Palestine has just passed through one of the saddest Ramadans ever. To start with, the political stalemate and the non-payment of the salaries of civil servants for seven months running did not allow citizens to enjoy the pleasures of this holy month. Many had difficulty putting a decent meal on their Iftar tables. The worst blow came on the first day of the Eid (holiday) when seven Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire during an incursion by Israeli soldiers into the Gaza Strip that also left scores of injured persons. It was a sad Eid indeed.

With the end of the Eid, the ultimatum given by President Mahmoud Abbas for forming a national unity government also ends. Since no such formula has been agreed on, the President has to decide whether to dissolve the present cabinet and call for early elections. One thing is for sure, though: the current impasse cannot go on much longer. The economic situation is in tatters. Incidents of factional fighting are on the rise, prompting fears of a civil war. It is imperative that the call to unity should be heeded by all involved for the sake of the country—whatever is left of it.

It may be ironic, then, that this issue is dedicated to tourism, given the present status quo. The truth is that tourism will remain Palestine’s cornerstone ‘industry’ and we Palestinians, being eternally hopeful, believe that things will eventually get better and that tourism will flourish once again. That is why we cannot but be present at the World Travel Market in London—the tourism industry’s premier event. More than 1,000 copies of This Week in Palestine are slated to be shipped to that all-important yearly happening.

Contrary to what one might think, cultural life in Palestine remains as vibrant as ever. An international puppet festival—already in its fifteenth edition—is under way, and an international film festival will start soon. Concerts and art exhibitions are programmed throughout the month. This is the paradox that is Palestine.

Tony A. Khoury
Editor

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The views of all the articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher
A Personal Invitation from the Heart of Palestine

If you can’t remember the last time you were truly awed, amazed, or inspired on your trip abroad, consider coming to Palestine next time. Palestine is a box of treasures waiting to be discovered, a mystery to be unravelled, and today’s best-kept travel secret. An astonishing array of sights and experiences packed into a small area awaits you, for diversity is the keynote of this ancient and holy land. A meeting place of ecosystems and civilizations throughout history, it has been at once the destination and destiny for people drawn from all over the world throughout the ages: pilgrims and painters, monks and merchants, travellers and writers—all these and more have fallen under its spell and left their marks not only on Palestine but on the entire world as well. Its moderate climate and yearly schedule of festivals and religious feasts make Palestine an ideal year-round travel destination. Whatever the season, your heart will be warmed by the generosity and hospitality of the Palestinian people.

There’s something for nearly everyone in Palestine. Town, desert, or countryside—each offers its own magic. After exploring the fascinating nooks and crannies of the Church of the Nativity, you can wander through the charming, narrow, and winding streets of Bethlehem’s recently renovated quarters and enjoy the sensory delights of its marketplace. Within minutes you can find yourself contemplating a spectacular desert monastery or palace, pondering its attraction for monks or monarchs. Or you can visit a preserved Palestinian village—perhaps at one of the agrarian festivals—and experience colourful Palestinian folklore. If your tastes run more to contemporary culture, check out our lively art scene: theatre, dance, music and art exhibits abound. If you are looking for outdoor adventure, you might join the Palestine Wildlife Society for a trip to explore caves or to do some bird-watching.

Be sure to bring the kids: Palestine is a very child-friendly society with a young population that can often be seen in parades and on stage. Our museums are full of eye-catching displays that appeal to young and old alike. School subjects assume a concreteness and immediacy here. Religious and historical figures are almost palpable as ancient man/woman and the first townspeople take on substance. Music is present every day in the call of the muezzin to prayer and the pealing of church bells. And what better way to develop an appreciation for art than the still lifes and the colours, hues, tints, and shades of the market?

But the greatest treasure of Palestine is its people and culture. Centuries-old varying ethnic and religious traditions make of it an exquisite mosaic. All the senses are invited to the groaning banquet table of Palestinian culture—as befits a people whose warmth, hospitality, and kindness to visitors are the most frequently mentioned highlights of the trip. Come and find out why they cite the Palestinian heart as the souvenir they would most like to take home!

Please consider this letter as my personal, open invitation to Palestine on behalf of the Palestinian people.

Eng. Judeh Morkus
Minister of Tourism & Antiquities

Palestinian Private-Sector Tourism Strategy

By Yusef Daher

The tourism industry in Palestine, as in most other parts of the world, is managed by both the private and public sectors. The Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities (MOTA) holds the public role in this equation, whereas the tourism private sector is comprised of seven subsectors, each of which is represented by a professional trade association. When the Israeli authorities closed the Higher Council of Tourism in Jerusalem, along with other organizations related to the Orient House umbrella forum, the Coordinating Group (CG) was formed. The CG established an administrative arm: the Administrative Services for Tourism Associations in Palestine (ASTAP). The tourism associations, most of which were established even before the occupation in 1967, are the base of this coordinating body and include: the Arab Hotel Association (AHA); the Arab Tourist & Travel Agents Association (ATTTA); the Arab Tour Guides Union (ATGU); the Arab Tourist Restaurant Association (ATRA); the Arab Tourist Transport Union (ATTU); the Panel of Airline Representatives (PAR); and the Holy Land Merchants of Souvenirs and Handicrafts (HLITOA). The other associations face difficulty in integrating all related members in Palestine under one association due to the existing geographical and economic constraints.

In serving the tourism industry, both the public and private sectors were keen on strategizing their efforts toward achieving the ultimate goal of a developed, sound Palestinian tourism offer.
Believing in **human resource development** as the drive behind better service that results in better and more business, the tourism sector concentrated its strategies toward this goal. The Palestinian Hospitality and Tourism Resource Center was established through a partnership between the Arab Hotel Association and Bethlehem University and was supported by USAID through Development Alternatives, Inc (DAI). The centre is embedded in the University and equipped by the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institution through this fund. Furthermore, some other programs were initiated within the context of this strategy—for example, the Master’s program by the EU Tempus project for tourism. This too was in partnership with Bethlehem University as well as with the London Metropolitan University and the Finnish University of Joensuu. During the past two years, approximately eighty trainees and ten Master’s students have benefited from these programs. Some of these activities were also supported by Paltrade and the Islamic Alquds Fund.

On the **infrastructure** level, the industry concluded that there is a need for restoration and rehabilitation in this field. The private sector lost a major part of its infrastructure during the past years of Intifada. Hotels were closed, and tourist coaches were sold back in order to stop the financial bleeding in these two subsectors. The industry pushed in vain its contacts and communications for better finance opportunities to restore these two sectors. These strategies have been embedded into the midterm national strategy and clearly addressed on the agenda of the Palestinian private sector for the donors’ community on the assumption that soon reconstruction of the tourism infrastructure would be on the donors’ radar screen.

**Policy management** in tourism took some giant steps in its indicated strategies. Partnerships were based on national interests as well as on the industry’s needs and expectations. Private-public partnership was the focus of both parties during the past few years. It started when Minister Ziad El Bandak formed the advisory board for MOTA in an attempt to establish a foundation for a Palestinian tourism board that was intended to be a private-sector body chaired by the minister and in charge of future marketing and investment promotion activities.

On another level, regional cooperation in tourism forced itself onto the agenda of the Palestinian tourism industry where stakeholders saw opportunities to ease freedom of movement for the tourism industry, whereas the counterparts on the Israeli, Jordanian, and Egyptian sides made marketing and promotion their objectives. In this respect, several initiatives were taken in which this strategy of regional cooperation resulted in the Forum 4 Peace that had a joint agenda to promote tourism and to resolve the main obstacles to tourism such as restrictions in the freedom of movement, permits, visas, and crossing-point regulations and arrangements.

On the same level, many other partnerships and plans were made, all of which were guided by the strategies and goals of the industry. Important industry concept and position papers were written jointly on subsector levels as well.

Awaiting normal conditions and stability where tourism could regain its levels of business and contribute to the national economy requires further consultation to assure complete implementation of the short- and midterm strategies while planning and focusing on a wider, sustainable tourism plan where the local community and other related partners and stakeholders are more involved.

**Yusef Daher** is a travel and tourism expert and Executive Director of the Arab Hotel Association. He is also Tourism instructor at Bethlehem University and Notre Dame Center.

**Marketing** Palestine was not an easy job during the past few years of instability. Most of the tourism players in the field were doing marketing on the firm level as much as on the joint and national levels. Palestine continued to be visible in international trade fairs, and a few marketing tools were introduced directly and indirectly through publications and printed material. Basically, the tourism strategy in this field focused on regaining the existing and traditional markets and included some research for new emerging markets namely in South America and Eastern Europe. The strategy management exercises concluded that the lack of adequate information is an obstacle that has to be dealt with. For local stakeholders and for potential international tourism decision makers, this was a normal conclusion.
Dear All,

You are used to hearing about all my adventures and misadventures in this beautiful and intriguing country. Now, standing 359º east of Truth and 2º south of Cyberspace, I am about to embark on one of the most fascinating voyages to date. By the time you read these words, Palestine-family.net (PFN) will have finally been launched and set sail on cyan cyberspace for Diaspora shores to gather the sons and daughters of Palestine and bring them home. With them will be a few intrepid travelers who dare to tread where few have been—deep into the heart of Palestine. There to see it off will be the ship’s builder, James Prineas, flying in from Berlin at his own expense, members of the Arab Educational Institute-Open Windows (AEI)—PFN’s local partner—invited guests, members of the advisory board, and interested members of the public.

A few pioneering Palestinian men, women, and children will board the well-provisioned ship. As an invited guest, I’ll be traveling in style: no need to be a stowaway or travel in steerage this time. On Palestine-family.net, everyone is a VIP, from academics to children. The heritage of all Palestinians is equally valued, whatever their religious or ethnic backgrounds. Splitting hairs and “doubtful” categories are not for us: we celebrate the multiplicity of identities and backgrounds.

You won’t have to wait until I reach shore to hear about my trip, nor must you master Morse code or send out radio signals to contact me. With just 24 rapid taps on your computer keyboard—www.palestine-family.net—you can chart our course. While we are navigating the waters, you can navigate the pane on the site’s left side. I’ll give you a minute to get your computer. Hurry back! We’ll all be there—Im Fakhri with her grandchildren, the girl in the yellow pants, the man and his father in the keffiyehs, Abu Lutfi, and the Lettuce Boy. (Photography>Local>Modern Portraits) Notable Palestinians, living and dead, are with us as well. (People>Notable Palestinians)

Everything we need for our voyage is right on board. We’ve got plenty of maps from different eras in our history (History>Vintage Maps), such as this map made in Nuremberg in 1729. We have closets full of clothes and accessories. Take your pick of one of the tarbushes or thobs, or try on a silver choker for size. (Photography>Local>Miscellaneous) When it comes to food, we won’t have to swallow our pride, eat crow or humble pie—just take a look at all those mouth-watering recipes. (Culture>Food and Recipes) And if you don’t find the cure for what ails you here, check out the home remedies. (Culture>Customs and Remedies)

While we’re together, we will look at each other’s photo albums (Photography>Local>Vintage Portraits) and (Photography>Local>Vintage Landscapes) and while away the hours reciting stories and sayings, songs and poems (Culture>Stories and Sayings) and (Culture>Songs and Poems), or myths and legends (History>Myths and Legends). When we tire of life at sea, we can put our feet on the ground for a few minutes. (Culture>Land and Nature and Photography>Modern Landscapes) and when we get homesick, we will visit homes in the homeland. (Photography>Architecture and Interiors) We will have nightly performances, both traditional and contemporary. We might be regaled by the samer, or verbal duel (Photography>Local>Social Life), watch a contemporary
dance performance—maybe even the new Palestinian circus. In a quiet moment, we might write letters or diaries, read other people’s letters and diaries (History>Letters and Diaries), or take a book off the shelf. (Community Resources>Books)

Yes, we are on a virtual voyage to the collective memory of Palestine, and we are collecting more memories at each stop. In the virtual valises of our cousins, whom we pick up at each port of call, will be old photos from Chile, the family tree of the branch of the family that immigrated to Honduras (Family Trees), and recipes from your great-uncle’s restaurant in New York. It will not all be smooth sailing, however. The papers these days are full of headlines about the difficulties faced by the sons and daughters of Palestine and their friends in getting ashore. But while we wait, we have

important work to do: together we will write Palestine’s history—person by person, family by family, and village by village.

Meanwhile, dear All, as we prepare to launch our voyage, just across from us at the Nativity Church landing pad, the last alien spaceship of the day, full of what are known in these parts as “tourists,” will have landed. It’s not the “velocity” of their travel that’s in question: decades have been dedicated to perfecting sophisticated techniques—getting travel down to such a fine art that people can get in and out of Bethlehem without even knowing they were in Palestine, much less interact with any Palestinians. Not all of them have checked their brains, not to mention hearts and minds, at the checkpoint. Some have tried to navigate these virtual cyber waters to reach our shores before. But what is the virtual tourist to do when faced with so many squalls and shoals along the way?

Burly bouncers at ports such as Yahoo.com consult their lists, look up, shake their heads, and say, “Palestine? Never heard of it.” Travel agents book them in hotels in a place called Texas, on the other side of the world. Brand-name travel sites list Bethlehem under Israel, without any further qualification. And, of course, the waters are rife with dreaded red herrings such as “Arab Terrorism” or “Palestinian Terrorism.”

I am sorry to tell you, dear All, that even travel sites under the heading of “Palestine, Middle East,” that feature tantalizing travel categories in the navigation pane, in fact serve up stories about the political conflict and feature sponsored links to Israeli and Jewish sites rather than Palestinian ones. What is most likely to stand out after reading the entry on one sophisticated, attractive site with a section entitled “Authentic Tourism” is the bloggers’ disrespect for the beliefs and holy places of the people of Bethlehem. And the queries of those looking to volunteer in Palestine remain apparently unanswered—probably because few Palestinians know about or would have cause to visit such sites.

Now, my dearest All, by now you are surely at sea when it comes to planning your trip to Palestine. I know that my letters are long on adventure but short on practical details.

Here comes the most exciting part of our virtual voyage as far as you are concerned: you can not only take a virtual voyage but a real trip to Palestine via Palestine-family.net. In fact, it holds great promise to the Palestinian tourism industry and would-be visitor alike. Under “Community Resources,” there are three particularly relevant sections: “Sightseeing,” “Where to Go,” and “Where to Stay.” Tourism providers can enter descriptions of their programs in these sections as well as submit entries to other relevant areas of the site. This is a great boon to those without the human or material resources to create or maintain their own websites. Because boundaries between tourism, pilgrimage, culture, and other categories—including family history—particularly overlap in Palestine, the site can be of use to institutions ranging in scope from education to the environment.

The technical sophistication and visual appeal of the site is one that any institution can be proud of, allowing it to bypass lengthy deliberations about design and content, given the once-and-for-all nature of conventional websites. Since the site has no central webmaster but relies on submissions from the public, an institution can take advantage of valiant volunteers to make the submissions. In a land where the situation on the ground changes daily, they can immediately update the information and not await the often infrequent ministrations of the webmaster. And they can get their messages across in up to seven languages: Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, and Greek.

Palestine-family.net is already being used to reach out to tourists. For example, few tourists (or Palestinians for that matter) realize that less than ten minutes from their landing pad lies the enchanting village of Artas, with rich and varied tourist attractions. But by partnering with PFN, Artas Folklore Center, keeper of the village heritage, earned the right to an externally accessible subsite of its own (www.artasfolkiorecenter.net) in return for helping to build up the main site. Information about the Artas Folklore Center itself is gathered in one place on this subsite, whereas over 110 entries in 21 categories, placed on the main site by Artas Folklore Center and others, can be accessed by going to “Places and Regions’Artas,” or chanced upon by people exploring the site. Turathuna (http://library.bethlehem.edu/resources/turathuna/turathuna.shtml) is another institution that has formed such a partnership, which is available to other institutions as well.
Paltournews, a newsletter of the Palestinian tourism industry put out by the Arab Hotel Association, has also found PFN. In fact, in writing for Paltournews, I have discovered a way to extend the experience of curious readers and kill two birds with one stone. After reading an article about my adventures in Wadi Khreitoun, at the Artas Lettuce Festival, or on the Feast of St. George, they can then continue exploring a photo-essay with up to 36 pictures or view a set of captioned photos on PFN. The photo-essays stand by themselves, for those who do not enjoy reading to discover the site, along with the article submitted in the name of Paltournews. Many entries have been made in the name of This Week in Palestine (www.thisweekinpalestine.com), which has much to offer tourists as well as Diaspora Palestinians interested in their roots, and which is helping to distribute the beautiful PFN postcards taken by PFN’s founder James Prineas. And visitors to a not-yet-launched Bethlehem tourism website will find themselves frequently directed to Palestine-family.net—virtual cultural archive and Collective Memory of a People—now that’s something to write home about!

Leyla Zuaiter is on the editorial board of Palestine-family.net. She can be reached at lzuaiter@yahoo.com. For more of her articles on family history, heritage, culture, and tourism, see: www.geocities.com/lzuaiter or www.palestine-family.net.

My Olive Tree
By Hanna Issa

A sacred vow embellished on your veil,
Which lends your gentle branches poise and grace;
Emblem of peace, and charm for restless souls,
Reposeful - soothing is your kind embrace.

Even your respiration smells of oil,
The olive oil that feeds the Sacred flame;
Your light in temple lanterns pure, divine,
Endures - Thine consecration to proclaim.

Thou noble spirit of the ancient heights,
The breath of Jesus in your shade transpires;
Apollo of the ages, firm and stout,
Your vespers Allah from His throne inspires.

High on that lovely Hill top that commands,
The sun-rise and the sun-set far beyond;
The crest of joy, the fusion of delight,
To thee my heart for ever shall respond.

Ramallah - «Hill of God» thy name was given,
Your crown, the Tireh Sector shall adorn;
My olive tree, a jewel on your brow,
Fed by the angels, was an angel born.

So huge, by right the Roman tree T’s called,
As old as time, by Roman fingers pruned,
My tree still stands unravished, undefiled,
Immune to age, so olive trees are tuned.

Your child Ghassan, so lively and enthused,
On field excursions he will surely mark,
A nest some bird attempted to conceal.
On field excursions he will surely mark,
A nest some bird attempted to conceal.

To speak of birds and nests and olive trees,
Ghassan’s adventures with me on the trail,
Imbues the soul with perfect loveliness,
Upright, my tree and child may never fail.

