



Baladna News

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Welcome!!!

Welcome to the first issue of *Baladna News*, the bi-monthly newsletter of Baladna: Association for Arab Youth. Every issue we will be updating you with our ongoing activities, our achievements and our plans for the future.

Baladna is currently in its 5th year of existence. Throughout this short time, the organization had managed to overcome various difficulties and these last months have not been problem-free.

Despite a particularly harsh financial situation during this academic year, Baladna achieved to establish several well-functioning Youth Groups nation-wide, to organize field visits, a National Convergence on Gender and trainings for both Leaders and Youth Groups.

Within the Youth Group Project, Public Achievement is taking on more and more importance. We at Baladna think that it is vital for youngsters to gain the knowledge, skills and tools required to work on issues in their society, to express their cultural

and creative potential and to engage themselves in a full civic participation.

From the beginning, Baladna has created a special space for Arab-Palestinian youth to meet and discuss questions unique to their experience as members of both a marginalized minority and an oppressed nation. It is



A youth group hard at work

important to enable participants to make change in their communities and the aim of the Public Achievement Project is to give the youths the means to convey their needs to a wider public.

In the near future, Baladna will offer media trainings, using different

tools such as photography, radio and video. It will aim at giving young Arab-Palestinians skills and resources to better advocate their projects, goals and views. In the longer term, the next step would be to create a national media resource centre that would allow participants access to materials and equipment all year round.

Turn to page four for news of our International Workcamps this summer!!

Evaluation Time

After 5 years of running the Youth Leadership Project the time has also come for a thorough evaluation of our activities. Over the past 3 months, Baladna staff and Leaders have been working on analysing their current work and next year a restructuring of the Youth Project will be implemented, according to the conclusions of the evaluating team.

Academic Year Ends With Public Achievement Festival

The end of the annual Youth Group Project was the occasion of different festivities at the Public Achievement Festival on 27th May.

Over 250 Baladna members gathered in Rahat for a day of workshops, music, dancing, debates and various presentations.

All the youth groups and leaders from different towns and cities introduced their annual work and the projects they had planned and implemented in their local communities.

The festival was also the

culmination of the Youth Groups' work. Baladna's Youth Group Project

In 2005-2006, 18 groups were established and led by graduates of our Leadership Development course (see page 3).

Dotted around the country in places such as the Naqab, Haifa and Nazareth, the groups met on a weekly basis and gave a total of 300 youths (aged 14-17) the chance to participate, learn and discuss different issues concerning them such as identity, the importance of gender in Arab society, the family, democracy and human

rights.

In the coming year we will be



Youths gather for games and workshops at the Public Achievement Festival

Another Year of Successful Public Achievement Projects

From March to May, Baladana's Youth Groups work on a Public Achievement project that aims to empower them by giving tools for full civic participation. Furthermore, Public Achievement projects aim to encourage a move from passive learning in a classroom to actively engaging in the society.

Project 1

Sara Abu Syam, a Biology student at Ben Gourion University in Beersheba, has been a Youth Group leader with Baladna for one year.

Sara (20), became involved in Baladna a year ago after having heard about its activities from her older brother who was already a member. The young girl wanted to know more about the association and became a regular reader of *Shabab* magazine then, last year, decided to take a more active role and took part in the Leadership training course.

After attending the Public Achievement training, she thought about running a project in order to help her community.

In Rahat, the teachers and students at the school often complained about not having books. Sara and her Youth Group decided to find a solution for the pupils and their teachers to have these educational tools at hand and came up with the idea of a school library.

In her town nobody believed that the young lady and her group could run such a successful project by themselves, but they didn't give up in the face of this and, a few months later,

the library was already refurbished, stocked and operational.

Sara joined Baladna in order to develop new skills and knowledge and also to meet people that believed in the same dream as her: that Arab-Palestinians from Israel understand and know who they are and from where



Sara and her Youth Group in Rahat

they come from in order to tell the real story of their homeland

Project 2

Another example of successful project took place in Lod this year, a mixed city in the centre of the country.

A youth group led by Ruba Hamdan initiated a study visit to the city and its destroyed houses. Many of Lod Arab buildings has already been destroyed by the Israeli Police. The houses were built many years ago without permission and the goal of the Israeli government is clearly to make the Arabs inhabitants leave the city.

The youth decided to gather material to create a testimony to what happened and is still happening in Lod.

they interviewed the people whose house has been destroyed and took many pictures in order to present an exhibition in Lod, Rahat and Haifa.

Youth Group Field Trips

All year round, the youth groups participate in different field visits. On the first April, 60 young people from Haifa, Jdaide, El Mker and Nazareth made a trip to Golan with a first study visit in Berim, a village destroyed by the IDF in 1949

There, the youngsters met M. Edmond Abu Hicham Endrawous, 80 years old, who explained them the history of his village. The second part of this trip to the East led the youth groups to Golan Heights where they had an encounter with the inhabitants and learned about the occupation and the annexation.

The second field visit drove 100 High School students to Jerusalem on 20th of April. They visited the Alazariea area (a Palestinian neighborhood crossed by the Apartheid wall). This study part was guided by Amar Zourba, he told the pupils about the consequences of the wall on Jerusalem is 'daily life. The students then had a visit of the Old City: the Old Market, the Al Aqsa Mosque, the Church of Saint-Sepulchre and were taught about the history of the holy city. They also attended a play based on Mahmoud Darwish poems at the National Palestinian Theatre and received a lecture about the prisoners and the specific political situation of Jerusalem since the wall has been built.

Baladna invites Rim Banna

On May 28th, Baladna held its annual benefit event: Rim Banna's concert in Haifa. The singer was accompanied at the guitar by her husband Leonid Alexeienko, musician and composer.

