

The Report on the Survey in Palestine
Of Children's literature and the Promotion of
Reading among Children
(The West Bank and the Gaza Sector)

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Introduction:-

This report is concerned with the presentation of the results of a survey on children's literature and encouraging reading in Palestine as represented by the West Bank and the Gaza Sector through emphasis on the following axes:-

First: Policies and Legislations:-

This item will cover the policies and legislations in force with a number of parties concerned with the field of children's literature and encouraging reading in Palestine:-

1. The Ministry of Culture:-

In an interview with the Director General of Civil Work at the Ministry of Culture, he confirmed that the Department of Publishing and Printing is the party charged with publishing books for children. This Department operates within the policies approved by the Ministry of Culture as represented by the National Plan for Palestinian Culture. When reading this Plan, it can be realized that it had not been prepared by one team or government institution for many institutions that are concerned with children's affairs had contributed to it. However, it will also be noted that there had been no representation for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Youth and Sports:-

A- The Ministry of Culture's Plan Addressed to Child Culture in 1996:-¹

The following deductions can be attained from reading this Plan:-

- Introduction:- Its concentration was that the child is half the present society and the whole of the future, that the Palestinian child is the product of two elements rooted in two realities, concomitant and conflicting: the reality of occupation and the reality of resistance. As he has inherited the feeling of being vanquished, persecuted and abandoned, so has he inherited as well the spirit of resistance and adherence to land and identity.

¹ Annex No. (1), The National Plan for Palestinian Culture.

The Palestinian child is exposed to dangers represented in the following:-

a- The Political Level:-

The forthcoming phase (forthcoming at the time) is that we are approaching a phase of peace. Accordingly, the culture we want is a national culture that emphasizes Palestinian Identity as it is the certain immunity against the complex of national inferiority, this being the relation that usually emerges between colonizers and the countries they have been colonizing.

b- The Economic Level:-

Economic risks have been the result of dependence on foreign aid and the Israeli policies of segregation. Therefore, we must prepare for economic independence, a matter that requires concentration on values such as: self reliance, respect for the value of work...

c- The Educational Level:-

The political and economic retardation previously indicated precipitated a decline in the quality of education (there are cases of illiteracy and escape from attending schools). That is what lends importance to the child's possession of the means for learning and creativity and for the necessity to approve ex-curriculum programs in parallel with curriculum programs.

d- The Social Level:-

The plurality of religions, sects, ethnic origins, political, clannish and tribal loyalties causes the Plan to give importance to strategies which would assert the national bond and the positive employment of this plurality.

e- The Environmental and Health Levels:-

Here the risks lie in the possible influence over society of the Israeli pattern of consumption and the destruction that has involved agricultural and forest areas and was the cause of pollution. Accordingly, the Plan must concentrate on security and order, proscribing extravagance and encouraging collective action...

2- The Criteria:-

The role of the Ministry of Culture is represented in adopting and disseminating programs by presenting them to the cultural institutions allocated for the child. For the Ministry to adopt these, they must be supported by the following bases:-

- a- The child's right to a life and development at the optimum of his potential;
- b- No child is incapable or a failure;
- c- Older children (13-17) are a very important category;
- d- The first few years are crucial in developing intelligence, character and behaviour;
- e- Talk of childhood means talk about all the tasks of a family.

3- The main targets of the National Plan of Action are to:-

- a- Exercise openness towards other cultures while consolidating national identity and deepening the trend of authenticity among our children;
- b- Elevate the child's scientific, environmental and hygienic culture;
- c- Consolidate positive economic and social ideas, values and behavioural patterns;
- d- Develop awareness of the skills of creativity and functions.

4- The Strategy of the plan for the child:-

The strategy included in the Plan can be summarized as follows:

- a- Cooperation with non-governmental societies in the field of culture;
- b- Coordination with the ministries concerned, particularly the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Youth and Sports;
- c- Coordination between the various departments of the Ministry of Culture: theatre, plastic art...;
- d- Utilization of the various national information media;
- e- Development of studies and research in order to crystallize the project for the culture of the Palestinian child;
- f- Strive to attain comprehensive programs for the programs of children's culture;
- g- Develop human resources capable of developing child culture.

There are some supporting targets the method of application thereof is not indicated in the Plan nor is the mechanism of implementing them or the dates specified for that. It also gave birth to (The National Developmental Program for the Literature of the Palestinian Child).

B- The National Developmental Program for the Child's Literature:²

This Program was prepared under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture with voluntary cooperation from many interested institutions and individuals, namely: UNRWA[•], Arhām al-Ďāmin, the Center for Childhood Resources: Assia Hābash, the Faith Center for Childhood, Bu'ād al-Khāliṣ, the University of Bethlehem: Jacqueline Şfeir, Denise As'ad: the 1948 Arabs, UNICEF[^]: Rose al-Shōmalī, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education: Zāhir 'Aṭwa and Ziyād Sharī'a, the writer Salmān Nāṭūr, the Tāmer Institute: 'Abla Nāṣir, the Project for Educational Information and Coordination: Waṣīm al-Kurdi, Mary Fāshā (a concerned librarian), the Center for Developing Programs: Jamāl Yūnus, the Ministry of Culture, Layla Yumna al-Baṭrān and the writer Samīra Nayrūkh.

It can be observed from this group that the Ministry of Culture tried to mobilize all the parties which are connected with children's literature but it also shows the absence of the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Youth.

The Project's Vision and Objectives:-

This Program is based on a general view that takes into consideration the Palestinian child wherever his residence regardless of his age, race, social status or his condition,⁷ psychological and physical needs. It can be summarized as follows:-

“For the sake of a child for whom reading is an inseparable part of his interests and to whom gratifying Palestinian, Arab and international literary books are available, such books to contain the technical fundamentals complying with the agreed criteria as to form and context, be capable of attracting the interest of the child, removed from exhortation and instruction and written in a language style suitable to the various age groups.”

² Annex No. (2), The National Developmental Program for the Literature of the Palestinian Child

[•] UNRWA: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency [for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East]

[^] UNICEF: The United Nations Children's Fund [the Translator]

In order to achieve the above vision, the following targets were formulated:-

- 1- Participation in crystallizing a literary movement that would present to the child a gratifying creative output derived from Palestinian realities and matching international creative output;
- 2- Participation in crystallizing the character of the Palestinian child, consolidating and developing his potential for participation and expression;
- 3- Encouraging creative talent among Palestinian children in various literary and artistic fields;
- 4- Rooting the habit of reading in Palestinian children;
- 5- Encouraging the publishing of good Arabic books in order to realize gratification for children and encouraging and publishing translations of good international books;
- 6- Consolidating the status of books among the many sources of knowledge and making it available to every Palestinian child,
- 7- Sowing democratic principles in Palestinian society.

C- The National Plan for the Palestinian Child 2004-2010

The National Plan for the Palestinian Child was issued in July, 2004 by the Secretariat Bureau for the Child which acts under the supervision of the Guidance Committee established by Presidential Decree in 1995. The Plan presents an analysis of the status quo on the basis of which the plan for the following ten years was prepared, i.e. until 2010, in respect of all aspects. As regards the cultural aspect, the Plan included the following:

Strategic Aim	Project Aim	Elements
1- Developing vital children's skills through children's literature	Encouraging children to take up reading within a three years period	1- Children can access books 2- Children's literature needs met at kindergartens & schools 3- Good quality books attractive to children were available 4- Families are aware of the importance of children's literature

2- Creating a cinematic culture in children	Creating cinematic awareness in children within three years to improve their constructive critical skills re cinema	1- Create suitable conditions to allow dissemination of cinematographic awareness through establishing 10 children's cine clubs in the West Bank and Gaza Sector 2- Developing the skills of invigorators of cinema clubs 3- A number of children with awareness and ability to criticize 4- Information authorities have interest in children's cinema and criticism
3- Developing vital children's skills through the cinema	Developing in children and youths (12-18) vital skills represented in their ability to express, analyze and criticize creatively	1- Developing the skills of the training cadre for production of children's cinema films 2- Developing children's skills of expression through their production of 30 cinema films at the rate of 10 per year 3- Developing cinematographic awareness in public and journalists

In order to realize the developmental program for children's literature and the National Plan, a number of projects were adopted:

- 1- Establishing and supporting libraries;
- 2- Developing the skill of librarians;
- 3- Using children's literature at schools;
- 4- Prompt media means to show interest in children's literature;
- 5- Refining the criteria for the production of books and developing their market.

Each of the above items will be discussed in accordance to the sequence determined for writing the report.

The Partners

The partners in the development of these projects, be their participation through financial support or with human resources, are varied. They

include the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (particularly in regard to a project at schools and an institution), the Tamer Institute for Community Education, Al-'Imān Institute (kindergartens), the 77 Libraries and the institutions subordinated to them, the Universities of Bethlehem, Nablus and Birzeit, the Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of Information, the Swiss and Swedish Governments, Diakonia, UNICEF, the British Ministry for International Development, Norway, SIDA* and many other institutions of civil society.

The most important activities adopted by the Ministry of Culture in order to realize its targets, strategies and plans, are represented by the following:-

- Supporting and encouraging Palestinian creativity and providing the conditions necessary for launching all creative potentials and acting towards spreading this creativity;
- Preparation of special cultural programs for the child;
- Expansion in the establishment of public libraries, developing them and cementing the bond between readers and cultural accomplishments; accordingly, 27 children's libraries were established in the Gaza Sector;
- Establishing the Palestinian Writers' Association for publishing Palestinian, Arab and international books, holding local exhibitions and setting up the Palestine International Exhibition of Books;
- Undertaking care for children's literature and encouraging the issue of magazines allocated for children;
- Preparation of programs to care for talented students and providing the potential and workshops to develop these skills;
- Preparation of programs for encouraging reading among students, coordinating for that end with ministries and civil institutions and encouraging the holding of book exhibitions to consolidate the relation between students and books;
- Supporting a number of cultural centers with printed material;
- Establishing cultural centers allocated for children;
- Undertaking a survey on the status of libraries;
- Establishing centers for the resources of children's literature;
- Gathering in a number of specialized references and supplying them to universities;

* SIDA: Swedish International Cooperation Development Agency [the Translator].

- Holding courses for the art drawers of children's books;
- Training teachers through the program for developmental children's literature implemented with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education;
- Supplying school libraries with children's stories;
- The preparation, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, of guide books for the first and second teachers;
- Holding training courses for trainers in respect of story recounting in order to train library custodians;
- Financing a number of projects on encouraging reading;
- Announcing a number of competitions for writers of children's stories;
- Participation in Arab cultural contests;
- Holding a number of workshops on publishing and writers' rights;
- Giving 120 hours training to custodians of children's libraries in order to activate these libraries and encourage reading;
- Inviting a Swedish expert to train writers, journalists, university instructors, supervisors, teachers and persons interested in children's literature;
- Presenting theatrical performance that encourage reading;
- Printing three children's stories by winners of competitions on writing for children;
- Printing the book *rasā'il hub li atfāl Lubnān min atfāl filisṭīn (Letters of Love to the Children of Lebanon from the Children of Palestine)*;
- Supporting institutions with story collections for presentation to children;
- Announcing a competition financed by UNESCO of books on children's literature;
- Holding five local and international book exhibitions;
- Offering a two years training study to art drawers on work for children's books;
- Holding exhibitions for art drawers of children's books;
- Training a number of children for participation in international festivals.

Legislation addressed to the child, specifically that part concerning culture in Palestine, can be listed as follows:-

In this context, the beginning must be with the Law for the Palestinian Child as it has become known that there is a draft for such a law which

was approved in the second reading at the Legislative Council. An extract of the cultural rights of the Palestinian child was derived from it.³

The Ministry of Planning has taken the lead in structuring a national plan for the Palestinian child through the Guidance Committee for the National Plan for the Palestinian Child. This Committee consists of ministries, governmental and non-governmental institutions, UNICEF, UNRWA and Sweden, the patron of the Palestinian child in the various fields of health, formal education and non-formal education, children in need of protection, culture, information, the area of defense for the child and monitoring.

The vision centralizes around the creation of a decent life for the Palestinian child so that he would enjoy a healthy body under living, environmental and psychological circumstances that cater for his feeling of security and stability. This would entitle him to the enjoyment of his childhood, his right to education and entertainment, his ability to be creative and take initiatives, his awareness of human values, his feeling of belonging patriotically, nationally and universally, his ability to express himself and his participation in decision making.

The Ministry's future vision in respect of children's literature and encouraging reading:-

- Cooperation with kindergarten libraries, governmental and private schools and the creation of a common work mechanism that will participate in preparing an environment appropriate for reading in order to develop those libraries, renovate them and supplement them with requirements as per age group;
- Holding specialized workshops with the local community institutions concerned in respect of encouraging reading;
- Encouraging local audio/visual media to produce planned programs aiming at spreading the spirit of affiliation with books, both printed and electronic;
- Pushing through legislation for the exemption of books in general and children's books in particular from duties and tax so that they would reach readers without much financial burden;
- Discussing the potential for issuing a magazine allocated for the child;

³ Annex No. (3), the Law for the Palestinian Child.

- Encouraging plastic artists working in the field of drawing for children's literature to develop their capabilities and benefit from their experiences in this field;
- Continuing to organize local exhibitions for children's books and following up on outside participations in order to benefit from the experience of others in this area;
- According sufficient care for the development of a department specialized in children's literature in the ministries concerned.

The Budget and the Partners:-

No budgets are allocated. Instead, these activities are executed with the support of international institutions and donors such as: the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland, SIDA, Diakonia, the British Cultural Council, the French Cultural Council, Norway and UNESCO.

2. The Ministry of Information:-

In a research survey undertaken by Mr. Taḥsīn Yāqīn about information as relevant to children, the following was indicated:-

In 1995, a conference on information was held in the city of Gaza and resulted in the acceptance by the parties involved in information of the slogan, "The Child Comes First". In truth, information pertaining to children witnessed noticeable progress relative to its state under the occupation but was the slogan really realized in Palestinian media?

In Palestinian media the parties which are active in respect of information relevant to children are:-

- 1- The Administration of Information on Women and Children at the Ministry of Information;
- 2- The Ministry of Planning represented by the Secretariat of the National Plan for the Palestinian Child.

This Secretariat undertook an information campaign through implementing a number of information projects to elevate awareness concerning children's issues. The Secretariat, together with the Administration of Information on Women and Children at the Ministry of Information, acted to establish the Center for Information about Children which acts to make available original audio/visual and written about Palestinian children.

There are other institutions, governmental and non-governmental, that are concerned with information about children, such as:-

- 1- The Directorate General of Family and Childhood at the Ministry of Social affairs issued some material such as “Messages for the Parents”;
- 2- The Directorate General for Childhood and the Directorate General for Vanguarders at the Ministry of Youth produced the magazine *sawa sawa (Together, Together)* and another magazine under the title *al-ṭalā’i’ (The Vanguarders)* for older children;
- 3- The Ministry of Education and Higher Education issued the magazine *‘ālam al-ṭufūlah (Childhood World)* three times and the Ministry of Health produced a television program under the title *al-ṣihhātu lil jamī’ (Health for All)*;
- 4- The Radio and Television Authority broadcasts among its programs a program produced by the Bialara Foundation*;
- 5- Civil Institutions:-
 - The Jerusalem Educational Television broadcasts varied children’s programs on subjects such as modernity, civil society and teaching. It has produced seventy episodes of the popular program *’iftah yā simsim (Open Sesame)*. It is presently producing the second season of this program;
 - The Tamer Institute produces *yarā’āt (fireflies)*;
 - The Palestinian Authority for Information and the Activation of the Role of Youth - the Bialara Foundation⁴;
 - There are no clear policies in the field of child culture;
 - Within the frame of the future vision, the Ministry of Information takes steps to hold various seminars and workshops to encourage children to read. It also seeks the allocation of sufficient time for them in audio and visual media and also sufficient space various printed material and periodicals are issued to project the question of encouraging reading and planting the habit of reading in children;
 - As to activities by the Ministry of Information within the framework of encouraging reading, these have been implemented through an exhibition for photographs of various children’s activities such as drawings and visits to institutions. The Ministry participates annually as well in photograph exhibitions with the Tamer Institute for Community Education, also in the National Week for Reading, encouraging creative children to issue novels, stories and poetry and,

* Bialara Foundation: The Palestinian Organization for Youth Education in Media [the Translator].

