

The Arch

Newsletter of the Canadian-Palestinian Educational Exchange

Pausing to Move Forward: Plans for 2007



2007 marks the tenth anniversary of CEPAL's Summer Program. This is an exciting year for CEPAL as we prepare to commemorate this anniversary during CEPAL's main annual event, the *United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People*. This is also a year of reflection for CEPAL in light of last year's war in Lebanon and for future Summer Programs.

It is with deep regret that, due to the current heightened tensions in Lebanon and in consideration of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade most recent recommendations regarding travel by Canadian citizens to Lebanon, the CEPAL Board of Directors have made the decision to suspend CEPAL's 2007 Summer Program. This decision was also based on discussions with CEPAL's partners in the refugee camps in Lebanon, who, while they express continued need for the Summer Program, have also stated that the present situation in the country is tense, and may pose unacceptable security concerns for the Summer Program volunteers.

Inside this Issue

1. Pausing to Move Forward: Plans for 2007
2. Introducing CEPAL's Board of Directors
3. Needs-assessment of CEPAL's Summer Program
4. Get involved!
5. Show Your Support
5. A New Look for Cepal.ca
6. New Awareness-raising Coordinator
6. Make a Donation

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.

While the suspension of the 2007 Summer Program is unfortunate, CEPAL remains dedicated to continue its commitment to our partners and members. We see the suspension of the Summer Program as an opportunity to reinforce links with CEPAL's partners, and to review with them CEPAL's Summer Program. As an alternative to the 2007 Summer Program, this year the CEPAL Board of Directors is therefore following two main objectives that fall in line with CEPAL's mandate. First, a formal needs-assessment of CEPAL's Summer Program will be undertaken this summer (see page 3). The purpose of this needs-assessment is to assess the current needs of CEPAL's partners in the refugee camps, particularly in light of last year's war, and to ensure that CEPAL is meeting these needs. Information gathered from this assessment will be used to strengthen CEPAL's future Summer Programs. Second, awareness-raising efforts in Canada will be strengthened and pursued throughout the year in various cities across the country with the help of CEPAL's Summer Program alumnus - over 60 individuals who live in various cities across Canada and internationally.

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 the pursuit of the needs-assessment, a stronger awareness-raising component in Canada and a strong Summer Program next year. We encourage you to please visit www.cepala.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, CEPAL President

Introducing CEPAL's Board of Directors

CEPAL is pleased to announce the new Board of Directors. This year four exceptional individuals were voted in as Directors during CEPAL's Annual General Meeting in January: Shannon Dow as President, Gilberte Fleischmann as Communications Director, Niketh Pareek as Director of IT, Fundraising and the Treasury, and Philippe Johnson as Vice-President and Overseas Program Director. Please read more about these individuals in the following biographies:

Shannon Dow

Shannon holds a master's degree in Socio-cultural Anthropology, and is the coordinator of the National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research, a research partnership between Aboriginal communities and academic researchers which aims to address the mental health needs of Aboriginal people in Canada. Shannon 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. This is her second term serving as President.

Gilberte Fleischmann

Gilberte is retired from the public service where she held various positions, in the field of negotiations with Aboriginal people. Her last job was as director of self-government negotiations in the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. From this vast experience, she brings her management and her negotiations skills. Since she retired, her interests led her to work with CEPAL and with the Center for Conflict Management, Peace and Development in Nepal, in both cases as a volunteer. As a francophone, she brings with her the opportunity to expand awareness of the Palestinian refugees and to increase CEPAL's membership to the francophone community.

Niketh Pareek

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. He strongly believes in CEPAL's mandate of empowering Palestinians through access to education and raising awareness of their plight. Serving in the roles of Treasurer, Fundraising and Information Technology Director, Niketh aims to continue building upon the legacy of past Board members who have created a remarkable organization. Niketh is currently employed as a Web Consultant at an advertising agency. He has worked as a management and IT consultant,

project manager and corporate trainer. He holds a graduate diploma in journalism and a Bachelors of Commerce in Finance. He has been published in The National Post, The Globe and Mail, and is a co-author of a marketing textbook.