Hanna Issa Khalaf (1905-1963) was born in Ramallah and graduated from the University of Michigan in 1936 with BA degrees in art and law. In addition to being an activist in the Palestinian resistance movement, he was a member of Jordan’s Parliament as well as Minister of Justice. This fascinating poem, “My Olive Tree,” was written as he hiked in mountain olive groves in Ramallah with his youngest son, Ghassan. The poem was submitted by his grandson, Fares N. Azar.
“A city so rich in trees it looks like a cloth of brocade spread out upon the land,” wrote the 14th-century Syrian scholar al-Dimashqi of his expansive view of Gaza. He was not the first to pen the city’s praises: Herodotus, Pliny, Strabo and others had all complimented it in antiquity. Indeed, as early as 1500 BC, Pharaoh Thutmose III had chiseled into the Temple of Amun at Karnak a note that Gaza was “flourishing,” and today, Gaza historian Ibrahim Skeik recalls seeing, in the early 20th century, “trees all about the city, olives and almond groves.”

But the very name of Gaza, or Ghazza in Arabic, often evokes a different aspect of its history, one less pastoral, often violent; both are parts of the legacy of one of the oldest, most economically and militarily prized cities in the Middle East. The name has no dictionary meaning in Arabic, but in other languages across 3500 years, etymologists have linked it to words translated as “strong,” “the treasure,” “the chosen place,” “to invade,” and “the ruler’s prize.” More precise definitions quickly become superfluous.

Much of Gaza’s historical turbulence came about because the city sits on a geographical edge. Gaza’s low, circular hill, now barely detectable amid urban sprawl, rose for ages like a gentle, topographic freckle in the southwest corner of ancient Palestine. From here the city served the most heavily traveled trade route linking Central Asia and Arabia with Egypt and Africa, called the Via Maris by Romans and the Horus Road by Egyptians. For traders, pilgrims and conquerors in both directions, Gaza lay, crucially, at the eastern edge of the Sinai Desert, which took eight days to cross by caravan.

Gaza also marked the northernmost station of the rugged Frankincense Trail from Yemen and western Arabia; this trade may have been the city’s first. Gaza’s port, just three miles from the city, was also one of the most convenient deep-water ports for the road from Babylon and Persia. Commerce to and from Asia, Africa, Arabia and southern Europe all passed for centuries through Gaza’s markets.

More locally, the city was also known for its farms. All around Gaza, natural underground cisterns trap the irregular winter rains, and the warm, moist climate allows growing year round. Figs, dates, almonds and olives; oranges, lemons, melons and apples; wheat, barley, com, dozens of vegetables and prized vineyards: all have grown abundantly in their time from Gaza’s sandy soils. “Gaza was designed first as an agricultural and land trading center,” explains Skeik, and “only secondarily” as a sea trading center.

“Gaza has been both a connector and a barrier,” observed Islamic archeologist Don Whitcomb of the University of Chicago. For Egyptians, Gaza and the neighboring cities of Raphia, Ascalon and Isdud were both the gateway to Syria and a strategic location for remote fortifications to slow invasion from the north and east. For the peoples in the north and east, in Palestine, Syria, Turkey and the Fertile Crescent, on the other hand, Gaza was the gateway west to the riches of the Nile. For them, Gaza could buffer invasions rising out of Egypt. So coveted has Gaza been through the ages, Whitcomb said, “it’s always been on the edge of somebody’s empire.”

Like traders and conquerors, pilgrims also regarded Gaza mostly as a means to an end, a transit station. Centuries of Christians passed through to retrace the flight of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus along the Via Maris to Egypt, and to visit what was long believed to be the ruins of the temple razed by Samson. Later, curious Muslims traveling through the city stopped to visit the tomb of the great-grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad, Hashim, who died in Gaza; even today, Gaza is sometimes referred to as Ghazzat Hashim—Hashim’s Gaza.

And if pilgrims passed through, scholars have largely passed over Gaza. In English, Martin A. Meyer’s 1907 History of the City of Gaza remains unique in its comprehensive historical scope. Studies in Arabic have been penned mostly by Gazans themselves: one volume within Baladuna Filisit (Palestine, Our Homeland) by Mustafa al-Dabbagh; 15 chapter-length volumes by Ibrahim Skeik; and Gaza and Its Strip, by geographer and archeologist Salim Arafat al-Mobayed. "There is still too much we don’t know," said al-Mobayed, pointing out that only one archeological dig has ever been conducted in the city, a preliminary excavation carried out in 1922 by a British expedition.

What is known, however, is that 3500 mostly uninterrupted years of trade formed the backdrop against which Gaza’s conquerors came and went. Control of the trade routes through Gaza was as much coveted as the city on the little round hill itself.

The founders of Gaza remain unknown. There is, however, little doubt that the modern city has been inhabited continuously since that founding. According to al-Mobayed, before the spice trade began in the 18th century BC, Gaza may have been a pre-Canaanite agricultural village subject to a nearby military center that, excavations show, dates from nearly 3000 BC. The Horus Road was well-known in Egypt as early as 2300 BC, when Pharaoh Pepi I entered Canaan five times, probably seeking Lebanese timber to build ships. His records, from the dawn of writing itself, make no references to settlements in Canaan. The first written record of the city appears in the inscription of Thutmose III, who made Gaza, even then outfitted with two defensive walls, his base for lucrative campaigns into Syria and Babylonia in 1500 BC. Meyer conservatively speculated that Gaza had not been founded until several centuries before this, at the same time the Arab Mineaens—centered in today’s al-Jawf in Saudi Arabia—marked out the first frankincense trade road up from Yemen.

Around 1200 BC, Gaza and the south Palestine coast came under the control of one of the several tribes who in ancient accounts appear as the “Sea People.” Most historians believe that their uncertain origins lay in Crete and other Aegean islands—though a persuasive new theory has recently been proposed. In any case, Egyptian records show that Ramses III drove them from the Nile Delta, and they settled in the first fertile lands to the east. There they became known as the Philistines, and Philistia stretched from south of Gaza north to Carmel.

Under the Philistines, Gaza grew into the largest of five city-states. In the following centuries, all became targets of the Israelites from the east, the Egyptians from the west and the Assyrians from the north. In about 1030 BC, after years of border battles, Gaza fell under the influence of the kingdom of Prophets David and Solomon for a century though most historians do not list the city as part of the kingdom proper.

In 525 BC, when the Persian king Cambyses set his eyes on it, Gaza was wealthy and strong enough to be the only coastal city to resist his siege. When the city finally fell, Cambyses used it as a base for his Egyptian campaign; the ensuing trade in Persian goods only increased Gaza’s wealth.

But it was Alexander the Great who encountered Gaza’s most dogged resistance. By his arrival in 332 BC, Gaza was trading in spices and goods from as far away as India and Ethiopia, including gold, olive oil, silks, medicines, perfumes, ivory, ostrich feathers and slaves, all in addition to frankincense, the keystone of Gaza’s export economy. Meyer noted that Alexander’s heavy catapults, dragged hundreds of miles from the north for the siege, bogged down in Gaza’s soft fields. His forces battled for two bloody months to breach the ramparts held by allied Persians and Arabs. By the time Alexander’s forces prevailed, he himself had been wounded. In revenge, he put nearly 10,000 men to the sword, enslaved the women and children, and packed the wealth of Gaza’s merchants into 10 ships that set sail for Greece.

Alexander reorganized Gaza as a polis, or...
A 500-member senate governed Gaza, and sea traffic from Gaza’s port increased. Left trade unhindered along all major routes, Gaza, Ascalon, Isdud and Jaffa—grew in 63 BC. All the coastal cities of Palestine—succeeded bloodlessly to Roman rule in Mediterranean trade had fallen off with the collapse of Byzantine rule, and the Byzantine navy regularly harassed the coast.

The city’s most luminous era began when it succumbed bloodlessly to Roman rule in 63 BC. All the coastal cities of Palestine—Gaza, Ascalon, Isdud and Jaffa—grew in the following centuries. The unity of empire left trade unhindered along all major routes, and sea traffic from Gaza’s port increased. A 500-member senate governed Gaza, and in the streets could be found Philistines, Greeks, Romans, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Jews, Egyptians, Persians and Bedouin. Under Rome, Gaza's mint stamped out coins adorned with the busts of gods and emperors. One hundred thirty-five years after the birth of Christ, the emperor Hadrian personally inaugurated wrestling, boxing and oratorical competitions in Gaza's new stadium, which soon became famous from Alexandria to Damascus.

Just as the city had resisted Alexander, so too was it the last city on the Levantine coast to submit to Christianity. Sixty-three years after Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Byzantine Empire, the ascetic Bishop Porphyrius arrived in Gaza, where the city’s merchant elite worshipped the Hellenistic god Marna in a famous domed temple, one of eight about the city. Until then, the emperor had been reluctant to force the new faith on Gaza, fearing that if prominent citizens fled or were killed, “its trade will be ruined.”

His fears were unfounded. Historian Glanville Downey, in his book Gaza in the Sixth Century, wrote that even though imperial troops burned the temples, “beat the pagans with clubs and staves” and quickly built a church upon the rubble of the temple of Marna, the city prospered overall and even, in this early Christian era, reached new heights. Gaza was adorned with a new wall and moat, new baths, new churches, a market, and a main street lined with marble columns. A library was constructed, and a school of rhetoric developed that in the early sixth century was esteemed as second only to Alexandria’s. Enormous outdoor banquets celebrated the dedications of new churches, and the games begun by Emperor Hadrian four centuries earlier were carried on as an annual festival.

The spice trade diminished in this Byzantine era with the fall of Nabatean Petra to the east, but it was supplanted by rapid growth in local wine exports. Using Nabatean irrigation techniques, vineyards around Gaza reached an extent not surpassed for more than a thousand years. Gazan vintages found favor as far away as France and Spain, while the old Frankincense Trail continued to bring Arabian trade from the south.

In the twilight of the Byzantine era, Gaza became the home of an increasingly influential group of Arab traders from Makkah. Among them was ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, later to become the second Caliph of Islam. Another, much earlier, trader, Hashim, would die in Gaza before he could see his great-grandson Muhammad change history.

In the years before his prophethood, Muhammad is believed to have visited Gaza more than once. In his early 20's, he arrived with the summer caravans, in the employ of the Makkah merchant Khadija, who would later become his first wife. More than 30 years later, when Muslims set out to capture the weakening Byzantine lands for Islam, Muhammad’s commanders knew that Gaza held the key to both Palestine and Egypt. The easy victory of ‘Amr ibn al-As over the Byzantines in 634 is often attributed to a combination of Arab strategy, Byzantine weakness and the influence of Gaza’s Arab residents (See Aramco World, November-December 1991). Under the governors installed by al-As, Christians and Jews were taxed, though their worship and trade continued, as noted in the writings of St. Willibald, who visited Gaza in 723.

Islam gradually added a new dimension to Gazan commerce: the Hajj. Muslim pilgrims on the long journey from North Africa to Makkah found safe passage along the Via Maris through Gaza. From northern Palestine, too, pilgrims often preferred the coastal route through Gaza to the King’s Road along the Jordan River. Even pilgrims passing directly from Cairo to Arabia through the Red Sea port of Aqaba bought grain, fruit and meat imported from Gaza to the north.

This was, however, a politically unstable era. The city was regularly sacked, besieged and revived in struggles among Egyptians, Syrians and Bedouin. By 985, Arab traveler and historian al-Maqdisi, “the Jerusalemite,” reported that Gaza was a “chief city of the district of Filistin,” but Mediterranean trade had fallen off with the collapse of Byzantine rule, and the Byzantine navy regularly harassed the coast.

The crusaders fell upon Gaza in 1100, a year after they took Jerusalem. The mosques of the city were demolished, and a new, far larger church rose on the ancient site of the Marna temple. Gaza’s citadel was refortified. Although the crusaders directed much of their trade through the rival city of Ascalon to the north, the Arab geographer al-Ildrissi passed through Gaza in 1154, and commented that it was still “a very populous station.”
When the Mesopotamian-born hero Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (Saladin) tried to recapture Gaza in 1170, he won only the hinterlands, not the walled city itself. Seventeen years later, after victories to the north in Galilee and Jerusalem, he returned and entered with little resistance. But his grip on Gaza lasted only four years. In an 1191 treaty with Richard the Lion-Hearted, Saladin relinquished Gaza, on condition that its castle and walls be torn down. Richard complied, and since then, they have never been rebuilt. Today, although the perimeter of the walls can be inferred from a few steep edges of the city’s hill, no trace of the crusader castle has ever been unearthed, and even its exact location remains a mystery.

The Egyptian Mamluk era that followed was punctuated by the conquests of rival Syrian rulers, the invasion of the Mongols, and a devastating sweep of plague. One of the most famous medieval travelers, Ibn Battutah of Morocco, passed through Gaza twice (See Aramco World, January-February 1978). Staying but one night each time, he commented in 1326 on Gaza’s abundant markets; he noted in 1348 that the city lay nearly deserted as a result of the plague that had struck in that year; it carried off between one third and one half of the population.

Most of Gaza’s oldest remaining buildings today are Mamluk. To protect the trade that fueled their Cairo-based empire, the Mamluks constructed khans, or fortified caravan hostels, throughout Palestine. Gaza’s 14th-century Khan al-Zayt, or [Olive] Oil Khan, built by Sanjar al-Jawali, fell to the bulldozers in 1960, but the city of Khan Yunis, south of Gaza, bears the name of its khan, which today lies crumbling in the town square. Al-Jawali did not destroy the crusaders’ great church; rather, he converted it into the present-day Mosque of ‘Umar by adding a fourth aisle and canting its southeast wall to face Makkah. He also built a hospital, a new school and a racetrack for the city; to this day his baths keep a warm fire burning beneath their worn mosaic floors, and residents of Gaza still find a steamy respite within.

For its first century under Ottoman rule, Gaza did well. In 1660 a French visitor compared Gaza’s baths and markets favorably with those of Paris, and noted that Arabic, Turkish and Greek were all spoken in the streets. But by the 18th century, Ottoman taxes had grown heavy, Bedouin raiding again choked off land trade, and the city found itself playing a diminishing role.

In 1799, Napoleon entered Gaza unopposed. Like Cambyses, Alexander, the crusaders and a score of others before him, he sought Gaza only as a springboard into Egypt. He stayed three days in the modest palace of the governing Radwan family; in Gaza today, the palace, now a girl’s school, is still called “Napoleon’s Castle.” With World War I, as the shells of the British navy pounded Gaza’s hill and residents fled, the city passed into the modern era with a violence befitting its turbulent past. With the renewed European strategic interest in Palestine, the city had been growing rapidly, and reached a population above 40,000 for the first time.

Soon after the war, a railway threaded iron along the hoof-worn trail of the ancient Via Maris, and the caravan trade ended forever. Sharp flowers of modernity, houses began to rise in the hundreds over the following decades, covering over Gaza’s fields and spilling far beyond the faint, circular ripple of the old walls, until, by the early 1990’s, the city came to be home to more than 300,000 people.

Today, the past endures, scattered amidst streets dense with homes and small shops. Only the Mosque of ‘Umar—the converted crusader church—and the small Greek Orthodox Church of St. Porphyrius, which still serves Gaza’s 700 Christians, hark back to pre-Mamluk times. The Mamluk maze of arched, covered streets collapsed under World War I’s shells, except for a lone, musty passage in Gaza’s gold market. The tomb of the Prophet Muhammad’s greatgrandfather, Hashim, still lies in a corner of a 19th-century mosque and former pilgrim’s hostel. Several smaller, Mamluk-era mosques and tombs dot Shuja’iyyah, Gaza’s old Lower Town; one, the Mosque of ibn ‘Uthman, is considered by historian Salim al-Mobayed to be architecturally “the purest Islamic mosque in Gaza.” The Mamluk baths open in the morning for men and in the afternoon for women, and in the narrow, ancient quarters of Daraj and Zaytun, cinder-block walls rise everywhere atop the worn stones and antique arches of earlier eras.

One of the most curious of Gaza’s relics is an unmarked hole in the courtyard of the Mosque of ‘Umar. It is the entrance of a tunnel, dug as an escape hatch in case of siege, that likely reached beyond the edge of the city walls. No one is sure who built it, or where it resurfaces, for today it is clogged with rubble, but historian Skeik recalls that, as a boy, he held a candle and navigated it for 200 bat-infested meters.

Many details of Gaza’s past hang today as equally unanswered questions. Where was the crusader castle? Where was Hadrian’s famous stadium? What of the sixth-century library and school of rhetoric, known throughout the Mediterranean, or the eight Greek temples? Or, indeed, what of the remains of Gaza’s cultural life in every era? And who, at the dawn of history, really founded Gaza, the city whose name has meant “strong,” “treasure,” and “the ruler’s prize”?

Archaeologist al-Mobayed believes that systematic excavation may begin to yield answers. With Gaza’s Islamic waqf, he has planned several digs. “Up to today, every relic we have from the city is what we call a ‘surface find,’” he explains. “Every time a new building goes up, we get a kind of archeology-by-accident: Someone is always finding something. Gaza is layer upon layer upon layer. We hope soon to learn what we can.”

Sites and Shrines in Palestine

By Hamdan Taha

Solomon’s pools from Wadi Arrub and Wadi el-Biyyar. The waters from Solomon’s pools and the springs surrounding them are led to Jerusalem through the lower aqueduct, 21 kilometres long. In the Ottoman period, a ceramic pipe made of fitted segments was laid in the plastered channel, but it proved to be inefficient. The lower aqueduct tunnelled through two ridges, the first tunnel beneath the town of Bethlehem, and the second passed through Jebel el-Mukkabir and brought water to the Haram area. The upper aqueduct springs from Solomon’s pools and runs to Jerusalem along a line corresponding to the water-divide along the Bethlehem-Jerusalem road. The aqueduct was hewn in the rock or built of field stones and plaster; a segment passed through a huge pipe of well-made fitted-stone segments.

From Nablus to Jenin
Nablus

Neapolis, the new city, was founded in 72 AD by the emperor Vespasian. The Roman city was built on the northern slope of Mount Gerzim. The modern name of Nablus comes from the Greek name, Neapolis. It was the capital of the northern kingdom in Palestine during the Iron Age II and a major urban centre during the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

The Aqueducts of Jerusalem

A network of aqueducts between the Hebron hills and Jerusalem was built to maintain regular water supply for the cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Two aqueducts were constructed to bring water from Solomon's pools to Jerusalem, the lower aqueduct from Ain Atan to Jerusalem, and the upper aqueduct, some 30 metres higher. Two other aqueducts bring water to

Colonia Flavia Iulia Sergia Neapolis.

The city of Neapolis flourished during the Byzantine and Umayyad periods and became the seat of a bishop. From the 10th century, it was known as little Damascus. Medieval Nablus still perseveres in the historic core. The Old City was extensively damaged by a series of earthquakes. The expansion of the city outside the wall occurred at the end of 18th century. The Old City, which consists of seven quarters, represents a distinctive example of traditional urban architecture in Palestine, but it has suffered considerably in recent years as a result of actions carried out by the occupying military power. During the Israeli incursions in 2002–2003, great damage was inflicted on the historic core of the city.

Jacob’s Well

Located at the eastern entrance to Nablus, Jacob’s Well is known, according to tradition, as the well dug by Jacob for himself and his flocks. It is linked with the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman who offered him a drink of water. It was restored during the Crusader period, and a church was built near the well. Today it stands within the walled complex of the Greek Orthodox monastery.

Sebastia

The site is located approximately 10 kilometres northwest of Nablus and occupies a strategic point on the main historical routes to the north. It commands the surrounding fertile agricultural area.

Sebastia, identified with ancient Samaria, was the capital of the northern kingdom in Palestine during the Iron Age II and a major urban centre during the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Archaeological excavations uncovered the remains of the Iron Age city on the acropolis, including the royal quarter with the ivory collection. Under Persian rule, Samaria remained a provincial capital for central Palestine. In 332, Samaria was captured by Alexander the Great. The city was renamed by King Herod to “Sebastia,” in honour of Augustus. The city was completely rebuilt during the Roman period and gained the status of “colonia.” The Roman features are represented by the city wall, a monumental gate, a colonnaded street that consists of 600 columns, a basilica, a forum, a theatre, a stadium, various temples, an aqueduct, and cemeteries. During the Byzantine period, Sebastia was the seat of a bishop. The city was linked with the tradition of John the Baptist, whose shrine is located in the city, according to popular Christian and Islamic traditions. A Byzantine church was erected on the southern slope of the city, and a Crusader church was built in the centre of the present town. The Mamluke, Ottoman, and present town of Sebastia, still preserving the ancient name, is located in the eastern part of the Roman city, indicating an element of cultural continuity.

From Ramallah to Jericho
Al-Bireh

Al-Bireh is identified with ancient Beerot and was occupied during the Roman and Byzantine periods. The early medieval remains of Al-Bireh are identified with the village of Mahamoria. Remains from the Crusader and Ayubid periods were found in the historic core of the town and include the Khan, a church, and a mosque. According to Christian tradition, Joseph and Mary rested in Al-Bireh on their way from Jerusalem to Galilee when they discovered that Jesus was missing. A crusader church, known as the church of the Holy Family, marks the spot where they stopped.

The Jordan River

The Jordan River, which lies below sea level, is the world’s lowest river; Jesus came to the Jordan River from Galilee to be baptized by John. Since then, the river has been important to all Christians, many
of whom go there to be baptized.

Tell es-Sultan

Tell es-Sultan, the ancient city of Jericho, is the lowest (258m below sea level) and the oldest town on earth. It grew up around a perennial spring, Ain es-Sultan, in an area of fertile alluvial soil, which attracted hunter-gatherer groups to settle down and to start a process of plant and animal domestication. Archaeological excavations carried out in the mid-20th century evidenced 23 layers of ancient civilizations at the site. The earliest remains date back to the Natufian period, 10th–8th millennia BC. By the 8th millennium, before present Jericho witnessed the emergence of the first settled society, it became a fortified town surrounded by a stone wall and supported by a massive round tower. The Neolithic settlement represents the first agricultural community, based on domestication of plants and animal. During the Bronze Age, Tell es-Sultan was a fortified town and one of the most flourishing Canaanite city-states in Palestine. During the Greco-Roman period, the city centre moved to the site of Abu Alayeq. The Umayyad period is represented by the site of Hisham’s palace. Medieval remains were uncovered recently at the site of Tawasheen es-Sukkar.

Numerous historical and religious events and beliefs are associated with the site and area, including the stories of Joshua’s invasion, Elisha’s spring, Anthony and Cleopatra, the temptation of Jesus, Zacchaeus, and others. Jericho has flourished throughout history as a winter resort.

Hisham’s Palace

Built between 724 and 743 A.D., during the Umayyad dynasty, Hisham’s Palace is one of the most significant early Islamic monuments in Palestine. It is located approximately two kilometres north of Jericho, at Khirbet al-Mafjar. Excavations during the 1930s and 1940s exposed the luxury and lavishness of the palace. Without doubt, Hisham’s Palace shows considerable development of architectural and artistic talent during the early Islamic era.

The complex contains a palace, a bath, a mosque, and a public forecourt that reflects the Umayyads’ luxurious standard of living and political and tribal power. In decorative terms, the palace gathered the most exquisite forms of architectural décor, from polychromic mosaic floors, frescos, and marble to stucco-decorated walls and geometric and vegetal representations. Perhaps the most important of these are the six-lobed (pointed) rosettes and octagons that appear in different features throughout the complex. Hisham’s Palace represents a unique example of the depiction of humans and animals in Umayyad decorative art. Archaeological investigations indicate that the baths were the only part of the complex that had been completed and in use before the destruction of the site by an earthquake in 749 AD.

Qumran

The site, identified with Kh. Qumran, was occupied mainly during the Greco-Roman period (ca. 150 BC–68 AD). The community that inhabited Qumran is generally identified as the Essenes, a religious sect that lived in isolation in this region west of the Dead Sea. Qumran became internationally known in 1947, when a Palestinian shepherd, Mohammad al-Deeb, discovered a series of scrolls in a cave. These scrolls later came to be known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The site is composed of a large complex of buildings, including communal facilities, a sophisticated water system, a library, a large cemetery, and a series of caves along a cliff.

Deir Quruntal and the Monastery of Temptation

The site commands a magnificent view of the Jordan Valley. It is the site where Jesus spent forty days and nights fasting and meditating during the temptations of Satan. The monastery was built in the sixth century over the cave where Jesus is believed to have stayed.

Maqam al-Nabi Musa

The maqam is located 20 kilometres east of Jerusalem and is a splendid example of medieval Islamic architecture. The shrine, mosque, minaret, and some of the rooms were built in 1269 AD; other additions were made to the site in 1475, giving it its current shape. The maqam has been the site of an annual pilgrimage festival since the time of Salah ad-Din.

From Bethlehem to Hebron

Bethlehem

The city of Bethlehem is holy to both Christians and Muslims. It is acknowledged worldwide as the birthplace of Jesus Christ, the Son of God in Christian belief, and the divinely inspired Issa to Muslims. The Church of the Nativity, a Byzantine basilica built by the emperor Constantine to commemorate the event, was first dedicated on 31 May, 339 AD, and is built on top of the cave where, according to a tradition first documented in the 2nd century AD, Jesus was born.

The Church forms the central feature of the town and is surrounded by other important sites related to the nativity. Among these are the Milk Grotto and the Shepherds’ Fields in Beit Sahour. The historic core of Bethlehem today, with its old buildings, represents a significant example of vernacular urban ensemble. The old town is the main place where a wide range of religious and traditional activities takes place. The Patriarch’s route, which runs through Star Street in the old town, is the route along which the religious procession passes each year during Christmas celebrations. Today Bethlehem still witnesses an annual special event when people from all over the world attend the traditional celebration of Christmas.

Herodion

The site of Tell el-Fureidis, identified with ancient Herodion is located approximately 6 kilometres southeast of Bethlehem. During the early Roman period, the fortress was built by Herod the Great as a castle/palace complex. It dominates the landscape of el-Bariyah as well as overlooks the Wadi Khareitoun immediately to the south. The complex was built on a conical hill shaped...
The Old Town of Hebron, the Haram, and Tell Rumida

Ancient Hebron is identified with Jebel er-Rumeideh, located southwest of the current historic town. Archaeological investigations show several layers of occupation dating from the Chalcolithic period down to the present time. Hebron was always known as the burial place of the prophets Ibrahim/Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives. During the Roman period, Herod the Great (73–74 BC) built a massive wall to enclose the cave of the prophets’ tombs.

After the Arab-Muslim conquest, al-Khalil, with Haram el-Ibrahimi, became one of the four sacred cities of Islam, after Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, which are visited by Muslim pilgrims from all over the world. The town and the Haram were honoured and sanctified by the rulers of the successive Muslim states during the Mamluk rule and Ottoman periods; al-Khalil increasingly flourished and became a famous Sufi centre. Hundreds of Islamic religious and historical monuments were built close to the Haram, including mosques, zawiyas, ribats, madrasas, bazaars, and sabils, etc.

Since 1996, the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee has been implementing a large programme for the rehabilitation of the old town to preserve its historic character, which is represented in its traditional architecture, its particular craftsmanship—pottery and glassware—and its traditional life. Hebron is the cultural and commercial centre of the southern part of the country. The fertile soil, abundant rainfall, and mild temperatures also make it one of the most flourishing vineyard cultures in Palestine.

From Gaza to Deir el-Balah

Khirbet Tell Umm Amer: Saint Hilarion

The site is located five miles south of Gaza city in Al Nusairat village on the coast, east of the shore rifts, and on the south bank of Wadi Gaza, on the main ancient route of Via Maris.

Khirbet Umm al-Tutt was built during the Roman period on Wadi Gaza, close to the seashore. It appears on the map of Madaba with the name of Tabatha and dates from the Byzantine to early-Islamic period.

The site contains the ruins of the monastery of Saint Hilarion, which consists of two churches, a burial site, a baptism hall, a public cemetery, an audience hall, and dining rooms. The monastery was provided with good infrastructure facilities, including water cisterns, clay-ovens and drainage channels. Its floors were partially paved with limestone, marble tiles, and coloured mosaics that are decorated with plant and animal scenes. The floors also include a Greek inscription decorated with circular motifs. In addition, the monastery was provided with baths, consisting of hot-water and cold-water halls.

Khirbet Umm al-Tutt (Tabatha) was the birthplace of Saint Hilarion, born in 291, who received his education in Alexandria.

He founded the monastery in the 3rd century and is considered the founder of monastic life in Palestine.

Anhedon

The ancient harbour city of Anhedon is the first known seaport of Gaza, located along the Mediterranean Sea, near the Beach Refugee Camp. It is mentioned in Islamic literature with the names of Tida, apparently an abbreviation of Anhedon, or Blakhiyeh. The city was inhabited from 800 BC to 1100 AD. South of the seaport of Anhedon lies the ancient harbour of Maiumas, then identified with Gaza, which was also continuously populated and became, during the Roman period, a flourishing and well-developed coastal town. Maiumas is mentioned only in late classical sources, when the trading with Greece began.

The present site consists of a variety of elements which spread throughout the area from the seashore, including the underwater archaeology, to the inland: the ruins of a Roman temple and a section of a wall have been uncovered, as well as Roman artisan and living quarters, including a series of villas, which testify to the city of Anhedon. Mosaic floors, warehouses, and fortified structures are found in the area. The acropolis of Anhedon shows archaeological remains dating from the late Iron Age II to the Byzantine period. A massive tower and city wall of the old commercial centre have also been uncovered.

St. Porphyrus Church

Located in Gaza city, the church was built in the fifth century where St. Porphyrus died and was buried. The church is still in use by the Greek Orthodox community.

Deir al-Balah

It is located south of Gaza city. A monastery was built in Deir al Balah by St. Helena in 372 AD. Archaeological excavations uncovered a cemetery dating back to the late Bronze Age that contains a number of tombs, pottery coffins, pottery objects, bronze pots, and a mosaic floor.

Dr. Hamdan Taha is a Palestinian archaeologist and has been Director General of Antiquities since 1994. Currently, he is the Deputy Minister for the Sector of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, director of renewed excavations, and author of several publications.
A Perspective towards a Better Tourism Industry

By Marwan Toubassi

Palestine has great opportunity and vast potential to be a prime tourist destination—a development that would make the emerging state’s economy grow significantly. At present, although the tourist potential is largely untapped and hampered by political uncertainty, there is movement afoot to change this situation given that Palestine has a number of potential attractions. Among them are its wealth of religious, cultural, historical, archaeological, recreational, and natural sites; a history with links to many cultures of the world; an excellent cuisine; a welcoming climate; a friendly and hospitable population; an energetic workforce that is eager to learn and work; good access from many international markets; and relatively inexpensive tourism facilities and services.

There are some constraints that likely interfere with the timely and orderly development of the Palestinian tourism sector. Many of these constraints will only be mitigated by a final-status agreement with Israel through ending the occupation, the establishment of the independent State of Palestine, and implementing the United Nations’ resolutions towards sustainable peace in the area. Some of these constraints are in clear violation of the existing accords or the spirit of those accords and could be identified as follows:

- Continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories
- A negative international image resulting from a lack of progress in the peace process, as well as overt or unconscious Israeli promotion of a negative image of Palestine
- Noncompliance of Israel with protocols on economic relations between Palestine and Israel
- Israeli restrictions on the mobility of the local population and Palestinian tourist transport companies
- Isolation of the Arab Jerusalem tourism sector from PNA support and assistance
- Lack of Palestinian control of its ports of entry
- Israeli security procedures that impede tour planning and operations
- Lack of a fully developed Palestinian economy that requires extensive importation of goods and equipment needed by the tourism sector.

Currently, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) is working to upgrade connections to international tourism organizations. By establishing all needed contacts, Palestine will draw on the benefits of other countries’ international experience relevant to its own tourism-policy development. This will help to raise awareness of international issues, encourage dialogue between countries on important tourism issues, and facilitate the understanding and development of international practices directed toward liberalizing tourism flows. Palestinian involvement in regional organizations will additionally benefit us by helping to refine our national tourism policies and to develop trade relations. Linkages are being made with other countries in the region, on a bilateral basis, which will offer opportunities to develop tourism trade policies and agreements that ease the exchange of visitors and maximize the equitable economic benefits that can flow from such agreements. Such bilateral linkages also offer opportunities for joint tourism-development programmes and the skill-enhancement of MOTA staff as well as private-sector employees.

As tourism remains one of the strategic sectors in Palestine, significant efforts are being made to capitalize on the existing national assets. The ongoing development of this sector is contingent upon various investment activities that contribute to maximizing the realization value of tourism as a main national asset.

Whereas investment incentives can potentially turn economically unfeasible projects into viable developments, incentives alone cannot create investments in an economy with an unpredictable future. Risk-reduction programmes are being worked out and a broad, up-to-date, new National Tourism Law that sets out the functions and powers of MOTA and its relationship to other ministries, advisory bodies, and the private sector is in process. This new law will not only establish and identify clearly the role of MOTA as a government body that coordinates tourism-sector activities that overlap or potentially conflict with the activities of other ministries, but will also ensure the formation of an advisory committee to be made up of municipal tourism officials to guide MOTA development and site-management policies. The new tourism law will define MOTA’s authority to license and regulate tourism enterprises.

This law will include: a Tourism Licensing Law to establish clear and transparent regulations for each of the tourism sectors as well as the legal establishment of their representative bodies, associations, and unions; a National Parks Law to provide regulations for the preservation and protection of areas of Palestine deemed to have unique natural beauty or cultural significance; and Restrictive Development Laws to protect the Dead Sea, Gaza beach, and Jericho areas. In time, a Museums Law may be required to establish standards for museum operations and to regulate the protection, sale, and export of nationally significant artistic, scientific, historical, and cultural specimens.

Palestine’s efforts at marketing are coordinated between the private sector and MOTA. Other coordination tasks include taking responsibility for promoting international and regional tourism to Palestine through mutual attendance at various worldwide tourism fairs and conferences; coordinating and facilitating private-sector promotion and awareness-raising efforts among Palestinians regarding local tourism; assisting the private sector in developing marketing, public relations, and related training programmes that will improve the sector’s competitiveness; and recruiting private-sector hosts for international and regional travel/trade familiarization trips to Palestine.

Neither MOTA nor private-sector business associations have been able to plan for the sustainable development of the tourism industry due to limited access to adequate financial and technical resources. However, contributions and assistance from friendly countries and donors have been received throughout the past years, since the establishment of the PNA on Palestinian land. In addition, there were several uncontrollable factors as a result...
of the continuous occupation and the constraints that were mentioned earlier. To a certain degree, these factors contributed to the weak performance of the Palestinian tourism industry in a highly competitive business environment.

A decision taken by the Council of Ministers last year has prompted MOTA to start plans for the establishment of a public/private body to be known as the Palestinian Tourism Board (PTB). PTB’s board of directors will be made up primarily of private-sector members who represent various tourism-sector associations, with the deputy minister as chairman of the board, in addition to other senior officials from MOTA who will be appointed by the minister. The staff of the PTB, who will be hired from within the private sector, should have appropriate background and training for their respective positions.

This effective and efficient form of public/private partnership will be responsible for the survival, growth, and future sustainability of the Palestinian tourism industry. Such partnership is evident in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon and in most of the European countries as well, which has proved to be an extremely successful engine of growth and development for the tourism industry.

It is our obligation and our challenge, therefore, to explore new avenues that will enable us to continue to implement our tourism development strategies in order to increase Palestine’s foreign revenue. Through increasing the number of international arrivals to Palestine by greater marketing and promotional activities, sites development, enhancement of infrastructure, structure reforms in the public sector, support to the private sector, and policy development to enhance the environment, we will be more able to promote the Holy Land as a safe and attractive destination for international visitors.

Marwan Toubassi is the Deputy Minister of Tourism and Antiquities. He can be reached at: marwantoubassi@yahoo.com.
A Thriving Equation for the Tourism Public Sector in Palestine

Long ago, in the days when pilgrims traveled on foot from such varied places as Russia, Rome, and Arabia, Palestine and the Holy Land were the most-visited destinations on the globe. During the sometimes decades-long periods of war as well as throughout the times of tranquility in Palestine, our great-grandfathers and generations before them and after have earned their living from the tourism business. This was always possible because of the special and sincere desire of the public sector and the official authorities, who reigned at any given time in the past, to encourage and promote tourism.

We realize now that the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism has become powerless and toothless in front of the harrowing task of addressing even the minimal necessities that are required to boost this major source of income of our GNP. With all genuine reverence to the body working hard at the Ministry to maintain our tourism business, I must admit that we are far from receiving even a modicum of support from this Ministry. I very well understand the current circumstances of our lives, but we can do better in these harsh situations as we have done in the past.