⁴ Annex No. (4), A list of the names of periodicals issued in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector.

- finally, the competition for the production of films allocated for children;
- Consideration is accorded to age groups and the separate needs of each group;
 - The Ministry's budget is provided by the Cabinet of Ministers, the Swedish Institute, Canada, the Ministry of Planning and the Directorate General of the Secretariat for the National Plan for Children;
 - It has three departments that are concerned with children, the Department of Activities, the Center for Child Information and the Follow-Up Department;
 - As for exhibitions, it was indicated that the Ministry holds none but participates with governmental and non-governmental institutions. No prizes have been assigned in this field.
- 3- The Ministry of Social Affairs:-*
- Cooperation is restricted to international bodies and institutions;
 - The Ministry has no written policy relevant to children's literature but bases its attitude on the care for children's conditions and the circumstances they are suffering, particularly the difficult ones;
 - Activities vary from running summer camps to participation in the competitions for poetry and story writing organized by the Higher Council for Childhood;
 - The Ministry has no budget directed to children's literature but relies on support from international institutions such as UNICEF, the Swedish Government and Save the Children;
 - The Ministry has a Department for Early Childhood which includes sections for fostering and the development of potential, an administration for children in difficult circumstances, four rehabilitation centers for youth from both sexes with emphasis on vocational training and *mu'assasat al-rabi'* (The Spring Institution) which targets youth.
- 4- The Ministry of Education and Higher Education:-^
- The Ministry relies on a written policy which states that all the cultures in the world accord the child and his literature great care,

* These deductions were reached through an interview with the manager of the Children's Department in Emergency Conditions.

^ These deductions were reached through an interview with the manager of the Department for School Libraries and Scientific Laboratories.

- differences are of degree not of quality, in the extent of care for the child and his literature as the child needs the literary expression that is in harmony with his scientific views and interests and his psychological and physical developments. He is capable of appreciating what is written for him within literary forms and genres such as poetry, story, play, essay and voyage;
- This policy is to be implemented through several means one of which is enriching school libraries with stories, activating and employing them in rectifying weakness in reading and writing and in attaining comprehensive learning of more than one subject during the class hour. Other means include a qualitative change in educational methods, transforming stories by the production of plays and puppet shows, a positive improvement to some of the prominent story characters, activating the role of popular tales, varying the forms of free expression of children's literature, holding cultural contests between schools within the project for children's literature, activating the relation with the local community and causing children's families to participate in various activities;
 - The Ministry invokes a future view represented by supplementing school libraries with books of children's literature, encouraging teachers and children in respect of creative composition and writing, issuing a school magazine that favours children's work, allocating a school day during the year for activities pertaining to children's literature, organizing inter-school visits for the exchange of ideas and experiences, following up on the activation of the project for children's literature at schools and merging it in school plans;
 - As to the activities adopted by the Ministry for encouraging reading, these are represented by organizing book exhibitions within each library, preparing programs for classes to visit the library and borrow, holding cultural competitions, participating in the National Week for Reading, allocating prizes for students who excel at creative writing and inviting writers to visit schools, meet students and discuss their books;
 - In respect of magazines, there is the magazine *'ālam al-ṭufūlah* (***Childhood World***) issued by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education/Palestine, the Directorate General for Public Education, of which 11 issues have been made starting with 1998. A quantity of 15,000 is printed through the support of UNICEF. Addressed to kindergarten children and students of the lowest basic stage, this

- magazine is distributed gratis to governmental schools in the lowest level, UNRWA schools and kindergartens;
- The budget allocated for the development of children's literature varies from 5% to 10% of the library's budget allocated for the purchase of books;
 - Obligatory education is from Grade One to Grade Ten. The lower basic stage is from Grade One to Grade Six and is divided into two parts: from the First to the Fourth Grades it is called Preparatory⁵, the Fifth and Sixth Grades are called Enablement, the higher basic stage from the Seventh to the Ninth Grades is called Complementary and is followed by the Tenth Basic.⁶

Periodicals concerned with children's literature in Palestine were restricted to the following:-

- 1- *yarā'āt (Fireflies)* is issued by the Tamer Institute and is distributed gratis as an annex to the daily *al-ayyām (The Times)*. It is edited by children and youth but most of those who participate in editing are older than the age group which is the subject of this study;
- 2- *ghadīr (Fountain)* is issued by the Ghadīr Institute for Child Culture in Jerusalem as an educational and cultural magazine addressed to the age group 8-15 years. The first issue came out in 1991 and it is distributed, at the cost price of almost one shekel, in three areas only, Jerusalem, Ramallah and Bethlehem, particularly to schools. Each of the three annual issues prints around 10,000 copies. The editor in

⁵ Kindergartens in Palestine are private and are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. They suffer many problems. The educational outlook is confused and subject to personal inclinations, sometimes to political inclinations, and the kindergartens lack facilities. They are considered to be investment projects without the provision of the minimum requirements for the early childhood stage. According to a study performed by the "Aneera" Organization about the quality of education at kindergartens in the Gaza Sector, it was made clear that 57% of kindergartens had libraries. 34% of these libraries had sufficient books whereas 66% did not. It was noted that there was a book shelf containing formally approved children's books but very few other books or stories. The study recommended the support and encouragement of writing children's literature, both stories and anthems. It also recommended the employment of methods for work with children such as drama, acting, photographs, drawings and story telling. The recommendations included the supply of each kindergarten with a library for the teachers containing references, books and guides relevant to early childhood, also qualifying and training of kindergarten teachers in the subject of story telling and the system of learning through many angles.

⁶ There are 267 kindergartens. Among the fundamental policies of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education which supervises all these kindergartens is that facilities should be provided, including a library at each school. The number of libraries reached 188 in a sample of 219 schools distributed as follows: 31 model libraries each of an area greater than 80 m², 147 libraries consisting of a classroom of 50 m², 19 libraries in small rooms of less than 30 m², 19 libraries dispersed among the principal's room, the teachers' or the secretary's room, 2 libraries in an already occupied classroom and 1 library in a school passage.

- chief is Mr. Khalīl Sallūm. The Institute also publishes *Ghassān* and *Ghādā* [male and female names respectively];
- 3- *'ālam al-ṭufūlah (Childhood World)* is a magazine issued by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education /Public Education, for those under six;
 - 4- *sawa sawa (Together, Together)* was issued by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

“For the sake of reality, there is great weakness in the magazines and periodicals issued for children in the West Bank. Many magazines are published once only with no further repetition.”

Second: Libraries

1- Private and Public Libraries:-*

The Ministry of Culture undertook a survey of the libraries existing in the West Bank and Gaza to know what there is as a starting point in preparation for a study in cooperation with the Association of Specialized Librarians and the British Cultural Council. The study of 105 pages resulting in 1966 indicated that the various types of libraries, including children's libraries, were suffering from a number of obstacles and problems under the circumstances of the occupation and its military orders of confiscation. The occupation authorities issued orders banning the circulation of 6,420 books. Conditions under the occupation also participated in delaying the development of writing books, publishing and distribution. The economic situation and scarcity of support from any parties prejudiced the possession of various library ingredients.

There are many public libraries for every municipality in the West Bank and Gaza has a public library and most of them have children's sections. On the other hand, the Ministry of Culture has acted to establish and develop a chain of children's libraries. Some of these were new and others were already in existence under the administration of municipalities, cultural institutions, societies and centers, altogether 87 in

* Interviews were made with each of Mr. Sāmī Baṭrāwī, the Director General of the Public Administration of Libraries and Manuscripts and the Department of Authors' Copyrights, and Mrs. 'Imān 'Ōdah, the Director of the Department of National Libraries at the Ministry of Culture, in order to obtain the information mentioned about libraries in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector.

total. Of these, 33 were in Gaza⁷ and 54 in the West Bank distributed geographically between cities, villages and camps. There are other libraries that have not been listed in the Ministry of Culture's list for development due to the insufficiency of resources.⁸

2. School and Kindergarten Libraries:-⁹

- Government school libraries have a card system for lending ;
- There are no kindergartens at Government schools and the contents of the library are insufficient at an average of almost 1.8 – 2 books per student. Furniture is not suitable in some cases and sometimes not provided.

Through an interview with Mr. Mahmoud Dawoud a staff member at the Directorate of Library Administration, it was possible to obtain the following:-[^]

- 1- Most Palestinian Government schools have libraries in an independent room and the others have cupboards of books including children's books;
- 2- Schools in which the library area is more than 40 m² get a specialized library custodian, in most cases a graduate with a B.A. in Library Science;
- 3- In most cases, schools in which the library has a smaller area and less than two thousand books obtain half a library site as the full site can be divided between two schools or there can be a teacher with half the number of hours;
- 4- Schools where the library is not independent get a quarter of a teacher's allotment of hours. The staff who administer these libraries, other than at schools with full-time library custodians, are teachers, usually teachers of Arabic;¹⁰
- 5- The staff in charge of libraries is trained to become qualified, depending on potential and the financial situation. For the past two years, work has been undertaken in cooperation with the National Institute supervised by the Ministry to qualify 270

⁷ Libraries in the Gaza Sector are distributed as to 8 to the north of Gaza, 11 within the Governorate of Gaza, 6 within the Governorate of Khan Yunus and 8 within the Governorate of Rafah.

⁸ Annex No. (5), Children's Libraries Existing in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector.

⁹ Annex No. (6), First: Some Samples of Public and Private Libraries Spread in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector.

[^] Interview with Mr. Mahmoud Dawūd, Director of the Administration of School Libraries and Laboratories at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

¹⁰ cf. Annex No. (6), Second:- The library of the Beera Municipality and the Center for Child Culture:- explanatory models.

persons in charge of libraries through intensified courses including 30 hours of training in children's literature and story telling.¹¹

The number of independent school libraries in Government schools reached 1,162 of which 853 are in the West Bank and the rest in Gaza. When we know that the total of Government schools in the West Bank is 1,755, the ratio of schools with independent libraries works out at 60%. These schools enjoy good library service.

- Every school allocates what amounts almost to 10% of its annual budget from donations to buy books for the library and these schools allocate half this amount for children's books. Furthermore, around 1,000 school libraries benefited from the Project for Children's Literature at Schools which has been supplying them with children's books constantly for years as the number of West Bank schools participating in this project was 866. This means that each school has obtained 63 titles of the books distributed in accordance with this Project at an average of 8-10 copies of each title in addition to lesser quantities of other books. In other words, the Project for Children's Literature at Schools which is implemented jointly by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Culture has distributed what amounts to almost 650,000 copies in the West bank and Gaza. The titles are varied between translations and local production.¹²

3. The Libraries of UNRWA Schools:-

It is known that there are 93 UNRWA schools in the West Bank. By asking Mrs. Fatima Badwān, the Supervisor of Libraries at UNRWA, it was found that the number of libraries in schools was 70 large libraries and around 20 small ones. There are four central libraries one in the al-Khalīl (Hebron) area, one in Qalandia, the third in the Balāṭa Camp and the fourth in the boys' school in Jenin. These libraries serve school groups in various areas. As to the librarians who supervise them, we have the teacher/librarian who teaches Arabic at schools and undertakes the role of library custodian. These staff members have a full year's course to qualify them for the proper utilization of libraries.

¹¹ Annex No. (7), some samples of Government school libraries in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector.

¹² Annex No. (8), a list of the books supplied to Government schools under the Project for Children's Literature in Palestine.

Library Activities:

- 1- Activities relevant to encouraging reading implemented by the teacher/librarian in the library and in the classroom;
- 2- Activities carried out on various occasions through the school broadcasting facility;
- 3- Constant organization of cultural contests at schools;
- 4- The Week for Reading when schools encourage reading through a school program over a full week.

In respect of the quality of these libraries, the services they offer to students, the method of lending books, how they encourage children to participate in their activities and the interest these libraries take in children's books, the following libraries were visited:-

- 1- The library of the Beera Girls' Basic School/Ramallah;
- 2- The library of the Nazareth Girls' Basic School in Beit Sāhūr;
- 3- The library of al-Duhaisha Boys' Basic School, UNRWA;
- 4- The library of the daughters of Haj Ishāq al-Qawasmah, al-Khalīl;
- 5- The library of the private al-'Ikhā' School.

It was noted that the project for children's literature at schools has tremendous importance in activating school libraries, work in the children's corner and activities in general. This is what appeared following these tours for it was found out, when the lending record at the Nazareth Girls' Basic School was inspected for the 3rd April, 2007, that thirty books were lent. This shows the role of schools and their libraries as this number exceeds what a public library lends out in the one day.

4- Library Contents:-

Library contents include books, periodicals and stories. They have sections allocated for the audio/visual and computer CDs. In general, most libraries, whether they are within the network or outside it, exert great effort in seeking to develop their capabilities in the use of technology. However, they suffer a shortage of funds and this disables them often times.

5-The Activities Performed by the Libraries Visited:-

- 1- Organizing reading activities;
- 2- Managing campaigns for encouraging reading;

- 3- Organizing competitions between library members;
- 4- Organizing annual festivals;
- 5- Lending books to children;
- 6- Organizing workshops for drawing, creative writing, drama and story telling;

6- The Legal Status of Librarians:-

The Ministry of Culture does not interfere in the method of appointing librarians but offers guidance and endeavours to develop their capabilities through courses on library work. There are as well volunteers who help librarians during these courses. Some librarians have a degree in library work and others depend on training. In addition to supervising the library and safekeeping it, his functions also include organizing the activities mentioned above.

Following contact with many centers in villages and towns, it was found that most of those working in them are volunteers as these centers cannot cover the cost of these staff many of whom have specialization degrees in academic fields.

7- Training to Which Librarians Have Been Exposed:-

Training courses have been held for the custodians of these libraries and some of the staff working there (120 hours of training). These courses were not restricted to classifying but, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the British Cultural Council, also covered how to encourage children to read and, in particular, recounting stories. They were also linked to the Internet but did not continue except in libraries of centers able to pay the cost such as municipality libraries.

It can be observed that supported libraries are distributed geographically in the West Bank between towns, villages and camps, it being noted that tens of centers and clubs received no support. Furthermore, the network libraries included in Annex No. (5) were supported with books and this support continues still, albeit in limited quantities. On a once only basis, they were also supported with equipment such as: suspended projector, dark photograph apparatus, video, television...furniture, curtains, fitted carpets and renovation of buildings.

This is a quick glimpse of libraries that encourage reading in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector whether they are under municipalities, clubs, cultural or female centers, or others. We can say that the situation of school libraries is not bad; indeed, we can say that it is somewhat acceptable.

Third: Schools and Kindergartens:-

1- Government Schools:-

Since its establishment, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has made it its responsibility to develop the process of teaching and educating the child and has believed since the beginning that it cannot undertake this role alone in isolation from all other ministries and the country's institutions, be they governmental or civil.

The number of schools in Palestine is 2,317 between Government, private and UNRWA schools.¹³

Review of Annex No. (9) which indicates the number of schools in the West Bank and Gaza Sector, it can be said that the number of Government schools in the West Bank is 1,755 and that all these schools have libraries. Some libraries have been allotted an independent room and a custodian or 50% of his time; other libraries can be in a classroom.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Culture and the various supporting institutions have cooperated to develop the Project for Children's Literature in Palestinian Schools which had proceeded in graduated steps and realized very great achievements whether at the level of developing teachers, school libraries, students and the families themselves.¹⁴

2- The UNRWA Schools:-•

The training program in the field of children's literature at UNRWA schools is implemented in cooperation with Diakonia and draws on the

¹³ Annex N0. (9), The Distribution of Schools in the West Bank and Gaza Sector according to Directorate and Gender.

¹⁴ Annex No. (10), The stages of the steps for the training undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education within the framework of the Project for Children's Literature at Schools in Palestine.

• This information was obtained through an interview with Mrs. Fatima Badwān.

experience of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in this respect:

- 1- Training a team of central trainers, 20 supervisors and teachers, at the National Institute for Educational Training;
- 2- Finishing the training in the summer of 2007 of 174 teachers from both sexes;
- 3- With the end of this year, training would have been completed to make the number of trained staff 450 teachers.

