

CEPAL Canadian-Palestinian
Educational Exchange

Taking Stock 2008

CEPAL's Annual Report

CEPAL is a volunteer humanitarian organization, founded in 1996 by Canadian individuals who share a deep commitment to the respect of human dignity and the rights of all people. Our objective is to assist the Palestinian refugees in the pursuit of their basic human rights by increasing their access to education, and by raising public awareness in Canada about their struggle.

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Introduction

Since its founding in 1996, CEPAL has become a strong, vibrant, well-known and respected organization, both in Canada and internationally. We continue to focus and expand upon our goals in the areas of education, human rights, awareness-raising and capacity building, with the overriding goal of improving the lives and future prospects of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Over the years, CEPAL's Summer Program has expanded from English language training, to incorporate French language and computer literacy, in addition to arts courses, such as photography and journalism. These additions were a direct response to the expressed needs of our local partners. CEPAL's Summer Program has to date sent over 60 volunteers to work in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

Unfortunately, due to continued instability in Lebanon and lack of funding, the 2008 program was condensed into a 2-person trip to Lebanon to conduct a valuable needs assessment report, which will be distributed in the coming months.

CEPAL's Vice-President and Overseas Program Director, Michelle Turner, and I travelled to Lebanon and met with our NGO Partners to discuss ways in which we can improve the summer program. Michelle conducted great interviews and wrote up a report that we hope can become a launching pad for all future CEPAL boards in the years to come. I also held a summer journalism workshop in Bourj el-Barajneh refugee camp to youths aged 12-14 in which they learnt to write articles and take photographs. Their own newsletter can be found within CEPAL's Fall newsletter on our website.

The absence of the Summer Program has been felt by camp residents, with feedback from our partners affirming the importance of CEPAL's presence in the refugee camps.

Much of our time was dedicated to strengthening and expanding CEPAL's awareness raising activities and base in Canada. These are just a few examples of our endeavours this year, and of the continued dedication CEPAL volunteers have demonstrated in helping to support and solidify CEPAL's presence in Canada and internationally.

CEPAL continues to be supported by a number of key individuals. We are in regular communication with our Board of Advisors and greatly appreciate their support.

Our local Canadian volunteer support has continued to grow this year, and is now located in various cities across the country. With the support of our dedicated volunteers and generous donors, we will continue to focus and expand upon our goals in the areas of education, human rights, and raising awareness about the plight of Palestinian refugees. Most importantly, in response to continued requests from our partners and friends in the Palestinian refugee camps, where CEPAL works, and in light of the latest atrocities in Gaza and the continued plight of Palestinian refugees in the region, we are renewing our commitment to actively support and advocate for the Palestinian Right of Return.

Mayssam Zaaroura-Jackson
CEPAL President

2008 Board of Directors

CEPAL is run by an Executive Board of Directors whose objectives are to lead and manage the activities of the organization. Directors are voted in by CEPAL's members every year at the Annual General Meeting. They typically come from a variety of backgrounds, either as past overseas teachers, volunteers, or supporters of CEPAL.

President

Shannon Dow (January 1st, 2008 – July 31st, 2008)

Shannon holds a master's degree in Socio-cultural Anthropology, and she has been involved with CEPAL since 2001 when she was a Summer Program volunteer working in Bourj el-Barajneh and Shatila refugee camps. Shannon also served as CEPAL's 2005-06 Overseas Program Director. 2007 was her second term serving as President.

President

Mayssam Z. Jackson (August 1st, 2008 – December 31st, 2008)

Mayssam is a British citizen of Palestinian-Lebanese origin. She recently moved to Ottawa and is in the process of obtaining her MA in International Development and Globalization. She has a BA in Communications and Languages from the University of Sunderland in the UK and worked as a journalist/editor at The Daily Star Newspaper in Lebanon for 5 years (2002-2007). Throughout her travels and experiences, she has yet to meet a people more in need of help and attention than Palestinian refugees in the Middle East and specifically Lebanon. That is why she hopes to be able to work from Canada to help her friends and family who remain in the camps.

Vice-President and Overseas Program Director

Michelle Turner

Michelle has held the position of Overseas Program Coordinator (2006) and Wavel Coordinator (2004). She has much experience in coordinating education programs, having worked as the Experiential Education Coordinator at York University from September 2006 until August 2007. She has a strong personal commitment to education, dialogue, and program continuity, in addition to the people with whom CEPAL works in Lebanon.

Overseas Security Director and Secretary

Giulia El-Dardiry

Giulia El-Dardiry has worked with CEPAL as a summer program volunteer (2000) in the Beirut refugee camps of Bourj el-Barajneh and Shatila, as well as a Lebanon Field Coordinator (2001 and 2002), and as the Overseas Program Director (2002 and 2006). She has extensive experience working with local organizations and international NGOs in the Middle East, mainly in Palestine and Lebanon, and especially in the Palestinian refugee camps.

Treasurer

Sarom Bahk

Sarom has a B.A. from Simon Fraser University and joint LL.B./B.C.L. degrees from McGill University. She has worked or volunteered for many non-profit

organizations, including the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association and the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations (CRARR). She is a member of the Quebec Bar and practices law in Montreal.

