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CEPAL'S Plans for 2006

• by Shannon Dow, CEPAL President



Children of Bourj El-Barajneh. Taken by Marie-Eve Fiest (2005).

CEPAL's Board of Directors has been working hard to ensure that this year's Summer Program is as successful as in previous years. Giulia El-Dardiry, CEPAL's Overseas Program Director, has coordinated all aspects of Summer Program recruitment and selection, in addition to all aspects of volunteer training and pre-departure orientation. Sami Al-Hussieni, CEPAL's Treasurer, in coordination with Mohamed Zahaby, CEPAL's Fundraising Director, have been working towards refining CEPAL's fundraising strategy by seeking out new potential donors and sustaining members. In addition, they are working with our events committee, headed by past CEPAL board member Cyrene Hashash, to ensure that CEPAL's events are successful fundraising sources.

This year, CEPAL will host two main awareness-raising events in Ottawa, in addition to awareness-raising activities being organized by CEPAL's past and current Summer

Program volunteers in various cities across Canada. CEPAL will soon be celebrating the 2006 Summer Program launch in Ottawa, where we will introduce this year's volunteers, coordinators and CEPAL's Board of Directors. In addition, the Summer Program launch is an opportunity to learn more about what CEPAL volunteers do in the camps, and the type of awareness-raising they will be involved with upon their return to Canada. As with every year, CEPAL also plans to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This year the event will take place on November 27 on Parliament Hill.

Moreover, next year will be CEPAL's tenth year sending volunteers to teach language skills in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. This means that a great deal of time will be spent working towards next year's main event on

CEPAL Canadian-Palestinian Educational Exchange

CEPAL is a charitable 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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Parliament Hill, where we will not only commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, but we will also be celebrating ten years of work with our partners in the camps. We will have more information throughout the year regarding how to be involved in the planning for this event, and the details of where and when it will be held.

Our partners in the camps are looking forward to the arrival of CEPAL's 2006 Summer Program volunteers, and we are excited to be able to send such a dynamic team yet again. In order to sustain CEPAL's Summer Program, we rely on the generous support of our sustaining members and individual donations. I encourage you, in the pages to follow, to please read about how you can help support CEPAL in this and in future years. Your support is essential for the continuation of CEPAL's work in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, as well as in Canada.

CEPAL's 2006 Summer Program Volunteers

• by *Giulia El-Dardiry, CEPAL Vice President and Overseas Program Director*

CEPAL's 2006 Summer Program is well under way and we have recruited a dynamic and diverse group of volunteers who are sure to make CEPAL's ninth summer more successful than ever! After launching our 2006 recruitment campaign in January, we proceeded to interview twenty-two potential candidates from the Toronto, Ottawa, Montréal and Québec City areas, all of whom were exceptional; the selection committee had the difficult challenge of choosing the final seven volunteers and one coordinator from this group.

With Michelle Turner as a returning coordinator, we will be launching into the orientation phase of our program, with team training in May prior to volunteer departures for the camps in late June. Michelle and Amélie, our new Wavel coordinator, will be going over to Lebanon in late May-early June to set up this year's program in Bourj el-Barrajneh, Shatila and Wavel camps, and meet with partners to continue strengthening CEPAL's long and fruitful relationships with them, while exploring new ways that CEPAL can be of service to the camp communities.

During their stay in the camp, the volunteers will each be teaching English and French language skills, through informal techniques such as art and theatre, with two or three of CEPAL's partner organisations. CEPAL volunteers teach very different groups, with some having classes of small children and others working with youth or adults; the conditions are generally difficult, with small classrooms, few resources and more often than not, no electricity! The experience is challenging, at times frustrating, but ultimately extremely rewarding! Moreover, volunteers have the opportunity of living with host families, bringing them closer to the camp community and allowing them to

learn, on a far more personal level, about the history and current hardships of the camps.

Upon returning to Canada, these volunteers, then, will have a rich experience to share with the Canadian public, making a valuable and greatly needed contribution to raising awareness on the struggle of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.



Taken by Shauna Trainor (2005).

