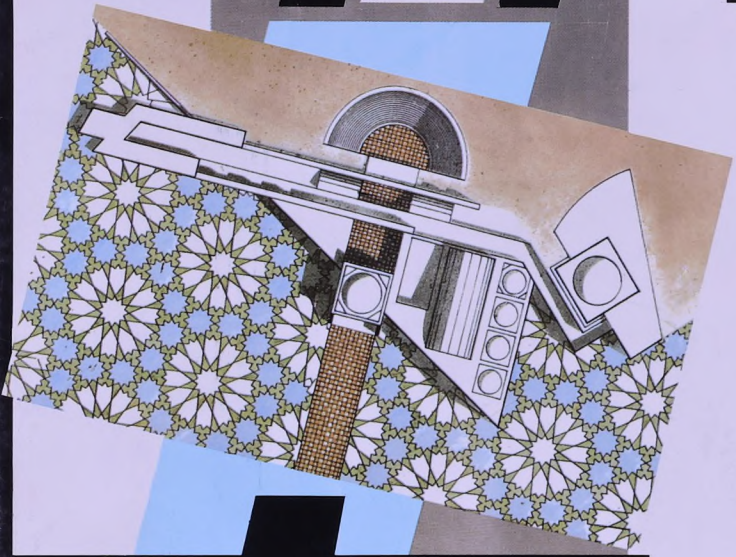


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The  
Palestinian Cultural  
Project



Research Center for Arab Heritage  
Tayibeh

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**The  
Palestinian Cultural  
Project**

a proposal for the establishment of

**The National Center  
for Palestinian Culture**

**Research Center for Arab Heritage**

P.O. Box 746 Tayibeh, 40400 Israel

tel: 052-991578 fax: 052-992721

*on the cover: Detail, future National Center for Palestinian Culture.*

**CENTRE FOR ARAB GULF STUDIES**

**UNIVERSITY OF EXETER**

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## Introduction:

### Roots of the problem; genesis of the plan

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One of the hallmarks of a democratic society is the right of all citizens to express and preserve their culture, regardless of national background. However, in Israel, the realization of this right on the part of its Palestinian Arab citizens -- who, numbering approximately 750,000, comprise approximately 16 percent of the population\* -- has been problematic since the establishment of the state 45 years ago.

What makes the realization of this most basic of democratic civil rights difficult? The answer lies in the definition of Israel -- in all its official credos and symbols, the printed word and the graphic image -- as a state and homeland of **the Jewish people in its entirety**, comprising those not only resident in Israel but in the diaspora as well. Not only does this definition of Israel as the Jewish state confer a second-class citizenship on its non-Jewish citizens, but infers that Jews living abroad can potentially enjoy a status in Israel that is beyond the reach of nearly a fifth of its native-born population.

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\* This figure does not include the Palestinian Arab population of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, but only those Palestinians living within the pre-1967 lines of the state.

This is not to suggest that Arab citizens have no right to cultural expression or religious freedom, as these rights are guaranteed in the Proclamation of Independence (which has, however, not always proved to be legally binding when such rights have been challenged in court). Arab citizens are free to worship as they choose and to organize cultural events through their local institutions.

But on the official level, due to the definition of the state and the ongoing Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, Israeli policy since 1948 has sought to obfuscate the reality that *its Arab citizens are part of the Palestinian people and the Arab nation*. Instead, official state policy, for domestic and international consumption alike, has been to recognize this segment of the population in the aggregate only as "Israeli Arabs," and to make salient and unequal distinctions (depending on military service) among them, those being Druze, Christian, Muslim and Beduin (the latter two of which overlap completely!).

Therefore, on the official, institutional level, Palestinian citizens in Israel face the constant pressure of being socialized to think of themselves as *Israeli Arabs* -- a term that is used to the exclusion of all others in the media, public elementary and secondary school textbooks and the majority of discourse and literature generated by universities, think tanks and research institutions.

That traces of Arab and Palestinian culture are rarely if ever to be found in these venues -- much less given positive expression in the cultural vehicles of popular music, advertising, and Israeli-produced television, theater and cinema -- has prompted leading members of the Arab community to approach the state repeatedly for permission to establish an Arab university in Israel. But that request has been refused every time it has been raised over the course of the past 15 years.

