

Jerusalem



NEWSLETTER

Number 16

AMERICAN NEAR EAST REFUGEE AID, INC.

Jan.-Feb., 1972

UNITED NATIONS ACTION

There was much activity at the Fall 1971 United Nations General Assembly which concerned UNRWA and the Palestinian refugees. Forty-two governments were represented at the annual pledging conference on November 30, and thirty-nine of them pledged a total of \$16,326,067. Additional pledges have raised this total to \$43,210,000. In a statement to the General Assembly on December 6, 1971 UNRWA Commissioner-General Sir John Rennie said that the sum, plus other anticipated contributions, would still leave UNRWA with a deficit for calendar 1972 of \$3.5 — \$5 million. In the face of this serious state of affairs, he planned to consult immediately with the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, Ambassador Nuri Eren of Turkey, concerning possible solutions to the problem.

In November the U.N. Special Political Committee held hearings on the Middle East situation and on December 6 its proposed resolutions were submitted for approval to the General Assembly. Adopted resolutions continued the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA for another year and extended UNRWA's mandate for three years, until 30 June, 1975. Other resolutions were passed deploring Israeli action in the Gaza Strip and recognizing that "the people of Palestine are entitled to equal rights and self-determination, in accordance with the charter of the United Nations."

(Resolution II D, U.N. Press Release GA/4505, 6, Dec., 1971)



Mr. Richardson visits Dar el Eytam school in Jerusalem

RICHARDSON TRIP REPORT

I was in the Middle East from November 9 — December 2 on an annual visit to all of the different projects which ANERA assists. The trip included Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, East Jordan, the Occupied Territories (West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza), and Israel. I was able to see twenty-two projects and to speak with representatives of three others; and to visit eight potential new projects. From ANERA's standpoint I feel that the trip was most worthwhile. Not only was I able to assess on the ground the work that ANERA has been doing; I also had the opportunity to explore additional uses of ANERA's resources.

In spite of the limited level of assistance that ANERA is able to provide to worthwhile projects and institutions in the Middle East, in a comparatively short time ANERA has become well-known and respected throughout the area for its humanitarian concern for people. Like many similar organizations, ANERA is

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JORDANIAN TOWN BEING REBUILT (N.Y. Times, Dec. 26, 1971) By MARVINE HOWE

KARAMEH, Jordan, Dec. 20 — Sixty-four families have moved back to this crushed shell of a city on the east bank of the Jordan River that was virtually abandoned until last spring.

"We do not believe that Jordan will go to war again," said Mohammed Absi, a 25-year-old Palestinian refugee from Faluja, near the Gaza Strip, who came here the other day to rebuild his home.

Four modest coffee shops, eight groceries, a barber shop, two butcher shops, a bakery and 32 chicken farms have sprung up out of the rubble of Karameh. The valley around is green with the first wheat and vegetable crops in four years.

Once a prosperous agricultural center of more than 40,000 inhabitants, Karameh, like most of the valley towns, was badly damaged by shelling in the six-day Arab-Israeli war in 1967. Then in March, 1968, it was destroyed when it served as a battlefield in the worst clash between the Israeli Army and the Palestinian guerrillas, or fedayeen. It was here that the guerrillas gained their reputation as a force to be reckoned with.

The people of Karameh fled eastward and were resettled in six temporary camps on the plateaus west of Amman. The Jordan's east bank became a kind of no man's land where the commandos, quartered in caves in the nearby hills, would cross at night to attack Israeli posts along the river.

Early in 1969 four commuting chicken farmers went back to the deserted city and, with the assistance of the Lutheran World Federation, started their hatcheries again in a school and one or two other buildings still standing. There was no

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caught in a squeeze between unlimited demands and limited resources. This dilemma forces ANERA to make difficult choices among numerous equally worthy projects.

The situation in the Middle East was more stable — though uneasy — when I was there than it is now. (My visit preceded the announcement of renewed American deliveries of offensive jet aircraft to Israel). The saddest place of all is Gaza, where the Israeli army is using harsh tactics to root out the commando movement. The violence associated with this policy, coupled with ongoing efforts to “thin out” the population of Gaza, have brought dislocation, hardship, and uncertainty to the people of the Strip. Despite all these problems, there is an attitude of proud defiance among the people which indicates that they will persevere.

Institutions like the Gaza Women's Union and Gaza College (secondary) are providing training and a sense of stability for the people of Gaza. In an area with a large refugee population, such institutions take on an even greater significance than in less turbulent areas.

One of the most impressive phenomena I encountered during my travels was the rapidly growing emphasis among the Palestinians on self-help. This self-help emphasis involves schooling, medical aid, vocational training, and other subjects. One fine example of a self-help project is the Beit Jala Development Committee, headed by Said Araj and Issa Najjar in Beit Jala, outside of Jerusalem. This committee provides loans which enable local individuals to initiate small business ventures. When the loans are repaid, the money is loaned out again, and so is used more than once.

Despite the fact that the more militant aspects of the Palestinian movement are less apparent now, the process of social building among the Palestinian people goes on apace. It is this sense of pride and determination to forge a better future that will bring the ultimate renaissance of the Palestinian people.

