

Palestinian children's visit to Oxford
July 2007

Cultural Project Outline

ORFA background

ORFA is a non-sectarian voluntary organisation, building grassroots links between civil society groups and individuals in Oxford and Ramallah.

Our main aim is to offer people in Ramallah support in terms of making their stories known and to reduce their sense of isolation and desperation. ORFA is concerned with human contact at an individual level, to promote understanding and friendship.

ORFA has sent a number of delegations from Oxford to Ramallah to meet people with whom they have something in common, such as working in the same industry. These delegations have been funded by the participants themselves, but ORFA welcomes return visits from Ramallah residents. ORFA also funded trips for Palestinians to the UK. Hadeel Qazzaz came to Oxford in March 2004 and gave a talk at the Oxford International Women Festival where she described the life under occupation and our main achievement has been the funding and organisation of a **2-week trip to Oxford of 8 children and 2 adults from the Al-Amari refugee camp in Ramallah in 2005**. We also organise awareness raising events and promote Palestinian culture.

Context

Two members of Oxford visited Al-Amari refugee camp in Ramallah in March 2004. Al-Amari has been established in 1949 and 7,300 registered refugees live there today. After their return, ORFA thought in more details about setting up trips to the UK for the most disadvantaged children from the camp.

The project

As in 2005, we will bring a group of 8 children (4 girls and 4 boys) from 13 to 16 and 2 accompanying adults in July 2007. These children have spent all their life under movement restrictions (road blocks, checkpoints, the Wall, curfews) and military occupation. This violent environment takes their childhood away and can sometimes lead to psychological problems.

➤ **The aims**

The project will give these children the opportunity to broaden their horizons, move without barriers and break their sense of isolation. This visit will be both educational and a time away from their difficult routine:

- By exploring cultural differences through artistic workshops with the Pegasus Youth Theatre Summer Project
- By creating links with schools and youth groups, arranging visits and making contacts and setting up some exchange that they can take back with them.
- By developing their practice and skills in English to help them in their future life – this exchange will also motivate them to carry on developing their English after their return.

Children living in Oxford will gain from this an understanding of the life in Ramallah. A further outcome will be for the 2 accompanying adults to improve their personal development and skills.

P.T.O

➤ **The program**

The 2-week visit will take place between the 20th July and 6th August 2007.

- **First week:** Reception with the Lord Mayor of Oxford
School and other youth group visits
Sightseeing in Oxford and London.
- **Second week:** Cultural week in collaboration and organised with the Pegasus Youth Theatre Summer Project (www.pegasustheatre.org).
 - with local children including refugee children
 - workshops (dance, music, drama)
 - public performance on the last Saturday (4th of August)

Deliverables

A documentary film and reports will be produced.

Accommodation

The children will be staying in pairs with local families who are involved with ORFA.

Travel

The children will have to take a coach from Ramallah to Amman in Jordan and then fly from Amman Airport to London.

Administration / paperwork

To make sure the project runs smoothly, we will be working on getting passport and issuing Visa, recommendation letters and purchasing insurance. All related cost will be covered by ORFA.

What next

At this stage of the project, we are in the process of finding sponsorship for the children's visit. Our estimated budget is £800 per visitor.

If you would like to know more, support this project, get involved or have a speaker to come and talk to your group:

Email: oxford-ramallah-owner@yahoogroups.com

Telephone: 07837 146129.

Web site: www.oxford-ramallah.org