The result of these processes has been that the third generation of Palestinian citizens in Israel is growing up more acutely aware of its national identity than did its mothers, fathers and grandparents -- but with virtually the same limitations on its opportunities to learn, through official and mainstream channels, Arab/Palestinian literature, poetry, theater, Arab/Palestinian history, geography, economy, Arab/Palestinian art, music, folklore.

Indeed, this is not to say that the Arab population in Israel is unaware of or unschooled in its culture. Moreover, there exists an awareness of a separate society -- *a distinctly Palestinian society* -- among Palestinian citizens in Israel:

*And the masses of our people on the inside  
(of Israel) still enjoy the social link which is  
supported by the language, culture, history and*

*accumulated experience of the great struggle and the experience of the disaster (of 1948) that is engraved deeply in the emotional life and whose witnesses still exist close at hand; supplying the memory and increasing the spiritual stubbornness that is based on the fact that the Palestinian belongs to the ancient Arab nation whose roots extend back to the beginning of history.\**

But access to formal channels of transmission of Arab/Palestinian culture is often beyond the reach of the individual, as the resources of local initiatives are limited and national institutions of Arab/Palestinian culture are virtually non-existent.

Aware of the danger to the preservation of Arab Palestinian culture posed by the reality that the majority of second- and third-generation Palestinian citizens in Israel have had more exposure to the writings of Haim Bialik than those of Ghasan Kanafani; and that traces of Arab heritage in Haifa, Jaffa and Tiberias have all but been obliterated, a group of Palestinian intellectuals has taken up the initiative of the **Research Center for Arab Heritage\*\*** to draft the blueprint for the **Palestinian Cultural Project**.

Meeting in Nazareth for a three-day conference organized by the RCAH in December 1992, 60 participants -- among their number

\* From "The Palestinian Cultural Project: Introduction," **Kanafan**, Research Center for Arab Heritage, No. 21/22, Jan -Feb, 1993, p. 8.

\*\* For more details on the RCAH, see p. 27.

professors at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank, lawyers, a UN consultant, high school teachers, poets, novelists and the directors of several Arab grassroots organizations in Israel -- organized themselves into committees to discuss the issues concerning the preservation of Palestinian culture among the Arab population in Israel. After 14 working papers were presented in seven workshop committees, the assembly reconvened to draft the framework of the cultural project, which calls for the establishment of the **National Center for Palestinian Culture**.

# The Palestinian Cultural Project:

## Blueprint for a national institution

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The grand vision that emerged from the Nazareth conference was that a **National Center for Palestinian Culture** be established as the national institution charged with the preservation and transmission of Palestinian culture among the Palestinian population in Israel. While this institution would eventually be constructed in Israel, it would serve as a center whose doors would be open not only to all Palestinians regardless of where they live, but to researchers of all nationalities specializing in any aspect of Palestinian culture. The center would include these facilities:

1. national public library
2. conference and study rooms
3. field school and hostel
4. cafeteria, snack bar, sports facilities
5. center for social development projects
6. publishing house, printshop and bindery
7. Palestinian folk heritage museum

The **National Center for Palestinian Culture** would comprise six research units, a data bank and a community education division, as follows:

## 1. Folk Heritage Unit

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To promote the following:

- a. The collection of documentation of Palestinian folk heritage, to be assisted by popular participation via grassroots associations and committees, and schools;
- b. The carrying out of research on Palestinian folklore and the encouragement of its application and continuity;
- c. The gathering of studies done on Palestinian folk heritage in foreign languages in various periods and their translation into Arabic;
- d. Renewal, development and spreading of the use of Palestinian cultural symbols, material and non-material;
- e. The organization, on the national level, of festivals, seminars, conferences and exhibitions relating to Palestinian folk heritage, and the encouragement of such events on the local level.

## 2. Palestinian/Arab Geography, History, Archaeology and Islamic Architecture Unit

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This unit will promote the study of the history, geography, archaeology and architecture of Palestine, by the following means:

- a. The convening of seminars, conferences and educational field trips to focus on Palestinian geography, history, archaeology and architecture;

b. Preparation of materials and documentation for the purpose of familiarizing Palestinians living in the country and the diaspora with these topics;

c. The undertaking of comprehensive studies on topics relating to Palestinian history, geography, archaeology and architecture, and the tracing of the historical continuity of modern Palestine with pre-Islamic periods, extending back to the Kana'anites;

d. The training of staff qualified to conduct educational tours whose purpose is to teach participants about various historical, geographical, archaeological and architectural aspects of their homeland, and to strengthen spiritual and material ties to these sites.

