

NYHEDSBREV - April 2012

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KÆRE LÆSERE, VELKOMMEN TIL ET NYT NUMMER AF VORES FÆLLES NYHEDSBREV FOR LEVANTEN.

Den komplekse situation i Syrien optager naturligvis sindene meget, ikke alene i Syrien, men også i Libanon og Jordan. Her ved starten af foråret 2012 kan det se ud, som om der kan blive tale om en langvarig krise, ja endda en meget langvarig krise. Frygten for, at den syriske krise skal vælte yderligere over på bl.a. Jordan og Libanon, er voksende. De negative økonomiske effekter blev allerede følt markant i 2011. Syriske flygtninge er nu kommet i større tal til de to lande. Danmark yder humanitær bistand både i Syrien og til flygtningene. Det kan man læse mere om i Nyhedsbrevet, hvor der også er en øjenvidneberetning fra Damaskus. Det Danske Institut i Damaskus har pga. situationen suspenderet alle aktiviteter i Syrien, men fortsætter sine kultur- og forskningsaktiviteter i Libanon og Jordan. Heldigvis er det hele ikke bare krise og bekymring i Levanten. Livet går videre på normal vis i Jordan og Libanon mht. kommercielle aktiviteter, kultur og NGO-aktiviteter mv.. I Beirut blev der sidst i februar gennemført en "urban art-festival" med mere end 2000 gæster. Læs også om et meget spændende projekt i Damaskus om en kombineret moske-kirke, der er planlagt, og som forhåbentlig får mulighed for at blive færdiggjort. I dette nummer har vi et sært tema om forsknings-

og undervisningssamarbejde, særligt når det gælder Libanon. I længere tid har ambassaden arbejdet på at skabe forbindelser mellem danske og libanesiske institutioner. Det giver umiddelbare gevinster for de studerende og forskere, der deltager i samarbejdet. Og det bidrager på et bredere plan til at udbygge relationerne mellem landene. Det vurderes også, at der på sigt kan komme yderligere kommercielt samarbejde ud af det. Libanon er kendt for at have mange universiteter, herunder en håndfuld på internationalt niveau. Ind til videre er der kontakter på følgende områder, kommunikation/journalistik, palæontologisk samarbejde om de fine fossiler i Libanons bjerge, political science om "den arabiske vækkelse", tandlægeområdet, arkitektur og design samt forskning inden for demens-Alzheimer-området. Også inden for folkeskole- og gymnasieområdet er der blevet indledt samarbejde. Det er kun fantasien og ressourcerne, der sætter grænser for at udvikle disse samarbejder mere de kommende år.

Go' læselyst

Jan Top Christensen
Ambassadør i Libanon

GLOBAL SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN LEBANON AND DENMARK

Global School Partnerships between Lebanon and Denmark were established in the autumn 2011, when groups of Danish teachers visited schools in Lebanon at secondary education level. Teachers from four schools in Denmark were matched with teachers from four schools in Lebanon.

Global Schools Partnerships is an independent NGO and collaborates with the Lebanese Moawad Foundation in order to establish contacts between the partner

schools.

The purpose is to strengthen the global dimension in teaching in the countries involved. The partnerships build on teacher exchanges where teachers meet to collaborate on planning activities and projects involving students at both partner schools. The objective is to make the students:

- Learn about social and cultural differences and similarities between themselves and

young people in other regions of the world through dialogue

- See themselves as global citizens
- Able to handle cultural differences
- Use innovative approaches to global challenges

As representatives of one of the projects we will describe the partnership established between College Des Soeurs Des Saint-Coeurs in Keswane and Herning Gymnasium.

HERNING - KFARHBAB EXCHANGE

Søren Brøndum, principal, Peter Lundby Jensen, social science teacher, and Pia Oxenvad, English teacher, visited the Saint-Coeurs school in November where we were introduced to our Lebanese colleagues, Hoda Houssami and Pascal Mesthi, and we began exchanging ideas for the project.

In December and January the students in both countries started work on their first assignment which had the purpose of getting acquainted with each other and the daily lives of young people as well as the educational system in the two countries. They wrote articles, which were uploaded on Wiki Space, a blogging space on the internet. This will be our means of communicating with each other as a physical student exchange is not part of the project.

In February 2012 Pascal Mesthi from the Lebanese school visited Herning Gymnasium and the second school project for students was planned, which will take place in March and April.

The partnership is going to continue in the next school year with teacher exchanges in which teachers will take an active part in teaching activities at the exchange school. Personal relationships between teachers are the best way to secure a stable partnership in years to come. New classes and new teachers will be involved so that many people will benefit from the Global School Partnership.



GLOBAL SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN LEBANON AND DENMARK

By Hoda Houssami

Global school partnerships between Lebanon and Denmark gave the opportunity to the Lebanese students to virtually travel to Denmark more specifically to Herning Gymnasium in order to explore the country's culture, tradition and educational system.

Students of both countries shared a typical day of their lives then moved on to describe their schools and educational systems, posting videos and pictures to make the approach more concrete. They also worked on a comparison in order to establish similarities and differences between the 2 countries.

The enriching program had a positive impact on the Lebanese students and concerned teachers.

As Grade 11th English language teacher, i can assure that this project broadened my students horizons, created cultural awareness among them and motivated each and every one to learn more about a new country and its inhabitants. It enhanced as well their oral and writing skills since all the work was done in English.



• Tour at Herning Gymnasium

As to me, a grade 11th responsible and French language teacher, this project gave me the chance to explore Denmark, which impressed me on different levels;

Environment: (The wind power, the wildlife preservation, the use of the bicycle by most of the inhabitants).

Patrimony: The stunning Den Gamle By, the traditional crafts and house reconstruction at Århus and the marvellous Nyhavn district in Copenhagen.

Art and culture: Breathtaking museums such as Århus Arts museum, Heart (where an amazing photos exhibition for Jacob Holdt took place, Ordrupgaard, the extraordinary National Museum, the Glyptotek with its amazing sculptures and The Kunst museum with its hilarious modern paintings (Braque, Leger, Matisse, Modigliani.....)

Herning Gymnasium is perfectly equipped with high technology and competent teachers. The teachers are solidary and convivial. They are opened to the world (projects with Turkey, The USA, France, Germany and Lebanon). The courses are given in a happy and polite atmosphere. The students enjoy a responsible freedom. To sum up the school is perfectly ran thanks to a creative administrative board and committed teachers.



LEBANESE FOSSILS REVISITED - A SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE LEBANESE UNIVERSITY AND THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, COPENHAGEN UNIVERSITY, DENMARK

By Dr. Dany Azar, Habilitation of Directing Researches Palaeoentomology, Forensic Entomology Palaeoenvironment, Biodiversity and Evolution at Lebanese University

Lebanon is a very rich country in fossils, and worldly known for its Cretaceous fossils, fish's outcrops and Lower Cretaceous amber deposits. Since October 2011, a scientific collaboration has started between the Lebanese University (LU) and the Natural History Museum of Denmark (NHMD), when Dr Gilles Cuny, Searcher and Curator of fossil fish collections at NHMD, visited Lebanon to examine fish fossils from the paleontological collections of the Lebanese University and the American University of Beirut, and the large and impressive collection of Abi Saad family. This visit was also the opportunity to start a master project in co-supervision with NHMD and LU, with the purpose to form a Lebanese student on studying fossil fish and describing a new species of fossil ray fish identified in the collection of the Abi Saad family.

Historical and geological settings of the fossil fish outcrops in Lebanon

The Upper Cretaceous lithographic limestones of Lebanon comprise fossil fish Konservat-Lagerstätten of different ages and faunal composition. The oldest written evidence of these sites dates back to the 3rd century AD, when Eusebius of Caesarea (circa 263 - 339 AD), the bishop

of Caesarea Palaestina, evokes these mysterious stones found in Lebanon and considered them as the witnesses of Noah's deluge. The most famous mention of fossil fish sites appears in the writings of Jean de Joinville (1224-1317 AD) - one of the great chroniclers of medieval France - who told how a fossil fish was presented to the king Louis IX of France (Saint Louis) (1214-1270) during one of his crusades to the Middle East.

