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MAGAZINE ON CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



PROTESTANTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST
MAGNIFICENT LEGACY WITH AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE



EVS Evangelical Association
for the Schneller Schools

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Dear Readers,

it is almost 500 years ago that Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. At that time, Germany and Europe were on the brink of a historical transformation. It was not until the 19th century that American missionaries brought the reformatory vision to the Middle East. This led to social developments which are still noticeable today, especially in the education and social sectors. This issue contains a lot of information on the magnificent legacy of Protestantism in the Middle East.



But today more than ever, the very small minority of Evangelical Christians is questioning its future. The 5th International SiMO Consultation in Beirut at the end of June attempted to find answers to this question. During the conference, it became clear how important Protestants are, for example when it comes to Ecumenism. They are also important to give space to the reformatory values of freedom of conscience and opinion. This is anything but easy in a region which is brutally caught between the pincers of fundamentalism and superpower interests. But whoever has an open ear for our Evangelical brothers and sisters in the Middle East, they will hear the Lutheran call of "By grace alone" in a new context. And here lies the crux of the charm of the Ecumenical Movement.

In this issue we are delighted to finally announce the appointment of a new director at the Theodor Schneller School (TSS). The post was vacant for two and a half years. There is also good news from the preschool in the Syrian Valley of Christians. The international Mission Council of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) has decided to fund this project for the next three years. Finally two volunteers report about the time they spent at the Theodor Schneller School (TSS). Turn to page 20 to read all about how these months influenced them and about the many questions they brought back with them.

On behalf of the entire editorial team, we wish you every enjoyment reading this issue.

Yours,

Katja Dorothea Buck

LOOKING INWARDS

The Evangelical churches in Germany are already preparing a variety of different events to mark the anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. It will be the 500th jubilee anniversary of the publication of Martin Luther's theses "Disputation on the power and efficacy of indulgences". But what is a jubilee anniversary exactly? And how should it be celebrated?

Today, a memorial celebration is regarded as a solemn jubilee to mark special and important events. The same happened at the Reformation jubilee anniversaries of 1817 and 1917: the celebrations centred around the greatness of Martin Luther and the church itself. When viewed from this aspect, the word "jubilee" seems to stem more from the Latin verb "jubilare" (rejoice, shout joyfully, invoke with whoops). But it actually stems from the Hebrew word "jovel" which is the ram's horn which is blown to mark the start of the Holy Year.

The concept of the jubilee then has a Biblical origin and core. The Holy Year is described in Chapter 25 of the Book of Leviticus. There it says that every 50 years, liberty should be proclaimed throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It should be the year when all accumulated injustices are righted, the year when slaves are freed and every person should return to the original land and way of life originally given by God. So it is not simply the celebration of an important date, it is the effective rapprochement to the gift of freedom.

Of course it is not simply a matter of turning the Biblical Holy Year into a model

for the Reformation jubilee. Nevertheless the associations are obvious in a world in which wealth, energy, water and food are not equally distributed. Modern forms of slavery such as child labour and human trafficking cannot be overlooked. But the Biblical Holy Year also has implications for the anniversary of the Reformation, besides the political ones. Accordingly, should the issue not be all about an effective rapprochement to the beginnings of the Christian faith, in other words to the core of the Biblical tradition, just as the Reformation itself was?

The proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth revolves around the same term, just as the first of Martin Luther's 95 theses of 31 October 1517. The first words of Jesus' proclamation are: "Repent", which Luther interpreted in his translation of the Bible as "Tut Buße" (Do penance). And Luther's first thesis also states that the lives of Christians should be a daily penance. No matter how much both Jesus and Luther contributed to influencing the language, thoughts and faith of their times, there is no doubt that both of them were governed by the same Biblical concept: go back, turn around. Back to God, to his commandments and to the truth of His goodness and love.

In this respect the Reformation jubilee anniversary may be characterised by the fact that Evangelical churches first look into themselves and contemplate the essentials of their faith and the reformatory doctrine. In his 62nd theses on indulgences, Martin Luther states, "The true wealth of the church in the sacrosanct gos-

pel of God's glory and mercy." During the course of the centuries, this reformatory message has unfolded its strength and offered guidance even for overcoming political crises. It has travelled the world, which is marked today by a religious and ideological diversity which simply did not exist in the 16th century. As a result, interfaith questions will be asked on the occasion of the Reformation jubilee anniversary.

The conference on Islamic issues organised by the Evangelical Church in Germany recently presented a discussion paper as its contribution to the thematic complex of "Reformation and Islam". At the time of the Reformation, nobody spoke referred to "Islam" or "Muslims". The Prophet's followers were described by terms such as "Turks" and in 1529, they were standing before the gates of Vienna. That was the time when Martin Luther's confrontation with Islam represented a battle for the true faith. In our times, the discussion paper formulates the aim "of dealing with the legacy of the past in such a way that it is not a hindrance to an encounter with others, but allows and facilitates such an encounter."



The Jewish Holy Year is ushered in by the sound of a shofar (ram's horn).

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For churches indigenous to the Middle East, the encounter with Islam is part of a centuries old memory and a daily experience. It is exciting to learn how Christians express and experience the gift of freedom as presented in the Gospel and by faith.

Martin Pühn is responsible for Near and Middle East matters at the Church Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

MAGNIFICENT LEGACY FACES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

5th International SIMO Consultation in Beirut on the Reformation in the Middle East

At the end of June, a conference in Beirut looked back at the traces of the Reformation in the Middle East. Under the title "The Protestant Reformation 500 Years Later in Germany and Lebanon", around 60 Evangelical and non-Evangelical Christians from Lebanon and Germany as well as representatives from Islam discussed this topic at the Near East School of Theology (NEST).

Protestantism is still very young in the Middle East. It was not until the mid-19th century that Evangelical missionaries from America and Europe brought the Reformation doctrine to societies in the Middle East, established schools and universities, built hospitals and so set the wheels of continual transformation in motion. "For us, the Reformation is a magnificent legacy, especially with regards to achievements in education and social welfare," said George Sabra, President of NEST. "But what will be our contribution in future?"

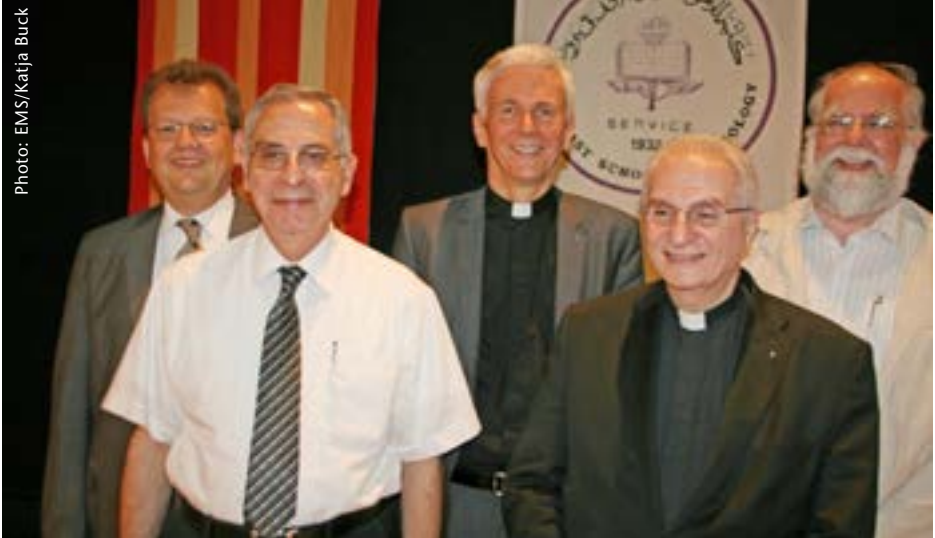
The question of the future of Protestantism in the Middle East is more relevant now than ever. In all countries of the Middle East, Protestants are only a small minority but it is very badly affected by the phenomenon of emigration. As a rule Evangelical Christians have a very good education. As a result they can easily find their footing in Western societies. "Our historical, theological and liturgical roots lie in the West, not in the East," said Sabra and described relationships to the West as a blessing. On the other hand, the external perception by non-Evangelical Christians sometimes poses a problem in this respect. "Many regard us as a mistake of

the West in Middle Eastern church history," said Sabra.