3. Kindergartens:-*

An interview with a staff member of the Kindergarten Department showed the emphasis on children's literature as the studies executed by the Department of Kindergartens in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education indicated the extent of effectiveness of stories in preparing students or what is called recently learning how to read and write.

The studies have proven that the child who can distinguish the shapes and sounds of letters and read them before joining school is the one who had listened extensively to stories in his early childhood. In other words, the child who listens a great deal to stories in kindergarten classes and interacts with the story or other literary genres through his parents at home and his teacher in the kindergarten will enjoy the possibility of developing a natural ability to learn emergent reading prior to his entry to school.

The studies have also emphasized the existence of a strong relationship between the child's success in achieving reading and writing skills in the first basic grades and his previous experiences relating to reading stories in kindergarten classes. In other words, the opportunities for a child to succeed in learning the four language skills, reading, writing, listening and speech in the grades of the first basic stage are greater and faster in the child who had listened to many stories in kindergarten classes and acquired rich experience in that field.

There also exist Government Kindergartens. A trial concerning their viability was begun with the inauguration three years ago of four kindergartens, two in Gaza, one in Nablus and one in Bethlehem. The evaluation of this trial points to positive indications.

* An interview was made with Mrs. Maysūn al-Silwādī (Head of the Department of Kindergartens at the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education) and Mrs. Bu'ād al-Khālīṣ, for the 'Īmān Childhood Center of the Committee for Islamic Science and Culture.

As to the number of kindergartens, Mrs. Maysūn al-Silwādī stated that there were 1,028 supervised by municipalities, societies, clubs, female committees and other institutions many of which are private and belong to one person; some belong to private schools.

It was indicated that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education had established in each Directorate a section allocated for kindergartens with a female supervisor following up on the kindergartens in her assigned area even if they were private and organizing training courses for their teachers in various fields. She clarified that these courses are varied and include training on drama, story narration, employing stories in teaching and the developmental characteristics of children. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has a presence represented by the supervisors of kindergartens even in those kindergartens that obtain funds for their staff from other sources.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education issues a non-periodic bulletin called *'ālam al-ṭuflūah* which has illustrations for children, articles addressed to kindergarten teachers, simplified stories and various photographs. The bulletin which receives support from UNICEF meets with acceptance and wide circulation. Three issues have been published.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education holds exhibitions for the activities of the kindergartens of each area separately. Each kindergarten displays what activities it had undertaken in various fields. Kindergarten libraries, however, still lack a great deal for they do not have an abundance of children's books as is the case in schools and need attention in this regard. As an example of what kindergartens do to encourage children to read, we present a sample of kindergartens of al-'Imān Center which participated in 2002 in a program for encouraging reading through the Program for Children's Literature. This Center undertook the following activities:-

The Committee for Training Kindergarten Teachers at the Center, supported by the Ministry of Culture and the Swedish Diakonia Institute, worked for the preparation of a training program for kindergarten teachers based on educational principles and compatible with the teachers' needs in this field. The objectives of this program are:-

- 1- To deepen the theoretical knowledge of kindergarten teachers in the field of children's literature;
- 2- To strengthen their capability of application in kindergarten classes.

Practical activities were designed to enable the teams of trainers everywhere in the country to follow the proposed steps and implement them in their present form or consider them a basis for developing more suitable activities on the grounds that the training program is an experimental one. Ignoring this aspect can lead to the choice of stories that are not compatible with children's reading inclinations or with their needs which would lead to the ignorance and neglect of literary genres. This, in turn, would reflect on the development of kindergartens in the field of children's literature.

Achievements

- 1- A training program was put in place for teachers and principals of kindergartens;
- 2- Training material was prepared;
- 3- 140 kindergarten teachers from various locations were trained. The geographic distribution was as follows:-

Jerusalem	Villages to North West Of Jerusalem	Bethlehem	Ramallah	Jerusalem Villages	Total
25	15	25	25	50	140

- 4- An evaluation was made in each training area before and after training;
- 5- Every teacher was asked to present a project;
- 6- Libraries were set up in children's classrooms;
- 7- A festival was held for kindergartens on children's literature;
- 8- A larger sector of female teachers was trained;
- 9- A prize was offered to the kindergarten which excelled in children's literature;
- 10- Kindergarten teachers participated in conferences about children's literature by presenting their experiences;
- 11- The training guide was developed and made generally available.

<p>What was accomplished is clearly good though not sufficient as the 'Imān kindergartens are concentrated in limited areas. Reaching all libraries in the country and training in respect of encouraging reading still require</p>

more support and development. Furthermore, the lack of libraries in many kindergartens is considered one of the huge obstacles facing the development of this matter.

Fourth:- Universities

1. The Islamic University:-

- The interview with the Vice-President of the Quality Unit indicated the non-existence of a specialized course for children's literature but there are references to children's literature in the course for Arabic Literature and for all specializations (the basic teaching of Arabic Literature and in the specialization for English as one of the methods of learning language);

2. The University College for Vocational Sciences:-

- A course for children's literature in this College was included as of 1998 for specialization as a teacher of children then for specialization as a Form Teacher. The course is supervised by the Faculty of Educational Sciences. There is as well a course on the methods of teaching art to children in the specialization as a children's teacher [for females];¹⁵

- The subjects of children's literature are taught as obligatory subjects for the specialization of Form Teacher in the Department of Educational Studies. There is a noticeable increase in the number of students taking up the course of children's literature.¹⁶

3. Al-Aqṣā University:-

- It has had a course on children's literature since 1990 taught at the School of Arts and Human Sciences. It is taught as an obligatory subject in each of the following specializations: Arabic Language, the methods of teaching Arabic Language, Islamic Education and preparation to become a Form Teacher;

- The course is also available at the Department of Artistic Education from which teachers of artistic education graduate. It concentrates on teaching art to children and touches on the subject of explanatory illustrations in books and magazines. However, there are no courses which delve directly into the subject of illustrations for children's books or their artistic production.¹⁷

¹⁵ Annex No. (11), The Plan for the Course of Teacher at the Faculty of Vocational Sciences.

¹⁶ In 2003-4 there were 174 female students. In 2006-7 the number was 1,136. Male students started joining this course in 2006-7 when there were 69 of them.

- The college holds an annual childhood festival. Seven festivals have been held and in each the educational aids produced by students are presented as there are factories for the production of educational aids including the production of stories, puppets and theatrical productions;

- Every year, the college allocates a school day for childhood. In 2007 it concentrated on violence against children in families.

¹⁷ Annex No. (12), The plan for the course on children's literature at Al-Aqṣā University.

4. Al-Azhar University:-

- There is no specialization course for children's literature but this is a subject that is taught within the curriculum for drama art and that of the Arabic Literature for specialization in the Arabic Language and Information, also within the curricula for Education and Psychology.

5. The Open Jerusalem University:-

- There is no special course for children's literature but the subject is taught within the course for Arabic Literature.

6. Al-Najah National University:-*

The course on children's literature is taught at al-Najah National University at the Faculty of Education. He states that this course is obligatory there and is taught to students specializing in Primary Education as it is considered among the fundamentals of raising the child and encouraging him to read. We did not obtain the scheme for the course.

7. Birzeit University:-¹⁸

In order to learn the nature of what universities adopt, particularly Birzeit, the specialist in Arabic Language and the teacher of the course, Dr. Mahmūd al-'Aṭshān, was visited at his home in Ramallah. It was stated that the course carrying the name, Children's Literature, is available under No. 439 at the Department of Arabic Language/the Faculty of Arts. In most cases, graduates receive a degree in Arabic Literature. There is no university in the West Bank that offers a degree in Library Science which means a scarcity of specialists. However, this does not preclude that those working in libraries can be distinguished as witnessed by those working in the library of the Municipality of al-Beera who combine academic and creative aspects.

The course has been constantly offered for the past three years and has met with great demand. The number of those who wished to take it in the last academic term was 235 of whom 40 could be accommodated, this being the absorptive capacity of the form. The numbers perhaps express the progressive demand on a course considered untraditional by students as it concentrates on both the theoretical and practical sides. Students are trained in creative fields by specialists of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education through the National Institute for Training and Education. Furthermore, the course is optional and open to all university students of the third and fourth year levels regardless of their specialization. Despite it not being obligatory, it has witnessed great attendance. Al-'Aṭshān points out that other universities have

* This information was obtained through an interview with Dr. Ṣalāh Yāssīn at the University.

¹⁸ Annex No. (13), The The plan for the course on children's literature at Birzeit University

adopted the course on children's literature but not on a constant basis, such as the University of Bethlehem. Due to objective reasons which he summarized as the difficulty of the task to start with and the limitation of work horizons for such a specialization, he precludes that there would be in future an independent specialization in children's literature. He also referred to the non-existence of courses on illustrations for children's stories, a matter that drives those concerned to redress this lack with training courses that can be held through a university in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Culture and relevant institutions.

As to the source authorities for this course, they are from Arabic educational literature by authors from Egypt, Iraq and Syria. There are as well translated books and critical essays. Dr. al-'Aṭshān's opinion of the desire of librarians to work with children at schools is affirmative. If no work opportunity presents itself, they hasten to volunteer for work with children.

It is indicated by the above that the subject of children's literature is still in its beginnings. The course on children's literature in many of these universities has been optional at the Faculty of Arts. In others, it has been obligatory at the School of Education for students of Primary Education. It is worth mentioning that Birzeit University is considered to have taken a qualitative step towards spreading the habit of reading by moving students to the experimental stage through an optional session so that those who have joined this course would implement activities that encourage students to read.

Accordingly, we are unable at present to pass judgment on any of the previous experiments as this requires a study of the results. However, there is at least a trend and we look forward to undertake a campaign to cause universities to admit the course whether in the specialization of Education or Literature or to make it a university requirement.

Fifth:- Civil Institutions Active in the Field of Children's Literature:-¹⁹

- Interviews were undertaken with a number of civil institutions active in the field of children's literature, namely:- Al-Qaṭṭān Child Center, the Tamer Institute for Community Education, the Kan'ān Education and Development Institute, 'Aṭā' Ghazza, the Society for Culture and

¹⁹ Research was restricted to interviews with nine civil institutions due to the absence of serious institutions possessing a clear view on this subject. Many small institutions spread in the West Bank and Gaza Sector are active in this field but only within seasonal programs of weak performance, particularly due to the difficult security conditions and the shortage of funds in the last years.

- Free Thought, the Resources Center for Early Childhood, the Palestinian Society for Reading, the Center for Children's Arts and the 'is'ād al-ṭufūlah Center (Joy to Childhood);
- The axes for these interviews were defined as becoming acquainted with each institute's philosophy, objectives and the activities it has implemented within the framework of children's literature and encouraging reading;²⁰
 - Al-Qaṭṭān Center is an exceptional case in Gaza for, despite its recent establishment, it is considered today as a pioneer center in encouraging reading and is crowded with children thirsty for knowledge. It is considered an educational and cultural lighthouse and has registered 7,700 subscribers of whom 83% are children and 17% family kin and professionals. In July, it recorded 27,000 book borrowings for external use and 19,000 for internal use. Al-Qaṭṭān Center's activity is concentrated on children's literature and encouraging reading as follows:-
 1. Encouraging reading;
 2. Acquainting children with the various arts of literature, music, drama, drawing and cinema;
 3. Qualifying and training the staff working in the field of children's libraries in order to enhance the services they render to children;
 4. Reaching remote areas through offering extended service;
 5. Employing technology in encouraging reading, research and interaction with various cultures.

Al-Qaṭṭān Center faces the following problems:-

 1. Closures by the occupation have delayed the completion of the building and also the shipment of library material purchased in exhibitions in Arab States;
 2. Israeli raids and shelling have spread fear among children and their families. In many cases, they have caused the children's failure to reach the Center or the restriction of service to lending out of fear for the children;
 3. The Israeli erection of barriers before their withdrawal [from the Gaza Sector]. This prejudiced the arrival of employees to their work stations and the Center's inability to carry out activities outside the City of Gaza;
 4. The Center's remoteness from other Governorates so that children from outside Gaza cannot benefit from its services due to its distant

²⁰ Annex No. (14), A glimpse of civil institutes interviewed which are working in the field of children's literature and encouraging reading. This includes the philosophy, objectives and the most important activities undertaken in the field of children's literature and encouraging reading.

location as the children cannot reach it and their families fear for them. This deprived a great number of children from the Center's services despite their great thirst for such services.

- The Tamer Institute for Community Education was established in Jerusalem in 1989 and a branch office for it was opened in Gaza in 1998.[•]

- The Institute is active in a number of fields all of which supplement children's literature and encouraging reading through:-

1. Encouraging the habit of reading in Palestinian Society;
2. Encouraging production and civilized expression;
3. Consolidating the creative potential of youth and children;
4. Participating in the dissemination of children's literature by the establishment of libraries and holding workshops for writers and those interested;
5. Producing, printing and publishing a collection of issues for children and youth and distributing them to libraries and civil institutions;
6. Acting to consolidate the habit of reading through an annual Campaign for Encouraging the Habit of Reading in Palestinian Society, this to include:-

- A National Reading Week in April of every year;

- A competition, "My First Book", during which workshops are held for children aged 8-15 years on creative writing. Following that, the stories of winners will be printed and published;

- The Campaign, "I Donated a Book", an annual campaign during the last quarter of the year when books and publications are collected from libraries, institutions and individuals and presented to the Institute to support it in building up the contents of its library;

- The Palm Tree Teams, volunteers of young men and youth working in part of the campaign activities. They include a group called *yarā'āt* (Buds) which looks after creative writing by youths, holds team meetings during which they implement many activities and issue *yarā'āt*, the supplement with the newspaper, *al-ayyām*;

- Summer days with children;

- Training librarians and art drawers;

- Showing plays and training on story narration;

[•] This information was obtained from a personal interview with the Director General of the Institute, Mrs. Ranād al-Qubbaj.

- Issuing a bulletin for publishing children's creative output and news of their activities for distribution with daily newspapers once every two months;
- Caring for the blind and publishing some stories in Braille;
- Participating in exhibitions through distributors in Jordan and Lebanon and through local distributors. She also mentioned that the Institute was a member of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).

Concentration of activities and lending involves children aged 7-12 years. In addition, output and stories of children's literature are published after approval by a committee of specialists. Large quantities of these are printed and distributed to schools. He speaks of an active history for the Institute in respect of work relative to children's literature over two decades.

The Tamer Institute faces the following problems:-

1. The economic situation which, together with high cost, preclude the purchase of books for children;
2. The non-availability of children's books in libraries and institutions and the low degree of interest in them;
3. Children's disinclination to read because of boredom and the routine of the educational process;
4. The lack of provision of an area for children's creativity at schools, some civil institutions, libraries and cultural centers;
5. Children's preoccupation with modern technology such as use of the computer and Internet without making use of them in reading;
6. The scarcity of institutions working in Palestinian lands on the subject of the book and the child;
7. The cumulative problems of the educational process which prevent children from attaining the standard of reading required for learning;
8. The low level of the culture for reading in society as a result of the uncomfortable circumstances from which the Palestinian people are suffering generally.

"There is a scarcity of those who combine an academic qualification and knowledge of the skills of classification and indexing, on the one hand, and the ability to execute activities with children on the other hand," the Director General of the Institute.

- The Kan'an Developmental Educational Institute was established in 1997 as a non-government organization and the first project of the Palestinian Gathering for Developmental Education. It undertakes an active role in

supplementing local society with implements that contribute to the development of Palestinian human resources. This is done through training and qualifying cadres of active people to lead social activities in various fields, among various social categories, relying on the principle of alternating training with professional practice and implementation in the field of work.

- The fields of this Institute's interest concentrate on the following sectors:-
 1. Training people working in the social, cultural and educational field;
 2. Organizing activities with children and assisting them to express themselves through literary and theatrical expression as well as through games and plastic arts;
 3. Activating libraries of institutions working in the field of childhood by developing the skills of activators;
 4. Training teachers of the educational sector and helping them to acquire the necessary experience for dealing with children in order to encourage reading and respect freedoms;

- Within the framework of developing children's literature and encouraging reading, the Kan'ān Institute faces the following problems:-

1. The small number of libraries and the lack of experience and efficiency of those working in them for activating these libraries;
2. The lack of awareness by families of the importance of reading and libraries;
3. The absence of programs and activities to attract children to the library;
4. The method of implementing activities, the values embodied in activities and the enjoyment of the activity presented to children;
5. The necessity of training teachers in the ways to activate the library and encourage children to read;
6. The library is no more a matter of books and lending; it is additionally activities and performances.

