

The Foundation – Shatila’s Children and Youth Center

Annual Report for the year 2015

(our Swedish Postal Giro Acct. number is 598428-1)

What is the CYC?

The CYC has existed since 1997. It was registered with the Lebanese authorities as a non-governmental organization in 2008, whereupon it was renamed “The Children & Youth Association”. The organization conducts its activities in Shatila, with an affiliated section in the refugee camp Naher-el Bahred since the camp was there eight years ago.

CYC constitutes a meeting place for the refugee camp’s children and youth. During their leisure time children and youth are given help with their school work and given opportunities to engage in meaningful things to do, cultural and recreational activities that contribute to developing their abilities, imagination and potential.

Abu Mujahed is the head of the organization. Work locally is led by a number of selected young people who form a committee that plans activities together with Abu Muhajed. The activities are planned in meetings open to all participants. The direct involvement of children and youth in the planning process is a fundamental principle. The “Child-to-Child” method (Children help Children) is basic to the way activities are organized and carried out. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the guideline when the content of various activities are decided upon.

Some of the organizations that support the work of the CYC are the following:

- in Lebanon, Unicef and Unesco
- in France, Chatila les enfants de l’espoire-France
- in England and Italy, organizations and individual persons

The CYC runs a Youth Hostel (Guest House), which also brings funds for activities.

The CYC seethes with activities and energy – read about it on the website:

<https://cycshatila.org/> (insert the link in your browser).

What is the Foundation?

The supporting Foundation was established in the year 2000. Its purpose is to

- 1) support activities of the Children & Youth Association. The Foundation collects money from godparents and receives gifts and donations from individuals and organizations. The funds that are collected are sent as contributions to agree-upon activities to benefit all children and youth at the CYC.
- 2) disseminate information regarding the situation of children and youth in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

The Foundation is non-partisan and independent (for more information see the website – faddershatila.se).

Obituaries: **Hasse Karlsson** died unexpectedly and quickly 19 February 2015. Hasse and his wife, godparents from the very outset, visited the CYC some years ago and wrote a travelogue that is accessible on the aforementioned website

Ulla Gustavsson was a godparent ever since the Foundation was created. She was always exacting in inquiring if and how the money benefited the children. Ulla died in her sleep 23 March 2015.

The year 2015

The civil war in Syria has ravaged and destroyed villages and cities; large residential areas are in ruins and the waves of fleeing refugees are large. Flight continues due to the battles, but now one also needs money to cross the border between Syria and Lebanon.

At least one million refugees exist in the little country of Lebanon! The Lebanese “state”, with no president and a parliament paralyzed by discord, lacks even the semblance of official facilities to harbor refugees. New refugee camps have been set up, with assistance coming from various organizations. Existing facilities that date back to the Palestinian forced diaspora 1948-50 are today also filled to levels of collapse as they bring on board needy people, Syrians and Palestinian refugees who have been driven from Syria. It is a humanitarian catastrophe!

The refugees’ most basic needs are not met. They do not receive the health care they need and children’s educational needs are neglected, they lack the schooling they ought to be given. Living conditions are very expensive and problematic. Conflicts are easily generated, sometimes shooting occurs and people are killed. Drug addiction is increasing, creating further serious problems, not least for children. A market for selling illicit drugs exists even in the crowded refugee camps, while violence increases amongst dealers and between sellers and buyers. Prostitution also exists.

During the summer and autumn of 2015 we in Europe have witnessed how large numbers of refugees fled the catastrophic regions, among other ways, via the Mediterranean Sea where over 3000 persons drowned under demeaning and horrible circumstances. We know that Palestinian refugee-families from Shatila sold whatever meager possessions they had and left the hopeless conditions there, opting for the dream of a better life, and thus followed the stream of refugees.

It is terribly unjust how people, who for generations have been driven out of Palestine, cannot return home but are forced to remain in deplorable housing, beset by war and have to flee time and again, while Israel at the same time permits immigration of people born of Jewish mothers or alternatively convert to Judaism. They receive citizenship and therewith citizens’ rights in a country that ought to be able to accommodate everyone, regardless of any religious creed.

The “Palestinian Question” cannot be solved with violence and expulsion, occupation and blockades again and again. The fact that Sweden and 135 other states in the world have recognized Palestine must be followed up with demands for a real Palestinian state – not the occupied territory that is continually being populated through the influx of more Israelis in contravention of international laws and agreements.

The situation in the refugee camps has not improved during 2015

- All forms of democratic and citizens' rights are withheld even from Palestinian refugees from Syria.
- There is a drastic worsening of the living standard in Lebanon, for example if one considers garbage disposal, supply of clean water, drainage, and electricity in the refugee camps. Crowding in the camps is enormous.
- Education is deteriorating the whole time and the number of "drop outs", i.e., those who do not complete their schooling, is on the increase.
- Refugee children from Syria do not have the same educational plan for their schooling that children in Lebanon have; their education is compromised, which in turn multiplies difficulties for their future.
- Opportunities in the labor market decrease and unemployment increases.
- Persons traumatized due to war get no help.
- Criminality increases, as does the frequency of drug abuse and prostitution.
- It is very expensive to live in Lebanon!

