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CEPAL is a not-for-profit organization, founded in 1996 by 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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PEYTON LYON: A FRIEND TO PALESTINIANS

by *Dr. Atif Kubursi*, President, National Council on Canada-Arab Relations

Peyton Lyon has been a constant and solid source of support and inspiration for CEPAL. We are proud to honour him at our 4th Annual Observation of the United Nations Day of Solidarity for Palestinians, on Parliament Hill.

While the Arabs in Canada can count on only a few friends, they have a handful of very good and solid friends. None better or more consistent in his friendship and commitment to justice for the Arabs than **Peyton Lyon**.

His friendship and support in the most difficult and critical of times are much appreciated and have made a whale of difference to all of us in the community of solitude. He has been a beacon of hope, a library of knowledge, a fundamental source of good and reasonable advice, passionate supporter and prolific writer of incisive and knowledgeable letters to the editor, pamphlets and articles on our issues and concerns.

There is no way that I can think of that we can repay him for a debt that cannot be measured or valued. We will continue to treasure his unceasing contributions, his enthusiasm for our causes, his championing of our hopes and his unwavering loyalty.



Photo: A. Crampton, Shatila

(Continued on pg 8)

CEPAL Summer Volunteer Reflections, by *Giulia El Dardiry*

Giulia is a student at McGill University in Montreal. Giulia worked in Bourj el-Barajneh and Shatila refugee camps as part of CEPAL's 2000 Summer Program

The steps up to the roof were never the safest, but without electricity, darkness quickly settles in and turns them into a formidable challenge. I make it to the roof, however, and see the sight which has become all too familiar over the past two months – the Amlieh, a technical college on the outside of the camp, and in the opposite direction, an endless span of rundown roofs and wires of all sorts.

Tonight is my last night in the camp of Bourj el-Barajneh. One of twelve Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, this has become more than just a place where I have worked – it has become a veritable home, with welcoming faces all along the labyrinthine alleyways and wonderful friends within the walls of most homes. As the days went by, I never once imagined that leaving would be as painful as it is... a necessary good-bye before we meet again.

I have about three hours before I leave for the airport, and my good friend, Ghada, has invited me to see a film of the six-month siege of the camp. And so we all settle down on the roof – her sisters and brothers, their children, the neighbours and as usual, more children – while the TV set and VCR are brought to the roof, where access to power lines is easier. The atmosphere is lively, as though we were about to watch a film of a day in the Magic Kingdom. But, of course, the images that flash on the screen are as far removed from Snow White's castle as one can get – terrible scenes of suffering and courage, all the more moving because they happened to people that I have come to know, respect and cherish deeply. I battle ferociously to keep tears from welling up in my eyes...

Beirut looks like a wonderful cluster of diamonds from the sky, indistinguishable at this altitude from any other city. It is here, surrounded by the emptiness of the sky and the laughter of tourists, that I allow all those unshed tears to flow. I cry for the people I am leaving behind and because of what I experienced of their struggle to survive...and yet there is something more...a very real feeling of guilt. I think it was Heiner Muller who once said that, "as long as the price of freedom is equality, and vice versa, there will always be situations where to survive is to betray the dead..." The sentence haunts me as I realize that there are situations where to leave is to betray those left behind.

l i v i n g r o o m

by Annmarie Crampton

Annmarie is a student at McGill University in Montreal who worked in Bourj el-Barajneh and Shatila refugee camps as part of CEPAL's 2000 Summer Program

There is a father. Who comes home every day, around four o'clock, with dusty boots and tanned arms, after a full day of physical labour. First he showers, then he proceeds upstairs where the family gathers to eat dinner in the TV room (which is also the parent's bedroom). The TV always being on in that room, tonight is no exception. Arabic music videos, news clips...I can't understand a word; when I am not watching the TV, I watch them. Hamoudi running around, picking at food and spilling it on his face. Ali, the third youngest boy is ordered downstairs to get more utensils for Hamoudi. My name is mentioned every now and then as I am asked if I would like any more humous or potatoes. What about pita? Do I have enough Pepsi? His eyes are tired and kind, this father. He plays with his youngest son Hamoudi, letting him push him over on the floor and wound him with bullets from a gun made out of tiny clasped hands and pointed index fingers. He watches the news, this father, and flips the channels as he likes. The Camp David Accords are on TV. Yasser Arafat and Bill Clinton are shown.