Events Director
Jonathan Hera

Jonathan is an Administrative Coordinator, Copy Writer and Project Manager at TNS Canadian Facts where he liaises with media outlets, conference plans, writes and edits marketing materials and manages the schedules of seven Vice Presidents. Jonathan has lived, worked and studied in numerous international settings, most notably with Frontier College's Labourer-Teacher Program in Leamington Ontario with Mexican migrant workers (2002-2004) and Barka Organization's Rehabilitation Program in Chudopczyce Poland with marginalized Polish citizens (2001). In 2001 he planned and developed youth programming initiatives for Canada World Youth, Myszyniec Community Centre and Barka Organization while in Poland.

IT Director
Niketh Pareek

Niketh holds a graduate diploma in Journalism and a bachelor's degree in Finance. Having grown up in the Middle East, and through his volunteer work at the Montreal City Mission, Niketh has always taken a keen interest in the plight of refugees. Last year, he served as the Treasurer, Fundraising and Information Technology Director of CEPAL.

Events

Since the 2008 Summer Program could not go ahead in full force, we decided to focus much of our efforts last year on awareness raising activities in Canada, as well as overseas.

Human Rights and the Palestinian Right of Return May 29th, 2008

Held on May 29, at the University of Ottawa in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of *Al-Nakba* (The Catastrophe), this public lecture was part of CEPAL's educational lecture series, featuring two speakers who offered an examination of the Palestinian Right of Return.

The speakers, Terry Rempel, PhD Candidate/Senior Researcher, BADIL Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights and Advisory Board member and professor of Sociology at the University of Carleton Nahla Abdo.

Terry Rempel is a Research Fellow and PhD Candidate at the University of Exeter, School of Humanities and Social Sciences. He is a founding member of BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights (Bethlehem, Palestine), where he was the Coordinator of Research and Information from 1998 until 2005. His current research areas include a history of the search for durable solutions for Palestinian refugees and refugee political participation.

Nahla Abdo (Ph.D.) is an Arab feminist activist and has extensive publications on women, racism, nationalism and the State in the Middle East with special focus on Palestinian women. Among her recent publications are *Women and Poverty in the OPT: Some Conceptual and Methodological Notes*, 2007; *Violence in the Name of Honour: Theoretical and Political Challenges*, 2004 (with Shahrzad Mojab); and *Women and the Politics of Military Confrontation: Palestinian and Israeli Gendered Narratives of Dislocation*, 2002 (with Ronit Lentin). She is currently completing a manuscript on women and citizenship in Israel.

The lecture was not as widely attended as we'd hoped since the timing coincided with student exams; however, the discussion between the audience and the speakers was stimulating.

60 Years of Exile: The Palestinian Right of Return June 28th, 2008

CEPAL's first ever Right of Return conference commemorated the 60th anniversary of *Al-Nakba* and was meant to encourage discussion among Canadians about the Palestinian Right of Return.

The Right of Return was discussed in reference to several themes, including: 1) Historical insights, 2) International law, 3) Human rights, 4) Culture and identity, and 5) Political considerations.

The conference was also meant to be one of solidarity with the Palestinian people, as well as an opportunity to discuss achieving a just solution to the predicament for Palestinian refugees who remain stateless. This conference was instrumental in highlighting CEPAL's important work, as the only Canadian organization to work directly with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It was critical in fulfilling CEPAL's mandate to raise awareness about the dire and

worsening situation Palestinian refugees face, the options for a just solution to their predicament, and how Canadians can help.

The panel of speakers at the conference was as follows:

Michael Lynk, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Western Ontario, who discussed the Right of Return with respect to international law.

Amnesty International Speaker Jim Joyce, who presented the human rights' violations and Canadian policy regarding the Right of Return.

Randa Farah, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario who gave a very moving presentation "Forgotten by History, Burdened by Memory" about refugee camps and the Right of Return across generations.

Rex Brynen, Professor, Department of Political Science, McGill University gave a controversial presentation about the Right of Return in the current political context, which resulted in a lively discussion.

Finally, the conference concluded with a panel discussion on the historical foundations of Al-Nakba and ways to move forward.

Overall, the conference was a success, and participant feedback encouraged us to hold a conference again next year. This remains to be decided by the 2009 board. About 55 participants attended, and the speakers were very well received despite the unfortunate cancellation of our key note speaker Dr. Norman Finkelstein, who could not attend. Following the discussion, a screening of Occupation 101 was shown.

The conference was co-sponsored by Al-Awda (Toronto chapter), NCCAR, SPHR, APAC, Rabble.ca, and Libby Davies, MP for Vancouver East NDP.

60 Years of Exile, 60 Years of Hope – 12th Annual Commemoration of the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People November 28th, 2008

The United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was instituted in 1977 by the UN General Assembly. The day is meant to be one of solidarity with the Palestinian people, as well as an opportunity to reinvigorate efforts aimed at achieving a just peace.

The commemoration of the UN International Day of Solidarity is instrumental in highlighting CEPAL's important work, as the only Canadian organization to work directly with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It is critical in raising awareness about the dire and worsening situation Palestinian refugees face, and how Canadians can become involved in helping CEPAL fulfill its mandate.

Last year, CEPAL commemoration focused on bringing our volunteers' and partners' stories from the camps to the awareness of people in Canada, as well as presenting our recent needs' assessment and program from August 2008. We also launched our plans for the 2009 Summer Program. Finally, a series of short movies about and from the camps was shown. A reception for sustaining members and new members was held following the event in which several people expressed interest in supporting CEPAL's work.