### 3. Arabic Language and Literature Unit

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To be implemented as follows:

a. The offering of Arabic language classes whose aim is to strengthen use of the language at various levels;

b. The convening of seminars, conferences and festivals relating to Arabic literature in all its forms (poetry, novels, plays, etc.);

c. Working toward ensuring the accessibility of Arabic literature on a popular level via the abovementioned national public library, publishing house and printshop;

d. Encouraging young writers to create in the Arabic language through contacts with established literateurs whose work reflects the aims of the **Palestinian Cultural Project**;

e. Undertaking studies on the practical implications of teaching the language and the literature, which will serve to facilitate their instruction and raise the level of their use;

f. To undertake translation projects so that we may impart to our people some of the best works of creative writing from other cultures, and so that we may effect a transfer of our outstanding creative works to other cultures.

### 4. Art Unit

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To be established to serve the following goals:

a. The establishment and encouragement of local theater troupes, and working toward the establishment of a national theater troupe;

b. The establishment and encouragement of folkdance (debka) troupes on the local level, while working for the establishment of a national debka troupe;

c. The encouragement of film and video production and the establishment of a special library in this field;

d. Encouragement of the work of local Palestinian artists and staging exhibitions of their works;

e. Support for those talented in the abovementioned areas.

### 5. Journalism and Media Unit

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The activities of this unit are envisioned as follows:

a. The publication of a weekly newspaper aimed at addressing Palestinian society and its relevant concerns in new ways;

b. The training of individuals with journalistic potential, via internal and external courses, to create a staff

qualified to work in the newspaper, radio and television fields.

c. The publication of a juried journal on a variety of humanities and social science topics.

d. The publication of a monthly periodical in English, to convey issues of interest in the Palestinian community and the Arab world (that are relevant to Palestinians) as well as to publicize the activities of the **National Center for Palestinian Culture**.

e. The publication of a monthly political/literary magazine, **Kana'an**.

## **6. Early Childhood and Informal Education Unit**

This unit will serve to further the cultural curriculum in early childhood (kindergarten) and informal (local community center-based after-school programs) education by the following means:

a. The creation of a number of programs to train staff to work in the areas of early childhood and informal education (i.e. kindergarten and after-school instruction);

b. The Arabizing of programs, games and publications to be used in the abovementioned frameworks;

c. The collection, editing and publication of Palestinian folk tales from stories, songs and games, to be carried out with the cooperation of the folk heritage unit and then utilized in the abovementioned frameworks;

d. The establishment of exhibits, shows and other activities for children and adults in cooperation with the folk heritage and art units;

e. The publication of books and magazines for children about the child and the family;

f. Mobilization of parents' committees to participate in these projects and activities.

## **7. Data Bank**

The staff of the data bank, envisioned as a special unit of the library, will provide the various research units with any and all requested data and/or materials relevant to their specific fields and others.

## **8. Community Education Division**

The **National Center for Palestinian Culture**, in addition to its various research units, will seek to incorporate the public at large through a series of programs designed to ensure its participation via community education activities -- with special attention directed toward the Palestinian population of mixed towns -- as follows:

a. Training staff in the fields of early childhood education, eliminating illiteracy, youth leadership and tourism;

b. Planning and implementation of trips for youth and adults to sites of Palestinian historical, geographical, archaeological and architectural importance;

c. Holding youth and technology camps;

d. Training staff to work in Arab grassroots organizations through a series of courses in the vocational, administrative, educational development, media and health care fields;



e. Drawing up plans for local and regional libraries and museums;

f. Creating economic, cultural and recreational activities to incorporate and activate the society's senior citizens;

g. Organizing vocational courses and cultural activities for working youths.

h. Establishing guidance counseling centers for high school and university students, in cooperation with local Arab grassroots associations and institutions, to guide high school students -- by means of courses, publications and one-to-one advising -- through the matriculation and university application processes and to act as an advocate for Arab university students who encounter problems with their studies and/or study programs.

i. In addition, the national center will undertake to establish a fund to support higher education, to be called "The National Fund for Higher Education," whose aims would include:

- \* To give aid to needy students during their studies, to be repaid without interest after four years;
- \* To transform the aid into grants in exchange for community service, including tutoring weak and learning-disabled students; programs to eliminate illiteracy; training centers; and voluntary work in grassroots institutions -- as defined by the administration of the fund;
- \* To support talented students at various levels of study;
- \* To support students studying subjects vital to Arab society, as defined by the administration of the fund.