This father, he listens intently. He says they are thinking about economic compensation for every member of the family, as well as a relocation to a country of choice (perhaps Canada, Norway or Sweden...).

I ask if he would like this. He says yes. Very much.

The plane soars and I close my eyes in an attempt to hide the tears and forget the painful pressure on my ears. In a dazzling flashback of memories, I return to the outside of the camp and walk in. I reach my house, shout out a quick "Marhaba," and continue past the water reservoir, up to the central alleyway that has come to be known to the foreign volunteers as the "Champs Elysées." I dodge the water that unexpectedly comes splashing out of an open pipe, as I greet the women sitting on the steps of a house. The street turns sharply and I pass the Coca-Cola shop, arriving at the first of many mini-markets. I stop to chat with the sellers and promise that I will stop in for coffee...but later, as I am already late. With a wave of my hand I am on my way again, and I soon reach one of the only reliable landmarks in this part of the camp – the plastic shop, where buckets and bowls of all sizes and colours may be purchased. I rush by and turn another corner before seeing my destination – the small school where my kids are waiting, exploding with an energy that is absolutely infectious. I run up the tight stairs trying to resist the heat and humidity of the tiny building. I open the door to a chorus of joyous voices, their owners quickly jumping all over me with affection. As the last one settles down, Samira, the assistant teacher, walks in and with a warm smile says simply, "Ahlan." Welcome.

There is a pause, and then he says something which is translated for me: "There is a saying in the camp. It is, 'we live but for the absence of death'."

Tomorrow morning when I leave the house for my 8:30 class, he will have been gone already for several hours.

She says to me as I sit on the couch opposite her, "Life is random, it is but chance, no Annmarie?" And I hesitate to agree. I want to tell her, that no, it is not chance. That you can't think like that. That you must grab a hold of your life and take it where you want to go. That you must live with optimism in your heart and never believe those who tell you can't do something. I feel a sense of urgency at the lack of hope which plays such a crucial role in keeping up one's spirit and one's will to live. I feel the suffocating pull of despair that threatens to overwhelm when such hope dwains. I want to comfort her like a child discouraged by failure; to convey to her what I know to be true but which she, from her perspective has lost a grasp on.

And yet I cannot tell her these things, for her emotion is powerful enough that it reaches across the room and engulfs me. I grasp for a more optimistic perspective on the stories she has just told me. Stories of how she is alone in this world, of how her family is dead. Of how after her house was bombed, that attempts to rebuild the living room were forbidden by the government of Lebanon because they took such an opportunity to tighten the borders of Beirut's dirty little secret by half a room's width. But these stories are too real and too choking to see any other way. The tears run down her cheeks.

She adds, however, that she has everything she needs. That she needs nothing else. There is a moment of silence. She apologizes for crying in front of me and for being depressing. She brushes away her tears, lifts herself off the couch, and moves to the kitchen to make coffee.

Impressions of Bourj el Barajneh

by *Madelena Santos*

Madelena is a student at Carleton University in Ottawa who also participated in CEPAL's 2000 Summer Program

Even before I walked into the camp I recalled what I had read in last year's newsletter about the first impressions of a former CEPAL intern. To paraphrase, she stated that she felt comfortably at home in Bourj el Barajneh but that still she was aware that her experience was not like those who lived in the camp since she knew always that she had the luxury to leave should she so desire. I held these thoughts close to me, as I believed that they would be significant to my experience in Bourj. Throughout my time here I have often deliberated upon what my luxury to retreat from my surroundings without losing my ability to return means to me and to those who have been deprived of this opportunity. It is difficult to believe that people who have experienced and continue to experience so much pain and have had so much taken away from them can be so giving. And it is because of this that, at times, it is easy to forget that they have lived through so much unrest. The bullet-ridden structures in which they live are a constant reminder of

