two-week workshop. The discussion revolved around their respective experiences from the exchange programme. They spoke of a strong relation between the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO) and the Art Academy in Ramallah. For that reason the Palestinian students were interested in coming to Oslo. It was important for them to come and see what Oslo looks like, and many of their former images had been transformed, especially through the workshop with Norwegian students. This raised for them many questions, such as role of the artist, and artistic freedom, in that as they expressed it, such issues take on wholly different perspective in Ramallah.

The Norwegian students stated that they found it very interesting to see the students present art that was very connected to the situation in Palestine. They had discussed among themselves whether they have different points of view with regard to a collective as versus individualistic perspective in terms of their art. They found that for Norwegians the themes of nationality or national identity are not equally present in what they do, although they have similar ways of looking at it, and that both want to develop new ways of seeing the structures in which they find themselves. They explained that they had also found differences in the production of art due to the different nature of the input one was exposed to in Norway and Palestine. The output would as a matter of course be different, although the practice of art in itself was not. The Palestinian students elaborated on this in stating that they cannot separate being Palestinian from being art students. They expressed how coming from Palestine is a heavy burden, and that one's art practice contains one's identity, in the sense that even if an artwork is only indirectly political, it nonetheless contains the political situation of Palestine. On the other hand, they spoke of an interest in exposing their society to different kinds of art, art forms that society is not necessarily accustomed to, a sentiment which echoed one of the objectives of the Picasso in Palestine project.

On the other hand, one conclusion the Norwegian students spoke about was that seeing the work of the Palestinian artists had raised questions for them about life in general but also about their own artistic practices, in that they developed an awareness of the responsibility felt by the Palestinian artists, and this made them ask themselves about the scope of their own social and political responsibility. In consequence, the Norwegian students came to feel that KHiO actually needs the academy in Palestine. This was confirmed by the Palestinian students who stated that before coming to Norway they believed that they needed the Norwegian students, but now understand that they themselves are needed by Norway as well.

In response to a question from the floor regarding any stereotypes they might have had of one another, and what had taken place when they finally met, the Norwegian students replied that it was an interesting question. One of the students stated that she had read about the conflict, and felt that perhaps they were afraid of doing the wrong thing; they arrived with certain images, and witnessed a demonstration in Palestine that was very powerful, as had been the entire experience of being in Ramallah. Their knowledge of the situation had been expanded. As an example, they had gone through a checkpoint, and experiencing this as opposed to simply reading about such a thing is very important, in that it leads to a better understanding of Palestinian art. The overall sense was that there was work involved in getting to know one another and they are now building a solid platform of understanding. The Palestinian students for their part stated that because the Norwegian students had visited them in Palestine before they themselves came to Norway, they had had a pretty accurate idea of what to expect. On the whole, having already been exposed to people from the West in general decreases the tendency to stereotype. So in consequence their stay had been as they had expected, with the exception of having now more details.

### *Conclusion*

The scope of the initiatives presented throughout the course of the day was nothing less than staggering, encompassing visual and print media, music, literature, filmmaking and the visual arts, through initiatives and collaborations within Palestine and internationally. The focus on young people with an eye towards the Palestine of the future was a recurring theme, and one which echoed perspectives from day one, regarding a focus on agency in defining the Palestinian story. Having thus established that voice, as it were, in the context of international collaboration it is tested and plied, and given further outlets of expression as well as making available mutual resources and providing concomitant inspiration.

The many arts and media projects presented in this seminar appear to both fulfil and surpass their own objectives and parameters, not least in terms of the disclosure of unexpected perspectives – whether this be in the immediate sense of the artistic production of children given the opportunity for empowerment and hope for the future, or, in terms of defining Palestine, an understanding of the concept of culture – whether this is defined as cultural identity or the physical city of Jerusalem – as its active and ongoing reinterpretation, and specifically through the arts. The diaspora imposes not only disconnectedness, but also an expansiveness which must be viewed as a dynamic resource and opportunity. Issues of accessibility and connection are destabilized, and gain new significances, and to the extent that international collaboration shakes up the politics of otherness, instigate the renegotiation of cultural and socio-political identities and boundaries.

This is given further nuance by Khaled Hourani's words about the Picasso in Palestine art project, which summarize also in a broader sense the overall importance of international collaborations with Palestine, as these "create a space for the political reality to clash with the art discipline, revealing the hard living conditions with which Palestine is struggling. It also embodies historical concerns in the art world in general as well as the ways in which Palestinian art relates to international and European art disciplines." The reciprocal benefits inherent to international collaboration with Palestine referred to by numerous speakers throughout the day are thus underscored. Politics and nation-building are served by art, but art also opens up new perspectives on political issues and the very definition of national identity; the act of bringing art into an occupied territory not only "helps" those given the opportunity to experience that art. It becomes a gesture that reverberates with telling and aesthetic resistance, in highlighting issues around the definitions of art- and nation-as-institution, and the very borders according to which these are policed and preserved.

Diane Oatley

## PAPERS

### *Welcoming note by professor Gunvor Mejdell, University of Oslo*

Oslo has for almost a week been Viewing Palestine – through a rich programme with various aspects of contemporary Palestinian cultural creativity: artists, writers, poets, journalists, and other cultural workers – this week the density of Palestinian intellectuals in Oslo probably rivals that of Ramallah. Oslo has been the meeting place of artists, musicians, traditional and hip hop artists, and cultural brokers and administrators, from Palestine and Norway. To some extent, it seems, it has also a meeting place for Palestinians living in the land of the inside and those living in exile, to exchange their experiences, views, hopes and despair, what it means to be a Palestinian, and how to pave the way for the future Palestine.

We extend our thanks to the organizer, Transnational Arts Production, with its dedicated lady Eli Borchgrevink, and her prime contact into the Palestinian artistic community, Said Murad, musician and composer, and the founder of the Sabreen Association for Artistic Development. Sabreen, in Arabic, means the patient, the stubborn, those who do not give up. Apparently, they live up to it.

Financial, and moral, support to the projects and the seminars, has come from the Arts Council, Norway, represented by Erik Fosnes Hansen whom you just heard, the municipalities of Oslo and Akershus, the Institution Fritt Ord, and not least the Cultural Section of Norwegian foreign ministry and the associated Development Fund (NORAD). Thanks to Aschehoug for hosting an evening of cultural exchange and culinary specialities, delicacies to most of us...

