



**Preliminary report and recommendations from
an IFLA/FAIFE-mission to Israel and the
Occupied Palestinian Territories 13th – 21st April
2007.**

by
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Recommendations to IFLA Governing Board and FAIFE Committee.

Please note that the terms of reference for the FAIFE visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories can be found in Appendix 1 below, a covering letter from IFLA HQ about the mission can be found in Appendix 2, and UN Security Council Resolution 242 can be found in Appendix 3.

Preamble

The IFLA Conference in Jerusalem in August 2000 focused attention to the situation of libraries and the library community in Israel and the Occupied Territories of Palestine. The Arab States boycotted the Conference and there was no dialogue between the Israeli library community and the Palestinian library community. After discussions during the Conference, a statement about the Arab boycott was published in IFLAS Express. Subsequently the IFLA Governing Board authorised a mission (to be carried out by IFLA/FAIFE) to assess the present situation of libraries and the library community in Israel and Palestine. After delay, the mission took place in April 2007. The mission has highlighted the way in which professional dialogue and the development of professional institutions in civil society can transcend political boundaries and help towards peace and reconciliation between people in situations of conflict.

Summary of Situation

When discussing the current situation for Israeli and Palestinian library and information professionals it must be recognised that everyday life is dominated by the 40-year old Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank (1). For the Israelis this means ongoing security worries in the wake of the second Intifada, and for the Palestinians it means severe restrictions of freedom of movement within the Occupied Palestinian Territories (2). For both sides it means that any discussion of how to move forward is clouded by past events and present difficulties.

Due to the difficulty of entering certain areas, and the continuing deterioration of security in the Gaza strip, we were unfortunately unable to visit our colleagues in Gaza. This means that the following impressions arise from our visits to colleagues in Israel and the West Bank. However, through conversations with our Palestinian colleagues and international NGOs, we are confident in saying that the situation

described below in relation to the West Bank is even worse in Gaza and there are clear signs of a breakdown of societal structures and an increase in factional fights among Palestinian groups there. The disturbing impact of this, as far as IFLA is concerned, is the recent increase in allegedly deliberate Palestinian attacks on Palestinian institutions which are directly connected to access to information and freedom of expression for the Palestinian population in Gaza. Libraries, Internet cafes, bookshops, cultural and educational institutions have all been attacked, and in some cases destroyed (3).

- Freedom of access to information and freedom of expression exist in Israel, within boundaries to be expected from a state experiencing security problems - even if there are serious criticisms of Israeli practice in some areas relating to reporting on the conflict (4)
- Libraries in Israel operate to a high standard, although the public library system and school library system face issues of under-funding and the library association is not completely inclusive and weak
- The problems created by the lack of freedom of movement within the West Bank are adversely affecting all library activities and freedom of access to information there
- Freedom of expression does exist in the West Bank, despite many reports of censorship since the establishment of the Palestinian authority (5). Of great relevance to IFLA, the latest specific incident of censorship concerned the removal of a book of Palestinian folk tales from public libraries in March 2007. It is pleasing to report that Palestinian librarians, authors et al protested publicly about this and reversed the decision by the Minister of Education (6).
- Libraries in the West Bank are experiencing the effects of
 - Under-developed library infrastructure, legal frameworks and organisation
 - Reduced budgets
 - Restrictions on freedom of movement
 - Outdated and under-funded library education, and a lack of knowledge of current library practices elsewhere in the world
 - The 'greying' of the library profession
 - Self censorship and restricted collection development as a result of interference in book deliveries
 - Physical damage to library and information institutions (7)
- Communication between library professionals in the West Bank and Gaza is extremely restricted, limited only to telephone and email
- Communication between library professionals in the West Bank is profoundly affected by restrictions on freedom of movement, leading to drastically reduced effectiveness of associations and committees
- Israeli librarians know virtually nothing about the situation of Palestinian librarians, and vice versa
- At this point in time, conditions do not exist for effective co-operation between Israeli and Palestinian library colleagues, although it can be said that there exists some willingness to increase co-operation in the future

Recommendations

1. ALP should provide training in general modern library practice to the Palestinian library community, in the form of workshops to take place at various locations on the West Bank
2. FAIFE should liaise with organisations such as the BOBCATSSS conference to explore the possibility of sending Palestinian library students abroad to study the latest library techniques and approaches
3. CLM should offer advice to the Palestinian Authority on the drafting of a Palestinian copyright law with a focus on the best way to use information in a situation with severe restrictions on freedom of movement
4. PAC should offer advice to the Palestinian Ministry of Culture on the need for digitisation of Palestinian cultural heritage
5. The Palestinian Authority should clearly identify an institution to co-ordinate all library activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This institution should:
 - a. Assign national library functions to an existing university library with the best potential to carry them out
 - b. Liaise with the Palestinian Authority to draft a legal deposit law and library law for all libraries in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for later adoption
 - c. Explore the possibility of creating a national bibliography, union catalogue, and ILL system for the Occupied Palestinian Territories
 - d. Re-establish library education on the West Bank
 - e. Develop and modernise library standards for all libraries in the Occupied Palestinian Territories
 - f. Document all incidences related to the occupation that adversely affect the work of libraries in the Occupied Palestinian Territories
 - g. Create a single online portal for the communication of information relating to Palestinian libraries, and encourage development of this resource to increase co-operation among institutions, organisations and individuals
6. FAIFE, in partnership with the Ramallah Centre for Human Rights, should hold a conference on the subject of libraries and human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories
7. FAIFE should co-ordinate a report on the situation relating to the alleged seizure and censorship of Arabic language books at checkpoints in the Occupied Palestinian Territories
8. FAIFE should help representatives from the Israeli, Palestinian and Israeli-Arab library communities to attend the FAIFE conference on tolerance later in 2007 (nb. If this conference is held in Damascus then it must be noted that Israelis are not allowed to enter Syria)
9. There should be a special edition of IFLA Journal to raise awareness of the effects of the occupation and effects of the second Intifada on both Palestinian libraries and Israeli libraries. The edition should contain papers describing the situation facing university libraries, public libraries, school libraries and library associations
10. In the long term IFLA should be ready to initiate co-operation after any peace agreement. Such co-operation could take the form of a conference for library

professionals from Israel and Palestine to discuss future co-operation between institutions, associations and individuals