Philippe Johnson

Hailing from the cold North-East of Alberta, Philippe is currently finishing his fifth and final year of the Interdisciplinary Program in International Specialist Co-op Program in International Development Studies at the University of Toronto. Having previous experience working with children and volunteering in the Middle East, Philippe was a CEPAL Summer Program volunteer in the summer of 2002. He re-joined the CEPAL Summer Program in 2005 in order to return to Lebanon as the Lebanon Field Coordinator. From there he went on to complete a 10 month internship with a microfinance organization in Sri Lanka as part of his University of Toronto program. He is now back in Toronto and eager to combine his knowledge of development and volunteerism along with his experiences with CEPAL into a successful board position as Overseas Program Director for 2007.

Needs-assessment of CEPAL's Summer Program

CEPAL is entering its 10th year of work among the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon. What started out as a vision shared by three people with shared interests in the plight of the Palestinian refugees, has grown into a more structured organization that has sent over 60 volunteers and interns to the camps in Lebanon. CEPAL has garnered a solid reputation in the camps where it works, and local NGOs continue to express gratitude and interest for the organisation's work.

In the current political climate of the Middle East which indicates that a political settlement to the plight of Palestinian refugees will still be long in the waiting, it is CEPAL's responsibility to ensure that its programmes continue to respond to real

and pressing needs as identified by the community and those researchers and service providers who have worked in the community for lengthy periods of time.

In addition to the 10th year anniversary of CEPAL programming, given that the 2007 Summer Program has been suspended, this summer marks a particularly important impasse in the evolution of the CEPAL Summer Program conducive to the implementation of a formal needs assessment and field evaluation. While the suspension of the 2007 Summer Program is unfortunate, this is an important time to assess CEPAL's role in the refugee camps in Lebanon.

Justification for mandate / programme Review

CEPAL has always responded to the needs of partner organizations. It is therefore essential for CEPAL to assess its programmes, particularly at a time when the political situation seems to indicate that the camps will be in place for a long time to come. In order for CEPAL's Summer Program to be responsive, well-integrated and properly developed in the future, it is crucial to gather information on its current work, its possible development and where local people feel it would be most effective.

Review of specific subject areas

CEPAL needs to ensure that the educational subjects it is tackling are still priorities. There have been indications in the past few years that broader programmes are needed, for example math and science training.

Review of awareness-raising / solidarity impact

Half of CEPAL's mandate relates to awareness-raising work in Canada, and CEPAL is responsible for communicating with NGO partners to gain insight into how they perceive CEPAL's awareness-raising endeavors to be effective and accurate ways of portraying the Palestinian situation in Lebanon.

In addition CEPAL has always understood its work in the camps as a form of solidarity with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It is important to see the extent to which the presence of Canadian volunteers over the years has indeed been perceived (or not) as a form of solidarity among the refugee camp communities where CEPAL works.

Personnel

Two CEPAL Directors will travel to Lebanon to carry out a formal needs' assessment of CEPAL's educational programmes: the Overseas Program Director and the President. Both individuals are in an excellent position to conduct this needs-assessment given their extensive knowledge of CEPAL and their work in the refugee camps where CEPAL works, in addition to their educational backgrounds.

Timeframe

The duration of the stay will be between 08 – 25 August 2007.

Methodology

The methodology will be a mix of in-depth semi-structured interviews, meetings and focus group discussions all looking generally at the following fundamental issues: 1) General refugee camp priorities / needs; 2) CEPAL's past contribution; 3) CEPAL's possible future contribution, and 4) Regions of intervention.

For more information about this assessment please visit www.cepal.ca.

Get Involved!