The logical way out of this state of affairs is for the public sector to accept, recognize, and believe that the most important tool in its survival kit for the tourism business is strong connections with the private sector, including all the supporting organizations. Our Tourism Ministry will have to use all available means to work in serious and competent collaboration with the existing Palestinian tourism bodies: the Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association (HLITOA), the Arab Tourist & Travel Agents Association (ATTAA), the Arab Hotel Association (AHA), and the Arab Tourist Guides Union (ATGU).

In our tours to the Holy Land, we are selling the same geographical sites that we “share” with our strong competitor and adversary — the Occupier. The only way for us to confront this reality and to save our tourism business is by bolstering the bond between the public and private sectors. We will have to put our differences aside and join forces to better serve the tourism industry in Palestine.

Tony Khashram
Licensed Travel Expert and Owner of Aeolus Tours Ltd.

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Palestine has been receiving tourists for as far as recent history can remember. In fact, some say it was in Palestine that the origins of organized tours were invented as a business practice, with Jerusalem and Bethlehem being introduced as a pilgrimage package. There is no doubt that this long history of receiving guests, pilgrims, and tourists has tremendously impacted, directly or indirectly, the cultural, economic, and social lives of Palestinians all along. However, one would ask, “Have we Palestinians impacted tourism—trends and schools—with our wealth of heritage and experience?”

From an observer’s point of view—and definitely from a nonscientific perspective—I would say that we have done little to contribute to the ongoing growing and diversifying tourism industry. Reasons behind the lag in our tourism are many, including the callous reality of occupation and the non-nation status we operate under. On the other hand, our narrow definition and understanding of tourism and tourists have contributed significantly in creating a dormant yet engaged position characterizing the Palestinian tourism industry today.

If, at a glance, we examine what is being offered at our universities, colleges, and training centres that is related to tourism, we find that most of the programmes are confined to the notion that tourism is an industry that deals with pilgrims-religion-driven groups and cuisine. Thus, the curriculum is designed and implemented to accommodate what we think is “the market demand.” For instance, our tour guides spend a lot of time learning by heart the facts and figures of the Old and New Testaments, paying much less attention to the present reality and the treasures Palestine has to offer and share with the human race and civilization. By no means am I trying to underestimate the pilgrims’ industry. On the contrary, I think there is much to present and compete over; however, what remains is whether we know how to explore our prospects, invest in them, and successfully carry them through. This is definitely no easy task. To go through the process of introducing a new product/offer, certain fundamental practices have to be put in place—and that is the theory bit that many experts and practitioners continue to argue over; “What comes first, the chicken or the egg?” I actually think that the business and the offer come together; and we can’t afford to wait for the one and neglect the other.

Fundamentally what we lack in the Palestinian tourism industry is a shared strategic vision under which all stakeholders operate to develop the sector. This strategic vision should be sought through the collaborative work of the public sector and the private sector, including the educational institutions. The role of educational institutions should not and cannot be limited to training individuals on theories and practices that aren’t necessarily developed or designed at home. An example of such training would be the amount of time spent training chefs on mastering French or Italian cuisine when what we should really be doing is giving them the tools to be more innovative in introducing a Palestinian cuisine that is of richness and edge, capable in its turn to compete in the international arena. Two of the most important things educational organizations should be utilized to serve as advancement centres, making possible the arriving of the chicken and the egg through integrating research outcomes with education and training programmes that develop the knowledge and skills required to implement sustainable tourism principles and technologies. Throughout this learning process, taking the multidisciplinary approach is an essential element to maximize results. Tourism studies should vary from business and development studies to fashion, cultural heritage, pop culture, arts, languages, cartography, history, religion, and information technology. To limit tourism studies to what is common practice today is practically like sitting on a gold mine and not knowing what to do with it. Palestine could and should be a leading force in the tourism industry, providing a capital of knowledge for the world. After all, weren’t we the ones to contribute to the founding of the industry?

Carol Sansour Dabdoub is the Director of Public Relations at Bethlehem University and a board member of Open Bethlehem. She can be reached at cdabdoub@hotmail.com
Towards a National Tourism Framework

Responsible, Sustainable Cultural Tourism as a Key Factor for Development

The relationship between Heritage Places and Tourism is dynamic and may involve conflicting values. It should be managed in a sustainable way for present and future generations.

From “Principles of the Cultural Tourism Charter,” ICOMOS, 1999

Heritage sites and cultural tourism are at the centre of UNESCO’s mission in Palestine, due to its peculiar historical, cultural, religious, and political status. The uniqueness of this authentic and irreplaceable heritage, in combination with other external factors, imposes challenges on how to exclusively retain these rich cultural values and utilize them for tourism as a means for socio-economic development.

From policy formulation to implementation of concrete projects, UNESCO, through a wide spectrum of activities, supports Palestinian cultural institutions; its activities range from the protection, preservation, and restoration of tangible cultural heritage, including archaeological sites, ancient buildings, historic cities, and landscapes, to the intangible aspects that are embodied in the traditional ways of life, material culture, and oral history, which all together form the basis for tourism. UNESCO’s action, channelled through the Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, is implemented in close cooperation with line ministries so as to share process and results from concept to realization phase.

Towards this end, for example, UNESCO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and other local partners, is preparing a comprehensive National Tourism Framework to encompass cultural projects and activities within a coherent vision. The “flagship project,” titled “Developing Cultural Routes in Palestine: In the Footsteps of the Prophets,” is configured as an overarching framework for all UNESCO culture-related projects to be developed in Palestine as well as a multilateral venue for cooperation and donor investments.

This horizon is divided into five segments (or itineraries) across the West Bank and Gaza searching for the roots of Palestinians and investing in their future; two trails out of five have been already outlined: 1) *From the Canaanite site of Tel T’nnik to the cultural landscape of Wadi Fara* in the northern governorates and 2) *From the Oasis of Jericho to the Birthplace of Jesus through the Jerusalem Wilderness* in the Governorates of the central West Bank.

The establishment of a Crypt Museum underneath the Bethlehem Peace Centre, funded by the Government of Norway, represents an opportunity to display the history and the values of the Holy Land, embodied in the archaeological remains found during the construction works of the Peace Centre and salvaged by the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage. The presence of historical traces *in situ* will interact within the museum space with the Palestinian living heritage in addition to the display of various collections.

The liaison of the Crypt Museum in Bethlehem with a project concerning protection and revitalization of the Palestinian Hikaye, carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, mainly addressing disenfranchised communities in the West Bank and Gaza, contributes to promote intangible heritage values as a means for mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue for both visitors and local communities.

The first principle of the Cultural Tourism Charter states that “since domestic and international tourism is among the foremost vehicles for cultural exchange, conservation should provide responsible and well managed opportunities for members of the host community and visitors to experience and understand that community’s heritage and culture at first hand.” Therefore, provided that the key element of tourism lies within the interaction between host and visiting communities, UNESCO and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities are joining their efforts to outline a framework that may enhance dialogue between civilizations and contribute to peace and stability in Palestine.

As examples, highlighting the two spheres of cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, which are currently harmonized in projects recently launched in Palestine, UNESCO associates a range of projects to the above-mentioned framework.

In conclusion, UNESCO is committed to providing its specialized technical expertise to Palestinian cultural institutions aiming to achieve a coherent vision for tourism that would be responsible, culturally oriented, and sustainable for the benefit of the local and international communities.
Since the beginning of time Palestine has been God’s unique gift to the world. A sacred home to the world’s great faiths, Palestine is also a natural habitat for many of the world’s most magnificent, rare and endangered birds, mammals and plants.

Replete with ancient religious and archaeological sites, the high desert environments are harsh but lovely settings for both human and animal families. The fertile Jordan Valley, the cradle of agriculture in the Middle East, is home to a unique wildlife and ecosystem which is currently under severe threat. With its environmental and historical heritage characteristics, the potential is surely present for a solid tourism base for both local and international travellers.

The varying geography and climate are represented by the Mediterranean Sea, the long shoreline of Gaza, the Jerusalem mountains, the eastern slopes and the Rift “Jericho and El-Gour” Valley. Within a small area the biodiversity is truly astounding: more than 2,720 plant species “Flora Palaestina” and around 520 bird species reside or migrate through this compact ecological area. Many avian species journey all the way from Africa to Europe through small land bridges in the south and centre of Palestine. In addition, more than 70 species of mammals and thousands of other insects, reptiles and amphibians are represented in this compact but diverse stretch of land.

Apart from the natural phenomena, the most sacred sites of many faiths, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Nativity are found in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Many visitors are surprised to find that Jericho, the oldest inhabited city in the world, and Nablus, with its famous Mt. Jerzim inhabited by the Samaritans, are still lively, important sites. Let us not forget the long, slender strip of Gaza and its famous wadi bounded by the Mediterranean Sea. On a clear day, from the wondrous Jerusalem mountains, tourists and residents alike enjoy the site of the mountains of Jordan across the valley with a view that differs only slightly from Biblical times.

Today’s tourism is closely related to both the environment and nature. Visitors want to see and understand not just the tourist sites but they want to learn about the ecosystem which supports them. Members of the local wildlife society take pride in showing their heritage and are willing to help keep places clean and green to encourage visitors. Tourism, in turn, helps provide an improved standard of living for those who protect the sites.

Included in the concept of ecotourism are all the steps needed to establish programmes such as producing and marketing tourism packages that cover the cultural, natural and environmental resources of the country. Consequently, tourists can come and enjoy themselves in these places where they can watch nature and birds while mingling with the native people, as at the Jericho Wildlife Monitoring Station. They can join in festivals such as the Artas, Taybeh, Beit Sahour and Battir festivals, and in national and religious ones that have existed thousands of years ago, even before the time of Jesus Christ.

Bird ringing/banding is one of the scientific activities that enables tourists to learn more about birds. They can be taught to perform a useful task and at the same time consider extending their visit in the country.

It has been agreed that ecotourism is a vital sector and has to be dealt with on a national scale. Some local and global organizations have focused their activities on this topic. Some sites in Palestine have been selected to be models for these new concepts that combine cultural heritage and nature, such as the Jerusalem wilderness, St. Saba Monastery (Bethlehem), Masafer Bani Naeem (Hebron), Wadi Qilt and the Monastery of St. George and the city of Jericho.

Through ecotourism, the Palestine Wildlife Society aims to promote the sustainable use of natural and cultural values of Palestine’s heritage sites, to help in the conservation and monitoring of these sites, to build up the local capacity for conservation and ecotourism nationally and regionally and to promote ecotourism and other sustainable development programmes in Palestine through local communities and travel agencies.

Imad Atrash is the Executive Director of the Palestine Wildlife Society www.wildlife-pal.org.
Al-Kasaba International Film Festival
From Ramallah to the World, without Checkpoints

Al-Kasaba Theatre & Cinematheque in Ramallah will host the first Al-Kasaba International Film Festival between 9 and 21 November 2006. Highlights include the following:

Panorama: 25 recently produced films will be screened—from Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, Iraq, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, and Turkey. A notable feature film is Dunia, directed by Jocelyne Saab (Lebanon), who is among the Festival’s invited guests. Other films include The Bus (Bosta), Philippe Aractingi, Lebanon; Yaaqubian Building (Amaret Yaaqubian: Egypt); Free Times (Awkat Faragh); Under the Roof (Taht Essaqf), Nidal Aldebes, Syria; New Day in the Ancient Sana’a (Yaoum Jadid fi Sana’a al Qadeemah), Bader Ben Hershi, Yemen; Fleur D’Oubli, Salma Bakkar, Tunisia; Dreams (Ahlam), Mohammad Alalraki, Iraq; and Waiting (Intithar), Rashid Mashhari, Palestine.

Oscar for Best Foreign Film in 2006: The Palestinian film, Paradise Now, [Aljanna Alaan], by Hani Abu Asaad, has earned the honor of being an Oscar candidate for best foreign-language film. The Festival will screen all Oscar-nominated foreign films to allow Palestinian audiences to view them.

Palestinian Revolution Cinema: The Festival will pay tribute to a group of Palestinian and other Arab filmmakers who made significant contributions to various categories of Palestinian Revolution Cinema and will screen a group of films produced during that period.

Lars Von Trier: The Festival will introduce the films of Danish director Lars Von Trier, who is known for his Dogma 95 movement. A number of his films will be screened, including Manderlay, Dancer in the Dark, Breaking the Waves, and Dogville.

Youssef Chahine: The Festival will honour the Egyptian director Youssef Chahine through screening a group of his films that represent various stages of his cinematographic journey. Misr International Films has agreed to allow Al-Kasaba to screen all Youssef Chahine’s films.

The Festival, which is supported by the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures, will be the platform for a discussion session about “Palestine in the Cinema,” a book by Qais Alzubaidi, published by the Institute for Palestine Studies. A meeting between the Lebanese director Jocelyne Saab and the Palestinian directors will also be held in order to allow Ms. Saab to share her experience in producing the film Dunia. Ms. Aude Erenberk, from Europa Cinema and the Medscreen Program, has been invited to organize a workshop to introduce Palestinian filmmakers to the Medscreen Program and to common cooperation mechanisms.

In order to introduce Palestinian cinema to the world and to enhance the potential for cultural dialogue and exchange through the screening of Palestinian films in Beirut, Amman, Berlin, and Paris, Al-Kasaba cooperates with Aljena productions (Lebanon), Royal Films Corporation (Jordan), the Goethe Institute (Germany), and Cinema L’Atalante (France).

The Festival has been organized in cooperation with numerous Palestinian institutions such as the Institute for Jerusalem Studies, the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Ashtar Theater, and the Palestinian Audiovisual Project (A.M. Qattan Foundation).

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A mere coincidence made it possible for the three actresses to meet in an international audition that would select the ideal actress for the ideal role; each of these actresses arrives with a dream. But that dream is restricted by barriers on all sides.

One actress chooses to be Cleopatra for the audition. The English-speaking actress, who has a dual identity and carries an American passport, is originally Palestinian and torn between two cultures—on one hand, a western culture that allows her to live, to dream, and to give her fantasy a liberal space; and on the other hand, the ever-present taboos of her Arabic culture and traditions that cannot be broken. She falls in love with a man from another religious tradition. Their different religious backgrounds make her love story impossible to be fulfilled.

She was forced by her family to return to her native soil to marry a Palestinian Muslim man whose desire is directed more toward her American passport than toward her as his future wife. This passport can offer him a better standard of living and better opportunities, while at the same time, it limits her life and dreams, as she is imprisoned within an unbreakable cultural frame.

Cleopatra describes her perception of the ideal death that assimilates her femininity and her magnificent glory as a queen. She artistically presents the last moments of her life in a monologue and a physical gesture suggestive of a snake crawling on her arm and scarring her breast—the ideal death that assimilates her femininity within an unbreakable cultural frame.

The three actresses meet at the theatre platform despite their different sociolinguistic backgrounds—three actresses with three different conflicts symbolized by three wooden frames on stage. They all meet with the same desire: resistance. Their rebellion begins by breaking the frames on stage. The three actresses reveal their personal struggles and conflicts, but they realize that the audition they came to is not consistent with their value of idealism.

They are shocked when they realize that only superficial physical qualities would be taken into consideration at the audition. The most-valued “quality” was sex appeal. The mere idea that this could be called a professional audition was in contradiction to their moral beliefs and ambitions.

The three actresses are unique in their abilities to address all feminine souls, rejecting women’s inferiority and discrimination toward women worldwide. The theatre stage is their platform for resistance and change. Although their paths diverge, they all agree to defend the values of pride, challenge, and love. And they all approach the theatre as their means of resistance …

Women under Spotlights: The tale of three women who arrive at the theatre physically framed with barriers and leave with freedom and liberty of soul.

The roles were played by Bayan Shbib as Cleopatra, Faten Khoury as Antigone, and Maysa Falha as Ophelia. The play was directed by Iman Aoun, who attracted the attention of the audience through various theatrical techniques, monologue, and historical characterization with a deep insight into experimental exploration of women’s identity crossing borders of place and time. And finally, the lighting design by Atallah Tarazi was magnificent throughout the play.

Sonia Khader Kashou is the public relations officer at Ashtar Theatre and a theatre enthusiast.
It’s Not Hard to Please Myself!

By Hania Rayyan

You can never please all the people in your life. You can, however, please a small bunch of them. But even those, you can really do without.

No one, believe me, no one will like or accept everything you do. And there is this thing about people: they are more at ease when you are like everybody else, saying what most people say and do. But when you act differently, you should be prepared to face some lifted eyebrows, a stare of suspicion, or a judging word.

All that should not stop you. Because there is no way that you will be accepted by everyone. As long as you are not hurting anyone or doing anything wrong, you should for once in your life dare to do something that feels right at the moment, something that makes you feel so happy, so alive, that your soul starts to sing.

I always remind myself of the following saying, which really helps me to venture out and do some unexpected things as I concentrate on pleasing myself. It says: If you always do what you’ve always done, if you always go where you’ve always gone, you will always be what you’ve always been. I let this saying guide me and even encourage me to go beyond myself—to search within myself to truly get to know what it is that makes me me, and not someone else. And in the end, the result is always a feeling of deep satisfaction and a step forward to becoming who I am really meant to be, not what others expect of me.

Several years ago, I had a lot going on in my life. I was an art teacher. I was taking a modern art course. I was taking Turkish language courses. I was giving English lessons to young Turkish children who came with their families all the way from Turkey because of a job opportunity for the parents at the Turkish consulate. I had such a full schedule that I had no social life. I was not even seeing my family and friends. But I was happy, I was very happy, because I loved all that I was doing.

And one day, after taking my pay check from the school where I worked, and the money I made from giving private English lessons, I went out on my day off and told my mother that I was going to go to a book shop in West Jerusalem to buy a book or two. I knew what she was going to tell me: “You get that book and come home quick. Don’t make me worry about you!”

“Don’t worry mom, I’ll be careful. But you do know that I like to take my time at the bookshop,” I told her. It was true; it took me hours to get the right book. I was very excited since buying new books and reading was one of the things I enjoy very much.

“Don’t take all your money with you, just in case someone tries to ...” But she did not finish her sentence because I was already out the door.

The truth was that I did take all my money because I had something in mind. When I was at the bookshop, there were too many books that I wanted to have, as I expected. And this time, I was going to give myself a treat: after all the hard work I had done, it was now time to please myself. You should have seen the looks on people’s faces as I managed to carry the big pile of books (which took me almost two hours to carefully choose) from the shelves to the counter. I smiled to myself as I wondered what kinds of thoughts they had when they saw me. Even the cashier had to ask me if I was actually buying all nine books! And when I answered her, “Yes, of course!” she looked shocked. They were too many books to buy on one day, and they were expensive books, but they were great books.

I will never forget the feeling I had as I walked out. I had finally done something that I had always wanted to do, even just once. And it made me feel wonderful. It was not the number of books that I bought, but the idea that I did not care what people thought of me. I simply wanted to please myself and thought that I had deserved it after all the hard work I had done.

The big shock was when I reached into my wallet to pay the bus fare. I discovered that I did not have one agora left! What was I to do? Such a humiliating moment you would think, right? Not for me! I told the bus driver that I had lost my money, so I simply got off and stood in the street.

I began laughing quietly. I had not expected this to happen to me, and to be honest, if this had happened on any other day, I would have really seen it as something terrible.

But not on that day. Holding the books in six different plastic bags, I headed home on foot. I walked all the way from East Jerusalem to Beit Hanina. It took me an hour to reach home. I was tired and thirsty and hungry, but I was also excited, too excited to let these things bother me because I did what I did to please myself.

The day after I bought my nine books, I kept one book for myself and gave the other eight to my good friends so that they would read them. This way, it would be as if each month I was given a new book to read by my friends, after they finished reading it — except that I was to keep the book for myself after finishing it. The best thing was that each would be a book I was truly interested in! For almost a year, I enjoyed the outcome of that act of doing what I really felt like doing.

Believe me; don’t put all your energy into pleasing other people. Rather, do your best to please yourself.

Hania Rayyan is the happy wife of the wonderful Loay Rayyan and the mother of cute one-year-old Omar. She enjoys singing and playing ney to her loving husband and son and dreams of sharing her painting and writing with the world. She can be reached at hania7@yahoo.com.
Raji Khoury

Raji Khoury was born in Jerusalem in 1926. He graduated in 1943 from the Friends’ Boys School in Ramallah. His father, being the Lutheran Minister of Bethlehem at that time, could not afford to provide him with higher education. So Raji had to grab the first job available, which was at the Palestine Educational Library in Jerusalem, where he started working two days after graduation from school.

A few years later he moved to a job at the controller of heavy industries with the war department, then on to a stint at the YMCA until he was lucky to land an excellent job with the Socony Vacuum Oil Company in Jerusalem (now Mobil Oil) at a salary considered rather fat for those days.

When the war flared in 1948, he, along with others at the company, was suspended, with the promise to be called back once the war ended. This suspension went on until mid 1950 when he was called back by Mobil Oil to go work in Beirut, Lebanon, for four years and then to Damascus, Syria, for another 12 years. During that period he was offered a part time job at the Damascus Radio and Television as the supervisor of the English section, an editor and newscaster.

On June 30, 1965 the oil company was nationalized by the government and he ended up becoming a government employee, a fact he did not cherish at all. So he decided to go back home to Jerusalem and start a new line of work. Upon the recommendation of his father and uncle he opened a tourist agency together with his cousin Basem Khoury. Shepherds Tours and Travel was inaugurated in July of that year. One month later Raji went on a promotional tour to Europe and, although things were not that easy, he was able to contract the largest company in Europe by the name of Tjaereborg Rejser, situated in Denmark.

In March 1966, Tjaereborg started dispatching groups to Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. It was back-to-back business, with two bus loads at the beginning expanding later to ten bus loads with 500 passengers weekly. This traffic helped Shepherds become one of the leading agencies in the Middle East.

In early 1978, Tjaereborg had plans to expand its traffic to Eilat, but it faced some difficulties with the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. At that point Raji recommended Aqaba as a better substitute to Eilat, an idea that was favoured by Tjaereborg. Thus Shepherds Tours, together with the help of the Jordanian authorities and the Royal Jordanian Airlines, were the pioneers in starting the big traffic to Aqaba (two charters a week with 400 passengers). The late King Hussein was so appreciative and pleased to see his pet city Aqaba booming, he personally sent his photograph with a word of thanks and appreciation in his own handwriting to Raji.

The traffic to Aqaba went on until the end of 1979 when the Iraq/Iran war broke out and the whole venture to Jordan had to stop. Tjaereborg’s traffic to Israel continued until 1982, when the company stopped sending people to Israel as a punishment for invading Lebanon, but this was a direct blow to Shepherds Tours.

During Raji’s long and illustrious career in tourism, he served five terms as President of the Skal Club No.187- East Jerusalem between 1977-1996 and as its Honorary President since 1996. He also served as Vice President of the Arab Tourist & Travel Agents Association between 1970-1972 and was recently appointed President of the newly established Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association.

A Hoard of Silver Coins at Qabatiya, Palestine

By Hamdan Taha, Arent Pol and Gerrit van der Kooij
Published by the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Al-Bireh, November 2006, 80 pages

Soon a hoard of 420 silver coins from the early Ottoman Period, found in Qabatiya, near Jenin, will be made public. This large cache of coins was found in a cave northwest of Qabatiya in 1999, alongside the road, during the removal of a limestone slope to build a house. The work stopped when the first coins appeared and an excavation was done by the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage. The coins, weighing altogether nearly 8 kg, were hidden in two jars in the cave that was also used for animals.

The process of publishing the hoard was done under the auspices of the Department of Antiquities, within the joint Palestinian-Dutch archaeological project at Khirbet Bal’ama, financed by the Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Palestinian Authority. Surprisingly the hoard shows an early connection between Palestine and the Netherlands, because 316 of the coins are Dutch lion-dollars; the others are from Spain and some are from Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy and France. For that reason the Dutch numismatist Arent Pol studied the hoard and the directors of the Khirbet Bal’ama project studied its archaeological and historical context.

The coins date from between ca. 1535-1612 and were hidden in 1612/1613. But how did they reach Qabatiya and what was the value of the hoard at that time? In the early Ottoman Empire only small coins of silver and gold were used. But in Europe large silver coins were common, especially since much silver came from Spanish America. Merchants from Europe traded with the east Mediterranean region and through this also with the Far East, and used these coins. The coins had a high percentage of silver (with some copper) and were called reals (in Spain), or taler (in Germany), from which “dollar” and also the Dutch daalder were derived. The northern provinces of the Netherlands, revolting against the Spanish king, needed funding and had the same kind of coins minted since 1575, but with a lower silver content (75% instead of 85-90%). This was called leeuwendaalder (lion-dollar) because of the standing lion on one side. These were spread all over the world by European and especially Dutch tradesmen and also reached the Near East. There, their value was accepted like that of other European silver coins, having about the same weight (27gr) and size (40mm in diameter), which made them very popular also in Europe, prompting imitations and even fakes.

Merchant were also active in the Levant, but there are clear indications that the owner probably was a local person, hiding the hoard at a place where he could easily reach it again – although at the end he did not pick it up! The value of the hoard for the owner may be imagined from what we know about taxes and other income information documented in the Ottoman tax-census records of that time. The hoard would have a value equal to two times the yearly tax levied from the population of Qabatiya (ca 500 inhabitants), which was one third of their produce per year. Or the amount of money that could be earned by a local peasant during 30 years, or even 50 years, in an agriculturally less rich area.
Edward Muallem: Theatre Pioneer, Actor, Trainer, and Director

At the age of 17, Edward Muallem went from his village Mi’ilya, in the Northern part of the Galilee, to study geography and theatre at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Driven by his passion for theatre, his dedication to his people, and his desire to raise the voice of the voiceless on stage, he joined François Abu Salem, Jackie Lubeck, Adnan Tarabsheh, and other peers and friends to found El Hakawati Theatre Company in Jerusalem in 1977.

Upon graduation, he taught geography and theatre at schools in Jerusalem and the Galilee to support his work in the theatre and to proceed with his career in acting, when acting was not yet a bread-winning profession in the West Bank.

When the members of El Hakawati decided to earn their living from theatre work, they transformed an old, fire-damaged cinema into a well-equipped theatre building in Jerusalem—Nuzha El Hakawati Theatre. Edward and his colleagues worked day in and day out to renovate the space to make it a place that would promote contemporary theatre life in Palestine. At El Hakawati, Edward was not only an actor but also an accountant, a stage builder, a tour manager, and much more.

In the course of his work with El Hakawati, Edward played key roles in many productions. People will always remember him best as Ali in “Ali the Galilean.” Ali, a young man from the Galilee, denies his Palestinian identity in order to be able to survive in Tel Aviv. In Mahjoob Mahjoob, Edward played Im Muti’, the unforgettable, archetypal old lady.

After leaving El Hakawati, Edward and his partner, Iman Aoun, established Ashtar for Theatre Productions and Training in Jerusalem in 1991 as a new initiative to set up the first drama training programme in high schools in Jerusalem and Ramallah. The unique programme is a three-year theatre training course designed to create a new generation of young actors and actresses.

Undertaking such a project in the unstable political environment of the first Intifada was a great challenge! But Edward’s belief in the importance of addressing the need for such school activities led Ashtar from one success to another. As programmes were expanded, more schools participated and more students became interested in theatre, which encouraged Edward to continue. In 1995, Edward managed to transform the basement of a new building on Al Irsal Street in Ramallah into a theatre where Ashtar’s team staged its first experimental production, “Martyrs are Coming Back.”

Edward has acted in most of Ashtar’s productions, whether alongside his students or among his colleagues. For him, theatre is a lifestyle, a path, and a tool for social transformation.

In his popular character, “Abu Shaker,” Edward and the Ashtar team introduced the Forum Theatre technique. Since 1997, this technique has been used to deal with “banned” issues and taboos such as incest, early marriage, violence in school, and honour crimes, among others, for such audiences as youth, women, and other marginalized groups. Edward attracted the audience to this type of theatre not only through directing prohibited questions to the public, but also through his distinguished manipulation of the Oppressor role in various forum plays.

Based on the extensive experience of Ashtar Theatre in drama training, Edward designed the first Palestinian public school drama curriculum for grades two to six and created a training programme for teachers to implement this curriculum accordingly.

After moving from acting to drama training and directing, Edward then began to document the experience of Ashtar Theatre in books and DVDs. His significant input can also be seen clearly in his design of Ashtar’s various publications.

As the General Manager of Ashtar Theatre, Edward has created an atmosphere of intimacy and positive interaction among the team members at the theatre.
Exhibition of the month  

**Exhibition:**  
Cordially Yours in Bethlehem  

Speak German?—Yes. Hear German?—Yes. Read and write German?—Yes. But how do you exhibit German? Like this! The exhibition *Herzliche Grüße* shows what people from all over the world—whether they have mastered the German language or not—could find interesting about it. It shows the things that make you fancy the German language.

The Goethe-Institut’s multimedia exhibition informs in a creative and unusual way about the language and the country. The various aspects of the German language are shown in clear, informative, entertaining, and even humorous ways. The visitor can see, hear, and experience the language. 

The curious, the amateurs, those who like the German language—and even those who have mastered it—will all enjoy this exhibition. They are all invited to an interactive encounter with the German language. Many visitors will have already had experience with the language; but even for beginners, there will be many things to experience.

The exhibition will open on November 16 at 3 p.m. at the Bethlehem Peace Center and will remain open through December 13. The Goethe-Institut offers transportation and guided tours. Please call 02-298-1922 for further information, or write to herzliche.gruesse@ramallah.goethe.org.

Fareed C. Majari, Director  
Goethe-Institut, Palestinian Territories

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CD of the month  

**Ila Mata**  

*Songs from Palestine*  
*Music, Lyrics, and Piano Accompaniment:*  
Rima Nasir Tarazi  
*Soprano: Tania Tamari Nasir*

Although only recently recorded in Palestine, the songs in *Ila Mata (Until When)* have been long in the making. Marking the sixth production of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music (ESNCM), *Until When* was launched on October 15 in Ramallah and consists of a compilation of thirteen songs that were written and composed by Rima Nasir Tarazi and sung by Soprano Tania Tamari Nasir.

Tarazi and Nasir have been working closely together for many years. Not only are they sisters-in-law but they are also united in their passion for the arts and literature as well as in their concern for issues with a human dimension. All this is revealed in this beautifully produced hour-long CD, the songs of which comprise a unique documentation of the poignant resilience of a country and a people under occupation, the story of Palestine and the Palestinians.

The CD is accompanied by a booklet that contains the Arabic lyrics and their English translation as well as some information about the two artists and a personal testament to their experience.

Here are some excerpts from Rima's notes about the special period in her life, in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab/Israeli war and the horrific occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and how it affected her music:

> *Soon every Palestinian home was to be touched by the brutality of the occupation. This led to a need to record my emotions in my own words and music as I stood to witness the unending suffering of my people. The first such song was the song of the Bird, which I wrote for the children of the Society of Inash el Usra and which I dedicated to Palestinian children on the occasion of the International Year of the Child in 1979. Later on, I embarked on writing more songs, which were inspired by courageous men and women in their struggle against oppression and injustice. Every time I sat at the piano to impart my pains, I would recall the warmth of hope and determination radiating from the eyes of the children I would encounter on my visitations to the families ravaged by loss of loved ones, homes, or vineyards, which uplifted my spirits and impelled me to end each of my songs on a hopeful note.*

Writing about her own experience, Tania reminisces:

> *I can still remember that day, sometime in 1979 when Rima asked me, as she usually does each time she finishes composing a new song, to listen to the song of the Bird which she had just composed, a song for children she told me ... Listening to Rima play the music and murmur the words, I was captivated and could not run away from an instantaneous feeling of wanting to sing the song myself. Along the years, Rima and I worked on more songs that carry the same pathos and dreams. It was a unique musical experience for me, an experience that expressed my identity and in which I found my humanity, an experience that continues to this day to enrich me and infuse my life with joy and hope.*

The CD is currently sold at the ESNCM in Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem and also online at ESNCM’s website: www.birzeit.edu/music and www.PalestineOnlineStore.com. For more information on how to order the CD, please contact the ESNCM at 627-1711 or info@ncm.birzeit.edu.
Herbal Medicine

Hops

The hop plant has been widely used in Europe for the fermentation of alcoholic beverages since the 11th century. It was believed that hops accentuate a person’s bad humour. The availability of hops in ale, according to traditional German preparation methods, causes headaches and other disorders. On the other hand, it was also believed that hops can rid the body of the extra quantities of the substance that causes a bad temper.

The kernels that grow on the tips of the hop plant can be used for making infusions. Add two teaspoons of the fresh kernels to a cup of boiling water and allow to infuse for at least five minutes. It is also possible to use newly-dried kernels or frozen ones. This infusion is good in combating insomnia. The tincture has a similar effect. Taking 2ml three times daily relieves tension and irritability. The tincture can also be mixed with other herbs such as camomile or fresh mint leaves for treating an upset stomach. Taking 1.5ml of the tincture on a cube of sugar relieves a nervous stomach. The tincture is also indicated for several sexual problems, including premature ejaculation.

Compresses can be dipped in the infusion or in a diluted tincture and placed on inflamed joints. The infusion can be used as a wash for injuries and skin rashes. Capsules that contain part of the hop plant are available on the market and are taken before meals to whet the appetite.

Avoid touching the uncut plant as it may cause a skin rash. Do not exceed the dosages indicated above and do not use the hop plant in cases of depression.

Restaurant Review

Wake Up Café
Azahra Street
Jerusalem
Tel. 02-6263771
Open daily from 8:00 – 23:00 hours

The National Palace Hotel was a Jerusalem landmark for many years. It was one of Jerusalem’s better hotels and its restaurants, especially the rooftop one, were the city’s finest eateries, with consistent good quality and fine service.

Several years ago, the hotel’s owners embarked on an ambitious refurbishment plan that ground to a halt soon after commencement for a multitude of reasons, financial being one of them. The hotel’s empty shell stood idle for many years, with the building slated to become another one of those half-finished projects.

The hotel was luckily saved from this fate several months ago when local investors bought the property and began putting the building in order. Their first project was to open the hotel’s famed balcony as a café. Whereas the balcony was an open-air meeting place and watering hole for the city’s prominent personalities, the present locale is a glass-enclosed venue billed ‘for ladies and families only.’

The café is long and narrow, with low tables and chairs on one side and a counter with stools running the length of the other side. There are a few regular tables here and there. Medium-sized LCD monitors hang all over the place, broadcasting popular Arabic music for the most part.

The menu offers a selection of hot and cold beverages, such as a variety of coffees, tea, soft drinks and freshly-squeezed juices such as orange, carrot and lemon. For those who want to have a bite there are a few sandwich options such as cheese, turkey and omelet and a few salads. The choice of ice cream on offer is displayed in a glass case at the entrance. There are also cakes to be had in the afternoon with a cup of tea or coffee.

Wake Up Café is an ideal place to relax over a drink after a shopping spree in...
Website Review
www.ochaopt.org

The website for this month is the OCHA oPt website (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), one of the few sites to still label us “Occupied Palestinian Territories.” The choice, although slightly unrelated to the theme, was governed by the fact that this site addresses the very weakness of all other tourist-promotion sites, namely, the facts on the ground. After all, where a tourist goes and what sights can be accessed is as vital as coming to the country on a visit and expecting to see all—and we, for the most part, do not wish to disappoint anyone. OCHA oPt is the main organization that coordinates all the UN agencies operating in the Palestinian Territories: UNDP, UNRWA, UNESCO, UNFPA, FAO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WFP, and WHO.

The attractive home page is well laid out and includes top navigation and the familiar two-column layout. The highlighted main theme and a few main topic headings are on the left, with all the details placed in the right-hand column. The home page also features secondary top-right navigation for the essentials: Home, Local Codes for the various governorates, About OCHA and its locations, and the indispensable Contact Us and Site Map.

One of the key features I found throughout the site was the ease of navigation, which is an essential part of the journey within the site. The home page has seven main sections that include Report Centre, Map Centre, Presentations and Photos, Coordination, Incident Tracking (ACIS), Relief Website Link, and the Information Centre.

The main topic headings in the left-hand column direct the visitor to a comprehensive review of all incidents that have recently taken place or relevant reports that have been written. The Current Issues heading, for example, will lead the visitor to a threecolumn layout page encompassing up-to-date, chronologically ordered, and detailed descriptions of current events. The other sections follow suit as they address the West Bank Barrier and its path, Protection of Civilians, Livelihoods and Poverty Issues, and Humanitarian Assistance. All the topic sections include a Related-Articles column with links to the topic being discussed.

Overall, I found this site very informative and filled with plenty of information that can be overwhelming at times. But as incidents frequently change the situation at a moment’s notice, one should visit the OCHA website for the latest news. It should be both a resource and an indispensable reference not only for residents, but also for well-informed visitors.

