In May 2002 McGill University and its Middle East Program were honoured by a second visit from Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, official guest of the Government of Quebec in her capacity as International Spokesperson for the MMEP.

Two years after her first visit, Her Majesty returned to deliver a message of hope during these violent times and to support Program fund-raising efforts.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

We publish this newsletter at a crucial time—a time in which there has been no abatement to the violence in the Middle East and the lives of innocent people continue to be lost on both sides of the conflict. Notwithstanding, our centers continue to respond to the ongoing and emergency needs of the disadvantaged in their communities and we take pride in their courageous, steadfast commitment to civil society and peace. Our network of academic and NGO partners remains determined and works together at all levels to advance the cause of peace, tolerance and understanding.

Together we have made considerable progress in our work on the ground and in gaining recognition for the vital role we play in advancing peace and keeping hope alive. Thanks to our collective efforts—our supporters, McGill and our partners—we are close to meeting our objective of raising the necessary $3,000,000 to match CIDA funding. As the books close on this phase of our program, we commence discussions with the Government of Canada on an all important second phase.

I am certain that you will find inspiration in this newsletter—inspiration based on our shared values which propel us to continue to act positively in the face of adversity.

I wish you all the very best in this Ramadan, Hanukah and Christmas season. May our faiths inspire us to continue to promote peace and social justice for all.

Professor Jim Torczyner

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As guest of the Quebec Minister for International Relations, Her Majesty enjoyed a whirlwind tour of Quebec which included a dinner in her honour hosted by the Madam Louise Beaudoin, Minister for International Relations, a luncheon for Parliamentarians hosted by Madam Louise Harel, President of the National Assembly, and a private meeting with Quebec Premier Bernard Landry. In Montreal, Her Majesty accompanied former Quebec Minister of Health David Levine on a visit to the CLSC Cote-des-Neiges. Her Majesty’s visit attracted extensive media coverage. In her CBC TV interview with Brian Stewart, Queen Noor said “This Program is... developing the skills and the knowledge and awareness within civil society [for] those who have suffered the most, who are the most impoverished, the most despairing, the least hopeful and therefore the most likely to be radicalized... to have some hope in the future. And, it is developing a network among Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians that is mutually supportive during times of crisis and can be essential to the peace building process afterwards.”

Mrs. Kappy Flanders of the McGill Board of Governors hosted a luncheon where H.M. Queen Noor expressed appreciation to major contributors to the Spring 2002 Campaign. “It is encouraging that in spite of the violence and unrest that plagues the Middle East today, there are individuals such as yourselves, with the courage and foresight to contribute to a vision of peace. You have recognized that this McGill program offers tangible, meaningful support to the poor and disadvantaged of the region (and)...the importance of the peace building relationships among Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians that it fosters.”

H.M. Queen Noor of Jordan

Her Majesty chaired a session of the Regional Conference, and heard from the Directors of the Practice Centers and the Fellows about the work they are doing in their communities in the Middle East during these challenging times. Her Majesty and McGill Principal Bernard Shapiro are pictured with Fellows, Center Directors, Senior Partner Representatives, CIDA Project Officer and MMEP staff.

The four Fellows who had been the most involved in studying the CLSC model accompanied Queen Noor and Mr. David Levine, former Quebec Minister of Health, on a visit to the Cote-des-Neiges CLSC. The Fellows, Abi Abu Dayyeh, Morad El-Sana, Ra’d Hadid and Bilal Salameh presented their experience and impressions of the applicability of the CLSC model to their situations in the Middle East. Pictured at the CLSC visit, from left to right: Prof. Jim Torczyner, Project Director, MMEP Fellow Morad El-Sana, H.M. Queen Noor, former Health Minister Mr. David Levine.
The Government of Quebec is proud to support the McGill Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building. Grounded on unifying and humanist values, this Program helps to promote peace in the Middle East and strengthen dialogue in this region of the world.

I am delighted that we have this opportunity to collaborate and wish to commend the sustained efforts of all those involved in this Program, who are contributing to a better future in an original and meaningful way.

Louise Beaudoin
Minister of State for International Relations
Minister responsible for La Francophonie
Minister responsible for the Observatoire de la mondialisation
The continued violence in the Middle East has made it impossible for Program partners to meet in the region. The on-going deterioration, however, has made such meetings ever more necessary, both to nurture the professional and personal relationships among the Program partners and participants, and to provide practice training in view of growing needs. In May 2002, the Directors of the Jordanian, Palestinian and Israeli Practice Centers and the second cohort of Fellows came together for a regional conference in Montreal.