The Foundation's economy

Income

From godparents and other friends of CYC – sum in Swedish Crowns (Sw Cr)	
2015	259 457:00
2014 (comparison)	268 737:50
2013 (comparison)	230 711:00

Comment: 2013 and 2014 were years with many extra large gifts (see earlier Annual reports on the Foundation's website). In 2015 the Foundation received a gift of 10,800 Sw Cr from Radio TUFF's Board. Radio TUFF sent a telephone interview with Eva H regarding the CYC's work and how the donated money is used to benefit children (<http://www.tyresoradion.se/search.php?query=Eva%20Hammad> - click on "Lyssna").

Debits

Administrative fee for Postal Giro acct. service: 1 375:80 (this is the only cost that is paid out of the collected funds)

Comment: Maintaining the register and costs for bank transfers to Lebanon, together with annual payments for the website (One.com) is covered by money obtained through sales of the brochure *Enjoy*.

Disbursements to the CYC during the year 2015

Date	Amount in Sw Cr
150331	140,000
2014 (comparison)	302,000
2013 (comparison)	170,000

Comment:

Due to political control of money flows to CYC's bank account there was a stop in the transfers to that account. The collected and donated funds remained in Sweden in our account. We will send more as soon as this problem with money transfers has been solved.

How many godparents?

For 2015:	88
2014 (comparison):	87
2013 (comparison):	74

Comment:

During the year we have both lost godparents and gained new ones.

Activities 2015

New Board member: we are pleased to present Kickan Einarsson, a longstanding loyal godparent has now been appointed to the Executive Board. Altogether the Board comprises 5 persons who work voluntarily on the basis of the Foundation's goals regarding support to the CYC and Palestinian refugees. All who are godparents of course make up the core, through your gifts, but there is a need also of a certain amount of planning and administration, a task mantled by the Board.

Visitors from CYC

17-25 September this year Abu Mujahed together with Alaa and Mohammed visited here; Alaa and Mohammed are two young leaders who "grew up" in the CYC. They have ordinary jobs, but in their spare time they also help with activities at the center. The itinerary of the visit was as follows.

17/9 The guests arrive and are welcomed.

18/9 Interviews for the journal *ETC*, which published a fine reportage in its No. 37, issued 25 September 2015.

19/9 The Peace Race. This year's Peace Race drew a record high number of persons who registered as participants – 1600 in all. The event was supplemented with enjoyable entertainment, food, as well as coffee time with snacks ("fika" in Swedish). Surplus income from sales amounted to 50,000 Sw Cr, which is shared between a Palestinian Sports organization on the West Bank, and the CYC Association.

21/9 Public event at the Recreation and Learning center *Mixgården*, a community center in Hammarkullen (a northern suburb of Gothenburg), where a meeting was held with *Mixgården's* youth and personnel. 24 young people during 2-3 weeks in the beginning of the summer collected 25,000 Sw Cr for the CYC and now presented the visitors with a cheque. A reporter from the independent Swedish Media-Cooperative was present and wrote an illustrated article published in the newspaper *Göteborgs Fria*, published Sunday 27 September (accessible via the Net). The same evening (21/9) the guests from Shatila CYC visited a neighboring suburb Hjalbo on the invitation of the Gothenburg section of Rädde Barnen (Save the Children International) to learn about children's activities there – the visitors also had a fruitful discussion with local Rädde Barnen leaders.

22/9 Visit to Nordiska Folkhögskolan (The Nordic Folk High School) in the city of Kungälv, located some 20 km north of Gothenburg (<http://www.nordiska.fhsk.se/>). The students and teachers of this residential college for adult education received the Palestinian guests in the morning. Some teachers had hosted Eva Hammad a few weeks earlier to give a talk on the history of Palestinian refugees, whereupon the students had prepared questions to pose to the visitors. This now led to further good discussions on the occasion of the visit.

23/9 A visit was paid to Emmaus on its premises in Hisingen/Gothenburg. Here an interesting guided tour was given, informing the visitors about this NGO and its admirable solidarity work (<http://emmausbjorka.se/english/>).

A novelty this year was that we met with the Gothenburg section of ABF (The Workers educational Association - ABF Göteborg <http://www.abf.se/Distrikt-och-avdelningar/ABF-Goteborg/Omabout-ABF/Information-in-English/>). A representative responsible for that organization's study programs received us in the Association's rooms located in a building adjacent to Järntorget (a square in central Gothenburg). He recounted some of ABF's history during its 100 years of work as a people's movement, and he also touched upon the dilemma of being a Social Democrat in present day Sweden, given a government that has recognized Palestine but which at the same time has contacts with and delivers weapons to countries and organizations that are deeply enmeshed in the conflict in the region.

