



## PROJECT HOPE UPDATE: FEBRUARY 2008

[www.projecthope.ps](http://www.projecthope.ps)



Newsletter

February 2008

### Dear Project,

The year 2007 began beneath the spell of a dark cloud of pessimism and misery for millions of Palestinians suffering through the effects of a pervasive international aid and economic embargo which permeated every level of society in the occupied Palestinian territories. Towards the end of the year, some optimism was returning with a slight improvement in the security situation and large promises made at the Paris Conference. These hopes though have been tempered to start 2008 with renewed incursions, stalled peace negotiations and the crisis in Gaza.

Amidst this chaos and misery, Project Hope continued stubbornly to persevere within its mandate of making the lives of disadvantaged young Palestinians better through a combination of progressive activities aimed at building skills and improving their mental health ... letting children be children,



youth be youth, and people be human.

In this February 2008 edition of Project Hope's newsletter you will be provided with an account of our activities over the past few months and an overall summary for 2007.



## English as a Global Language

English is the world language. Learning English opens doors to those who learn it. Project Hope's English classes represent an opportunity to learn practical communication skills in the language. Classes include different spoken accents; grammar, writing, conversation, and even games and art.

In 2007, Project Hope taught an average of more than 250 students per month. Although the focus is on children and youth, some classes were organized for adults.

What is amazing about these numbers is the generally weak financial support for what is by far Project Hope's most popular activity in both demand and numbers served. These numbers are kept up only through thousands of volunteer hours and extra time put in by Project Hope staff. These classes have not only a skills building component but a mental health component as well. They take place as a group activity in a safe and secure environment where participants are able to express themselves constructively and freely. Learning English is itself a normal activity in the midst of an abnormal living environment. It provides young Palestinians with a feeling of empowerment, mastering an important new skill while giving them a feeling of control in their own lives. Participants also get exposed to a new world that opens their minds, getting the chance to converse with a foreigner in a city that has essentially been cut-off from the outside world by years of constant conflict.

Project Hope's goal is to double the number of English and French placements per month in 2008, while also improving the overall quality of the activities in a proposed *Bridge to the World* program. However, this will depend completely on the support we can earn. If you are interested in learning more about *Bridge to the World* and ways to support it, contact us at [projecthope@projecthope.ps](mailto:projecthope@projecthope.ps). Further contact information is provided at the end of this newsletter.



## French as a Second Language

There is also interest in French as a second language in Palestine. French classes are taught by drawing upon available International and Palestinian French-speaking volunteers. As of the 1st of April, 2007, there has been financial support for the existing French program.

This support is from the French Consulate in Jerusalem for a period of fifteen months. In 2007, Project Hope served on average over 60 students per month, its focus on children in the Refugee Camps and the Old City.

## In This Edition

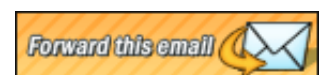
English as a Global Language  
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## Support Project Hope



It is through the generous support of individuals such as **yourself** that makes our work possible. Please support us by donating so that we can continue providing life-sustaining and life-enabling humanitarian activities for Palestinian children. Become a "Friend of Hope" by donating one time \$80 or four-times \$20 per year. Every donation helps and all donations are welcome. It is easy to donate by Paypal or Credit Card through the above link. To find out how to donate by cheque so that you can receive a tax receipt in Canada or the USA, email: [projecthope@projecthope.ps](mailto:projecthope@projecthope.ps)

You can also provide support for Project Hope's work by talking about it with your family, friends and colleagues; or by contacting us to organize a presentation about our work in your city with your union local, student association or other organization.



## Sawerna!



One of the most striking characteristics a visitor to Palestine notices is when she or he pulls out their camera to take picture, suddenly to be



### Social Justice Workshops

Project Hope continues with its Social Justice workshops. They are a forum used to explore topics related to issues in Social Justice and Human Rights. Project Hope is completing the first half in the second year of its Canadian-funded workshops. The primary goal is to provide an open environment where Palestinian youth can

discuss their many different views in each workshop. The program is funded by the Canadian non-governmental organization Rights and Democracy.

surrounded by a crowd of Palestinian children shouting out "Sawerna;" wanting their pictures to be taken. Palestinian children are in love with cameras. For these children it is usually enough just to have their picture taken and then to see it on a digital screen. It is a much more eventful life experience when they get to use one.

