

The Foundation – Shatila’s Children and Youth Center

Annual Report for the year 2017

(our Swedish Postal Giro Acct. number is 59 84 28-1)

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 branch in the refugee camp Nahr el Bahred since the camp was there in 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 schoolwork and engaging in other meaningful activities that contribute to developing their capabilities.

Abu Mujahed is the head of the organization. Work locally is led by several 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, applied equally for both girls and boys. 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 (UNHRC) is the guideline when the content of various activities is 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 in funds for activities.

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

<https://cycshatila.org/>

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).

We remember and pay our respects to:

Sten Ringselle also known as “Lingon” who died due to illness July 3rd, 2017. Born 1949 in Luleå (northern Sweden) he early on moved to Gothenburg – via Uppsala – and maintained

his Palestine-activism throughout his lifetime. He had visited Lebanon and understood the difficulties that confronted Palestinian refugees in the camps. “Lingon” was a contributor to the godparent foundation for many years. The Foundation participated in his funeral and on that occasion also informed of its activities.

THE YEAR 2017

Lebanon’s borders along Syria were closed this year. The will of European governments, not least Sweden’s, to receive refugees was drastically dampened. For Shatila and refugee camps in Lebanon more generally this implied a state of status quo and increased desperation. Syrians – and Palestinians from Syria – return to Syria only if they intend to stay there permanently since they are now prohibited from travelling back and forth between the countries. The situation in many places in Syria was somewhat calmer than the previous years but the war went on against IS in several regions. People who had fled did not want to return to their unsafe country. The decision to flee to Europe was filled with agony and fear – the *Mediterranean, new refugee camps, the risk of being sent back, etc. This path was only taken by those forced by necessity.*

In the refugee camps one sought to adapt life to the existing circumstances. Those who were able could rent accommodations somewhere else in the country, leaving the cramped quarters and moved/fled. It is noticeable that Palestinians in Shatila have done their utmost in order – after 70 years of “temporary camp-living” - to avoid getting it worse than before. Presently about 7,000 Palestinians remain in Shatila which now as a whole has a population of 23,000 persons. This may be compared to the situation in 1950 when the area was leased and organized (by UNRWA – the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) to accommodate 5,000 persons. Before the wars in Syria there were 18,000 inhabitants amongst whom Palestinians comprised a majority. The demographic pattern is different in different camps but overcrowding is a prominent feature everywhere due to the large influx of refugees into Lebanon – 2 million have come from Syria, although many these fled further again the last couple of years. Overcrowding brings with it unavoidable tensions. These influences everyday life for everyone.

Congestion in Shatila is enormous. Outside the CYC Centre one finds a constant swarming and buzz of people and vehicles on their way into passages the size of very narrow ones in the Stockholm’s Old City, while Shatila’s main street is not even as broad as Västerlånggatan in the Swedish capital. High rise buildings abound, level upon level of apartment stories have developed, reaching skyward, altogether without any building plans since the entire area allotted is limited and cannot be expanded horizontally, but only vertically (remember UNRWA and the leasing arrangement). Foul air, no sunlight, the only running water in the camp is salty; bundles of tangled electricity wires hang overhead in the streets, lethally dangerous. To make things worse rubber hoses for running water in some places also run between houses. Garbage that is not removed accumulates near each neighborhood. School classes are overcrowded, there is a lack of teachers, large-scale unemployment pervades, and health care is insufficient. Refugees who live there have no power, they lack citizenship and have no work permits. They don’t even have the right to claim elementary human rights. Nevertheless, they do demand rights!

