

# The Arch

## Newsletter of the Canadian-Palestinian Educational Exchange

### Commemorating *Al-Nakba*, continuing the Summer Program

With 2008 well under way, the CEPAL Board of Directors has a busy year planned. The Board of Directors were voted in at CEPAL's Annual General Meeting January 27 and they include an exceptional group of individuals with



diverse backgrounds and skills. All of us are dedicated to making 2008 another successful year for CEPAL's programs.

We will spend much of this year commemorating the 60th anniversary of *Al-Nakba* (the catastrophe), the creation of the state of Israel, which led to the displacement of thousands of Palestinians from Palestine and whose displacement remains to this day. We have three main awareness-raising activities planned to commemorate *Al-Nakba*: First, we are planning a public lecture for May 29 at the University of Ottawa. Speakers include Terry Rempel (BADIL) and Nahla Abdo (Carlton University). Second, we are hosting a number of excellent speakers, including Norman Finkelstein, Hanan Ashrawi, Michael Lynk, Nahla Abdo, Jaber Suleiman and Rex Brynen, as part of CEPAL's first ever Right of Return conference. The conference is meant to be one of solidarity with the Palestinian people, and an opportunity to discuss achieving a just solution to the predicament for Palestinian refugees who remain stateless. Third, as with every year, in November we plan to commemorate the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This year's commemoration

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### CEPAL on Facebook!

We've joined the golden age of Facebook and have launched our own CEPAL account. Join our group and keep up to date on conferences, activities by CEPAL and other related groups in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto.

*CEPAL is a charity whose 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. CEPAL is the only Canadian organization that works directly with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.*

will take place November 24 on Parliament Hill. Please read further or visit [www.cepal.ca](http://www.cepal.ca) for more information about these events.

Awareness-raising efforts will also continue in the form of the CEPAL Digest, CEPAL's weekly listserv publication, as well as through CEPAL's website, through Facebook, and through smaller events planned throughout the year. In addition, the CEPAL Toronto chapter is well organized in their plans for film screenings, lectures, etc. planned in Toronto. Through the support of hard working CEPAL volunteers, we plan to increase CEPAL's presence in Toronto, Montréal and Ottawa this year.

In addition to awareness-raising, after a year's absence we are planning to send a small group of Summer Program volunteers to Lebanon this summer. The decision to plan a 2008 Summer Program was made by the Board of Directors in coordination with CEPAL's Advisory Board, and following communications with partners in Lebanon, who have all expressed the continued need for CEPAL's Summer Program. Please see page three for more information about 2008 Summer Program plans.

We believe that CEPAL must continue to help give voice to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. CEPAL therefore needs your continued support this year to ensure a strong awareness-raising component in Canada and the 2008 Summer Program overseas. We encourage you to please visit [www.cepal.ca](http://www.cepal.ca) for continued updates on CEPAL's programs and awareness raising activities, in addition to information on how you can support CEPAL both in Canada and overseas.

Sincerely,

Shannon Dow, President

## Introducing the 2008 Board of Directors!

A number of exceptional individuals were voted in by CEPAL's members as the 2008 Board of Directors. Please read more about each director in the following bios:

Shannon Dow, President

Shannon holds a master's degree in Social and 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, and she has served as President since 2006. This is her third term as President.

Giulia El-Dardiry, Overseas Security Director and Secretary

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 organisations and international NGOs in the Middle East, mainly in Palestine and Lebanon, and especially in the Palestinian refugee camps.

Jonathan Hera, Events Director

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). He has also translated between many languages including German, Polish, Spanish and Italian.

Mayssam Z. Jackson, Communications Director and Vice President

Mayssam is a British citizen of Palestinian-Lebanese origin. She has a BA in Communications and Languages from the University of Sunderland in the UK and has worked as a journalist/editor at The Daily Star Newspaper in Lebanon for the past 5 years. Throughout her travels and experiences, she is 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 back in the camps.

Niketh Pareek, Treasurer and IT Director

Niketh holds a graduate diploma in Journalism and a Bachelors 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.

Michelle Turner, Overseas Program Director

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.

