

We at Sharek Youth Forum contribute to building and developing the capacity of the youth to take on a leadership role in developing society through empowerment and advocacy programs based on volunteerism and youth initiatives which promote equality and human rights.



Successful Summit becomes a Platform and a Catalyst for Youth Participation in Local Government Affairs



The Summit's main aim was to publicize the launch of a new appeal, specifically focusing on addressing the issues facing young Palestinians. This appeal, which was issued in the name of Palestinian youth, was directed specifically at the local government representatives, legislators and decision makers. It insisted that they begin to move towards a new horizon of mutual cooperation, built upon the communication among all generations, and with democracy and the rule of law at the core. This appeal also urged young Palestinians to reinforce their own desire to be taken seriously in the local government decision making process and emphasized their right to participation.

Dr. Khalid Qawasmi, Minister of Local Government

“Ensuring that youth become a potential powerful influence in the development of the community is one of the most important things we can do as politicians. I can only commend the participants of this summit for their dedication, determination and passion. The Youth Shadow Local Councils (YSLCs) continue to be a vital arm of the main municipality councils. I would like to express my support for the continuation of the YSLC, and encourage Sharek Youth Forum to continue to enlarge this excellent initiative.”

A Call for Change

The Palestinian youth strive for social justice, youth participation, democratic plurality and the freedom of opinion, thought and belief. The youth of Palestine believe that there is a need to open dialogue with decision makers immediately and without limitations. We will not accept anything less than the change to democracy and an allowance for all young Palestinians to be part of the Palestinian decision-making process. We call for the opportunity to diligently and creatively build our people’s present and future.

We demand that the Youth Shadow Local Councils become the catalyst for similar national projects.

A Call for Dignity

For generations, the Palestinian people have been tirelessly working on building the institutions of their future State. We believe the youth should be given the opportunity to prove that they are capable of creating a future Palestine for all. We, as Palestinian youth, will always continue to struggle for a better life, for dignity and for justice. We will be firm in our demand for all local and national institutions to be built on eligibility, competency and merit, rejecting archaic notions such as nepotism and cronyism.

We call for the most basic right, that of human dignity, the dignity to believe in what we want and express our beliefs freely and without prejudice, the dignity to become whatever we want to become.

Today, as we launch this appeal, we call upon Palestinian decision makers and other institutions to listen, without pre-judgment, to the voice of youth. They will then realize that this is a voice that reflects all demographics of Palestine; young and old, male or female, religious or secular.

Youth Working Papers

The Youth Summit also saw the presentation of three papers – each highlighting specific demands from the summit participants. These demands have been developed over six months as a collaborative effort from the 12 Youth Shadow Local Councils in 12 municipalities around the West Bank. Each paper aims to tackle the specific major issues facing the Palestinian youth today.

Only when we invest in youth will Palestine truly be free and independent

The Youth Participation Paper

- We demand that local municipalities adopt a minimum Youth quota system for their local councils. This will allow more causes and campaigns suggested by the youth councils and other young individuals to be implemented in the main local councils.
- We demand the establishment of a Youth Council in every municipality around the West Bank.
- We demand the formation of a Youth Council Union, specifically designed to tackle issues facing all, or individual Youth Councils.

The Unemployment and Job Opportunities Paper

- *During the coming years, we would like to see the Palestinian youth empowered enough and capable of working with local, national and international organizations in implementing policies and procedures that adhere to the Palestinian national interest.*
- We believe that local investment is the key to the building of a strong Palestinian economy; therefore we demand that initiatives be established to create opportunity and develop the local economy in different spheres of employment.
- We demand a current and detailed account of the correlation between educational courses and the demands of the labor market.

We need a Local Governance System that is transparent and willing to hear concerns from all Palestinian demographics.

Legislations and Policies Paper

- To create a new Palestinian Constitution – that serves all members of society.
- *To amend and develop current legislations specifically focusing on youth participation in local and national governmental decision making.*

- To update and modernize the teaching styles and methods in schools and universities around Palestine.
- To determine the sectors that can be funded externally.
- We again demand a current and detailed account of the correlations between educational courses and the demands of the labor market.

Local Government Units serve community citizens. Palestinian youth constitute a major force in each community.

A Palestinian Youth shadows the Minister of Economy for one week

Many critical issues related to youth and their participation in government were discussed in the Youth Summit. One of the highlights of the discussions was a remark made by Amaal Zamareh, the Vice President of the Halhoul Youth Shadow Local Council, who suggested that youth be given the opportunity to work directly with Ministers. The Minister of the National Economy, Dr. Hasan Abu Libdeh, welcomed this idea and in fact agreed to host Amaal in his Ministry to shadow him. Amaal stated, "This is going to be a great opportunity and

a big challenge at the same time. We need to show everyone that we deserve this recognition and will work very hard to be a model of success."