Afterword

During the World Library and Information Congress in Durban in August 2007 this summary report was considered by the IFLA/FAIFE Committee and was received and adopted by the IFLA Governing Board. The next steps are:

1. To publish this summary on IFLANET and the FAIFE website.
2. To allow this report to be disseminated by individuals and organisations (with due credit to IFLA) without needing specific copyright clearance.
3. To draft and publish a full report of the mission as part of the IFLA/FAIFE programme supported by Sida, the Swedish Development Agency.
4. To establish an IFLA Working Group to consider implementation of the recommendations in this summary report, in particular the recommendations for a first phase of activities including: arranging a conference in Ramallah on human rights as part of the IFLA/FAIFE/Sida programme; planning an event, possibly in Italy, to promote professional dialogue between the Israeli and Palestine library communities; co-ordinating work by the Core Activities of IFLA (FAIFE, ALP, CLM, PAC) to support professional development in Palestine.
5. To advocate the value of professional dialogue in the context of broader initiatives by the international community (such as those by the European Commission and the “Quartet” nations) to bring peace and reconciliation to the Middle East.

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 2. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2006), Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP): Humanitarian Appeal 2007 for oPt [Online], available: <http://ochaonline2.un.org/Default.aspx?tabid=9678> [April 25, 2007]
 3. Almeghari, R. (2007), The American school of Gaza, another nightmare in the strip [Online], available: <http://www.maannews.net/en/index.php?opr=ShowDetails&ID=21437> [April 25, 2007]
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IFLA is not responsible for the content of the referenced links and they serve as documentation and impressions of reports in media and from Individuals, NGOs and the UN-system.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

IFLA MISSION TO ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

To assess the present situation of libraries and the library community in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, with a special emphasis on questions related to freedom of access to information and freedom of expression, with a view towards organising a conference on this subject

PREAMBLE

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is an independent, international, non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation, established in 1927. It has Formal Associate Relations with UNESCO. Its Core Values include:

- The endorsement of the principles of freedom of access to information, ideas and works of imagination and freedom of expression embodied in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The belief that people, communities and organisations need universal and equitable access to information for their social, educational, cultural, democratic and economic well-being, and
- The conviction that delivery of high quality library and information services helps guarantee that access.

IFLA therefore takes no view on the political aspects of the current conflict in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. This mission will be solely concerned with the provision of library and information services.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To assess the present situation of libraries and the library community in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, with a special emphasis on questions related to freedom of access to information and freedom of expression, with a view to organising a conference on this subject
2. To assess the potential for communication between the Israeli and Palestinian library communities in light of the present situation, and to assess the willingness of librarians from both sides to be involved in planning and attending a conference on freedom of access to information and freedom of expression
3. Based on these assessments, submit to IFLA, including the Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) Committee, a proposal for the conference

PLANNING, TIMING OF THE MISSION

4. The Mission is foreseen to last nine days, from the 13th April 2006 to the 21st April.

There are two members who stand ready to fulfil the mission: Dr. Stuart Hamilton of the UK, consultant researcher for IFLA/FAIFE and Mr Frode Bakken of Norway, Library director of Telemark University College, former President of the Norwegian Library Association 2000-2006 and member of the IFLA/FAIFE Advisory Board and the IFLA/FAIFE Committee.

Appendix 2: Covering Letter from IFLA HQ

The Hague, 27 February 2007

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The undersigned hereby confirms that, pursuant to a decision taken by the Governing Board of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in December 2004, the following persons have been requested to travel to Israel and the Palestinian area 13-21 April 2007 on a mission to assess the present situation of libraries there:

- MR FRODE BAKKEN (date of birth 1950-01-05, bearer of Norwegian passport no. 25202550); and
- DR STUART HAMILTON (date of birth 1974-10-27, bearer of United Kingdom passport no. 459905006)

Their mission is undertaken as a project of IFLA's Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) core activity. As part of their mission Mr Bakken and Dr Hamilton will investigate questions related to freedom of access to information and freedom of expression, including an assessment of the damage incurred as a result of the current conflict. The mission will also advise and make recommendations on relevant aspects and to report on the visit to the Governing Board.

On behalf of IFLA I request professional colleagues and the relevant authorities of Israel and the Palestinian area to afford Mr Bakken and Dr Hamilton access to the libraries and persons they wish to visit and to provide them with the cooperation and assistance necessary for the safe and expeditious completion of their mission.



Peter Johan Lor
Secretary General

Appendix 3: United Nations Security Council Resolution 242

United Nations Security Council Resolution 242

November 22, 1967

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,

Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security,

Emphasizing further that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

1. *Affirms* that the fulfilment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

- (i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
- (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;

2. *Affirms further* the necessity

(a) For guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;

(b) For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;

(c) For guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to designate a Special Representative to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles in this resolution;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

Adopted unanimously at the 1382nd meeting.