### Zatoun



[www.zatoun.com](http://www.zatoun.com)

Zatoun is not just a primary financial but a moral sponsor for Project Hope. We highly encourage our supporters in Canada and the USA to buy Zatoun's fair trade Palestinian agricultural products and to promote Zatoun to their friends and colleagues.

Buying Zatoun may cost a little more than purchasing the same product at your local supermarket, but this is for a reason. Zatoun is designed to give a fair deal for Palestinian farmers while earning extra funds to plant new olive trees and support humanitarian initiatives such as Project Hope.

[Buy Zatoun!](#)

### Zaytoun



[www.zaytoun.org](http://www.zaytoun.org)

Zaytoun is an ethical business that was established to support marginalized Palestinian farming communities by finding a place for them in the UK market. Zaytoun also provides support Project Hope through the sale of olive oil soap produced in Nablus, historically one of the world's main soap production centers.

[Buy Zaytoun!](#)

### Nablus



### Art

Every month Project Hope engages in a variety of creative arts activities, supporting many different good ideas brought forth by its volunteers. The past few months were no exception with activities in painting, murals and drawing. Currently Project Hope is engaged in a pilot art therapy project, which

we hope to establish into a continuous year-round program. The goal will be to provide children new skills to express their emotions and ideas through art, allowing them to transform potentially traumatic experiences into a creative and enriching activity ... and having a lot of fun in the process.



### Photography

This Canadian-led project aimed to enable young Palestinians to explore the world of photography. Project Hope carried out this project in the Dar Al-Fonon center in Old Askar Refugee Camp to teach the children basics in photography, how to take the best

shot and the qualities of the best spot for taking a picture. In the end, the children learned the first steps that qualify them to be good photographers.



### Puppet Show

Project Hope organizes or sponsors large parties for kids at various times in the year. In December events were held for 200 children at the Eithar school, 300 kids in Balata Refugee Camp and 250 kids in Old Askar Refugee Camp. Project Hope invited the "Tantourah" theater group to perform at

the event; "Tantourah" theater group is a Palestinian group from Jerusalem which performs puppet shows around the world. These events were made possible through the sponsorship of the Arab branch of Motorola with a fund promised in early 2007.



## First Aid and Healthy Living Initiative

In November and December more than 230 women at various women's centers in Nablus Old City, Old Askar and Balata and Al-Fara Refugee Camps, and 6 villages near Nablus were given Basic First Aid and Healthy Living Initiatives workshops. This included teaching CPR and the Recovery

Position, checking blood pressure and blood sugar levels of any women who wanted it and giving them appropriate medical advice. Two professional medical nurses from New York and a British trained paramedic led the project with two translators from Project Hope who have experience as street medics dealing with casualties during incursions and fighting in Nablus.

In addition, a donation of medication, and some money to buy further medication, was provided for a sick 11 month old child. Project Hope does not engage in regular medical activities but has nonetheless facilitated a number of them over the years.

### 2007 Summary of Activities

2007 was another busy year for Project Hope, stretching resources to provide a variety of high quality activities.

- English classes for 3 166 placements (an average of 264 students per month).
- French classes for 742 placements (an average of 62 students per month).
- limited German and Spanish classes.
- Arabic classes for International volunteers.
- 50+ international volunteers from 9 different countries.
- 28+ Palestinian volunteers throughout the year.
- Social justice workshops for 90 students in 6 different eight-week workshops.
- Photography workshops: 17 girls aged 12 to 15 attending an UNRWA girls' school; 12 boys and girls aged 10 to 15 at the Dar Al-Fonon Center in Old Askar Refugee Camp.
- Puppet Theater for more than 750 kids in Nablus City and the surrounding Refugee Camps.
- Medical workshops (15) for 230 women, most of them mothers, in Nablus, Refugee Camps and villages.
- Multiple drawing and painting activities aimed at children, often carried out in conjunction with a language class.
- Three major mural projects for 100+ total participants: including, the walls of the Dar Al-Fonon Center in Old Askar Refugee Camp, the walls of the Balata Youth Center in the Balata Refugee Camp, and the walls of the Happy Childhood Center in the Balata Refugee Camp.
- A Car Art project designed by 7 volunteers from An Najah National University's Fine Arts department and 3 International volunteers, meant to be an "Exhibition on Wheels."
- A "Dome of the Rock" replica created in Balata Refugee Camp.
- Kids parties in Askar Refugee Camp held during Ramadan, and Circus shows held in May in Nablus and the New Askar Refugee Camp for 130 children.
- Music workshops in Nablus and refugee camps to teach children and youth basic skills with select instruments.
- Projects with 32 different community organizations and 4 schools.