Amaal enjoyed the experience of being a "Shadow Minister" and hopes that this will simply be the beginning of further collaboration between youth and the Palestinian Ministries.

The formation of local youth councils in Al Mutaheda and Marj Bin Amer Municipalities

Two new youth local councils in Al Mutaheda and Marj Bin Amer have recently been established by Sharek Youth Forum. This has been made possible by the generous support of the Municipal Development and Lending Fund through their local development program in the Jenin Governate (Phase II), which is funded by the Danish government.

It is worth mentioning that the Youth Councils were well received by the local communities and local government bodies.

Under the supervision of the Central Election Committee and local CBOs, Sharek staff and volunteers conducted the elections. In Al Mutaheda Municipality, which comprises four locations (Maythalon, Sirees, Jadedeh and Seer), 140 young men and women voted and elected 12 representatives to form a local youth council. Four young women and 8 young men won a seat on the council.



After the voting and counting process Mr. Abdul Karim Said, the mayor of Al Mutaheda, announced the results adding, "This is the first step for youth on the path to being active citizens." He declared the full support of the municipality to the youth council.

In the municipality of Marj Bin Amer, which includes ten villages (Beit Qad the North and South, Faqqu'a, Jalbun, Jalama, Deir Ghazala, Deir Abu Daef, Arrana, Aaba and Arbuna), 235 young men and women between the ages of 15-22 participated in the elections. Nine ballot centers operated during the election day under the supervision of 35 volunteers from the other youth local councils. Fourteen members have been elected to form the local youth council in Marj Bin Amer (6 females and 8 males).

At the end of a long election day Mr. Naser Adam, the Mayor of Marj Bin Amer, expressed thanks to Sharek Youth Forum and the the Municipal Development and Lending Fund for providing this opportunity to local youth. He stressed the need for those from marginalized villages to continue to work and develop themselves and he encouraged the local youth councils to be active and creative. Mr. Naser promised to support and cooperate with them fully.



Youth International Day presented an opportunity to discuss issues that are fundamental to young Palestinians, including the status of Palestine, prisoner rights, national unity, and freedom for all citizens.

The youth of Palestine call for national unity and demand rights and freedoms for all.

Sharek Youth Forum calls for a clarification for the policies and guidelines for young people at the national and international level.

The Youth of Palestine around the world have united to launch the campaign, “Don’t back down”



Around the world, Palestinian youth, in conjunction with Sharek implemented the ‘Don’t back down’ campaign. This campaign was initiated to support the Palestinian desire for recognition within the UN, and to garner support from other nations around the world.

The Palestinian youth called for the self determination of Palestine and for other nations to recognise Palestine’s sovereignty. They also urged all nations to campaign for the adherence of general human rights for all Palestinians.

The campaign included a series of dialogues among youth. These were initiated to draw as much support locally and nationally as possible.

Serry condemns closure of Sharek Youth Forum in Gaza

Robert Serry, the United Nations Special Coordinator to the Middle East Peace Process, expressed his deep concern about the closure of the Sharek Youth Forum offices in Gaza by the Ministry of Interior based on erroneous accusations.

Serry demanded full respect of the rights of organizations to work independently and free from external interference.

Youth organizations have in turn requested the resignation of the Minister of Interior in Gaza due to the inaccurate claims regarding Sharek’s legal status and activities.

Situation Report 2011: Winds of Change: Will they break down the Walls of Oppression?”

This Situation Report focused on the priorities of youth, activism and the use of social media by the youth of Palestine. Many recommendations were made including that youth should invest their energy in community work and activities that would benefit society overall, both of which Sharek promotes heavily through its many projects.

The report shows the connection of the struggle of Palestinians around the world, including the West Bank, Gaza, and the diaspora - uniting their desire to struggle against the occupation, the discrimination of Palestinian people and the internal Palestinian disunity.



Sharek Youth Forum highlights the need for an open forum of dialogue between students, businesses and organisations regarding the wants and needs of the Palestinian job market.

Sharek has recently released a positioning paper regarding the high school (Tawjihi) results. These results determine what a student can major in at University. Sharek recommended that students be more aware of what disciplines are offered in Palestinian universities in general. Similarly, Sharek also highlighted the need for awareness regarding the relationship between these majors and the needs of the job market.

Sharek believes that the Palestinian University entry system should be amended, and that the system of grades determining future degree choices is counter-productive to the needs of both the students and the future employees.