- The 'Aṭā' Ghazza Institute was established in 2003. The activities related to children's literature implemented by it have varied from equipping model libraries for children to campaigns for the contribution of books and encouraging reading.

- The Institute's areas of interest in the fields of developing children's literature and encouraging reading were concentrated as follows:-

1. The child's culture and encouraging him to read. The bulk of its budget for the past two years was concentrated on projects to support child culture;

2. Presenting support commitments for orphans;
3. The distribution of school bags to children;
4. The distribution of winter sweaters to children;
5. Quick relief programs.

- The 'Aṭā' Ghazza Institute faces a number of problems and challenges represented in:-

1. The increase in the cost of children's stories;
2. The lack of abundance in the titles of children's books and stories;
3. The non-existence of local distribution firms;
4. The almost permanent closures of crossing points which preclude the arrival of most recent book publications to libraries;
5. Scant encouragement by teachers and parents for visits to home and school libraries.

- The Society for Free Culture and Thought has more than one center working in the field of encouraging reading. The most important are the Center for Child Culture, the Club of Tomorrow's Builders (bunāt al-ghad), the Dawn and Hope Center (al-shurūq wal-amal) and the Nawwār Center. Accordingly, a file allocated for the activities of two of these centers has been attached because they work among the age group with which the research is concerned.²¹

- The Center for Resources of Early Childhood:- This is a Palestinian civil educational organization established in 1985 by the initiative of a group of Palestinian educationalists as a pioneering project to fill the urgent need for a progressive and modern structure to educate and foster early childhood in Palestine.

* The Center's Message:- The Center seeks to support, advance, develop and modernize the sector of early childhood in Palestine by adopting a comprehensive framework of complementary concepts in the education and fostering of the Palestinian child and bringing him up with a wholesome character emotionally, socially, physically and mentally, committed to his country, identity and heritage. The Center's headquarters are in Jerusalem and it has many branches the most important of which is the one in al-Khalīl.

²¹ cf. Annex No. (14), Second: The Society for Free Culture and Thought:- from a file issued by the Society for Free Culture and Thought containing information on the activities of the Dawn Club and the Nawwār Educational Center directed towards children's literature and encouraging reading in addition to problems and obstacles faced by each of them.

The Center issued the *marah* [Mirth] series consisting of *Said and al-bulbul*, *shajarat al-nuqūd* (The Money Tree), *karmat 'akhir al-'unqūd* (The Vine Tree of the Bunch End), *fārisun yastaḥ'u 'an yusā'id* (A Knight Who Can Help), *'ayna 'ikhtafat Fullah?* (Where as Fullah Disappeared?), *'anā lastu shaqiyyan* (I Am Not Bad) and *Fāris wa Amal* (Fāris and Amal). The series ceased to be issued in 2000.

- The Palestinian Society for Reading:• Established in 2001 and registered under No. 2/R/100/2001, the Society's Board members are 'Imān 'Mūs, Salīm al-Baṣṭ, Abdul-Fattāh al-Qalqālī, Ghassān Ziyādah, Sāmiḥ 'Abbūshī, Dr. Sawsan Marwa, Mary Fāshā and Nājiḥ Shāhīn. The Society aims to encourage reading among all categories in society regardless of age. Its functions concentrated on annual activities that included the survey of books most read by children, youth and adults in Palestinian Society. The most important thing it does is the discussion of books issued in Palestine and cultural lectures.

- The Center for Children's Arts:- Located in al-Khalīl, this Center aims at encouraging reading and holding workshops for children on drawing.

- The 'Is'ād al-Ṭufūlah Center (Joy to Childhood):- Also located in al-Khalīl, this Center aims at developing the child in all aspects.♦

Sixth:- International and Local Exhibitions and Prizes:-

1. International Exhibitions:-

Six international book exhibitions have been held in the West Bank and Gaza Sector. These were as follows:-*

The first was in Gaza in 1995. The second was in Bethlehem in 1998. Gaza was the site of the third held in 1999. The fourth was held in Sariyyat Ramallah in 2000. While the fifth was not successful, the sixth was held in 2005 in Ramallah. At the end of this last exhibition, the Ministry of

* This information was obtained in an interview with Mr. Said al-Baṣṭ, a Society member and the custodian of the library of al-Beera Municipality.

♦ In an interview with Mrs. Mariam Abu al-Ĥalāwah, the Director in charge of Cultural Centers at the Ministry of Culture, she mentioned that there were 186 cultural centers concerned with reading without specifying age groups.

♦ This information was obtained in an interview with Mr. Mohammad al-Asmar, the Director General of Exhibitions at the Ministry of Culture.

Education and Higher Education bought all the books and distributed them to the schools. ♥

2. Children's Exhibitions:-

The first exhibition for children's books was held in Ramallah between the 29th August and the 7th September, 2007. More than 30 local and Arab publishing firms, particularly from Jordan, participated in this exhibition. Many marginal activities were held in order to encourage children to read and visit the exhibition.

In general, there are no exhibitions allocated especially for children's literature. However, international and local exhibitions were organized by the Palestinian Ministry of Culture and most of the important publishing firms which participated in these exhibitions had children's books in their wings. On the occasions of these exhibitions, there were organized workshops and specialized seminars related directly to all that pertains to creativity in the world of children. These are annual/periodic exhibitions that are held in various cities in the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza. The first of these exhibitions was inaugurated on 15/11/ 1996.

The publishing firms that participated in the first exhibition for children's books in Ramallah in the period between the 29th August and the 7th September, 2007, were the following:-

1. dār al-shurūq linnashr wa al-tawzī and its agencies, al-Manhal and al-Salwa Establishments from Jordan, dār Ṣādir, al-‘arabiyya lil ‘ulūm wa al-technoljiā, maktabat lubnān, dār al-jīl, the Aṣāla Publishing Institution, dār al-‘ilm lil malāyīn, Al-‘Ārif Institution and al-maktaba al-‘aṣriyya from Lebanon, dār al-shurūq, Cairo, The Safīr Company, al-dār al-miṣriyya al-lubnniyya and dār al-Fārūq from Egypt, and from Saudi Arabia Al-‘baikān;
2. From Jordan al-ahliyya li al-nashr wa al-tawzī‘ and its agencies;
3. nahdat Miṣr;
4. rawā’i‘ Majdalāwī li al-nashr and its agencies, dār al-nabta from Saudi Arabia and al-Aṣāla from Jordan;
5. dār al-Yāzūrī al-‘ilmiyya and dār ‘Usāma li al-nashr wa al-tawzī‘ from Jordan;
6. dār al-jīl al-‘arabi li al-nashr and its agencies (Scholastic) from the U.S.A. and dār al-fursān from Egypt;

♥ It was not possible to obtain information from any party in this respect.

7. dār Majdalāwī from Jordan and its agencies the de Bono Institute, from Syria dār Raslān, dār Ṭāriq and dār al-qalam and from Lebanon dār al-fikr al-‘arabī;
8. dār al-‘usra from Jordan;
9. dār Rabī‘ li al-nashr from Jordan;
10. The Dundīs Institute from Palestine;
11. The Abu Ghōsh Institute from Palestine;
12. maktabat kul shay’ from Palestine;
13. The Ogarit, Tamer and maṣādir al-ṭufūlah from Palestine;
14. dār al-bairaq al-‘arabī li al-nashr wa al-tawzī‘ from Palestine;
15. ‘Anūd from Palestine;
16. The Ghadīr Institute for Child Culture from Palestine.

The following also participated: the British Cultural Center, the German Cultural Center, the Cultural Section of the American Consulate in Jerusalem and the Wing for Persons with Special Needs/Palestine.

Marginal activities undertaken on the occasion of the exhibition included:

1. Readings in the Creativity Tent with participations by writers and others concerned with child culture;
2. Artistic performances from troupes such as that of ‘Awni Shaḥbar and Ronnie Rock;
3. Workshops on drawing and handicraft;
4. Television plays and performances.

3. Local exhibitions:-*

One of the most famous libraries that hold exhibitions is the Universities Library. Its owner asserted that other local exhibitions are held upon unilateral initiative by libraries and publishing firms in seclusion from formal authorities at the Ministry of Culture which makes no initiative to organize any local exhibitions. His Library took the initiative to organize a number of local exhibitions as from the year 1980 in the cities of Ramallah, Jerusalem, Nablus and Bethlehem. None of these exhibitions was allocated for children’s literature. As concerns international exhibitions for children’s literature, the first was the exhibition held lately in Ramallah on 29/8/2007.

He also confirmed that many local exhibitions are held. At the level of Universities House, for example, there were four exhibitions during 2007 in Ramallah and Bethlehem. Circumstances and closures have precluded

* This information was obtained in an interview with Mr. Isma‘īl Ṣālīḥ, owner of the Universities Library.

holding a local exhibition in Jerusalem. The number of participating publishing firms is connected to the number of agencies represented by the organizing party after discounting books published in Lebanon and Syria for considerations pertaining to the Israeli prohibition on their entry at the crossings. He also believes that the number of visitors was good and reflected a good level of attendance especially at the exhibitions of the year 2007, bringing forth to our minds that there are factors that have weakened book promotion. Perhaps the most prominent of these is the photocopying of books.

A number of exhibitions were also held in Gaza. The most important of these were:-

- The Orchard of al-Azhar University in 2000;
- The Rashād al-Shawwā Cultural Center in 2001;
- The Italian Complex in 2003.

4- Conferences on Children's literature:-

Two conferences on children's literature were convened in Palestine. The first was in October, 2005 following which a book compiling the documents presented was published. The second was convened in October, 2006 at al-Beera Municipality under the sponsorship of the Diakonia Institute. The third was scheduled to be convened in November, 2007.

After reviewing the reality of local and international exhibitions and those concerned with children's literature, we must demand of the Ministry of Culture that permanent halls be provided in the major cities. We must also demand that the Authority and institutions should support local exhibitions so that they would be within access to the greatest number of children possible and to those concerned with children's literature at the local level.

5. Prizes:-*

A- Prizes by the State were started between the years 1995 and 1996 and continued annually until 2000 when they were stopped with the Aqsa Intifada. The committee was chaired by the poet, Mahmud Darwish. They intend presently to revive them when prizes will be allocated for adults, youth, children and writers of children's literature books;

B- The Palestine Prize of Appreciation was distributed three times the last of which was in 2002. The prizes are awarded in the fields of poetry, stories, the theatre, translation, newspaper essays and music. No prize was allocated

* This information was obtained in an interview with Mr. Ghassān Qaṭṭān.

for writers of children's literature. Instead, there was a competition in cooperation with UNESCO and it was won by each of Samāhir al-Khazindār and Majdī al-Shōmalī;

C- In the year 2000, the Prize was awarded to eleven creative writers and intellectuals:-

1- The poet, Mureed al-Barghouthi, for his poetry collection *al-nās fī lailihim (People in Their Nights)*;

2- The writer Faisal al-Hōrānī for his book *durūb al-manfa (Paths of the Exile)*;

3- The singer Reem al-Banna for her singing performance;

4- Faisal Darrāj for literary criticism;

5- Yahya Yakhluf for his novel *buḥairatun warā' al-rīḥ (A Lake Beyond the Wind)*;

6- Ahmad Omar Shāhīn for translation;

7- Kamāl Balāṭa for plastic art;

8- Sheikh Mohammad Hussein and Archmandrite Dr. Atalla Hanna were awarded the Jerusalem Prize;

9- The Prize for Information was shared by Waleed al-'Umari and the photographer Ṭalāl Abu Raḥma.

D- Many non-periodic competitions take place as well. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education used to implement an annual plan for competitions in the field of story writing, rendition and the theatre but ceased to do so in the years of the Intifada. It had been decided to resume these competitions in 2007.²²

Seventh:- Information:-

- Television was established in 1995, the year when the first experimental broadcast was made.
- There is no relation between the Ministry of Information and the authority for radio and television. However, there is a plan to merge all Governmental media under one heading so that they will all revert to one authority, namely "The High Council for Information" including the Ministry of Information, the Public Authority for Radio and Television, the Palestinian News Agency "Wafa" and the Public Authority for News;

²² Annex No. (15), The annual Plan for the Competitions of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the Field of Story Writing, Rendition and the Theatre.

- To date, the merger and implementation of the plan have not taken place due to the circumstances in the Gaza Sector. It has become clear that the present Palestinian Television service has no explicit plan for children. Because it moved from Gaza around mid 2007, it is still in a state of emergency and relies a great deal on recordings. The Radio and Television Authority has been closed down in addition to many other private media institutions after the military showdown executed by the Hamas Movement;[•]
- There is neither definitive party nor definitive bases for the determination of children's programs and all such programs are the result of individual initiatives. However, the team preparing the programs takes the age group into consideration. All programs are prepared in Arabic;[^]
- In general, the content of children's programs deals with the subject of "Children and Peace" from their viewpoint, how the Palestinian child can live in security and peace and how he can build up a peace-loving relation with others. The program, "*mumayyazūn*" (*Distinguished*), meets a distinguished talented child, introduces him, visits his school, home and such places he frequents as have had influence on refining his talent. The program "*farah fī farah*" (*Joy unto Joy*), includes varied sections about Palestinian villages, a visit to a library in order to encourage children to read, entertainment sections, festivals and other items;²³
- Two daily children's periods are broadcast, one in the morning from 7 until 8 and the other in the evening between 4:30 and 5 or 5:30;
- Among the programs presented, the program "*lahn al-hayāt*" (*The Tune of Life*) is a daily religious cultural program broadcast for half an hour. Television also presents a daily ten minutes item on the activities of the Palestine International Exhibition. Among the best it has presented is *bustān al-‘aṣāfir* (*The Bird Orchard*), a serialization of 30 episodes for the development of dreaming and imagination directed by Darwīsh Abu al-Rīsh;

[•] This information was obtained in an interview with Mr. Qāssim Maṣṣūr, of the Programs Department at Radio and Television., Mr. Marzūq Marzūq, the Manager of Archives at Palestinian Television and Miss Hiba Milḥim, the Executive Manager of Radio al-mustaqbal [Future].

[^] A program for a proposed program session period was obtained from the West Bank Television, Annex No. (16), whereas no radio and television program session for 2006 was obtained in the Gaza Sector because television is not operational at present and remains closed after the events witnessed by Gaza and the domination over the Gaza Sector by Hamas.

²³ Annex No. (16), A sample of a television program session proposed for 2006 in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector.

- In summation, Television presents daily between 90 and 100 minutes for children but it lacks a clear vision in this field particularly as it is in a transitory state of emergency;
- In the past few years, Television used to broadcast such children's programs as *maqāṭī' 'an al-ṭufūlah (Excerpts on Childhood)*, some produced by Television and some by UNICEF, a film about childhood, *'aḥlāmūn baidā' (White Dreams)*, a film about needs and the situation of children directed by Darwīsh Abu al-Rīsh, and a film about child labour called *al-'aydī al-ṣaghīra (The Little Hands)* made in Gaza about children who were casualties there. A program for children called *ṣabāḥ al-khair (Good Morning)* about spring and the daḥnūn plant used to be broadcast as well;

Accordingly, Television staff believe that Palestinian Television was delinquent in respect of devising plans and programs appropriate for children. They hope to have soon a systematic and clear plan to serve the Palestinian child and be capable of responding to his needs.

- The radio station was established in 1997 under the name “The Voice of Jerusalem” and used to broadcast from there. However, it was attacked a great deal after the demise of Faisal al-Husseini and resumes its broadcast experimentally at present from Ramallah under the name “Radio Al-Mustaqbal” (Radio Future);
- The radio service is also preparing a program for Ramadan under the name “Ḥanān”. Some children will attend at the radio station to participate with the announcer in the program. Children's stories for encouraging reading will be among the prizes to be presented through the program which will include stories and discussions of them. It will be broadcast around 6 p.m. each Friday, this being the weekly holiday;
- The establishment of radio and television channels in Palestine is accelerating.

It is clear from what preceded that there has been tangible progress. However, information concerning children in Palestine suffers a number of problems the most prominent of which are:

- 1- The shortage of experience among those working in the field of information concerning children;

- 2- The concentration of the private media sector on profitability instead of children's interests;
- 3- The scarcity of financial support to the information sector;
- 4- The shortage of information available to those employed in producing media material concerning children;
- 5- The non application of the slogan "The Children Come First" in a practical and systematic form;
- 6- The instantaneousness that stamps projects;
- 7- The lack of applied training.

It is also noticeable that, despite the large quantity of audio or visual channels, they are not up to the required standard and represent scattered efforts that are not exerted within a studied or systematic plan or a unified vision. I believe that any success in encouraging reading requires a comprehensive campaign in the media and the search of a creative method to organize these efforts.

Eighth:- Associations:-²⁴

1. Librarians:-*

- The frame that joins Palestinian librarians together is the Association for Palestinian Libraries and Information which is chaired by Mr. Jabr, himself a member of the International Federation of Library Associations.
- The Association's objectives are to promote the progress and development of libraries, supervise and assist librarians, encourage reading and public libraries, encourage the accumulation of necessary statistics, train librarians, convene conferences and participate in international conferences;
- Through this Association, three conferences for librarians have been convened in 1992, 1996 and 1998. This effort was discontinued after that due to the present circumstances. Hope is now renewed that the Association's activity will be resumed on an extensive basis.

2. Translators:-

²⁴ Annex No. (17), A List of the names of authors working in the field of children's literature in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector.

* This information was obtained in an interview with Hānī Wajīh Jabr, the Manager of al-Najāh University Library.

There is no union type entity or association that pools translators. Matters remain within the frame of individual efforts such as those of Walīd Abu Bakr and ‘Iṣṣām al-Baṭrān.....;

3. Art Drawers:-[^]

- It has been pointed out that there is no association for art drawers but there is a league for plastic arts professionals headed by Mr. Nabīl ‘Anānī. There also exists a club for young artists comprising a good number of artists who do work for children’s literature. It is now chaired by Mr. Mohammad Ṣālīḥ Khalīl himself. The Association for Young Artists was formed in 2003 and was headed at that time by Mr. Mohammad Ṣālīḥ Khalīl who manages it now after a number of successive administrations. Since this Institution started its formal activities at the beginning of 2003, a number of developmental projects for children and youths have been executed with finance from various local and foreign sources. These projects are compatible with the Institution’s view of its community role for some aimed at generating community awareness among youths through the language of the various arts in the fields of human rights, particularly children’s rights, democracy, respect for law and the consolidation of the culture of peace (civil peace and peace between peoples, cultures and other ideologies). Various arts were consecrated for work with young delinquents and children with special needs. The Institution has also executed projects aiming at the protection of the psychological health of Palestine’s children through art, especially in villages and the areas exposed to constant friction with the soldiers and settlers of the Israeli occupation;
- By way of participation in the creation of improved infrastructure for the industry of the Palestinian child’s books, the training of young professional artists in the field of drawing for stories was one of the most important projects executed;
- In the area of training cadres, the Institution undertook the training of Government school teachers of 35 basic schools in the field of teaching art in addition to training the activators of art at cultural clubs in rural areas and in al-Khalīl.

Despite that, this field is still in great need for development and training. A quick glimpse at drawings in Western books and those in Palestinian books will cause us to notice a marked contrast and look towards exerting greater

[^] This information was obtained in an interview with Mr. Mohammad Ṣālīḥ Khalīl, the Director of the Department of Plastic Arts at the Palestinian Ministry of Culture.

effort to advance this aspect due to its effect on attracting children to books and to reading them.

4. Journalists:- The Association of Palestinian Journalists is headed by Mr. Na‘īm al-Ṭūbāssī. Newspapers can be listed as follows:-

N e w s p a p e r	M e t h o d o f P u b l i s h i n g	C o m m e n t s
Al-Ḥayāt al-Jadīda (The New Life)	Critical essays and analytical articles	I r r e g u l a r
Al-Quds	Stories, puzzles, games	Independent page every Friday
Al-Ayyām (The Times)	An independent annex, <i>yarā‘āt</i>	Two-monthly in cooperation with the Tamer Institute

5. Writers:- The Palestinian Writers’ Association is headed by Al-Mutawakkil Ṭāhā and its interest in children’s literature is rather limited.

We note that the interest of journalism in children’s literature is not great. There are some newspapers that publish some excerpts but the only newspaper to allocate a weekly Friday corner for the child is Al-Quds.

Ninth:- Writers for Children:-²⁵

Since its start, Tamer has assisted writers to publish and hosted many international authors of children’s literature. This became more especially so after its activity and the Resources Center supported it to become a member of the International Council for Youth Books and join the activities of other civil institutions that lend assistance for publishing such as Ogarit. This energized the writing movement in Palestine and we can review here some of the information that has become available on authors of children’s literature in Palestine.

1. Mahmoud Shqair:- He is a fulltime author, 66 years of age, and has 30 years experience in the field of writing children’s books. In general, his

²⁵ Annex No. (18), A list of the names of authors and persons working in the field of children’s literature who have been met, distributed according to functional capacity and place of work in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector.

concern is writing for children in the age groups 6-9, 9-12 and 12-15.

- The author publishes his books through a number of publishing firms in Amman [Jordan], Ibn Rushd [Averroes], Al-Karmil/and Ramallah, Tamer, Ogarit, the Association of Palestinian Writers and in cooperation with the Directorate of Education at UNRWA, Jerusalem. His view is that we can obtain the information on publishing and cost from publishers;
- As to the level of demand for copies, 10,000 copies were printed of story collections published by Ibn Rushd, Al-Karmil and Tamer, 10,000 copies of *'anā wa Jumāna (Me and Jumāna)*, 11,000 copies of *kawkabun ba'īdun li 'ukhtī al-malika (A Remote Planet for My Sister, the Queen)*/ tens of thousands of copies of five books that are distributed annually to UNRWA schools in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria;
- When asked about children's interests, he confirmed that, naturally, children's interests change with the development of literary taste and the variety of programs presented for children by television and radio, also with the development of school curricula. However, there continue to be basic inevitable interests for each age group;
- He also asserted that those who read are a very great minority, perhaps the students of some private schools and, perhaps, students who are cared for by some childhood centers;
- As to awareness of needs according to age groups, he asserted that it is not systematic due to the entry of many writers to the field of writing for children as a hobby without sufficient theoretical preparation;
- His opinion of the standard of children's literature is that it is still modest in comparison with output in advanced states. The present situation of children's literature from the aspects mentioned is still not satisfactory;
- He also emphasized that the nature of the relation between publishers and distributors is not known to him. However, he is certain that the distribution of books in our country is extremely bad. There does not exist a national distribution firm that undertakes the distribution of books diligently in all towns and locations;
- Furthermore, writers of children's literature have no understanding of the needs of children's age groups and there is no appreciation for the importance of reading. In general, children's demand on reading is limited;

- Price plays a big role as does the availability of books. The more important matter, however, is that the habit of reading is generally lacking;
- The degree of children's participation in literature addressed to them varies from one school to another as the matter is related to the extent of interest manifested by the school in encouraging its students to read;
- As to radio and television programs, he is unable to attend to them for lack of time;
- According to his information, there are a number of magazines addressing children such as *Mājid/Qatar*, *'Usāma/Syria* and *Ĥātīm/Jordan*;
- The most important problems facing the writers of children's literature in his opinion are defined as follows:-
 1. The difficulty of importing and exporting;
 2. The demand on books as commodities;
 3. The quality of available books of children's literature;
 4. The cost of books of children's literature to both writer and consumer (printing, publishing and distribution);
 5. The importance of the book in comparison to other modern forms of children's literature (television programs, CDs, etc...)
- The author listed his books as follows:-
 1. *Al-ĥājiz (The Barrier)*, a story collection, 6-9 years, first edition 1986, *dār al-Karmil li al-nashr wa al-tawzī'*, Amman. Art drawer: Abdul-Ra'ūf Sham'ūn;
 2. *Al-jundi wa al-lu'ba (The Soldier and the Game)*, 6-9 years, first edition 1986, *dār Ibn Rushd li al-nashr wa al-tawzī'*, Amman. Art drawer: Abdul-Fattāh Nājī;
 3. *'ughniyat al-ĥimār (The Donkey's Song)*, 9-12 years, first edition 1988, *dār al-Karmil li al-nashr wa al-tawzī'*, Amman. Art drawer: Zakī Shaqfa;
 4. *mihnat al-dīk (The Cock's Profession)*, a story collection, 6-9 years, first edition 1999, a publication of the *Ogarit Center for Publishing and Translation*, Jerusalem. Art drawer: Bahā' al-Bukhārī;
 5. *qālat Maryam, qāla al-fata (Maryam Has Said, the Lad Has Said)*, a long story, 12-15 years, first edition 1996, published by the Association of Palestinian Writers, Jerusalem. Art drawer: Nādyā al-Shalabī;
 6. *'anā wa Jumāna (Me and Jumāna)*, a novel, 12-15 years, *Ogarit Publications*, Ramallah, first edition 2001. Cover by Sharīf Samḥān, inside drawings by Abdul-Jabbār Dweikāt;

7. *ṭuyūrun ‘ala al-nāfidha (Birds on the Windowsill)*, a story, 12-15 years, *UNRWA Publications*, Department of Education, first edition 2001. Art drawer: Māhir Fāris;
8. *al-walad alladhī yaksiru al-zujāj (The Boy Who Breaks the Glass)*, a story, 9-12 years, *UNRWA Publications*, Department of Education, first edition 2001. Art drawer: Māhir Fāris;
9. *tajribatun qāsiya (A Cruel Experience)*, a story, 9-12 years, *UNRWA Publications*, Department of Education, first edition 2001. Art drawer: Māhir Fāris;
10. *al-rubbān (The Sea Pilot)*, three texts for the theatre, 12-15 years, *Ogarit Publications*, first edition 2003. The book has no drawings;
11. *al-ḥaṭṭāb (The Lumberjack)*, a popular tale, 6-9 years, *dār al-shurūq li al-nashr wa al-tawzī‘*, Ramallah, first edition 2004. Art drawer: Mohammad Ṣāliḥ Khalīl;
12. *al-malik al-ṣaghīr (The Young King)*, a story, 12-15 years, *UNRWA Publications*, Department of Education, first edition 2004. Art drawer: Mohammad Ṣāliḥ Khalīl;
13. *‘Alā’ fī al-bayt al-ṣaghīr (‘Alā’ in the Small House)*, a story, 9-12 years, *UNRWA Publications*, Department of Education, first edition 2004. Art drawer: Mohammad Ṣāliḥ Khalīl;
14. *qālat lanā al-shajara (The Tree Has Told Us)*, a collection of stories, 9-12 years, *Ogarit Publications*, Ramallah, first edition 2004,. Art drawer: Abdul-Jabbār Dweikāt;
15. *kawkabun ba‘īdun li ‘ukhtī al-malika (A Remote Planet for My Sister, the Queen)*, a novel, 12-15 years, *Tamer Publications*, Ramallah, first edition 2007. Art drawer: Mohammad ‘Mūs.

2. Mary Jamīl Fāshā:-

A library custodian and researcher with 30 years experience in this field, she had graduated in 1970 from the University of North Carolina [U.S.A.] and has attended a number of sessions on children’s literature at British universities.

She has written a number of books and studies including:

- *al-mahārāt al-maktabiyya li al-marḥala al-‘ibtidā’iyya (Library Skills for the Elementary Stage)*, *dalīl al-ṭifl (The Child’s Guide)*, Amman, 1989;
- *dalīl mawārid wa maṣādir thaqāfat al-ṭifl al-filisṭīnī (Guide for the Resources and References for the Culture of the Palestinian Child)*, Ramallah, the *Tamer Institute for Community Education*;
- *al-bibliogrāfia al-filisṭīniyya li kutub al-atfāl (The Palestinian*

bibliography of Children's Books), the *Tamer Institute. 1997.*

- She is also the author of many essays in the field connected with activating libraries.

- The stage she concentrates on includes the students of the Elementary Stage. She also addresses some of her writings and essays to those who deal with children, especially teachers and families;
- She publishes her output through three outlets, publishing firms, specifically dār al-shurūq, educational and international bodies, especially UNRWA and the Tamer Institute for Community Education which has the lion's share of her publications;
- Mary Fāshā sees that children's interests have changed presently from previous times in the light of innovations led by the computer and television which present ready knowledge moulded into specific frames. Therefore, those who read are restricted to those who are encouraged by family and teachers, especially those excelling academically;
- The researcher points out the presence of a state of awareness of the needs of children in the pre-school stage and of youth among authors, researchers and those interested. This acts towards unifying views in respect of any trends that are adopted;
- She sees that the level of interest in children's literature is not bad in the light of the difficulties and challenges enveloping Palestine. It is also acceptable in comparison with sister states. However, it is possible to attain a better situation if books were to become exempt from taxation and a special law is adopted concerning creativity;
- She does not hesitate in describing the nature of the relation between publishers and distributors as purely commercial. This renders cultural interest of no relevance in regard to the priorities of work;
- Children do not read Arabic books only; those who attend schools where teaching is undertaken in a foreign language also read books in English and French. She sees that this accords students the opportunity to become acquainted with various cultures;
- She does not deny the existence of a category who read nothing because they do not see their parents reading and because the education system leaves no margin for encouraging free reading;
- As to obstacles facing reading, one cannot pretend to forget the difficulty of importing in the shadow of occupation. She is also ambitious for books of a better standard as to content and production.

- Add to that the negative role of the computer which has substituted reading interest with electronic games. She has noticed in her experience that some authors allow children to share in their view of things while writing story text;
- She expressed no opinion in respect of children's programs on radio and television. She pointed out a rather important point, to wit the non-continuity of journalistic issues and magazines allocated for children for the issue of these publication ceases quite soon either because of poor circulation or the lack of funds. She also noted that there is a one page weekly annex with the newspaper Al-Quds.

3. Samīh Mohammad Abu Zākieh:-

He is an art drawer and a researcher specialized in arts pertaining to the child. A graduate from the Institute of Arts, he has 25 years experience and has attended a number of specialized sessions. He has written many books and studies including:

- *funūn al-aṭfāl (Children's Arts)*, 1987;
- *A Hundred Routes to Peace*, Canadian Publishing Institution, 2007.

He is the Manager of the Palestinian Child Arts Center and has written a number of articles on the analysis of drawings.

- The stage he concentrates on in his articles and activities includes the students of the Basic Stage. He also directs some of his activities to those who deal with children, in particular teachers and families;
- He finances the publication of his output personally; this limits his ability to have successive issues and, therefore, he requests the support of creative people;
- Abu Zākieh sees that children's interests have changed presently from past time in the light of the information technology. Television has also furthered the lowering of the degree of interest by delivering information to the child without any effort;
- He believes that awareness is available among parents, authors, researchers and those interested in children's literature;
- He thinks that the level of interest in children's literature is not bad in the light of what Palestine has by way of cultural centers, civil and international institutions, programs and activities adopted by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education;
- Abu Zākieh describes the nature of the relation between publishers and distributors as commercial which makes both groups governed by the logic of profitability more than by the logic of cultural returns;

- Abu Zākīeh admits the presence of a category that do not read even in Arabic due to a general weakness in reading skills and the system of automatic class promotion which faces us with children who have not mastered reading although they are in the Fourth or Fifth Grades. Another factor contributing to this weakness is the absence of a library hour. For the past four years, it has suffered the absence of cultural activity. Abu Zākīeh says that he has now heard that this activity will be resumed presently following the Ministry's review of the plan for cultural activities. He did not conceal his annoyance with the low degree of interest in children's programs by both radio and television.

4. Sāmiḥ 'Abbūshī

He is an architect, 46 years of age, and is keenly interested in child culture. He participates constantly in meetings related to that field, writes, draws, narrates stories and tales and participates in workshops allocated for children. His works include:-

1. *Hanān wa 'aṣḍiqā'uha al-judud (Hanān and Her New Friends)*, the Tamer Institute;
2. *Fāris wa Amal (Fāris and Amal)*, Childhood Resources;
3. *man sayughannī li Yāsamin?* (*Who Will Sing to Jasmine?*), the Tamer Institute;
4. *karmat 'ākhar al-'unqūd (The Vine Tree of the Bunch End)*, the Resources Center for Early Childhood.

