

LEARNING FOR THE EMPOWERMENT & ADVANCEMENT OF PALESTINIANS

Empowering students to become their own agents of change

Summer 2013

WWW.LEAP-PROGRAM.ORG

Vol.III, No.1

P.2 LETTER FROM THE LEAP PROGRAM TEAM

*Dear
readers,*

About the LEAP Program

LEAP is an educational empowerment program for Palestinian refugee-youth in Lebanon. LEAP is dedicated to nurturing the intellectual and creative growth of its students and encouraging them to become their own agents of change through education.

LEAP is a grassroots volunteer program and our work and efforts can only be achieved through the generosity of our supporters and donors. We are actively fundraising to help support both our short-term and long-term initiatives. Please consider donating today and help us empower Palestinian refugee-youth in Lebanon!

For more information, please visit:

www.Leap-Program.org

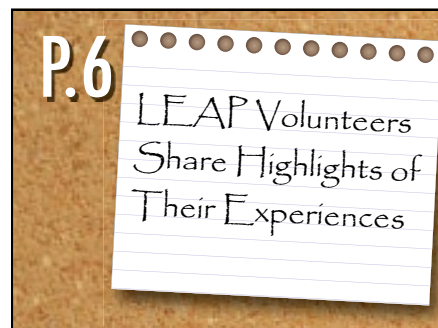
or email:

info@leap-program.org

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Dear readers,

We began 2013 with such high expectations for LEAP.

Our Marcel Khalife benefit concert in April was a huge success; and with your generous outpouring of financial support, we were planning to implement a full array of projects for the year ahead. SHINE 2013 was slated to become LEAP's most ambitious project since our inception in 2010. We laid extensive plans to expand our English-language teaching and mentoring programs to five Palestinian refugee camps. We recruited 97 volunteers to serve 1,000 students and 150 local teachers! In addition, for the first time, LEAP was implementing a community health project.

Unfortunately, the volatile security situation in Lebanon forced LEAP to cancel its summer projects. In spite of security concerns, a handful of LEAP coordinators—who were already in Lebanon to prepare for the summer—made the decision to stay and implement an abridged version of the SHINE Project. Following this decision, a number of volunteers also insisted on coming to Lebanon to roll up their sleeves, despite the security warnings. After six months of preparation, we informed our students and volunteers that LEAP would not operate in three of the five camps. Sadly, this meant that LEAP's services were suspended for over 600 students and 120 teachers that had enrolled.

Working closely with our partner organization Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS), these committed volunteers and staff implemented SHINE while facing very difficult circumstances. LEAP continued to work in two refugee camps in Tyre—Bourj el Shemali and Rashidieh—and reached approximately 400 students and 30 teachers. Our team of LEAP and BAS volunteers were able to implement a community-wide dental health project with over 500 adults and children in attendance, provide free check-ups to over 400 children, make two short film clips, create two art-on-canvas murals that will be incorporated into a traveling UN children's art exhibit, participate in photography classes, travel on field trips, and more!

The logistical reality of operating in an unstable country such as Lebanon requires LEAP to make difficult assessments in a timely manner. While we would have enjoyed moving forward with our full range of summer projects, we did not want to compromise the safety of our volunteers. The heartbreaking events of this summer further magnify the plight of Palestinian refugees. While we had the privilege of choosing whether or not we should travel to Lebanon (and we have the freedom of escaping), these are rights that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon do not yet have. Forced to remain in an unstable and explosive environment, they remain at the mercy of internal conflicts and pressures.

This summer's experience further highlights how lack of citizenship and other documentation prevent and limit the movement of Palestinian refugees, even after four generations. This case is sadly illustrated in the changing demographic of the students that LEAP served this summer. A significant portion of our students were Syrian refugees or Palestinian refugees from Syria demonstrating the lasting nature of the *Nakba* (Palestinian catastrophe), which has been ongoing since the exile in 1948. For Palestinian

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refugees coming from Syria, this was their family's second, third, or at times fourth time with becoming refugees since the *Nakba*. Palestinian refugees anticipating return to their homes remain confined to refugee camps in host countries for over 65 years, during which they have been consistently targeted or made vulnerable. This is why the mission of LEAP continues to be of vital importance, as it provides rare opportunities for social and educational advancement that are so often denied to this community.