Of Note: We were not able to complete the Shadow Theater project



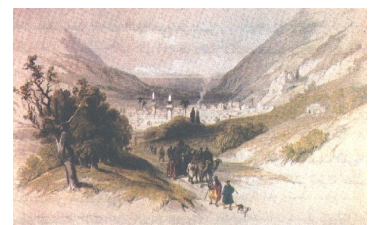
Nablus is a major Palestinian city and the major center for the northern region of the West Bank. It is an established population center that has been inhabited for thousands of years. The city has numerous historical sites and religious significance to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Overwhelmingly Muslim, the city still has small Christian and Jewish (Samaritan) communities. Nablus was once the industrial heartland of Palestine but its economy is now in ruins; the city has seen some of the worst conflict.

Nablus is abutted by four major refugee camps. Many of its inhabitants are themselves refugees. The majority population of it and its refugee camps' is under the age of 25.

Despite all of the challenges, in fact because of conditions making it difficult for NGOs to work there, Project Hope is based out of and carries out most of its aid work in Nablus.

Nablus is the Arabic form of the city's original Roman name, *Flavia Neapolis*. By name it is actually the sister city of Naples, Italy, whose Roman name *Neapolis* (New City) has the Italian form Napoli.

### Did you know?



In 1799 Nablus was a hill town of minor regional importance. Legend holds that a contingent of French troops under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte was repelled by defenders in Nablus. Some Historians contend that Nablus played only a nominal role during the French invasion of Ottoman Palestine, with local leaders from Jenin and Nablus actually stalling in providing

advertised in our September Newsletter. Instead it was replaced by the popular Puppet Theater.



troops requested by the central government in Istanbul.

Whatever the case, Napoleon's expeditionary force failed in Palestine beneath the walls of Acre (Akka in Arabic - Akko in Hebrew), unable to wrestle the city from its local Turkish garrison assisted by British forces. Napoleon soon left the Middle East to return to France due to political developments back there. It was a rare defeat for the brilliant French general, who oversaw the loss of a couple thousand French soldiers.

### Nablus Soap Industry



The production of olive oil soap in Nablus dates back to at least the early days of the Islamic Empires in the 7th Century AD, when it along with Kufra and Basra were the main centers of production. Techniques in soap production were brought back to Marseilles by French Crusaders, who once controlled Nablus under the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

In the 1830s Ottoman Nablus, briefly under Egyptian rule, emerged as a center for the cultivation and production of cotton. However, this could not hold up to vigorous international competition and Nablusi merchants soon switched over to something they had a strong competitive advantage in - the production of olive oil and soap. By 1850 expansion in these traditional industries made Nablus the largest trade and manufacturing center in Ottoman Palestine.

**Thanks for your Support**



### Contact Information

General Email: [projecthope@projecthope.ps](mailto:projecthope@projecthope.ps) \* Website: [www.projecthope.ps](http://www.projecthope.ps)

### [Contact Us](#)

Canada:  
 110 Cumberland St., Suite 237, Toronto, ON, M5R 3V5, Canada  
 Email: [projecthope@projecthope.ps](mailto:projecthope@projecthope.ps)  
 Tel: +1 416 879 8939

Nablus:  
 29, An-Najah Al-Qadim St (next to the French Cultural Center), Nablus, Palestine  
 Email: [nablus@projecthope.ps](mailto:nablus@projecthope.ps)  
 Tel: +972 9 233 7077

### News and Events

Keep track of our website for news, events and updates on our activities.  
[www.projecthope.ps](http://www.projecthope.ps)

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