

25 years of service  
**ANERA** Newsletter

American Near East Refugee Aid

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Cityscape of ancient Hebron.

## HEBRON: A CITY DIVIDED

by Michael Dunn

Other than Jerusalem itself, there is no place more emblematic of the conflicts and disputes between Israeli Jews and Arab Muslims than the city of Hebron. In Hebron the root of the quarrel is, in a sense, quite basic: a dispute over which religious traditions will control what the devout on both sides hold to be the burial place of their common ancestor, Abraham. Because Judaism and Islam (and, of course, Christianity) all share a common ancestry, it is often the links which might unite them which in fact divide them.

Hebron today is a city of about 120,000 people located in the southern part of the West Bank, about 23 miles south of Jerusalem, and located in hill country over 3,000 feet above sea level. Hebron's population is overwhelmingly Palestinian, but with a large Jewish set-

tlement of several thousand people, Kiryat Arba, located just outside the town and a small Jewish enclave in the city itself, near the Tombs of the Patriarchs.

The city is a very ancient one. Archaeologists have found signs of habitation from 2,000 BC or earlier. The book of Genesis says that Abraham settled at Mamre, nearby, and when his wife Sarah died, at the place called Kiryat Arba, Abraham said: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." (Genesis 23:4)

Abraham was allowed to buy the Cave of Machphelah, to bury Sarah, and it was there that the Patriarch himself was also laid to rest.

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## Crisis in Lebanon

With horror and disbelief, ANERA monitored reports of the Israeli military campaign against civilian populations in Lebanon. As in the case of Palestinian suicide attacks in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and Hezbollah attacks on Israeli civilians in northern Israel, ANERA condemns all forms of violence against innocent civilians. Not only are the Israeli attacks against civilians illegal according to international law, ANERA finds them inhumane and unjustifiable.

The attacks have devastated the heavily populated cities of Tyre and Sidon, as well as dozens of towns and villages throughout southern Lebanon. Targets included power stations, water facilities, roads, apartment buildings, public parks, and private vehicles — including at least one known attack of a Lebanese ambulance. The bloodiest and most shocking attack to date was the bombing of a permanent United Nations camp in the town of Qana, filled with families fleeing from the shelling in the south. Nearly 100 civilians, mainly women and children, were killed and many more seriously wounded.

The extent of the humanitarian crisis is not yet measurable, but early

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Both Jews and Muslims see Abraham as a primary founder of their religion (in Islam he is sometimes referred to as the first Muslim), and also an ancestor of both the Jews and the Arabs, through his sons Isaac and Ishmail (Ismail). Not surprisingly, the site of his burial is venerated by both religions and both peoples. In Arabic one of Abraham's titles is *Khalil al-Rahman*, the friend of God the Merciful, and the Arabic name for the city is simply al-Khalil.

Rising beside the old city of Hebron is a large structure which both Jews and Muslims believe lies over the Cave of Machpelah. The site has certainly been recognized as such for thousands of years, for the huge stones which are immediately apparent in the platform of the building date from the era of Herod the Great. In the Middle Ages it became a church, and the building which stands today is mostly of the Crusader era. It has long been used as a mosque (Abraham's mosque) or the Haram al-Khalil (the holy place of the friend). This great building does lie over a cavern, in which tradition says the bodies of the patriarchs lie. Shrines or burial markers



inside the building are said to rest over the spot in the cave below where the actual bodies lie. No one has been allowed to actually enter the cave since the Crusader era.

Not surprisingly, this building has itself often been at the core of the conflict. The creation of a synagogue inside what had long been a mosque after the occupation by Israel in 1967 created

friction, as did the presence of Israeli troops and security forces in the mosque. In 1994, a Jewish settler strongly opposed to the peace process opened fire in the mosque on Muslims at prayer, killing scores. This led to a long closing of the shrine to both peoples.