their affliction, however, as are the photos of the family members who were killed which hang ominously on the nearly identical paint-peeled walls of their various meticulously clean homes. The proximity of their surroundings adds to the close and warm feeling of the camp but it also can feel equally suffocating. With no parks to stroll in or playgrounds for children to run and play the tiny concrete alleyways hardly suffice for the human necessity for the physical release of energy through exercise. Before I arrived at Bourj el Barajneh I remember telling people that the children had nowhere to play. They could hardly believe me and I also had difficulty conceiving it. I thought that there had to be somewhere that they could run around freely. But the only open space is filled with debris and thus the small passage-ways are what the children use to make do. Daily, as I walked to my classes the children and adults smiled and said hello. Their strength of spirit moved me. I found myself thinking of my luxury and how it could be so easy for them to resent me yet how they embraced me instead. The hospitality and warmth of the people I have met has awakened a new consciousness in me. I am now more aware of the life that the Palestinians here face and also more cognizant of the world's obliviousness to their plight. I hope that my time here has enhanced their ability to acquire their own voice in the ever-increasing English dominated world.

CEPAL President Returns to Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon

by *Maysa Jalbout*

Ten years ago, I came to Canada with my family as a humanitarian refugee. Ten years later, I made my way back to the refugee camp I knew best: Bourj El Barajaneh. I knew Bourj as the place where my grandparents, aunt and uncles, friends of my parents lived, where so many people I cared about lived and shared our most precious dream - to return to our homeland, Palestine as it was known before 1948.

My grandparents no longer live there, the pain of losing three of their children while living there was too much to bear. They moved to the South of Lebanon. Most people we knew having endured similar pain also left; most of whom took refuge in Denmark or Sweden, if they were lucky. My personal connection with the camp was all a memory.

With "weaker" ties and after so much time had passed by I did not know what to expect, how I would feel, how people would relate to me, how I would relate to them and do I, does CEPAL make any difference at all in their lives? Is there more we, as Canadians, can be doing? I had ten days to answer all of these questions.

In my first day I learned that even though I did not personally know the people in the camp I had an undeniable bond with them, one that can not be erased by time or distance. They welcomed me with open arms, into their humble homes and into their world of daily struggle and hope.

I also experienced apprehension. Children in our English classes often stopped in their tracks amazed to learn I am Palestinian. Why would a Palestinian living in Canada return to the refugee camp? Do Palestinians in Canada care about Palestinian refugees in Lebanon? It all seemed unreal to them. They are used to seeing a few foreigners running around the camp in the summer but they never made the connection that Palestinian-Canadians as well as non-Palestinian Canadians take part in our programs.