The creativity our Palestinian guests have presented us with, through musical encounters, poetry recitals, prose readings, are diverse expressions of "aesthetic resistance". Unfortunately, I was only able to attend a few events: I was deeply moved (to tears) by Ibrahim Nasrallah's beautiful poems, in the resistance + lyricism tradition, as well as by Samer Abu Hawwash in his seemingly everyday/everynight sensitivity – a style less directly referring to the Palestinian issue, but with underlying melancholy and feeling of pain – and with subtle references. It reminded me of an interview with your young poet Zakariya Muhammad, who insisted on writing poetry about "life and death, about an ant for that matter" – in order not to let the Other control your poetry. "He may occupy my house, my street, my country, but I will not let him occupy my poems". I was also reminded of the words of the grand old man himself, Mahmoud Darwish, something like "we Palestinians have an incurable ailment: Hope. Hope for liberation and independence – hope for living a normal life – a life where we are neither victims nor heroes".

In the same reading session, we shed tears from laughter by the short story read to us by Mahmoud Shuqayr, a masterpiece of irony and everyday humour, revealing of all the hardships – and the absurdity of the hardships – imposed by the occupational powers. Our Palestinian guests represent and embody the call for the Power of Culture to resist the culture of Power (also Darwish?).

Just a few words from the academic perspective: the role of the university's involvement with cultural issues, where I see potential for expansion and cooperation. In my department, more specifically our modest section for Arabic studies, let me mention that we teach and study Palestinian literature, we lecture, and students write papers, on themes such as Kanafani's *Rijal fi al-shams*, Emile Habibi's *Said al-mutasha'il*, on Mahmud Darwish's poetry, on the Palestinian/Israeli rap group Dam, on Palestinian journalism. We study and practice translation from Arabic into Norwegian, and I call on the writers present and their colleagues, to send us short stories we can work on this year, and next year. We might also consider the possibility of sending our students on internships to one of your cultural institutions, where they take part in the work and activities, and write a report on a relevant issue, subsequently expanding it to a master thesis. I think we should explore this.

Cultural cooperation between institutions – on an equal footing – is the subject of the seminar this afternoon. What are the results and experiences from the projects that have been and are running, what are possible extensions of cooperation. I must admit that I am truly

amazed at all the activity, all the projects involved, and the number of people involved, on both sides. Some of them shall now present and share their ideas and perspectives with us. Many of the projects are orientated towards empowering the young – al-shabab – of Palestine, to realize their potential, to reach out with their many different voices, to find meaning – and to enjoy. It does not take much wisdom to understand that the shabab are the future.

First, however, we are greatly honoured by the presence of Her Excellency the Palestinian minister of culture, ms Siham Barghouthi, who has accepted the invitation to be the keynote speaker this morning. Please welcome her warmly!

## *Speech by her excellency the Palestinian minister of culture, Ms Siham Barghouthi*

I'm honored to join you in this cultural demonstration which is special for Palestinian culture here in Oslo with our friends of Norwegian authors & artists under "Palestine Program 2011" which is organized jointly with our Norwegian friends by "TrAP" institution & its Palestinian partner "Sabreen" association. In this occasion we have to thank and appreciate both institutions for this kind invitation, for this effort to build bridges between intellectuals, for allowing Palestinian male and female creators to present their cultural products, and for deepening and promoting the relations between Palestinian & Norwegian culture.

The activities of this program have come at the same time the Palestinians prepare to fight to get the full membership in the UN in the 66<sup>th</sup> general assembly session. We are confident of the Norwegian formal and public position which always stands by Palestinian rights, supports the independent state of Palestine with 1967 borders, Jerusalem the capital of Palestine & supports the right of refugees' return according to resolution 194.

This program "Palestine 2011" is one of the components of the Palestinian – Norwegian program for long years whether governmental or nongovernmental levels and in many fields specially cultural field.

Absolutely there is a special relationship between the Palestinians & Norwegians, also on the formal level, and it comes under the international cooperation & the cultural cooperation between countries.

The culture distinguishes a society from another. Based on that, the cultural cooperation is based on the covenants & agreements which control the work of international & regional organizations. Those agreements confirm the necessity of keeping the cultural variety, and interaction between the cultures must be based on mutual respect & equality according to the international legitimacy & to international law that forms the common denominators among all governments & nations in this world.

The cultural interaction among the nations is a human work, influences the movement of history & a helpful component to achieve progression, development, security, peace, and the impetus to the stability and advancement of human life. The cultural variety became one of the rules in the international law according to the charter of United Nations & the agreements which control cultural cooperation relations among the international group, as a right of the human rights confirms the specialty of culture for each nation, and presents the national identities with their civilized features which form the general human identity. The following came in the declaration of principles of international cultural co-operation in the first article:

- Each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved)
- Every people has the right and the duty to develop its culture.
- In their rich variety and diversity, and in the reciprocal influences they exert on one another, all cultures form part of the common heritage belonging to all mankind

Add to that there are other international agreements such as agreement of keeping & promoting the variety of expression forms, the agreement of keeping the intangible cultural heritage and the agreement of the natural & cultural international heritage. So, any attempt to eliminate the nation's identities by force & compulsion is a violating of the known laws and the international law rules and threaten the stability, security & peace. Many nations struggled to keep its identity in the face of dispossessing its culture, through the liberation movements which resist the colonialism.

Now we see the international effective role of technology. A strong technological culture can control a weak technological culture. The globalization of culture is an attempt of society to circulate its cultural mainstream on other societies by influencing their cultural concepts.

There is penetration of societies' cultures & attempting to reformulate new values & habits which establish different cultural identity threaten the original identities of societies. The dominance of a particular culture is produced by powerful interests. Thus, we are in front of a complex situation: we have to encourage interactions among human cultures and at the same time keep the specialty of culture.

About the specialty of Palestinian cultural reality, the Palestinian culture after 1948 has been affected by the new political, economic, and social reality in every Palestinian community inside Palestine or outside. The most notable result of the dispersion & absence of one political, economic & social society is the predominance of cultural production which doesn't need institutional structure such as poem, novel, short story, literary criticism, caricature & artistic pictures. Every gathering of Palestinians became under impact of different political, economic, logical & cultural fields, according to the policy of the country or society Palestinians live in. That wasn't negative reality absolutely, especially if we look at it as a variety affecting positively on the Palestinian cultural product.