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Within this newsletter you will find volunteer testimonies, examples of exemplary student work, and a note from our education coordinators on their experience with implementing the SHINE teacher training course for the first time.

We are already making arrangements and beginning to plan for SHINE 2014 to continue empowering Palestinian refugee youth through education. We hope, as all of you do, that 2014 will bring an improved political climate, thereby allowing us to implement our full, expanded programs. Stay tuned — because we will also be announcing ASPIRE 2013-2014! ASPIRE is an extension to SHINE and will provide year-long English tutoring alongside homework assistance and recreational activities to continue nurturing students' intellectual growth and creative curiosity.

The LEAP Team



On behalf of the LEAP Program, we are thankful to everyone who helped us implement this year's educational projects. We are heartened by how warmly we were received by the communities in which we carry out our work, touched by the commitment of our phenomenal volunteers, forever grateful to our coordinators and colleagues at Beit Atfal Assumoud, inspired by our students who taught us so much, and most importantly, humbled by our supporters who allow us to carry out this important work, which we hold dear to our hearts.

Among those we would specifically like to thank are Mr. Kassem Aina and Ms. Fatima Khaizaran from Beit Atfal Assumoud as well as all of the BAS Directors: Abu Wasim and Mahmoud Zeidan, as well as their respective staff. Thank you to everyone who makes our work possible.

~ MAKE YOUR CONTRIBUTION TODAY ~

I wish to make a charitable contribution to support LEAP's initiatives in the amount of: \$50 __ \$100 __ \$300 __ Other ____

Please make checks payable to the "WESPAC Foundation" and kindly indicate **"LEAP Program"** in the reference line.

WESPAC Foundation, 52 North Broadway,
White Plains, NY 10603

Online donations accepted via website www.LEAP-PROGRAM.ORG

The WESPAC Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization and the fiscal sponsor of the LEAP Program.

Get Involved With The LEAP Program!

LEAP seeks dynamic, compassionate, and motivated volunteers who enjoy working with young adults; value the right to quality education for all people; have a strong belief in international law with respect to Palestinian refugees; maintain respect and diplomacy in their interactions with people of different backgrounds; and are capable of working under challenging circumstances.

Volunteers must be mature, responsible, able to multi-task, maintain a positive and flexible attitude when working in stressful and exhausting environments, be understanding, and a great team-player.

The LEAP Program aims to be a mutual learning and sharing experience for both students and volunteers.

LEAP welcomes the involvement of students, educators and faculty from all academic fields and institutions to get involved in one of the following ways:

- ✓ Project SHINE (Summer Help IN English);
- ✓ Project ASPIRE (After-School Program In Remedial English);
- ✓ Project RISE (Recruitment Initiative for Scholarship Enrollment);
- ✓ LEAP Junior Board Committee Volunteers: LEAP is currently accepting applications for board positions to help in our year-long outreach and fundraising initiatives.

To get involved with LEAP and volunteer in one of our educational projects or help us carry out our year-long work, please contact us at info@leap-program.org.

Photographs and Creative Writings by SHINE 2013 Students

Despair

Save us, save us...
For heavens' sake please
I'm tired of coughing, sneezing and itching
Help us, help us... I demand
I want to grow up in a healthy land
Why isn't the grass green
The fountains sheen
The man growing oldest
And the morning dew lying longest
And me growing healthiest
Isn't that mean?

— by Mohamed H.