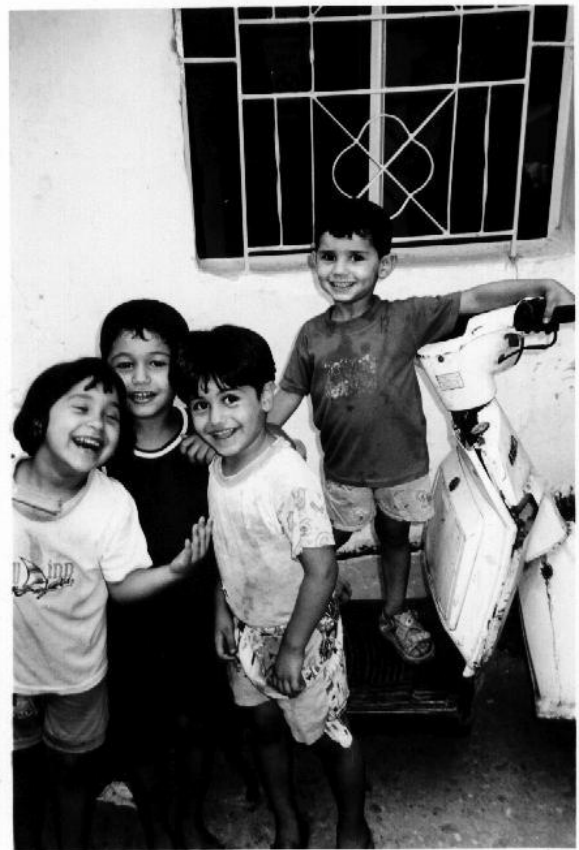


Photo: A. Crampton

Their gratitude far out-weighed their apprehension. Every organization I visited to discuss our programs expressed their gratitude for working with us. I was overwhelmed with the kind words and positive assessment that all of the Women's Humanitarian Organization, Najdeh, United Nations Relief and Works Agency and other organizations gave our teacher volunteers. They all emphasized how valuable it was to them to be able to give the children in the camps an opportunity to participate in our English/French classes and fun activities, which are often the only outlet for these children in the summer. They told me that our presence in the camp and our awareness activities in Canada bring them a sense of hope that the "outside" world still remembers them even though 52 years had gone by.

I learned that our programs do make a difference. But do they go far enough? The answer to that I already knew before I got there. My goal was to find out what else can I do and what can we do through CEPAL or other organizations.

With the help of every Palestinian-Canadian and every Canadian supporter of human rights, CEPAL can do a lot more to help Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. We need your financial and in-kind support to continue our programs and expand them. They deserve more language classes, better technical skills, recreation activities and centres, and most of all our respect and solidarity. Please help us give every Palestinian child an opportunity to experience greater hope. With your help we can accomplish our goals which include sending 10 volunteers to the refugee camps and starting new computer classes.

I was very fortunate to visit our friends and partners in Lebanon this past summer. I learned much more than I could have imagined and I was especially pleased to learn how effective CEPAL's programs are. But I felt the greatest impact personally. I discovered the true meaning of the saying: "It is much easier to know where you are going, if you know where you are coming from". I am a Palestinian. I am a Canadian. My mixed identity and ten years away from the refugee camps will not pull me away from trying to make a difference -- it will motivate me to do more.

Palestinian and Canadians alike, we can not forget them - over 4.9 million Palestinian refugees around the world - and we can never stop believing in their will to survive, to persist on a better future, and insist on their right of return.

Palestinian Refugees: Right of Return

by Dr. Salman Abu Sitta

Dr. Abu Sitta is the keynote speaker at this year's UN Day of Solidarity event in Ottawa. Excerpts from this speech, originally given in the UK House of Commons November 24, 1999, are reprinted with permission of the author

It is often said that history repeats itself. I believe it does not. It simply accumulates unfinished business, piles up debts and stacks up fortunes and misfortunes. Then there comes a day when all these accounts have to be settled. Look at our departing 20th Century. We have seen the retreat of evils imposed by man on man, such as the fading away of colonialism, the disappearance of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, the collapse of communism, the unceremonious departure of apartheid, the steady but sure decline of racism from the time when Martin Luther King could not get a hamburger on a lunch-counter until Nelson Mandela became a world leader hosted by big and small countries alike.

Today, there are about 8 million Palestinians world-wide. Five million of them, or two thirds, are refugees uprooted from their homes. The peace process initiated in Oslo deals only with the 1 million people, who are the original inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank. Other Palestinians (87%), including all five million refugees, derive no benefit from the Oslo Agreement and are not likely to do so in the future. How can one think that there can be a global and final peace without taking account of the most basic rights of at least 5 million refugees?

The topic I am about to discuss before you today is the right of return of the Palestinian people to their land, and the feasibility of achieving this objective with minimum effect on the existing population. I shall try, using facts and figures not rhetoric, to show that the Right of Return is not only sacred and legal, but possible too.