After an informal get-together, the conference opened with updates from the field. Time was provided to discuss the personal impact of the special challenges of the time as well as ways to continue working together and relating to each other across the divides.

The program was organized around leadership and community economic development issues, an agenda developed by the participants prior to their arrival. The first session, held at the Co-operative de consultation en développement La Clé in Victoriaville, was designed to help the Practice Centers deal with the economic crises facing their increasingly impoverished communities. Bill Ninacs, Associate Director of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network, shared his vast experience as well as useful resource materials. Another session was a lively workshop on leadership skills with Montreal area consultant Sharon Leslie. During their week in Montreal, Fellows were able to meet with their research advisors and program management held working sessions with the teams of each center.

We wish to thank MMEP friends who generously opened their homes to conference participants. With the ongoing need to hold the regional meetings away from the region, home hospitality has emerged as a friendlier and more affordable alternative to hotels.
As a native of the Middle East and knowing the level of distrust between Arabs and Israelis, I am convinced that the road to a sustainable peace can only start with programs like this one. It is unprecedented that a group of Israelis and Arabs study harmoniously together for a whole year in order to apply what they learned in social work back in their hometowns... The centers in Israel, Palestine and Jordan provide hope to thousands of people living in despair, without government social programs and little community assistance. I strongly support this program and am a member of its Executive as I believe it can be a model to achieve permanent peace in the region.

Nabil Fawaz, President
Spectrum Business Consulting LTD.

The Jordan Red Crescent is anxiously awaiting news—hopefully positive—from the European Union Partnership for Peace Program. Funding from this program would support the Centers, established under the auspices of the McGill Middle East Program, in their continuing efforts towards improving the living conditions of the poor in the region while supporting their collective efforts to develop a regional empowerment practice. The project’s title “Building a Foundation for Peace: Empowering People in Israel, Jordan and Palestine” captures the essence of what has been initiated through the McGill Project.

Mohammed Al Hadid, President
Jordan Red Crescent Society
**PROMOTING INNOVATION AND SOLIDARITY IN DIFFICULT TIMES**

**UPDATES FROM THE CENTERS**

**Al-Quds Community Action Center**

Located in the heart of the crowded Moslem Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem, the Al-Quds Community Action Center works within the Israeli system of social entitlements and cooperates with local and international NGOs working in East Jerusalem. Although the emergency situation in the West Bank has made it dangerous, difficult and at times impossible for staff living in Ramallah and Bethlehem to reach the Center, it continues to serve the community. Thanks to a grant from the European Union, it is developing its advocacy capacity and introducing a legal component. Community Advocacy, which has many years of experience with the Israeli system, is providing support to the Al-Quds Center as it develops these new programs.

The Al-Quds Center has responded to the current crisis by developing an emergency volunteer program that serves large areas in the West Bank including Jenin in the north, Ramallah in the center and Bethlehem in the south. Through this program, trained volunteers offer public health activities, help to repair damages caused by the Israeli military and provide counseling in schools.

At the end of June, Arab and Jewish social workers from East and West Jerusalem, members of the Israeli "Social Workers for Peace and Social Welfare" met in Stuttgart, Germany to build a joint project aimed at promoting peace and welfare in Jerusalem. ACAC staff Abdullah Hamdan represented the Al-Quds Community Action Center and presented its work to the group.
The Amman Community Development Center continues to pool resources and create innovative programs which impact positively on the lives of the residents of the low-income community of East Seweileh. As well as its storefront advocacy services, the Center offers programs to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable populations including women, children, and the elderly.

A third Literacy Program has been introduced to provide women with better tools for advancing themselves as full participants of society. The Child Visitation Program enables the court-mandated monthly or by-monthly meetings between divorced fathers and their children to take place in the friendly environment of the Center, instead of having to go the intimidating and impersonal Police Station as was done previously. The Elderly Program was designed to meet the social and medical needs of older citizens in the community. This weekly program includes discussions on social and health problems, speakers on topics of interest, blood pressure tests, and outings. Volunteers provide food and transportation for this popular and well attended program.