- Mr. Sāmiḥ 'Abbūshī writes for children aged 5-8 years and is assisted in respect of publishing by the Tamer Institute and the Childhood Resources Institute;
- Financing for these publications is through the support rendered by international institutions such as Diakonia or others;
- Books that are admitted to schools are printed in reasonable volume, 10,000 copies, such as *man sayughannī li Yāsamin?* As regards other books, 1,500 copies of each are printed. He did not answer some questions but stated that the prices of children's books published locally are reasonable. Their cost to parents is not much when compared with translated books published outside Palestine;
- He believes that children will take up reading if suitable books are available to them, particularly enjoyable books. In his opinion, the problem is that children's families are not avid readers and, therefore, how can they encourage their children to read? The problem also rests

in the quality of children's books available and their ability to attract the child. As to radio and television programs, he stated that he gives them no time.

5. Dīmā Saḥwīl

Thirty three years old, she has three years experience in her field of interest, children's literature, for which she allocates time despite her work as the lawyer of Al-Quds Bank. She writes stories for children and participates in workshops on them. Her works include:-

- 1- *al-amīr wa al-ṣukhūr (The Prince and the Rocks)*, Tamer Publications 2006, drawings by Sāmīr 'Awad;
- 2- *malik al-baḥr (King of the Sea)*, 2007, was awarded sixth rank for al-'awda prize;
- 3- *'Īmān wa al-ṭā'ira al-waraqīyya ('Īmān and the Paper Kite)*, under publication.

- She considers herself a writer for children aged 4-12 years and publishes through the Tamer Institute for Community Education and through the Internet, the site for children's literature. She does not know the cost of publishing as it is the Institute which looks after that;
- She believes that children's interests have changed greatly because we are in the age of satellite channels and the Internet. They take children away from reading;
- The number of readers, be they adults or juniors, is small according to her belief;
- She was affirmative in respect of writers, both adults and amateurs, having awareness of children's needs according to age group;
- She thinks the cost of books is high, especially in these difficult circumstances. She has no knowledge of the ease or difficulty of publishing;
- She says that people understand the differences between age groups but interest in reading is generally weak. Our children read mostly in Arabic;
- As to problems, she finds that these are related to the cost of the book for children and the extent of its importance relevant to the child's other interests, especially in modern technology;
- As to children's programs on Palestinian Television, she finds them very weak and not up to the minimum of the child's needs, particularly if compared with what is offered by satellite channels.

6. Zaynab Abdul-Salām Ḥabash

She worked previously in UNRWA's Department of Education and, subsequent to that, as a Director General in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Born in Beit Dajan, Jaffa, she is 64 years of age and has 40 years experience. After she specialized in English Literature at the University of Damascus, she entered the field of education and teaching as the officer in charge of the Jerusalem area at UNRWA. Then she was appointed a Director General at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the secretary of its Education and Higher Education Committee. In 1982, she graduated with a M.Sc. degree from the University of Birzeit. She takes part in a number of community activities and her works include:

- 1- Two story collections for youth, *limādhā ya'shaq al-awlād al-burqūq?* (*Why Do Lads Love Plums?*) and *qālat liyā al-zanbaqa* (*The Lily Told Me*);
- 2- Five poetry collections, *qūlt li al-raml* (*Tell the Sands*), *al-jarh al-filistīnī* (*The Palestinian Wound*), *barā'im al-dam* (*The Buds of Blood*), *lā taqūlī māta yā 'ummī* (*Say Not He Has Died, Mother*), *ḥafarū mudhakkārātī 'alā jasadī* (*They Carved My Memoirs on My Body*) and *li'annahū waṭanī* (*Because It Is My Country*);
- 3- A collection of plays of one scene under the title *hādhā al-'ālam al-majnūn* (*This Mad World*);
- 4- Four collections of thoughts and a prose poem;
- 5- A novel entitled *al-farāsha wa al-'akḥṭabūt* (*The Butterfly and the Octopus*);
- 6- A story for children, *mughāmarāt Ḥdaidūn* (*The Adventures of Ḥdaidūn*), for ages 4-9 years, 2007.

- She considers herself a writer for children, lads and youth and publishes in her own mu'assasat al-'anqā' li al-tajdīd wa al-'ibdā' (Phoenix Institute for Renovation and Creativity). She charges nothing for publishing as all the cost comes out of her own account. The number of copies varies from 1,000 to 2,000;
- She confirmed that children's interests have changed due to satellite channels and computers including films and games;
- In her opinion, those who read these days are children who meet with encouragement from their families, school or have a strong incentive to read. The proof of that is that we notice many publications

- allocated for specific age groups. In libraries, books are also arranged according to age groups;
- When asked about the standard of children's literature today, she said that there are many encouraging symptoms for children's literature to be developed presently but we are still at the beginning due to high cost and the difficulty of publishing;
 - As for the relation between publishers and distributors, she said that both parties have difficulties due to the barriers that shred our country, the high cost of books and the low level of purchasing;
 - As to whether the general public was aware of the importance of reading and the levels of children's age groups, she answered in the affirmative but said the trouble was in the percentage of taxation on imported books which generates a high price. Children would take to reading if books are available;
 - In respect of problems, she thinks that all of them should be disposed of or controlled such as the high cost of books and demand on purchasing;
 - She stated that very few writers think of narrating their stories to children although that would give the writer an indication as to how successful his story is;
 - As to television and radio programs, she regards them as an intrusion on our culture and do not respond to our needs. She does not mention if there were children's magazines in existence.

7- Bāsima al-Takrūrī:-

A teacher and translator, she is 25 years of age and has six years experience. Among her works are the following:-

- 1- *khiṭṭat Salma (Salma's Scheme)*, Tamer Institute 2004;
- 2- *yawmiyyāt taḥt al-'iḥtilāl (A Diary under the Occupation)*, Tamer Institute 2005;
- 3- *mughāmarāt kayyūs wa kayyūsa (The Adventures of Kayyūs and Kayyūsa)*, Tamer Institute 2006.

- The writer says that she targets the age group from 7-9 years and that she publishes through the Tamer Institute;
- As to children's interests, she asserted that they do not change but take on new forms according to the dictates of the space of

- imagination which are realized by the much more attractive new technology;
- As to who read, she believes they are a minority and occasional. As to awareness of age groups, she says that writing has become similar to fashions. Interest in the age group is merely an instrument of measure which is not implemented in books issued in Palestine and which do not lead the child to enjoyment and imagination as they are not open to the real imagination of the child;
 - In respect to the standard of children's literature and its present situation, she said that families welcome children's books but the price is prejudicial, particularly in the case of translated books which are of a better quality;
 - Regarding the relation between publisher and distributor, she stated that she was not cognizant of it. She affirmed that children like reading in Arabic because of their instinctive love for books and stories;
 - Any refrainment from reading is attributable to the non-existence of books that can attract children's attention;
 - She restricted problems to the types of published books, difficulty of importing and exporting, high cost of books and non-availability of illustrators that can produce books attractive to children;
 - She sees that testing the book with children before publishing it benefits the writer and helps him to make corrections. As to audio or visual programs, she does not follow them.

8. Majdī Ya'qūb al-Shōmalī

The public relations consultant with the Japanese Agency for International Cooperation in Jericho as of January, 2006 to date, he is 53 years of age and has 30 years experience.

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He is a Palestinian writer and engineer born in Beit Sāhūr in 1954. Chief Editor of the quarterly *Beit Sāhūr* magazine (68 pages), he also heads the Cardinal House Cultural Center in Bethlehem. He:

- prepared and directed a number of plays and poetry tableaus in Iraq and Kuwait between 1972 and 1984;
- was in charge (1997-2000) of generating local awareness during the Bethlehem 2000 Project;

- is the trainer for “Creative Writing”, “Story Narration” and “The Employment of Stories in Education” at a number of institutions such as the University of Bethlehem 2004-5, Jerusalem’s Educational Television 2000, the Peace Center, the Tamer Institute and many others in Bethlehem, al-Khalīl and Jericho;
- was the joint writer with Rose al-Shōmalī of the television program of 16 episodes *’ihnā wa Nakhla (We and Nakhla)* which was awarded the prize as the best variety program for children at the Tunis Festival in 2001. The program was produced by Jerusalem’s Educational Television;
- was awarded third rank of al-‘awda competition for children’s literature in 2007;
- has a number of printed works for children and youth including:
 1. *riwāyat ṣayf 67 (The Summer of 67)* for youth, issued by the Tāmer Institute for Community Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Culture;
 2. *Hulāko yaltaḥiq bi al-madsrasa (Holago Goes to School)*, a story, issued by the Tamer Institute for Community Education;
 3. *al-sirr (The Secret)*, a story, was awarded the prize of a competition organized by the Ministry of Culture and was printed twice;
 4. *’anā mish nakira (I Am not a Nobody)*, nine theatrical scenes dealing with the subject of democracy and elections. Written at the request of the Center for Developmental Work Together, it was issued by *dār al-bayān*;
 5. *fāris al-malā’ib (The Knight of the Playgrounds)*, issued by *dār al-ḥadā’iq*, Beirut;
 6. *Lubnā tal’ab wa tata’allam (Lubnā Plays and Learns)*, four stories: supervising the writing of a number of stories issued by the Faculty of Education at the University of Bethlehem. It was written in 2005 as an example of story employment in teaching physics, chemistry and mathematics;
 7. *’awdat al-’azīz (Return of the Cherished One)*, under print by the Badīl Center. This was the story awarded the prize of al-‘awda competition for children’s literature.
- wrote a number of plays (unpublished) that were presented in Gaza in favour of The Palestinian Center for Conflict Management;
- translated many foreign stories such as *Winnie the Witch (al-sāḥira winni)*, *The Friend of the Seal (ṣadīq al-faqma)*, issued by the Tamer Institute;
- composed many poems and songs for children including: *bas shway (Just*

a Little), music writing and publication by the National Institute for Music, and four poems that were included in the curricula of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education;

- was the production manager of the video clip, *ḥulum al-ṭīfl al-filisṭīnī* (*The Dream of the Palestinian Child*);

- wrote a number of scripts for documentary films;

- edited a number of novels, stories and books.

- Mr. Shōmalī writes for youth and children and publishes through the Ministry of Culture, the Tamer Institute, the University of Bethlehem, dār al-bayān in Bethlehem and dār Beirut. He sees that there is a demand for publishing and on purchasing numerous copies of each book;
- As for the reasons causing the change in children's interests, he attributes them to television and the computer. He sees that those who read are the children of educated people but we must seek to make reading a popular matter;
- He says that after reviewing the record of lending at some children's libraries he found the situation unsatisfactory. At the Tamer Institute the daily quantity is 13 and at the Papal Mission it is 15;
- He believes that there is awareness of age groups and also thinks that all ages need books;
- His evaluation is that there is insufficiency in the standard of children's literature but that is not the only deficiency. He believes that the writing content is good but requires the development of its artistic aspects to become more in harmony with children and the new mentality;
- The most important problems are the demand on books as commodities, the cost of the book to the Palestinian child in present circumstances, the quality of books in third rank and the difficulty of importing and exporting coming last;
- The book, in his opinion, is more important than television and the computer because it is the point from which the child's comprehension is launched for the understanding of language, reading, drama, singing, how to learn writing and other matters, all of which he will not find from television;
- He had worked with children in television programs the standard of which is not of a high quality in his opinion. What is presented is the

dropout from the tables of others. We take this and it reflects negatively on our children.

9. Şafā' 'Umayr

She is 43 years of age and works as a children's teacher. She writes for children aged 3-8 years. The following are among her works:

- 1- *Dīmā (Dīmā)*, the Tamer Institute;
- 2- *'ukhtī Sārā (My Sister Sarah)*, the Tamer Institute;
- 3- *hadiyyatun li al-shams (A Present to the Sun)*, the Writers' Association;
- 4- *'anā lastu shaqiyyan (I Am Not Bad)*, the Center for Children's Resources;
- 5- *man tuḥib (Whom You Love)*, Ogarit Center;
- 6- *hā hā (Ha Ha)*, under print, Ogarit Center.²⁶

Tenth:- Publishing and Distribution Firms:-²⁷

Within the framework of interviewing a number of people working in this field, it was possible to form the following deductions:-*

- There are presently in the West Bank many publishing and distribution firms most of which rather concentrate on distribution. Publishing activity is not extensive compared with neighbouring states but its growth is accelerating relative to the past. Perhaps the Tamer Institute and the Ogarit Center are the most important in respect of publishing children's literature;
- Other firms that have published children's literature include the Center for Early Childhood Resources which, however, ceased to do so in 2000 but it publishes books on how to care for and protect children. There is also a new institution, the Center for the Childhood Mission which has published nine books for children in 2007;
- Not all writers receive a consideration from distribution firms for their literary output, particularly amateurs; or rather simply receive a symbolic fee. Replying to our query, the Dundīs Library staff stated

²⁶ Annex No. (19), A list of the names of art drawers, translators and critics in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector, also of those working in the field of children's literature.

²⁷ Annex No. (20), A list of the names of publishing and distribution firms in the west Bank and the Gaza Sector.

* This was obtained in an interview with Mr. Ibrahim Ma'rūf.

- that only the well known writer can receive something for what he writes;
- For the others, it suffices that they can have some party willing to publish for them; the image remains unclear. As Mohammad Ṣālīḥ said, most art drawers are amateurs who have ventured into the world of art and drawing on the basis of talent not study. However, they have consolidated their talents with intensified sessions whether in drawing or children's literature;
 - As for book series, one only was found, comprising seven stories issued by the Center for Early Childhood Resources under the title *marāḥ* (*Mirth*);
 - When asked as to where they distribute and where their market is, it was indicated that the internal market is where they have a wide margin for movement, mainly with Governmental and civil institutions, centers and libraries. Exportation is restricted to Jordan and Syria as most Arab States do not allow the marketing of Palestinian books. Some even publish the book in Beirut, per example, so that it can be marketed;
 - Importation faces many difficulties and high transport costs causing the price of the imported book to be quite high;
 - It was found that prices of Palestinian books are not very high and range between 8 and 20 shekels per book depending on whether it was illustrated or not and the type of cover, whether hard or soft;
 - However, translated books are quite expensive especially those published by the Swedish *dār al-munā* for they are distinguished for their high quality both as to content and production but are not accessible to all people due to the difficult economic conditions;
 - As to the union entity that joins them, they advised that its status is frozen and ineffective at present and its membership in the Association of Arab Publishers is frozen as well according to Mr. Abu Ghōsh;
 - The problems encountered in publishing and distribution were identified as follows:
 - 1- The absence of an active association for publishers and distributors;
 - 2- The lack of cooperation between publishers and distributors;
 - 3- Transport problems as a result of the non-existence of an independent sovereign state, which increases cost and leads to higher prices;
 - 4- Most publishing firms in the Arab Homeland do not deal with Palestinian books;

- 5- Libraries established for children require follow up and rectification of their functioning;
- 6- It is imperative that a data center be established as what happens represents scattered efforts;
- 7- There are flourishing libraries with a children's corner such as those of the Municipalities of al-Beera, Ramallah, Nablus and al-Khalīl. The success of these libraries is the result of their self-reliance;
 - The Palestinian books that have met with great demand, according to one distributor, are *al-hājiz* (*The Barrier*) and *al-haṭṭāb* (*The Lumberjack*), both by Mahmoud Shqair;
 - Speaking about the school market, a major distributor said that what gets purchased at many schools depends on what the teacher recommends not what is beneficial or enjoyable to the children. Instead, they look for books that have educational or teaching values;
 - After asking him about the lack of his interest in distributing Palestinian books, a proprietor of a publishing and distribution firm claimed that the reasons are the quality of output and content which does not address itself to the child's imagination, the writers do not write for the child, the drawings are not attractive and, this being the greatest problem, the high price relative to what is imported from Arab countries;
 - Of marketing methods, they said that exhibitions, the Internet, book shops, schools and tenders announced by institutions are all utilized.