The uprooting of a whole people from their homes in Palestine in 1948 by a carefully executed and externally supported plan is unprecedented in modern history. This is what we call Al Nakba (the Catastrophe). Its dimensions are staggering. The inhabitants of 531

CEPAL

AUTUMN/WINTER EVENTS 2000/01

October 28: *Impressions of Bourj el Barajneh*, 11am, Rm H765, Concordia University, Montreal

November 8: *Breaking the Silence: A first hand account of life in the Palestinian Refugee Camps*. 7pm, Rm 149B, Loeb, Carleton University, Ottawa

November 30: *4th Annual UN Day of Solidarity with Palestinians*. KeyNote Speaker: Dr. Salman Abu Sitta. 7pm, Rm C-237, Parliament Hill, Ottawa

January 2001: *Annual General Meeting*. Ottawa. Date and Location to be announced.

towns and villages were forcibly evicted from their homes by the Zionist forces in 1948. They represented 85% of the people in the land that became Israel. Their land, which represents 92% of Israel today, has been confiscated and administered by Israel Land Administration. Their property and their heritage have been given free for all: Russians, Ethiopians and other people as diverse as passengers in a busy transit lounge. Provided such diverse people are Jews, they were instantly welcomed to the very same homes from which the rightful owners were expelled and to which they continue to be denied the right to return.

Where are the Palestinians today?

Of the total 8 million Palestinians, about 3.6 million (46%) now live within the Mandate Palestine boundaries (i.e. Israel, West Bank and Gaza), 3.3 million (42%) live in bordering Arab Countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria), and about 1.0 million (12%) live in other Arab and foreign countries. Thus, 88% of Palestinians world-wide live in or adjacent to Palestine. Today there are 4.9 million Palestinian refugees. Of those, 3.6 million are registered with UNRWA. The rest, 1.3 million, are self-supporting non-registered refugees. Thus, two thirds of all Palestinians are refugees.

What is their Land?

In 1948, the land area under Jewish control was 1,682 sq. km or 8% of Israel today. The land area of Palestinian villages remaining in Israel is 1,474 sq. km or 7% of Israel. Two thirds of their land is now confiscated by Israel. The remainder of Israel's area, which is 17,166 sq. km, or 85% of Israel, is the property of the expelled refugees. It has all been confiscated by Israel. Thus, fully 92% of Israel's area is Palestinian land.

How could such a massive catastrophe have happened? The refugees told stories of massacres, expulsion and eviction over and over again. The West refused to believe them and preferred to believe the heroic story of David against Goliath or little Israel fighting 7 huge Arab armies. It is a crying shame that it is now left to the Israeli historians to demolish this myth and to tell the West that what the refugees always said was true.

...

In the years of agony that followed Al Nakba in 1948 there was not a single, more basic or stronger driving force for the Palestinians

than their quest for their right of return. There are three aspects to the Right of Return which makes it compelling and inevitable. It is sacred, legal and possible.

First, the will and determination of the Palestinians. To them, the Right of Return is sacred. In spite of being dismembered and dispersed in the four corners of the earth, Palestinians continue to maintain a monolithic structure, based on the family and the village. They intermarry across countries on a family or a neighborhood basis. A grandchild of a 1948 refugee identifies himself as belonging to his original village. On the national level, societies or syndicates for professions, trades, women, students, creative artists and others, representing the Palestinian people, are functioning in many countries. That was the *raison d'être* of the PLO. It was basically a refugees' organisation.

Second, the Right of Return has a solid legal basis. To begin with, neither the Balfour Declaration of 1917, nor the UN Partition Plan of 1947 is binding on the Palestinians. They were not a party to them. None of these can grant them any new rights or deprive them of their basic rights.

In recognition of the rights of the Palestinians, the United Nations adopted Resolution 194 on December 11, 1948. Paragraph 11 states: "(The General Assembly)... resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of, or damage to, property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible".

...

We come now to the third aspect of the Right of Return. With such overwhelming support of law for the Right of Return, we hear voices, well intentioned or self-serving perhaps that exclaim: but is the return of the refugees feasible? They say "that Palestinian towns and villages ... have disappeared... (and) ... it would be difficult to re-establish these former sites".

The claim that it is not possible to re-establish former sites is factually erroneous. There is no land better documented than Palestine. In the period 1920-1947, the Survey of Palestine produced detailed maps for the whole of Palestine. The land area and ownership of each town and village are recorded on maps and government registers. In 1964, the UN prepared ownership records for 500,000 owners describing the area and location of each property.