This created the need of a flexible structure of culture which ties the cultural institutions inside the homeland and outside. So what the strategic plan for the heritage and culture field 2011-2013 tried to create ways of cooperation among the official institutions, circle of Palestinian Liberation Organization, the unions and the popular associations to institutionalize the cultural work. The Palestinian culture is one. This plan takes as a title, from the great poet Mahmoud Darwish, his saying "who writes his tale inherits the land of speech".

Despite of this reality the Palestinian national culture said, from the beginning, no for uprooting, fragmentation, occupation, settlement. It resisted and still by painting, word, music, cinema and literature. It achieves moral and human superiority by making insisted will on freedom.

The Palestinian pioneers of culture made elements of our power and converted the culture to force can raise the national struggle. They uncovered all the injustice of Israel: by them the culture power overcame the power culture and the Palestinian people became more confident in their fair cause in the unequal encounter.

The Palestinian culture is the culture of diversity, variety, openness and creative human communication with all the cultures and civilizations. Here I have to talk about what happens in the peace city "Jerusalem": the capital of our state. About a century ago Jerusalem was political, spiritual and cultural city for the Palestinian people. For 44 years the Israeli occupation has continued to cover the feature of its original identity and fragmented its geographic and demographic unity. It tries to convert it from spiritual cultural center to a besieged city: isolated from development. It also tries to Judaize Jerusalem and join it. Israel to prevent it to regain its civilized and historical status and to be the capital for Palestine state.

About the ministry vision concerning the cultural cooperation, it declares that: renewed creative demographic human Arabic national culture which respects and keeps the aesthetic religious political intellectual diversity. This culture is open on the other cultures, keep the heritage and historical tale of the Palestinian people and develop the citizenship which depends on the values of equality, social justice and the human dignity. The ministry tried to support the cultural cooperation by implementing the Josor program:

## *International music cooperation – by Sabreen association for artistic development George Ghattas*

- 1- Cultural agreements with other countries.
- 2- Participating in international books exhibitions.
- 3- Broadening the participation of Palestine in the regional and world festivals.
- 4- Broadening the participation in the regional and world conferences .bodies and circles.
- 5- Hosting artistic teams and men of letters in Palestine.

In the light of that I assure the importance of this Palestinian/Norwegian cooperation and call to broaden and deepen it on the governmental and civil level .I hope this cooperation participate in spreading the Palestinian literature and art not only in Norway but also in Europe.

I also think of broadening the translation movement: the language is an important factor to bring the peoples together .the translation protect the culture and it means for influence and expression and the key of peoples acquaintance.

We also ready to host teams, authors and artists from Norway in Palestine for direct interaction with Palestinian culture.

Finally I greet you all. I greet our Norwegian friends and the Palestinian writers and artists. I repeat my thanks to the Norwegian government and the Norwegian institutions for their supporting the Palestinian culture.

Working with known poets and writers namely Mahmud Darwish, Hussein Barghouthy, Sayyed Higab, Talla Heidar and others Sabreen captured the human story of Palestine and put them in song. It talked about man and women, love and the beloved, jail and capturing, dreams and aspirations, frustrations and disappointments.

### **Sabreen the musicians**

My interview with Said was the quickest interview ever. I was brought in to an old building in al-Musrara in Jerusalem, went up the stairs to a second floor that was full of sun. It was full of music, children teenagers and older musicians all training, jamming. I was seated for a while at the very end corner of the building at a desk that had too many cigarette burn marks. I saw some files of projects, some archives, plenty of musical blood and tape and videos all over. I was moved into Said room, a corner whose partition was locker, most probably from the YMCA, that gave Said his breathing space. The piano suffered the same burn makers, and then I understood the reason, season made sure he left his trace everywhere. It is good he quit smoking!

### **Sabreen the Band**

The interview was very short and was impressed with said knowledge of accounts! We set the terms, working hours, pay. Shook hands and I led myself out as Said turned and went back to his music. Sabreen started in 1980 when musicians such as Said, Odeh Issa, Suheil, Jack, juma'ah and later on Kamilia decided to make music their life. They started like many other musicians playing in Bands, performing at weddings and special occasions, and even taught music as a way to earn their keeps. Others were accountants, administrators with a passion for music and music making that at certain times was in conflicts with the dreams. To be a full time musician was a new concept in Jerusalem and elsewhere, a musician who lives his or her music, for his and her music.

Sabreen hit the road with original songs and original music and started touring performing locally and international for several years, investing all money earned into producing albums of their own, Dukhan al Barakin, Maout il nabi, Jay il Hamam, Ala Fein Mazouj, each of them representing Sabreen understating of that period the Palestinians endured. Working with known poets and writers namely Mahmud Darwish, Hussein Barghouthy, Sayyed Higab, Talla Heidar and others sabreen captured the human story of Palestine and put them in song. It talked about man and women, love and beloved, jail and capturing, dreams and aspirations, frustrations and disappointments.

### **Episodes of Sabreen**

Like any other band, the touring was a key element of sabreen work starting 1982 into 1990; sabreen toured the United States, Japan, Tunisia, England and elsewhere. Members of sabreen were Sabreen promoters, musicians, composers, distribute, tour managers, and load and unload workers. Together they formed a center to teach music by creating a young band called bidyayt. Actually Wissam murad was the young lead singer then.

A grant from UNICEF to produce a tape of music appreciation Ismauni Btirafuni, helped by sabreen first recording mix, a pivotal point in Sabreen history and moving form depending on recording and producing tapes and cd's elsewhere, it is now done in Jerusalem.

Sabreen established its studio in another location in Jerusalem, the basement of a building and with a grant from ford foundation and dramatiska institutet, Sabreen supported the training and graduation of the first sound engineer who later on trained

16 young technicians who now assume positions in Ramallah cultural Palace, National Theatre, Kasbah, Wattan, radio Bethlehem etc.

Sabreen similar to other groups, organizations and community suffered the lack of infrastructure and support for music. The decision to invest in such a built up and combine its effort to the physical and human resource development in music, helped Sabreen evolve into Sabreen Association for artistic developed a not for profit organization that maintained the same core values of Sabreen. That of Music and Change.

#### Sabreen the organization

Sabreen the association, a not for profit organization that started operations in 1995 was paralleled with a shift in paradigm regarding music and music education with the deployment of the Palestinian authority, greater interests in Jerusalem based origination dealing with culture, an evolving and developing national cultural and educational policy. The Musical dialogue was lifted to another level, involving sabreen not only as a musical group, nor as a musical organization but as a contributor to music on a national level.