A brief of some publishing and distribution firms:-

1- The Tamer Institute:-

It is a civil non-governmental non-profit institution established in 1989 to participate in the child's education and develop his culture. It has many targets which will be projected during discussion of it as a civil institution. It is interested in encouraging reading, spreading books for children and youth and publishes no less than six books annually;

2- The Ogarit Center:-

A cultural center for publishing and translation, Ogarit is concerned with Palestinian literature and translating it to world languages, also with the formation of a critical background for it and publishing outside Palestine. It seeks as well to have world literary works translated to Arabic. The Center is considered to be a non-profit institution, supervised by a number of intellectuals, seeking to root the rights of authors and publish creative works after recommendations by reading committees. The Center accords particular care to writings for women and children and

those that express the freedom of thought. It was established with the assistance of the NORAD institute of Norway;•

3- Dār al-Shurūq, the Palestine Branch:-[^]

This institution was established in Amman, Jordan in 1979 and started branches for it in Jordan and Palestine. Perhaps the new headquarters in Ramallah reflect the development of this institution and the hope that it will be an important supplement for publishing in Palestine. By launching a branch in Palestine, Dār al-Shurūq hopes to be a bridge for intercommunication between Palestinians in Palestine and those in the Diaspora, and between Palestine's people and their Arab and international dimensions so that they can influence and be simultaneously affected by the outside;

4- The Center for Early Childhood Resources:-

This is a civil Palestinian organization established in 1985 by initiative from a number of Palestinian educationalists as a pioneering project to respond to the urgent need for a modern developed structure to educate and care for early childhood in Palestine;

5- The Dundīs Library for Publishing and Distribution:-[♥]

Its major feature is distribution. Licensed by the Ministry of Information with its headquarters in al-Khalīl, its concern used to be the distribution of Islamic and Arabic books. Then it expanded and branched out to other libraries such as the Dundīs Islamic Library and the Dundīs Scientific Library. The Library's proprietor says that they are among the largest parties in Palestine in respect of importing books as, almost every month, they import two lorry loads;

6- The Universities Library, Ramallah:-^{*}

This library is presently specialized in sales and distribution although it had been licensed for publishing and distribution. Since the seventies, the library has been keen to provide books for university students. It has a corner for children's literature produced locally, in the Arab world and universally;

7- The Center for the Palestinian Childhood Mission:-

Established in 2005 with headquarters in Ramallah, this institution which is headed by 'Abd al-As'ad is concerned with children's affairs and spreading child culture. To date, they have issued nine books for children.

• NORAD stands for the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation [the Translator].

[^] This information was obtained during an interview with Mr. Fathī al-Biss, the manager of dār al-shurūq.

[♥] This information was obtained during an interview with Mr. Sāmiḥ Dundīs, the proprietor.

^{*} This information was obtained during an interview with Mr. Sāmiḥ Sallūm, the manager of the library.

Eleventh:- Trends Towards Children's Literature among Families, Children, Teachers, Workers in This Field and Governmental and Civil Institutions:-²⁸

1. Trends Towards Children's literature and Encouraging Reading among Authors, Workers in this Field, Governmental and Civil Institutions:-

- The standard of children's literature is rather weak due to the high financial cost;

- As regards authors' awareness of age groups, it is very low. There are many institutions that are concerned with this subject but the fear is that many of them include it within their agendas in response to donors' wishes not out of awareness of the importance of reading. This is because the child and his programs are among the priorities of grants by donors. This bias to donors' wishes does not apply to serious institutions that had been established before donors came to the scene and have their special project for reading;

- As to children's information programs on radio and television, some of them were good especially those in which children participated as the programs were by them and for them. The majority of programs carried direct stereotypes;

- The scope of publishing for children is tight, the cost is high, the authors are scant and the context backward;

- The number of titles offered is small, the quality low, the prices are high and the poverty of the majority of people have not allowed a great demand for reading;

- In general, children's literature is mediocre due to the scarcity of writers contributing to it, the fact that the price of children's books forms a financial burden to those in charge of children, the difficulty of providing books, the absence of suitable context and the difficulty of publishing because of the non-availability of support for the book or the absence of the prospect of profit;

- Economic difficulty + openness regarding publishing + relative experience = mediocre result;

- Children's participation is considered a matter relegated to coincidence, the initiative of schools or specialized institutions. It is limited per se in our country;

²⁸ Annex No. (21), A list of the names of children's books and works issued in the West Bank and the Gaza Sector arranged according to title, author's name, publisher's name and year of publishing.

- The Qaṭṭān Child Center (one of the centers of the Abdul-Muḥsin al-Qaṭṭān Institution) is considered a pioneering Palestinian experiment for it has been able, within only a short period of activity (not exceeding two years), to capture the children of the City of Gaza and encourage them and their kin to read. The experiment of the Qaṭṭān Center proved that there is a thirst for reading and knowledge among children. When appropriate circumstances prevail, the Palestinian child will respond positively to them and will attend to reading;
- Audio/visual programs are considered to be individual attempts with no clear strategy, basis and clear rules possessing clear features. They do sometimes participate in entertaining and encouraging children. However, there are radio and television programs that have participated in rooting wrong concepts;
- The problem with children's literature is not cost but context and the isolation that has been imposed on the child through the daily education which he is fed on the street, at home or in front of television. The experience of writers specialized in children's literature is almost non-existent although there are some attempts which have met with approval from all. However, these are intermittent experiments which have not been based on scientific bases. Therefore, they do not suffice;
- The majority of Palestinian society consists of the middle and poor classes. It is an educated society but lacks culture; hence it does not accord reading any importance and does not pay the least care for age groups;

2. Trends among Families, Children and Teachers towards Children's Literature and Encouraging Reading:•

These trends were explored by holding three intensified discussion groups on the bases of pre-arranged axes to achieve the aims of these work groups²⁹ which were convened with:-

1. Families;
2. Teachers;³⁰

• A focus group discussion was held with 13 boys and girls at the Qaṭṭān Child Center. The moderator chaired the workshop which went on for an hour and a half on Tuesday the 28th September, 2007; in addition to 20 children from both sexes from the village of Bil'īn and the Duhaisha camp in the West Bank.

²⁹ A focus group discussion, made up of nine mothers and one father, was convened for an hour and the half on Monday the 27th September, 2007 at the Qaṭṭān Child Center in the Governorate of Gaza.

³⁰ A focus group discussion, made up of 12 male and female teachers of whom two were library supervisors, eight Arabic Language, two English, one social subjects and one Islamic Education, was convened under the chairmanship of a moderator for an hour and the half on Thursday the 30th September, 2007 at the 'Āmnaḥ Bint Wahab School in the Governorate of Rafah in addition to 11 female and male

3. Children.³¹

First:- Trends among Families Towards Children's Literature and Encouraging Reading:-

1. Matters, books and television programs that attract children's attention:-

- Mothers' answers indicated the concentration of their children's interest around the computer due to the many choices it offers them such as games, listening to music and watching films at any time. Next in order is television due to the existence of satellite channels allocated for children, the variety of programs shown and the long availability of the period for airing these programs, reaching 24 hours;
- Books preferred for reading by children were defined by mothers as religious stories, scientific books, books containing jokes and puzzles, stories with coloured illustrations and heavy pages, stories of Tarzan, Superman and Barbie, games that require disassembling and assembling, animal stories, stories of reward and retribution, planes, cars and scientific fiction, also stories such as *al-'akhawān (The Two Brothers)*, *nammūlā (Nammūlā)*, *Leila raḥalat min al-bayt (Leila Has Left the House)* and the novels of Najīb Maḥfūz;
- Most mothers affirmed their children's inclination to television programs, especially cartoons (*Tom and Jerry*) and those that speak of stories such as *Cinderella* or *Sandy Bill* and then religious stories.

2. The role of the family in encouraging reading, the presence of a library at home, a shelf for children's books, the books they choose for their children, how they encourage their children to read, families' opinions of the role of the school in encouraging reading:-

- Three out of twelve participating mothers confirmed the presence of a library at their homes and of a shelf for children's books in this library. The subjects of these books concentrated on religious themes and historic novels with emphasis on the history of Palestine;
- Most mothers prefer to encourage their children to read books of educational context aiming to root specific behaviour or values in addition to stories with coloured illustrations, religious books and stories of the Prophets;
- All female participants in the group expressed their admiration of the books, particularly those in the Qaṭṭān Child Center that suit the needs of

teachers at two schools, the governmental Nazareth Basic Girls' School and the private al-'ikhā' al-'islāmiyyah School.

³¹ Annex No. (22), A list of participants in the workshop on children's literature and encouraging reading arranged according to age and name.

the various age groups in addition to being of high quality, exciting and attractive to children. These have formed a tremendous motive for the children's great desire to frequent the Center and adhere to the rule of quietude;

- The methods applied by mothers to encourage their children to read have varied. Some accompany their children to the Qaṭṭān Center and to buy books. Some narrate stories and discuss them with the children, especially due to the high prices of books so that one cannot acquire them;³²

- The majority of mothers pointed out the length and difficulty of the curriculum which creates a burden to school, children and families. They indicated their belief that schools do not encourage reading as many children do not know the location of the school library. This is not attributable to a shortcoming by teachers as it is the responsibility of those with authority and are decision makers, particularly in respect of the length of the curriculum;

- There was continuous emphasis on the importance of the school's role, as represented by the teacher, in encouraging reading.

3. Family trends towards reading, love for reading, the preferred book, the last book read:-

- Four of the participating mothers affirmed their love for reading whereas the rest used to go to the Qaṭṭān Center as part of the children's daily routine in addition to borrowing from the families' section some books of relevance to them;

- Mothers prefer religious and cultural books and those on education, ethics and values such as *ṣūmū taṣīhū* (*Fast and You Shall Be Healthy*), *thabata 'ilmiyyan* (*It Has Been Proven Scientifically*), *dalīluka fī al-taghdhiya* (*Your Guide on Nourishment*), *khulq al-muslim* (*The Ethics of a Moslem*), *alf layla wa layla* (*One Thousand and One Nights*), *al-tadāwī bi al-'a'shāb* (**Medical Treatment with Herbs**) *kayfa tuṣbiḥu milyonairan* (*How to Become a Millionaire*), the last according to the only father participating in the group;

- The responses of the participants did not vary much as to the preferred book and the last one to have been read. However, the books

³² One participant added that her children are the ones who encouraged her to visit the Qaṭṭān Center of which they had heard from their comrades. Others pointed out that the activities that are executed inside the Qaṭṭān Center have contributed to the encouragement of their children to read and love books. Another participant indicated that her two and the half years old child used to sit with some other children and listen to the story narrated by an activator in the [children's] section.

ghazwāt al-rasūl (The Campaigns of the Prophet), Kalīla wa Dimna (Kalīla and Dimna) and kay lā nansā (Lest We Forget) were added.

Second:- Teachers' trends towards children's literature and encouraging reading:-

1. The role of the school in encouraging reading in respect of the curriculum, the plan for reading at school, the most important subjects to encourage reading:-

- Theoretically, the curriculum encourages reading for it is somewhat idealistic and includes several subjects. It creates a state of open-mindedness towards Palestinian Literature in particular and human heritage in general. However, this curriculum forms a burden to the teacher, students and their guardians, leaving no scope for encouraging reading;

- Following a number of courses on children's literature held in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, plans for schools concentrated on activating the school library making use of the activities mentioned in the Teacher's Guides, I and II. The courses themselves were enjoyable and attracted attention to the importance of reading;

- These plans are available at schools. The teachers execute special and distinctive varied activities with the aim of encouraging reading. Sometimes, children are accompanied on a field visit to cultural centers and public libraries. Alternatively, these centers may execute activities at schools with the aim of encouraging reading;

- Subjects which students are encouraged to read concentrated on a variety of stories according to age groups, Palestinian popular heritage as a means to face the Israeli occupation, religious books, stories of the Prophets, history books, biographies, some uncomplicated scientific subjects and any other subjects that support the curriculum;

- In general, stories are not imposed on students. Instead, they receive guidance to stories that target the development of imagination and consolidate value and ethics.

2. Ex-curriculum activities executed at school for encouraging reading:-

- There are various and distinct activities such as hosting a writer, poet or creative person. This had the clear effect of inducing students to read the literary output of the guest and this extended to the family which was in turn encouraged to read. Accordingly, a state of interaction developed between students, creative people and families. Additionally, some books were interpreted in drama work. Occasionally, an old person would be asked to attend and narrate a popular tale. Some grammar classes were

transformed in favour of songs and anthems. In exhibitions organized by schools, children's literature was allotted a special wing. Various cultural competitions are announced annually in addition to the competition for the best note book. Monthly prizes were awarded to students with the highest record of borrowing books from the school library. Class libraries were set up with contributions by form students. Stories and tales were narrated by teachers and the school would participate in the competition for the best school in respect of children's literature. In this competition, the school undertakes distinct activities and submits a complete file on this subject to the Ministry of Culture which awards a prize to the school with the best file;

- It was also emphasized that activities in children's literature are executed for it is possible to do so in every class hour by using stories in teaching, also in the class hours for activities and physical education during winter.

3. Teachers' opinions of children's literature in its present status, the name of the last book to have been read:-

- Books are not available at school libraries in sufficient numbers;
- Books at public libraries are becoming dated and worn out;
- There is no awareness among families of the importance of reading and their interest is concentrated on the curriculum;
- No home libraries exist in order to root the habit of reading in children at an early age;
- Most available works are translations which are sometimes remote from the student's environment;
- The non-existence of Palestinian Literature that deals with children's issues and their situation;
- The lack of finance for publishing books of children's literature;
- Story topics are sometimes branded with stereotype concepts and are neither exciting nor attractive. This repels children away from reading;
- Children are interested in television programs and computer games,³³
- The participants asserted that their reading concentrated on the following books:- *'imārat ya'qubiān (Ya'qubian's Building)* by 'Alā' al-'Aswānī, *mi'at qiṣṣa min nihāyat al-ẓālimīn (A Hundred Stories*

³³ Despite all the obstacles we have mentioned as deduced from participants in the workshop, there has been interest in children's literature in the last few years. The matter of encouraging reading is no more restricted to individual initiatives but has been incorporated in the annual school plans. The participants' recommendations included the necessity to supply school libraries with various information receptacles, employ specialists at school libraries, prompt local media to allocate space within children's programs to encourage this aspect and to reduce the heavy burden of the school curriculum in favour of ex-curriculum activities inducing students to read.

from the End of the Oppressors), *qadāyā al-takrār fī al-naṣṣ al-qur'ānī* (The Question of Repetition in Quranic Texts) by al-Kubaysī, *al-bu'asā'* (Les Misérables) by Victor Hugo, *al-'iqd al-farīd* (The Unique Necklace), *Kalīla wa Dimna* (Kalīla and Dimna), *tanbīh al-ghāfilīn* (Warning the Headless) and *al-kabā'ir* (The Great Sins) by the Imam al-Dhahabī, *al-'dab al-ṣaghīr wa al-'adab al-kabīr* (Minor Literature and Major Literature), *ḍuhā al-'islām* (The Morning of Islam), *lā taḥzan wa 'ibtasim li al-ḥayāt* (Grieve Not and Smile on Life), *Jamīla wa al-waḥsh* (Jamīla and the Beast), *al-dhi'b wa al-jidyān al-sab'a* (The Wolf and the Seven Goats), *al-badīl* (The Substitute), *'anā ḥurrā* (I Am Free), a novel, and *Jinān fī bayt yā layt* (Jinan in the House of 'I Wish'), a story enjoying greater popularity among children.