CEPAL's 2006 Coordinators

Michelle Turner

Lebanon Field Coordinator 2006

Hi there! My name is Michelle Turner and I am privileged to be this year's Lebanon Field Coordinator. Two summers ago, I was part of CEPAL's summer program as the Wavel Field Coordinator and I am excited to have the opportunity to work with our partner organisations once again for the benefit of the people we support, teach and learn from. Returning to work with CEPAL is very important to me both in terms of the solidarity-building work that we do and in terms of assisting with the growth of our organisation as one that values education as a means for social change. I am very much looking forward to rekindling the many relationships with people from the camps, who have been with me over the past two years through emails, letters and photographs. The skills, creativity and dedication of this year's group of volunteers makes me feel fortunate to be a member of CEPAL's team. Currently, I am at the University of Guelph finishing up a degree in Drama so that, in the future, I will be able to assist underprivileged youth find a voice.

Amélie Plaisance

Wavel Field Coordinator 2006

For the past ten years, I've had many interesting experiences that have helped me to discover my major interests. First, after my studies at CEGEP François-Xavier-Garneau, I went to work as a French monitor for two years in Ontario and British Columbia, where I realized that I had an interest and talent working with kids. So, I studied primary school teaching for four years at Laval University in Québec City, and while I was studying there, I started getting involved in theatre and I discovered a real passion!

Also, I had the chance to live and volunteer in different communities in the world. Living in these communities, I learned Spanish and realized that I had a good ability at learning languages. I also found myself being able to adapt and enjoy different cultures. After my teaching degree, I decided to put my passions together and I started to create a theatre for kids. I did a one-year degree in theatre at Laval University and later on got a great work opportunity as a theatre teacher with deaf kids at l'École oraliste de Québec pour enfants sourds!

Now, as well as being a teacher, I am involved in theatre and I travel whenever I get the chance to do

so. I consider myself as a very lucky person and I feel the need to give back and share my talents and love with people around me! To be a coordinator in a Palestinian refugee camp will be a wonderful opportunity for me to do so.

CEPAL's 2006 Volunteers

Farrah Byckalo-Khan

Farrah Byckalo-Khan is committed to participating in grassroots initiatives that prevent and end violence in her community. Since February 2001, she has been a part of the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children peer education program, Respect in Action, developing and facilitating popular education workshops for youth on violence prevention. Farrah also writes a zine about issues of interpersonal violence in Toronto. Currently she is completing her Masters of Social Work in Social Justice and Diversity stream at the University of Toronto. Farrah believes that by volunteering with CEPAL, she can bear witness to the challenges and struggles that Palestinian refugees experience in Lebanon. She will use this knowledge to challenge misconceptions, speak out and participate in Palestinian solidarity movements in Canada.

Julie Champagne

Hi, my name is Julie Champagne. I was born and raised in Montreal. As a CEGEP student, I participated in an internship to Nicaragua and since then I have been interested in International Development. I graduated from McGill last June, where my major was International Development and African Studies. During my studies at McGill, I participated in the Canadian Field Studies in Africa program. This consisted of a three-month semester in Kenya, where our courses were based around Kenya's politics, history, and wildlife. After graduating, I spent some time travelling in Europe. I am currently working at a research firm in Montreal. As well, I volunteer at a home for people with AIDS. I enjoy reading and outdoor activities.

Gus Constantinou

My name is Gus Constantinou and I am a fourth year student at the University of Toronto completing a double major in Political Science and International Development. A significant portion of my studies have tended to focus on various Middle Eastern issues and the regions ever-evolving history. I have

Welcome to the New CEPAL Board

On January 22, CEPAL held its Annual General Meeting and elected its new board for 2006; a welcomed and appreciated group of gifted and dedicated individuals. CEPAL would like to thank our members who attended the Annual General Meeting, and gave the new Executive Board of Directors their vote of confidence. CEPAL is extremely happy to announce the names of our new team!

- Sami Alhusseini, Treasurer
- Shannon Dow, President
- Mohamed Zahaby, Fundraising Director
- Giulia El-Dardiry, Vice President and Overseas Program Director

We look forward to a promising year, as we plan our priorities for 2006, and prepare for activities both locally and overseas.



participated in a variety of social justice and human rights organizations for quite some time. When not writing my own bio, I dabble in photography, music, literature, and print journalism.