In 1999 an international conference on music and music education was held by in co-operation with the British council and the ford foundation involving the ministry of education culture, planning and all organizations working in the field of music and music education. The conference identified the needs and lacking of music and music education and set the grounds for cooperation with the Palestinian context and cooperation with international aid and cultural organizations.

Key to a life of music is the availability of a nurturing infrastructure starting from a culture of appreciation, development into an industry of music making. This infrastructure is not isolated from other arts form and interlinked with the development of media and promotional vehicles. Sabreen focuses its efforts as organization into the two streams that follow:

Music productions

Music in schools

Music networking

#### Recipe for good cooperation

Sabreen established a local and international advisory board who together with the Ministry of education culture UNRWA Education Department, The Latin Patriarchate Schools, we executed several small projects that laid grounds for an action base research on how to address the vast needs in music and music education. Competence building resource development, musical productions, promotion and networking, lobbying and policy change were key elements. As results a ten year strategy was developed under Music for everyone.

#### Peer to peer

The essence our relation was building on the accumulated specialization of Sabreen as well as that of Rikskonsertene within a context of international cooperation. Having said that, the relationship was not a proposition and an opportunity for funding, but rather creating the opportunity and developing relations to fund and realize it. Both ends set expectations and benefits of such a relationship and met great relevance at Palestinian and Norwegian levels. Music For Everyone is endorsed by the Ministry of Education in Palestine as well as the Ministry of Culture and is supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NORAD and NRO Office in Jerusalem) since 2002.

### Sabreen checklist for international cooperation

#### Sharing a vision a competency

- Music and sharing music is fundamental in both Sabreen and Rikskonsertene
- Musical competency and high quality performance
- Shared interest
- A strong network for planning and execution
- Relevance of policy and interest.
- Making the opportunity for partnership

#### Investing time in getting to know each other

- Understanding each other structures.
- Allowing of trial and error, and piloting
- Investing in planning and dialogues
- Utilizing existing structures to develop new ones.
- Building on each other programs and a two way traffic

#### Shared planning – opened dialogue

- Stakeholders participation, while recognizing competency of each
- Relevance to international policies
- Relevance to national policies
- Building competency

#### Proximity and distancing

- Started as Rikskonsertene being the grant holder
- Turned into a trilateral partnership
- Into a unilateral contract and a consultancy role

#### Exchange of know-how, learning process

- The stronger the partner the stronger the cooperation
- Both internal and external
- Integrated into other programs within the institution (being part of international concert their network)

#### Allowing differences and

- Appreciating cultural and contextual differences. Expanding the knowledge
- Music as the based on dialogue
- Deriving expectations from competence vs. needs
- Flexibility and modalities in execution

#### Monitoring but not choking

- Quality base line and open channels for dialogue
- Appreciating the cycles of music development
- Addressing the process as well as the outputs

## *Picasso in Palestine, excerpts from catalogue Khaled Hourani*

### Conclusion

Although the Palestinians have made great strides in the world of culture and music, much remains to be done. Progress can only happen through a comprehensive national strategy that includes coordination among all governmental and non-governmental organizations, appropriate and fair distribution of roles, and the cooperation and partnership of stakeholders – including schools, universities, cultural centers, and publishing and distribution companies. Educational, media, and production institutions must be set up, and there should be a mechanism in place to encourage and develop communication and interaction among these institutions in order to ensure a common vision and to overcome whatever challenges may arise. Despite the importance of talent and creativity, the question remains: Are these sufficient for creating a broad, successful artistic movement? It is well known that such a movement could not be created without a strong artistic circle that includes adequate infrastructure. Talent, educational facilities and resources that include teachers, books, and venues to experience and express this talent are only the beginning. The next step is to provide the infrastructure necessary for production; publishing houses and possibilities for recording and organizing performances. The role of the print, broadcast, and electronic media is no less important. Also, outreach and communication with other Arab and international cultures, through joint festivals, meetings, art exhibitions, and recordings, are needed as well, along with the existence of laws and an institution that protects the rights of writing, publishing, and distribution. The above are preconditions for a complete artistic circle, with art production forming the backbone for the renaissance and spread of art.....

Abstracts form Said Murad – artistic Vision Viewing Palestine 0211

Picasso in Palestine began in 2009 at the museum of Van Abbemuseum in Holland. Initially, it was part of another artistic project where we attended a tour of the museum with the director and the curators we were given the opportunity to see the art exhibitions at the museum and as well as to have a tour of works in storage that were not exhibit. During the tour, we listened attentively to detailed explanations about the exhibited art items, the policy of the museum in selecting and exhibiting the various items and other related issues. Mexico and Greece were mentioned, and the exchange of artistic collections or parts of them and some of the transportation methods that facilitated the exchange were also mentioned. For instance this portrait travelled to Sao Paolo and this to Greece in a military plane and this portrait to this place, and so on.

At that point, I delved into one particular thought which I was unable to articulate at the time: Why Palestine would not be one of these countries or touring locations for such unique historical and artistic works? Why do the Palestinians struggle to place their name on a map? To have a Palestinian flag? I became obsessed with finding not only a name and a presence on the geographical map for Palestine but also for Palestine to be included in a discourse where Palestine can be mentioned simply as one of the destinations that an artistic item has travelled to. At the time I didn't think about how this would happen and what kind of journey this would entail for the artwork to be transported to Palestine or for me as an artist. Gradually, the idea of this project developed from a thought into a desire and obsession, into an impossible dream. Finally, it shaped up into an artistic project through 2 years of extensive research preparation and management.

The idea of the military helicopter remained circulating in my head: a plane that can't be hit or destroyed due to the significance of the artistic item that it will be carrying. How wonderful it is to secure the safety of an artistic item being transmitted in a military helicopter? Internal thoughts and questions of such evolved in my head and the constant question was: How about Palestine? Is there an airport? Are there any borders under Palestinian control? What routes would an artistic item take to find its way into Palestine? What, where, when and how, became the questions of the project?

Hence, the idea of Picasso in Palestine emerged. Bringing one of Picasso's works to Palestine is a complicated and exciting story. It was clear where to start the project but how the course of events would unfold through various details and sub-stories and how this story will conclude is still unknown. It is a significant event to invite an international work of the renowned artist Picasso, one of the most famous art works in the history of contemporary art, to be exhibited in Palestine. The contemporary artistic creation of such a project introduces a story that diverges from expectations. The significance of this project is not only that this is the first exhibition of its kind ever to take place in Palestine or the magnitude of Picasso per se, but is as much about Palestinians' yearning for and appreciation of art. This project fundamentally exposes the Palestinian people's aspiration to live equally like other nations and to have unrestricted access to art.