Photo: E. Zorbas, Bourj el Barajneh, Lebanon

After the Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1948, these very same maps, with their Arabic names erased and replaced by Hebrew names, were used by Israel. The Israel Land Administration, which leases Palestinian land to Jews, has complete records of every plot of land. Today advanced technology such as the satellite mapping system makes the retrieval and comparison of old and new data quite feasible and accurate.

Then comes the question: where would the Palestinians return to? What is to be done with all those multi-national immigrants who were brought to Israel to live in Palestinian homes? The answer lies in examining Israel's demography.

Demographic analysis of Israel shows that the concentration of Jews today is largely in and around pre-1948 Jewish land and that the expropriated Palestinian land is still sparsely populated. As surprising as this may seem, serious research proves this point. Let me explain a bit further. For this purpose, let us divide Israel into 3 areas.

68% of the Jewish population in Israel live in an area of 1,628 sq. km. (8% of Israel). Let us call this area A. Just to remind you, this area is almost the same area in which Jews lived in pre-1948 Palestine.

Another 10% of the Jews live together with 20% of the Palestinians in Israel in an area of approximately 1,500 sq. km. (7% of Israel). Again for the purpose of our discussion, let's call this Area B. This mixed area is almost the same in size as the land of the Palestinians remaining in Israel. Thus the undisputed fact is that about 80% of the Jews in Israel live in 15% of Israel.

The remaining part, which we shall call Area C, has a total area of 17,325 sq. km. and is essentially the land of the 4.9 million Palestinian refugees. Apart from a few urban centers (mostly Palestinian towns originally) in which urban Jews live, only 200,000 rural Jews control and exploit this vast Palestinian land. The striking fact is that this small number of rural Jews who confiscated the heritage of about 5 million Palestinians is almost the same as the number of settlers in the West Bank.

...

Let me test two scenarios which, in my opinion, can diffuse two volatile dynamites in

the Middle East. The subject is vitally important, so please bear with me as I roll out some figures. The first scenario is the return of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. This is most worrying and is now constantly in the news because of their depressing working and living conditions. The second scenario is the return of the Palestinian refugees in Gaza, where over one million people are crammed in 360 sq. km. with no hope of a future. Although the entire issue of the refugees must be resolved, these two explosive situations must be addressed without delay.

If Lebanon refugees return to their homes in Galilee and elsewhere, the impact would be hardly felt by the Israelis. The density of the whole new population would only increase by 1% in Jewish Area A, 6% in mixed Area B, and by 17% in Area C to which most of the refugees would return. The much-touted concern for Jewish majority would not be warranted. They would remain above 50% even in areas when Jewish concentration is the lowest. The Jews who may barely feel the effect of the return are those few rural Jews who lease refugee's land. Of course, the urban Jews will continue to live and flourish in towns.

While Lebanon refugees could return to a largely Arab territory in Israel, with minimum effect on the Jews, the Gaza refugees would return to an almost totally empty land. As I said before, the rural Jews who exploit their land are spread at a density of 3 persons/sq. km. The density of population in Gaza is one thousand times more. According to Israeli statistics, there are few Jews - barely 60,000 - rural Jews in the southern half of Israel in an area of 14,000 sq. km. In addition, there are 553,000 urban Jews, two-thirds of whom live in 3 Palestinian towns (Beer Sheva, Ashdod and Majdal-Ashqelon) and another 24% live in 3 new towns. These urban Jews are engaged in industry, education and services. The return of the refugees would be of benefit to those Jews and vice versa, and as such, would be a positive element. After the return of Gaza refugees, the density of the total population in Israel would increase by only 6% in Area A, 5% in Area B and 32% in Area C to which the refugees return. Once again as in the case of Lebanon refugees, the Jews would still be over 50% in Area C where they are least in number.

One of the painful twists of history is that the number of Gaza and Lebanon refugees, who have been denied the right to return home, is almost exactly the same as the number of Russian immigrants that have been freely admitted to Israel throughout this decade. While the return of the refugees will bring peace and stability to the Middle East, the Russian immigration is a cause of tension in Israel itself and, as studies have shown, could trigger a new major conflict about water.