Third:- Children's trends towards children's literature and encouraging reading:-

1. Children's trends towards reading, love for reading, who reads to you?, where do you read?, when do you read?, preferred stories and why?, the language preferred for reading, participation in reading competitions, preferences between reading, television, the computer and why?:-

- All participants affirmed their love for reading due to the greater comprehension and benefits they acquire by way of ideas and information in addition to enjoyment;

- Children read on their own next to someone assisting them, father, mother, grandmother or brothers. They usually read in the library or at home. The time they spend reading varies from day to day during their free time according to their preoccupation with studying or their homework, watching television, playing games on the computer, going to entertainment places and the lack of desire for reading;

- Children prefer reading certain stories in Arabic such as stories about the human body, *Cinderella*, *al-ḥasnā' wa al-waḥsh* (The Beauty and the Beast), *Tūlīn* (Tūlīn), *nawādir Juḥā* (Juha's Anecdotes), *'ālam al-jinn wa al-'ashbāh* (The World of Jinn and Ghosts), *'ālam al-kompyūter* (Computer World) and *'aṭafāl al-ghāba* (Children of the Forest). On the other hand, they prefer reading Tarzan stories in English. Usually, they prefer reading in Arabic but viewing the illustrations in English books;

- The stories most preferred by children alternated between the story of *al-rā'ī al-kadhḥāb* (The Lying Shepherd) because of its emphasis that a liar would not be believed by people, the story of *al-rajul al-ṭammā'* (The Greedy Man) which teaches the concept of steering away from greed, *al-khayr li al-nās* (Good to the People) because it prompts

towards cooperation and love between people, *al-rajul wa al-ghanama* (*The Man and the Sheep*) because it puts forward the concept of not taking other people's things, *'atfāl al-ghāba* (*Children of the Forest*) because he who does evil becomes entrapped in it, *al-fallāh wa zawjatuhu al-ṭayyiba* (*The Farmer and His Good Wife*) because it teaches the idea of helping people, *Tūlīn* (*Tūlīn*) due to the beauty of the girl in the story, *al-tājir al-ṭayyib* (*The Good Merchant*) because he neither lies nor cheats and *kayfa tata'allamu al-kompyūter* (*How to Learn about the Computer*) for the benefit that can be gleaned from it;

- Most participants confirmed that they have participated in competitions, mostly religious ones during the holy month of Ramadan. When comparing between television, computer and reading, nine participating children answered in favour of the computer and all participants asserted their greater love for television than for reading.³⁴

2. The family's role in encouraging reading from the children's point of view, who encourages reading?, who chooses the stories?, who prepares the stories?, who assists with reading?:-

- Relatives, brothers and friends encourage reading by the side of the teacher. Usually, children choose the books themselves together with family and teacher. The child is assured to obtain books either through his family or through field visits to libraries in the company of the teacher but sometimes out of their own pocket money. The children's dependence on themselves in reading was obvious in addition to assistance by family and teachers when visiting a library as they are asked to summarize the stories they have read and discuss them together, especially those included in the class for Islamic Education.³⁵

Twelfth:- Bibliography of Children's Books:-

There is no real effort in this field except for that exerted by the librarian and researcher concerned with children's literature, Mrs. Mary Fāshā. She has no profit or any other ulterior target beyond her love for children and children's literature. She has issued:

³⁴ The children specified the reasons for their preference of television and the computer over reading as follows:- the availability of satellite channels allocated for children, the variety of programs, concern not to miss episodes of serializations, cartoon films, the attraction of listening to tales and stories and learning English.

³⁵ When we asked about the extent of the benefit from reading stories, most answers concentrated around values such as truth, aiding people, love for work and assisting others. Some mentioned the scientific benefit in respect of certain subjects such as the computer and geometry. Title, illustrations, colours and story context were among the elements that attract children in most to these stories.

- 1- al-bibliyūgrāfiā al-filistīniyya li kutub al-'aṭfāl (The Palestinian Bibliography of Children's Books), the Tamer Institute for Community Education, 2003;
- 2- The second edition of al-bibliyūgrāfiā but with variations as a brief of every writer, his photograph and new works were inserted. Still under print, it will be published by the Tamer Institute as well;
- 3- *dalīl al-kātib al-filistīnī* (*The Palestinian Writer's Guide*) issued by the Palestinian Writers' Association, edited by 'Iṣṣām al-Dīk and Mālik al-Rīmāwī, 2001. It lists the members of the Association.

Thirteenth:- Problems Facing Children's Literature:-

1. From the Points of View of Official and Civil Circles:-
 1. The output of children's literature in the Gaza Sector has relied on the agendas and programs of donors. Most books produced were about subjects such as the child's rights, rationalization of water consumption, cleanliness, integrating handicapped persons within society and extending human rights to them. These topics were far removed from the realities of the Palestinian child and his local environment;
 2. After al-Aqsa Intifada and the crimes committed by the occupation during it such as incursions, bombardments, destruction, bulldozing, demolitions and assassinations, the child became the subject of books issued as guides to families and people working with children as to how they should treat the child during crises. Programs concentrated on psychological support for the child who had lost security in the street, on his school bench and even at home;
 3. During the period of the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Sector, some guidance pamphlets were issued warning children against approaching materials left behind by the Israeli enemy;
 4. The Secretariat of the Palestinian National Plan is considered a pioneering experiment in dealing with children's issues and coordination between governmental, non-governmental and international institutions. It was through this Plan that many projects have been executed laying the basis for the subjects of children's literature and encouraging reading;
 5. Many programs on children's literature and encouraging reading are financed by donors but these projects do not produce tangible results which, such as they are, end with the cessation of support inasmuch as they were projects denuded of clear vision or programs in

this field. Furthermore, they have neither faith in children's issues nor sufficient experience;

6. Donors' conditions have often been obstacles in the face of laying the basis for a national project in respect of children's literature as they have concentrated on activation and expenditure on consumables without consideration to children's basic cultural needs but rather considering the entertainment and decorative aspects;

7. Distributors and publishers face numerous difficulties the most important of which is the closure of the Rafah commercial crossing point around three years ago. This had been considered the only outlet for the Gaza Sector to the world. Presently, all books come into the sector through the 'Ojā crossing between Egypt and Israel. They remain on hold by Israel for a period of no less than 60 days before they reach Gaza after coordinating their entry through the Şōfā crossing. Accordingly, the shipment which used to cost \$ 350 when coming in through the Rafah crossing now costs \$ 5,000 for freight alone through the 'Ojā-Şōfā crossings before taxation and the fees of the Israeli customs agent. The situation is not any better when books come to the sector from the West Bank;

8. There do not exist publishing firms specialized in children's literature in the real sense due to the high cost of children's books and the low demand for them because of the negative cultural conditions. All that exist are distribution establishments which, even in this field, face difficulties due to the Israeli occupation;

9. Children's books are published only through donors and international institutions;

10. There is an absence of general coordination between family and school;

11. Kindergartens and some schools lack specialized libraries;

12. Media means do not play a serious and concerted effort to extol reading and its importance;

13. No prizes are awarded by way of encouragement within effective programs for rooting the habit of reading;

14. There is a scarcity of specialized personnel;

15. No specialized festivals have been arranged to create a concrete basis of this aspect in the society's memory;

16. Children show interest in television programs, the computer and the Internet to the detriment of books;

17. There is no cooperation between teacher and library custodian and books are not provided to suit the various age groups. Most of the

time, the library would be closed because of administrative tasks which the school principal charges to the library custodian, the length of the curriculum and the intensity of homework demanded of the students who possess no time to visit the library.

2. From the points of view of generators of children's literature, writers, poets, art drawers and producers:-

- There are the problems of producing the book and the publisher's concern for profitability and market. Hence, the latter seeks easy methods and quick gain regardless of the quality and standard of the book;
- There is a problem in publishing books, namely the high cost and the lack of donors;
- There is difficulty in importing and exporting;
- There is the matter of demand for the book as a commodity insofar as purchasing books is a very limited practice;
- As we, meaning society at large, are still in the stage of pre-selection, the quality of available books of children's literature is not of a high standard;
- The high cost of books of children's literature to writer and consumer (printing, publishing and distribution);
- Reading in our country has always been described as a hobby. Watching television, however, has become an addiction and a habit;
- The Palestinian writer suffers difficulties due to the absence of a dedicated party that would help him to publish and distribute in compliance with a clear strategy that would contribute towards disseminating and lending effect to children's literature;
- The non-existence of plans to encourage reading;
- Technology methods have started to compete with the book but these methods are not utilized towards advancing progress and demand on reading.

* Suggestions and recommendation for developing children's literature:-

- The organization of a book exhibition allocated for children's literature;
- Care must be exercised to present non-traditional material in the spaces of exhibitions for books on children's literature;
- Persistence on participation in exhibitions for books of children's literature, internationally and in the Arab World, in order to present local output and acquire more experience;
- The legislation of laws that would contribute support to the process of publishing and distributing children's literature;

- Coordination with the international institutions concerned with cultural affairs such as UNESCO in order to exert pressure on the occupying state for relief in the strictures imposed on the entry of books and the movement of Arab and international publishers from and to Palestine.

Conclusion:-

It has not been easy to complete an effort such as this, not only due to the constriction of time but further because of the comprehensive scope of the subject with which the study is dealing and the plurality of the sectors concerned with it. In any case, the study has been a serious endeavour to explore the extent of the successes that have been realized at the level of concern for child culture in Palestine. It has also been an opportunity to monitor the existing visions and trends regarding child culture and what can crystallize through promoting it. There are a number of observations that can be presented following the conclusion of the interviews undertaken, the workshops organized with children and their families, discussion sessions with teachers and, additionally, field visits. The following sets forth the most important conclusions reached in this study:-

- There are many programs and various efforts at the level of child culture and children's literature. In most cases, however, they remain within the realm of individual efforts, not on a personal but on an institutional basis. In this respect, we exclude the small part- of the developmental project for the Palestinian children's literature-executed in cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Culture with the support of the Swedish Diakonia Institute and in partnership with some institutions concerned with this subject;
- It has become clear that the support previously extended by the Ministry of Culture to children's libraries has receded. That support had been linked to projects financed by donor states for a specific time life. Herein is projected the problem of time-constrained interest in a project of long term dimensions, child culture, which consolidates the demand that child culture must be dealt with as a state to be lived not as a project or program with limited duration. It has become clear that the projects for the support of children's libraries have indeed expired, a situation that has led more than one party to demand that this support be revived;
- The axis of children's literature has become a constant axis on the agenda of many national and educational efforts for it is prominent as

- one of the subjects in the training of kindergarten teachers, a fundamental element of summer camps organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and occupies a great part of interest in the training programs adopted by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Not the least indication of that is the data, both quantitative and qualitative, reflected in the statements of the project for activating children's literature at Palestinian schools. This is part of the developmental Project for the Palestinian Child; what successes relative to its framework were achieved to date have exceeded expectations in many instances. It is worth mentioning in this regard that the effort exerted throughout this Plan has not been restricted to training and the distribution of books but has transcended that to include the design of creative activities and the production of training aids particularly those allocated for activities with targeted purposes. Furthermore, the existence of qualified cadres has proffered the opportunity to transfer the Palestinian experience to other states including Iraq and the Arab teachers in Sweden. It has also been indicated that there is a plan for the reactivation of children's literature at schools as the previous plan ended in 2007;
- Cooperation, as presumed, does exist between the parties concerned with the field of children's literature. Perhaps the cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Tamer Institute, the Center for Young Artists and publishing institutions falls within the sequence of employing the experience of each party in favour of the others which facilitates the execution of any future plans that may be adopted in this context;
 - There is a National Plan for the Palestinian Child. This has been crystallized by specialized parties at both the governmental and civil levels. It will cause work to be governed by a clear mechanism and a scientific pattern. It will also restrict to a great deal the conflict between various adopted programs which means that the ground has been prepared in front of any national effort with the child as its axis. The Plan, however, is still in its beginnings for its start in 2004 does not reflect practically what has been achieved within its framework until now. Perhaps the most prominent matter to record here is that the Plan allocates a special part for child culture which expresses its interest in specialization, the principle that safeguards against the dilution of cultural plans and programs by other programs of an educational characteristic. This also enables that previously uncared for cultural spaces be covered such as children's cinema which has

- suffered what neglect and marginalization the movie industry in Palestine undergoes generally;
- Many queries that touch on the whole cultural scene are generated by the cessation of cultural activities. Our attention is arrested here by certain marker junctions such as the cessation of awarding the Palestinian prizes of appreciation, Palestinian international exhibitions and other activities that have been strangled by political circumstances. However, the most prominent matter that alleviates the burden of this recession is the convening of the first Palestinian international conference for children's literature recently, ending on the 7th September, 2007. This constituted a qualitative increment to the efforts exerted at the level of interest in children's books. However, it is early time yet to judge the effect of this conference on child culture;
 - There is no reasonable level of interest in such children's programs as are presented on radio and television. This reflects the infrequent presentation of these programs by the National Television Channel, although it must be admitted that there are varying efforts by the local television channels with which Palestine is distinguished. These channels, however, also vary in the nature of their coverage of the Palestinian areas which makes it difficult to issue a common judgment on the returns of the programs they present. It has been indicated that the plan for television programs allows but limited space for children's programs. It has also become apparent that there is no plan with clear features at this level. Perhaps the launching of satellite channels allocated for children will mitigate greatly the prejudicial influence of the neglect by national information departments and will allow children to interact with information material dedicated for the child. It should also be noted that there is a continuing shortcoming in the coverage of local literary material inasmuch as the satellite channels concentrate on the Arab and international axes;
 - The reinstatement by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education of the plan for cultural activities will consolidate the potential of schools to undertake a pioneering role in the development and refining of talent and encouraging reading. The plan was given general circulation to the Directorates of Education on the 5th September, 2007 but the lack of any share for library activity will restrict interaction between students and books other than the accredited curriculum books;

- The adoption by Palestinian universities, such as those of Birzeit and al-Najāh, of a special course on children's literature is an important transformation. However, according to those concerned, this will not reach the level of an independent curriculum due to objective reasons. At this juncture, it becomes evident that it is necessary to adopt a curriculum jointly with outside universities and to qualify specialists in this field;
- The development of culture in general and that of the child in particular requires the liberation of the relation between publishers and distributors from the onus of being subjected to the logic of pure profitability. More than one writer and literary personality have expressed reservations as to the nature of the present relation as they see it expressive of the interests of agencies and institutions. This makes it difficult to employ this relation in favour of the movement to promote literature. Indeed, self finance was, in some cases, a prerequisite with some writers for publishing some of their output;
- Local book exhibitions do not meet with interest from the official cultural institution, I mean the Ministry of Culture, which drives those organizing them to do so within the frame of personal initiatives. There are demands for the provision of financial and logistic support for these exhibitions so that they can engage the role presumed for them in promoting children's books in particular and literary books in general;
- The difficulty of importing and exporting (i.e. exporting Palestinian books) represents an obstacle in the face of interaction with Arabic books produced in geographically neighbouring states and advancing the level of Palestinian literary output due to the limitation of the local market. This is a point that has met almost with the unanimous concurrence of all concerned. Add to this that the high cost of local book production which renders this production without financial viability. Furthermore, it draws attention that it is difficult to export Palestinian books to Arab markets other than to those of Jordan and Egypt, being the two available as distributors told me. This makes spreading Palestinian Literature in Arab countries a rather limited affair;
- Children's demand for reading varies. They mostly read Arabic which means that translation is the only medium for becoming acquainted with foreign books. Furthermore, families vary in regard to interest in reading and this reflects on the degree of interest shown by children. It has also become evident that children's interest vary in respect of

attachment to book types and specifications albeit there appears to be semi unanimity in respect of illustrated books and stories and also in respect of considering that technology with its modern supplements has become a burdensome guest of the cultural reality and the part of attaching to reading;

- The experiments of journalism addressed to children are not successful and do not meet with continuity. In the light of many previous experiences which had not been destined to witness an acceptable time of life for this axis, it is required that supporting programs be adopted at this level to guarantee that this axis will stay;
- The plurality of authorities supervising kindergartens makes it difficult to unify their curricula, plans and activities. Making the experience of governmental kindergartens universal is bound to allow this experience to be shared as was the case with what has been realized at schools;
- Institutions interested in children's literature have met with conspicuous success that is singled out. In this respect, we cannot ignore the Tamer Institute with its many activities and well studied plans. This qualifies it to play a distinguished role at the regional level. We cannot ignore either its role in publishing together with the Ogarit Center. This bodes well for the continuation of the publishing sector and the promotion of children's books in future because this axis has become a major support for the work of these institutions. We also note that there is an active movement in publishing and distribution and that many Jordanian publishing firms have started to launch branches for them in Palestine such as al-Shurūq, al-Bayraq and dār 'Usama;
- The presence of sections dedicated for children in public or private libraries consolidates the trend in respect of organizing special activities for children in addition to allocating budgets for them. This also allows adaptation with contemporary innovations in respect of presenting and offering culture rather than being restricted to the legible and written. This will mean the transformation of libraries to centers possessing various resources for their contents.