

The Foundation – Shatila’s Children and Youth Center

Annual Report for the year 2016

(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 2007.

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 Mujahed. 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) in Shatila, 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 our website – faddershatila.se).

Leif Englund, we miss you

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The CYC's friend, the engaging social worker Leif Englund travelled to Lebanon in 1996. He visited Shatila and met his colleague Abu Mujahed who was busy starting up the CYC. Leif and his family gave a generous monetary gift to the Center already at that time. When he turned 60 he issued a call for support and every year after that the family contributed to this unique youth-work in the refugee camp. Leif attended the meetings of the Foundation as often as he could and invited us to inform about the CYC, and collect money when the choir *Motvals* – in which he was a member – participated in public meetings in the auditorium of *Blå Stället* (The Blue Place) and told about its trip to Palestine. Upon Leif's decease and in a sign of solidarity the family in the obituary announcement asked people to contribute to the CYC via the Foundation to commemorate him instead of sending flowers.

The year 2016

During the year, large cities like Homs and Aleppo were hit hard by the ravages of war. We have all seen the terrible reports about large destroyed neighborhoods where people tried to survive the waves of bombs. Many refugees from Syria found their way to Europe, not least Sweden. Thousands of refugees drowned during their flight across the Mediterranean Sea.

The political tensions were tangible in Lebanon. In the far beyond capacity filled refugee camps there was a strong anxiety that the war would spread there too. For many years, Lebanon has been without both a parliament and a president. Decisions regarding the most mundane everyday matters like, for example, garbage disposal and sanitation did not fall under anyone's mandated responsibility. Consequently, stench and decay threatened people's health and welfare in the cities. Riverbeds and the sea became legitimate places to dump unsorted garbage. Toxic waste and bacteria thus still constitute a threat to the environment. Finally, towards the end of 2016 a president was elected and a new parliament is now in place.

In Palestine, ever more deficiencies and wrongs have been exposed. Israel's discriminatory politics and the expansion of illegal settlements on Palestinian land as well as the continued blockade of Gaza is a difficult problem for the occupied population. The 137 countries that have officially recognized Palestine do not criticize Israel in sufficiently strong terms and, moreover, Israel has now gained still stronger support from the USA. The refugees in Lebanon have been even more forgotten while suffering in the camps continues to grow.

Therefore, it is a source of gladness for children and youth that there exists involvement in their plight locally and internationally. Support for Shatila's Children and Youth Center is extremely important so that the young people shall be able to struggle with their schooling/education, enjoy meaningful times of leisure, and create a future for themselves and their own children – a future in Palestine that many dream about. They are tired of living without citizenship, a situation that robs them of civic and human rights that we others take for granted.

The situation in the refugee camps has not improved during 2016. However, a certain amount of stability has emerged. This entails a little betterment in the functioning life conditions for children in the CYC. More activities have been facilitated to strengthen their culture and reinforce their identity.

Some examples:

Celebrating the 8th of March, International Women’s Day, as well as observing Palestinian historic dates like “Land Day” and “al Naqba”; inviting children and adults to celebrate major Muslim festivities after Ramadan – Iftar and Eid al Adha; arrange comprehensive summer activities to boost children’s school results and provide recreation with games, crafts, developing various skills, excursions, etc.; organizing summer-camp trips for over 80 children of school age; setting up football tournaments – they even have a girls’ team! – as well as visiting the Annual International Arab Book Fair in Beirut. Further there are Christmas activities, New Years, and the annual commemoration of the around 1000 persons massacred in Sabra and Shatila 1982.

A lot of the Foundation’s collected funds are used to make the activities possible. It may be anything from covering purchases of various items, or renting buses, but especially salaries and hourly wages for employees or temporary leaders at the Center.

The CYC has also engaged itself in the schooling of Syrian refugee children. These have experienced discriminatory treatment. Supportive actions have been called for to exert pressure to get them registered and obtain the education that is the right of all children. Consequently, many more have obtained schooling thanks to the struggle against an unjust school system, a struggle in which the CYC participated.

Economic review for the year 2016

Income:

From godparents and other friends of CYC – sum in Swedish Crowns (Sw Cr)
2016 259 564:00
2015 (comparison) 259 457:00
2014 (comparison) 268 737:50

Comment:

Generous gifts came from Leif Englund’s family and friends, not least from the choir Motvals. We are also pleased to acknowledge receipt of other large gifts from individuals. The continuous receipt of monthly contributions is still the important mainstay of the Foundation’s economy.

Costs 2016

Administrative fee for Postal Giro acct. service: 1 360:50 (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 payment for the website (one.com) has been covered by money gained from sales of Enjoy coupon brochures.

Disbursements to the CYC during the year 2016 (comparing 2 previous years)

Year	Amount in SwCr
2016	290,000
2015	140,000
2014	302,000

Comment:

During 2016, the collection went well and continues to do so. Additional contributions came in with commemoration days, funerals and other occasions when people choose to give an extra thought to the children in Shatila.

Very valuable!

How many godparents? (comparing 2 previous years)

2016: **97**
2015: **88**
2014: **87**

Comment:

In the Spring of 2016 we took a decision to count godparent families – hence several godparents in the same family are now counted as one unit. Gladly help us enroll more godparents!