Upcoming Events

Project Hope & CEPAL Gala Montreal, Canada April 2009

In partnership with Project Hope, a volunteer-driven non-profit organization that provides Palestinian children and youth with educational and recreational activities in Nablus, Palestine, CEPAL will be hosting a Gala Fundraiser in Montreal in April 2009. The purpose of the gala is to raise funds for three projects run by *Project Hope* and *CEPAL*. A portion will be raised for Project Hope's *Bridge to the World* program, which uses one of the biggest and best volunteer programs in Palestine to bring in foreign volunteers past the checkpoints to Nablus and nearby villages to work with local Palestinian volunteers and staff to teach English, French, Art, Photography, and Computers and Internet technology. A portion of the proceeds will also go towards CEPAL's *2009 Lebanon Summer Program*, which brings Canadian volunteers to live and teach English and French in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

Summer Program

CEPAL's 2008 Summer Program was both a disappointment and a success. Unfortunately this year, the CEPAL Board of Directors was forced to make the difficult decision to scale back its Summer Program significantly due to financial constraints. The result was that, unlike previous summers, CEPAL was not able to send up to 9 volunteers to Bourj El-Barajneh, Sabra/Shatila and Wavel Palestinian refugee camps to assist with local educational initiatives for 8 weeks. CEPAL, however, took this setback as an opportunity for organisational growth and development and sent the Overseas Program Director to Lebanon to conduct a Needs Assessment with our partners. Furthermore, CEPAL's President was able to provide a well-received media workshop to Palestinian youth in Bourj El-Barajneh camp.

Media Workshop

A group of students between the ages of 12 and 14 living in Bourj El-Barajneh camp worked to create a newsletter that reflected issues relevant to their lives. A group of 10 boys and girls joined in this 4-day workshop during which they were taught the basics of journalism and photojournalism. In groups of two, the youth wrote articles on several topics, including lack of electricity, youth unemployment and inadequate medical care in the camps. They also took pictures to give weight to their stories. It was difficult during the first day or so to encourage participation but the last two days were very satisfying as all the youth became excited about the work and felt, in their own words, a real sense of achievement. Throughout the workshop, there were repeated requests for more similar efforts to improve English and other skills in future years. The newsletter that they wrote has been compiled into a document for distribution to the community in Lebanon, donors of the organisation we worked within in Lebanon, pen pals in Australia and CEPAL members here in Canada. It is available on our website: www.cepal.ca

Needs Assessment

CEPAL has been sending volunteers to work in educational initiatives in the refugee camps in Lebanon since 1996 after several Canadians working in Lebanon recognized the dire situation

facing the Palestinians in Lebanon and approached several local non-governmental organizations in order to offer assistance. The organizations expressed a particular need for educational programming for children throughout the summer months since a high percentage of their students were not able to complete secondary school. A major impediment to students, it was noted, came from the fact that children in the camps must follow the Lebanese curriculum and are therefore required to pass a Grade 9 exam that places a heavy emphasis on English language proficiency. In direct response to their request and with assistance from UNIPAL, CEPAL was founded and began offering English language instruction to children and youth in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. CEPAL also offers classes to members of the local NGO community to strengthen their capacity to communicate with foreign donors and provide instruction to children and youth after CEPAL departs during the scholastic year. CEPAL volunteers live and work in three Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon for eight weeks (July and August) every summer – Bourj el-Barajneh, Shatila and Wavel. Our most recent full summer program in 2006 boasted 9 volunteers.

From end-of-summer evaluations, CEPAL has continuously attempted to adapt its programs in response to feedback from local organisations and community members as part of its commitment to responding to local community needs. However, since its foundation, CEPAL had not yet taken the opportunity to examine its programs systematically. In light of the heavy financial burden placed on the organisation as a result of the inflated costs of evacuation during 2006 July war in Lebanon and its consequential inability to send volunteers to the camp in Lebanon in 2007, CEPAL's Board of Directors felt that it should take this setback as an opportunity to re-examine CEPAL's work in the camp to ensure the program is responsive, well-integrated and properly developed in the future; it was felt that a Needs Assessment was warranted.

The Needs Assessment occurred over a 4-week period in Lebanon during July and August 2008 and involved interviews with the heads of partner organisations, local staff of organisations, community members and former CEPAL students regarding CEPAL's work, community needs and program development. Overwhelmingly, the response from the interviews indicated that there continues to be a significant need for the kinds of educational initiatives that CEPAL provides in the camp, namely English language and arts instruction. There was also a strong desire by many organisations that CEPAL extend its work into the fall months to assist with remedial after-school and weekend programming. Our partners noted that most students who are unable to continue on to high school fail their exams as a result of weak English scores. Volunteers capable of breathing life into the English language for students by providing them the opportunity to improve their communication abilities were seen as integral to helping students succeed beyond primary school. Furthermore, a strong desire for volunteers skilled in the arts was noted. Resource constraints facing UNWRA schools have meant cuts to arts programming at the primary and secondary school level. The lack of opportunity for students to harness their own creativity and generate self-confidence and motivation through the arts was felt to be a significant deficit for the community. Many of our partners also felt that educational initiatives provided by foreigners were essential to generating a sense of hopefulness within the community and granting children and youth opportunities to mature into well-rounded community members with a sense of connectedness to the world outside the refugee camp.

