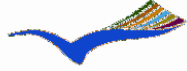


Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association

جمعية صداقة
كامدن أبوديس

*Promoting human rights and respect for
international humanitarian law*



Education and Culture

'Youth in Action' Programme

Youth Ambassadors for Human Rights Project 2009

NEWS RELEASE 21st May 2009

For immediate release

Camden schoolchildren begin to prepare for European project: visit of Palestinian young people in June

Camden schoolchildren from six of the borough's secondary schools have been given permission by families and schools to have a week off school to accompany their Palestinian peers on a project focusing on human rights.

Four girls and four boys from Abu Dis, Palestine, will come to Britain for a week in June on the Youth Ambassadors for Human Rights project organised by Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association and funded with the help of a grant from Europe's Youth in Action fund.

"We can't wait to meet you," reads an entry on the blog shared by both groups of children. The Camden school children are already having preparation meetings to help plan the visit, find out what human rights are about, and learn some beginners' Arabic.

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Charity number 1112717

“I’m really looking forward to this,” said Anna from Camden School for Girls. “I met the Palestinian children who came to London a year ago and it was brilliant.”

In Abu Dis, Palestine, the school children are also having preparation sessions. They are doing work on human rights, and improving their English with the help of a volunteer sent over by Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association. They are also doing some short plays about their lives.

From Abu Dis School for Girls, Saja writes: “It’s a very beautiful chance to meet friends and people from outside Palestine to talk about human rights and to do plays that talk about the situation here. I really hope to visit the famous buildings in London and I also hope to go to the largest wheel in the world and swimming pools too.”

Links between Camden and Abu Dis have been growing over the past five years due to the efforts of Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association, a local charity that promotes human rights.

“We find the best way of getting people interested in this is helping them meet each other,” explains Nandita Dowson, CADFA co-ordinator.” We organise visits to Palestine and we bring people here. This is the fourth youth visit we have organised, and possibly the most exciting, because we have this great group of young people from Camden who will be playing a central part.”

The Palestinian and Camden children will work together to understand about human rights in each other’s countries, and then they will work with other children in schools and youth clubs across the borough to explain what they have found. They will also visit museums and tourist attractions. The first day will be on Hampstead Heath, which will give the Palestinian youngsters a chance to be free in a space with no checkpoints, no threat of violence from settlers and away from the Israeli military.

“Previous groups of children from Abu Dis have told us that their strongest impression here is that there are no soldiers, that they can go where they want to,” said Nandita. “Abu Dis is very confined. The Israeli Separation Wall goes right through the middle of it, there is a military camp on a hill inside the town, and checkpoints getting in the way of travel in all directions. And of course it used to have masses of hills, part of the village lands, but they have been taken away by the settlements and the children can’t go there.”

The Palestinian children will be performing their plays at some of the schools that have twinning links with Abu Dis schools: on Monday 15th at Hampstead School International Evening and on Friday 19th at South Camden School Refugee Concert, which celebrates the twinning between South Camden and Maria Fidelis Schools and the refugee school in Abu Dis.

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They will also visit Edith Neville Primary, which has made a link with the elementary school in Abu Dis. And on Saturday 20th, they will take part in a human rights arts workshop which is open to all Camden children.

Then on Sunday 21st, they will have a trip to the seaside with the Woodcraft Folk from Highgate Newtown Community Centre. This will probably be the high point of the visit, because the Palestinian children, though they live close to three seas, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, are not allowed to go to any of them.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

More information is available from Nandita Dowson 07791 536 620

1. Camden children involved come from the following schools: Hampstead, Haverstock, Acland Burghley, Camden School for Girls, Maria Fidelis, South Camden.
2. Camden Abu Dis website – www.camdenabudis.net
3. The project blog is at <http://yhr09.blogspot.com>
4. The Camden children are available for interview now; and the Palestinian children will be available for interview when in London between 13 and 22 June.

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