The Golden Age Club is an innovative offshoot of the Amman Community Development Center. This new voluntary organization for seniors was founded by two Fellows and a former Center staff member who donated the first floor of her house for this purpose. This new organization intends to raise awareness in Jordan on issues of concern to the elderly and to advocate for their rights. The senior club for women, launched in July 2002, is run by the members themselves, and serves as a tool for the empowerment of older women. In Jordan, it is assumed that elders are taken care of by their families. As a result, the Ministry of Social Development offers no services for them. The Golden Age Club has succeeded in enlisting financial support from the Minister of Social Development for the participation of 20 poor women and has already been hailed as a model and source of inspiration for others.
An-Najah Community Service Center

The An-Najah Community Service Center has been working under particularly challenging circumstances. With the reoccupation of the city by the Israeli army, Nablus has been under curfew for over 150 days this year, and the uncertainty continues. Since April 2002, the CSC has concentrated its efforts to assist the population deal with the effects of the curfew, the closures and the damage caused by the military.

CSC has continued to pool local community and international resources through its innovative programs. In cooperation with a Palestinian NGO and the Italian NGO Movimondo, the Center initiated a project for community empowerment of marginalized villages. Project staff is hired on 6-month contracts to work in a village, building and training a team of local volunteers who work with children, women and seniors, and help them overcome the difficulties of the situation. Staff meets with the villagers and organize recreational activities including summer camps for the children. The project was renewed and since October, it is focusing on Nablus neighbourhoods because the closure is making it difficult to send staff out to the villages.

The center created a special volunteer team to support the injured in hospitals, especially those from out of town whose families are unable to visit because of the closure. In cooperation with UNRWA, it developed a program to help disabled and wounded children, both in the hospitals and after they are discharged. Center volunteers recently organized a day of recreational activities for 150 such children and their peers with musical activities, face painting and small gifts.

One of the consequences of the curfew is the closure of schools, which deprives children of their right to education. After acts of civil disobedience defying the curfew led to a partial easing of the limitations imposed on the population, many neighbourhoods initiated alternative schools in public buildings. The Center opened an Emergency Education Program that benefits 300 children in cooperation with a community voluntary committee. Volunteers teach and organize the activities. When schools reopen, the initiative turns into after-school support classes, which sees 12 volunteers tutoring 125 children.

In spite of the crisis situation, the center continues to offer its regular services. Seven more houses were renovated through the Housing Improvement Program that continues to help elders and families facing special hardships. With the help of two engineers paid by the Palestinian Engineers Union, four more houses are under renovation. In the program for thalassemia patients, volunteers continue to offer support, visits, blood drives, and “Farah” (joy) recreational activities for the children. The storefront has been dealing with more cases than usual, as many as 10 a day. People reach the storefront even at the risk of breaking the curfew. When the curfew is lifted, large numbers of people arrive for help. Other projects include regular visits to elders living in the Old City of Nablus to offer psycho-social support and advocacy.
The work of the two Community Advocacy storefronts continues to be colored by the economic conditions in Israel particularly the 2002 budget cuts, which include severe cutbacks in the National Insurance system. Home nursing care will be reduced from 10.5 to 5 hours a week for 35,000 elderly. Welfare payments for a family of four will be reduced from about 3,600 NIS to 2,500 NIS. In Beersheva, a group called “Arrow” was formed to fight for social justice. It has organized regular demonstrations and assumes a leadership role in a coalition in Southern Israel developed to protest the budget cuts.

The Jerusalem Center is supporting the activities of a group called “Revolutionary Social Fighters” made up of Community Advocacy members and activists. This group keeps the fight against rising poverty on the public agenda. They have set up a tent at the Patt intersection next to the storefront, are giving out food and are organizing a concert to bring attention to the issues of poverty.

The Jerusalem storefront of Community Advocacy has won two important local issues. The Katamon Valley is the last remaining green space where local residents can enjoy nature and watch wildlife. After extensive efforts by Community Advocacy to have local views heard, the Regional Planning Committee rejected an appeal by the municipality and the entrepreneurs and upheld the decision to prevent construction in the valley. On another front, when a major bank announced the impending closure of the local branch, Community Advocacy helped citizens organize a letter campaign, demonstrations and extensive media coverage. As a result, an agreement was reached with the bank to keep the branch open 3 days a week.