Gabriel Batato, IT Specialist
Mr. Batato can be reached at gbatato@yahoo.com.

Events

Note: Please make sure to contact the venue to check if the programme is still running.

EAST JERUSALEM (02)
Centre for Jerusalem Studies at Al-Quds University, tel. 628 7517; Palestinian National Theatre (PNT), tel. 628 0957; Palestinian Art Court - Al Hoash, tel. 627 3501; Turkish Cultural Centre, tel. 540 0592

ART
Thursday 2
18:00 Inauguration of an innovative exhibition featuring the works of the renowned Palestinian artist from Makr, Ibrahim Nubani for the first time at al Hoash. Art on display include paintings and installations (through November 30th opening hours Monday-Friday 10:00-16:00, Saturday 9:00-12:00, Sundays closed), Al Hoash Gallery

CHILDREN’S ACTIVITIES
The 15th International Festival is organized by the Palestinian National Theatre
Thursday 2
17:00 The 15th International Puppet Festival: play, The Fable of the Fox (Spanish group), PNT

FILMS
The 15th International Festival is organized by the Palestinian National Theatre
Images from Netherlands: Dutch films, the Palestinian National Theatre in cooperation with the Netherlands Representative Office
Friday 3
14:30 İnşaat (Turkish with English subtitles),
Turkish Cultural Center

Saturday 4
17:00 The 15th International Puppet Festival:
Catch the kid (English with Arabic subtitles),
PNT
19:00 Documentary film: The Iron Wall, which
was quoted as: “The best description of the
barrier, its routing and impact is shown in the
film The Iron Wall” by the former U.S. President
Jimmy Carter, film director Mr. Mohammed
Alatar will be available for discussion following
the screening, Al Hoash Gallery

Tuesday 7
13:00 Shashat 2nd Women’s Film Festival:
documentary films: 25 Kilometers, The
Fourth Room, and Going for a Ride, by the
Palestinian director Nahed Awwad, director
will be present, Main Auditorium, Al-Quds
University, Abu Dees Campus

Tuesday 14
13:00 Shashat 2nd Women’s Film Festival:
documentary film, Maftouh:Muglak by the
Palestinian director Liana Badr, director
will be present, Main Auditorium, Al-Quds
University

Wednesday 15
19:00 Images from the Netherlands: SHOUF
VRIENDEN! (Dutch with Arabic subtitles),
Alquds University

Thursday 16
19:00 Images from the Netherlands: Character
(Dutch with Arabic subtitles), Alquds University

Friday 17
14:30 İnşaat (Turkish with English subtitles),
Turkish Cultural Center
19:00 Images from the Netherlands: Going
Home (Dutch with Arabic subtitles), PNT

Saturday 18
12:00 Images from the Netherlands: The
Iron Wall (Dutch with Arabic subtitles), Alquds
University
19:00 Images from the Netherlands: Leef (Alive)
(Dutch with Arabic subtitles), PNT

Sunday 19
12:00 Images from the Netherlands: SHOUF
VRIENDEN! (Dutch with Arabic subtitles),
Alquds University
19:00 Images from the Netherlands: The
Dress (Dutch with Arabic subtitles), PNT

Monday 20
12:00 Images from the Netherlands: Leef (Alive)
(Dutch with Arabic subtitles), Alquds University

Tuesday 21
12:00 Images from the Netherlands: Character
(Dutch with Arabic subtitles), Alquds University
13:00 Shashat 2nd Women’s Film Festival: films
: Naim and Wadee’a (a documentary), Yasmine
Tughani (fiction) by the Palestinian director
Najwa Najjar, director will be present, Main
Auditorium Al-Quds University, Abu Dees
Campus

Friday 24
14:30 İnşaat (Turkish with English subtitles),
Turkish Cultural Center

Tuesday 28
13:00 Shashat’s 2nd Women’s Film Festival,
Good Morning Qalqilya, At the Checkpoint,
and Until I See You, by the Palestinian director
Dima Abu Ghoush, director will be present,
Al-Quds University, Abu Dees Campus, Main
Auditorium

TOURS
The tours “Jerusalem, A Palestinian
Perspective” are organized by the Centre for
Jerusalem studies of Al-Quds University. The
dates of the tours are to be confirmed. For
further information please call the Centre for
Jerusalem Studies, tel. 02-6287517

Saturday 11
10:00 Canaanite Jerusalem: The walking tour
will explore Canaanite Jerusalem entering
the city of David to the excavated area in the
city, than walking into the Canaanite Shaft
(Warren’s Shaft) down to the spring of Silwan
(SitnaMerriam). and continuing through the
Hezekiah tunnel which connects the spring
with the pool of Silwan (Siloam) where we will
see the newly excavated area there, Centre
for Jerusalem Studies

Sunday 19
10:00 Akka & Haifa: The bus tour will drive
us to Akkato visite Al Jazzar Mosque, St.
George’s Church, and the City Walls & Gates,
plus the Old City of Haifa, the Bahai Garden,
and Mount Carmel., Hind Husseini College,
Al-Quds University

Thursday 30
10:00 House Demolitions in East Jerusalem:
The bus tour will take us along Silwan &
Alwalajeh, to visit areas with mass house
demolition and those under threat. The tour
will also visit Al-Addaseh area north of Beit
Hanina, Hind Husseini College, Al-Quds
University

BETHLEHEM and BEIT JALA (02)
Bethlehem Peace Centre, tel. 276 6677;
International Centre of Bethlehem (Dar
Annadwa), tel. 277 0047

ART
Inauguration of a retrospective exhibition
"Hassan everywhere" by the late artist Hassan
Hourani (please call for time and date),
al-Kahf Gallery, the International Center of
Bethlehem

Thursday 16
15:00 Inauguration of an exhibition “Cordially
Greetings” Goethe Institute at the Franco-
German Cultural Center in cooperation with
Bethlehem Peace Center (through December
13th daily from 10:00 till 18:00), Bethlehem
Peace Center

Saturday 18
11:00 Under the Patronage of their
Excellencies Mr. Fritz Schramma, Lord Mayor
of Cologne & Dr. Victor Batarseh, Mayor
of Bethlehem inauguration of an exhibition
entitled “People Like Us – Minsche Wie Mir”

This Week in Palestine would like to invite all talented photographers to take part
in visually showcasing Palestine through their lenses. We particularly encourage
photographers to follow up on the upcoming themes of our publication and send
ahead of time images related to that theme. Photos that meet the publication’s
standards will be considered for inclusion with the articles, within the Picturesque
Palestine section and on the cover. Naturally, proper credit will be given.
(through November 30th daily from 10:00 till 18:00), Bethlehem Peace Center

Thursday 23
17:00 Inauguration of an exhibition “The Bethlehem Room” by Fr John James Abraham (through December 18th), al-Kahf gallery, The International Center of Bethlehem

CHILDREN’S ACTIVITIES
The 15th International Festival is organized by the Palestinian National Theatre

Friday 3
9:30 - 13:00 Friday Club, Bethlehem Peace Center
12:00 The 15th International Puppet Festival: The Fable of the Fox (Spanish group), Bethlehem Peace Center

Friday 10
9:30 - 13:00 Friday Club, Bethlehem Peace Center
16:00 Circus Behind the Wall, show by the First Palestinian Circus School, The International Center of Bethlehem

Friday 17
9:30 - 13:00 Friday Club, Bethlehem Peace Center

CONCERT
Thursday 30
19:00 Solo Oud Concert by Issa Murad, the concert is supported by A.M. Qattan Foundation, The International Center of Bethlehem

DANCE
Saturday 4
19:00 Flamenco Dance, Popular Art Center’s Rhythm of Autumn and Dar Annadwa present Alhucema Flamenco troupe from Granada, International Centre of Bethlehem

Wednesday 22
13:00 Images from the Netherlands: Character (Dutch with Arabic subtitles), Bethlehem University

Wednesday 29
14:00 Shashat 2nd Women’s Film Festival: “25 Kilometers” & “The Fourth Room” & “Going for a Ride” by the Palestinian filmmaker Nahed Awad, followed by a debate with the filmmaker, organized by Shashat/Ramallah in cooperation with Al-Najah University/Nablus and Bethlehem Peace Center/Bethlehem, Fiorono Auditorium, Bethlehem University

PLAYS
18:00 Abu Jabber Al Khalili by The Palestinian National Theater “Al Hakawati”, Bethlehem Peace Center

SPECIAL EVENTS
Thursday 9
11:00 On the occasion of the International Day against the Wall, a presentation entitled “Long-term Strategic Impact of Israeli Unilateral Actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” organized by Bethlehem Peace Center in cooperation with Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (Arij) and The Palestinian Non Governmental organizations (PENGON), Bethlehem Peace Center

Wednesday 22
14:00 Inauguration of an exhibition for old currencies and stamps of different historical periods and different countries. Complete sets of Palestinian currency are available. The exhibited stamps and currencies will be part of the permanent exhibition in the Chamber later (through November 11th), Trade Promotion Center-Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Wednesday 22
15:00-17:00 Japanese Cultural days: Art Workshop: Shodo / Japanese Calligraphy, Origami / Japanese paper art, Kimono (Yukata) / Japanese fashion, during the workshops - Scenery of Japanese Garden, The International Center of Bethlehem

Thursday 23
15:00-17:00 Japanese Cultural days, Art Workshop, Shodo / Japanese Calligraphy, Origami / Japanese paper art, Kimono (Yukata) / Japanese fashion, during the workshops: Scenery of Japanese Garden, The International Center of Bethlehem
Friday 24
11:00-17:00 Japanese Cultural Days: Open Day, Opening of an exhibition of: Atomic bomb tile, Stone-print, Mr. Takayama interview video, Painting of the Atomic bomb victims, Sadako story movie, and Hiroshima tour video related to atomic bomb. Demonstration of: Tea Ceremony, Hagoita (Japanese Badminton), and Fukuwarai (Japanese Puzzle). 19:00 Japanese Cuisine, The International Center of Bethlehem

GAZA (08)
Red Crescent Association, tel: 2838824, Shahsat, tel: 02 - 297 3336

FILMS
Saturday 4
12:00 Shashat 2nd Women's Film Festival: Young Women Directors: Rowan Al Faqih's "Summer 85" documentary, Enas Muthafar's "East to West" documentary, Liana Saleh's "A Ball and a Coloring Box" fiction, and Larissa Sansour's "Bethlehem Bandolero" experimental, Conference Auditorium, Al-Aqsa University

Sunday 12
12:00 Shashat 2nd Women's Film Festival, Young Women Directors: Rowan Al Faqih's "Summer 85" documentary, Enas Muthafar's "East to West" documentary, Liana Saleh's "A Ball and a Coloring Box" fiction, and Larissa Sansour's "Bethlehem Bandolero" experimental, Conference Auditorium, Al-Aqsa University

HEBRON (02)
Children Happiness Center, tel: 229 9545, Shahsat, tel: 297 3336

FILMS
Monday 6
11:00 Shashat 2nd Women's Film Festival: documentary film, Maftouh-Muglak by the Palestinian director Liana Bader, director will be present, Auditorium #1, Hebron University

Monday 13
11:00 Shashat 2nd Women's Film Festival, documentary film, All that Remains by the Palestinian director Nada El Yassir, Auditorium #1, Hebron University

Monday 20
11:00 Shashat 2nd Women's Film Festival: Naim and Wadee'a (documentary), and Yasmine Tughani (fiction) by the Palestinian director Najwa Najjar, director will be present, Auditorium #1, Hebron University

Saturday 25
19:00 Images from the Netherlands: SHOUF VRIENDEN! (Dutch with Arabic subtitles), Children Happiness Center

Sunday 26
19:00 Images from the Netherlands: Character, (Dutch with Arabic subtitles), Children Happiness Center

JENIN (09)
Shahsat, tel: 02 - 297 3336

FILMS
Monday 6
13:00 Shashat 2nd Women's Film Festival: documentary film Hay Mish Eishi by the Palestinian director Alia Arasoughly, Arab American University

Monday 13
13:00 Shashat 2nd Women's Film Festival: documentary films, Naim and Wadee'a, and Yasmine Tughani by the Palestinian director Najwa Najjar, director will be present, Auditorium C3, Arab American University

Monday 20
13:00 Shashat 2nd Women's Film Festival, Young Women Directors: Rowan Al Faqih's "Summer 85" documentary, Enas Muthafar's "East to West" documentary, Liana Saleh's "A Ball and a Coloring Box" fiction, Larissa Sansour's "Bethlehem Bandolero" experimental, Arab American University
JERICHO (02)
Jericho Municipality, tel. 232 2417

CHILDREN’S ACTIVITIES
The 15th International Festival is organized by the Palestinian National Theatre

Sunday 5
13:00 The 15th International Puppet Festival: The Fable of the Fox, (Spanish group), Jericho Municipality

NABLUS (09)
CCF, tel: 2385 914; Child Cultural Centre, tel: 239 7140; Shahsat, tel: 02 - 297 3336

ART
Thursday 23
18:00 Inauguration of an exhibition "Photos from Palestine" by Marie Noelle Boutin, CCF

CHILDREN’S ACTIVITIES
The 15th International Festival is organized by the Palestinian National Theatre

Saturday 4
14:00 The 15th International Puppet Festival: The Fable of the Fox (Spanish group), Child Cultural Center

CONCERT
Monday 13
18:30 Au bord de mon rêve by Cecile Jammes and Guillaume Verjat, Child Cultural Center

FILMS
Images from Netherlands: Dutch films, the Palestinian National Theatre in cooperation with the Netherlands Representative Office

Monday 6
17:00 Shashat 2nd Womens Film Festival: documentary film Maftouh:Muglak by the palestinian director Liana Badr, director will be present, An-Najah National University, Zafir Al-Masri Auditorium (call for more information)

Tuesday 7
18:30 The Crimson Rivers (French with Arabic subtitles), CCF

RAMALLAH (02)

Al -Bider Theatre, tel: 247 4333; Al-Kasaba Theatre & Cinematheque, tel: 296 5292; Ashtar Theatre, tel: 298 0037; Franco-German Cultural Centre, tel: 298 1922; Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, tel: 298 7374; Popular Art Centre, tel: 240 3891; Ramallah Cultural Palace, tel: 298 4704; Shahsat, tel: 297 3336

ART
Monday 6
18:30 Opening of an exhibition "Rouge" by the Palestinian artist Abdel Nasser, Franco German Cultural Centre

CONCERT
Thursday 9
19:00 Popular Art Center’s Rhythm of Autumn presents Khaled Jubran “Psalms”, Ramallah Cultural Palace

FINALS
The Popular Art Centre will screen films from its library for groups of five persons and above by prior reservation only

Images from Netherlands: Dutch films, the Palestinian National Theatre in cooperation with the Netherlands Representative Office

Wednesday 1
18:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
20:30 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Saturday 4
18:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
20:30 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Sunday 5
18:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba
20:30 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Monday 6
13:00 Shashat 2nd Women's Film Festival: Good Morning Qalqilya, At the Checkpoint, and Until I See You by the Palestinian director Dima Abu Ghoush, director will be present, Kamal Nasser Auditorium, Birzeit University
18:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
20:30 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Tuesday 7
18:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba
20:30 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Wednesday 8
18:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba
20:30 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Wednesday 9
18:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba
20:30 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Friday 3
18:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba
20:30 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
Thursday 9
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival (the opening): Dunia, Egypt, Al Kasaba

Friday 10
17:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival
Word and Utopia, Portugal (Arabic Subtitles), Al Kasaba
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Al Bosta, Lebanon, Al Kasaba
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Habibi Daeman (Arabic), Ashtar
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Ahlam, Iraq, Al Kasaba
20:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Paradise Now, Palestine, Al Kasaba
20:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Bab Al Haded (Arabic), Ashtar
21:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Angel’s Fall, Turkey, Al Kasaba

Saturday 11
17:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Los Lunes Al Sol, Spain, Al Kasaba
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Away From Home (Arabic), Khalil Sakakini
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Al Asfour, Ashtar
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Ahlam, Iraq, Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Manderlay, Dogma, English, Franco-German Cultural Center
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
La Caja 507, Spain, Al Kasaba
20:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Awdet Al Eben Al Dal (Arabic), Ashtar
20:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Tsotsi, South Africa, Al Kasaba
21:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Al Bosta, Lebanon, Al Kasaba

Sunday 12
17:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Angel’s Fall, Turkey, Al Kasaba
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Al Youm Al Sades (Arabic), Ashtar
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
That Al Sakf, Syria, Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Two Drifters, Portugal, Al Kasaba
20:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Eskenderia leh, Arabic, Ashtar
20:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Ahlam, Iraq, Al Kasaba
21:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba

Monday 13
13:00 Shashat 2nd Women’s Film Festival:
documentary films, What's Next, and Staying Alive by the Palestinian director Ghada Terawi, director will be present, Kamal Nasser Auditorium, Birzeit University
17:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Dunia, Egypt, Al Kasaba
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
The Visit, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Haduta Masria (Arabic), Ashtar
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Kebab Connection, Germany, Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Breaking the Waves, Dogma films (English), Franco-German Cultural Center
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Yacoubian Building, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
The final Days (Germany), Al Kasaba

Tuesday 14
17:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Awkat Faragh, Al Kasaba
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
They Don't Exist (Arabic), Khalil Sakakini
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Al Muhajer (Arabic), Ashtar
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Oporto of my youth, Portugal, Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Dancer in the Dark, Dogma films (English), Franco-German Cultural Center
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Word and Utopia, Portugal, Al Kasaba
20:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Al Cahera Menwra Be Ahlaha (Arabic), Ashtar
20:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Merry Christmas, France, Al Kasaba

Wednesday 15
17:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Paradise Now, Palestine, Al Kasaba
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Palestinian Visions (Arabic), Khalil Sakakini
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival:
Bab Al Haded (Arabic), Al Kasaba International Film Festival, Ashtar
18:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Khushkhash, Tunisia, Al Kasaba
18:30  Wednesday Cine-Club: Redaktion-D, short feature and documentary films to learn German, Franco-German Cultural Center

Yacoubian Building, Egypt, Al Kasaba
19:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Al Bosta, Lebanon, Al Kasaba
20:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Los Lunes Al Sol, Spain, Al Kasaba
20:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Al Youm Al Sades (Arabic), Ashtar
21:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Al Bosta, Lebanon, Al Kasaba

Theatre

Awdet Al Eben Al Dal (Arabic), Ashtar

The Sea Inside, Spain, Al Kasaba
18:00  The Sea Inside, Spain, Al Kasaba
18:00  The Sea Inside, Spain, Al Kasaba
17:00

Saturday 18
17:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: The final Days, Germany, Al Kasaba
18:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: La Caja 507, Spain, Al Kasaba
18:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Eskenderia Kaman u Kaman (Arabic), Ashtar
18:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: The Key, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center
19:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Yacoubian building, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Al Bosta, Lebanon, Al Kasaba
20:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Haduta Masria (Arabic), Ashtar

Sunday 19
17:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Merry Christmas, France, Al Kasaba
18:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Dunia, Egypt, Al Kasaba
18:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Al Cahera Menwra Be Ahlaha (Arabic), Ashtar
19:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: That Al Sakf, Syria, Al Kasaba
19:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Breaking the Waves, Dogma films (English), Franco-German Cultural Center
20:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Al Muhajer (Arabic), Ashtar
20:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Al Bosta, Lebanon, Al Kasaba
21:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: The Sea Inside, Spain, Al Kasaba

Tuesday 21
17:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: In the land of the deaf, France, Al Kasaba
21:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Strayed, France, Al Kasaba

Monday 20
13:00  Shashat 2nd Women’s Film Festival: Naim and Wadee’a (documentary), and Yasmine Tughani (fiction) by the Palestinian director, Najwa Najjar, director will be present., Kamal Nasser Auditorium, Birzeit University
17:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: One day in Europe, Germany, Al Kasaba
18:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Back to Haifa (Arabic), Khalil Sakakini
18:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Waiting, Palestine, Al Kasaba
19:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Dancer in the Dark, Dogma Films (English), Franco-German Cultural Center
19:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Oporto of my youth, Portugal, Al Kasaba
20:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: That Al Sakf, Syria, Al Kasaba
21:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: The Sea Inside, Spain, Al Kasaba

Wednesday 22
18:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Kebab Connection, Germany, Al Kasaba
19:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Word and Utopia, Portugal, Al Kasaba
21:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Two Drifters, Portugal, Al Kasaba

Thursday 23
18:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Dunia, Egypt, Al Kasaba
18:30  Wednesday Cine-Club: Le banquier des humbles (French), Franco-German Cultural Center
19:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Yacoubian Building, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:00  Images from the Netherlands: SHOUF VRIENDEN!, (Dutch with Arabic subtitles), Al Bider Theatre
20:30  Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Friday 17
17:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Children Nonetheless, Khalil Sakakini
19:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Yacoubian Building, Egypt, Al Kasaba
19:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Manderlay, Dogma films (English), Franco-German Cultural Center
20:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Al Asfour (Arabic), Ashtar
20:00  Al Kasaba International Film Festival: One day in Europe, Germany, Al Kasaba

This Week in Palestine

In its bid to further enrich the content of its issues, This Week in Palestine would like to encourage its friends and supporters to follow up on the themes of the upcoming issues of our publication which are normally printed in the “Forthcoming Issues” box on page three. Furthermore, This Week in Palestine would like to invite all connoisseurs, experts and those who believe that he or she has an added value to write to us and share the information. Naturally, proper credit will be given.
Friday 24
18:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:30 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Dunia, Egypt, Al Kasaba

Saturday 25
18:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
20:30 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba

Sunday 26
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Dunia, Egypt, Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Yacoubian Building, Egypt, Al Kasaba

Monday 27
13:00 Shashat 2nd Women’s Film Festival, documentary film Hay Mish Ishi by the Palestinian director Alia Arasoughly, Kamal Nasser Auditorium, Birzeit University
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:30 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Tuesday 28
18:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:30 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Wednesday 29
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:30 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Thursday 30
18:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Special Events

Saturday 25
19:00 The Shadow, directed by Yacoub Ismail, Al Kasaba

PLAYS

Friday 24
18:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:30 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Sunday 26
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Dunia, Egypt, Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Yacoubian Building, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:30 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Monday 27
13:00 Shashat 2nd Women’s Film Festival, documentary film Hay Mish Ishi by the Palestinian director Alia Arasoughly, Kamal Nasser Auditorium, Birzeit University
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:30 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Tuesday 28
18:00 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:30 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Wednesday 29
18:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
19:00 Al Kasaba International Film Festival: Awkat Faragh, Egypt, Al Kasaba
20:30 Wahed mn el Nas (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Thursday 30
18:00 Wesh Egram (Arabic), Al Kasaba

Special Events

Monday 20
15:00 Opening of the Mediathek, reception and presentation of Robert - Schumann Mediathek, Franco German Cultural Centre
Palestinian Child Arts Center (PCAC)
Tel: 222 4813, Fax: 222 0855
pcac@hotmail.com
www.pcac.net

Theatre Day Productions
Telefax: 229 1559
tdphebron@alqudsnet.com

The International Palestinian Youth League (IPYL)
Tel: 222 9131 Fax: 229 0652
lty@ipyl.org, www.ipyl.org

Jericho (02)

Jericho Community Centre
Tel: 232 5007

Jericho Culture & Art Center
Tel: 232 1047

Municipality Theatre
Tel: 232 2417, Fax: 232 2604

Nabulus (09)

British Council Info-Point (An-Najjah University)
Tel: 237 5950

Cultural Centre for Child Development
Tel: 238 6690, Fax: 238 7518
nutaleb@hotmail.com, www.nutaleb.cjb.net

French Cultural Centre
Tel: 238 5914, Fax: 238 7993
cfcnablouze@consultfrance-jerusalem.org

Ramallah & Al-Bireh (02)

A. M. Qattan Foundation
Tel: 296 0544, Fax: 298 4886
info@qattanfoundation.org
www.qattanfoundation.org

Al-Kamandjâti Association
Tel: 297 3101
info@alkamandjati.com
www.al-kamandjat.org

Al-Kasaba Theatre and Cinematheque
Tel: 296 5292/3, Fax: 296 5294
info@alkasaba.org, www.alkasaba.org

Al-Rahalah Theatre
Tel: 298 8091
alrahalah@hotmail.com

Amideast
Tel: 290 8023, Fax: 290 8017
westbank-gaza@amideast.org
www.amideast.org

Ashar for Theatre Production
Tel: 290 0037, Fax: 296 0326
info@ashar-theatre.org, www.ashar-theatre.org

Baladna Cultural Center
Tel: 295 8435, Fax: 295 8435

British Council
Tel: 296 3293-6, Fax: 296 3297
britishcouncil@ps.britishcouncil.org,

Carmel Cultural Foundation
Tel: 298 7375, Fax: 298 7374

Cinema Production Center
Tel: 298 6942
cpc@p-ol.com

El-Funoun Dance Troupe
Tel: 240 2853, Fax: 240 2851
www.el-funoun.org

First Ramallah Group, Sareyret Ramallah
Tel: 295 2706 - 295 26 90, Fax: 298 0583
sirreyeh@palnet.com

Greco-German Cultural Centre Ramallah
Tel: 298 1922 / 7727, Fax: 298 1923
info@ccf-goethe.org

Greek Cultural Centre - “Macedonia”
Tel: 298 1736/ 298 0546
makdona@palnet.com

In’ash Al-Ursa Society - Center for Heritage & Folklore Studies
Tel: 240 1123 / 2402876, Telefax: 2401544
usra@palnet.com, www.inash.org

Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center
Tel: 298 7374, Fax: 298 7375
sakakini@sakakini.org
www.sakakini.org

Manar Cultural Center
Tel: 295 9373, Fax: 295 7958

Mazra’a Qibliyeh Heritage and Tourism Centre
Tel: 295 7937, Fax: 298 7598

Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange (PACE)
Tel: 240 7611
Telfax: 2407610
pace@p-ol.com, www.pace.ps

Popular Art Center
Tel: 240 3891, Fax: 240 2851
info@popularartcentre.org
www.popularartcentre.org

Ramallah Cultural Palace
Tel: 298 4704 / 295 2105, Fax: 295 2107
events@ramallahculturalpalace.org
info@ramallahculturalpalace.org
www.ramallahculturalpalace.org

RIWAQ: Centre for Architectural Conservation
Tel: 240 6887, Fax: 240 6986
riwaq@palnet.com, www.riwaq.org

Shashat
Tel: 297 3336, Fax: 297 3337
info@shashat.org, www.shashat.org

Sharek Youth Forum

Tel: 296 7741, Fax: 296 7742
info@sharek.ps, www.sharek.ps

Tamer Institute for Community Education
Tel: 298 6121 / 2, Fax: 298 8160
tamer@palnet.com, www.tamerinst.org

The Edward Said National Conservatory of Music
Tel: 295 9070, Fax: 295 9071

The League of Palestinian Artists
Telefax: 296 7013, p-art@p-ol.com

The Palestinian Network of Art Centres
Telefax: 240 7939, network@p-ol.com

Young Artists Forum
Telefax: 296 7654, yaf@palnet.com

Gaza Strip (08)

Al-Qattan Centre for the Child
Tel: 283 9929, Fax: 283 9949
reem@acc.qattanfoundation.org
www.qattanfoundation.org/qcc

Arts & Crafts Village
Telefax: 284 6405
artvil@palnet.com

Ashtar for Culture & Arts
Telefax: 283 3569
atlas@palnet.com

British Council
Tel: 282 5394, Fax: 282 0512
britishcouncil@ps.britishcouncil.org
www.britishcouncil.org/ps

Culture & Free Thought Association
Telefax: 285 1299

Culture & Light Centre
Telefax: 286 5896
ifarah@palnet.com

Fawanees Theatre Group
Telefax: 288 4403

French Cultural Centre
Tel: 286 7883, Fax: 282 8811
ccfgaza@palnet.net

Gaza Theatre
Tel: 282 4860, Fax: 282 4870

Global Production and Distribution
Telefax: 2884399
art.global@yahoo.com

Holst Cultural Centre
Tel: 281 0476, Fax: 280 8896
mcroq@palnet.com

Rashad Shawwa Cultural Centre
Tel: 286 4599, Fax: 286 8965
shawacentre@hotmail.com

Science & Culture Centre
Tel: 281 0476, Fax: 280 8896

Theatre Day Productions
Telefax: 283 6766
tdpzaga@palnet.com
East Jerusalem (02)

**Addar Hotel** (30 suites; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 626 3111, Fax: 626 0791
www.addar-hotel.com

**Alcazar Hotel** (38 rooms; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 628 1111; Fax: 628 7360
admin@jrscazar.com, www.jrscazar.com

**Ambassador Hotel** (122 rooms; bf; cf; mr; res)
Tel: 541 2222, Fax: 582 8202
amb@netvision.net.il, www.jerusalambassador.com

**American Colony Hotel** (84 rooms; bf; cf; mr; res)
Tel: 627 9777, Fax: 627 9779
reserv@amcol.co.il, www.americancolony.com

**Austrian Hospice**
Tel: 626 5800, Fax: 627 1472
office@austrianhospice.com, www.austrianhospice.com

**Azzahra Hotel** (15 rooms, res)
Tel: 628 2447, Fax: 628 3960
azzahrahotel@shabaka.net, www.azzahrahotel.com

**Capitol Hotel** (54 rooms; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 628 2561/2, Fax: 626 4352

**Capitolina Hotel** (ex. YMCA)
(55 rooms; bf; cf, mr; res)
Tel: 628 6888, Fax: 628 6301
capitol@cast-jerusalem-ymca.org

**Christmas Hotel** (37 rooms; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 628 2588, Fax: 626 4417

**Commodore Hotel** (45 rooms; cf; mr; res)
Tel: 627 1414, Fax: 628 4701

**Gloria Hotel** (94 rooms; mr; res)
Tel: 628 2431, Fax: 628 2401 - gloriah@netvision.net.il

**Golden Walls Hotel** (112 rooms)
Tel: 627 2416, Fax: 626 4568
info@goldenwalls.com, www.goldenwalls.com

**Holy Land Hotel** (105 rooms; bf; cf; mr; res)
Tel: 627 2888 / 628 4841, Fax: 628 0265

**Jerusalem Hotel** (14 rooms; bf; mr; res; live music)
Tel: 628 3282, Fax: 628 3282
raed@jrsotel.com, www.jrsotel.com

**Jerusalem Claridge Hotel** (30 rooms; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 234 7137, Fax: 234 7139
claridge@palnet.com

**Jerusalem Meridian Hotel** (74 rooms; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 628 5212, Fax: 628 5214
www.jerusalem-meridian.com

**Jerusalem Panorama Hotel** (74 rooms; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 627 2277, Fax: 627 3899
panorama@trendline.com.il

**Knights Palace Guesthouse** (50 rooms)
Tel: 628 2537, Fax: 628 2401
kp@actcom.co.il

**MT. of Olive Road No. 30**
P.O. Box 19195 – Jerusalem
Tel: 02-532-8706, Fax: 02-532-8701
E-mail: Jerusalem@netours.com
Ramallah & Al-Bireh (02)

Al-A’in Hotel (24 rooms and suites; mr; cf)
Tel: 240 5825, 240 4353 Fax: 240 4332
alainhotel@hotmail.com
Tel: 240 5925, 240 4353 Fax: 240 4332

Al-Bireh Tourist Hotel (50 rooms; cf; res)
Telefax: 240 0803

Al-Hajal Hotel (22 rooms; bf)
Telefax: 298 7858

Al-Murouj Pension (Jifna village) (8 rooms; res)
Telefax: 281 0881

Al-Wihdah Hotel
Telefax: 298 0412

Ankars Suites (22 suites; cf; res; bf)
Tel: 285 2602, Fax: 295 2603
info@ankarsuites.com

Best Eastern Hotel (81 rooms; cf; res)
Tel: 296 0450, Fax: 295 8452
besteastern@iol.com

City Inn Palace Hotel (47 rooms; cf; res; sp)
Tel: 240 8080, Fax: 240 8091

Grand Park Hotel & Resorts (84 rooms; 12 grand suites; cf; mr; res; sp; pf)
Tel: 298 6194, Fax: 295 6950, info@grandpark.com

Gemzö Suites (90 executive suites; cs; mr; pf; gm; res)
Tel: 240 9729, Fax: 240 9532
gemzo@palnet.com, www.gemzosuites.net

Manarh Hotel
Tel: 295 2122, Telefax: 295 3274
fyara@hotmail.com, www.manarhotel.com.ps

Merryland Hotel (25 rooms)
Tel: 298 7176, Telefax: 298 7074

Rocky Hotel (22 rooms; cf; ter)
Tel: 296 4470 Telefax: 296 1871

Pension Miami (12 rooms)
Tel: 295 6808

Plaza Hotel
Telefax: 298 2020

Ramallah Hotel (22 rooms; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 295 3544, Fax: 295 5029

Gaza Strip (08)

Retno Hotel (15 rooms & su; res; mr; gm; sp)
Telefax: 295 0222, retnohotel@yahoo.com

Royal Court Suite Hotel (24 suites; res)
Tel: 296 4040, Fax: 296 4047

Adam Hotel (76 rooms; bf; cf; mr; res)
Tel: 282 3521/19

Al-Amal, Palestinian Red Crescent Guesthouse
Tel: 286 1832

Al-Deira (11 suites; cf; mr; res; ter)
Tel: 283 8100/200/300, Fax: 283 8400
ADEIRA@PI-S.com

Al-Quds International Hotel
(44 rooms; 2 suites; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 2825181, 2826223, 2863481, 2822269

Al-Waha Hotel
Tel: 287 0880, Fax: 287 0889

Beach Hotel (25 rooms; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 282 5492, 284 8433

Cliff Hotel (24 rooms; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 282 3450 Fax: 282 0742

Commodore Gaza Hotel (120 rooms; su; bf)
Tel: 283 4400, Fax: 282 2623
hotel@commodoregaza.com

Gaza International Hotel (30 rooms; cf; res; sp)
Tel: 283 0001/2/3/4, Fax: 283 0005

Grand Palace Hotel (20 rooms; cr; mr; cf; res; internet)
Tel: 284 9498 / 6468, Fax: 284 9497
grand_palace@p-i-s.com

Hotel Sea Breeze
Tel: 283 0277, 284 2654, Fax: 282 4231

Marna House (17 rooms; bf; mr; res)
Tel: 282 2624, Fax: 282 3322

Palestine Hotel (54 rooms; bf; cf; mr; res)
Tel: 282 3355, Fax: 286 0056

Summerland Tourist Village (casino; cf; res)
Tel: 284 7171, Fax: 284 4008

Zahrat Al-Madain
Tel: 282 6801

Key: su = suites, bf = business facilities; mr = meeting rooms, cr = conference facilities; res = restaurant,
ter = terrace bar; tb = turkish bath, cf = coffe shop; gm = gym; pf = parking facilities, sp = swimming pool

East Jerusalem (02)

3 Arches Restaurant
Tel. 569 2692, Fax 623 5192

Al-Diwan (Ambassador Hotel)
Tel: 541 2213, Fax: 582 8202

Al-Shuleh Grill
Tel: 627 3768

Al-Quds Al-Arabi
Tel: 627 3963

Amigo Emil
Tel: 628 8090, Fax: 626 1457

Antonio’s (Ambassador Hotel)
Tel: 541 2222

Arabesque, Poolside & Patio Restaurants
(American Colony Hotel)
Tel: 627 9777, Fax: 627 9779

Armenian Tavern
Tel: 627 3854

Askidinya
Tel: 532 4590

Az-Zahra
Tel: 628 2447

Blue Dolphin
Tel. 532 2001, Fax: 581 1737

Borderline Restaurant Café
Tel: 532 8342

Cafe Europe
Tel:628 4313

Cafe Imperial
Tel:628 2261, Fax: 627 1530

City Café
Tel: 583 8055

El Dorada Coffee shop & Internet Café
Tel: 626 0993

Four Seasons Restaurants & Coffee Shop
Tel: 628 6061, Fax: 628 6097

Goodies
Tel: 585 3223

Kan Zaman (Jerusalem Hotel)
Tel: 627 1356

Lotus and Olive Garden
(Jerusalem Meridian Hotel)
Tel: 628 5212

Mocca Café (Beit Hanina)
Tel: 583 6821

Moon Light Pizza
Tel: 627 5277

Nafoura
Tel: 626 0034

Wake Up Café
Tel: 626 3771

Notre Dame - La Rotisserie
Tel: 627 9114; Fax: 627 1995

Panorama Restaurant
Tel: 626 3344

Papa Andreas
Tel: 628 4433

Pasha’s
Tel: 582 5162; 532 8342

Patisserie Suisse
Tel: 628 4377

Philadelphia
Tel: 628 9770

Pizza House
Tel: 627 3970

Quick Lunch
Tel: 628 4228

The Gate Café
Tel: 627 4282

The Patio (Christmas Hotel)
Tel: 628 2588

Victoria Restaurant
Tel: 626 3051

Restaurants

restaurant

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KAN

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- Live Music on Friday, Sunday and Thursday evenings
- Oriental Music Chants on Wednesday evening