Two of us on the Foundation’s Board together with two godparents visited the CYC in October 2017 (travel costs were covered individually by ourselves). We clearly observed how there is a procedure in place to ensure that children have a good life while they are at the

Centre. The courtyard and buildings are surrounded by a solid fence plus a robust gate, since there are other people in Shatila who are desperate and want to build their houses there. The door cannot always be open, but children are received to participate in organized activities. At appointed times, they rush in to do something that is fun or useful. Important too is the support given to schoolchildren with their lessons to do well in their examinations. Further, there are Friday activities - Dakbe folkloric dancing, football (even for girls), arts and crafts, courses in English, etc. Workshops are held taking up issues relating to Children's Rights, violence in the home, how to develop group leadership skills, and more. There are special activities during the summer vacation, including cultural events, sports and excursions, and an annual weeklong summer camp. Psychosocial support is provided for children coming from the Syrian war scene. A series of celebrations mark respectively Children's Day, the International Women's Day, Teacher's Day, New Year's Day, as well as days of sorrow and remembrance like al Naqba 1948, the massacre in Tel al Zataar 1976, the massacre in Sabro and Shatila 1982, the advent of the Belfour Declaration 1917, the Palestinian Day of the Land, and finally, not to forget: family feasts during Muslim anniversaries after observing the month of fasting, Ramadan.

The funds collected by the Foundation contribute to facilitating the CYC's activities, purchases of goods and services, maintenance and renovations, as well as funding of summer camps and excursions. A primary item concerns contributing towards cost coverage of salaries for teachers and youth leaders employed at the CYC.

Economic review for the year 2016

Paid out to the CYC during the year 2017 (comparing 2 previous years)

2017	305 000
2016 (comparison)	290 000
2015 (comparison)	140 000

Comment:

Under the heading, **Income** it may be noted that collections brought in slightly less money than during the two previous years but we have had a surplus since 2015. Now we need to become a larger group of godparents in solidarity!

Income

From godparents and other friends of CYC – sum in Swedish Crowns (Sw Cr)

Year	Amount in SwCr
2017	231 485,00 SEK
2016 (comp.)	259 564,00 SEK
2015 (comp.)	259 457,00 SEK

Comment:

Once again large donations came in, altogether amounting to 43 085,00 SEK. From birthdays, funerals and persons becoming pensioners. A big THANKS to ALL – no one named and none forgotten.

Costs 2016

Administrative fee for Postal Giro acct. service: **2 488,40 SEK**
Authorized auditor: **4 531,00 SEK** (this is the first time we take this cost from 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.

How many godparents? (comparing 2 previous years)

2017: **100**

2016: **97**

2015: **88**

Comment:

Behind each item in the collection of funds there stand either an individual godparent or several godparents in the same family.

General comment:

97,7 % of the collected funds goes to the benefit of the CYC children and youth!

ACTIVITIES HERE 2017

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Meeting in the town of Växjö: May 2017 the Palestinagrupperna invited Eva to speak about the Palestian refugees and the CYC.

Visit from CYC:

September 15-22. Abu Muhajed visited Gothenburg, by himself this year.

- a) **Peace Race** 17/9. Slottsskogen city park. Abu Muhajed ran as usual and helped with all the work the event entails. The Foundation was there and informed about the CYC.
- b) **Nordic Folkhögskola Kungälv** 18/9. A teacher invited us to his classroom Eva gave a talk outlining the background to the Palestinian refugee question. Abu Muhajed told about the difficult situation of the large number of refugees that still live in Shatila and other camps in Lebanon.
- c) **Mixgården** 19/9. Annual meeting with leaders and youth.
- d) **Board meeting of the Foundation** 20/9. Entire day meeting with Abu Muhajed. Around 6 PM a discussion meeting in the Röda Stjärna (Red Star) bookstore. In the evening dinner with Abu M. and some godparents that for a longtime worked in solidarity with the CYC.
- e) **Godparents meeting** 21/9 at Masthugget House. Short introduction by Eva, and an information- and question & answer (Q&A) period with Abu Muhajed.

Trip to Beirut: Néstor, Eva, Anna and Frida 21/9 – 1/10 visited the CYC. Information regarding the trip will be presented in 2018.