Yet, in storytelling and living through the various stages of this artistic project; in the process of making it actually happen, the most interesting experience of all is how the political, social and economic factors interrelate in bringing this project to light. The project includes uncountable numbers of correspondence in letters and emails, artistic tours, negotiations and agreements between the Palestine International Academy of Art and Van Abbe Museum in Holland. As well as negotiations and agreements with cargo and insurance companies, funders, political authorities, and security bodies.

On another level the implications and effects of this artistic project exemplify a highly political message by bringing such a renowned and highly priced international art work into a country that is under occupation and completely unstable. This project also provokes questions around the 'museum space' that can host such an art work, and

reveals the fact that there is no equivalent official/national museum space in Palestine to the European standards of museums such as the Louvre and the British Museum. These establishments were introduced in the West as a parallel art practice to display, analyze and dissect intellectually art production in the museum space also serving as Western national and colonial establishments.

Evoking these issues and dilemmas is the objective of this project, in challenging the common assumptions about the museum concept, its relevance to the sovereign state, and its cultural and national indications by bringing Picasso to Palestine. Undoubtedly, these questions and intellectual issues will emerge and will be discussed on wider a stage. Throughout the last two years of working on this project, it is important to know that, in its various stages, it has stimulated and evoked interesting and ironic details that concern both the worlds of art and politics and brought them to a crossing point. However, it is not only the case that the world of politics can be considered abstract or even how art represents politics in an abstract manner, but also the fact that life in itself is abstract in general confronting reality in all its details. In other words, it was not easy to speculate or predict the routes, implications and effects of such art practice in the art world in selecting, curating and exhibiting the art work of this project. It has been an art project with open possibilities.

The most important aspect in the process of working on this challenge is where this project can lead? The possibilities that may open up, the unknown locations of outreach in the same country, the possible networking and bridging amongst cultural institutions and artists in various countries? Some may ask if it is the right timing to bring Picasso to Palestine while it is still under occupation and what the meaning of that act is. In response to such questions, I will refer to what we have stated earlier when the Palestine Art Academy was founded in 2007: It is normal to have an academy and a museum in Palestine and it is not normal to live under occupation. In order for the exception not to become the rule, we established a school of arts. Hereby bringing in Picasso is a normal practice, yet it is an exceptional art endeavour in such political context. Picasso in Palestine definitely aims to create new boundaries for art in Palestine as a rule resisting any exception or denial of its normality.

It is not exceptional that Picasso's works have toured several countries and will continue touring. Palestine should be another touring destination equal to many other nations in the world. We explored the Oslo agreements to learn more and understand the conditions that control cargo and insurance and what restrictions the Palestinian Authority has for such an artistic works to find its way into Palestine? Here politics invaded the artistic project once again without being invited to do so.

In the selection process of which art work of Picasso should be exhibited, we have chosen Picasso's work *Buste de Femme* (1943), a portrait of a female character which is not considered a direct political portrait such as the *Guernica*. The theme of this portrait is the woman, a selection made by the Art Academy students and friends. This art work is significant for its representation of the female character and her status in the production of international art as well as encouraging comparisons to how Palestinian art represented the female character historically. This portrait also reveals Picasso's relationship to non-Western art sources of inspiration; this is apparent in the Cubic African masks and its ethnic cultural representations in this portrait. Finally, I am personally fond of this particular art work of Picasso.

This art project created a space for the political reality to clash with the art discipline, revealing the hard living conditions from which Palestine is struggling. It also embodies historical concerns in the art world in general as well as ways where Palestinian art relates to the international and European art discipline. The various stages of this unique art project are documented in a film in cooperation with the Palestinian film director Rashid Masharawi and in a book with *A Prior* magazine which will be published soon.

In this regards, I would like to thank the team of Van Abbemuseum in Holland, the students, the employees and partners of the Palestine International Art Academy. Special thanks and gratitude to the heroes of this project: Samer Qawasmi and Fatima AbdulKarim, the project coordinator, and to Charles Esche, director of the Van Abbemuseum, and Remco De Blaaij, the project coordinator in Holland, and Galit Eilat, Bettine Verkuijlen, Louis Baltussen, Christiane Berndes, and Ilse Cornelis, and special thanks to my family and children.  
Khaled Hourani

## *Speech by Cecilie Willoch, head of the cultural section in the Norwegian ministry of foreign affairs*

Excellencies,

Dear distinguished guests,

First of all I would like to congratulate Transnational Arts Production and Sabreen for organizing such a unique event as the "Viewing Palestine 2011". This week's programme of Palestinian culture has demonstrated a great variety in literature, music and dance, and I believe you have opened our eyes and minds both to the quality of Palestinian culture and to the many stories that are to be told about Palestinian history and society. As I understand, this event has also provided an important arena for Palestinians to meet as participants have come from the Palestinian Territory, from Israel and from abroad. I hope that your stay in Norway has been as rewarding and inspirational as you had hoped.

Thank you for inviting me to speak here at this seminar on Palestine in International Cultural Collaboration. I will try to highlight some key elements in Norway's cultural collaboration with the Palestinian Territory and try to explain why it has been such a priority for us.

The Norwegian Government's main goal in the Palestinian Territory is to contribute to the building of a Palestinian state. We therefore support the institution building process that has taken place throughout the past years. Culture is seen as an important cornerstone in this nation-building project as it helps strengthen the Palestinian identity. National identity is in our opinion equally important to providing health services and to having tax authorities. This does not mean that Palestinians will speak with one voice, or that there is only one narrative for the Palestinian people. On the contrary, diversity is encouraged. But it is a key for any state in its nascent phase to share some common ground and culture can help provide that feeling of unity.

The cultural dimension is considered an integral part of both Norwegian foreign policy and development aid. In the Norwegian Government's "Strategy for Culture and Sports Cooperation with Countries in the South", we have applied a rights-based approach. In other words, culture is seen as a human right: people have a right to a cultural identity and to express that identity. This also goes for the Palestinian people, be it those who live in the Palestinian Territory, Israel and those living in Diaspora, ranging from countries in the Middle East to the United States and Chile.