This concert helped to fund Baladna's activities by receipts on tickets sale and

local sponsorship, this year was a success: about 500 persons attended the event and we got support from the French Cultural Centre. During the evening, the first part of the scholarships were delivered to our Youth Leaders for all their work during the academic year.



Rim Banna in Haifa for Baladna's annual benefit concert

Leadership Training Courses



Study visit in the holy city of Jerusalem for the Leaders course participants

Each year, Baladna offers university students throughout the country a Leadership Training Course in four different cities (Tel-Aviv, Beersheba, Jerusalem and Haifa).

The course introduces them to leadership and identity concepts, improves their awareness about the society they live in and gives them the skills and tools required to graduate and become

successful youth leaders.

During the academic year, students take part in different workshops and study visits.

On May 17th, the 60 Leadership Course participants have visited unrecognized villages in the Naqab area. On 10th of June, 60 students took part to a study trip to Jerusalem organized by Baladna in collaboration with IPCC (International Peace and Cooperation Center). The visit included an historical tour of the Old City and a less 'traditional' visit during which the participants the Wall and the Jewish settlements surrounding Jerusalem.



'Field visits in West Bank or in unrecognized villages of Israel and encounters between Arab-Palestinians from different areas are necessary to emphasize the common History.'

Encounter With Youth From the West Bank

In early June, 15 Baladna leaders from throughout the country made a trip to the Palestinian administrative capital to meet PCC (Palestinian Peace Coalition) volunteers from different cities in the West Bank.

This encounter focused on topics such as Arab-Palestinian identity and the difficulties of daily life of

Palestinians in West Bank as well as in Israel.

Participants in Ramallah



The encounter also gave the opportunity to youth from both sides of the Israeli separation wall to express themselves, to learn from each other's experiences and to get to know each other to take away pre-ideas. At the end of the week-end all the participants agreed that this kind of encounter has to be repeated in the future.



The cover of the latest issue of Shabab Magazine

Brand New Shabab Magazine

Thanks to our Editor Salim Abu-Jabar and the contributing writers, the last two months have seen a really positive improvement in our monthly Arabic language youth Magazine, **Shabab**.

With a new stable form and more systematic content with five key sections, the magazine now focuses better on student life and deals

with such issues as education, literature, culture, gay issues, politics, international affairs, health and psychology all in an attempt to raise awareness in



Momken Website

Happy Birthday Momken!

A Year ago, Baladna launched **Momken**, a Arabic language website dedicated to giving young Arabs in Israel up to date information on a host of issues such as education, culture, employment and their rights.

The website is growing and we currently have approximately 5,000 unique users per month.

Coming soon...

The Summer is always a busy and exciting time for our organization with an influx of foreign volunteers and many training courses. This year is now different and below are some of the projects we will be working on in the coming months.

Workcamps

After the success of last years workcamp in Eilabun, Baladna is



Volunteers in Eilabun workcamp

organizing four international workcamps in the country this summer. Two of them in Palestinian villages. About 10 to 15 international volunteers coming mainly from Eastern and Western Europe or Japan will be working on each camp. Some visit trips, workshops and other activities will be held to enhance participants' understanding of the Arab-Palestinian situation within Israel.

Story Telling Workshop

From 22nd to 26th July, Baladna will propose a Story telling workshop. A professional teacher from the United States will give the participants tools to build up a video-clip in order to make youth able to take the media language to themselves and begin an

advocacy process.

Photo journalism training

A training course will take place next month, from 24th to 26th August in cooperation with IDEA (International Debate Education Association). This training will teach the volunteers how to analyse and to use media such as audio and photography.

Theatre exchange in Italy

A delegation of Baladna will soon travel to Italy to take part in an exchange between 29th July and 14th August. It will give the opportunity for 5 Baladna volunteers and their coordinator to meet young people from Italy, Turkey and Spain. The youngsters will take part to theatre workshops and present the results of their work at the end of the exchange in the city of Brescia

Arte Diem 2006

In Cooperation with YAP Movement „Baladna is hosting the Arte Diem festival from 15th August to 4th September 2006.

In a response to conflictual and highly charged political situation that people in Israel and the Middle East on a daily basis, This year's theme is *'Promoting a culture of Peace through art'*

Participants will come from different European and Mediterranean countries and will work in different workshops such as Theater, Dance, Music, Media, Painting and Sculptures. These workshops will focus more precisely on issues linked with conflict prevention and



Baladna's Youth Leaders

resolution or existence and co-existence in a situation of conflict.

Leaders Intensive Training

At the beginning of August, the prospective Youth Leaders for the following academic year are invited to an Intensive Leadership Training that focuses on leadership and facilitation skills. This summer there will be about 30 students taking part to this Intensive Leadership Training.

EVS

In Cooperation with YAP Movement , Baladna is going to be host coordinator for the EVS project in Israel this year 2006-2007. It means linking 17 volunteers at 16 different associations throughout all regions, North, Center and South of Israel: Nazareth, Haifa, Ein Hod, Um el Fahem and Jerusalem. The European volunteers will have the opportunity to experience youth participation and community work in a variety of cultural, social welfare and awareness-raising activities in support of anti-discrimination and anti-racism efforts in disadvantaged communities. An EuroMed Festival will be held at the end of the EVS project.

Tell Us What You Think:

This is our first issue and we hope you have found it interesting. Any comments about the newsletter will be greatly received here at the office!

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"Balancing our work to strengthen Palestinian identity, Baladna also aims to address internal problems within Palestinian society, encouraging a Palestinian political culture based on pluralism and democracy capable of neutralizing factionalism and guaranteeing social and gender equity. We work to cultivate a healthy balance of pride and self-critique as a framework for developing genuine, durable individual and collective identity, strengthening youth capacity and enabling young people to express their full leadership, cultural, and creative potential"