## The Implementation Plan/Stage 1: Setting Priorities

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From the Nazareth conference emerged the oversight committee of the **Palestinian Cultural Project**. Taking into account the recommendations of the various working papers presented at the workshop sessions of the conference, the committee developed a list of priority projects for the establishment of the **National Center for Palestinian Culture**.

These priorities were arrived at by considering the cultural needs and requirements of Palestinian society in Israel as well as the essential elements necessary for the foundation of the national center, upon which the existence of future projects and programs will depend. The main considerations were two:

- a) *ranking priorities according to which programs and projects can bring culture to the public in the most direct way possible (such as the national public library and heritage museum);*
- b) *ranking priorities according to which programs and projects can be implemented making use of already existing physical facilities*

*(such as the RCAH in Tayibeh, the museum site in Sakhin and facilities of existing Arab local organizations) -- because raising funds to build a national center as outlined above is expected to take several years.*

Thus the oversight committee defined the priority programs for the establishment of the national center as follows, setting aside more academic aspects (such as research, documentation, conferences and publications) for a future stage.

### **Programs and projects for Stage 1: implementing the cultural project**

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1. staff training
2. campaign to eliminate illiteracy
3. folk heritage museum
4. cultural caravan
5. national and local public libraries

#### **1. Staff Training**

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The success of the **National Center for Palestinian Culture** will depend to a large extent on the existence of qualified trained personnel to staff its various departments. Moreover, trained staff is needed to work at the local level in Arab grassroots organizations, which will be integrated to the maximum extent possible into the framework of activities of the national center.

Thus, staff training will be undertaken on two levels:  
a) first, to train a working staff for the national center; and  
b) to train instructors qualified to offer various courses at local organizations throughout the country.

#### **a. Training of staff for the national center**

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Trained staff is required in the following areas:

- 1) Early childhood education
- 2) Literary Arabic
- 3) Library administration
- 4) Tour guiding
- 5) Journalism/Media

The courses will run for an average of six months, meeting twice a week, and will be offered in a number of locations, taking into consideration the geographical location of existing Arab grassroots organizations. It is expected that the cost of each training course will reach approximately \$5,000, with some variations. Thus the gross cost of offering the five abovementioned courses is \$25,000, to cover the following expenses:

- 1) lecturers' stipends,
- 2) travel expenses
- 3) educational/pedagogical materials
- 4) telephone/fax
- 5) administrative expenses
- 6) salary for training course coordinator
- 7) reference books
- 8) paper/stationery supplies

It is anticipated that the number of participants will be between 15 and 20 per course, totaling between 75 and 100 all together. Each participant (or his/her local organization) will be required to pay enrollment fees of \$100; with the

minimum number of projected participants this would generate \$7,500 in income.

Thus, deducting the projected income from the projected gross costs, the net cost of offering the first level of staff training courses is \$17,500.

Support required for training of staff for national center.....\$17,500
----------------------------------------------------------------------------

**b. Training of staff for local organizations**

Trained staff is needed so that Arab local organizations can offer courses in the following areas:

- 1) Arabic calligraphy
- 2) History of the Palestinian question
- 3) Kana'anist history
- 4) Embroidery and other handicrafts
- 5) Folkdance (debka)
- 6) Arab music
- 7) Computer education

These courses will be offered in a number of locations in Galilee, the Triangle and the mixed cities -- Haifa and Acre in the north and Jaffa, Ramle and Lod in the central region. Each course will run six months, and the graduates will be employed by local community centers in their fields of specialization and training.

Assuming that each course is offered in two locations at the same time, the actual number of required courses is 14. The cost of offering each course is estimated at \$3,000; therefore, the total gross cost of offering the 14 courses comes to \$42,000.

It is expected that enrollment will average 15 participants per course, yielding a total of 210 participants. Enrollment fees will be \$100 per student, generating a projected income of \$21,000.

Thus, deducting the projected income from the projected gross costs, the net cost of offering the second level of staff training courses is \$21,000.