After a brief visit to Lebanon this past summer, I made a promise to myself that I would return to Lebanon's refugee camps in any productive capacity I could. I am therefore excited and glad to be participating in the CEPAL summer program. In particular, I find CEPAL's dual mandate effective. By combining the dual tasks of promoting a basic human right, such as education, in the camps of Lebanon along with the raising awareness in Canada through a respected organization such as CEPAL, a contribution can be made to bettering the lives of Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon.

Antoine Dion-Ortega

I was born in Montreal, son of a Québécois mother and a Chilean father, who was a political exile in 1973. I lived in the Caribbean from the age of seven, first in the Dominican Republic (where Spanish became my second language), then in Haiti. My mother and I were repatriated during the coup d'état of 1991. Throughout my childhood and into my adolescence, I travelled regularly to South America to visit my father, who lived temporarily in Cuba, then Bolivia, before returning to Chile permanently in the 1990s. I believe that I know and understand this world region well given this strong paternal heritage.

I studied literature since 1997 until receiving my MA in March 2006 when I defended my thesis. I worked extensively, as a research assistant and as a student,

on V.S. Naipaul's body of work. I now work as a French teacher, in the hopes of eventually obtaining a CEGEP position teaching literature. I have a young son, Jericho, who is two years of age.

Meaghan Johnstone

Hello everyone! My name is Meaghan Johnstone. I am a communication studies student at Concordia University, and I specialize in film production. I also work part-time as an office manager for a group called Sustainable Concordia, which is our campus' eco-social justice group.

I was first drawn to the CEPAL summer program because it seemed like a fascinating opportunity to combine travelling, volunteering for a worthy cause, working with people, putting media skills to good use, and furthering my own personal knowledge about important social justice issues. In 2003, I backpacked through South-East Asia for four months, which perked my interest in international tensions and cross-cultural education. I'm thrilled to have the chance to work with CEPAL this summer, and I can't wait to experience the enlightening and (most probably) humbling challenges that will come with it.

Aude Leroux-Lévesque

My name is Aude Leroux-Lévesque and I am currently doing a Major in Communication Studies and a Minor in Political Sciences at Concordia University in Montreal. I have been involved in many things in my life, often related to arts and travelling, but also to social sciences and sports. I have experience as a basketball team coach, after having played myself for

eight years. In terms of the arts, photography and film are my major interests, and being able to use this passion while travelling is extremely stimulating for me. I have done voluntary work in Cuba before, and after I saw many other countries in Europe, North Africa and South America, I became fascinated by all the different cultures of the world! In 2003, I worked for six months in Scotland in order to learn English, and I am now learning Arabic.

For a few years already I have been interested by the politics of the Middle East, and being part of CEPAL this year is a real privilege for me. I see it as an incredible opportunity to work for a cause I cherish and learn more about the beautiful cultures of the Middle East.

Laurel Pfeiffer

I am in my second year at the University of Guelph studying International Development and Anthropology. Through my program I have acquired an interest and passion for the protection and enhancement of basic human rights, especially the importance of an accessible education. While at school I am actively involved with Save the Children Canada, promoting and raising awareness of child rights in Canada and abroad. I have always greatly enjoyed working with children and I hope that my experience interacting with them on many different levels will be useful while working with children in the refugee camp. I feel very honoured and privileged to work with CEPAL this summer and hope to broaden my scope of awareness concerning Palestinian refugee struggles. As well, I look forward to utilizing my experiences in Lebanon by shedding some light on the challenges facing these refugees and increasing awareness of their plight in Canada when I return.

☞ A Special Thanks ☞

CEPAL would like to extend a very special thank you to our Sustaining Members for their continued support. Thank you very much to:

- Hala Al-Madi
- Mark Assad
- Bahija Reghāi
- Ismail El-Assi
- Dr. Jehan El-Dadah
- Suehila Elkateb
- Ali El-Yassir
- Gilbert Fleischmann
- Maysa Jalbout
- Jacques Mainguy
- Faraj Nakhleh
- Mustafa Shabib
- Shannon Smith
- Joan Worthington
- Ralph and Myrna Zeitoun
- Mark Zeitoun
- Monzer Zimmo

Celebrate the Summer Program Launch

Join us June 15th for an evening of fine Middle Eastern cuisine, beautiful music, and inspiring art to celebrate the launch of the 2006 Summer Program.