A Dialogue

A: Hi, why are you sitting on the street?
B: Because, I don't have a home and money.
A: Ok, come with.
B: To where will you take me?
A: I will give you money and a comfy home.
B: Thank you very much, you are so generous.
A: Thanks.
A: After one month I hear that the man died. I feel so sad for him. I go to his home to see his family, they were so sad.
C: Why didn't you help us before?
A: I did one month ago, I saw the old man in the street and I gave him money and a home.
C: So why didn't you help us in the hospital to pay for medicine?
A: Because, now I know he died. I am sorry.
C: No, we are sorry, because we didn't know the story.

— by Alya J. and Ayat A.

My friend and I also the teacher Roset were last week in the school. Alya hit me and the teacher Roset told Alya to be put out of the class and she was crying. But I told the teacher I want to forgive her because she is my friend.

— Manal S., Rashidieh

Big Goal:
100% of SHINE teachers will be able to achieve English proficiency for 100% of their students.

The Rabbit and the Turtle

One day from the imagination world there was a rabbit and a turtle. The turtle was named Batti and the rabbit Magrou. The rabbit was faster than the turtle, and the rabbit was arrogant and showing off. He said to Batti: "I am faster than you. You are slow." "The turtle said: "You are very arrogant and you are showing off. I hate you very much." The rabbit said: "You hate me, ok. Then all the animals in the forest hate me. However I will make a competition between me and you, so the winner will become the fastest animal. Tomorrow we will start."

Next day, friends of the turtle came and started clapping their hands for the turtle and said to her, "You can do that, you can." The rabbit became angry because he didn't have any friends. Finally the cheetah that is the owner of the city in the forest came and said "1 2 3 start." The race began. The rabbit was faster than the turtle. While the rabbit ran he said, "I can sleep for 15 minutes then I will win in any way." While the rabbit was sleeping, the turtle won. Finally the rabbit apologized to the turtle and said, "I am sorry too much. I was arrogant. I am sorry." The turtle said: "Ok, no problem. I think that you learned a lesson." "Can I be your friend," Magrou asked? Batti said, "Yes, you can."

— Israa D.

**SANFOR.**

[as told by Batoul R., age 13]

Pictured in the photograph is Mohammed S. Affectionately called by his nickname *Sanfor*, which translates approximately to "short stuff," everyone —the elderly, the youth, male or female— knows him. One might say that *Sanfor* is a celebrity in Bourj el Shemali.

**WORKING AND FASTING.**

Ali K. is carrying heavy things on his shoulder, working hard to earn little money for his children, especially for *Eid* after *Ramadan*.

**SUPERMARKET.**

[as told by Rayan D., age 14]

"At my market, you can get anything you want."

**FRIENDS,
LOVE, AND
HAPPINESS.**

Hiba M.
(age 13)
and Malak
M. (age 12)

express their perseverance (*sumoud*), and their deepest desire to return to Palestine, in front of the draft of a wall mural at Beit Atfal Assumoud.

**UNTITLED.**

Fatima I. (age 11) and Mariam I. (age 10) know the locations of all the beautiful trees and flowers in their neighborhood surroundings. They led the class to this scenic location during the first photography club field trip.

LEAP Volunteers Share Highlights of Their Experiences

When I first joined LEAP in the summer of 2012, I could not have imagined the lasting impact the experience would have on me. It is difficult to articulate how I feel about LEAP and how my experiences have moved me. We, volunteers, try to avoid stating the cliché saying that LEAP changed our lives, but in reality, it did exactly that for me. LEAP awakened something in me that made my committing to the children of Palestine, and it is through this Program that I feel I can do that. LEAP can certainly be stressful sometimes, yet the individuals I have met during my time help us cope with the experience and form lasting bonds. I am grateful that I have been able to be a part of LEAP for two years now and would encourage those committed to refugee rights and the right to education for Palestinian refugee youth to join LEAP.

I would like to leave you with this piece written by one of my brilliant students this year —

"In Rashidieh camp, we suffer from many problems. Bad conditions, no food, no water, no clean environment and no civil rights. I see a poor boy playing with garbage, instead of a ball. I see a sad boy because he lost his parents and does not have anyone to take care of him. These are the stories of the camp.

