



MEND UK

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Establishing a Non-violence Office in Gaza

From October 2005 in conjunction with the UNDP, this project will establish a centre from which training courses and ideas can be implemented.

What we're up to...

The Participatory Video (PV) Project – in conjunction with the Ford Foundation.

Started in August 2004 groups of teenagers across eight cities in Palestine will be trained to use video cameras to film activities and events which will enable them to express their ideas, aspirations and hopes towards the future and contribute to their communities through filming about occupation, rights, archaeological and historical places.

The Active Nationwide Non-violence Network – funded by the European Union and supported by the British Consulate General and Development Cooperation Ireland.

Over the course of the two year programme, eight non-violence centres have been established all over the West Bank. These centres provide training in non-violence, human rights and conflict resolution as well as a venue for people to participate in active non-violence. It is hoped that we will be able to establish many more of these centres across the Palestinian territories as well as regionally.

MEND UK at Parliament

MEND UK launched at Parliament on July 4th with the former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, voicing her support to MEND and praised Lucy for her work in Palestine. Mrs Robinson said "Those who share MEND's values of non-violence, personal responsibility and civic pride are pioneers in the search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East." Mrs Robinson also talked about the problems of terrorism and the dangers of the media making "terrorism" synonymous with the Palestinians.

Figures from the world of politics and the media came to listen, including Rt. Hon Stephen Timms MP, Marsha Singh MP, the Honourable Haifa Al-Kaylani Chair of the Arab Women's league and The Revd Anthony Ball.

Lucy Nusseibeh, director and founder of MEND, spoke movingly about the damaging effects that the conflict is having on the children in Palestine through the absence of hope and aspirations. Despite the conflict though, Lucy described the warmth she had experienced from Palestinians. She told one story of her car breaking down in the Palestinian territories in the midst of a torrential downpour. Villagers appeared from nowhere and began to help. One person asked where she was from and another replied, "It's obvious she is from the settlement over there." They had helped her anyway.

Mrs Nusseibeh also highlighted the accomplishments we have made in Palestine through the continued establishment of non-violence centres and projects like participatory video training, a teen radio soap opera, as well as human rights and conflict resolution education. All of these projects aim to reinvigorate young people and enable them to see available alternatives. Lucy concluded: "Mend has been so successful that members of Fatah have approached us to learn about non-violence, and the politicians now talk about non-violence as a viable future."

Ziyaad Lunat, a Portuguese LSE masters student who recently returned from Palestine, spoke about his involvement in MEND's community projects and how valuable the experience was both to him and to the young children he bonded with.

We would like to give special thanks to our hosts Evan Harris MP, Mark Field MP and Kerry McCarthy MP, and everyone else that came to listen to what Mend has accomplished and hopes to achieve.

Glimpse of Hope

How Mend changes communities

Ahmed was a 13 year old boy living in Tul karem. Like many other Palestinian children Ahmed belongs to a large and deeply religious family. He felt unheard at home and isolated at school. His dad worked all day to feed the family and his mum focused on the younger children. Life for Ahmad was mainly attending school and the mosque and he saw little meaning in anything outside of this.

On the first day of a Mend Participatory Video training workshop, Ahmed was withdrawn and uncomfortable. He found it hard to integrate with the rest of the group and did not understand why he was there, and what value learning new skills might have. He did not want to be there.

As the training sessions went on, Ahmed went from being skeptical to enjoying the course. He started interacting with everyone else in the group and embraced the new skills he was learning. The joy and sense of confidence he discovered through MEND's help has made Ahmed feel like a productive member of his community. Among many other activities, he now volunteers for MEND. MEND has helped many children and teens like Ahmed.



Volunteering for MEND in Palestine

Julie Norman

As a summer intern with MEND, I have had the opportunity to visit many of MEND's projects, assisting with video trainings with youth in Izariyeh, participating in human rights discussions with teens in Hebron, observing drama workshops with children in Nablus, and more. MEND engages youth in conversations about nonviolence, human rights, and conflict resolution in innovative ways that emphasize empowerment and expression, especially through the use of participatory media.