If the Right of Return is implemented and Palestinians return to their homes, hardly any infringement on the Jews' Lebensraum (living space) would occur. The Palestinians, mostly farmers, would return to their fields which they had tilled for centuries. Their efforts would compensate for the drop in Israel's agricultural production from 11% of GNP (1950) to only 3.5% (1993). Already the farmers in Gaza, in spite of being deprived of economic support and of water supply, produce superior and cheaper agricultural products.

...

Five million people today wait for their right to return home. If, by a miracle, 99% of these refugees were to surrender their right to return, and only 1% were ready to resist that by force, this would mean a militia of 50,000 motivated individuals, enough to cause serious trouble to any hostile government in the region. The Palestinians will not go away, disappear or accept to be carted away to settle elsewhere. Their plight has shaped the history of the Middle East and will continue to do so in the next century. It behooves fair-minded people and governments concerned with peace and stability to support their Right of Return actively and by every effective means. For it would be an illusion, a dangerous and costly illusion, to think that peace can prevail in the Middle East, indeed in our global village, without implementing the most basic of rights, to return home.

Dr. Salman Abu Sitta is the author of the "Palestinian Right to Return: Sacred, Legal and Possible", "The Register of Depopulated localities in Palestine" and "A 1948 map of Palestine".

New Initiative!!! Internet on Wheels - bridging the digital divide for Palestinian Refugees

Imagine the possibilities. a bus packed with children gazing onto a world of opportunity through internet, communicating for the first time with people all over the world, and developing computer skills they never imagined possible.

Internet on Wheels is an exciting new initiative currently under development by CEPAL and its partner organizations in Lebanon. This initiative is part of CEPAL's efforts to better respond to the educational needs of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon by including a greater focus on access to and knowledge of information and communication technologies. It is aimed at providing children in UNRWA schools with hands on training and access to computers and the internet in a creative and motivating learning environment. It is envisioned that the bus will rotate between schools providing an opportunity to share the resources between camps and reaching as many children as possible.

CEPAL is targeting a September 2001 start date and needs your help in making this exciting and innovative project a success. Please help us in securing resources (computers, software, and financial assistance) over the next 6 months. Contact us at info@cepal.ca for more information.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS OF CEPAL'S ADVISORY BOARD

It is with great pleasure that CEPAL announces three new members to its Board of Advisors: long-time supporters Dr. Nahla Abdo, Dr. Atif Kubursi and Ms. Deirdre Collings-Rohozinski.

Nahla Abdo is a Professor of Sociology at Carleton University, where she served on the Board of Governors for the Institute of Women Studies and for the Institute of Human Rights. She also helped establish the Women Studies Institute at Birzeit University. She is currently developing a Gender Research Unit at the Women's Empowerment Project under the Gaza Community Mental Health Program. She has published extensively in the area of women and the State in the Middle East.

Atif Kubursi is the President of the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations and is an expert and an advocate on Middle East issues including Palestinian Refugees' right of return. He is currently a Professor of Political Science at McMaster University.

Deirdre Collings Rohozinski inspired and supported the foundation of CEPAL through her work with UNIPAL in Lebanon. She has extensive knowledge of Palestinian refugees and has recently returned to Canada after completing an assignment with the United Nations in Rwanda.

We trust that you will join with us in welcoming Nahla, Atif and Deirdre to the extraordinary group of individuals who form our Advisory Board. We look forward to working with them and benefiting from their good sense and experience in continuing to build our organization's capacity to provide better educational opportunities for Palestinian refugees and raise awareness of their struggle.

CEPAL IN THE NEWS

Excerpt from Montreal Gazette article by Amanda Jelowicki, October 29, '00

...Something struck Sebastien Pierre-Roy about working in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon last summer. Despite living in dirty, cramped conditions in a politically unstable environment, the Palestinian children he was responsible for were the same as youngsters back in Canada. They liked to play, to laugh and to cause trouble just like children here.