—Mohamed, Rashidieh camp

This piece represents the resilient spirit of many of my students who came to school every day ready to learn with a smile on their face despite the hardships and struggles they face. They want to live in dignity and have so much potential; if only they had the opportunities and resources to reach them.

— Samer A., Rashidieh volunteer,
SHINE 2012 & 2013



Samer A.



Basma E.

"Miss Basma, I want to show you something"

Jana and her family had graciously invited me over for *Iftar*, as many of our students do during *Ramadan*, and we had just finished breaking our fast on a delicious meal.

The previous summer Jana had been a student in my class and we had, thanks to Facebook, kept in touch throughout the year. I was happy to see her again and witness how much she'd grown. Moreover, it was great to see how her English skills had significantly improved.

"Come on!" she insisted.

She rose from the table and I followed her into the room she shared with her younger sister. She opened her closet and proceeded to pull out a box of papers. From the box emerged her LEAP Memory Book, which is given to all students/teachers at the closing ceremony of the program, from the previous summer followed by her workbook, notebook, and what appeared to be every remnant from Project SHINE 2012.

"I saved everything" she told me.

She then showed me a small torn piece of paper, which I did not recognize at first glance.

"Do you remember this?" She handed me the tattered paper and I saw that it was a bookmark I had nonchalantly passed out to my students at some point last summer.

"What happened?" I asked looking at the bookmark that had once bore the word 'READ' but now only displayed the letters 'RE.' Jana told me that one day she came home to find that her brother had ripped the bookmark without knowing the significance it held. She recalled how terribly upset she was after seeing that it was ruined.

I was surprised that Jana would shed tears over a mere paper bookmark, but it was at the moment I realized the extent in which LEAP affected its students. For Jana, that unsuspecting piece of paper represented her connection to LEAP and it was as if it being torn could somehow destroy that bond and take away her precious memories.

If I've learned anything from the Palestinian people it is that memories are embodied within us and the strongest ones will never leave our hearts. Despite frayed bookmarks, the friendships, the love and the happiness which come out of our experiences with LEAP will stay with us always.

Students like Jana brought me back to Lebanon this past summer and it is those students who will keep bringing me back.

— Basma E., Bourjel Shemali volunteer, SHINE 2012 & 2013

"Listen carefully Wajdi. The eggs are *Hot, Yellow and Delicious*."

Wajdi holds my gaze intently for each word.

"Yes, yes, yes." He nods furiously and starts. "Our breakfast special is eggs they are..." He trails off and stamps in frustration.

"Hot..." I suggest.

Mohamed and Malak try not to laugh as Wajdi grabs the script.

I'm in a small room with three theatre class students and we're rehearsing a restaurant scene for the closing ceremony. Large windows let one look over the tightly packed concrete buildings of Rashidieh. Staring out at the camp and blue sky I feel another wave of surrealism hit.

Having previously spent time volunteering and living in Bethlehem, Palestine, I felt I understood or at least was aware of the Palestinian plight. But nothing had prepared me for their reality in Lebanon. 27,000 people are living in Rashidieh, the entrance is controlled by



Lebanese soldiers, the inhabitants do not have the right to work or own property outside of the camp, and they are living just 20 km from their homeland.

The injustice in these children's lives is just so painful, yet it was my students themselves who gave me the biggest hope for their future. For each one of them I developed the greatest respect and admiration. They were the most enthusiastic, generous, funny and intelligent people I've worked with.

So here I was with Wajdi as he welcomed Mohamed and Malak to "Mr Amir's restaurant," beaming and excited as he thrust menus into his fellow actors hands.