Let me underline that our support to the Palestinian cultural sector is in line with Palestinian national plans. This pertains most of all to the Cultural Sector Strategy for 2011-2013. The stated vision is an Arabic national culture which maintains the Palestinian narrative and strengthens the social fabric, and the strategic objectives include increased reading among children, developing an infrastructure which enhances cultural production and developing a cultural fund. Moreover, in its 2<sup>nd</sup> annual plan of the 13<sup>th</sup> Palestinian government program ("Homestretch to Freedom"), the cultural mission is to safeguard and promote Palestinian culture, including positive values of tolerance, openness and progressiveness, and to protect cultural heritage.

Our approach to the field of culture in the Palestinian Territory is twofold.

On the one hand we assist Palestinian cultural institutions through long-term financial support. This is the main bulk of our support and the Palestinian Territory has been the largest recipient of Norwegian funding in the field of culture and sports during 2006-2009.

As an example, Norway has supported the establishment of the International Art Academy in Ramallah. The academy is engaged with Oslo National Academy of Arts (Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo, KhiO) building on their education model. This spring the first class from the Academy graduated. These young people have achieved a Bachelor's degree in arts, a degree that was not available in the Palestinian Territory before the establishment of this Academy.

Another example is the so-called Palestinian Cultural Fund, where, we have supported the Palestinian Ministry of Culture in developing a grant mechanism whereby the Ministry can manage a fund through which a variety of cultural activities can receive some financial assistance. Many of these activities take place in marginalised areas that otherwise have limited access to such financial support. This support will also benefit individual artists, and the support helps build an infrastructure through which both professionals and amateurs can express themselves to the audience.

"Viewing Palestine 2011" is mainly focusing on music and literature as cultural expressions. Norway supports both of these areas in the Palestinian Territory. Tamer is a Palestinian NGO that focuses principally on the rights to education, identity and freedom of expression, and their Children Literature program promotes reading and writing in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Tamer's main activities under the program include the National Reading Campaign, upgrading the physical infrastructure and capacities of librarians, and publishing books by local authors and/or translated foreign books. Tamer's is unique in their approach of focusing on the needs of the disabled. Their published books include Braille books and books in sign language in an audio-visual form.

Sabreen is our main partner in the field of music, through which we support a project named "Music for All". At the local level Sabreen works closely with the Ministry of Education in order to provide education for music teachers and to include music as part of the curriculum for 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. Over the past few days in Norway, audiences have had the opportunity to enjoy the creative force and enthusiasm of Sabreen. Through their collaboration with Concerts Norway (Rikskonsertene), I believe the two parties have greatly benefited from each other's experience and competencies.

The link between many of these projects and the Norwegian support to the education sector in the Palestinian Territory is evident. One of Norway's main sector programmes in the Palestinian Territory is within the education sector, where we provide the Ministry of Education and Higher Education with funds so that they can deliver education services to their children and young people, as education is a human right. Moreover, having a Palestinian curriculum enhances a Palestinian identity. We see this support to the building of educational institutions as being of strategic importance to the overall state-building agenda.

Let me also mention our support to the development of the cultural centre Yabous i East Jerusalem. This centre has a unique program of concerts, exhibitions, film and music in an area with otherwise few cultural activities. This centre has a global network.

We also work with UNESCO in the Palestinian Territory. Through UNESCO and in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Norway contributes to the creation of a museum in Bethlehem - Riwaya - based on Palestinian narratives. A Norwegian expert (Erling Dahl Jr.) has been actively involved and there are also plans for future collaboration with Norwegian institutions. The construction of the Riwaya museum is mentioned as one of the priorities in 13<sup>th</sup> Palestinian government's program ("Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State", August 2009).

This fall an agreement will be signed with UNESCO for financing a centre for restoration of Islamic manuscripts at Haram al Sharif. This will contribute to protecting the Muslim cultural heritage of Palestine.

Also, through UNESCO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has supported a project which purpose was to strengthen Palestinian capacity to preserve the Battir cultural landscape outside Bethlehem.

Norway also supports promotion of Norwegian culture in the Palestinian Territory. This may be through a dance performance for children or by presenting Norwegian literature that has

been translated to Arabic. In addition to providing the audiences with a flavour of Norwegian arts and culture, ties are established between Norwegian and Palestinian performers and artists, relationships which may inspire new cultural collaboration. There are also several twinning arrangements between Norwegian and Palestinian cities, whereby people get to know each other and establish long-term commitment through cultural exchange among other things.

Yesterday, NORAD's evaluation of our Strategy for Culture and Sports Cooperation with Countries in the South was launched. This evaluation takes stock of to what extent we have met our objectives – what impact our efforts have had. In the case of the Palestinian Territory, the evaluation verifies that Norway has made important contributions to the development of the Palestinian cultural sector, both by building and strengthening institutions working with visual arts, literature, music, cultural heritage and multi-culture. It was also concluded that the Palestinian Territory is the best and most significant example studied when it comes to building a cultural infrastructure.

The evaluation also stresses the challenges of operating in the Palestinian context which is fragmented and multi-faceted. One obvious example is the geographical divide between East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, and the West Bank and Gaza are run by two different authorities.

On the basis of a thorough assessment, the evaluation team has provided us with a set of recommendations which we will study and discuss further in order to improve our efforts in the cultural field even more.

Thank you.

## *“Specialized youth media” a tool for change*

Hania Bitar

### **Introduction:**

PYALARA is an independent Palestinian youth NGO established in 1999, officially registered at the Palestinian Ministry of Interior # QR-166-S. PYALARA targets Palestinian children and youth, both males and females between the ages 13-25 in the different Palestinian areas that include West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip. PYALARA is an independent Palestinian youth organization that seeks to create young Palestinian leaders who are aware of their rights and duties as equal citizens, capable of incurring social and political change, and effectively participate in building a democratic society through specialized media, lobbying and advocacy. For the past 12 years, PYALARA has been working on rebuilding the resilience of young Palestinians through activating their role in the society, improving their psychosocial well being, and granting them independent media forums through which they can express themselves.

### **Where do we work?**

PYALARA works on the national level that include: the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip with concentration on marginalized villages, refugee camps and towns.

Our programs and Interventions:

PYALARA's work is grouped under three main complementary and mutually reinforcing programs: the wellbeing, the Palestinian youth media program and research program.

### **Wellbeing**

The core elements of the wellbeing program are peer-to-peer capacity building and counseling, leadership building, and advocacy through local initiatives and media (the media program). The wellbeing program approach has yielded positive results in terms of effectively engaging youth in community development and fostering personal and professional growth among youth. The combination of the peer-to-peer approach with media activities has become an integral part of PYALARA and its activities, and synonymous to our identity as an organization.

