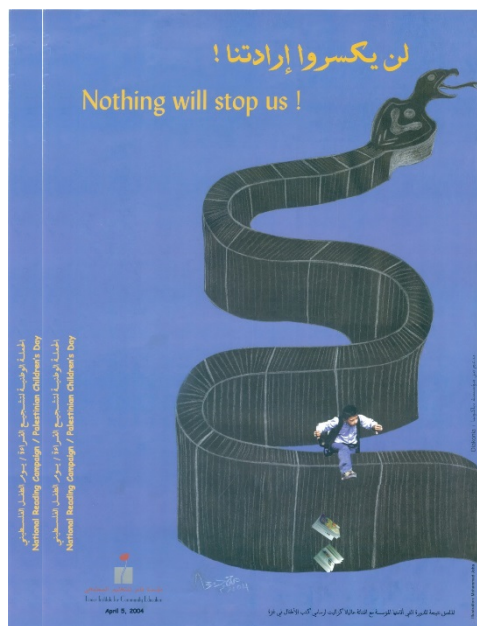


# Children in Crisis Situations – Palestinians Under Occupation

Presented by Jehan Helou

PBBY





# Why Must Children Suffer?



*'Why must children suffer, for the wrong we do?  
Why must children pay the price for the ugly hate we spew?  
Why must children have to cope with hunger and with war?  
Why must children feel the wrath at Mother Natures core?'*

Krysti Farrell



# Children: Main Victims of Wars

*“... war in our time is always indiscriminate, a war against innocents, a war against children”.* Howard Zinn

More than 90% of casualties in modern high tech wars are civilians, millions of children are killed, disabled, left homeless, orphaned or separated from their parents, and many are psychologically traumatized



# Not Enough!



Though the UN has given great attention to the cause of children in war zones; yet, unfortunately the situation is still very bad.



Graca Machel, the champion of the study [The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children](#) said: *“no one has done enough or moved quickly enough to safeguard the millions of children suffering through wars”*.



*“Power and greed can never be an excuse for sacrificing children”*. Machel powerfully called to consider education as the “fourth pillar of humanitarian response, alongside the pillars of nourishment, shelter and health services”





# Solidarity!



*“The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing”.* Albert Einstein

Rachel Corrie who went to Gaza in solidarity with children there and sacrificed her life, said, *“I feel like I'm witnessing the systematic destruction of a people's ability to survive. It's horrifying.”*



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3JI-axaRF4>



Rachel said before she was battered by the Israeli bulldozer, *“We are protecting civilians. We are unarmed. We are no threat to you. Please do not shoot!”*



# Palestinians No More?!



In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Palestine was starting to develop and became among the vanguards of the Arab world, enjoying growth in the spheres of education, agriculture, commerce and culture; as well as progress in the social milieu.

The disaster happened or al Nakba with the Support of Great Britain and the powerful colonial powers!





# Palestinians: Refugees & Homeless!

In 1948 around 800,000 Palestinians were uprooted from their homeland and became refugees in surrounding countries. Around 450 Palestinian villages were destroyed and many other villages partially destroyed.



The life of Palestinians was shattered, they lost everything, and for long years had to strive for basic survival.





## Struggle for Books: A Struggle for Liberation



Palestinians were not intimidated and determined to struggle to regain their lost paradise! Believing that the struggle for books is a struggle for liberation and empowerment, education became a priority in our lives, inside Occupied Palestine and in Exile, in the very marginalized Refugee camps.

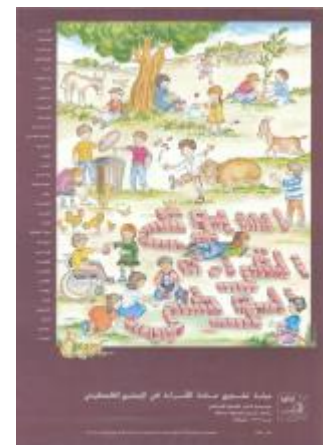
Books and learning helped to restore the Palestinians vitality, national identity and culture, and guaranteed us an outstanding role in the educational, cultural and economic arenas of the Arab world.





# National Reading Campaign for All

- Education was not easy to attain due to discrimination against Palestinians in the Occupied Territory and inside the Green Line and in exile.
- During the first Intifada, schools and universities were closed for almost four years, that was when Tamer Institute for Community Education blossomed. Tamer matured to support the Palestinians' endeavour to cherish the road to books, learning and knowledge!
- Tamer started the National Reading Campaign in 1994, believing that encouraging the bond between children and books will also contribute to developing skills in the field of language, expressive writing, imagination, and critical thinking. The campaign, which deserved the ALMA in 2009, is still vivid and warmly embraced by society and by tens of community-based organizations.