We are always looking for dedicated volunteers to help us with our work in Canada, and we encourage you get involved by helping us with our upcoming tenth anniversary event through the following opportunities:

Events Director position open

CEPAL is currently recruiting for an Events Director. The CEPAL Events Director develops, directs and oversees the implementation of all CEPAL events and activities for awareness or fundraising, and is responsible for the delegation of all tasks associated with the successful implementation of all events and activities. This year, the Events Director will have the exciting opportunity to coordinate CEPAL's tenth anniversary celebration, to be held in November on Parliament Hill. For more information about this position and how to apply please visit www.cepal.ca.

Events committee meeting

The Board of Directors is actively seeking your support to help organize CEPAL's tenth anniversary event and commemoration of the *United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People* which will take place November 29, 2007. You may contribute to the organization of this event by becoming a volunteer as part of CEPAL's Events Committee. The Events Committee will meet for the first time May 27 at 1:00 PM at CEPAL's head office (323 Chapel Street, Ottawa). If you are interested in becoming involved with the organization of this event, please send an email to Shannon Dow, CEPAL President, at shannon.dow@cepal.ca.

Volunteer

In addition to preparing for CEPAL's tenth anniversary event, CEPAL is always looking for volunteers to help in the running of the organization in Canada. Whether it be in desktop publishing, book keeping, translation, content contributing, or event organizing, your time and skills can be put to use for the benefit of CEPAL's programs. Please visit www.cepal.ca for information on how to volunteer in Canada, or write to info@cepal.ca.

Show your support.

There are many ways in which you can express your direct support for the plight of Palestinian refugees. For example:

1. Write messages of support that can be posted on the blogs that you will soon find on the new CEPAL website;
2. Send a message to your Member of Parliament, expressing your concern about the situation of the Palestinian refugees and the need to address in future negotiations the Right of Return for Palestinians. (When writing them, you may wish to consult the new CEPAL website for information);
3. Write to a friend about CEPAL and encourage them to become a member of CEPAL.



A New Look for Cepal.ca

While in the course of implementing CEPAL's 2007 awareness raising strategy, the Board of Directors deemed it necessary to install a content management system (CMS) to aid in the administration of CEPAL's web properties. The Board believed it was necessary as a CMS improves CEPAL's ability to communicate with members, partners, volunteers or the general public interested in matters concerning Palestinians refugees and their struggle for the recognition of their rights. Our new site is also designed with accessibility standards in mind, which means that those with visual and hearing disabilities can also read and learn about CEPAL's programs and the plight of Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon.

Look out for new features to our site over the next few months, these include:

- Blogs
- Customized content for registered members
- Social bookmarking
- Event registration
- Calendar

We are still adding content to our site and aim to reach all interested francophones by making CEPAL.ca a fully bilingual site by the summer. We also endeavour to increase our visibility on the web by optimizing our pages for popular search engines.

If you're interested in learning more about what we have accomplished so far regarding our website, send us an e-mail at info@cepal.ca.

New Awareness-raising Coordinator

We are pleased to announce that CEPAL has a new Awareness-raising Coordinator. Chaker Khazal is a student at York University and past student of CEPAL's Summer Program. Raised in Bourj el-Barajneh refugee camp, Chaker is currently undertaking graduate studies in film, and has agreed to coordinate CEPAL's awareness-raising activities across Canada. A calendar of activities will soon be posted on CEPAL's website, so please stay tuned for an event near you!

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. Please visit www.cepal.ca to donate on-line.
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. 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: 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.

4. Become a Sustaining Member. CEPAL relies heavily on its membership for fundraising, and particularly 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. 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. 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.

Sign up to receive the CEPAL Digest!

The CEPAL Digest is a weekly listserv email that includes relevant news and information about Palestinian refugees, as well as letters or "refugee diaries" written by Palestinians living in the refugee camps where CEPAL works. To view refugee diaries from past issues and to sign up to receive the CEPAL Digest, please visit www.cepal.ca.

Contact Us!

The Canadian-Palestinian
Educational Exchange
323 Chapel Street, 3rd Level
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
K1N 7Z2

Tel: (613) 236-7825
Fax: (613) 236-9187

E-mail: info@cepal.ca