With this creative spirit in mind, I spent the majority of my time this summer reaching out to community centers in the Jerusalem and Bethlehem areas, coordinating photography workshops with different youth groups. The youth receive basic training with point-and-shoot film cameras, and then take pictures in their communities on topics that they choose, such as human rights or daily life. We then use the youths' photos to discuss these topics on the personal and societal levels. We are planning exhibits of the photos in the centers at the completion of the project, as well as the development of a website. The idea is to use arts as a form of expression and empowerment on the one hand, and secondly to use the photographs as a means of advocacy and nonviolent activism.

So far the project is off to a good start, with the youth having completed their initial trainings and beginning to take pictures on their own at home. Some of the youth have never used a camera before, while others with more experience have said that this is the first time they have used photography to document their own lives and communities. Indeed, we are all learning from the project, me perhaps most of all, as the youths' photos allow them to share their stories with others in a unique way. While working hard and learning a lot, we are all having fun with the project, and I look forward to continuing working and learning with them in the upcoming weeks.

Dear Friends...

Lucy Nusseibeh, Director of Mend

By the summer of 2006, MEND now has eight active non-violence groups, including one in Gaza and all of them with committed groups of youth, Menders, trained in media as well as non-violence. MEND has become a fully national organization and has also begun on the way to becoming regional and has already started to distribute advocacy materials via this regional Arab network.

The summary for the year of MEND from July 2005 to 2006 shows in particular the development and consolidation of the Menders. Starting in July 2005 with a trip to Berlin where a group of ten Palestinian Menders met with nine Germans working in peer mediation at the Kaufstrasse School – (they also visited the Berlin Wall and compared it with the Separation Wall) and completing this July with a summer camp in Beit Jala (Talitha Kumi) for nearly 70 young Menders from all over the West Bank – the title of their project seems borne out – “Leading the way together”. In addition to their many activities, plays, radio broadcasts etc, their work has been consolidated in a peer to peer training manual, and in the films each group has produced via the method of participatory video.

The youth have also participated in a groundbreaking project exploring the possibilities for a curriculum towards a culture of tolerance and coexistence.

The centres have set an example via the commitment of the adults despite the changed political climate and the lack of continuing funding – as they continue to organise trainings and in the case of Gaza, open debates around the topic of non-violence.

Mend's slogan of “Smarter Without Violence” is becoming increasingly widely known through the T-shirts and the bumper stickers and the poster of 198 methods of non-violence (Gene Sharp), also through the help of the local authorities.

Gillian Mosely, Trustee of Mend UK

Today Mend celebrates its first birthday in the UK. Set up as an organisation intended to support Mend Palestine's projects focusing on children and youths, we have taken our first baby steps. Our official launch in November 2005 was held at the LSE with a panel on children and women in Palestine.

Hind Khoury, then parliament minister for Jerusalem lead a panel which included anthropologist and Mend UK trustee Jonathan Benthall, Lucy Nusseibeh founder of Mend and Dana Abdul Fatah, who spoke movingly about her participation in a variety of Mend projects. In addition to giving Mend a face in the UK, we were able to send money to maintain the Menders newsletter for six months.

Information evenings followed in March '06 at my home in St James, London, in May at Oxford University, in June at the home of Martine and Peter Halban, who generously gave us a wonderful evening, and, an event hosted by Jews for Justice for Palestine. In addition in April, indie bands 'The Deptford Beach Babes' and 'Naked Ruby' played a packed benefit gig for us. This was all crowned by the parliamentary event in July. As a result these evenings we were also able to sponsor a youth/conflict resolution training session conducted by Gerald Coyningham in Tul Karem.

So what now?

We are planning a series of dedicated fundraising events from an acoustic gig, to a classical concert, 'debate fundraising dinners', and a charity party among others.

With these, we hope to make a far more substantial contribution to the work of Mend in Palestine, with children and teens, aimed at making a peaceful future real. In today's environment, the work of Mend is needed more than ever!

Mend UK would like to thank Lucy Nusseibeh and everyone in the Jerusalem office, as well as Professor Mary Kaldor and her department at the LSE, and all of our volunteers for all of their help in making Mend UK an active reality.