Support needed for training of staff for local organizations.....\$21,000
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**2. Campaign to Eliminate Illiteracy**

It is expected that this program will begin to be implemented in 10 locations of existing grassroots organizations throughout the country, to continue for a full year. Each association will offer instruction on two levels, with each course running 5 months. The minimum number of participants per course is projected at 15; thus the number of people expected to benefit from the campaign is 300 (15 participants per course x 2 courses x 10 locations).

The cost of offering the courses is projected as follows:

1. Pedagogical materials...	\$.15,000
2. Instructors' stipends \$150x10mosx10 locations.	\$.15,000
3. Half-time coordinator; \$1,000/mo x 12.....	\$.12,000
4. Newspaper advertising...	\$.1,000
5. Administrative expenses \$500/mox12 mos.....	\$.6,000
<b>TOTAL gross costs.....</b>	<b>\$.49,000</b>

In addition to staff and equipment provided by Arab grassroots organizations, the local contribution to the project will consist of enrollment fees of \$80 per participant, totalling \$24,000 in income (based on 300 participants).

Thus, deducting the projected income from the projected gross costs, the net cost of the campaign against illiteracy is \$25,000.

Support needed for campaign against illiteracy....	\$25,000
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### 3. Museum of Palestinian Folk Heritage

The members of the oversight committee agreed that the Palestinian folk heritage museum is to be one of the focal points of the **National Center for Palestinian Culture**. The museum is intended not only to encourage the local Palestinian population to learn about and take pride in its folk heritage, but to spread understanding and appreciation of that heritage to visitors from abroad.

However, the museum, as it presently exists in Sakhnin, still needs a budget for the acquisition of additional items including rare costumes, work implements, folk handicrafts, documents and special furniture. Furthermore, interior and exterior renovations must be carried out before the museum can be opened to the public. The opening, in turn, will require further funds for the preparation of literature in a number of languages and advertising the museum via hotels and travel agencies throughout the country as well as in the press.

In addition to opening its doors to school groups, foreign tourists and the general public, the museum will present, in cooperation with local Arab organizations, joint exhibits, book fairs and lectures, the proceeds from which will support the ongoing activities of the cultural project as a whole.

From previous preparation of museum budgets by the **Research Center for Arab Heritage**, the level of support needed to ready the museum for opening is projected at \$81,320.

Once opened, the museum is expected to attract an estimated 25,000 visitors during its first year of operation, generating income from entrance fees as well as the sale of assorted heritage-related printed and craft items in the museum gallery. While it is not yet possible to project the extent of that income, we

expect that this revenue will contribute a great deal to ensuring the continuity and development of the cultural project as a whole.

Support for the museum effort has come from Mr. Basem Farah of Nazareth, who has been so kind as to offer a building he owns in the heart of the city for the use of the cultural project. The oversight committee has determined that some of the building's eight rooms will house a branch of the Palestinian folk heritage museum as well as exhibits of Palestinian art aimed at the tourist traffic in the city. The remaining rooms are intended to be used as workshops for the production/reproduction of traditional Palestinian handicrafts of saleable quality.

The cost of renting a building like of which Mr. Farah has generously put at our disposal would come to \$24,000 a year. However, the building he has offered is in need of various renovations costing approximately \$20,000 to make it suitable for the the abovementioned functions.

Therefore, the costs for readying the Palestinian folk heritage museum site in Sakhnin and its Nazareth branch total \$101,320:

1. Readyng Sakhnin museum site. . .	\$81,320
2. Renovation, Nazareth site. . . . .	\$20,000
TOTAL, heritage museum/branch. . .	\$101,320

#### 4. Cultural Caravan

In order to ensure the participation of the community as a whole in the various activities of the **Palestinian Cultural Project**, the oversight committee concluded that a novel program is needed to bring the project to the people to increase their awareness of its scope and to develop their commitment to its goals, summarized as follows:

- a. To strengthen the community's spiritual and material awareness of our heritage;
- b. To instill an understanding of belonging to a national identity as a basic principle in overcoming the effects of Israelization, instilled by political parties and processes, that have resulted in a lack of social cohesion;
- c. To further enhance ties with the land and the homeland via self-actualization in all aspects.

Thus, such a program must be carried out on the local level in a systematic way so that it may be implemented in 14 different locations each year in cooperation with existing Arab organizations, from the northernmost reaches of the country to the southernmost. The caravan will pass through mixed towns and Arab villages and towns twice a month, where its activities will be presented over a two-day period.