Contributions by non-Protestant speakers clearly revealed how much the indigenous Catholic, Orthodox and Old Oriental Churches regarded the rise of Protestantism in the 19th century as a Western import. "The missionaries did not establish new Oriental churches, they imported new Western churches and assimilated Western languages in their liturgy," said the Maronite priest Gaby Hachem who lectures in theology at the Université du Saint Esprit in Kaslik (Lebanon). Serj Boghos Tinkjian, Deputy Dean of the Armenian Orthodox Seminary in Bikfaya, pointed out that Western missionaries regarded the local churches as their mission field. Presumably it would have been preferable if Evangelical fervour had concentrated more on reforming the local churches and not on establishing new ones." As a result of their actions the missionaries had sown seeds of discord in the society and even in families.

The Rum Orthodox priest Rami Wanos described how missionaries in the 19th century were not without prejudice towards the local churches. They poked fun at us for kissing icons. They accused us of worshipping images and condemned our veneration of the Virgin Mary," he said. "For Protestant missionaries, we were the reason why Muslims had not found their way to Christianity."

All three non-Protestant speakers also made it clear that the Evangelical mission had positive impacts on their churches. For example, it enriched theological



The Baden Bishop Jochen Cornelius-Bundschuh (centre) spoke about the power of religion in modern society at the Consultation and used the trip to become better acquainted with the work of the EMS in Lebanon. Next to him on the left is George Sabra, President of the NEST, and Uwe Gräbe from the EVS and EMS; on the right Habib Badr from the National Evangelical Church of Beirut and Martin Tamcke from the University of Göttingen.

discussions in the Rum Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox churches, said Wannous. Tinkjian also confirmed this for his church. The central role which the Bible plays for Protestants or the emphasis of social work and education also influenced the Armenian Orthodox Church and "opened new doors in theology. Our confrontation with the Reformation strengthened our church," he said.

In general, the future of all Christians in the Middle East mainly depends on how the situation in the region develops as a whole. Many Muslims are also aware of this. The Grand Mufti of Lebanon, Shaykh Abdul Latif Daryan, pleaded for a renewal of religious discourse at a reception of the consultation participants in the Dar el-Fatwa, the supreme Sunni

religious authority in Lebanon. "We do not want religious discourse if it is based on hate and fundamentalism." Church schools teach the values of Christian faith and Islamic schools teach those of Islam. "Together it is our task to renew religious discourse and preach the spirit of love which is central to both religions."

Katja Dorothea Buck

A BRIDGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

About the present and future of Protestantism in the Middle East

Protestants do not even make up one per cent of the total population in countries of the Middle East.

On top of all this, they are divided into Evangelical and Reformatory churches. "But they can still play an important role towards the West and Islam," says Dr. George Sabra, President of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut.

Can Evangelical Christians play a role at all in the Middle East as a very small minority?

As a student I already examined this question. At that time, I asked Christians about how they saw the role of Protestants in collaboration with Habib Badr (*now senior pastor of the National Evangelical Church of Beirut and sponsoring church of Johann-LudwigSchneller-Schule*) Many named the field of education; others answered the spread of the Bible. But one Catholic priest told us that the Evangelical church played the same role as other churches, namely to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Nonetheless, there could be something that Protestants can do better than others, surely?

Above all they can form a bridge between East and West. Their liturgical and theological roots lie in the West and they have always fostered strong contacts with the West. At the same time, they are firmly rooted in the local culture. They can explain Eastern Christianity to the West and conversely they can explain the Western way of thinking to communities in the region. But we also have an

important role to play with Islam, both when it comes to dialogue and witness. Today, Islamic legalism represents a major problem. On this point, we Protestants believe that there is a life beyond the Sharia and mercy through justice.

Do you think that Protestantism in the Middle East has any future at all in view of the high number of emigrants?

Our future is the future of all Christians in the region and is dependent on the direction which Islam takes. At the present time this is unclear. We hope that Islam develops so that we Christians can stay here.

Protestants in the Middle East are not only a very small but also a very fragmented minority. Why can't the many different Evangelical groups work more closely together?

Protestantism in the Middle East has nothing specific to offer here. As everywhere else, there are two movements: one recognises Ecumenism and the other does not. But this is only a rough definition which does not apply to all groups. Within the NEST, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) or the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC) there are also Evangelical groups which want to co-operate with other. So we Protestants are not hopelessly divided.