# Lament children, Lament Books

The road of struggle is thorny, sacrifices are great and suffering tremendous thus Palestinian children are cruelly denied their basic Rights!

Mahmoud Darwish mourning of Muhammad al Durra mentioning his yearning to go to school:

- *Muhammad would like to go home again, without a bicycle . . . or a new shirt.*

*to get back to his school bench . . .*

*his book of grammar and conjugations:*

*Take me home, father,*

*so I could do my homework*

*and live my life, bit by bit . . .*

*on the seaside,*

*under the palm trees,*

*nothing more, nothing.*



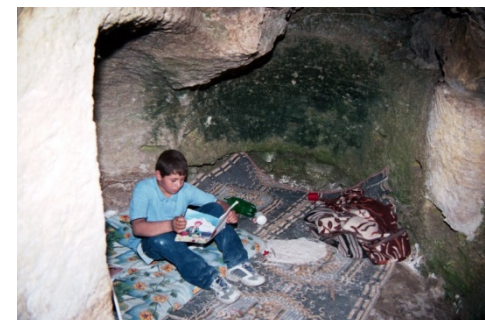


فتاة تنظر إلى النمار في منزلها الذي خلفه الأخطال في رفح - التصوير المركزي - ولسا

امرأ القصف الإحتلالى كبر الناجح - التصوير المركزي - ولسا



# Children Defiant, Looking for Books!



أثار الدمار في منطقة أبو هولي في دير البلح التصوير المركزي - وفا

# Books are Haven for Palestinian Lost Childhood

- Books became a Haven for Palestinian children; books distract them from their repressive reality and carry them temporarily into a beautiful world. Bibliotherapy and psycho-social activities become vital healers of the children traumata and psychological scares that are caused by dispossession, occupation, and daily atrocities.
- It was amazing how children went to their library during the atrocious war on Gaza, the same in Ramallah during the 2002 Israeli invasion. This was a manifestation of how children found their safe haven in their second home, the library, a place where they would find their close friends of books and children.



# Giving Every Child the Right to Become a Reader



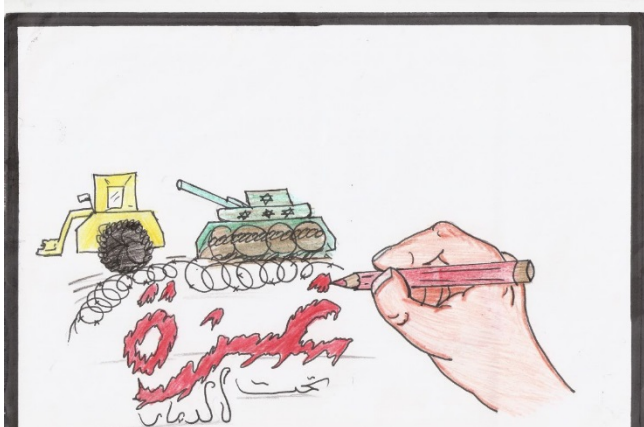
- *"We can no longer just work on the physical well-being of the child, we need to make sure that the physical, mental and social aspects of the child are in equilibrium."* ICRS
- **PBBY** started Children in Crisis project (launched by IBBY in 2006, as a main program), in Gaza in 2008. We established and activated two children libraries in cooperation with two community-based organizations in the most marginalized and dangerous areas:  
Rafah and Beit Hanoun.
- Bibliotherapy aimed to support a healing process, re-establish a sense of normality, and give the children a feeling of security, human warmth and care!



# Our Vision

PBBY believed in the importance of keeping children with their families and community, especially that around 70% of children in Gaza are the third generation of refugees!

- Programs reflected our belief that it is vital for children to understand the cause of their oppressive situation as well as their social realities and to fully orient them with CRC, so as to know their rights and to defend them. Activities reinforced the love of their Homeland and their pride of their identity.



**Children in Crisis project** faced and is still facing great obstacles due to the drastic results of occupation and siege, that violate basic human rights. Resulting in shortage of food, medicine, fuel, electricity, water destroyed infrastructure... Moreover, we could not reach Gaza which was completely isolated even from the rest of Palestine.

*Gaza is the “largest open-air prison, where a million and a half people, in the most densely populated area of the world, are constantly subject to random and often savage terror and arbitrary punishment...”\_Chomsky*

Creative activities were implemented like storytelling, drama, creative writing, illustrations, animation, handcraft, in addition to general knowledge contests about Palestinian heritage and history. Recently, we built a playground near the library for physical activities.