Thus the oversight committee envisions that each two-day caravan should include the following cultural activities:

- 1) mobile museum exhibits
- 2) Palestinian/Arab book fair
- 3) handicraft exhibit/sale
- 4) theater performances for children and for adults
- 5) folkdance performances
- 6) folksong performances
- 7) poetry readings

The cost of implementing the cultural caravan progra for the first year, including 14 such two-day events in a different location each time, includes the following:

1. Staff salaries.....	\$22,659
2. Performers' stipends, travel expenses Photography, video recordings of events..	\$35,100
3. Tools, equipment, moveable furniture....	\$13,500
4. Purchase of a van; insurance/maintenance.	\$60,000
5. Administrative expenses.....	.\$7,700
6. Handicrafts, books for sale at caravans..	\$10,000
TOTAL.....	\$148,959

It is projected that each of the 14 two-day caravans will attract 2,000 to 3,000 people. Entrance fees and exhibit item sales are projected at \$2,000 for each caravan, bringing the anticipated income to \$28,000. Thus total level of support for the cultural caravan project's first year is \$120,959.

Support needed for cultural caravan project.....	\$120,959
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### 5. National and Local Public Libraries

Palestinian grassroots associations and organizations and other institutions in the Arab sector have witnessed in recent years the establishment stage of a number of public libraries, which can be considered one of the central pillars of developing the cultural situation in general. And yet, this process continues to a very great extent without any coordination as to the quantity or nature of the reference works and other books being purchased.

In light of this, the members of the cultural project oversight committee reached the following conclusions.

#### a. The establishment of a national public library

The national library occupies a prominent place in the priorities of the **Palestinian Cultural Project** because it is most important in its service to the Palestinian community on all levels. Because of the lack of an existing building that is suitable at present to house such a library, the budget for the project's first year was limited to \$77,700, for the purchase of all types of books needed to begin the process of preparing for the eventual opening. The 10,000-volume library of the **Research Center for Arab Heritage** can be considered the nucleus of the national library; with the establishment of the physical premises of the **National Center for Palestinian Culture**, this collection will be transferred to the permanent national library location.

#### b. Support for local libraries

The establishment of the national library does not preclude the existence of local libraries, to be undertaken according to the level of importance of location. Thus, it was agreed by members of the oversight committee to support 10 such local libraries a year at the establishment and

development levels with an average budget of \$15,000 each with variations according to particular needs of each site.

Thus the level of support for establishing 10 local libraries (10 locations x \$15,000 each = \$150,000) and buying books for the national library (\$77,700) totals \$227,000.

Support needed for libraries...\$227,000

### Budget summary:

#### Funds required to implement Palestinian Cultural Project/Stage 1

Project	Gross Cost	Local Contrbtion	Support Required
1. nat'l staff training	\$25,000	\$7,500	17,500
2. local staff training	\$42,000	\$21,000	\$21,000
3. illiteracy campaign	\$49,000	\$24,000	\$25,000
4. heritage museum	\$125,320	\$24,000	\$101,320
5. cultural caravan	\$148,959	\$28,000	\$120,959
6. nat'l lib. local lbs.	\$77,700 \$150,000	----- -----	----- \$227,700
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$617,979</b> (100%)	<b>\$104,500</b> (17%)	<b>\$513,479</b> (83%)

**Total support needed.....\$513,479**

### **The Research Center for Arab Heritage**

The **Research Center for Arab Heritage** in Tayibeh was established in 1983 by local Palestinians to help the Palestinian population in Israel cope with the tremendous threats facing its heritage and culture.

The center is a national academic institution that believes in academic freedom for its staff. It is open to anyone interested in Arab history and culture -- regardless of religion, nationality, gender or race.

The center's main objectives are:

- \* To recover the lost, hidden, forgotten and neglected aspects of Palestinian culture, drawing on folklore, historical perspectives, intellectual assets and all the dynamic resources of Palestinian society throughout the ages.
- \* To preserve and protect living remnants of Palestinian culture and Arab civilization in the area, especially those in danger of vanishing.
- \* To develop Palestinian culture so as to enrich the individual and the society.
- \* To disseminate Palestinian culture and thought via periodicals, journals, books, papers, seminars, theater and festivals.
- \* To strengthen the ties between the Palestinians and their heritage.
- \* To expose and disseminate all aspects of Palestinian Arab culture by all means, locally and internationally.





Picasso  
1910