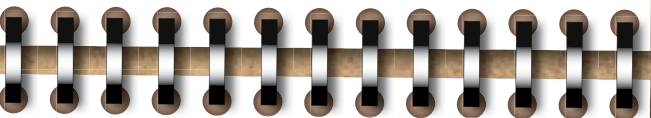
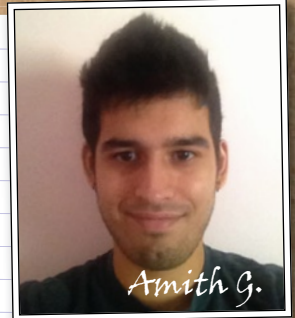
Volunteering with LEAP has made me fully appreciate that the education of our students and of the world at large is the only way this injustice will one day be righted. I leave Rashidieh with many deeply personal memories, far more than I could ever hope to sum up here.

— Jenny Baillie-Grohman, Rashidieh Volunteer

My experience with the LEAP Program was eye-opening, even as a social justice and Palestine solidarity activist who has confronted the refugee crisis before. Working in Rashidieh camp with the tireless Palestinian volunteers of LEAP's partner organization, Beit Atfal Assumoud, gave me the opportunity to provide intensive English lessons to Palestinian youth in Lebanon. More importantly, it forced me to understand the Palestinian refugee crisis in human terms, no longer a lifeless abstraction or simply a "political problem" that can be ignored by the powers that be. The communities with whom I worked were not only dedicated in their resolve to return to Palestine, but also dedicated to improving their lives and the lives of their children in Lebanon.

As a volunteer, I joined several dozen foreign volunteers to teach English to Palestinian youths in the camps. Although the trip was "humanitarian," rather than "political," it quickly became clear that the lack of demonstration did not signify a lack of solidarity. I felt proud that I could be a part of this effort.

While refugee rights are often brushed aside in the West, LEAP puts refugees front and center. Before our arrival, all



volunteers were expected to familiarize themselves with the situation of the refugee community — from their expulsion from historic Palestine to the discrimination and subjugation they have suffered in Lebanon. Upon arrival, our orientation entailed testimonies from survivors of the *Nakba*, and the expectation that all volunteers will pursue "individual projects" upon their return to their home countries to raise awareness about the Palestinian refugee reality and share their experiences.

During our first days, we visited the Lebanon-Palestine border. Many of the Palestinian volunteers from BAS were able to point out their historic villages. Despite being literally thirty minutes away from their homeland, our friends and co-workers were expected to stay in Lebanon, where they were contained in camps for now 65 years and over four generations. Our students and their families were forced to deal with overcrowding, as Palestinian and Syrian refugees streamed in from Syria. Instability was a constant menace — even forcing LEAP to severely curtail the extent of the program from five camps to two. While the people of my assigned camp, Rashidieh, had built community, solidarity, and life out of their situation, the camp itself was squalid and lacked an underground sewage system. Furthermore, the camp had been repeatedly bombed by Israel throughout history.

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But the communities with whom we worked were steadfast — and volunteers were required to behave accordingly. Most of us, Muslim or not, took part in *Ramadan* fasting, both out of respect and as logistical reality. Intimate relations, drugs, and alcohol were completely forbidden. Our living space was crammed, with dozens of volunteers sharing small apartments. Work days were stressful, from teaching hyperactive youths to writing lesson plans to adjusting to culture shock.

Sometimes, cultural differences were discomforting. For example, it was difficult to explain my identity as an Indian-American to my students. As Palestinians in Lebanon, they did not identify as Palestinian-Lebanese, but as Palestinians only. They all knew which village their family came from, spoke in Palestinian dialect, and recited the national anthem each morning. Their stay in Lebanon was considered temporary, and in any case, Lebanon had made every effort to define them as foreigners. As a result, the concept of a second-generation immigrant being "American" was incomprehensible. Many of my students believed it meant I was half-white.

Nonetheless, the experience was worth it and I hope to return to Lebanon to take part in the program again. I am grateful to the LEAP Program for setting up such an eye-opening and effective program and would gladly take part in LEAP's efforts in the future.