Facebook closes Sharek's official page

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Facebook administration recently closed the official page of Sharek Youth Forum. This was done both with no prior warning and no explanation. Sharek therefore presumes that this was due to the fact that it was a page that focussed on developing and empowering the youth of Palestine.

Shabab Youth Network – focusing on aiding youth to build a stronger, more democratic society.

Sharek launched a new project, the 'Shabab Youth Network', aimed at building and developing the skills of youth in the fields of advocacy, communication, volunteerism and debate and dialogue. It provides young participants the opportunity to debate with high level decision makers. The 'Shabab Youth Network' was based in 12 different locations across the West Bank.



Sharek supports the campaign 'Give me a Chance'

'Give me a Chance' is a campaign specifically initiated to garner support for local Palestinian products. It similarly aims to remove all Israeli products from the Palestinian market, in turn developing the Palestinian economy.

The campaign aimed to stimulate the production process and therefore employ more Palestinian workers, ultimately reducing unemployment and poverty in Palestine. The campaign's overall goal is to fully develop Palestinian products in order for them to successfully compete against the Israeli alternative.

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Sharek Youth Summit – September 10, 2011

The Palestinian Youth Summit saw a successful transitional conclusion to the Youth Shadow Local Councils. It also marked an important stage in the progress of youth initiatives. A culmination of over six months of preparation, involving over 1500 individuals from across the West Bank finally meant that the Summit became a reality and not just a dream. This summit played host to over 350 Palestinian youth, and an additional 150 guests. These guests included local municipality representatives, individuals from national and international organisations, and local and international media.

The Summit's main aim was to publicize the launch of a new appeal, specifically focussing on the problems faced by Palestinian youth. This appeal, which was issued in the name of all Palestinian youth, was directed specifically at the local government representatives, legislators and decision makers. It insisted that they begin to move towards a new horizon of mutual cooperation, built upon the communication among all generations, and with democracy and the rule of law at the core. This appeal also asked young Palestinians to reinforce their own desire to be taken seriously in the local government decision making process and emphasize their right to participation.



E-shabab TV

Sharek has recently announced the launch of its new internet based youth TV (eshabab.tv). It is an independent network aimed at youth around the world. The Shabab Television show was initiated to reach a wider audience – making it easier for the youth to communicate with others regarding local, national and international issues.



YSLC camps

The YSLC has successfully completed its youth camps initiative in 10 different locations around the West Bank. These camps were aimed at engaging the youth with their local communities. The Youth Councils worked in conjunction with their local municipalities to successfully deliver vibrant activities. Sharek can report that over 500 individuals from all over the West Bank took part.

YSLC Campaigns

The youth councils based around the West Bank continue with their initiative to launch ten youth based campaigns aimed at tackling major Palestinian issues. In cooperation with local municipalities and other youth organisation the campaigns created will be diverse and focus on both local and national issues, such as pollution and road maintenance.





YSLC Unions

Sharek will begin to implement a strategy to form a union among all Youth Councils around the West Bank. This will be the final part of the second stage for the Youth Council Project – thus creating a self-sustaining network. Sharek's main aim is to expand the YSLC, hopefully reaching 40 councils across Palestine.

YSLC – Marj Benamer

A new Youth Shadow Local Council has been established in the town of Marj Benamer. Elections for members will commence on September 24 2011. Sharek would like to highlight that the proposed council will encompass ten different areas around the municipality, creating an arena for cross-community dialogue.

The Right to Live



The European Institute for Democracy and Human Rights has founded the 'Right to Live' project, which Sharek supports. This project aims to change the way people view the subjects of the death penalty and state executions. The project will build networks between the youth of Palestine, and create a safe-space forum for debate and dialogue.

Art-Territories

Art-Territories is an independent online platform for artists, researchers and curators to reflect on their practice and engage in critical exchange on matters of art and visual culture in the Middle East and the Arab World. Dedicated to the interview format, the initiative encourages discussion of artistic process with an emphasis on discursive art and media practices, collaborative initiatives, and cultural and institutional politics. Activated through interview chains which we call Trails, the project aims to define, connect and expand already existing art communities in the region and beyond. Art-Territories is acting in multiple locations through a growing network of guest editors, contributors and users.



Harrer Harrer Workshops

Through a series of workshops, the Doha Film Institute, with the support of Sharek, launched the *Harrer Harrer* program, to collect stories from Palestine. Participants from different districts made a series of one minute films chronicling personal stories inspired by the recently Arab Uprisings.