The Needs Assessment report is complete and is currently awaiting translation into Arabic for our partners in Lebanon. It will also be available on our website in the coming weeks for you to review. Feedback offered by our partners suggests that CEPAL will continue to work towards sending a Summer Program to help with English conversational skills. Rather than hiring volunteers that are generally capable of teaching language skills through the arts, as CEPAL has done in the past, greater emphasis will be placed on hiring volunteers with more specialised skills in the arts such as music, photography, drama and painting. These teachers

will be hired bearing in mind the specific skills that our partners have requested for that particular year. Better communication between the Board of Directors during the year and our partners in Lebanon will ensure that we are better meeting the needs of our partners during the recruitment and hiring process. Furthermore, CEPAL will work towards extending our programs into the fall months. Several of the Summer Program volunteers will be recruited to remain in Lebanon after the conclusion of the Summer Program to assist organisations with remedial classes for students. It is therefore imperative that CEPAL achieve the funding necessary to be able to better meet the needs of our partner organisations and create sustainable programs for the Palestinian community we support.

Outlook for 2009

Needs Assessment

The Needs Assessment will be used as one of the primary resources for program planning in 2009. As it was clear from the Assessment that CEPAL programs are needed in the camps, the 2009 Board of Directors will work diligently towards sending a Summer Program to Lebanon. The hope is that CEPAL can secure more funding to enable this to happen and that the political situation in Lebanon remains such that volunteers can be sent accordingly.

Security situation in Lebanon and CEPAL's preparations

The security situation in Lebanon and in the Palestinian refugee camps has been volatile over the past few years, and has limited CEPAL's programming. Given a more stable internal situation in the country and in the camps, CEPAL hopes to resume its full regular program in Bourj el-Barajneh, Shatila and Wavel in the summer of 2009. As part of its overseas program development, and in light of heightened security concerns, this past year CEPAL focused on the creation of a complete security manual for work in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. This manual, based on ICRC security procedures, will provide the basis of all CEPAL security protocols and evacuation procedures, and all coordinators and volunteers will be trained accordingly.

CEPAL's Main Areas of Operation

CEPAL works in three camps in Lebanon: Bourj el-Barajneh, Shatila and Wavel. All 12 official refugee camps in Lebanon suffer from serious problems. The camps do not have proper infrastructure, they are overcrowded, and many Palestinian refugees living in the camps suffer unemployment and extreme poverty. Moreover, employment and ownership restrictions for Palestinians living in Lebanon mean that most refugees cannot afford to live outside of the camps. UNRWA-registered refugee camps in Lebanon remain home to over half of the Palestinian refugee population there. Furthermore, over forty thousand refugees live in camps not recognized by UNRWA, while some 35 000 Palestinians remain housed in makeshift shelters, a result of their displacement during the Lebanon civil war.

Bourj el-Barajneh

Bourj el-Barajneh was one of the first camps established in Lebanon and is located in the southern suburbs of Beirut. As a highly politicised camp in a central location, it suffered extensive property damage and displacement of nearly a quarter of its population during the civil war. Several sieges between 1985 and 1987 occurred on the camp and while the residents never relinquished control, many human lives were lost and much infrastructure damaged. With a population of approximately 15 000 in an area a little over one square kilometre, the camp consists of a series of very narrow alleyways with residents being forced to build upwards and inwards with population growth. Compared with other camps in the country, Bourj el-Barajneh is one of the better serviced in terms of access to health clinics, sanitary staff, waste management, NGO service provision and secondary school education. Many of the men living in Bourj el-Barajneh work as casual labourers or manual workers, and many women work in sewing factories and as cleaners. CEPAL has been working in Bourj el-Barajneh since 1997.

Sabra/Shatila

Shatila is situated in southern Beirut and was established in 1949 by the International Committee of the Red Cross in order to provide shelter for the hundreds of refugees fleeing northern Palestine. It is located near Beirut and Bourj el-Barajneh camp and was the site of severe devastation during the civil war. Heavy bombardment and numerous raids resulted in severe destruction of lives and property, internal displacement and a siege. Most devastating was the September massacre that killed up to 3500 people. Approximately 8000 persons currently live in the approximately one square kilometre that is Shatila. Sabra is a slum and market area that surrounds Shatila camp and has a high population of Palestinian refugees and is also serviced by several Palestinian NGOs. The infrastructure of the camp is in disrepair with open drains, damp shelters, poor sewage and unreliable potable water. CEPAL has been working in Shatila since 1997.

Wavel

Wavel camp, also referred to as 'Al-Jaleel,' is situated near the city of Ba'albek, 90 km east of Beirut in the Beqa'a Valley and near the Syrian border. Originally a French army barracks, in 1948 it was designated a camp for Palestinian refugees by the League of Red Cross Societies. It is one of the smallest camps in Lebanon at a size of approximately 42 000 square meters and with an estimated population of around 3000. It resides in a part of the country that has historically been tightly controlled by Syria, although that has decreased to a certain extent since the Syrian withdrawal in 2005. The relationship between the camp residents and the surrounding Lebanese is significantly less hostile than in other regions of the country.

Although the camp suffered less structural damage than other camps during the years of civil conflict, living conditions in Wavel are particularly severe. Extremely low unemployment rates have led to high rates of emigration and a decline in the camp's population. While Wavel camp has wider streets, fewer-storied housing and more daylight and ventilation within the camp, overcrowding within homes is much more acute with many families sharing one or two rooms. The climate in the region is also more severe than in other parts of the country making for challenging winters when money for diesel fuel heaters is scarce. Wavel is one of the least serviced camps in Lebanon. While UNRWA provides schooling, water, health clinic, sewerage and solid waste services, NGO services providing educational services are significantly limited. CEPAL has been working in Wavel since 2001.