Activities 2016

Visitors from the CYC

September 20-30: Visit by Abu Mujahed, Alaa, Muhammed, Wajde and Malike – the latter four are young leaders who “grew up” at the CYC; they have regular jobs, while in their spare time they also assist in the activities at the CYC. The following list itemizes the series of events and meeting during the visit.

- a) Mixgården: Abu M. and we were all welcomed and well received by the Recreation and Education center Mixgården’s staff. *Mixgården* is a community center located in Hammarkullen, a northern suburb of Gothenburg. Alaa presented the CYC for the youth at Mixgården and Alaa, Muhammed, Malika and Wajde treated everyone to a program of music and dancing. A Somali dance group also took part. A proposal was made to initiate exchange of videos between youth in Shatila and in Hammarkullen. It is a question of small films that can be recorded with a cell-phone camera and easily sent via the Internet.
- b) The Gothenburg Folk High School (*Folkhögskola*) in the suburb Biskopsgården was visited. Students and teachers there showed great interest; Eva Hammad and the guests from Shatila made a strong impression on the audience. Eva spoke for 45 minutes, telling about the CYC as well as Tel al Zaatar 1976. Afterwards about 20 students stayed and participated in conversations and discussions in Arabic with our guests.
- c) Vänsterpartiet (the Left Party – which is represented in the Swedish Parliament) hosted a meeting attended by 18 persons. Alaa presented the CYC. Some persons

in the audience had visited Lebanon & Palestine earlier. It was a positive meeting with a fruitful exchange of views.

- d) KP-meeting: The Communist Party in Gothenburg had invited Eva to speak in commemoration of the occurrence 40 years ago when the war devastated the Tel al Zaatar refugee camp. Abu Muhajed presented a talk on the situation in the Middle East.
- e) Meeting with godparents: this was a fine meeting. A memorial moment was held to honor Leif Englund. Alaa presented the CYC. Abu M. spoke about the political situation in the Middle East. Alaa, Muhammed, Malik and Wajde once more treated us all to an enjoyable musical and dance performance. The question period after the talk was not so well organized from our side – in future this aspect needs to be developed.
- f) Gothenburg Folk High School (*Folkhögskola*) at Nya Varvet: the event started 11 AM with a valuable visit in a classroom with new students. After that there was a gathering with around 55 third-year students. Alaa presented the CYC, Abu M. continued, telling both about the historical background and the present political situation in the Middle East. The students were very interested and asked questions.
- g) The Peace Race (*Fredsloppet*), with Slottsskogen as its start and finish points. This year's Peace Race had an equal number of registered participants as last year's – 1600 in all. As before the event was supplemented with enjoyable entertainment and food as well as coffee with snacks (“fika” in Swedish). The five guests participated in the run and were involved in both preparations and the aftermath in the clubhouse and in Slottsskogen. We had an exhibit regarding the CYC and its activities, plus a table with books.
- h) The Teacher's Union (*Läraryrket*): at a meeting with representatives of the teacher's union Abu Muhajed and his youthful companions spoke about the CYCs work; contacts were established.
- i) The net-journal *Alba.nu*: journalist and editor Christer Wigerfelt interviewed Abu Mujahed and Eva Hamad for this social media journal under the heading “The Youth Palestine's hope for the future” (*“De unga Palestinas framtidshopp”*). The article is accompanied by presentations of the interviewees and information about both the CYC and our Foundation as well as links to the organizations' respective websites – see <http://www.alba.nu/kategorier/mellanostern?showArticle=30833>.

Godparents: we periodically (but not as often as before) inform godparents about developments in Lebanon and CYC activities through the *Fadderbrev* (Godparent Letters). Further refer the reader to the CYCs Homepage <https://cycshatila.org/> where one can find lots of pictures and information regarding the CYCs activities. Easiest is to subscribe to their Newsletter <https://cycshatila.org/newsletter/>.

Our website: the link is <http://faddershatila.se/> - unfortunately we are continually behind when it comes to updating our Homepage (due to a lack of time), but there you will nevertheless find important *documents* about us and CYC activities. The Annual Review (*Verksamhetsberättelse*) is also posted there.

Facebook: “Stiftelsen Shatila Barn- och ungdomscentrum” is the name of our Facebook site, but you can simply access it by writing “Shatila” and it will appear. There you will find the best updates. Welcome!

Information material: The Foundation's Board has an attractive information folder with pictures of our godparent-work and regarding the CYC. If you want to use and spread this material, do contact the Board (*Styrelsen*) and we will gladly send the folder.

Information about the continued investment to repair and upgrade the building at the CYC

Abu Mujahed tells us: "It was a year ago that reparations began. We have renovated doors, windows, the roof, the electrical system, the sanitary facilities, steps, and finished painting both inside and outside.

We received a generous donation from the UNICEF to protect the building so that we can guarantee the children's safety. And motivate them to feel good and thrive in the Center."

The courtyard where the children play is now surrounded enclosed by a wall with a gate.

Board meetings of the Foundation held during 2016

27/2 Annual meeting

27/2 Board meeting

17/4 Information about the CYC presented to Martina

11/6 Board meeting, Lotta participated via telephone – planning the visit in September.

26/9 The Board and Abu Mujahed

21/10 Board meeting

Authorized Auditor: Åsa Jeanson/Adact Revisor & Konsulter AB.

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 16 January 2017

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/translated from Swedish to English by Aant Elzinga