He was saddened, however, by his encounters with Palestinian adults. They had lost their innocence, optimism and dreams for a brighter future. "When they are 16 or 17, they are supposed to start providing and thinking about what they are going to do. And at that age they begin to realize that they are blocked," Pierre-Roy said. "They get angry and frustrated when they are older they settle into the reality of (being refugees), and they get depressed. I got a strong sense of that."

Pierre-Roy, 23, spent July and August working at the Bourj el-Barajneh Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, where he taught French to children.

His trip was organized by the Canadian-Palestinian Educational Exchange, an organization founded in 1996 that seeks to ensure Palestinian refugees are accorded basic human rights by educating them. The group also aims to make Canadians aware of the plight of Palestinians.

Yesterday, Pierre-Roy spoke about his experiences in Lebanon at a meeting of CEPAL.

Pierre-Roy lived with a family in the camp of about 20,000 people, and he was struck by how sociable the refugees were. He said that every day visitors would stream in and out of his house, having coffee and chatting. "They think it is a paradise here (in Canada), and it is, but I also told them it is a very lonely existence. People don't just stop by to say hello. They make plans first."



Photo: E. Zorbas, 1999

PEYTON LYON: A FRIEND TO PALESTINIANS

Continued from front page

While most of us retire by 65 or earlier, it is not surprising that Peyton tried to retire at 85. He did not succeed. I am sure he will never succeed. He may change a job or two, but he cannot escape from his dedicated work and his staunch commitments. He may succeed in exiting from one place to another, but he will never exit from our gratitude, appreciation, respect, conscience and love.

Peyton we will continue to count on your voice, on your warmth, and on your knowledge. You have no choice, you are stuck with us in the trenches, and you cannot abandon us. Not now as our people are brutally gunned down by the forces of oppression. The torch you have carried for so long is still burning and will burn as long as there is darkness over our land and lives and our striving for justice is unfulfilled.

We are still counting on your articles and letters on foreign policy in the Middle East. We need more books. It is not enough that you wrote and co-wrote several books including, "Canada and World Affairs", "The Policy Question", and "Canada as an International Actor" as well as publishing a major article for the Canadian Institute of International Affairs' publication, "Behind the Headlines" titled, "Canada's Responsibility for Palestine". It is not enough that you were one of the co-founders of the Middle East Discussion Group. We are still waiting for more.

Born in Winnipeg in 1921, Peyton Lyon was a member of the RCAF 1940-45. He received a BA from the University of Manitoba in 1949. A Rhodes scholar, Dr. Lyon earned his MA and DPhil at Oxford University in 1953. He served in the Canadian Department of External Affairs 1953-59. He has been a professor of Political Science at the University of Western Ontario and at Carleton University. He has 5 books on Canadian Foreign Policy and numerous articles.

Pierre-Roy said he felt great empathy for the Palestinian refugees, who have been living at that particular camp for the last 52 years.

"These people feel they have been thrown out of their homes, and it's not their fault. They have been told by the world not to worry, that everything will be fine. They have been there for 52 years, and they know now they won't be going back. Sometimes I think they are slowly going crazy. They feel trapped and threatened. I think that they've got a feeling of abandonment from the Western and Arab nations."

Anmarie Crampton, 22, who taught English at the same camp as Pierre-Roy, said she felt tremendous satisfaction working in Lebanon for two months, but also felt saddened at the lifestyle the refugees live. "There are no open spaces or green space. Between the buildings, garbage and debris are everywhere. The electricity doesn't always work, the water gave my co-ordinator E. coli. They have infestation problems, and it's overcrowded," Crampton said.

"But a much bigger problem is there is no work, and a real lack of opportunities for them. They don't have citizenship in any country. They are barred from 72 professions in Lebanon, so all that's really left are labour jobs."

At yesterday's event, CEPAL members discussed ways to improve the group's profile in Montreal and then started into a brief but animated discussion about what many members perceive as an anti-Palestinian bias in the Western media.

"It's very clear to us that the media has not been portraying a very balanced picture of what's going on," said CEPAL president Maysa Jalbout, of the fighting that has rocked the Middle East for the last month.

"But we should focus on the fact that Palestinians have no human rights."

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