Using this approach, PYALARA has managed to engage and mobilize youth in several local and national advocacy campaigns by raising their awareness of and building their capacity - through training and mentoring- to act on issues that they identify as priorities on the one hand, and on issues that PYALARA as a youth organization advocates for on the other. Among the national advocacy initiatives implemented within the framework of the wellbeing framework are 1) engaging youth and other stakeholders across the West Bank and Gaza Strip in reviewing the draft youth policy prepared by the Ministry of Youth and Sport and formulating a position paper in this regard; 2) implementing an advocacy campaign for the establishment of a student fund, which resulted in several initiatives for this purpose; and 3) implementing an advocacy campaign for the establishment of a school and student insurance program as a form of protection for students, which resulted in bringing public attention to the subject and an announcement by the Minister of Health that such program will soon be implemented.

In order to increase the impact of the wellbeing program, PYALARA has been making efforts to strengthen the alignment between the wellbeing program and its media program, which has been geared towards providing an independent space for youth to express their issues and concerns. This alignment serves to strengthen the effectiveness of both programs by making the media program serve the objectives of the wellbeing program through enhancing youth's capacity to utilize media as a tool for affecting change, while at the same time providing youth with opportunities to tap media to exercise their talents in expressive writing and various forms of art. The media program has been thus far focused on print and audio-visual media and media training.

### **Media**

A major corner stone of PYALARA's modus-vivandi is the usage of media, whether print or visual, to allow young people with whom we work with, on issues related to their well-being in the different Palestinian areas as a means to express their problems, needs and concerns. In its modest but rich experience, PYALARA succeeded in reaching young people in very underprivileged areas, raise their awareness about their rights, empower them with the skills needed to make their voices heard and mobilize them to make use of the specialized youth media outlets to approach decision-makers, spread awareness and lobby for their causes.

### **Print Media:**

The paper serves as a platform from upon which young Palestinians would express their nationalism and love for their country. Young people were encouraged to write, express themselves, address officials in the world; and their voices found the platform. We taught young people that media could serve as a constructive tool in showing their love for their country, in expressing their refusal to injustice and occupation: "you don't have to die to prove that you love Palestine... you don't have to hurt others to make them feel your pain..." Under such slogans and beliefs, hundreds of young Palestinians used their pens in making their voices heard through The Youth Times

### **Visual Media/ Alli Soatak TV program**

The TV program tends to allocate special attention and place for the voices of Palestinian youth, encouraging them to SPEAK UP on issues that concern them. PYALARA decided to initiate such a program after realizing that the harsh political circumstances take up the largest portion of attention from local and international media, leaving young Palestinians marginalized and distant from the main picture except when addressing the independence movement of Palestinians where young people constitute major activism on the streets.

The program seeks to achieve the following goals: giving Palestinian youth and children media space for the development of an independent voice, creating awareness among Palestinian children and youth about their rights, and responsibilities, creating attention among the larger Palestinian community for the voice and rights of Palestinian youth and children, supporting the development of youth program on the national Palestinian TV channels, increasing the participation of young Palestinians and youth-service organizations in the public discourse over issues of national concern, and creating youth role-models for young people, especially those coming from peripheral and marginalized areas, to further entrench the concept that youth can be effective agents for social and political change.

Making it a priority to activate youth in this program, youth participate in every stage of implementation of this program. This has been done through the training of a cadre of youth volunteers on television production and engaging students and young leaders in the various stages of production. On average, some 45 episodes of Alli Sotak are produced and broadcast live on Palestine Television annually. The topics are often linked to the issues emerging from the wellbeing program and, in several instances, focus on emerging issues on the Palestinian scene to encourage and promote youth to participate in public discourse and make it a cultural norm for youth to have a voice in the media on these issues.

In addition to Alli Soatak TV program, PYALARA has managed to produce a number of other programs that include: Talat Maqdisiyeh, Iftah Li Qalbaq and Katakeet.

### **Situation of Young Palestinians:**

If anything can be said about young Palestinians is that they are living under severe political, social and economical situations. They are living within a vicious circle that is characterized with:

- **Lack of hope:** The majority of young people are unfortunately passive, hopeless, and inactive with regards to the socio-political life. The high risk of marginalizing these young people even further goes hand in hand with the activation of violent roles for them, and endangers future generations of Palestinians. Instead, we have to use methods that make it possible for young people to make a difference in their lives and the lives of their peers. By listening, and giving some advice, marginalized young people may come to feel that they are worthy and that someone is there for them. Consequently, we believe that by focusing our energies and attention on our youth generation to create a sense of inner peace, build their self confidence, open-up their horizons, cultivate a culture of tolerance and more acceptance and understanding to differences, showing them that there are other options and alternatives, even in fact provide our youth generation with a tangible sense of hope.
- **Isolation:** Young Palestinians are not represented in the Palestinian official bodies and even in the different CBOs and NGOs and even if they are represented in certain bodies, their voice is not heard especially when the issue is related to decisions-making. They are dominated and silenced by adults amidst a society described as a patriarchal one
- **Immigration:** Due to the deteriorating political, social and economical situation and due to high rates of poverty and unemployment, young Palestinians who failed to live their childhood and youthhood started searching for opportunities worldwide. Young Palestinians and their families face another problem that is DISPLACEMENT. A report published recently (August 11th) by the Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) and based on field visits to 13 communities in Area C, found that Palestinian families live in a state of pervasive insecurity and daily life has deteriorated to such an extent that some residents are forced to leave in order to meet their basic needs, feed their families or educate their children. This pattern of displacement, along with ongoing Israeli settlement activity, undermines the ability of Palestinian communities to maintain their presence in Area C and raises concerns about demographic shifts and changes to the ethnic make-up of Area C. This project targets young people and children in at least 3 communities in area C.
- **Checkpoints, extremism and the Separation Wall.** The West Bank is surrounded by around 150 settlements and the different cities, villages and towns are isolated by around 600 checkpoints thus the movement of people is severely hindered. Although Israel withdrew from Gaza Strip in 2005, the Strip is still under an Israeli sea, ground and air siege. As for Jerusalem, it has been surrounded by the Dividing Wall and Jerusalemites are under constant threat of losing their homes and even their residence rights. The separation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank has severely affected the Palestinian economy and weakened the social fabric
- **Poverty and Unemployment:** PCBS's statistics indicate that at the end of 2007 over 57% of the oPt's population were living in poverty and as of September 2008 the overall unemployment in the oPt reached 32.7 percent. A study published in May 2010 by ACRI (The Association for Civil Rights in Israel) indicates that 66.8% of Palestinian families in Jerusalem are impoverished, including 74% of children; over 94,000 "live in a perpetual state of poverty.
- **Factional division and internal conflict.** The seeds of the Palestinian internal division started with the ultimate victory of Hamas during 2006 election. Such a victory was met with discontent and unease from majority of Palestinians as well as internationals. This was followed by the 2007 internal fighting between Fatah and Hamas that left scores dead and hundreds wounded. For the first time, Palestinians started perceiving themselves as enemies.