— Amith G., Rashidieh volunteer

What made the teacher training course so stimulating for everyone involved was its organic evolution into a dynamic and mutually supportive learning space. The course opened with a writing workshop of "I Am From..." poems, and from that class on developed as an environment in which the teachers shared and compared notes on their unique experiences, building powerful new alliances as well as friendships in the process. The diversity of the group — which included teachers based in Tyre as well as many coming from Syria— further enriched this dialogue. Participants concluded the program expressing a newfound confidence in their English language skills and keen to deploy new tools in the classroom, but the value of the teacher training course went beyond these fundamental objectives. The teachers were encouraged to keep their students' perspectives in mind when engaging with new tools and topics, and this approach was reaffirmed and deepened as they combined resources within the classroom, exchanging experience and broadening their perspectives through collaboration and discussion.

— Catherine C., Rashidieh Education Coordinator



UNRWA Schools

UNRWA is a United Nations agency responsible for protection, care, and human development for Palestinian refugees. It works directly to benefit the camp community by providing teachers, doctors, etc. It has become one of the most important educational institutions in Palestine society. However, recently UNRWA's schools face many problems that must be solved immediately. Today, students are less interested in their education and are also less prepared to excel in their academic studies. They hate schools, but why?

One of the issues is that parents don't care. Another issue is that teachers are not motivating the students enough to study and succeed. Teachers just focus on three or four students in the class and ignore the weak ones because they are considered a failure. Also, many students study to pass an exam, but they do not learn anything about the subject material. Moreover, a bad environment surrounds UNRWA's schools; for instance, a garbage container is next to the school. Also, teachers nowadays criticize their students negatively in everything like their dress and hair, so students hate school and their teachers.

These problems must be solved to have an educated generation in the future. One of the solutions is to encourage and motivate the students to study using different methods. Also, teachers must pay attention to all students in order for them to gain information. Teachers must not criticize the students negatively, but positively in order for the students to love their teachers and love to study the subject. Education must be made relevant to our world today in order to prepare students for it. UNRWA's school problems must be solved quickly to have a successful education system and an educated future generation.

— Hanin K., Bourjel Shemali Camp, Teacher

LEAP & BAS COLLABORATE ON COMMUNITY DENTAL PROJECT

On behalf of LEAP and Beit Atfal Assu-mound (BAS), we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to our circle of friends for supporting our first Community Cares Dental Health Project. Thanks to your generous support, we were able to implement a successful grassroots dental health campaign in two out of the five camps that LEAP was originally supposed to operate in for SHINE 2013.

With your donations, LEAP was able to provide over \$4,000 worth of dental supplies, including much needed dental supplies such as composite and root canal fillings and impression materials, which will be used by two dental clinics in Rashidieh and Bourj el Shemali camps throughout the year for children's dental treatment. Over the course of SHINE's four weeks, LEAP and BAS volunteers worked together to plan, engage, and implement the project.

During week one, volunteers distributed material on dental health around the camps. Volunteers designed, translated, and researched information for the fliers and posters and plastered them around the camp afterward. Some were creative and amusing—for example, one illustrated the widely popular Arab Idol winner, Mohamed Assaf, shining his beautiful smile and a message for the children to practice good dental habits so they can have a smile like Assaf! Others were more conventional and informative by incorporating statistics/facts and the consequences of not taking care of one's teeth. Furthermore, volunteers distributed over 1,000 brochures between the two camps on dental health.

For week two, volunteers worked with local dentists to organize informational sessions. During the informational sessions, Dr. Murad in Rashidieh camp and Dr. Emad in Bourj el Shemali camp addressed adults on the specifics of gum disease and dental decay, prevalent throughout the community, and also spoke about preventative care and ways to build healthier habits for their families. The informational sessions were attended by over 350 adults. The dentists



conducted extensive question-and-answer sessions, during which parents were able to pose general questions, as well as specific questions about their children's dental health.

On the third week, volunteers organized a Dental Carnival with a series of fun, educational workshops, presentations, and activities on dental health. With over 400 kids in attendance, students saw theatrical skits on the importance of daily brushing, flossing, and healthy eating habits for dental health and overall health. Children also participated in fun

card games, trivia questions, face painting, and dental bingo. In addition, students designed and colored artwork reflecting the various components of healthy dental care. There was even an original bilingual sing-along song that the children learned and performed at the end of the afternoon!

Furthermore, each attendee at both the adult and child information sessions received a dental kit and brochure—created by the LEAP and BAS team—summarizing the session's key points, and an appointment card for a free checkup with the local dentist.



LEAP will continue to support BAS dental clinics, and we hope that we can continue to rely on you for your support throughout the year. Please consider making an additional tax-deductible donation to support the dental clinics by writing a check to the WESPAC Foundation, with "LEAP Dental Project" in the reference line and/or donating online.

The WESPAC Foundation is a 501c3 non-profit organization and is the fiscal sponsor of the LEAP program.

She wakes up early in the morning, not to drink her coffee or to
eat *Zeit w Zaatar* (olive oil & thyme) with pita bread as usual
But to pack her suitcase
And never forget the key to her house
Abraded key by the rust of alienation

She exchanges sounds with the crowing rooster at sunrise
She expresses sounds that miss the homeland
She screams out loud
Take me home, Take me home!
This is not my house!
What am I doing here? Who brought me here?
YOU?!

Where are my children? Where is mom? Where is dad?
She looks into the mirror and she does not recognize herself!

65 years later of exile, she lost her recollections
She lost her memory—a memory filled with displacement,
alienation and exile
But God still have mercy on her!
He granted her two separate memories
A 65 years old memory, and 20 years old one

Recounted 20 years at home and 65 years in exile
She doesn't know who's around her
She does not know herself at the age of 85!
She doesn't recognize the wrinkles on her tanned face
She does not lie, she doesn't know!
Do YOU understand?!

She does not recall the death of her father nor her mother
She does not remember her own sons and daughters
She does not acknowledge the existence of her grandchildren
She is confident that her kids are still playing in the orange groves
She does not recall the the occupation of Palestine,
thus does not recall the establishment of the state of Israel
She does not believe that a European Zionist took over her home

Precisely, she is still able to describe her hometown and
accurately she can name all of the families that lived in Lyd
She is able to describe her city, street by street, and house by house
Nevertheless, she doesn't know who YOU are!
She can tell you stories about the soil of her homeland,
and the seasons of harvest up until her
sight returns back to reality due to the suffering of exile.
She yells with a strong echo in return!
Take me to my home!
It is not far from here!
Few meters only!

A two-storey house, four bedrooms
And a balcony overlooking the main street to Haifa
She advises you to put on sweater if you decide to have a cup
of coffee seating in the balcony to watch the beautiful sunset
The fresh breeze will make you tremble!
House built with old stones.
Her bridal dress is hanging on the main door to her house
Her mother embroidered that dress for her when she got married!
Where is my husband?
I have not seen him for a while!

She is only 20 years old, yet Handala is still 11!!
She turned her back and sight to the world exactly like him
However, she is a real person who still breathes like every other
human being!
Her name is not listed in the daily newspapers, nor it is painted
on the walls of refugee camps in the Diaspora

She is PALESTINE!

She does not recognize the violator of the land
She does not acknowledge the presence of the foreign residents
She does not recognize the new structures and buildings
She is fully aware that these hands are fake!
They are not the same as those of the original inhabitants
She does not believe in the 65 years of alienation
She doesn't believe that her sons became elderly men

Confidence!
Fully aware!

She is sure that one day her kids will come back to take her home
Her rights aren't lost and she is not accustomed to this life
She believes in that morning, when she finds use for the key
she hangs around her neck

No recognition!
No acknowledgment!
No belief!

Take my home...
She is free PALESTINE!

— by Samer S., Rashidieh volunteer



At the Jaffa Orange Grove. Matson Collection. www.PalestineRemembered.com