CEPAL's Partner Organisations

CEPAL works with nine partner organisations in Lebanon:

Arab Resource Centre on Popular Arts (ARCPA) / Al-Jana

ARCPA (more commonly referred to as 'Al-Jana' – the harvest) is a non-profit organization founded in 1990 in response to the needs of the community and grassroots NGOs for a resource centre that provides training and resources relating to youth, culture and creative expression. The Centre works to both impart skills and instil self-confidence in Palestinian children and youth through arts activities and active learning creative pedagogical techniques. Some of their past and present initiatives include: establishing a network of organisations that run child-friendly libraries; providing workshops for young filmmakers and hosting Palestinian and Children's Film Festivals; facilitating child-to-child landmine awareness workshops; collecting oral testimonies from Palestinian refugees in Lebanon with attention paid to folk stories, songs, stories of uprooting, accounts of life in Palestine; facilitating music, writing and drawing programs for children and youth; running Summer Encounters workshops to develop skills and capacities of librarians, animators and volunteers; coordinating Spring Festivals to promote solidarity among the neediest and marginalized communities of Lebanon, regardless of their sectarian background; provide public access to their multimedia labs and library. ARCPA's approach is thus pro-active: helping young Palestinians to survive their present difficulties by equipping them with important skills such as critical thinking, imaginative problem solving, effective interpersonal communication, and creative expression.

<http://www.al-jana.org>

Association Najdeh

Najdeh was founded in 1976 and works primarily to empower disadvantaged women to become positive contributors to the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon. Its programs include vocational training, popular education and tutorial programs, mother and child programs, social affairs, domestic violence programs, micro-credit projects and embroidery. It also works on educational initiatives related to reproductive health, women's rights and child rights. Najdeh operates in 26 centres in and around refugee camps in Lebanon and reaches over 10 000 refugees through its programs.

<http://association-najdeh.org/index.html>

Children and Youth Centre (CYC)

The Children and Youth Centre was founded in 1997 to serve the Shatila community and to provide a place for children and youth to develop their education, abilities and imagination. It is an organization that places a great deal of importance on community work and strives to make its members sensitive to social justice issues, by empowering them as youth with a

variety of skills. Its aim is to develop an aware and responsible generation that is able and determined to positively contribute to the community around it. CYC works in the following areas: child and human rights by emphasising gender equality, religious tolerance and non-discriminative right to literacy; follows a child-to-child method of education through intensive external workshops and continuous committed internal practice; aims to confirm Palestinian history and identity; runs training workshops, children's activities, recreational and educational trips, after-school classes in academic subjects, arts activities, sports activities, journalism workshops, summer camp activities, cultural events and community wellness seminars.

<http://www.cycshatila.org/>

National Association for Vocational Training and Social Services (NAVTTSS)

NAVTTSS (formerly known as VTTC) is an independent social and educational institution established in 1983. It works to combat illiteracy, poverty and disease, helping young men and women in their career choices by offering intensive vocational training based on current market demands in Lebanon. Furthermore, it works to empower youth by running training workshops geared at community mobilization, human and child rights, gender and conflict resolution, facilitation and communication skills, time management and decision making skills. They run six vocational training centres and several cultural centres in Lebanon and train an average of 350 women every year in fields such as nursing and hairdressing.

National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training (NISCVT) / Beit Atfal Assumoud

NISCVT was founded in 1976 to care for children who were orphaned following the siege and massacre of Tel al-Zaatar camp. Following the 1982 massacres in Sabra/Shatila, NISCVT extended its program to provide support to families that lost their primary income provider. Its objectives are as follows: provide financial and social support for the families; cultural, recreational, educational and health services for the children and their family members; development of economic and professional opportunities through programs geared towards women and youth; preservation of Palestinian identity through reviving cultural heritage and transmitting it to the new generation. In 2007, NISCVT sponsored 1360 children from 635 families throughout its 10 centres in Lebanon. Some of the services NISCVT provide include remedial education classes, vocational training, kindergartens, children and youth activities, embroidery projects, family guidance centres, dental services and reproductive health projects.

<http://www.socialcare.org/>

Popular Aid for Relief and Development (PARD)

PARD was founded in 1985 as a grassroots, non-profit, non governmental organisation that seeks to improve the health and environmental conditions in the unofficial Palestinian gatherings and displaced buildings through water and sanitation programs, mother and child care services and by raising awareness and empowering the local communities. It envisages environmentally clean and healthy Palestinian communities whose members are actively participating in the development of their own communities. It currently provides primary and secondary health services through a network of five clinics in Lebanon, a range of environmental services including water supply and sewerage network rehabilitation and construction, preventative health programs, community development centres with activities targeting women, children and youth and First Aids service by trained youth volunteers in three centres.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)

UNRWA was established by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of December 8th, 1949. The purpose of UNRWA is to carry out direct relief and human development programs for Palestine refugees after the expulsion of Palestinians from their land following the creation of Israel in 1948. Currently, UNRWA provides education, health, relief and social services to over 4.6 million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It staffs more than 29 000 people, the majority of whom are refugees, and comprises the largest UN operation in the Middle East. UNRWA has been the main provider of basic education to Palestinian refugees over the past five decades and operates one of the largest school systems in the Middle East. UNRWA provides primary and junior secondary schooling, vocational and technical training courses, teacher-training programmes and scholarships to qualified refugee youth.
<http://www.un.org/unrwa/english.html>