The issue of public housing remains high on the agenda of the Israeli Centers. The Beersheva storefront supported a group of 250 residents who received eviction notices, helping to find alternative housing for some and canceling the evictions for most. Community Advocacy participated in a meeting at the Knesset with a documentary that showed that repairs are not being made in public housing apartments despite the law that guarantees maintenance and funding. The following day, the Director General of the Public Housing Corporation visited the neighbourhood featured in the story and promised that repairs would begin immediately. She also promised regular follow-up meetings.

The two-year old Jerusalem Food Coop continues to grow—it now has 180 Arab and Jewish member families and is attracting interest as a model in Israel. In Beersheva, efforts are already underway to organize a coop there. The Food Coop highlighted the need for economic empowerment, especially for women. Thirty-two women who expressed interest in starting a business participated in a course on Economic Empowerment for Women. Sessions included personal empowerment, women’s rights and financial affairs, developing a business plan, mentorship and business development and micro-loans. One woman who piloted her business selling silk flower arrangements for the Jewish holidays earned several thousand shekels!
At the October 23, 2002 Fall Convocation, nine Fellows were awarded their M.S.W. degrees: Ms. Abir Abu-Dayyeh, Mr. Talal Al-Qdah, Mr. Morad El-Sana, Mr. Ra‘d Hadid, Mr. Fawwaz Momani, Ms. Najwa Safadi, Ms. Miriam Sager, Mr. Bilal H. Salameh, Ms. Sarit Zik.

Special congratulations to Najwa Safadi, winner of the Lotte Marcus Sheldon Prize, awarded annually for innovative research project. Her advisor, Prof. Robin Wright, explained:

“Najwa is a bright, hard-working student living through extremely arduous circumstances with limited freedom and access to resources such as the library. It is to her credit that she completed an excellent Independent Research Project (and on time), entitled, Toward a Healthy Future in Palestine. The optimism reflected in the title of her IRP reflects Najwa’s sunny personality and attitude and we miss her very much.”

Four Fellows have completed all requirements and will be awarded their degrees in the Spring Convocation: Dr. Salah Al-Louzi, Dr. Hmoud Al Olimat, Ms. Yvonne Deutsch, and Dr. Mohammed Maani.

After completing their year of field practice in the centers, many Fellows are now assuming staff positions: Najwa Safadi and Abir Abu-Dayyeh in the Al-Quds Community Action Center; Talal Al-Qdah, Ra‘d Hadid and Fawwaz Momani in the Amman Community Development Center; Bilal Salameh as Assistant Director at the An-Najah Community Service Center; Sarit Zik as community organizer at Community Advocacy in Beersheva where Morad El-Sana continues part time as staff lawyer.

**CONDOLENCES**

Our partners have lost dear ones in the conflict that continues to plague the region. An-Najah CSC staff Maha Yaish lost her brother who was mistakenly shot by Israeli bullets. Bilal Salameh and his wife Banan lost an aunt who died because she could not reach critically needed medical treatment because of the occupation. Community Advocacy Jerusalem lost the volunteer architect who worked on the campaign against construction in the Katamon Valley. Yoav Goldstein was killed in a terrorist attack at a train station in Nahariya.

We extend our deepest sympathies and continue to work to end such senseless death and suffering.

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MMEP expresses appreciation to the following donors for their generous support to this Program.


The Henry & Berenice Kaufmann Foundation has been pleased to support the McGill Middle East Program over the last few years. This initiative provides hope and a glimmer of many small points of light at the end of a regrettably dark and gloomy tunnel.

Janis Levine, Executive Vice President
The Henry & Berenice Kaufmann Foundation

Our strong support for the McGill Middle East Program is inspired from our vision of supporting the cohabitation and understanding between the people in the Middle East. The MMEP constitutes a solid opportunity for all Canadians wishing to participate in the building of durable and sustainable peace in the region and we wish continued success to this program.

Michael C. Novak, President
SNC-Lavalin International
We hope readers of this Newsletter will respond to our year-end campaign. Remember, not only are donations eligible for charitable tax receipts, your donation is matched by CIDA and the funds are effectively used to improve living conditions in a region where many suffer despair and extreme hardship.

New MMEP Web Site!
Please check out our revised web site, which has a new address

www.mmep.mcgill.ca

Bookmark it for yourself and forward the address to your family, business associates and friends

For further information on our program, please do not hesitate to contact us

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