The event will take place in Ottawa at Jericho Mediterranean Restaurant. The walls of Jericho

are covered with magnificent pieces of stain glass art created by the restaurant's owner Raouf Omar. His work will be on sale and auctioned with a part of the proceeds going to CEPAL's Summer Program.

Also included in the evening is

the marvelous talent of Kamal Elkadri. Kamal is a world renowned musician who has enchanted the world over with his mastery of music.

Tickets are priced at \$50. For more information, please visit our website at www.cepal.ca.

Greetings from a Valued Partner

• by *Olfat Mahmoud, Director Women's Humanitarian Organization in Bourj el-Barajneh camp*



The WHO river trip. Marie-Ève Fiest (2005).

Greetings CEPAL volunteers and supporters! Another year has quickly gone by and soon we will be preparing to welcome the new volunteers for summer 2006.

Although much has happened in Lebanon in the past year, with the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, little has changed in the lives of Palestinians. Refugees are following the political situation closely in a state of anxiety, wondering if developments will be for better or for worse. But as Lebanese struggle to patch together their own national unity, Palestinians are left on the sidelines. Promises of lifting restrictions that exclude Palestinians from the workforce never materialized, and as the issue of arms inside and outside the camp resurfaced in the political debate, tensions have risen too political and unnecessary.

This heightened sense of uncertainty affects life in the camps, and especially youth and children, many of whom already suffer the psychosocial consequences of stressful living conditions. The Women's Humanitarian Organization (WHO) is addressing this issue by providing a counseling program for staff working in the After School Center and other projects. The training, led by an experienced Australian social

worker, will build the counseling skills of our staff and help them to identify the needs of children.

Our children and youth programs are continuing to expand and develop. While maintaining our core educational support and recreational activities, we hope to expand our target group to include programs for children with minor disabilities who have been pushed out of the educational system. These children are capable of learning basic reading, writing and mathematics, but because the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools are already overburdened, and currently lack programs for children with special needs, these children find themselves in the streets. In addition, this year's summer activities will focus on Human Rights as a general theme.

Although WHO deeply believes in the benefits of the activities we offer youth, and that they make a positive difference in the lives of young people and their families, it is very difficult to measure improvement in the overall situation of the camp. Our programs are affected by difficult external factors, such as the difficult political and economic circumstances. WHO works with families to impress upon them the right of their children to decide what programs they wish to attend. Although families agree that their children should have a voice, financial constraints usually end up being the deciding factor. Politically, WHO feels camp life has become more conservative. Lately, some families feel pressured not to send their children to activities that mix boys and girls.

It is in the context of this difficult situation that we are grateful for the continued support of CEPAL volunteers. Palestinians, especially in Lebanon, feel that the international community has forgotten them, and that there is little hope for positive change in the future. In addition to supporting children academically and exchanging experience with WHO project staff, the presence of CEPAL volunteers reminds the refugee community that they have not been forgotten. Volunteers form lasting relationships with community residents, especially children, which alleviates their feeling of isolation. People genuinely appreciate the initiative of the volunteers to leave their country for a summer, and brave the unpleasant summer months in the camp. Finally, WHO and the community are aware that the volunteers will go back to Canada with a better understanding of the situation of Palestinian refugees, which they can share with their fellow citizens.

Continuing Our Work and Fundraising Needs

Based on CEPAL's organizational budget, the total funding needed for this 2006 is \$35,000.

All of our budget and resources revolve around the Summer Program, which accounts for about 80 percent of CEPAL's overall expenses. This means that for every dollar CEPAL receives from fundraising efforts, approximately 80 cents of that dollar goes toward the Summer Program.

CEPAL relies on a number of funding sources, and throughout the year we are involved in fundraising activities to ensure we meet our budgetary needs. For example, our sustaining members are essential for the development of CEPAL and the Summer Program. Sustaining members contribute, collectively, about \$10,000 to CEPAL each year. In addition, CEPAL holds two main events in Ottawa annually – the Summer Program launch and the November 29 International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People – which are important fundraising opportunities. From these combined events, CEPAL fundraises on average \$7,000 to \$8,000. We also receive donations throughout the year from individual donors. Finally, but certainly not least important, each Summer Program volunteer fundraises \$2,500 toward the Summer Program.