UNRWA Women's Centres

UNRWA Women's Centres are aimed primarily at empowering women by offering skills-training to enable women to earn income, literacy training and household maintenance and income conservation assistance. Several centres offer assistance with legal and civic matters and child-care facilities for working women. Centres also provide educational and summer programs for children and youth and are involved in health education for women.
<http://www.un.org/unrwa/programmes/rss/women.html>

Women's Humanitarian Organization (WHO)

The Women's Humanitarian Organization was founded in 1993 to serve women and children living in Bourj el-Barajneh refugee camp. Its objectives are as follows: to provide necessary care for women and children; habilitating and training women socially and vocationally; establishing various centres of rehabilitation and training in order to achieve the purposes and aims of the Association; establishing special centres for women and children care; conducting habilitating training programs. The organisation currently works to provide early childhood education (nursery), kindergarten (three-six years old), vocational training (computer literacy, handicrafts, sewing), an elderly care program, a day-care program for the children of working mothers, an after-school tutorial program, a summer activities program for children and youth, physiotherapy and a community disability project.

Awareness raising

The CEPAL Digest

The CEPAL Digest, established during the war of summer 2006 as a mean to raise awareness about the conflict in Lebanon and how it affected Palestinian refugees there, has been maintained after the very positive feedback received from listserv subscribers. The Digest includes current news and relevant articles from various sources, as well as letters from our partners and friends in the refugee camps when available. The intention of the CEPAL Digest continues to be to present information that might otherwise not be presented in mainstream media, with a focus on the personal experiences of the people in the Palestinian refugee camps and in Lebanon more generally. Over 100 digests have been compiled and sent out since July 2006. We intend to continue distributing the Digest throughout 2009.

Website

CEPAL continued to post events and announcements in English and French on its website at www.cepal.ca. Approximately 90% of the website is bilingual (French and English), and includes stories and pictures from our volunteers who lived and worked in the refugee camps, testimonies from refugee camp residents, events and other announcements, CEPAL publications—such as our bi-annual newsletter.

Powered by a content management system (CMS), the website is user friendly, making it feasible for all Directors, even with limited computer knowledge, to update content. A CMS takes the complexity out of maintaining a website. Even non-programmers can create and publish content online and the time to publish content has been significantly reduced.

Newsletters

As with every year, this year CEPAL published the *Arch*, a bi-annual newsletter that is distributed by mail to all CEPAL Sustaining Members, as well as local organizations that support CEPAL and our programs. In addition, the *Arch* is posted on CEPAL's listserv and website to maximize its reach. This year, the Fall newsletter included articles and photographs taken by youths in Bourj el-Barajneh refugee camp during a journalism workshop given by CEPAL's president. This year's newsletters, as well as past newsletters, can be accessed at www.cepal.ca.

Facebook

CEPAL recently joined the rest of the world on Facebook! As the year progresses and we hold more events, we're hoping to reach a wider audience. You can become a member at: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/group.php?gid=10899262027>

Treasury

The Treasury's main objectives this year was to use processes and practices that reflect CEPAL's decentralized operations (although CEPAL is based in Ottawa, many of CEPAL's directors and volunteers live in other cities).

Building on last year's achievements, the Treasury continued to use an accounting software for CEPAL's finances and implemented a secure online expense form that all members can access online. With the accounting software, CEPAL is able to produce accurate assessments of its finances at any time, thus increasing transparency. In addition, the new software reduces the effort involved in transferring knowledge from one Treasurer to another, as was demonstrated in July when the Treasury duties were taken over by a new Director.

CEPAL highlights from 2008

Several areas are worth highlighting from CEPAL's 2008 work:

General

- CEPAL has been managed entirely by volunteers since its founding
- CEPAL is supported by leading experts, NGOs, the UN and Canadian government, and has been supported as such for over 10 years now
- Membership has grown and more youths are taking an interest in CEPAL's work
- CEPAL remains the only Canadian NGO working with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Lebanon Summer Program

- Conducted a needs assessment with NGO partners in Lebanon
- Held a condensed summer program and reaffirmed CEPAL's presence in Lebanon

Awareness Raising and Communication

- Hosted Dr. Terry Rempel and Dr. Nahla Abdo for a lecture on Human Rights and the Palestinian Right of Return
- Held a major Right of Return conference with Canadian experts in the field discussing the various aspects of this issue
- Presented the full needs assessment report to sustaining and new members, as well as recommendations for future summer programs and communication with partners
- Opened a Toronto Chapter to raise awareness and hold events in Toronto
- Created a new Facebook account
- Conference on Right of Return filmed (and to be podcast) by Rabble.ca
- Distributed a statement condemning the Gaza crisis (See Appendix I)

Financial Statement

The Canadian Palestinian Educational Exchange

Date Range: January 1, 2008 - December 31, 2008

January 4,
2009

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

UN Day of Solidarity (2007)