REFUGEE INFORMATION

The UNRWA Liaison office at the United Nations is valuable source of factual information about the Palestinian refugees. The Annual Report of the Commissioner-General and periodic Newsletters are available. UNRWA Liaison Office, U.N. Secretariat No. 1801, New York, New York 10017.



Ambassador Bush receives petition from: Prof. Mezvinsky, Mrs. Pennar, Dr. Davis (Amb. Bush) Rev. Sutton, Mr. Richardson

PROJECT PROFILE Birzeit College

Birzeit College is located in the town of Birzeit on the West Bank north of Ramallah among the hills of Palestine. The name is really two words: Bir (well) Zeit (oil) — oil well. Birzeit College is the only institution of higher learning in the Occupied Territories, and as such is extremely important to the Palestinian people. In 1953 Musa Nasir expanded an existing high school and added a college freshman class. Later, in 1961, a sophomore level was added, and in June of 1967 the high school classes were dropped and the school became an English language, liberal arts junior college. Under the direction of Mr. Nasir and other members of his family, the school grew to its present enrollment of 200 students, 56 of whom are on scholarships. The family and the college sustained a tragic loss on August 26, 1971 when Musa Nasir suffered a fatal heart attack. His work is being carried on by his son, Dr. Hanna Nasir, and a dedicated staff. Because of inflation, the school must either raise fees or receive financial support from outside sources. In the past three years ANERA has given a total of \$25,000 in scholarship aid to Birzeit College, including a recent \$5,000 grant. Birzeit College, P.O. Box 14, Birzeit, West Bank, via Israel.

PALESTINIAN PETITION PRESENTED TO AMB. BUSH

The first 2300 signatures on a petition urging the United States Government to insist on implementation of repeated United Nations resolutions concerning the rights of the Palestinian people were presented to Ambassador George Bush on Friday, December 17 by a delegation headed by Dr. John H. Davis, President of ANERA. Also in the group were: Dr. Norton Mezvinsky, Professor of History, Connecticut State College (New Britain); Mrs. Margaret Pennar, Vice-President, Association of Arab-American University Graduates; Rev. John Sutton, Executive Director, Americans for Middle East Understanding; and ANERA's Executive Vice-President, John P. Richardson. In accepting the petition, Ambassador Bush expressed his appreciation for the initiative and acknowledged that concern for the rights of the Palestinian people is voiced all too infrequently in the United States. The delegation said that these 2300 names were only the first installment in a hoped-for total of 25000 signatures. People who wish to distribute and sign the petition can obtain copies from:

ACJME-Melbourne
P.O. Box 1956
Melbourne, Fla. 32901

NEW UNRWA DEPUTY

On February 1 UNRWA announced the appointment of C. William Kontos as Deputy Commissioner-General. Mr. Kontos is an American Citizen educated at the University of Chicago and the London School of Economics. He has served with the United States Agency for International Development in Nigeria, Ceylon, and Pakistan. At the time of his appointment to UNRWA, he was Director of Program Evaluation at A.I.D. in Washington.

Mr. Kontos, who is married and has two sons, took up his new duties in Beirut the middle of February. Before leaving Washington Mr. Kontos told ANERA Executive Vice-President John Richardson that he was eager to begin his new, challenging work. UNRWA has been without a Deputy Commissioner-General since Sir John Rennie left that post to become Commissioner-General in May, 1971. Mr. Kontos will thus be a welcome addition to UNRWA's administrative staff.

NEW YORK — THE HOLY LAND CENTER

The Annual Christmas Party held by the Holy Land Center netted a total of \$900; Rawdat el Zuhur Girl's School in Jerusalem has received \$450 of that sum, and the other \$450 has been given to Musa Alami's school and farm in Jericho. These funds have already been sent off by ANERA Board Member Hugh Auchincloss, President of the Holy Land Center.

ANERA BOARD MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

Dr. Hadi Salem, a thoracic surgeon from Los Angeles, spent the month of October in the Middle East serving as visiting professor at the University of Cairo, University of Alexandria, and the Institute of Cardiology in Cairo. He was presented an honorary membership in the Egyptian Chest and Tuberculosis Assoc.

Evan M. Wilson was recently elected President of the American Colony Charities Assoc., a fund-raising organization for the Spafford Children's Center in Jerusalem.

David G. Nes will be in California during the last half of February, lecturing on the Middle East situation in the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas.

James F. Sams (ANERA's legal counsel), now resident partner of an American law firm in Beirut, visited Washington at the beginning of February.



Children at Rawdat el Zuhr perform a show.

NEW GRANTS

Rawdat el-Zuhr	\$2,000
Dar el-Tifl	4,000
YMCA/Jerusalem	4,000
YWCA/Jerusalem	4,000
Birzeit College	5,000
UNRWA School, (Karamah)	5,000
Marjayoun National College	1,000

A total of \$25,000 has just been allocated by ANERA's Projects Committee to seven institutions in the Middle East, based upon recommendations of the Executive Vice-President. The first five listed above have received grants from ANERA in the past. The UNRWA school at Karamah will be a vital factor in making it possible for refugees to move back into this village in East Jordan near the river (see story, p.1). Marjayoun National College plays an important stabilizing role in Southern Lebanon, in light of the political/military problems there.