In addition, a number of organizations have helped CEPAL through co-sponsorship of CEPAL's events. These organizations include Association of Palestinian Arab Canadians (APAC), Ahlul Bayt Center, International Development Research Center (IDRC), MP Libby Davies (Vancouver East), Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR), Canadian Alliance for Palestine (CAP), The Canaanite Canadian Knowledge Center, Canadian Friends of Sabeel (CFOS), National Council on Canada Arab Relations (NCCAR), and Women Against Occupation (WAO).

How Can You Help?

There are many ways in which you can donate to help CEPAL continue working in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, as well as in Canada. Tax receipts are issued for donations of \$25 or more in February of each year.

1. *Become a Sustaining Member*

CEPAL is privileged to have a Sustaining Member donor club. This category was established to give recognition to those individuals and families who provide the financial support that is so necessary for CEPAL to conduct its activities. They pledge a mini-

mum of \$500 to CEPAL on an ongoing, annual basis. At the same time, we hope they will provide a structure through which we can encourage ongoing and increased giving to CEPAL and its programs.

2. *Make a monthly commitment for one year*

To donate to CEPAL on a monthly basis, you can mail us 12 post-dated cheques for monthly payments of \$10, \$15, \$25 - or any amount you choose. You can also make monthly payments on CEPAL's website through CanadaHelps.org. For more information, visit www.cepal.ca and go to the "Donate Now" icon at the bottom left corner of the home page.

3. *Sponsor a day in the camps*

It costs \$40 per day to sponsor a Summer Program volunteer for the duration of the Summer Program each year (July-August). By donating \$40, you enable one volunteer to live and teach for one day of the Summer Program.

4. *Join us at a CEPAL event*

Attend one of our upcoming events and make a donation there, and at the same time have the opportunity to meet CEPAL's board members, Summer Program volunteers and other CEPAL supporters!

How to Donate

By Mail

Send a cheque to:

CEPAL
323 Chapel St.,
Ottawa, ON
K1N 7Z2

Online

Make a donation through our secure CanadaHelps account by going to:

<http://cepal.ca/donations.htm>

. Appeal to All Canadians .

Support The Palestinian Right of Return!

CEPAL affirms its position of supporting Palestinian refugees' right to choose to return to their homeland or to resettle in another country, and to compensation for their losses and suffering. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are urging CEPAL and the international non-governmental community to assist in raising awareness of their rights, especially the right of return.

2006 marks the 58th anniversary of "al-Nakba" – the catastrophe – that created the first wave of Palestinian refugees and led to the continued suffering of their descendants. In Lebanon, the Palestinians' half-century of exile has been marked by a 16 year saga of unimaginable violence – the 1975-1991 war, with the 1982 Israeli invasions, protracted sieges of Palestinian camps, and massacres. Since peace returned to Lebanon in 1991, the Lebanese have been busy reconstructing their country, buoyed by the hope of a better future. By contrast, the Palestinians in Lebanon have been facing ever-greater socio-economic and political pressures.

The number of Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon has risen from 127, 600 in 1950, to approximately 394,532 today. Currently, Palestinian refugees make up an estimated 10 per cent of the population of Lebanon. Of all the Palestinian communities, the refugees in Lebanon continue to confront the greatest insecurity: Israel will never allow them to return to their homes, Lebanon adamantly rejects their permanent resettlement in Lebanon, and the current international "Peace Process" effectively ignores them. They wait in limbo – not citizens of any country.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face specific difficulties. Considered as foreigners, they are prohibited by law from employment in more than 70 trades and professions, they are denied social and civil rights and they have very limited access to public health or educational facilities. The majority rely entirely on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) as the sole provider of education, health and relief and social services. Over 60% of Palestinian families in Lebanon are living below the UN-established poverty line, and they form a greater percentage of UN-defined "hardship cases" than any other Palestinian community, including Gaza.

Canadians have an important role in supporting the Palestinian right of return. CEPAL urges every Canadian to contribute to this process. You can support Palestinians' rights and the right of return by: 1) Writing a letter to your Members of Parliament calling on our government to uphold international law and human rights including the Palestinian refugee's Right of Return; 2) Provide financial contributions to support CEPAL's efforts in providing education to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and in raising awareness in Canada; 3) Donate valuable time to assist organizations such as CEPAL both in Canada and overseas.

1. From <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/lebanon.html>. Last accessed March 24, 2006.

find us on the web

www.cep.al.ca