Book Sales 54.00

Total UN Day of Solidarity (2007) 54.00

4032 - Donations Income

4032 - Donations Income - Other 312.20

General Membership 1,102.41

4045 - Sustaining Membership Fees 5,013.65

4060 - Summer Program Donations 1,138.00

Total 4032 - Donations Income 7,566.26

4190 - Refunds & Adjustments - Summer Program 1,577.32

4700 - Outreach Program

4710 - Right of Return Conference 2,290.60

Total 4700 - Outreach Program 2,290.60

8194 - November Event 440.00

Total Income 11,928.18

Gross Profit 11,928.18

Expense

6000 - Advertising & Promotion

6100 - List Server 343.52

6200 - Hosting 35.00

Total 6000 - Advertising & Promotion 378.52

6600 - Outreach Program

6600 - Outreach Program - Other 135.00

6611 - Travel Expenses 482.53

6620 - Photocopying and Printing 189.27

6630 - Speaker Travel (Outreach program) 1,745.00

6640 - Transportation 272.28

Total 6600 - Outreach Program 2,824.08

6700 - UN Day of Solidarity

6700 - UN Day of Solidarity - Other 302.00

6720 - Speaker Travel (UN Day) 708.39

Total 6700 - UN Day of Solidarity 1,010.39

7000 - Board Expenses

7100 - Meals & Entertainment 8.81

7300 - Teleconference Expense 594.25

7725 - Transportation 1,309.73

7730 - Vehicle/Rental/Fuel 251.25

Total 7000 - Board Expenses 2,164.04

8000 - Summer Program

8000 - Summer Program - Other 2,472.51

8100 - Travel Expense (Summer Program) 3,509.73

8200 - Visa 220.95

8300 - Materials 124.29

Total 8000 - Summer Program 6,327.48

9000 - Administrative Expenses

9100 - Internet 409.35

9200 - Printing & Reproduction	193.54
9300 - Telephone	1,108.04
9400 - Office Supplies	33.00
9500 - Postage & Delivery	29.35
9600 - Banking Service Charge	14.00
9700 - Rent	3,667.00
Total 9000 - Administrative Expenses	5,454.28
Total Expense	18,158.79
Net Ordinary Income	(6,230.61)
Other Income/Expense	
Other Expense	
8190 - Misc. Expenses	476.46
Total Other Expense	476.46
Net Other Income	(476.46)
Net Income	(6,707.07)

Future Plans

The CEPAL Board of Directors is looking ahead to 2009 to plan for yet another successful year. Much of 2009 will be spent devoted to implementing the recommendations generated from the Needs Assessment, increasing CEPAL's access to funding and preparing for a successful Summer Program.

Annual General Meeting 2009

CEPAL's Annual General Meeting will take place Sunday January 11, 2009. At this time, CEPAL's current Board of Directors will provide a review of CEPAL's 2008 programs and operations. In addition, CEPAL members will elect CEPAL's 2009 Board of Directors.

All CEPAL members are invited and encouraged to attend the Annual General Meeting. You must be a current member in order to participate. CEPAL membership must be renewed annually, and we welcome new members throughout the year. For more information about becoming a CEPAL member, please visit www.cepal.ca or see below.

Date: Sunday January 11, 2009

Time: Noon – 2PM

Location: CEPAL Office, 323 Chapel Street, Ottawa, Ontario

2009 Summer Program

Although the political and security situation in Lebanon is still extremely tenuous, CEPAL is hoping to be able to send Summer Program volunteers in 2009, in line with recommendations from the Needs Assessment conducted in 2008. We will also further the initial steps taken during the Assessment to evaluate the possibility of extending our work to other regions, namely Jordan and/or the West Bank, in order to ensure CEPAL remains active when political instability is such that programs are not possible in one region due to political unrest. Planning for the Summer Program will take place following the election of the new Board of Directors.

CEPAL Chapters

CEPAL volunteers are now spread over various cities in Canada. The majority reside in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto and many past volunteers as well as people new to CEPAL have expressed interest in becoming involved in helping to raise awareness about the situation facing Palestinian refugees. In previous years, CEPAL chapters in Montreal and Toronto have existed in order to help maintain CEPAL's presence in these cities and to help strengthen awareness-raising activities. In 2008, a CEPAL Toronto Chapter was revived and assisted in holding one fundraising/awareness raising activity in Toronto entitled "To hope: an evening of soul, folk & electronica." This benefit concert featuring Lal, Tom Macgee, Farheen Beg, John McIntosh and celestial agriculture was held on Tuesday June 24th at the Lula Lounge in Toronto to a supportive audience. Unfortunately, however, the CEPAL Toronto Chapter was unable to make further headway in 2008. The hope is that in 2009 and beyond, CEPAL chapters in various cities can be developed whereby each CEPAL chapter would be responsible for organizing several small awareness-raising activities per year, for example, film screenings, presentations, lectures, etc. The chapters could also help CEPAL network with other, like-minded organizations.

How You Can Help:

There are many ways to contribute to CEPAL's work and every bit helps. Whether you volunteer your time or generously donate funds, you are providing the gift of education to those who need it the most.

Volunteer

CEPAL is always looking for volunteers to help run the organization in Canada. Whether it be in desktop publishing, book keeping, content contributing, or event organizing, your time and skills can be put to use for the benefit of CEPAL's programs.

This year, CEPAL is especially looking for volunteers based in Montreal who would be interested in organizing the Gala Fundraiser, which will take place in April 2009. Volunteers are needed both at the event and to help with prior preparations. Please visit www.cepal.ca for information on how to volunteer in Canada or email info@cepal.ca.