24/9 Palestinska Huset in Gothenburg arranged a good dinner and a meeting between Abu Mujahed and members of *Palestinska Huset Association* who wished to discuss solidarity work with Palestine, viewed in the light of different perspectives held by Palestinians living in Gothenburg. Even youth organizations were represented in the discussions.

Godparent Letters: We have informed godparents of the development of events in Lebanon and about the CYC via "Godparent Letters".

Eva Hammad, further, was an invited speaker, the 16th of June, at a Palestinian Youth Conference that took place in Gothenburg. Her theme was the history of the Lebanon-based refugees, Tel al Zaatar, Sabra/Shatila and the CYC. The conference was arranged by the Youth Organization of the of Palestinska Huset.

Our website

Several years now we have been assisted by our godparent Sara Aanivaara who started up, maintained, and inserted material on our website (faddershatila.se). During the autumn we got in contact with a person in Gothenburg, Martina Milisic, who assists us in modernizing the website making it easier for us to administrate the website ourselves. We extend our hearty thanks to Sara for all she has done to disseminate information about the CYC via the website we had in the past and welcome everyone to the new website as soon as it goes on-line in January 2016.

Facebook

The Board has established a Facebook page. It is called "Stiftelsen Shatila Barn- och ungdomscentrum". Welcome! (<https://www.facebook.com/Palestinasolidaritet/photos>).

Authorized Auditor

The audit-year 2014 was the last year that Lars Steen served as our authorized auditor. He has helped us over several years to revise and write the annual audit report before it was sent off to the County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelsen) of Västra Götaland. Now he Lars has retired. We are much obliged and owe him a bid and warm thank you for all the time he has devoted each year in the task of auditing. We now have a new authorized auditor, Åsa Jeansson; she is with the firm Adact Revisor & Konsulter AB that has its offices in Gothenburg.

Information Folder

The Board has, with the help of one of the godparents, designed an information folder with pictures depicting our godparenting activities and about the CYC. The CYC has also produced a folder (with the help of godparents), in English, that tells about the goal and purpose of our enterprise as well as the activities for children and youth. If you wish to receive this material please contact the Board.

Board meetings held 2015

Altogether 6 Board meetings were held this year. First off **21/3** an Annual meeting, wherein Lotta participated via Skype - this was followed by a Board meeting where Abu Mujahed was included via Skype. **18/5** a Board meeting during which Kickan Einarsson was appointed to the Board; **14/8** Board meeting; **17/9** Board meeting; **11/10** Board meeting; **1/12** Board meeting.

Information about a necessary investment in the CYC to repair the building in Shatila

Abu Mujahed has in a letter to us outlined what repairs have been done to the CYC building and what remains to be done. Fixing on several paragraphs the situation he describes may be summarized as follows.

During the months of November and December we managed to construct a strong stabilizing pillar to shore up the building from the ground level to the ceiling. The inside of the roof area has been newly plastered and stabilized with supporting beams. The problem had to do with large leaks up there that let in corrosive salt water through the roof, weakening the structure and making it unsafe to be up on the roof terrace. To deal with this we have poured a 10 cm thick layer of cement on the roof that has effectively stopped water seepage into the building. The inside of the building has also received a coat of paint, and on the roof itself a new umbrella has been constructed to protect the solar panels. Further, broken roof tiles have been replaced. Necessary repairs downstairs were carried out, including the fixing of 6 toilets, putting in new piping, and new taps where needed. Additionally, we have drawn a 150-meter long pipeline to feed fresh water into our indoor system.

Several tasks however remain – we must

1. repair 60 steps in our staircase;
2. replace tiles in front to the entrance to the building;
3. build a protective overhang above the entrance;
4. paint the outside of the entire building.

(Read further in the Godparent Letter of January 2016 on the website faddershatila.se (<http://faddershatila.se/nyarsbrevet-fran-abu-mujahed/>).

A big THANK YOU TO ALL OF YOU who during the year contributed money to the children and youth!

CYC is a worthy alternative and a support for children and youth whose safety and potential for development is in continual danger. Continuity, the predictable, persistent, steadily recurring support from us in Sweden, far away from their daily situation, instills hope. Our solidarity is important and makes a difference! (cf. their website, plug this link into your browser <https://cycshatila.org> and follow all activities!).

The Foundation Shatila's Child and Youth Center

Gothenburg 27 February 2016

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Jane Matsson

Nestor Verdinelli

Charllotte Wiktorsson

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/translated from Swedish to English by Aant Elzinga/