The workshops trained movie lovers on film making and script writing. A number of participants will be chosen to make the films and pass the message about the revolutions, social or political ones. The chosen films will be shown at the Doha-Trabica Film Festival in Doha, October 25 to 29, 2011.



Bridges Program - Enriching Education

Sharek is launching the Bridges program, in five different regions of the West Bank and one in East Jerusalem. This program will provide enriching activities to primary school children after the regular school day. They will be able to choose from among varied activities such as dabke, singing, arts and crafts, football, chess, English, math-for-fun and storytelling. This program will also be bolstered by a daily homework

help drop in which children who require support with their homework but who have no such recourse elsewhere have somewhere to turn.



The program will be largely supported by youth volunteer instructors who will offer activities in their area of interest and expertise. Furthermore, it is a program that will serve to bring children, youth, families and the community to participate and work together. Quality after school programs are neither readily available nor easily accessible in most communities in Palestine and Sharek Youth Forum, through the Bridges programme, is working to address this need.

Palestinian Youth Sports League (PYSL)



The PYSL is a national sports program designed to provide youth, adolescents and children with a safe and competitive sporting environment. The children will be involved in various sports such as football, basketball, volleyball and other strength-building activities. During the camp, excursions will take place and there will also be a health education program. Holding the camps was made possible by the support of the UNDP, PACES and the IBSA forum, and in conjunction with Khotwat organisation. Camps were held in three different locations around the West Bank, including Ramallah. The camps took place in July and the last day saw 300 children participating in the concluding ceremony.



For more information please go to www.pysl.ps

The closure of Sharek's offices in Gaza

On July 12, 2011, without any prior notification, Sharek was shocked to learn that the Gazan Minister of Interior decided to permanently close all of Sharek's offices in region. Sharek demands that the authorities in Gaza overturn their decision and re-open Sharek in Gaza immediately. Sharek firmly believes that they should be given the rights and freedoms to work uninterrupted within Gaza, and believe this decision to be a violation of Palestinian and International law.

In a recent paper Sharek highlighted the current situation in Gaza and described how Sharek was closed without the issuing of a court order. Similarly they were told that local NGOs were not to carry out projects that are funded by a donor, unless the Interior Ministry has previously agreed.

Sharek maintains that it has both the legal and moral right to be present in Gaza, and believes that actions like this only serve to divide Palestine further. The decision to close the offices has been made without any communication by officials in Gaza with any Sharek member, neither in Gaza nor in the West Bank.

Sharek continues to receive local and international support. Notable international actors such as the UN, along with international human rights organizations, media outlets and legal experts continue to condemn the closure of Sharek's offices in Gaza. They also continue to monitor the situation closely.

'Start Working' project and National Career Day



Within a series of youth leadership programs, Sharek implemented the 'Start Working' project. This included a national career day for recent graduates. The project will be executed in five different districts in the West Bank – working specifically with Palestinian universities.

In conjunction with the Ministry of Higher Education, Sharek completed a series of training workshops – targeting vocational high school teachers to develop their skills. These trainings were launched in cooperation with Palestine technical college, the Jerusalem Open University, and Al Tireh college. The trainings included: career days, CV writing workshops and interview skills workshops. Sharek highlighted the need for the career days to specifically target people with disabilities

Similarly, Sharek continues to sponsor the Model Court at Al Quds University in the presences of a number of judges and the head of the high court to develop the skills of law graduates.

Center of Youth – Jenin

In conjunction with Sharek the Center of Youth located in the Jenin Municipality has launched a Cinema Project. This project is designed to help children understand the world of film and media. It targets children from more disadvantaged communities. The program director, Shahd Zakaineh, stated that the program was implemented in 16 locations in Jenin, 7 surrounding villages and one in the Jenin refugee camp.

The Recent Graduate Workshop

International Youth Foundation and Sharek implemented a workshop addressing the specific needs of the Palestinian job market for recent graduates. Specialists in the education and employment highlighted the problem between higher education graduates and the needs of the job market – specifically issues of high unemployment.

The specialists also agreed on the need to reassess the Palestinian education process. They believed the education system needed to move from the standard traditional techniques to a more modern way of education. This gives students a better chance to gain experience in the workplace.



In cooperation with the MoEHE, Sharek Youth Forum organized a one-week study tour for a delegation from three vocational schools in the West Bank and the Ministry's representative to Germany to be acquainted with the German skills and experiences in vocational education.



Sharek Youth Forum and the dvv international, in co-operation with the Minister of Higher Education and a number of organisations and vocational institutes, organised a session about the relationship between technical and vocational education and the Palestinian job market.