Make a Donation

There are three ways in which individuals can donate to CEPAL:

1. Individuals can use a credit card to make a donation through the secure CanadaHelps.org website, located on CEPAL's website using the "Donate Now" option.
2. Individuals can mail a cheque to CEPAL's office in Ottawa. Cheques must be made payable to Canadian-Palestinian Educational Exchange, and must be forwarded to:

CEPAL, third floor
323 Chapel St,
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 7Z2

3. Individuals can donate through the United Way Payroll Deduction Program. The annual Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign supports Canadian charities and is managed by the United Way. Government employees can give donations through either cheque or payroll deductions, and can choose to donate to organizations such as CEPAL, who are not members of the United Way. To donate to CEPAL through this campaign, list the name Canadian-Palestinian Educational Exchange and its charitable number 862761418 RR 0001 on the donation form. Please note that the United Way will deduct an administrative fee of 11% for the donation, and an additional 4% if the donation is designated as a payroll deduction.

Become a Sustaining Member

CEPAL relies heavily on its membership for fundraising, most particularly on its Sustaining members. You can become a Sustaining Member if you commit to making an annual payment of \$500 or above. These payments can be made in one lump sum or in monthly/quarterly installments.

In addition to regular membership benefits, Sustaining Members may choose to have a meeting a year with the Board of Directors. The designation of "Sustaining Member" will

apply from the day a member makes this commitment, and will continue for as long as this commitment is fulfilled annually. With their consent, Sustaining Members are also recognized publicly (i.e., on CEPAL's website, newsletters, etc.) for their continued support of CEPAL's work.

Sustaining member benefits

- Sustaining Members are entitled to call a meeting with the Board, and once a year a meeting will be held with the board and all sustaining members.
- Sustaining Members receive an annual gift from the Board.
- Sustaining Members are entitled to be informed of and attend all general meetings of the organization.
- Sustaining Members hold voting rights and can vote at CEPAL's Annual General Meeting.
- Sustaining Members will receive regular updates via CEPAL's email news list and semi-annual newsletters.
- Sustaining Members are eligible to run for a position on CEPAL's Board of Directors.

If you are already a Sustaining Member, please encourage others to become Sustaining Members! To find out more about becoming a Sustaining Member, please visit www.cepal.ca, or send an information request by email to info@cepal.ca. Alternatively, you may call CEPAL at 613-236-7825.

APPENDIX I:

CEPAL statement of condemnation on Gaza attacks

Since December 26th, 2008, the shelling of 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza by Israeli forces has resulted in the death of at least 425 Palestinians, in addition to over 2000 wounded. The majority of the deaths and injured are civilians, many of whom are children. This death toll is mounting by the hour.

Moreover, the humanitarian situation, already dire due to the frequent closure of the Gaza Strip over the past year and the consequent depletion of food, medicine and petrol stocks, has been greatly aggravated. The UN warns that there is now a “critical emergency” in Gaza, despite the arrival of some humanitarian shipments.

CEPAL opposes all use of violence, including Hamas’ launching of rockets into Israel; however, CEPAL believes that the measures adopted by Israel in Gaza have been drastic and disproportionate. CEPAL regrets the Canadian government’s description of Israel’s assault on Gaza as self-defense. This position only allows Israel’s assault on Gaza to continue, leading to the continued loss of innocent lives and the destruction of vital civilian infrastructure. In the interest of human rights for all those affected by the current crisis, CEPAL therefore urges an immediate ceasefire and the use of diplomacy to resolve the conflict.

Many of CEPAL’s partner NGOs in Lebanon have begun protests and sit-ins to condemn the attacks. Starting Friday, January 2, 2009, a solidarity tent for Gaza will be set up near the entrance of Bourj Barajneh camp in Beirut. A number of activities will take place, including:

- Open phone lines to Gaza for those who wish to send their words of encouragement and solidarity to those in Gaza
- Card making activities for children who wish to draw cards for children in Gaza
- A mock funeral for the consciences of the Arab regimes who have failed to respond to the calls of their own people in condemning the Israeli government's recent acts of aggression, along with a reception area for those who wish to offer their condolences for the families of those who have lost loved ones
- A donation box for those in Gaza, whose proceeds will be delivered via an NGO who has access to Gaza.

The initiative is being organized by a group of local NGOs in Bourj Barajneh camp who have come together in the past, such as during the 2006 July War, in order to organize emergency relief efforts and activities. The Emergency Forum for Relief has stressed the non-political nature of this initiative, and their concern as local development professionals for the well-being of their fellow Palestinians. All interested NGOs are welcome to participate, and should contact either Hiba Izzahmad or Hekmat Staytee for how they can become involved.

Activities are scheduled to begin at 12:30pm on Friday, and will continue until 7 pm. The tent will remain open each day following from 9 am until 7 pm, and will host different activities each day. In case of inclement weather, activities will continue in a nearby shelter. For Canadians wishing to show their solidarity with the victims in Gaza, a Facebook group, Solidarity for Gaza in Lebanon, is scheduled to up in the next few hours, and will have a listing of current activities at the solidarity tent, as well as other activities in Lebanon in support of those in Gaza.

For more information, please contact (in Lebanon):

Hiba Izdahmad, Media and Outreach Coordinator hiba_izdahmad@hotmail.com, 03 053 290
(Arabic and English) Hekmat Staytee, Logistics Coordinator, 03 580 836 (Arabic) CEPAL
thanks you for your support,

The CEPAL Board of Directors