Fossil fish from Lebanon are among the best preserved in the world. This excellent preservation allows the fossilization of complete cartilaginous fish (among others) from the Upper Cretaceous (between 95 and 85 million years ago), whereas usually these fish are mainly known from isolated teeth from the remaining fossil fish outcrops of the world. These fossils are thus scientifically extremely important

Perspectives and awaited results from the scientific collaboration

As the excavation of new fossils, mostly at Haqil, Hgula and En Nammoura is always ongoing, several hundreds of exquisitely preserved specimens are found and available for science. Therefore a complete large proposal of a long term scientific program between the NHMD and the LU was submitted for funding. This program if realized



• *The new species of fossil ray fish (in study).*

will lead to: a) the formation of a PhD candidate in order to get a local Lebanese specialist on fossil fish; b) the description of several new taxa for science of fossil fish in international journals; c) elaboration of new theories



• *Drs Gilles Cuny and Anders Hastrup from the Danish Institute in Damascus in work in Haqil outcrop.*

of phylogeny and evolution of the different studied groups, d) enrichment of the collections of both LU and NHMD; e) the participation to the knowledge of the paleobiodiversity of marine fish fauna of the Cretaceous.

DEMENTIA/ALZHEIMER BECOMING A MAJOR PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM IN LEBANON. SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION BETWEEN COPENHAGEN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, AUB AND KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON

On 16 February 2012, an interesting project was launched at AUB. The Lebanese population is undergoing unprecedented rapid demographic aging, in Lebanon. In recognition of the problem, researchers from Lebanon, Denmark, and the UK have joined forces in the first population-based epidemiological study about dementia in Lebanon to provide a reliable estimate of dementia occurrence and an assessment of the needs of people with dementia in the country. The pilot phase runs into 2013. It is expected that funds will become available for a subsequent nation-wide study.

The study is supported by a US-grant from the National Institute of Aging and the National Institute of Health.



ARAB LEFTISM EXPLORED IN BEIRUT - ARAB LEFT & ARAB SPRING

What does it mean to be a leftist today in the Arab world, at a moment when the Arab Uprisings are changing the political and ideological landscape of the Middle East? This is the question driving a new research project based at Copenhagen University and with research partners at Lebanese institutions. The project is led by Sune Haugbølle, who is Associate Professor in Middle Eastern Studies at Copenhagen University and the author of the book *War and Memory in Lebanon*. In September 2011, he organized one of the first conferences on the Arab Left, together with a research group at the German Orient Institute in Beirut working on Arab Communism. The conference set out to map the history and current position of "the Arab Left" throughout the region. By comparing studies of leftist parties, intellectuals, and even leftist media from a large number of Arab countries, the conference illustrated how remains to be understood about this rich and important part of Arab history.

Haugbølle's project puts its finger on this lacuna. Since the heady days of Arab nationalism under Egyptian president Nasser in the 1960s, most scholars of the Middle East have agreed that Arab leftism was a spent force. The majority of leftist parties suffered from oppression under the ruling regimes in the region, and its members were put in prison or exiled. The same could be said about Islamist groups. However, in contrast to leftists, Islamists have received enormous attention. But despite their political marginalisation, the research project argues, Arab leftists of various shades have in fact continued to be influential in culture, media and civil society. More importantly, ideas of social justice and anti-imperialism have influenced other ideological groups. One of the most interesting phenomena in the uprisings has been the revival of leftist groups, slogans and ideas. In order to assess this new Arab leftism, it is necessary to revive the historiography of the Arab Left. Leftists span a wide spectrum

from socialists to Communists and have even influenced Islamist groups. By combining social and intellectual history, the researchers look at the changes that have taken place in leftist thought and in leftist milieus in countries like Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Palestine.

The ambitious goal of the project is to revise our understanding of Arab leftism. Sune Haugbølle's aim is to build an international network of scholars with a strong emphasis on researchers based at Arab universities. In July 2012, he is co-organizing another conference at the American University of Beirut, this time on intellectual history of the Arab Left. The conference as well last year's event at the German Orient Institute is partly sponsored by the Danish Institute in Damascus. Lebanon is a natural choice as a focus for the project, having been a hotbed for Arab leftism in the 1970s and 1980s. Sune Haugbølle's hopes that as the project gathers pace, more Lebanese scholars will become involved.

GÆSTFRIHED I SHATILA

BERETNING FRA TO UNGE DANSKERE OM DERES VOLONTØROPHOLD I EN PALÆSTINENSISK FLYGTNINGELEJR I BEIRUT.

Casper Harslett Petersen og Mette Elmbæk Jacobsen, Volontører

”Bor I i Shatila?” taxichaufføren kigger på os og griner bedrøvelende. Vi nikker og svarer at Shatila faktisk ikke er så slem, som folk går og tror. Men han synes vi er skrøbelige, for hvad vil europæere der? Ved vi ikke, at der bor der er slemme folk, og at selv ikke politiet vil komme der? Men vi har oplevet noget helt andet. I vores tid som volontører

i flygtningelejren har vi oplevet den største gæstfrihed, og lært mange fantastiske mennesker at kende. Mennesker der kæmper for deres rettigheder, mennesker der kæmper for at få et bedre liv. Ja, det er et hårdt miljø, men i et hårdt miljø kan der sagtens gemme sig gode mennesker.

Fra midten af september indtil julen 2011 var vi udsendt med Global Contacts Volontør program til flygtningelejren Shatila. Vi arbejdede og boede hos Children and

Youth Center Shatila, en NGO placeret i lejren. Vi arbejdede hovedsageligt med at aktivere børn og unge gennem aktiviteter, projekter og lektiehjælp. Det var gennem vores daglige gang på centret og på gaden at vi lærte de palæstinensiske flygtninge at kende. At bo i Shatila har været en stor oplevelse, og en oplevelse vi ikke ville have været foruden. Det er oplevelsen af, at selvom miljøet er hårdt og kriserne er mange, så opvejer den arabiske gæstfrihed nu det hele.



• En fredags aktivitet var at lave sæbebobler, hvilket børnene synes var rigtig sjovt

EN REGNFULD DECEMBERDAG BLEV LYST OP

Af Bo Vestergaard Thiesen, Programme & Consular Officer Damaskus

Som led i den danske ambassade i Damaskus' humanitære indsats rettet mod irakiske flygtninge deltog ambassaden torsdag d. 8. december 2011 i en fejring af unge irakiske flygtninge, der har fået tildelt stipendiatat til at studere på en videregående uddannelse som følge af projektet "Higher Education Assistance to Iraqi Refugees in Syria", et UNHCR-projekt støttet af Danmark og Italien.

UNHCR's konferencelokale i Damaskus-bydelen Kafr Sousseh var denne regnfulde torsdag eftermiddag stuvende fuldt af 16 glade unge og forhåbningsfulde irakiske flygtninge, der hver især havde fået tildelt et stipendiat som følge af den danske og italienske støtte. De ønskede alle at fortælle, hvad stipendiet havde gjort for dem.

Efter indledende taler fra henholdsvis UNHCR og en studerende, inddeltes de studerende i to diskussionsgrupper. Her var der rig mulighed for at drøfte flygtninges erfaringer med stipendiatprogrammet

Der blev i grupperne i over en time i en uformel atmosfære udvekslet synspunkter og erfaringer mellem donorene og de irakiske flygtninge i forhold til, hvad stipendiet har betydet for den enkelte flygtning, og hvad man kunne forbedre i et eventuelt fremtidigt program.

Over en bred kam var de meget taknemmelige for den mulighed, de havde fået med stipendiaterne, da de følte, de havde fået en chance for at komme videre i deres liv. Flere sagde også, at de havde opnået større selvtillid og værdighed samt var deres sociale status i det irakiske lokalsamfund steget.

Hvilke udfordringer var der forbundet med stipendiet? Her nævnte flere, at det tog tid at vænne sig til det syriske uddannelsessystem, samt at flere anså et syrisk eksamensbevis som relativ ubrugeligt i Syrien, idet irakerne ikke har lov at arbejde her i landet.

Der var ingen, der nævnte tilbagevenden til Irak som en fremtidig mulighed. De fleste ønskede derimod at fortsætte studierne på udenlandske universiteter, gerne europæiske, amerikanske eller canadiske.

FAKTABOKS:

Danmark har støttet projektet med DKK 500.000, hvilket svarer til stipendiatat til 24 irakiske flygtninge fra september 2010 – juni 2011. Læs mere om projektet på ambassadens hjemmeside: <http://syrien.um.dk/da/danida/>



DRC RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS

Operational since 2008 in Syria and 2004 in Lebanon, DRC has been adjusting since the spring 2011 its programme to assist those affected by the conflict in Syria and Lebanon



In May 2011, DRC Lebanon initiated an emergency assistance project in the north of Lebanon in response to the influx of Syrian refugees across the border due to the unrest in Syria. Funded by UNHCR and implemented in close cooperation with the High Relief Commission (HRC) of the Lebanese government, DRC started the assistance through registration, distribution of food and non-food items, shelter rehabilitation, protection monitoring, Quick Impact Projects and special assistance to the most vulnerable Syrians. At the time of writing, an estimated 9,000 Syrians have registered as refugees with UNHCR and the HRC. Estimations also show that approximately 3,000 people are currently residing in Tripoli in northern Lebanon and that yet another 5,000 Syrians are located in the Bekaa valley, east of Lebanon. DRC has opened offices in the north and in the Bekaa valley area in order to run emergency activities.

The displaced families most commonly live with hosting families, who are stretching their resources to provide for the additional household members. One of the greatest protection concerns is the limited possibility of movement for those people who entered the country illegally and for those whose legal documents are expiring and cannot be renewed without returning to Syria. As

a result of the inability to move or reside legally in the country, the Syrian displaced population is restricted from obtaining appropriate accommodation, formal employment and hence the possibility to provide for their families. Many of the children are out of school which leads to even greater obstacles to maintain an acceptable standard of life in the long term. DRC's regular program in Lebanon has been addressing the needs of Iraqi and Palestinian refugees since 2004. In Lebanon, host country of approximately 280,000 Palestinians and 10,000 Iraqis in need of aid, assistance to these groups is provided through advocacy and awareness raising, life skills and vocational training, and capacity building of local NGOs and authorities, operating both in Beirut and Saida.

In Syria, the regular program consists of quality education and school rehabilitation, community services and psycho-social support, livelihoods development and vocational training, targeting a portion of the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees through the community centers in Homs, Dara'a, Qudsaya, Saida Zeinab, Jaramana and Masaken Berzeh suburbs of Damascus. Due to the unrest during the last year, DRC activities in Homs are on a stand-still as the community center there has been closed for the last few months. In Dara'a, activities are still ongoing, even though access to the area is sometimes limited.

As of 2012, DRC Syria has entered into an emergency preparedness phase, making sure that an emergency program of NFI distribution, shelter rehabilitation and



** A Syrian refugee receiving food and non-food items in a collective shelter in North Lebanon*

protection monitoring could rapidly be started up, should DRC be given the green light to intervene. The preparations include ensuring sufficient human resources can be deployed to perform the activities and that the staff is trained in the different modalities of the emergency intervention such as emergency distribution, data management and protection monitoring. Procurement is being planned, funds are being secured and offices are being equipped for a potential emergency aid program in the areas where DRC is already present – Damascus suburbs, Homs and Dara'a.

For further information about the projects and the work of DRC in Syria and Lebanon, please contact: Olivier BEUCHER, DRC Country Director for Syria and Lebanon at: olivier.beucher@drtsyria.dk, Alexandre ADAM, DRC Program Manager for Lebanon at alexandre.adam@driclebanon.dk or Alberta SANTINI, DRC Program Manager for Syria at alberta.santini@drtsyria.dk.

THE BUSIEST DAY OF THE WEEK...

By Karin Eriksen, Country Coordinator,
Danish Red Cross

Volunteers in Red Crescent uniforms sit in groups and talk quietly, eating their breakfast or play table tennis. Nearby tents stand side by side next to the row of ambulances. A couple of T-shirts and uniforms are drying on a clothes rack. The VHF radio is crackling in the background with indistinguishable messages from other local Red Crescent branches across Syria and the maps of the Damascus area with clearly marked mosques, hotspot areas for demonstrations, medical clinics and hospitals are ready on the computers.

It is Friday morning in the Operations Room of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Branch of Damascus in Zahira. Everyone is getting ready to deploy with First Aid or medical evacuations for the wounded, should the need arise during today's demonstrations. Friday, which used to be the day of rest for the many volunteers around the country, has throughout the last year been the busiest day of the week. The tents are for the First Aid volunteers in charge of the Operations Room. They have since April last year been on a 24-hour standby seven days a week ready to deploy and provide First Aid, if needed. And that has often been the case in most of the local Red Crescent branches, where First Aid and medical evacuations are no longer a weekly, but a daily occurrence. The picture from Damascus is not unique – if you step into the Red Crescent branches in Homs, Rural Damascus, Dara'a or most of the other branches across the country the sight meeting you would be similar.

A few volunteers are busy checking the equipment in the ambulances. They look slightly tired. During the past weeks they have been part of the teams, who delivered humanitarian assistance in Homs, Zabadani, Bloudan and Madamiya. Such operations are neither easy nor simple and require patience, diplomatic skills, and long negotiations. Being a volunteer is



exhausting, but nothing is more satisfying than when access has been gained and food parcels, blankets and other necessities distributed to the many families, who are affected by the current unrest in Syria.

Since the onset of the unrest in March 2011, Danish Red Cross has supported Syrian Arab Red Crescent's 14 local branches across the country to train volunteers in First Aid and provided them with the necessary equipment to reach the people in need – be it a wounded demonstrator or a soldier in need of First Aid, or one of the many families who have fled from their homes. The needs for such families are many and include mattresses and blankets to keep the children warm as well as food and hygiene parcels to get them through the next weeks, until they can take a decision on whether they can return home or not.

“But it is not always easy” admits Khaled, who leads the SARC Emergency Operations and who has been involved in many of the relief distributions to Homs, Zabadani and Dara'a. “It can be difficult for us to

reach the families who need our support. Sometimes we have access to an area but suddenly there is renewed fighting or other complex reasons why we cannot access part of it”.

This complexity has caused SARC and the International Committee of the Red Cross to call for a daily halt in fighting from all parties so as to allow for better access for the humanitarian aid to the civilian population in the affected areas. “As the fighting fluctuates, the ICRC and the SARC have to adapt their humanitarian response, in order to locate people who have fled and to help them as quickly and as effectively as possible,” said Béatrice Mégevand-Roggo, ICRC head of operations for the Middle East. Now late in March access has become easier allowing SARC and ICRC to deliver assistance to areas in Idleb, Homs, Hama, Dara'a and Aleppo. As Béatrice explains “People have to know that they will get the help they need and that casualties will be taken care of regardless of where the fighting is taking place... A daily pause of at least two hours in the fighting is essential in

THE BUSIEST DAY OF THE WEEK...

order to provide humanitarian assistance.”

The increasing complexity of the situation and the need for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to reach the affected families was also the main concern, when Anders Ladekarl, the Secretary General of the Danish Red Cross, recently argued for a clear separation of humanitarian assistance from the political initiatives aimed at ending the violence in Syria; “Aid must be politically neutral, so that we can gain access and help everyone affected by the crisis”, he said.

This is – like many previous Fridays – one of both victories and obstacles. Yet another day of many injuries treated and medical evacuations of patients. As the day comes to end, the volunteers clean up and step into a room where Iyas, a consultant, organizes psychosocial support for the First Aid teams. Every Friday in the Damascus Operation Room ends with a session with Iyas, where the First Aid teams sit together and talk about the experiences of the day. The group defusing sessions, as it is called, is a technique where a psychologist trained in defusing discuss the experiences of the day with the volunteers, their difficulties and successes. The sessions help the volunteers in coping with stressful experiences and dealing in a positive way with the personal stress they experience. The sessions also focus on the team building and maintaining good teamwork, when working under stressful conditions as the volunteers expose themselves to every time they go out.

The group defusing sessions is what keeps the volunteers able to continue providing the essential services week after week after week. Some Fridays the sessions are easy, some days they are very emotional. Most of the volunteers have been involved in the operation since March last year and the work and the experiences are exhausting for both body and mind. Iyas provide the same support to First Aid teams in Homs, Dara’a, Rural Damascus and other branches around the country, when visiting there.



These sessions have also been a part of the psychosocial support for staff and volunteers in all of the five counseling centres, which the Danish Red Cross has supported since 2008. The five counseling centers focus on providing psychosocial support for Iraqi refugees and vulnerable Syrians in Deir ezzur, Qamishli, Aleppo, Rural Damascus and Damascus. The centres offer support to adults, adolescents and children through psychosocial support groups dealing with stressful experiences, creative and skills building activities and refer vulnerable people in need of individual assistance. In addition the centres have become important community meeting points, where social networks are build.

Since the onset of the unrest in Syria the centers have experienced a large increase of Syrians seeking support, and Syrians now constitute half of the visitors to the centers. Many of these seek support to deal with grief from losing a loved one, stress, or simply to have a place to come where they can talk to others, who are experiencing similar feelings.

“It is a positive sign” says Karin Eriksen, Country Coordinator for the Danish Red Cross in Syria, “that the centres can provide important community support for both the Syrians and Iraqis. Due to the experience gathered from the community-based activities during the four years the centres have existed, they have managed to adapt and adjust their activities to the current situation and deal with the exacerbated needs they see among the visitors. The general impact of the situation on the both the Syrians and Iraqis coming to the centres is also worrying though, as we see a deterioration of their psychosocial well-being with an increasing number of cases of depression, anxiety and hardships faced by the families” she says.

The counseling centers also focus on enhancing the community awareness through information on how to deal with stressful experiences and become aware of how children’s psychological reactions to stressful situations can manifest. Courses in Community-Based Health and First Aid, where families learn how to store food

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and water safely during periods without electricity and how to treat household injuries, are also implemented by the centres to support the families.

“The focus of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent is to provide the essential assistance to the populations affected by the current situation of unrest in a neutral and impartial manner” says Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Attar, President of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. “The support from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Danish Embassy

to Syria, the Danish Red Cross along with other Red Cross and Red Crescent partners and donors is what enables us to do so. We are very grateful for the cooperation with the Danish Red Cross and the continued support from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs”.

And the support continues. In the suburb of Harasta four volunteers lift up a person from the ground on a stretcher and run to the evacuation point. But it is not medical evacuation of a wounded civilian,

as the four are part of a team of 27 new volunteers being trained in Advanced First Aid as the last step before they are ready to join their peers to provide First Aid to people in need. Luckily the ‘wounded patient’ smiles and laughingly gets up without injuries, when she reaches the end of her treatment. During the coffee break the volunteers gather, share jokes and happy chatter, but are also consciously well-aware of the hardship and challenges awaiting them, once the training is over.

FACT BOX: SUPPORT BY DANISH RED CROSS TO THE EMERGENCY OPERATION IN SYRIA SINCE MARCH 2011

- Training of 450 volunteers in First Aid with 350 waiting to be trained in the coming months
 - 800 First Aid kits and 300 uniforms for First Aid volunteers
 - 7.000 food parcels, 6.000 blankets, 3.000 mattresses along with 750 kitchen sets and 750 hygiene parcels for internally displaced families or living in the most affected areas
 - 2.500 First Aid kits for household use
 - Five ambulances and three trucks for distribution of relief items
 - Support to a Mobile Health Unit and establishment of three stationary Emergency Medical Points in the areas most affected to allow better access to medical treatment for the local population
 - Support for the continued running of the emergency operations and for the Operations Rooms in the local branches
- The emergency operation of Danish Red Cross is funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ECHO

INFORMATION BOX: THE DANISH RED CROSS IN SYRIA

The Danish Red Cross has cooperated with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent since 2005. Besides the support for the emergency operation the Danish Red Cross cooperates with SARC within the field of psychosocial support for Iraqi refugees and vulnerable Syrians, preventive health activities, and development of youth and volunteerism activities.

The Danish Red Cross operations in Syria are supported by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ECHO, World Diabetes Foundation, DEMENA, and the Italian Red Cross.

GRADUATION CEREMONY OF BORDER REGIMENT I IN ARAMAN

Since 2007, and despite all difficulties, Denmark together with EU, UK, Germany and US is supporting the Lebanese security agencies (LAF, ISF, Customs and General Security) in a border project assisting them setting up systems to manage the border to Syria. Denmark has taken on the responsibility of helping to develop the training capacity.

We have adopted the “Train the trainers” principle where the effect of the main

training will last for the coming generations of the border involved security agencies, through the establishment of a self-running training center. A training curriculum has been developed.

On March 23 fifty persons graduated in Araman Camp, North of Tripoli, after a course on “organized Cross Border crime”. The Danish Ambassador, Jan Top Christensen, was present at the ceremony and handed over the diplomas to the proud

graduates.



TIL KAFFE I KOMMUNEN

Af Karen Louise Andersen, Det Danske Programkontor - Amman

En måde, hvorpå man tilsyneladende kan måle forskellen på fremdrift og velstand i Jordanske byer er ved deres måde at servere den traditionelle kardemommekaffe, som er en gammel velkomstradition blandt beduiner. Dette kom til udtryk ved et besøg på rådhuset i de to jordanske provinsbyer Al-Karak og Irbid. Hvor man i Al-Karak får serveret kaffen i en enkelt lille porcelænskop, som så går på omgang mellem alle gæsterne, så har man i Irbid fået fremstillet mini engangs-plastikkrus, hvor gæsterne får et krus hver, og dermed ikke skal bekymre sig om overførsel af diverse baciller. Det kan selvfølgelig være af hensyn til miljøet at Al-Karak sparer på kopperne. Det er dog nok næppe tilfældet, idet et samarbejde mellem Høje-Taastrup kommune og Al-Karak kommune blandt andet omhandler forbedring af affaldshåndtering.

Anledningen til besøget i de to kommuner var et twinning-projekt mellem henholdsvis Høje-Taastrup/Al-Karak kommune og Viborg/Irbid kommune. Projektet er en del af det bilaterale program om decentralisering i Jordan administreret af Kommunernes Landsforening og finansieret af DAI-midler. Decentralisering har tidligere været et område, hvor der syntes at være reformvilje hos den jordanske stat, men udviklingen inden for de seneste år har dog vist, at dette kun var tilfældet i begrænset omfang på centralt statsligt niveau. På laveste administrative niveau, kommunerne, er der derimod sket fremskridt. Valgloven fra 2007 sikrede, at alle medlemmer af de kommunale bestyrelser, inklusiv borgmestre, er folkevalgte, og det kommunale niveau repræsenterer således det eneste fuldt ud



demokratisk valgte niveau i det jordanske politiske system. Fokus fra dansk side på decentraliseringsområdet er derfor rykket fra at støtte nationale statslige reformtiltag til at sikre, at eksisterende reformer konsolideres på lokalt niveau.

Formålet med kommune-til-kommune samarbejdet er at bidrage til udviklingen af modeller for god regeringsførelse på lokalplan samt styrket levering af serviceydelser i Jordan. Besøget fra de to danske kommuner var ét i rækken af flere tekniske besøg af kommunale specialister med det formål at blive enige om udvalgte områder, hvor man vil styrke den strategiske planlægning.

Man er i samarbejdet mellem Irbid og Viborg kommuner blevet enige om at fokusere på affaldsindsamling- og håndtering, fysisk planlægning og erhvervsudvikling. Irbid er Jordans næststørste by og har dermed

de ressourcer, det medfører, og der synes at være et godt udgangspunkt at arbejde ud fra. Al-Karak har ikke de samme fordele af universiteter, god placering ift eksport, handelskamre og lign. som Irbid. Til gengæld har byen én af regionens største korsfarerborge, og det var derfor oplagt at fokusere på byudvikling i den gamle by omkring borgen for dermed at øge turismen til byen. Desuden har man i samarbejdet mellem Høje-Taastrup og Al-Karak kommuner ligeledes valgt at fokusere på affaldsindsamling- og behandling samt øget borgerinddragelse.

Der har været en del politisk diskontinuitet, såsom hyppige borgmesterskift og udsættelse af kommunalvalget, som har haft indflydelse på de respektive samarbejder, men efter besøgene er der blevet skabt grobund for at lave konkrete planer for de valgte samarbejdsområder i kommunerne.

HVORFOR ER DER SÅ FÅ KVINDER LIBANESISK POLITIK?

I Libanon er status i dag, at der ingen kvinder er i regeringen og blot 3 kvindelige medlemmer af parlamentet.

Ambassaden i Beirut markerede International kvindekampdag med en anderledes frokost. I samarbejde med *The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW)* som står bag danske KVINFO finansierede "**Who is She? – in Lebanon**" havde ambassadøren sat 9 kvindelige bl.a. aktivister, professorer og journalister i stævne i sit hjem, for at diskutere hvad libanesiske kvinder selv kan gøre for at få mere politisk indflydelse og repræsentation i politik. Kvinderne er alle registreret i "**Who Is She**" databasen, som har til formål at promovere og informere om nutidige libanesiske kvinder, der alle har markeret sig stærkt indenfor deres felt.



The Who Is She in Lebanon is an online database with profiles of prominent contemporary Lebanese women. This project started in 2008 following a bilateral partnership between the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University (LAU) and KVINFO, the Danish Centre for Information on Women and Gender, a grant-maintained self-governing institution under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture in Denmark. The aim behind this project is to provide the public with easy access to biographical information on a large number of contemporary women in one of the following categories: opinion leaders, senior managers, politicians, professionals, artists, researchers, and experts within a wide range of subjects. A similar online database with a list of thousands of names of prominent Danish women has been available to the public since 1995.

For more information please visit the database on <http://whoisshe.lau.edu.lb/>

MORE POWER TO THE PEOPLE



High-level visit from Vestas – the world’s largest producer of wind-turbines with headquarters in Denmark.

Facilitated by the Danish Embassy in Beirut, a delegation visited Lebanon in the beginning of the year to spread the good news about the potential for wind-power. A wind-atlas has been made showing that Lebanon, with a conservative estimate, is able to produce 1500 Megawatts, the equivalent of EDL’s present production.

The delegation had a busy programme and visited inter alia, Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Minister of Energy, Gebran Bassil, Minister of Environment Nazem Khoury, president of CDR, Nabil El Jisr and chairman of parliament’s Energy Committee, Mohamed Qabbani.

There was a great interest in learning about the economic competitiveness of wind energy and the environmental benefits.

Vestas presented two very mature projects for the Akkar region. With approval from the government, Vestas would be able generate power from wind to the tune of 60 to 80 MW, a total of 140 MW, within 13 months.

The projects fit very well into the general plans of the Lebanese government which foresees that renewable energy by 2020 should constitute 12 per cent of the power production.

DANISH ARAB URBAN ARTS FESTIVAL TAGER BEIRUT MED STORM

Lørdag den 25. februar blev en støvet lagerhal i udkanten af Beirut lavet om til en rå, pulserende sanseorgie, da musikere, poeter, filminstruktører, bloggere og billedkunstnere fra Syrien, Jordan, Libanon og Danmark indtog scenen. Festivalen var organiseret af Center for Kultur og Udvikling i samarbejde med Den Danske Ambassade i Beirut og den lokale partner Tarte aux Poires.

Tekst fra ugebladet for Det Arabiske Initiativ, skrevet af Camilla Wass, Center for Kultur og Udvikling

Frygten løber som en rystende, blodrød tråd igennem de historier, syriske kunstnere fortæller gennem pennen, kameraet og mikrofonen. Det samme gør trangten til at formidle den desperation, som det syriske folk oplever lige nu.

Den 25. februar rejste en flok syriske kunstnere fra Damaskus til Beirut for at deltage i Danish Arab Urban Arts Festival. Her fik de et pusterum fra de voldsomme begivenheder i Syrien – og et frirum til at vise deres kunst.

"Imagine all the people....living life in peace." Lyden af John Lennon med arabisk accent får for en stund tiden til at stå stille i den gamle lagerhal. Vi er i et gammelt industrikvarter i udkanten af Beirut, som med tiden nok vil blive omdannet til et hipt kunstnermiljø, og på scenen står det syriske rockband "Anas and Friends" og synger, mens publikum står med hinanden om skuldrene og sender tanker til det folkelige oprør i Syrien.

For er par timer siden ankom "Anas and Friends" til Beirut i en rusten, støvet minibuss, direkte fra Damaskus på endnu en dag med voldsomme overgreb på landets civilbefolkning. "We need to breathe," lød det fra forsangeren Anas, da han, med en guitar på ryggen væltede ud af tourbussen sammen med bandmedlemmer, groupies og kærester. "Selvom der er voldsomme kampe flere steder i Syrien, så er der alligevel roligt i Damaskus. Men vil føler ikke, det er moralsk rigtigt at stille sig op

og lave en rockkoncert i Syrien lige nu. Vi har holdt en lang pause - så vi brænder for at stå på scenen igen," sagde han.

Nu står "Anas and Friends" på scenen – som en del af Danish Arab Urban Arts Festival, der er arrangeret af Center for Kultur og Udvikling i samarbejde med den danske ambassade i Beirut og den lokale partner Tarte aux Poires.

Bag en stor tung metallåge og facade, der er overmalet med graffiti, gemmer sig et mekka af undergrundskunst. Et rå, pulserende sanseorgie med musikere, poeter, filminstruktører, bloggere og billedkunstnere fra Danmark, Syrien, Libanon og Jordan. Kodeordet er eksperimenterende kunst – og formålet med festivalen er at skabe et rum, hvor yngre, progressive kunstnere kan udtrykke sig frit - herunder en række kunstnere fra Syrien, der er under ekstremt pres lige nu.

Libanon er et frirum

"Det er enormt spændende at bringe kunstnere fra regionen sammen lige nu, mens det buldrer løs i den arabiske verden. Vi står midt i en arabisk vækkelse, og det er vigtigt at støtte de kræfter, der arbejder for åbne, demokratiske samfund. Vi vil gerne give de unge, eksperimenterende kunstnere et skulderklap og et skub fremad i deres udfoldelse," siger dansk ambassadør i Libanon, Jan Top Christensen.

Han mener, at kunsten kan ses som en indikator for, hvor meget de arabiske styre vil tillade. "De unge kunstners udfoldelsesmuligheder er lakmusprøven på, om de samfund vi får i den arabiske verden bliver åbne og demokratiske eller lukkede og konservative. Vi håber, at vi med festivalen i Beirut kan være med til at rykke barren en smule," siger Jan Top Christensen. Han er glad for, at mange syriske kunstnere har valgt at bruge festivalen som en ventil til at komme ud med deres kunst. "Libanon er et frirum for syrerne lige nu – så længe de ikke blander sig for direkte i den syriske



* Læs her om en flok syriske kunstnere der rejste til Beirut for at deltage i festivalen

konflikt," siger Jan Top Christensen. Et andet formål med Danish Arab Urban Arts Festival er at vise resultaterne af nogle af de partnerskaber mellem danske og arabiske kunstnere, der har fundet sted gennem det seneste år. Cremen af dansk-arabisk kultursamarbejde ruller sig ud, side om side med libanesiske lysinstallationer, live-graffiti og funky billedkunst fra Jordan. På første sal kan man tage sig en drink i en dansk "kolonihave-bar" med græsplæne og campingmøbler. Herfra kan man skue ud over festivalen og blandt andet følge koncerten med den danske DJ duo Ladybox og arabiske folkemusikere.

Eller man kan stoppe op ved en tørresnor med løst hængende blog-citater og blive klogere på, hvad danske og arabiske kvindelige bloggere har fået ud af at mødes både i cyberspace og i virkeligheden. Følger man stearinlysene og de guldne digtsamlinger, der ligger på trappen op til øverste etage, kommer man til festivalens poesirum. Gamle bøger står stablet i tårnhøje, skæve bunker og marokkopuder og arabiske tæpper fuldender den intime stemning. Her skal om lidt være digtoplæsning med syriske og danske poeter, der gennem det seneste halve år har arbejdet sammen i projektet Poetic Corridors.

"Der blæser en storm gennem mit hjemland"

Lyriske beskeder til fængslede venner,

DANISH ARAB URBAN ARTS FESTIVAL TAGER BEIRUT MED STORM

hænder der er 'lavet af træ' og en sitrende nervøsitet. Inden de skal optræde på festivalen, har tre syriske digtere sagt ja til at fortælle om, hvordan de reagerer på de voldsomme begivenheder i deres hjemland. Vi mødes på en café i det mondæne Hamra kvarter – på behørig afstand af den syriske grænse. Alligevel føles det, som om Damaskus er lige på den anden side af gaden. "Det er den største personlige krise, jeg har oplevet i mit liv. Der blæser en storm gennem mit hjemland, og jeg kan slet ikke holde op med at tænke på det. Jeg tænker på min fortid, min nutid og min fremtid og er nervøs hele tiden. Men jeg tænker også på, hvad jeg kan gøre for mit folk lige nu."

Golan Haji fjerner en hårtot fra panden og kigger ud i luften med et tænksomt blik. Han skrev sit første digt, da han var 13 år – og siden da har han været på banen med en lang række udgivelser i bl.a. Libanon. I oktober sidste år rejste han til Danmark for at deltage i projektet Poetic Corridors, hvor han har arbejdet tæt sammen med den danske forfatter Kristina Stoltz. De to har skrevet et digt sammen, som de skal læse op til festivalen i Beirut. Mens han tager en tår af sin cappuccino fortæller Golan Haji, at syrerne er fysisk forandrede på grund af det syriske regimes overgreb på civilbefolkningen. Folk kan ikke koncentrere sig – de kan ikke spise og sidder paralyseret foran skærmen hele dagen for at følge med i, hvad der sker. Alting er gået i stå.

Ansigt til ansigt med rædslen

For tre måneder siden flyttede Golan Haji til Amman for at undslippe syrisk militærtjeneste. Her har han oplevet sit forfatterskab løbe i en helt ny retning. I stedet for at bruge timer og dage på at finde den helt rigtige poetiske metafor, har han givet sig selv lov til at improvisere. Dag og nat sætter han sig til tastene for at kommentere de overgreb, der finder sted i Syrien. "Syrerne står ansigt til ansigt med rædslen – du mærker frygten hos andre, og jeg prøver at omsætte denne rædsel til ord. Det er for mig en helt ny måde at se sproget

på. Metaforene er væk - når jeg skriver at der er blod, så mener jeg ikke noget som helst andet end blod. Jeg forsøger at skrive en form for oversættelse af det, der foregår i syrernes hoveder," siger han. Golan Haji er dagligt på Facebook, hvor han med sin lyriske pen spidder, hvad der sker i Syrien. Han har blandt andet skrevet et digt med en kodet besked til sine venner, der er blevet fængslet af de syriske myndigheder – og han fortæller åbent om sine tekster, uden at tænke så meget på konsekvenserne.

"Jeg er nødt til at se min frygt i øjnene. Jeg har haft en frygt for at blive arresteret – men den er nu blevet afløst af en ny frygt. Som forfatter er du nødt til at være et vidne og du er nødt til at sige noget. Du ved alligevel ikke, hvem de slår ned på. Diktaturets regler er, at der ikke er nogen regler," siger han og smiler: "*Writing is an act of freedom – you find a way, regardless of the consequences.*"

"Mine hænder er lavet af træ"

Ved cafébordet sidder også Hanadi Zarka. Hun har mørke rander under øjnene og virker nervøs. Hanadi Zarka bor i Latakia i Syrien og har udgivet digte, siden hun var 21 år gammel. Hun har publiceret tre bøger, som er blevet oversat til flere sprog. Men siden overgrebene i Syrien begyndte, har papiret foran hende været blankt. "Jeg kan ikke skrive noget som helst – mine hænder er lavet af træ. De her begivenheder får mig til at tænke på, at det ikke nytter at skrive. Hvad kan jeg som poet gøre for at ændre situationen i Syrien – ingenting," sukker hun. Alligevel glæder Hanadi Zarka sig til at stå på scenen i aften og læse den tekst, hun har produceret i København. Det er hendes første oplæsning i 4 måneder.

Mens vi sidder og taler, kommer endnu en syrisk digter ind af døren. Hun gemmer ansigtet bag sit lange hår og sætter sig med ryggen til os, mens hun kigger på sin mobiltelefon. Man kan ane en tåre i hendes øjenkrog. Det var meningen, at hun skulle deltage i interviewet, men hun har netop fået at vide, at 15 mennesker er blevet dræbt i hendes mands landsby i Syrien og

tankerne er hos dem.

Den kreative energi er der simpelthen ikke, fortæller Simon Kristensen fra forlaget Korridor, der står bag Poetic Corridors projektet. For ham har den spændte situation i Syrien betydet ekstra udfordringer. "På det praktiske plan har det været vanvittigt svært at koordinere, fordi situationen hele tiden ændrer sig. Det, der lykkes den ene dag, mislykkes den næste," siger han.

Men giver det så overhovedet mening at lave et samarbejde med syriske kunstnere lige nu?

"Jeg synes i høj grad, det giver mening. I Syrien er der et kæmpe reservoir af kunstnerisk kreativitet, der er låst inde. Enten har folk ikke overskud til at skabe – eller også kan de ikke få lov til at skabe. I en situation som denne er det utrolig vigtigt at give de syriske kunstnere et rum, de kan udtrykke sig i," siger Simon Kristensen.

Kameraet er regimets største fjende

Tilbage i lagerhallen begynder publikum at myldre ind – over 2000 mennesker finder vej til festivalen og Tv-kameraerne snurrer livligt rundt. Blandt gadekunst og farverige malerier placeret på bildæk sidder de to syriske filminstruktører Hazem Alhamwi og Lamia Albukher. De er netop ankommet fra Damaskus og skal om lidt vise Lamias dokumentarfilm "The Red Colour" for et publikum for første gang. Filmen har frygten som omdrejningspunkt. "Frygten er en del af vores dagligdag – og jeg prøver i min film at finde ud af, hvad frygt betyder og hvordan den kommer til udtryk," fortæller Lamia på hakkende engelsk. I filmen zoomer Lamias kamera ind på en række unge syriske kvinder og mænd. En ung smuk kvinde fortæller, at hun ikke længere ved, hvad glæde betyder, fordi hun altid bærer frygten i sig, mens en ung fyr med hestehale kigger intenst ind i kameraet, mens han siger. "Vi er den tabte generation. Vi kan ikke længere drømme i det her land."

Lamia fortæller, at hendes film er blevet til

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i private lejligheder, da hun var bange for at filme på gaden i Damaskus. ”Faktisk blev jeg inspireret af, hvad der skete på gaderne i Egypten under oprøret mod Mubarak. Endelig kan vi råbe højt og fortælle hvad vi føler. Jeg har ikke selv haft modet til at gå på gaden – men min film er min måde at råbe på,” forklarer Lamia med et lille smil. Hendes manager Hazem Alhamwi tager over. ”Kameraet er det syriske regimes største fjende lige nu. Kameraet er farligt, fordi det dokumenterer, hvad der sker. Det er derfor en stor udfordring for os filmmagerne at arbejde netop nu – men jeg føler, at jeg er nødt til at gøre noget. Min

rolle er at lave en god film, der reflekterer situationen i mit hjemland,” siger han. Hazem fortæller, at han selv er gået i gang med at lave en meget speciel film.

Mens ”Anas and Friends” gør sig klar til et ekstrasnummer på festivalens store scene, hiver han et manuskript op af sin taske.

”Hvordan ville du have det, hvis du følte, at du skulle dø om lidt – ikke på grund af kræft eller en anden dødelig sygdom? Hvordan ville du kunne se denne følelse i øjnene? Hvis du så, hvordan folk, du elsker, bliver fængslet eller dræbt, så er det

pludselig ikke en fremmed følelse længere. Jeg har besluttet at se følelsen i øjnene ved at arbejde med det jeg tror på. Gaderne er fulde af vold. Jeg hader vold. Men jeg tror på den kraft, der er i kunsten, så jeg vil lave mit sidste kunstværk – efterlade mit fodspor i livet. Det er den eneste måde jeg kan føle en glæde ved siden af den følelse af død, der sniger sig ind på mig.”

Lyden af de dansende festivalgæster med Red Bull drinks i glassene bliver en fjern summen. I morgen går turen tilbage til Damaskus – med frygten som blind passager.

DAUA - PICTURE GALLERY



* Visiting the women's bloggers project



* Visiting the women's bloggers project



* Danish artist Thomas Dambo in creation process of bird houses to be hung up all over Beirut



* Musicians from Denmark, Lebanon and Syria meeting prior to kick-off



* Danish former minister of Culture Grethe Rostbøll at the opening of the festival



* Dynamic modern dance performance by ManCopy



* Food provided by Lebanese Souk El Tayeb

BEIRUT IGEN BASE FOR FLERE DANSKE MELLEMLØSTEN - JOURNALISTER

Af Ambassaden i Beirut

Først var det **Sanne Gram** fra Jyllandsposten der kom i 2007, så kom den meget erfarne journalist **Lasse Ellegaard** som korrespondent for Information for at dække begivenhederne i Mellemøsten med base i Beirut. Lasse har i øvrigt for et par år siden skrevet den stærkt underholdende bog "Med Gud i hælene", hvor han causerer over sine mange år i Mellemøsten og Tyrkiet og livet i almindelighed. På det seneste har de og vi fået selskab af

Puk Damsgård Andersen, der er Danmarks Radios nye Mellemøstkorrespondent. Puk rapporterede senest for Jyllandsposten fra Pakistan og Afghanistan. Puk har inden for det seneste år fået to fine priser for sit arbejde som journalist: Jyllandspostens Ytringsfrihedspris og Berlingske Fonds Journalistpris og har i øvrigt trods sin unge alder skrevet flere bøger om sine oplevelser i farefulde egne af verden.

Som den foreløbigt fjerde i rækken har **Marcus Rubin**, der skriver for Politiken, bosat sig med familie i Beirut. Marcus har

blandt skrevet bogen "Bibelen på bloggen" på baggrund af sin personlige læsning af Bibelen. Fruen, Louise **Stigsgaard Nissen**, har p.t. orlov fra Berlingske Tidende pga. familieførørgelse og arbejder samtidig på en bog om Kvinder i Mellemøsten. Familien kommer direkte fra New York, hvorfra Marcus også skrev for Politiken. Tidligere har Louise og Marcus boet og arbejdet i Jerusalem.

Velkommen til byen. Ambassaden ser frem til samarbejde med jer.

SCREEN INSTITUTE BEIRUT - FROM FILM FUND TO SCREEN ACADEMY



The Screen Institute Beirut (SIB)

was launched

late 2009. During its inception phase it is funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs via International Media Service. The objectives are to strengthen filmmaking and its infrastructure, not only in Lebanon, but in the whole Arab region, with a particular focus on supporting feature-length documentary film. The overall aims of the Screen Institute is to support and promote film in all its forms as an important means of expression of cultural, artistic and social values.

The Film Fund

The SIB Film Fund offers documentary production grants to emerging and proven talents in the region. Applicants are encouraged to produce films based on stories that relate to their own realities. Priority are given to creative teams (directors, producers, cinematographers, editors, sound recordists & designers etc.) working together on realizing their artistic visions and thereby contribute to strengthen independent filmmaking in the region. The documentary grants enable

low-budget films to be produced, finalized and distributed by offering crucial financial support, access to professional equipment, mentoring and professional advice.

A number of SIB films have already won awards at international film festivals. Also in 2012, they will be competing in regional and international festivals.

Screen Academy – the future!

The Screen Academy plans to set up its production and teaching premises in central Beirut, at which time the Film Fund activities would be merged with the Academy.

The Academy will offer high-level professional courses in all key areas of specialization within creative filmmaking and thus strengthen capacity building in the field of screen arts and techniques. Entry to the Academy will be based on merits, tests and competition. Only mature students with practical film/TV experience and/or relevant studies in film, as background will be considered. The Screen Academy is in the process of developing its curricula. A date for first intake cannot be set yet as additional funding and sponsoring of scholarships need to be identified in order to secure sustainability.

The stability of the Institute and its training programs will depend on sustainable

funding structures. The Institute will need substantial on-going support from Arab and international development agencies and foundations. Major sponsorship, donations, endowments and scholarships are therefore pursued. SIB is presently in an exciting process of consulting with interested partners to identify a sustainable financial and institutional framework for its future development.

The newest five projects from 2012 were selected from 45 submissions from nine Arab countries – Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.

Read more about **SIB** on **www.screeninstitutebeirut.org**



* *Cursed be the Phosphate* by Sami Tlili (SIB Grant – March 2012)

HER ER SÅ STILLE NU

- EN ØJENVIDNEBERETNING FRA DEN GAMLE BY I DAMASKUS

*Af Jane Blichfeldt Fogh
Kommunikationskonsulent Og
Projektkoordinator, Det Danske Institut I
Damaskus*

De siger, her er borgerkrig, men med det blotte øje er alt fredeligt i den gamle by i Damaskus – og dog. På de hellige fredage ligger gaderne øde hen som spøgelsesbyer i gamle westernfilm, og Ecco-fodsporene fra den sidste turist er for længst blæst til støv. Aftenerne er traditionelt fulde af dyttende biler, ivrigt handlende og højlydt habibimusik fra de nærliggende restauranter, men nu er her forbløffende stille efter kl. 23.

Normalt er den gamle by turisternes mekka, men i dag drejer unge mænd på gamle cykelskrog hovedet 180 grader for at glo på mig – den høje fremmede skandinav – som er jeg et levn fra en allerede fjern fortid. Lokale handlende og butiksejere sidder midt på dagen på hver deres lille skammel fuldt optaget af dagens tredje spil backgammon. Der er ingen kunder, så de kan lige så godt fordrive tiden med hinanden, en kop alt for sød te og lidt æbletobak i vandpipen.

I horisonten hører jeg en mand råbe højt om "syv millioner, syv millioner" i et forsøg på at holde liv i drømmen om den hurtige gevinst. Men i dag tør ingen tro på heldet. Drømme er erstattet af bekymring og usikkerhed for fremtiden. Men det er en usikkerhed, som kun en gang imellem

popper op til overfladen, som da min arabisklærer og jeg spjættede i takt, da en ballon sprang uden for vores hoveddør midt i bøjninger af komplicerede verber i nutid.

En tidlig morgen for to måneder siden blev urolighederne dog meget virkelige. Jeg vågnede til lyden af skudsalver og bombardementer i horisonten. Først troede jeg, at det var fyrværkeri, men kom så i tanke om, at jeg befinder mig i Syrien og ikke i Danmark den 31. december. Min veninde, som bor i en anden del af byen, vågnede til vinduer, der rystede. Vi hørte lyden af skyderi hver morgen i flere dage, og gaden var som forvandlet: Ingen højtråbende lottomand, ingen hyggesludder på gadehjørnerne og ingen børn, der legede udenfor. De få, som vovede sig ud for at hente æg og mælk hos den nærmeste købmand, kiggede ned i jorden og skuttede sig under jakken. Ingen kunne længere bilde sig selv ind, at alt var normalt.

I skrivende stund sidder jeg i mørket under endnu et strømsvigt og er yderst taknemmelig for den lange batterilevetid på min bærbare computer. Når strømmen går, og det gør den i otte timer om dagen, tænder jeg min batteridrevne lygte, som jeg har opladt i forvejen. Jeg tager et tæppe om livet for at holde varmen og arbejder videre – fuldstændig ligesom syrerne. Og når strømmen igen bliver tændt, hører

jeg jubelråb fra gaden i takt med, at den brummende lyd fra naborestaurantens generator endelig stopper.

Gadens handlende er som trodsige tumlinge, der dag efter dag møder på arbejde med eller uden strøm, med eller uden gas og varme og med eller uden lyden af skudsalver i horisonten. Hver morgen står mændene i den lokale smedje i kø for at hilse på mig, og på vej hjem render den tykke nøddemand mig stadig i hælene med en skålfuld velduftende nødder og byder mig velkommen. Den døve skomand reparerer stadig mine sko og nægter at tage imod betaling, og grønthandleren på hjørnet siger, at jeg bare kan betale ham næste gang, hvis sedlerne i min pung er for store, og det er vel at mærke, selv om den syriske pund falder i værdi for hver dag, der går.

De siger, her er borgerkrig, selv om jeg ikke kan se det, og selv om mine naboer på gaden ikke vil høre det. Men selv om vi prøver at drukne frygten gennem venlige smil, kærlige gaver og fælles forvisninger om, at der selvfølgelig kommer en næste dag, som der altid har gjort, kan vi heller ikke lukke ørerne. Nedtællingen til det store uvisse er for længst i gang, og hvad gevinsten bliver, tør selv ikke den mest frække lottosælger råbe højt om.

A MOSQUE/CHURCH UNITED IN DAMASCUS

An innovative idea of making a space for both Muslims and Christians to practice their religion. A shared space for a mosque and a church. Is that doable? The answer is yes. The Danish Embassy in Damascus asked the prominent Syrian architect, Mohammed Mufti to describe this cutting edge project:

By architect Mohammed Mufti and the Danish Embassy in Damascus

The project and the Syrian context

In response to a competition launched by Emaar Group for the architectural design of a Mosque located in the 8th Gate Emaar development in the Damascus area of Yafour, the concept derived from attempting to respond to an imminent question:

What does the architecture of a Mosque in the pioneering 8th Gate Emaar Development in the Yaafour suburb area in Damascus, Syria must intrinsically convey today?

Architecture today in Syria and more generally in the Arab world is persuaded as a style performance. An amalgam of plastic forms (rarely coherent) over verbalized and well marketed to consumers / clients. Commercially, this recipe seems to convince. But the truth is elsewhere: this is no longer architecture.

Since early 20th century architecture has left the styles battle searching for its new and essential role in rebuilding societies and cities. Architecture vocabulary is no longer a priority nor a measure of quality. What replaced styles and their vocabulary are more vital and important issues: Technology, function, environment, economy, ideologies and the understanding of the contexts.



Syria's context is a complex case study. In our beloved nation tens of civilizations and cultures have left prints. But the fact is that today, we "the citizens", are looking for our own print, our own understanding of our past and present, that is to project our future.

In the limit of our atelier's skills, architecture, the reading of our great architectural heritage is not only forms and materials, (Those evolve with technology, know how, and financial parameters, etc...), but it's the architectural spaces themselves. A much deeper and richer treasure: The greatness of an arcade in a simple Damascene house isn't only in the curve of the arches that draws its limit, but it's the space generated by the arcade itself (whether constructed with stone or mud). The spaces generated by a courtyard and its surrounding, the sequences of transfer from a space to another, the relation between the private exterior and the urban exterior, the grades

of privacy.... This is our great legacy: the spirit of spaces.

For this project, it was crucial to answer the following questions: What identifies a Religious building today? Is it an architectural style? Is it a dome? Is it a Minaret? Is it a material?

The answer was evident: it is simply the spirit of the space.

Style and stereotypes are therefore abolished. The architectural design is minimalistic and adopts simplicity and straight lines to convey the purity of the holy message in a modern and ingenious approach.

The vision

The vision of the 8th Gate development is to provide Yaafour residents with first class services and quality of life in order for the residents to be "self-sufficient" and fully satisfied in their new resourceful and

A MOSQUE/CHURCH UNITED IN DAMASCUS

upscale neighborhood.

In order to comprehend the depth of this project and fulfill its vision and objectives, one must inevitably take into account the following points:

a. Who are the residents of Yaafour which are the direct and essential target group?

The residents represent the elite/upper class of Damascus, originally from different Governorates and religions (Muslim and Christians), qualified with a considerable standard of education and open-mindedness.

b. What kind of “religious edifice” responds to both, the project’s objectives and to the needs of the target group living in Yaafour?

The proposed edifice is not only a Mosque fulfilling the above criteria but a Mosque embracing a Church within its very structure to embody the powerful and unique message of a modern Syria.

c. How can an edifice embody both a Mosque and a Church?

One of the most ingenious achievements of the Umayyad civilization resides in its inclusive mission and philosophy of tolerance exemplified in the Umayyads’ appeal to wider communities and acceptance of the cumulative religious heritage, namely the Christians. The latter message is until today flagrantly illustrated through the Umayyad architectural masterworks where the edifice or remaining of the old Church is preserved by incorporating the structure of a Mosque, and where both the Church and the Mosque embody this cumulative

heritage in an architectural embrace such as: the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, the Mosque of Cordoba, and the al-Aqsa Mosque (re)built during the Umayyad dynasty.

The solution

The above described concept - Mosque/Church edifice - conveys the most intrinsic component of Syria’s identity: The living in harmony and coexistence between different religious and ethnic communities.

In light of the events in the Middle East, there is no time when this concept is more relevant and timely than today. Not only does it articulate a very powerful message, not only does it recapture the religious identity of Syria, but it also strongly contributes positively to the changes that Syria is going through today.



YOUNG ARCHITECTS FROM DENMARK, SYRIA AND LEBANON GET TOGETHER

By Anne Marie Galmstrup, Henning Larsen Architects Levant

In February 2012, Henning Larsen Levant held a two-week work-shop in Beirut for 35 architecture students from Copenhagen, Beirut and Damascus. The workshop was the third in a series of IMAGINATION schools with the educational aim being process based learning and providing a neutral platform for collaboration and knowledge sharing between architectural students from different cultures and learning environments – while at the same time creating awareness on relevant topic in the MENA region.

The theme of this year's workshop in Beirut was cultural institutions and their synergy with civil society. Cultural institutions are good examples of how architecture plays a role in how we engage with each other and they can have significant influence on a city's character and the development of the specific society.

With the outset in the complex city structure of Beirut, the students looked into what a cultural institution actually is and means for a city's development, the social life and self-perception of the inhabitants.

IMAGINATION 3 was initiated with guided walks in and around Beirut to give the students a chance to work with the city from various angles and a sketch assignment where the students was asked to draw the intangible while walking in teams through Beirut.

At the following symposium invited speakers gave their views on Cultural Institutions and its synergy with civil society which helped to kick-start the discussions. The

speakers included 11 practicing architects, artists, curators and professors from Beirut, London and Copenhagen.

The students were then divided into 5 workshop teams exploring: The Urban Corner, River Beirut, Activity & Space, The Unplanned Nightlife and Buildings as Civic Infrastructure. The workshop teams were guided by eight tutors from Beirut and Copenhagen.

The students' observations and thoughts were showcased at a public opening at the St. Joseph Crypt in Beirut on the last day of the workshop and a publication will follow later in 2012.

IMAGINATION 3 was organized in collaboration between the American University of Beirut (AUB), the Lebanese American University (LAU), Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA), Gaia Heritage and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Schools of Architecture, Design and Conservation. The school was sponsored by the Danish Center for Culture and Development and Henning Larsen Levant. The two previous IMAGINATION schools took place in Damascus, Syria.

Facts

Henning Larsen Levant is a partnership associated to Henning Larsen Architects - a Scandinavian practice specializing in architecture and urban planning worldwide for more than 50 years. HLA Levant is a mobile studio established in 2009 in Damascus and currently practicing from Beirut where they specializes in Cultural and Education projects in the MENA region and Turkey.



• Georges Zouain from GAIA Heritage in Beirut, symposium co-organizer in IMAGINATION 3: "The changes we have seen in the participants thinking and attitudes through this very short exercise have amply proven the need for more IMAGINATION in Lebanon and a more open and comprehensive curriculum in architecture that will make students more aware of their social and political roles in the making of countries' futures."



• Houda from Damascus, architecture student and participant in IMAGINATION 3 "Architecture is for people and about people and the variety of people's cultures made the discussions richer due to the differences and similarities, thinking and designing with them was the biggest challenge".

NEW COMMERCIAL TRAINEE IN BEIRUT

“Hi, I am Mohamad Daya and I have been a trainee at the Trade Council at the Danish Embassy in Beirut since September of 2011. Although my dream occupation has always been “Superman”, I have been enjoying my work experience at the Trade Council a lot. I have met very interesting people starting from the embassy’s staff and my tasks are motivating and fit my educational background (Business Economics) really well, what more could one ask for? I enjoy coming to work every day and this is something which not a lot of people can claim.”



EN KONSUL SIGER FARVEL OG EN ANDEN GODDAG TIL AMBASSADEN I BEIRUT

Med udgangen af juli siger Christian Deloughery, efter næsten fire år, endeligt farvel til ambassaden. Han har valgt samtidigt at forlade Udenrigsministeriet efter mange års tro tjeneste. Men måske vi fortsat kommer til at have fornøjelsen af Christians gode humør i Libanon, da han har forelsket sig så meget i Libanon, at han nu ser på alternative muligheder for at kunne blive. Ambassaden ønsker Christian held og lykke med det hele!

Den 1. august overtager Trine Gitte Vigsø Nielsen. Hun kommer fra en tilsvarende stilling i Riga, hvor hun når at arbejde to år, inden stillingen nedlægges som del af Udenrigsministeriets store sparerunde. Trine kommer med mand og to teenage-børn. Vi siger ahlan wa sahlan til hele familien og ønsker den en god tid i Libanon.



EVENT KALENDER

BEIRUT:

Juni:

5.6 Grundlovsdag
Danish Children's Film Festival (tba)

September:

10-16.9 Danish Film Festival I Metropolis Empire

November- December:

European Film Festival 2012 (tba)

Hold dig løbende opdateret om events via ambassadens officielle Facebook side; "Danish Embassy in Beirut"

WE ARE NOW ON TWITTER! Follow ambassador Jan Top Christensen 'jantopDK' and the embassy on 'DKinlebanon'.

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Ambassadens officielle lukkedage i 2012: 1. maj, 15 og 20. august, 26. oktober, 2. november og 25. december.

Den Danske Ambassade i Damaskus (også for henvendelser vedr. Jordan)

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Ambassadens officielle lukkedage i 2012: 27. maj, 19, 20 og 21. august, 28. oktober og 24, 25, 26. december.