The presence of a settler community not only at Kiryat Arba but in the heart of Hebron itself has also been a major irritant, and clashes in and around Hebron have been frequent. During last year's West Bank security agreement negotiation held in Tabaa, Egypt, Israel and the Palestinian Authority agreed to divide authority in Hebron, with Israel controlling the Jewish-occupied areas and roads connecting them and the Palestinian Authority controlling most of the rest. But Israeli withdrawal from Hebron, scheduled for this spring, was delayed by at least several weeks after the wave of bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and is unlikely to occur until after the Israeli elections at the end of May. As for the great shrine itself, the agreement noted that the two sides could come to no agreement on the holy place, so it would retain the status quo, meaning Israeli control. ■

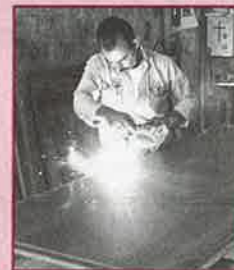
## ***ANERA in Hebron***

Amidst the most recent round of violence and turmoil of this hotly contested ancient city, ANERA continues to play an essential role in providing social services and successful job creation programs. Amongst our many projects, we assisted the **Hebron Municipality** in building a local public library, the **Hebron Polytechnic College** in provided greater access to vocational training and engineering classes for the community, and we made substantial contributions to the building of the **Hebron Patient's Friends Society Hospital** whose services were desperately needed in the southern West Bank. The following is a list of local organizations which ANERA has assisted over the years in partnership with the community of Hebron.

- Hebron Agricultural Cooperative
- Hebron Al Amal Society for the Deaf
- Hebron Chamber of Commerce
- Hebron Marketing Cooperative
- Hebron Municipality
- Hebron Industrial Zone

- Hebron Patients Friends Society Hospital
- Hebron Livestock Cooperative
- Hebron Young Women's Society
- Hebron Polytechnic College
- Hebron University

If you would like further information about these or any other ANERA projects, you can browse projects on ANERA's World Wide Web page or feel free to contact us directly.



ANERA has recently begun construction on a light industrial zone in Hebron. ANERA's industrial zones have become a model for successful job creation programs in the West Bank and Gaza. Professional craftsmen, like the welder pictured here at the Ramallah Industrial Zone, rent workshops in large multi-purpose buildings alongside other businesses. The program offers much needed job creation inside the Palestinian self-rule areas, and is therefore not affected by closures and emigration restrictions on day labor in Israel. The parks also enable greater cooperation among small businessmen, and offer a location on the outskirts of the city which helps to keep the city center clean of pollution. Other ANERA industrial complexes are operational in Anabta, Gaza City, Jericho and Ramallah.



# Report on Closures

An economic crisis of emergency proportions has developed as a result of the closures imposed on the West Bank and Gaza Strip following the February 25th and March 4th suicide bombings. All movement of goods and people in and out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been restricted. The economy of the area is threatened with almost total collapse, worse than the aftermath of the 1967 war and military occupation. Unemployment in many Palestinian areas now exceeds 50-60%.

ANERA President Dr. Peter Gubser has just returned from the region overseeing ANERA's projects and programs. He reports that despite the closures, ANERA's successful programs and projects are open and fully functional. Because of ANERA's achievements in providing long-term development assistance irrespective of political currents, international agencies continue to draw on ANERA's expertise and to adopt ANERA's models of successful small-scale projects.

Although one can only hope for an end to the violence on all sides, recent events prove that the Palestinians can no longer depend on work inside Israel if they want to guarantee their economic survival and prosperity. With no immediate relief from the closures in sight, ANERA will continue to find ways to

develop and strengthen the Palestinian economy through job creation, access to family health care, and educational opportunities — still the most effective components for promoting lasting peace in the Middle East. ■

## TRIP REPORTS

*...The closure has now lasted over two months with no prospect of it being lifted until after the May 29 elections. The likelihood of the reemergence of the status quo ante after the elections is problematic. Depending on whom you listen to, either separation and at least partial closure will be made permanent, or within a couple of months 60-80,000 workers will again cross daily into Israel and goods will freely flow. Suffice it to say, the consequences of the first alternative will be dire. Long-term severe economic depression which such a policy will ensure, will certainly result in more violence. ...*

**Dr. Gubser's Middle East trip report is now available.** The report provides updates on ANERA's projects and programs, an overview of general conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, and analysis on a wide range of political and economic issues relevant to the region. To receive a copy by either mail or e-mail, please contact ANERA's Washington office, or look for it on ANERA's World Wide Web

*Crisis in Lebanon from page 1*

reports are overwhelming. An estimated 400,000 were forced to flee their homes and the Lebanese infrastructure has been severely crippled. It is not yet known how much damage this will cause the Lebanese post-war reconstruction efforts, not to mention the fate of over one hundred thousand Palestinians who had been living in squalid refugee camps throughout the south. What we do know is that this hinders ANERA's economic development projects in Lebanon and can only inflict further damage on the peace process.