## CEPAL's Summer Program goes full speed ahead!

Plans for CEPAL's summer program are well underway and we are especially excited that we are in a position to send



volunteers to the camps in Lebanon this summer! What follows is a summary of our work in the winter of 2008.

In January, Michelle Turner was elected into the position of Overseas Program Director and Giulia El-Dardiry was elected into the newly created position of Overseas Security Director. Giulia's experience working with CEPAL for over five years and her work in Lebanon with Oxfam-Québec will be an asset to CEPAL's summer programming and security considerations. Michelle's work in the camps as CEPAL's Lebanon Field Coordinator and Wavel Field Coordinator and work in education and the arts puts her in a good position to plan summer program initiatives with our partners and volunteers.

In February, the board made the decision to send a small group of former volunteers for approximately 4 weeks this summer after considering security issues and CEPAL's financial burden following the 2006 evacuation. Although our program will be less significant in terms of length and numbers than in previous summers, we expect that the skills and experiences of former CEPAL volunteers will enhance

relationships, educational achievements and initiative-taking capabilities of our volunteers and learners. A portion of our work in Lebanon will also include a Needs Assessment, which we feel will greatly enhance our future presence in Lebanon. Feedback from our partners has been sympathetic and positive. The contemporary political climate warrants our work more than ever and we remain dedicated to assisting our partners in whatever way we can. Their support, dedication and warmth inspire us to continue the work we do.

Since March, we have been in the process of summer volunteer recruitment. The first round of written applications was a success. Interviews are currently being held in Montréal and Toronto and we anticipate the challenge we will have selecting from an already well-qualified and dedicated pool of applicants. We look forward to announcing our team in the upcoming month!

In preparation for our summer program, issues regarding security continue to be monitored, as always, through discussions with our contacts, including members of local and international non-governmental organizations, significant members of the Palestinian community in Lebanon and members of the Canadian government both here in Canada and in Lebanon. An updated Evacuation Plan is also being written to enhance our preparedness, the security of our volunteers and due diligence capabilities. Plans for pre-departure volunteer training and orientation are also underway and will occur in the late spring of this year.

CEPAL's fundraising initiatives and support from our donors continue to play a significant role in the realization of our summer program. Your financial assistance is greatly appreciated. We look forward to the next time we speak where we will regale you with the successes of our summer program!

Salamat,  
Michelle and Giulia

CEPAL LAUNCHES TORONTO CHAPTER

Meanwhile, CEPAL is pleased to announce the work of its 2008 Toronto Chapter. The Toronto Chapter is currently comprised of six dedicated volunteers who are working to enhance CEPAL's awareness-raising and fundraising capabilities. Some of our planned initiatives include holding Arabic classes, selling Palestinian embroidery in order to support women's initiatives in the camps, hosting speakers to talk of various issues regarding Palestinians in Lebanon, highlighting the work of former CEPAL volunteers through

presentations and discussions and holding film screenings on issues relevant to CEPAL's work. Our first event will be held in June where we will present the Toronto premiere of *Voices*, the film made by CEPAL volunteers and students in 2005 highlighting the situation facing Palestinians in Lebanon and the work of CEPAL. For those interested in learning more about our activities or getting involved as a CEPAL Toronto Chapter volunteer, please contact us at [toronto@cepal.ca](mailto:toronto@cepal.ca).

NEW TREASURER JOINS THE CEPAL TEAM!

On June 1st, 2008, I will be resigning my position of Treasurer of CEPAL. I recently accepted a one year contract to coordinate consolidation and modernization of Ethiopia's federal and provincial tax collection agencies. While I will remain CEPAL's IT Director, I will not be able to continue the duties of Treasurer.

Over the course of the next few weeks, I will be transferring my duties and responsibilities to my

replacement, Ms. Sarom Bahk. She is originally from British Columbia, and is currently a resident of Montreal, where she works as a litigator with the federal Department of Justice. Sarom holds a Bachelors of Law from McGill University, and a Bachelors of Arts in Economics and English literature from Simon Fraser University. She has worked or volunteered for many grassroots community organizations including the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, the B.C. Civil Liberties

Association, and the Montreal City Mission. These and other experiences have rendered her acutely aware of the situation of marginalized groups, particularly refugees.