International Population Day – 11 October

Sharek, in conjunction with the UNFPA, will celebrate International Population Day. This day is in recognition of the world population reaching seven billion in October 2011. Sharek stated that the youth of today will be the future leaders of the seven billion, believing them to be key to the success of the international community. Sharek has already launched a campaign throughout the West Bank and Gaza to promote these ideas – activities included an art contest that allowed the participants to express their views through artistic means, such as; writing, drawing and creating short movies.

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Sharek implements the 'Be the Change' project.

Sharek has celebrated the end of phase one of the 'Be The Change' project, which was implemented in cooperation with the UNFPA. This project, which encourages marginalized youth to implement innovative community service projects either individually or in small groups, has seen over 1000 participants. Sharek is pleased to announce the continuation of this successful project, with the second phase having been launched in August.



'Soul's Identity' Film

Sharek recently screened the Palestinian film 'Souls Identity', in a number of Palestinian universities. This was in co-operation with Arts Alliance, and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign affairs. Ten universities screened the film to a total 3500 students.



Sharek's Executive Director wins International Prize

Sharek Executive Director Bader Zamareh recently won a 'Social Innovator of the Arab World' Prize, awarded by the Synergos Institute. Zamareh received this prize in recognition of his participation in the Arab World Social Innovators initiative. The prize, valued at 25,000 dollars, was then donated to Sharek to continue their work in the field of social entrepreneurship.





Shabab al Balad Television Show



Sharek, in conjunction with Palestinian State TV, continued its production of the TV talk show, *Shabab al Balad*. The TV show, presented by Ihab al Jariri, aims to promote dialogue and debate about pertinent youth issues among youth of different ages and different social backgrounds.

Sharek also continues its association with Raya FM. Sharek volunteers present the radio show *Shu be Rasak* ("What's on your Mind?"). The program, funded by the Al Jeel Company and Al Wataniya mobile, continues to be a success.

Specific mention goes to 'The Youth and Political Parties' program. It was generally believed that this became a catalyst to many of its listeners in re-assessing their personal views on politics in Palestine.



Hasaduna Art Exhibition

Sharek was pleased to host the recent Hasaduna Art Exhibition. This exhibition featured a great number of paintings by local Palestinian students from the Ramallah Art Institute. The pieces on display were a testament to the talent and passion of the arts community in Palestine.



Social Media



Sharek has recently coordinated a number of workshops and lectures regarding the use of social media in advocacy, focusing on its ability to reinforce youth issues in particular. Sharek was proud to host Palestinian-Australian Sohail Dahdal, who is completing his PhD on the use of social media. He relayed his expert knowledge on this subject to Sharek's staff and many of the young volunteers.

National Detainee Day, Hebron

Sharek recently organised the 'Detainees on our Mind' Day, in conjunction with the Minister of Hebron, Kamel Hameed. Hameed relayed a message from the President Mahmoud Abbas thanking the efforts of youth organisations and young volunteers. He stated he was particularly impressed with their struggle for justice and freedom for the detainees in Israeli prisons.

Sharek's Executive Director Bader Zamareh stated that the case of Palestinians detainees was vital to Sharek and believed that through education, social communication, and advocacy, changes can occur. Zamareh also invited people to highlight the plights of Palestinian detainees to the International Community. The director of the Detainees Club, Amjad Al-Najar, thanked Sharek and the volunteers for their continued effort to promote this cause.



Sharek hosts local Ramadan evening

Sharek recently organised an evening to celebrate Ramadan in the village of Beit Ammer. This was attended by the Municipality Governor, the Minister of Detainees, as well as many other local individuals. The Governor of Hebron, Kamel Hameed and the Minister of Detainees, Issa Karakaa gave speeches, and there were performances from poets, musicians and dancers. It was estimated that 500 people attended, and Sharek was encouraged to host more events in Beit Ammer.



National Celebration of the Palestinian Volunteer

- The National Celebratory Committee arranged a festival to thank the Palestinian volunteers of 2011.
- The festival called 'Oneh' was staged in Nablus, and celebrated volunteers' contribution to Palestine and its struggle for freedom. The festival also highlighted the youth volunteers and their ambition to create a brighter future and to protect their heritage, history, and identity.
- Oneh aimed at awakening the concept of volunteerism and community work within Palestine. The festival organisers stated that volunteers needed to be thanked as it was these individuals who selflessly helped in the community and worked to improve Palestinian Society. They believed that these volunteers were perfect role models for young Palestinians.



Mari Bashir, Sharek Staff member of Gaza, Celebrates his wedding in traditional Palestinian style

