



Land for Lajee

The U.N. Convention for Rights of the Child states that: Children have the right 'to engage in play and recreational activities' (Article 31)

AIDA REFUGEE CAMP was established on 66 dunums of land (1 dunum = 1,000 square metres) near Bethlehem in Palestine in 1950 following the 'Nakba' ('catastrophe') of 1948. The refugees, promised the right of return to their original homes by UN Resolution 194, lived first in tents, then in small single-room houses set up by UNRWA, and now, around 60 years later, in houses which they have built for themselves. The population of Aida Camp is currently around 5,000, more than half of whom are children. Some of the many problems faced by the residents today are regular invasions by the Israeli army, severe water shortages, lack of medical facilities, overcrowding, and no open spaces in which the children can play. While the population has increased, the amount of available land has decreased. This is due to the construction of the Israeli Apartheid Wall, which now confines the Camp on two sides and has cut off access to open fields where, before the Wall, the children used to play.

LAJEE CENTER is an independent, Palestinian, non-governmental organization, registered with Palestinian National Authority's Ministry of NGO Affairs. Lajee does not accept donations from political parties or money with religious stipulations, believing this not to be in the best interests of its members. The centre was founded in 2000 by a group of young people from the Camp seeking to create greater opportunities for children than they themselves had whilst growing up in the Camp. The name they chose, 'Lajee', means 'refugee'. In the beginning they had nothing except their dedication and their determination to create a place where the children of the Camp could come together in safety, creating opportunities for social and cultural development, education, and recreation, and for developing and fostering collective and individual talents. Now, almost 10 years later, despite the enormous difficulties experienced under Occupation, Lajee can look back with pride on its achievements: its own building in the Camp; an IT suite; an Arts and Media Centre producing photography exhibitions, films, and online radio; a Dabke troupe (traditional Palestinian dance); regular classes in English; annual Summer Camps; and Human Rights projects such as 'Our Voice' Magazine. Moreover, exhibitions of the children's photographs have been shown in 8 countries around the world, while 4 books written, photographed, and illustrated by the children have also been published. Through its dedicated hard work Lajee has earned the respect and trust of organizations such as the European Commission, The Hoping Foundation, The Belgian Technical Cooperation, The Mennonite Central Committee, and the Pontifical Mission amongst others. For further information please visit - www.lajee.org

LAND FOR LAJEE PROJECT: This year Lajee has initiated a new project which aims to make a very positive difference to the life of Aida Camp's residents. The aim is to buy the area of open land directly behind Lajee Center for the use of all members of the community. This land, around 2 dunums in size (c.2000 square metres), is the only piece of open space accessible to the Camp. It is the only area where children could play in the open, where potentially a football field, a playground, a park, or a vegetable garden could be created. The land is valued at €200,000, a price that reflects the scarcity of available land in the area, and the type of land it is. The land carries 'Tabu' - land rights that allow the owners to build on and use the land however they see fit. We are therefore looking for your help to raise an initial €70,000 by the end of November 2009 as a down payment which will serve to secure the land, before work begins to raise the further funds to complete the purchase.



View of the land. Note the Israeli Apartheid Wall in the background.

Secure online donations can be made via Lajee's fiscal sponsors: http://nicanet.org/?page_id=341

Online donation instructions: Follow the above link, then below the list of Fiscal Sponsors click on the box marked 'Other' and type 'Lajee Center', then add the amount you wish to donate and click 'Continue'.

To contact the fundraising team for more information email us at: Lajeevolunteers@googlemail.com.

Or to email Lajee Center directly use: info@lajee.org
Or visit Lajee's website at www.lajee.org

"To dream together, to work together, to decide together, to build a future together..."

PLEASE SUPPORT LAJEE IN ITS WORK FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS