

# Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association

Registered Charity Number: 1155620

## Annual Report April 2015



Women in Black Protest with Palestinian visitors – Oxford June 2014

Annual General Meeting held 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015 – 7.30 – Oxford Town Hall





**Visitors with the Palestinian History Tapestry Project – June 2014**

**Information about ORFA:**

**Patrons:** Sir Iain Chalmers, Mahmoud Hawari, Karma Nabulsi, Rt Rev John Pritchard (Retired Bishop of Oxford), Sir Stephen Sedley, Avi Shlaim and Yasmin Sidhwa.

**Trustees:** Barbara Dziala (Treasurer), Tony Richardson (Chair), Joe Carter.

**Meetings:** Monthly – every third Tuesday month 7.30pm to 9pm at Oxford Town Hall. Subgroups work together on projects.

**Contact:** Via the website e mail

**Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association has been working since 2003, and became a registered charity on 4th February 2014.**

**Thank you** to our friends who visited Oxford from Bethlehem and Ramallah (Al Amari Refugee Camp) in Palestine: Hanan, Refa, Elham, Latifa, Samira, Basema and Nadia. They worked so hard to both set the visit up and whilst they were here; speaking at many meetings where they gave powerful, informative and deeply moving testimonies about their lives as women and mothers, in refugee camps and under occupation. We would also like to thank Shahd, for her help with translation, speaking at the Refugee Week meeting and with helping with pre visit and visit

organisation.... And a huge thank you **to all** the many individuals and groups in Oxford who helped in so many ways to ensure that the visit was such a success.

## **ORFA - Annual Report April 2015 – Presented at AGM on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015**

**Charity** - A successful charity launch took place in March 2014 at the Old Fire Station in Oxford with displays of our work, information and messages of support (as well as tea and cake!). We were very pleased that two of our patrons Avi Shlaim and Sir Iain Chalmers were able to speak about the importance of working to build friendship links and offer their support and encouragement for our work. The launch highlighted the work we have been doing over the last 11 years and also acted as a fundraising event and introduction to the Women's Visit which took place in June 2014. (See later in this report).

A general ORFA leaflet has been produced which highlights our aims and explains our work. Copies of these are available.

Through the Charity Commission ORFA charity is classified as:

- Working in the area of education and training, arts/culture/heritage, human rights/religious or racial harmony or diversity.
- Working with the general public/mankind.

ORFA's Charitable Objects are copied below as adopted: (CONSTITUTION ADOPTED 18 OCT 2011 AS AMENDED ON 19/11/2013)

TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS (AS SET OUT IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUBSEQUENT UNITED NATIONS CONVENTIONS AND DECLARATIONS) BY ALL OR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING MEANS:

- RAISING AWARENESS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE ISRAELI - PALESTINIAN CONFLICT IN GENERAL;
- RESEARCHING AND MONITORING ABUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND INFRINGEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW;
- EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS LAW;
- PROMOTING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW;
- WORKING TO ELIMINATE ABUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND INFRINGEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW;
- WORKING TO OBTAIN AND PROMOTE REDRESS FOR THE VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND THEIR FAMILIES AND INFRINGEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW.
- PROVIDING SUPPORT TO AND RELIEVING NEED AMONG THE VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND INFRINGEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW AND THEIR FAMILIES.
- 2. TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC IN THE UK AND PALESTINE, IN PARTICULAR IN RAMALLAH AND ITS ENVIRONS BY ALL OR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING MEANS:
  - TO PROVIDE EXTRA-CURRICULAR EDUCATION TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE, INHABITANTS AND REFUGEES;
  - TO FOCUS ON IMPROVING THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THOSE IN NEED, ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH AND REFUGEES.
  - TO ASSIST IN PROVIDING DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY EDUCATIONAL TEACHING MATERIAL, BOOKS AND TOOLS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE EDUCATION OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUTH AND REFUGEES.
  - TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY BASED EDUCATION THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS AND RESOURCES.
  - TO HELP THE COMMUNITY BUILD SUSTAINABLE AND LOCALLY MANAGED EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES.
  - TO BRING PEOPLE FROM THE COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS TO OXFORD TO FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION IN A WAY THAT IMPROVES THEIR SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES AT HOME AND ABROAD.
  - TO PRESENT MATERIAL IN VARIOUS FORMS TO EDUCATE PEOPLE IN OXFORD ABOUT THE CULTURE AND ORDINARY LIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF RAMALLAH.
  - TO SEND GROUPS AND DELEGATIONS FROM OXFORD TO PALESTINE AND IN PARTICULAR TO

### **Women's Visit:**

During the June 2014 visit to Oxford by seven women from the West Bank we organised a number of meetings (see below with a range of groups). We collated nearly 300 packs of information, mainly Palestine Solidarity Campaign Factsheets, to give to individuals attending the meetings to help raise awareness of human rights and humanitarian issues. The visit was a huge success and we estimate that over 400 people heard the women speak whilst attending one of our meetings/events. We hope that each of those people will have left the meeting they attended with an increased awareness and knowledge about the situation for people in Palestine and particularly the issue of prisoners.

### **From ORFA Website:**

#### **Six Women from Al Amari Refugee Camp visited Oxford, June 2014**

*Report by Tony Richardson.*

*The six women from Al Amari refugee camp in Ramallah, together with Hanan Bannourah, a Trade Union leader from Bethlehem, arrived in Oxford on 13th June. The delegation had been brought over by the Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association (ORFA). At the Ramallah end, the visit was organised by the Women's Centre in Al Amari Refugee Camp.*

*Their first event, on Saturday 14th, was the 'Women in Black Vigil' in Bonn Square. This was followed by a meal organised by the Network of Oxford Women. On Sunday they went by train (the first time for some of them), to Banbury to meet the Labour Party women's section and community groups.*

*On Monday 16th they had a lunchtime meeting in Oxfam's headquarters. This was attended by 50 mostly young people. Although it was about gender issues in Palestine it could not help being dominated by the issue of prisoners, because the women were the mothers of 6 sons serving life sentences, and one of the sons was going blind, lost the use of one leg, had no hearing in one ear, yet couldn't get medical treatment. In the evening was one of the main public meetings, in St Michael's Church, chaired by the priest, Bob Wilkes. This was well attended, 60 or so people.*

*The next day the Oxford Mayor, Mr Abbasi, held a reception for the Al Amari group, while Hanan went to London to meet the President of the Royal College of Midwives, to continue the links with the Palestinian midwives. In the afternoon the whole group met some Oxford lawyers, to discuss human rights. On the evening of the 17th we held the main Oxford public meeting, sponsored by ORFA and Oxford PSC (Palestine Solidarity Campaign). The women movingly addressed a packed courtroom, in the Town Hall (about 70 people). Again the issue of prisoners dominated, and people were directed to the PSC petition about prisoners.*

*On Wed 18th they attended Unite Women's section, in the Unite Offices in Cowley. This lasted nearly 2 hours, and resulted in a discussion about going to Palestine. That evening they addressed a public meeting in Faringdon organised by the Arura Faringdon Friendship Association, AFFA. (Arura is a village near Ramallah.)*

*A group of the women, one of whom has worked in the main Ramallah hospital for 30 years, went to the Unison Offices, in the John Radcliffe Hospital, on Thursday. They received a good response and a list of possible actions was developed. In the evening a group addressed a public meeting, organised by the local United Nations Association (UNA), in Charlbury, David Cameron's Constituency. This is the UN Year for Palestine. It was agreed to send a message to Cameron.*

*On Friday 20th they went to discuss with the cast of a new play about Palestine 'Far away so close'. They were also interviewed by the 'Oxford Mail'. Two of the women were interviewed by Bill Heine, for his Radio Show that was broadcast on Radio Oxford on Sunday, 11am. This was really well received. In the evening they attended a meal, and a presentation on 'The Palestinian History Tapestry', part of which is due to be produced in the Al Amari Women's Centre. Several of the women went to an Oxford Refugee Week event and spoke at a meeting.*

*On the Saturday they went to the Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) event, organised by Oxford Trades Council and Ruskin College, on the 30th Anniversary of the Miner's Strike. This included the launch of a new film that Anne Marie Sweeney has made for WAPC. Two of the Palestinian women who spoke, responded to the film, saying that these women in struggle were speaking their own language. This was followed by a lovely meal with supporters in a Cowley Road restaurant.*

*Sunday was their free day and they all went to London, took an open topped tour, and returned back to a wonderful farewell evening meal and gathering of ORFA patrons and supporters, in a supporter's house and garden. Monday they returned to the airport, and home.*

### **Fundraising:**

One member's participation in a run for ORFA meant that we have raised sufficient funds to begin considering future projects. Fundraising for projects needs to be ongoing. Our charitable status means that we can claim gift aid on donations as appropriate. Our treasurer is working on this at present and we will claim for retrospective (since charity registration) during the next financial year. Our treasurer has also set up Local Giving account and when contributions are made through this account (see website) gift aid is managed.

### **Current Work:**

Participation in the Palestine Unlocked Festival which is taking place in Oxford during June 2015. ORFA is particularly involved with a **photo exhibition** – the exhibition will bring together photos taken in Palestine and in Oxford under a series of themes and will be shown in the Town Hall and the church in Bonn Square. ORFA is also helping with some of the arrangements for the **Ashtar Theatre** performances of 48 Minutes for Palestine at the Pegasus.

## Agenda for AGM 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015 7.30pm Oxford Town Hall

1. Annual Report
2. Financial Report (Treasurer and Trustees)
3. Distribution of Annual report and website updating
4. Current work
5. Ideas future plans and fundraising.



Top: Oxfam Headquarters. Centre: Seeing the sights. Bottom: Meeting Town Hall