P.O. Box 10130, Jerusalem, Neblus Rd. Tel & Fax: 02-6332206, retnohotel@yahoo.com
Bethlehem (02)

Abu Eli
Tel: 274 1897

Abu Shanab Restaurant
Tel: 274 2985

Akkawi Café
Tel: 274 8447

Al-Hakura Restaurant
Tel: 277 3335

Al-Kuz Café & Bar
Tel: 277 0047

Andalos
Tel: 274 3519

Al Makan Bar - Jacir Palace
Tel: 276 6777, Fax: 276 6754

Balloons
Tel: 275 0221, Fax: 277 7115

Baidar - Jacir Palace Inter-Continental Bethlehem
Tel: 276 6777, Fax: 276 6754

Café Bonjour
Tel: 274 0406

Café Sima
Tel: 275 2058

Central
Tel: 274 1378

Cigar Bar (Jacir Palace Inter-Continental Bethlehem)
Tel: 276 6777, Fax: 276 6754

Dar Joudnah Coffee Shop
Tel: 274 3212

Golden Roof
Tel: 274 3224

I’illyeh Restaurant
Tel: 277 0047

La Terrasse
Tel: 275 3678

Mariachi (Grand Hotel)
Tel: 274 1440

Riwaq Courtyard (Jacir Palace Inter-Continental)
Tel: 276 6777, Fax: 276 6754

Shepherds Valley Village
(The Tent)
Tel: 277 3875

Tachi Chinese
Tel: 274 4382

Zaitounah - Jacir Palace
Inter-Continental Bethlehem
Tel: 276 6777, Fax: 276 6754

Jericho (02)

Al-Amara
Tel: 232 3500

Al-Nafoura Restaurant
(Jericho Resort Village)
Tel: 232 1255, Fax: 232 2189

Al-Rawda
Tel: 232 2555

Al-Rabiyah Park & Restaurant
Tel: 232 4060

Green Valley Park
Tel: 232 2349

Jabal Quruntul
Tel: 232 2614; 232 2593

Jericho Tent
Tel: 232 3820

Old Jericho Tent
Tel: 232 3820

Papaya Park
Mob: 0505 286 067

Samhouri
Tel: 232 3252

Spanish Park
Mob: 0505 515 518

Seven Trees
Tel: 232 2781

Shallal
Mob: 0505 520 932

Sultan Restaurant - Jericho Cable Car
Tel: 232 4025

Tahhan
Tel: 232 2600

Nablus (09)

Al-Mankal
Tel: 267 5362

Rozana
Tel: 238 5676

Salim Afandi
Tel: 237 1332

Zeit Ou Zaater (Al-Yasmeen Hotel)
Tel: 238 3164

Ramallah & Al-Bireh (02)

Addar (Birzeit)
Tel: 281 0274

Almakan
Tel: 295 7676

Almonds
Tel: 295 7028

Al-Aseel
Tel: 298 0456

Al-Bardauni’s
Tel: 295 1410

Al Matal Restaurant & Pub
Tel: 297 6854

Al-Pasha
Tel: 0599 609 050 (Jifna)

Angelo’s
Tel: 295 6408

Baladna Ice Cream
Tel: 295 6721

Benny’s
Tel: 296 0937

Birth Café
Tel: 297 6614

Café Mocha Rena
Tel: 298 1460

Café Sima
Tel: 275 2058

Casablanca
Tel: 298 7658

Champs
Tel: 298 7188

Chinese House Restaurant
Tel: 296 4081

Cliff House (Rocky Hotel)
Tel: 296 4470

Darna
Tel: 295 0590

Diwan Art coffee shop
Tel: 297 3043

Elite Coffee House
Tel: 296 5169

Ein Al-Marj (Birzeit)
Tel: 281 0220/1

Fawanees
Tel: 297 7046

Kings
Tel: 296 4040

K5M - Caterers
Tel: 295 6813

Mr. Donuts Cafe
Tel: 240 7196

Mr. Pizza
Tel: 240 3016

Muntaza Restaurant & Garden
Tel: 295 6835

Osama’s Pizza
Tel: 295 3270

Piano Restaurant
Tel: 298 7995

Pizza Inn
Tel: 298 1181/2

Plaza Restaurant & Park
Tel: 295 6020

Pollo-Loco (Mexican)
Tel: 295 6194

Pronto Resto-Café (Italian)
Tel: 298 7312

Rukab’s Ice Cream
Tel: 295 3467

Saba Sandwiches
Tel: 296 0116

Samer
Tel: 240 5338

Sangria’s
Tel: 295 6808

Shukeireh Restaurant
Tel: 297 5233

Sinatras Café & Restaurant
Tel: 297 1028

Stones
Tel: 296 6038

Tabash (Jifna village)
Tel: 281 0932

Taboun
Tel: 298 0505

Tal Al-Qamar Roof
Tel: 298 7905/6

The Orthodox Club
Tel: 295 6520

Tomasso’s
Tel: 240 9991

Urjuwan
Tel: 298 7783/4

Urobian Coffee shop
Tel: 295 7031, 296 6505

Vatche’s Garden Restaurant
Tel: 296 5966; Fax 296 5988

Zan Restaurant and Pub
Tel: 297 0548

Zarour Bar BQ
Tel: 295 6767, 296 4480

Zeit ou Zaater
Tel: 295 4455
Population and Demography (revised - 2006)

Projected Population (15/10/2006)

Palestinian Territory .......................................................... 4,435,524
West Bank (all governorates) ............................................. 2,465,644
Gaza Strip ............................................................. 1,460,018
Jerusalem Governorate ......................................................... 409,672

Projected Population by Age (Mid 2006)

0-17 years .................................................................... 2,465,644
18-64 ........................................................................ 1,824,940
65+ .............................................................................. 324,940

Sex Ratio (2006) .......................................................... 102.7

Fertility rate (2003) .......................................................... 4.6

Population’s Natural Increase Rate (2006) ...................... 3.3

Percentage of youth aged 15–29 (mid 2006) .................. 29.9%
Percentage of households with at least one person aged 15-29 (2006) ................. 74.0%
Percentage of households headed by a youth aged 15-29 (2006) .... 12.6%
   Both sexes .......................................................... 12.6%
   Males ................................................................. 13.5%
   Females ............................................................ 11.3%

Land Use and Agriculture

Palestinian Territory (PT) Area (Km2) .......................... 6,020
Area of PT by Type of Use (different reference periods)
  • Agricultural Land (2004) ........................................ 24.7%
  • Forest and Wooded Land (2004) ......................... 1.5%
  • Palestinian Built-up Land (2000) .............. 9.7%
Area of built-up land in Israeli settlements of the total area of the West Bank (August 2004) .................. 3.3%

Cultivated Area (Km2)-2003/2004 ................................. 1,824

Education (2005/2006)

Illiteracy rate for persons 15 years and over (1st quarter 2006) .......... 6.7%
Illiteracy rate for persons 15-29 years (1st quarter 2006) ............... 0.8%
No. of schools ................................................................. 2,277
No. of school teachers .................................................. 40,957
No. of school students ................................................ 1,067,489
   Students per class ................................................. 34.4
Drop-out rate (schools 2004/2005) ................................... 1.0%
Repetition rate (schools 2004/2005) .................................. 1.5%

Health (2003-2005)

No. of hospitals (2005)** .................................................. 76
No. of Primary Health Care centers (2004) .................... 731
Doctors per 1000 population (2005)** ......................... 1.6
Nurses per 1000 population (2005) .......................... 1.9
Beds per 1000 population (2005)** ................................ 1.3

Culture (2005)

No. of mosques (in operation) ...................................... 1,900
No. of churches ................................................................ 149
No. of newspapers (in operation) ................................... 12
No. of museums (in operation) ....................................... 5
No. of cultural centers (in operation) ............................... 86

Information & Communication Technology (2006)

Availability of TV sets in households .................................. 95.3%
Availability of a satellite dish in households with a TV set .......... 80.4%
Availability of computers at home ................................... 32.9%
Availability of Internet at home ....................................... 15.9%
Persons 10 years and over with access to the Internet .......... 18.4%
Persons 10 years and over who use a computer .................. 50.9%

Living Standards and Humanitarian Aid (2005)

Percentage of Households below poverty line .................. 51.5%
Number of Individuals below the poverty line ................... 2,095,437
Percentage of households that lost more than half of their income during Al-Aqsa Intifada ................. 51.6%
Percentage of households that indicated their need for assistance .......... 67.0%
Average Monthly per capita Expenditure in the Palestinian Territory ....................... 89.5

Labour Force (2nd quarter of 2006)

Labour Force participation rate .................................. 67.6% 13.7%
Unemployment rate in Palestinian Territory (PT) ................ 23.7% 19.1%
Unemployment rate in West Bank .................................. 18.3% 16.9%
Unemployment rate in Gaza Strip ................................. 34.6% 29.0%
Average net daily wage for employees working in PT (US$) ...................... 16.6 15.2

Percentage of working children (5-17 years) 2004 .................. 5.3% 0.7%

Economics

GDP (2005) in million of US$ at constant prices (RWB and GS)** ............................................. 4,456.4
GDP per capita (2005) in US$ at constant prices (RWB and GS)** ........................................ 1,268.2
CPI and percent change in Palestine Terrotory in September 2006 Compare with August 2006 ................. 152.76 0.50%
GDP per capita for the second Quarter in US$ at constant price (RWB & GS) .................. 299.1
Quarterly GDP at constant price in million of US$ (RWB & GS) for the 2nd Quarter 2006 .................. 1082.7

Number of establishments in operation in the private sector by economic activity (2005)**

- Mining and Quarrying .............................................. 259
- Manufacturing ...................................................... 13,085
- Electricity and Water supply .................................. 508
- Construction ......................................................... 644
- Commerce ........................................................... 55,024
- Transportation, storage and communication ......... 869
- Hotels and Restaurants .......................................... 4,195
- Financial Intermediation ........................................ 726
- Real Estate, Rental and Business Activities .......... 3,889
- Education ............................................................. 1,949
- Health and Social work ......................................... 3,672
- Other Community, Social and Personal Services .... 6,394

Imports (2004**million US$) * .................................... 2,373.2
Exports (2004**million US$) ........................................ 312.7

Hotels (2nd quarter, 2006)

Room occupancy rate .................................................. 20.5%
Bed occupancy rate ................................................... 16.0%

Housing Conditions (2005)

Average number of rooms in housing units .................. 3.6
Average number of persons per room (housing density)** ........................................... 1.8

(RWB and GS)=Remaining West Bank and Gaza Strip
*RWB and GS at constant prices: 1997 is the base year: revised version
**It’s primary data
***Revised Figures

Prepared by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
Tel: 02-240 6340, Fax: 02-240 6343
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As Palestine continues its struggle for independence, it has already begun to acquire sovereign cyberspace recognition. A difficult three-year international debate resulted in the “Occupied Palestinian Territory” being officially assigned the two-letter suffix, "ps," in the ISO 3166-1 list for the representation of names of countries or territories. The successful struggle to attain country code 970 led the way for the Internet Corporation for Associated Names and Numbers (ICANN), the international corporation that manages the country code Top-Level Domain (ccTLD) system on the Internet, on 22 March 2000, to assign Palestine its unique country identifier, "ps," in line with other sovereign nations such as .fr for France and .ca for Canada.
The Canaanites were a Semitic people from the inner-Arabian Peninsula; they settled in the land that came to be known as Canaan and later, Palestine. One of the Canaanite tribes, the Jebusites, built a settlement called Urusalim (Jerusalem), meaning “the city of peace.” One of the main Canaanite archaeological sites is the water tunnel in Silwan overlooking the remains of the Umayyad palaces. The remains of the city date from the middle-Bronze Age to the Iron Age, the period when the Jebusites built and inhabited the city. They built the tower of Jabous, the walls, and very sophisticated water systems to supply the city with water from Silwan Spring during times of siege. They channelled the water through a tunnel to a water reservoir that was used for irrigation during peaceful days. The shaft and the tunnel were discovered by the British archaeologist Charles Warren. For this reason, since the middle of the nineteenth century, it has been known as Warren’s Shaft.

A tour to explore Canaanite Jerusalem, organized by the Centre for Jerusalem Studies, will take place on November 11. For information, please contact the centre at 02-628-7517, or write to cjs@planet.edu.

Text and photos provided by the Centre for Jerusalem Studies.
The Museum of Traditional and Popular Art was founded in 1972 and is located near the Church of the Nativity. It was established as a way of preserving Palestinian tradition and popular art and is currently run by the Arab Women’s Union.

The Museum consists of two small houses with what is considered typical old Palestinian architecture. In one room hang old photographs from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. The second room is the living room where traditionally people ate, slept and entertained. It holds furniture and accessories such as rugs, lamps, chests, pillows and brass objects. The third room is a kitchen with a display of pots, pottery, coffee grills and jars. Within the kitchen is a well from which families used to get their water.

The second house also has three rooms. The first served as a place for the animals such as donkeys, mares, goats and sheep. The second displays Bethlehem costumes and jewellery and the third room, called illieh, is a 19th century bedroom with cushions, pictures, beds, rugs and embroideries.

The Museum is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. except Sundays and Thursday afternoons. The entrance fee is $2. There is also a shop that sells embroidery typical of Bethlehem and the surrounding villages.
Where to Go?

The City of Jericho

We are well into autumn, what with the first showers of the season. This makes it the ideal time to ‘escape’ to Jericho with its warmer climate and near eternal sunshine. Plan on spending your weekends (or even longer) in this eastern oasis, especially if it is tranquility and peace of mind that beckon.

Jericho boasts of a world-class InterContinental Hotel and the equally impressive Jericho Resort Village which has both a central building and bungalows overlooking the swimming pool. You could remain marooned in your hotel, lazying around the pool in the company of a book or a few friends. Should you seek some adventure, venture out to the city to stroll through its marketplace which is replete with all kinds of fruits and vegetables that grow in the area's fertile plains. Or soak in some history by visiting Hisham's Palace and the other historic sites in the city. Take a cable car ride up to the Mount of Temptation to visit the Greek Orthodox Monastery that hugs the mountain and enjoy a spectacular view of the whole area.

Settle in for a meal in one of the city's many restaurants and be sure to drink freshly-squeezed orange juice. Jericho's wonderful and unmatched oranges ripen towards mid December so be sure to go there to sample this delectable treat before its short season comes to an end.
The Village and Maqam of Nabi Saleh

Situated 21 kilometres to the northwest of Ramallah, the village of Nabi Saleh was named after one of the key prophets in Islam. There are eight holy shrines that bear his name in Palestine.

The holy shrine of Al Nabi Saleh (maqam) was linked to an annual religious event (mawasim) that brought together thousands of believers from all over the country to celebrate and engage in various cultural activities that included song and dance. Unfortunately the mawasim stopped after the beginning of the Intifada in the year 2000.

As one moves from Ramallah toward Bir Zeit and passes the Umm Saffa forest, the dome of the shrine can be seen. The beautifully situated, multi-level edifice goes back to medieval times and is visible just before one enters the village. An Israeli-controlled gate, set at the entrance to the village, controls the movement of sixty thousand Palestinians who live in various villages throughout the area.

Going up toward the village, one can see the distinguished building with its two terraces overlooking the great landscape of the mountains and the forest. Housed within are the burial chamber in the centre of the building, two arched rooms on the side, and an olive press on the ground floor.

Riwaq renovated the shrine in 2001, in an attempt to revive the hope that song and dance would once again grace the shrine of Al Nabi Saleh.
The Last Word

On Palestinian Tourism

The first six months of 2006 witnessed a sharp rise in Palestinian tourism. After almost five years of a dry-spell, tourists and pilgrims started coming back to the Holy Land, to Palestine. Palestinian travel agencies, some of which were established as early as the 1860s, got busy again and in turn gave much needed business to hotels, guides, transportation companies, restaurants, and sites, to mention only some of the directly affected beneficiaries. Although the increase in tourism has not reached the levels of the year 2000, the situation has no doubt dramatically improved.

Like many similar tourist locations, Jaffa Gate, considered to be the main entrance to the Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock, the Holy Sepulchre, and the Western Wall, was throbbing with life again. Traffic in cities like Jerusalem started to become congested, the hustle and bustle of the Old City was back, and the famous Bethlehem stores that normally cater to large groups of tourists and pilgrims were working again. In July, however, most of the above came to a standstill because of the Israeli invasion into Lebanon. Tourists and pilgrims were again afraid to come, and the fear that the situation would be prolonged brought chills to the travel agents’ spines! Luckily, come September, the reservations were back, and today all agents agree that if the situation remains calm, 2007 looks quite promising. We’re all keeping our fingers crossed.

Palestine, the Holy Land, the cradle of the three monotheistic religions boasts to be home to some of the richest and most varied archaeological and religious sites and shrines in the world. The long history of this small stretch of land has seen so many peoples and civilizations that wherever you stand in Palestine, you will be near a major historical or religious site. Moreover, according to statistics available at the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, approximately 12,000 sites in the West Bank (of which 2,000 are major ones such as Tals or Khirbehs [ruins] and the remaining 10,000 identified as “features”) have not yet been tapped since they lie in the areas still under Israeli jurisdiction. It would be safe to assume that Palestine’s historical heritage is among the richest in the world.

The political instability in the region is most definitely the single most important reason as to why other regional countries attract more tourists. With all the richness and diversity in our sites and shrines, one would expect that the Holy Land would be number one among “countries” that attract the highest number of incoming tourists. One would also imagine that it would be rather easy to convince all tourists and pilgrims who visit our region to start their trips in the Holy Land and then move on to the other countries.

The benefits of peace, even stability, are no doubt immense, and all parties stand to gain from either of them. However, as cliché as this may sound, the quickest as well as the only way to achieve peace in the region (indeed the world!) is by restoring justice to the Palestinian people through the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state according to United Nations’ resolutions. Unless that happens, our region will always be prone to outbursts that have proven time and again to be catastrophic to both the Israeli and Palestinian economies, and particularly to the tourism industry.

*Sani P. Meo*
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