#### Methodology:

PYALARA has managed over the past years to develop its own intervention methodology that is based on peer-to-peer approach. What is special about such approach is that key-messages are delivered via empowered young men and women who are very close in age to the targeted beneficiaries and who are selected, trained and empowered to deliver from the same targeted under-privileged areas (thus creating localized young leadership and maintaining sustainability of interventions).

In general, our methodology is based on the following elements:

First: Debriefing: Our trained youth workers work with those younger than themselves to help them vent out their anger, fear, frustration and thoughts. The whole Palestinian nation went through lots of pains, loss and scars. Adolescents need to voice out their feelings. They need to spell-out what is venting inside their hearts and souls and they need to feel that there are people who CARE about them, who will listen to them, who share similar fears and went through similar circumstances. They need to feel that they are not left out and they need to see in front of their eyes and to interact with live examples of young people who despite the fact that they have been going through similar or even harsher circumstances are still resilient enough and capable of standing up, resurrecting their spirits, walking with determination and realistic hope towards a better tomorrow.

Second: Engagement: To improve child participation processes, changes need to be made on at least two levels. First, children need to be trained in life skills that give them the tools necessary to clearly identify their needs, articulate their ideas, and work towards resolving their problems. Second, at the community level capacities and mechanisms should be strengthened or built among parents, leaders, and civil society actors in order to allow them to define and set parameters and processes through which both they and children can participate in development and decision making processes. This second area of focus recognizes the impact that adult attitudes have on children's ability to participate and on the development of effective child participation mechanisms. Adults (in addition to children) need to be trained in participation principles and engaged in developing sustainable community level participation structures. In order to ensure their engagement in this area of work, the programme has been designed based on feedback received by both implementing organizations from local communities. Relevant CBOs will also be brought into the project early to ensure their support and involvement in developing child participation capacities in Palestine.

Third: Empowerment: This methodology focuses on empowering young Palestinians who are selected to serve as youth workers, empowering CBOs and empowering Palestinian children, adolescents and community members. Empowered and enabled young people, specially young women are able to play a role in making a positive change in their own small communities and thus enriching young people's self-value and opening up their appetite and vision to their abilities and power to induce change. Children who are empowered with new skills and knowledge, would have increased voice in decisions which affect their lives, and who would benefit from better service delivery. Empowered communities and local and national non-state and state actors would improve their service delivery.

Fourth: Topic/issue selection: Our direct beneficiaries are the ones who prioritize their problems, needs and concerns. Youth workers and PYALARA team work hand in hand with the direct beneficiaries to prepare action plans, activities, etc. At the end the direct beneficiaries are the ones who will be in charge of implementing the projects they selected. Usually one project is implemented in each targeted community. As a part of this work PALARA organizes face to face meetings between the youth participants and local and national decision makers. In this way, both adults and children will be able to actively work together to address issues of joint concern and will be able to tangibly see how child participation can be beneficial in communities and to the nation.

**Fifth: Orientation/ training.** Usually, our work involves providing our direct beneficiaries with the necessary training that include: communication skills, life skills, Children and Human rights, problem solving techniques, lobby and advocacy and media. In doing so, we tend to empower and enable direct beneficiaries to play a positive and constructive role in their communities. At the same we tend to empower CBOs to improve their administrative and financial abilities together to improve their interventions. Parents and community members are also part and parcel of our projects. They are involved in a number of awareness raising sessions that tend to enhance their capabilities especially with regard to child participation and engagement.

Sixth: Task division: This activity aims at dividing youth workers and direct beneficiaries into groups and committees each of which will be responsible for carrying out certain tasks.

### Seventh: Production:

As indicated earlier trained youth workers work hand in hand with direct beneficiaries to identify their problems in their communities, diagnose the causes of these problems, develop intervention strategies, form coalitions, and work to effect social and political change. Upon defining issues, they start working on them. We help the children develop the connections and find the support (including financial support) needed to implement their intervention. The youth projects may cover any number of topics, ranging from awareness raising activities on subjects such as early marriage, children's rights, domestic violence, etc. to development programmes focused on improving sanitary/health conditions in schools, rehabilitating schools or a community centre, planting a public garden, developing a public park, etc

The philosophy underlying the public/community achievement model upon which this project is based views youth as having the insight, capacity and talent needed to solve their problems and contribute to the development of their communities and country. Our approach focuses on training youth in the practical skills needed to solve society's problems. It is our opinion that decision cannot only be made from the top down. Young people themselves need to be engaged in decision making and effecting change.

**Eighth: Broadcasting/ publishing.** Usually our print and visual media teams take part in the different activities that take place as part of our projects and interventions. They take the responsibility of enhancing direct beneficiaries media wise and work with them in producing the different media outlets that usually include TV episodes of Alli Soatak, issues of the Youth Times, short documentaries. Besides our cadres assist direct beneficiaries to develop their social media that include: face books, web pages, etc.

Impact of PYALARA's methodology:

- Empowered and responsible young Palestinians.
- Institutionalization of youth rights in the cultural scene.
- Debating and dialoguing with decision-makers.
- Innovative and credible promotional techniques through social media.
- Enable creativity and innovation by creating local heroes and leaders. Our methodology capitalizes on the concept of role model influence to generate attitude transformation amongst Palestinian youth. Our methodology aims at influencing the attitudes of groups of Palestinian youth with regards to how they perceive themselves in society, their role, and their value system. Thus when those role-models start to believe and to adopt values to gender equality and rights, and together start revising laws, regulations and advocate for their rights, their influence and impact on their local communities and their peers become definitely stronger.
- Voice and role for the underprivileged and minorities by inducing socio-political values.
- Cultural diversity and outreach through rights-based development.



**TrAP** | Office for  
Transnational  
Arts Production

Kongens gate 2, N-0153 Oslo, Norway  
Tel: +47 22 49 51 00, [post@trap.no](mailto:post@trap.no), [www.trap.no](http://www.trap.no)