

CHAIRPERSON'S 2007 ANNUAL REPORT

It is my absolute pleasure to report on our Association's activities for 2007. It has been a year packed with activism, successes and progress in many fronts.

Political and Organisational Activities

In January 2007, Dr Bassam Dally (AFOPA's secretary) led an Australian delegation to Palestine/Israel. That study tour included three politicians, academics and supporters of our cause. The delegation had extensive meetings with the Palestinian President, members of parliament (both Palestinian and Israeli parliaments), human rights and non-governmental organisations. On their return, members of the delegation spoke to various groups about their experience during the trip and in particular the resilience of the Palestinians people under the Israeli occupation.

In March we had our AGM which was a tremendous success. A large number of members and friends attended the AGM and the talk which followed. The talk was chaired by myself with a panel constituting our own Secretary, Dr David Palmer from Flinders University and Dr Ahmad Shboul from the University of Sydney.

On the infamous 40th anniversary of the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, AFOPA in collaboration with other groups around Australia produced T- Shirts, post cards and other material to highlight the 40 years of the occupation of Palestinian land. In addition, we screened the Iron Wall documentary at the Mercury Cinema to. Furthermore, AFOPA organised a protest on the steps of Parliament house in Adelaide. That included a mock-up wall and photo exhibition from the January trip to Palestine.

In the months prior to October we commenced an intensive media campaign to publicise the Edward Said Memorial Lecture. The lecture was presented by Dr Ghada Karmi, a Palestinian academic based in the United Kingdom. Dr Karmi also visited Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. The media coverage was intensive and all her presentations were received with enthusiasm for their content, particularly the one State alternative peace initiative.

In the last quarter of 2007, we had the launch of our Summer (car) Lottery, and it was tougher than we had anticipated. I would like to thank all those who sold or purchased tickets, in our endeavour to raise much needed funds.

In October and November, we took our just cause to the federal election, namely the seat of Sturt. Christopher Pyne, the sitting member, has a history of being an insensitive and uncritical supporter of Israel. That campaign with its two public seminars at the Burnside Hall generated a lot of interest. Christopher Pyne had a swing of almost 7% against him. Whether we had an impact in that electorate is debatable, but I am certain that the campaign will have important consequences. No federal politician can blithely attend Zionist events in the future and declare their unqualified support. They will think twice, if not a third time.

In November, the annual fund raising dinner was held at the Hyatt Hotel. It was an outstanding success, and brought together a large number of people, including many politicians and business people. That occasion gave us the opportunity to highlight the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories under the Israeli occupation. In all aspects, be it financial or political, the function was a tremendous success, and the hard work of Dr

Samer Shahin, Houssam Abiad and the rest of the team to achieve the excellent result must be acknowledged. Deborah Ziernicki is one who warrants special mention for her work in both the Summer Lottery and the function.

Humanitarian and Medical Activities

All medical assistance to Palestine and Lebanon (Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and disadvantaged Lebanese) was conducted by or through Dr Francis Nathan and Merlin Nathan, with assistance of other doctors and organisations such as PCRFB, UNRWA and INMA. A list of these activities follows:

January 2007	Surgical trip to Nablus in Palestine, in which 70 cataract operations were conducted.
March 2007	Surgical trip to Nablus in Palestine, in which 85 cataract operations were conducted, with help from Dr Roberto Jule (Surgeon) from El Salvador.
May 2007	Surgical trip to Beirut, with total of 25 cataract operations and rehabilitation work conducted by Merlin Nathan in camps around Beirut. In addition, cancer medication was donated and delivered to the Children Cancer Centre in Beirut.
November 2007	Surgical trip to Beirut, operating on 120 patients with assistance from Dr Janak Shah from India and Dr Kathy Lenz from the US, in collaboration with INMA (refugee support group in Lebanon).
December 2007	Despatch of two medication consignments to UNRWA
Miscellaneous —	Donation of \$ 500.00 to Anglicord Donation of \$ 1000.00 to The Women Embroidery Project in Burj Al Barajneh Refugee Camp in Beirut, via PCRFB. \$1000.00 to PCRFB to fund screening costs Three despatches of medication to UNRWA in Lebanon

Special thanks is given to Hani Shahin and his family, for their unquestioning support in contributing towards the above mentioned medical assistance. 2007 was concluded with an increase in the number of supporters, and in particular, financial members. That support is absolutely essential for us to continue with our humanitarian and political work in this most worthy cause.

Finally, I must, as ever, acknowledge the support of my Executive. I regret that Claire O'Connor was obliged to resign during the course of the year as a result of work and family commitments. I acknowledge the tireless work of Ibrahim Farran, as Treasurer, and, especially, I acknowledge the work of Bassam Dally, without whom this Association would be but a shadow of what it has turned into, a vibrant, relevant, confronting participant in Australian current affairs.

Your Chairperson

Paul Heywood-Smith QC