The most important activity was creative writings where children were encouraged to express themselves and their feelings. It was very touching to read the stories children wrote or their feelings about their trauma caused by the Israeli aggression on Gaza.

More on that and other activities on PBBY Webpage:

<http://www.ibbypalestine.org/>



## We Little Children Hate War

*The Israelis destroyed the houses and many people were killed. I hope there wouldn't be another war on any country; we little children hate war and hate those who like killing and destroying us.*





Children also wrote and illustrated their outlook of **Peace**:

(...)

*I sleep with no fear from the sound of  
airplanes*

*Oh lord of peace, lord of peace*

*I play with no fear from the shooting  
tanks*

(...)

*I go to my school with no fear from the  
sound of shells*

*Oh lord of peace, lord of peace!*



## Success Stories

The feed back from the children is very encouraging; one child said: *“I enjoyed the Creative Writing Training so much and since then I love reading and writing stories, I also joined Friends of the Library Group”*.

PBBY was keen to extend its work, when possible, to children with disabilities believing in the necessity of integrating them in society. Here is what one child with hearing impairment wrote: *“I am a deaf girl. At the beginning I was very sad. I could not talk or hear. I faced problems. People did not want to talk to me or befriend me. But now I go to my beautiful school, it is special school for the deaf. There I found new friends. I started writing and reading using sign language. Here people understand me and I understand them. Then and only then I felt that I am an effective member of society”*.





The local community warmly embraced the two libraries. They saw the difference it made in the life of their children. Primarily they were pleased that their children stopped playing in the dangerous area which is full of land mines.

Parents were happy to see that their kids' academic performance has improved, they became more self-confident, sociable and organized. Here is what Umm Tarek said:



*“My son Tarek is an intelligent boy, he goes to the library every day after school, as he loves the library very much. I am also happy because I borrow and read stories and historical books from the library”.*



*Umm Ala'i: “ I have two young boys Ala' (17 years) and (Jaber 16 years). Every day they go to the library after school. They enjoy reading stories and playing football with their friends. Thanks to all who participated in reviving this remote and marginalized village”.*

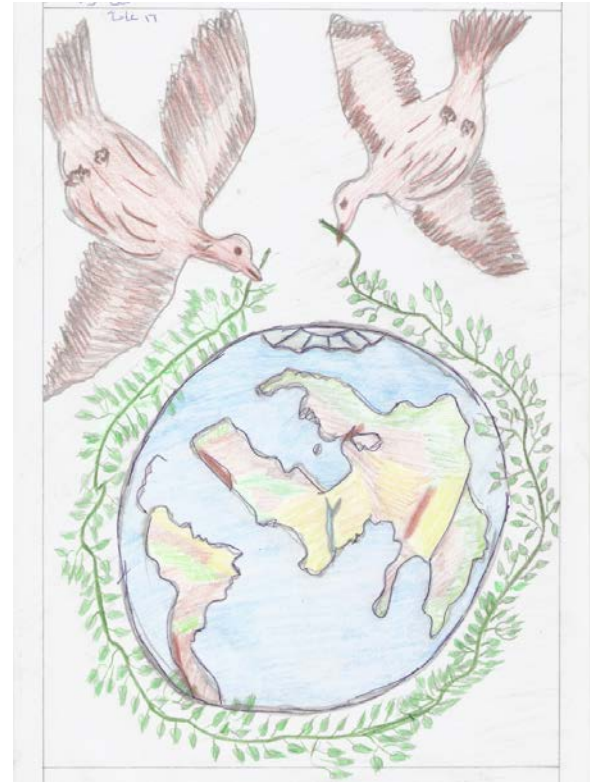


## HOPE!

Hope and Peace frequently recurred in the children writings and illustrations, Mahmoud Darwish in his poem **Under Siege** joins them:

.....

*Here on the slopes of hills, facing the  
dusk and the cannon of time  
Close to the gardens of broken shadows,  
We do what prisoners do,  
And what the jobless do:  
We cultivate Hope!*



It is heart-warming to see how proud and appreciative the children and the local community of their library and its activities.

It was the most incredible thing to hear when one of the youth suggested to call al-Shawka village, where one of the libraries is located, and the most marginalized area 'The Village of Happiness!! Members of the library responded joyfully and adopted the name!

In conclusion, bringing **Children and Books Together** in this horrific situation gives a Beacon of Hope to our children!

Moreover, It helps to give them a Future!!