I am certain Ms. Bahk will do an excellent job and will make an immediate impact in helping CEPAL achieve its 2008 objectives.

Niketh Pareek, Treasurer / IT Director

A PUBLIC LECTURE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF AL-NAKBA

**MAY 29, 2008**

7:00 – 9:30PM

University of Ottawa  
 Montpetit Building  
 125 University Street  
 Room 203

\$8 Students (ID required)

\$10 Adults

Tickets sold at the door

As part of its educational lecture series, CEPAL presents two speakers offering an examination of the Palestinian Right of Return. Speakers include Nahla Abdo, Professor of Sociology at Carleton University, and Terry Rempel, PhD Candidate/Senior Researcher, BADIL Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights. For more information, please visit [www.cepal.ca](http://www.cepal.ca).

# 60 Years of Exile: The Palestinian Right of Return

A conference sponsored by the Canadian-Palestinian Educational Exchange

**JUNE 28, 2008**

8:30AM - 5PM

University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON  
Montpetit Bldg, 125 University Street  
Room 203

\$40 students (ID required)  
\$65 general

\* Lunch is included in the registration fee.

CEPAL's first ever Right of Return conference commemorates the 60th anniversary of *Al-Nakba* (The Catastrophe), and will encourage discussion about the Palestinian Right of Return. The Right of Return will be 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 is 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.

Speakers to date include:

**Nahla Abdo**, Professor of Sociology, Carleton University

**Hanan Ashrawi** (via live stream), Palestinian scholar and political activist

**Rex Brynen**, Professor of Political Science, McGill University

**Randa Farah**, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario

**Norman Finkelstein**, Independent Scholar

**Michael Lynk**, Associate Professor of Law, University of Western Ontario

**Jaber Suleiman**, Independent Researcher/Consultant, Palestinian Program of UNICEF

All proceeds will go towards CEPAL's 2008 Summer Program in Lebanon.

SPACE IS LIMITED! We encourage you to register early by visiting [www.cepal.ca](http://www.cepal.ca), or by contacting Jonathan Hera, CEPAL Events Director at [jonathan.hera@cepal.ca](mailto:jonathan.hera@cepal.ca).

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

**GET INVOLVED**

We need your support! There are many ways to become involved with CEPAL. We are always looking for volunteers in Ottawa and Toronto to help organize events and awareness raising activities. Or, if you have more time to dedicate, consider running for a position on the Board of Directors. You can find more information about these opportunities on our website.

**Become a member**

CEPAL is a membership-based organization with a growing membership body. Our vision is to maintain the steady growth of a membership base with the highest level of diversity in age groups, cultural, academic and professional backgrounds. By becoming a member, you are ensuring that CEPAL's crucial work continues.

**Membership Choices**

There are two membership choices, including general membership and sustaining membership.

Members who wish only to be informed by obtaining related news and articles on Palestinian refugee issues, attending our activities, and receiving updates on our programs are General Members. Anyone who donates \$5 or more to CEPAL can become a General Member.

If you are interested in become more involved through annual meetings with the Board of Directors, in addition to receiving updates on our activities throughout the year, you can become a Sustaining Member. Sustaining Members commit to making an annual payment of \$500 or above. These payments can be made in one lump sum or in monthly/quarterly installments.

We encourage you to please visit our website for more information on becoming a CEPAL member.

**Donate to CEPAL!**

Another way of getting involved is by donating to support our important programs.

**Donate On-Line**

Conveniently make a secure donation on-line through our partner at CanadaHelps.org. Simply visit our website and click on the Donate Now link.

**Donate By Mail**

Send a cheque to the CEPAL office payable to Canadian-Palestinian Educational Exchange. You can find our mailing address below, or by visiting the Contact Us page on our website.

**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.

**Tax Receipts**

CEPAL as a registered charity issues tax receipts for donations of \$25 or more.

**CEPAL Calendar**

**May 29, 2008**

Public lecture in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Al-Nakba

7 - 9:30PM

University of Ottawa

Montpetit Building

125 University Street

Room 203

**June 28, 2008**

Right of Return conference

University of Ottawa

Montpetit Building

125 University Street

Room 203

**Contact Us!**

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