Under the leadership of Mr. Labib Ghulmiyyah, the school has an enrollment of 450 students in classes from kindergarten thru 12th grade.

Since the beginning of the current fiscal year (July 1, 1971) ANERA has contributed \$55,077.50 to projects in the Middle East which serve the Palestinian people.

ANERA'S ART EXHIBIT

ANERA's Art Exhibit of drawings done by Palestinian children after the June, 1967 War is currently on a tour arranged by the Organization of Arab Students. The drawings will be shown in New York, Montreal, Chicago, Detroit, Austin, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. It is encouraging to know that people in many sections of America are being provided this unique insight into the way the world looks to Palestinian children.

BOSTON — AMARA

The American Arab Association of the Boston area has just completed a most successful year with a Christmas party, the proceeds of which will go to support Palestinian children through Project Ryaiat. During December AMARA presented two programs in Boston area churches featuring handicrafts from the Middle East, books about the area, and information about Project Ryaiat. Miss M.J. Ekstrand, organizer of Project Ryaiat through AMARA, reports that local individuals and groups are now supporting 44 children thanks to the promotional efforts of AMARA.

Another important AMARA project is a cookbook, "Arabic Cooking in America" which sells for \$3.25. Proceeds from this enterprise go to support the Musa Alami school and farm in Jericho. Just recently AMARA sent \$1,000 to Musa Alami as a result of cookbook sales. New officers for this year are: Mr. Michael Nackel, President; Miss M.J. Ekstrand, V.P.; Philip Shakir, Recording Secretary; Josephine Nackel, Corresponding Secretary; and Michael Redman, Treasurer. AMARA, P.O. Box 18217, Boston, Mass. 02118.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — PALESTINE HOUSE

Palestine House held a very successful dinner on December 5 at the Embassy of Kuwait. This event had two purposes: to express concern publicly for the people of Gaza and to raise funds to aid children in Gaza. \$5,000 was sent to the Gaza Solidarity Day Committee in Beirut which will be put to direct use in the Gaza Strip. The evening featured Arabic food and dancing. Arab Embassies, local Arab restaurants and businesses donated food.

Palestine House was formed a year-and-a-half ago by a group of predominantly Middle-Eastern students who sponsor meetings and lectures on the Middle East problem. The organization also teaches courses in Arabic and Hebrew. Mohammed Shadeed is currently President of Palestine House. 1609 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

NAJDA—SAN FRANCISCO

Two more UNRWA Vocational Training Scholarships have been donated by NAJDA. This organization is now sponsoring four students. On February 28 NAJDA sponsored a lecture by ANERA Board member David Nes.

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move to settle in Karameh until after the Jordanian Government expelled the remaining guerrilla forces last July on the ground that they caused too much unrest.

Dr. Joseph Tompson, director of the Lutherans' Amman office, said in an interview: "None of the banks or credit institutions would give funds to the chicken farmers in Karameh, but we felt that if they could risk their lives, we could risk our money."

Three months ago the Lutherans opened registration for the rebuilding of Karameh. Under their self-help community development program, they are committed to assist 500 families rebuild their homes. More than 430 contracts have been signed with refugees, who agree to provide manpower, gravel, doors and windows while the Lutherans supply cement, bricks and steel rods.

"Now the main bottleneck is lack of services," Dr. Thompson said, adding that most refugees insisted on having a school, clinic and post office before they would bring their families back.

Abdalfatah Shaker, one of the original chicken farmers, now has a prosperous business in Karameh, with 6,400 chickens. "I have eight children," he said. "I can't bring my family here until there's a school."

In any case, the full recovery of communities like this one is still stalled. The trouble, it is said, is that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency is having serious financial difficulties and is not in position to reopen and administer a large city like Karameh. The Jordanian

Government, suffering from economic blockade by Syria and the loss of extensive financial aid from Kuwait and Libya because of its harsh handling of the fedayeen, is also in no position to take on the task.

Nevertheless, life is progressively returning to normal on the east bank. A number of checkpoints remain on the road from Amman, but they are manned by policemen not troops.

Most land in the northern part of the valley is under cultivation and people have returned to live in the villages. Kraimeh, a farm community a few miles north of Karameh that was deserted in December, 1970, has a population of 4,600. The United Nations agency opened a school and a clinic there and the Lutherans helped 432 families to rebuild their houses.

Another bottleneck is marketing. Talal Nabulsi, project director for the Lutheran community development program, said, "Unless the Syrian border is opened in another month, we'll lose most of this year's crops." Most of the Jordan Valley's winter crops of eggplant, tomatoes and green vegetables used to go to Syria, which shut the border because of Jordan's stand on the guerrillas, and Lebanon.

Only a few families are allowed to return permanently to the west bank each week. In the summer the Israelis gave temporary permit to 100,000 Palestinians to visit their families.

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