A few days into the shelling, ANERA made an emergency grant of \$10,000 to the Lebanese Red Cross, an organization with whom we have worked for over 15 years. The 32 ambulances being operated by the LRC in southern Lebanon were the only relief vehicles at the time whose emblem was recognized by the Israeli military, and who were therefore able to travel in the area without fear of being fired upon.

ANERA continues to accept donations for Lebanese relief. Please send donations to the address below. Questions regarding donations of medical and emergency supplies to area hospitals and clinics should be directed to Nina Dodge at (202) 347-2558. ■

### Lebanese Emergency Relief

c/o ANERA  
1522 K Street, N.W., Suite 202  
Washington, D.C. 20005



Bill Carter

## YES, I want to help ANERA's projects in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Lebanon

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 and above: Founders    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 to \$999: Sustainers          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 to \$9,999: Builders    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 to \$499: Creators            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,500 to \$4,999: Benefactors | <input type="checkbox"/> I have remembered ANERA in my will. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 to \$2,499: Sponsors    |  |

*Contributions of \$250 or more to this year's Annual Fund will be recognized by category in ANERA's Annual Report (FY96). Further recognition opportunities exist for large, special project gifts.*

\$200     \$100     \$75     \$50     \$35     \$25    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

- General Programs
- Gaza/West Bank Fund
- Lebanon Relief
- Scholarship:

*I would like to provide a one year scholarship (\$100 per child) for a:*

- Palestinian child
- Lebanese child
- School where need is greatest

*Sponsors receive a photo of the child and letters from the child's school during the year.*

G4.16



## ANERA On-line

Check out ANERA-online for up-to-date information on projects, reports from the field and press releases. Its also an easy way to contact us. Our address is: <http://www.access.digex.net/~gubser/anera.html>

## TRANSITIONS

**Ruth Adomeit** of Cleveland, Ohio, a retired teacher and philanthropist, died in February. She was a reknowned collector of miniature books and Columbian artifacts. Following a trip to the Middle East in the 1950's, she became extremely concerned about the welfare of the Palestinian people and committed herself to the goal of a lasting peace in the Middle East. Miss Adomeit was an extremely generous supporter of ANERA's scholarship and educational programs, in particular, and a member of ANERA's Legacy Society. ANERA would like to express its profound gratitude for Miss Adomeit's wonderful long-term support for ANERA's work and for generously remembering ANERA in her will. We are honored by her enduring generosity and concern, and saddened by her passing.

### ANERA has recently received gifts in honor of :

Miss Ruth Adomeit ■ Musa Alami ■ Hanan Ashrawi ■ Aida Azzam ■ Miss Theresa Blake ■ Munir S. Daoud ■ Roderick Davison ■ Mr. and Mrs. Simon Estfan ■ Margaret Hicks ■ Jack Hively ■ Renate Hofmann ■ Al Howell ■ Harriet Jerpbak ■ Patrick and Leretha O'Neill ■ Jeremy Priebe ■ Shukri Quttainih ■ Cynthia Saltzman ■ Mr. Charles Sawabini ■ Dr. & Mrs. Wadi Sawabini ■ Mrs. Siham Sifri ■ St. Joseph ■ Amy Wiesman ■ Ali Yehye ■ Dr. H.A. Yeni-Komshian ■ Alpha Delta Kappa (an international sorority of women educators) ■ Jobs, peace, progress, prosperity and the Palestinian elections ■ The people of Lebanon

# ANERA

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Tel. 202-347-2558

Fax 202-682-1637

Internet: [gubser@access.digex.net](mailto:gubser@access.digex.net)

<http://www.access.digex.net/~gubser/anera.html>

AT&T mail: laneradc.

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*At ANERA we are concerned about the proliferation of junk mail. However, mail is a very economical way to reach new people. For this reason we occasionally trade our mailing list with similar humanitarian organizations, although we never rent or sell our names. If you wish to have your name removed from this list, please let us know in writing.*

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