Godparents Letter: this is an occasional letter whereby we inform godparents on ongoing developments in Lebanon and regarding the CYC. For further information, we refer you to the CYC's homepage cycshatila.org where you may find lots of pictures and details about activities at the Centre. Easiest is to subscribe to their Newsletter (<https://cycshatila.org/newsletter/>).

Our homepage: the link is <http://faddershatila.se/>. We are unfortunately still lagging a bit regarding updates of the site (due to lack of time) but there are important documents about us, and the CYC. The Annual Reports are also deposited there.

Facebook: "Stiftelsen Shatila Barn- och ungdomscentrum" is the name of the site, but you can simply write "Shatile" and it will appear. There you can find the most recent 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 folders.

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

Board meetings of the Foundation held during 2017

23/1 Annual meeting

23/1 Board meeting

27/6 Board meeting, planning of the visit in September

20/9 The Board and Abu Mujahed

9/10 Board meeting

9/11 Board meeting

Finally, a report from the trip to the CYC in the autumn of 2017

Dear godparents!

Children and youth in the CYC and at Nahr el Bared sent with us their cordial greetings and warmest thanks to all of you that contributed to the work that so splendidly brightens their existence in the refugee camp and enriches their free time.

We, Néstor, Eva as well as Anna and Frida took a trip to Lebanon in the end of October and met Abu Mujahed, the young leaders, other responsible persons and of course many children and young people. We visited the study rooms where assistance with schoolwork is given and saw teachers help children polish skills in English, Arabic, math and natural sciences. We enjoyed the training sessions with Dabke dancers - we even experienced a lively performance – and we joined in when football players (children and youth; girls and boys) were training and saw their joy as they chased the ball on an open plain. The field is rented by the hour and that is valuable time.

The Centre itself is now renovated, the rooms are nice. In Shatila the rooms and facilities where children spend time, including the auditorium, the library, rooms used for workshops, meetings, children's craft and other activities, have all been refurbished. The hostel, Guest House, is newly painted and it is well managed. In the Nahr el Bared branch the study rooms are more spacious, the playground is larger while overall the camp is calmer than Shatila. Half

of the living quarters are now rebuilt with funding from UNRWA – the remainder lay in ruins behind walls, the whole camp is closed, and the Lebanese Army has Check Points to screen people going in and out. We received a pass for one day.

The CYC has gone further in its work to build a Preschool in Shatila, where one calls it a “KG” (an abbreviation of the German term Kindergarten). It is adjoining the Centre. It will be four stories high and have a roof terrace for spending time outside. Children between the ages of 3-5 years old will play, paint, sing, dance and train in numbers (counting) and letters of the alphabet as well as social interplay prior to the beginning of the school term.

There is also an economic question. The CYC needs to have an independent source of income of its own. The Palestinian refugees are extremely tired of being forced into dependency. They are denied citizenship and are automatically excluded from prospects of work in about 70 different occupations or professions. They are not permitted to own land or real estate property, a company or farm. Thus, to run a non-profit organization like the CYC one must constantly knock on doors and is expected, as it were, to “stand with your cap in your hand”.

The CYC wants to promote activities that question war and flight from war, and question the lack of all things most children throughout the world see as their just rights; something that will fortify war victims like Syrian children and other poor children in their alienation; something that reinforces Palestinian children’s cultural and historical bonds with Palestine. Something that gives girls and boys equal rights in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHRC), something that allows young people to develop by getting outside crowded conditions of the refugee camp and masses of problems and enabling them to participate in society at large: attending book fairs, participating in marathon races, meetings and excursions to places where there is snow or a beach on the sea and one can breathe cleaner air.

Without your money life would be much tougher. The predictable sums they receive through godparenthood helps facilitate joy of life to the highest degree for children who in fact live in urban misery. You are a hero by virtue of your efforts in support of the CYC.

The Foundation Shatila’s Child and Youth Center
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/translated from Swedish to English by Aant Elzinga/