Evangelical groups are apparently more attractive than Reformation churches. Will this change the overall profile of Protestantism in the long run?



Dr. George Sabra in the library's archives of the NEST holding part of the original hand-written Arabic translation of the Bible by Cornelius Van Dyck.

ical groups really strong are their rich sponsors abroad. On the other hand, some of our partners are even in financial difficulty themselves.

In your opinion, if a new Martin Luther were to come to the Middle East, where would he first start with reforms?

If this Martin Luther were a Christian, he would not change anything. If this Martin Luther were a Muslim, on the other hand, he would bring about changes which would benefit both Muslims and Christians. I think he would start to reinterpret the Holy Qur'an. He would ask what is really revealed to people in Islam. Islam must go through a phase of self-criticism as Christianity did. If this does not happen, it will some day become meaningless.

*The interview was conducted by
Katja Dorothea Buck.*

Perhaps, but this is under discussion at present. We can't even verify who is really a Protestant. Many come to us without giving up their original church membership. I assume that everything will stay the same as it always has in the history of Protestantism. Groups will split off within the Evangelical scene. For some the accent will be too much on Evangelisation and others may perhaps want more Ecumenism. That is what's called the famous Evangelical diversity. Evangelicals are certainly more active in the evangelisation of Muslims and especially of Christians of other denominations. The Reformation churches on the other hand do not evangelise in other churches. But what makes Evangel-

GOD'S WORD IN THE BEST HIGH ARABIC

The Van Dyck Bible excels due to its very high linguistic quality

No other Arabic translation of the Bible has enjoyed such enormous success as the one by the American missionary Cornelius Van Alen Van Dyck. "It would be really good if the regional churches and the Bible Society in Germany could agree on this translation when conducting their work with Arab-speaking refugees," said Hanna Josua, pastor at the Arab parish in Stuttgart.

There were other Arabic translations of the Bible before. But why did Van Dyck think it was necessary to translate the Bible again in the middle of the 19th century?

The whole thing has to be regarded from the historical background. When the Ottoman Empire declined in the second half of the 19th century, the idea of Arab nationalism attracted more and more followers. Among them were also many Christians. In this context they played an important role in reviving the Arabic language as the lingua franca in the Middle East. Before that, Turkish had been the official language of communication in the region. In the middle of the 19th century came the first printing presses and Evangelical missionaries started their work in the Middle East. To reach the people, they needed a Bible in Arabic which many people could afford.

What aims did the missionaries pursue?

Firstly they wanted to consolidate the Christian faith within the indigenous churches whose liturgical languages were



Photo: Josua

"The high linguistic quality highlights the significance of the Van Dyck translation," says Dr. Hanna Josua.

either Coptic, Aramaic or Armenian. Many Christians no longer understood these languages and so they had difficulty in having any access whatsoever to biblical texts. But the missionaries also wanted to provide Muslims with access to the Bible. Ultimately that was the original reason for their mission in the Near and Middle East. In the end, the Van Dyck Bible was the source used to promote general literacy, just as Luther's translation had in its time. Bible texts were often the only texts from which Christians could learn to read and write, especially in rural areas.

Didn't people read other Arabic translations of the Bible?

The problem was that not enough of them were printed and therefore they were only available to a few people, mainly the clergy. But there must have been Arabic translations very early on. For example, we know from Islamic sources in the Middle Ages that Muslim philosophers such as Al-Ghazali in the 12th century or Ibn Taymiyya in the 14th century had studied the Bible intensively. And it even says in Surah Yunus [10:94] in the Holy Qur'an written in the 7th century: "So if you are in doubt, [O Muhammad], about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you."

What is the significance of the Van Dyck Bible compared to other translations?

Its linguistic quality and musicality is extremely high. I don't believe in denigrating the linguistic level of a Bible translation in the assumption that it would then be much easier for people to understand it. By the way, Muslims read the Holy Qur'an in the language of the 7th century, which is really not easy at all.

Who reads the Van Dyck Bible nowadays?

Besides Arab-speaking Evangelical Christians, the Van Dyck Bible is read by many Orthodox Christians in Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and in the Persian Gulf. For example, it is enormously important for the Bible Society in Egypt that Copts recognise the Van Dyck Bible since they are the largest group of Christians in the Middle East. Otherwise they couldn't sell so many Bibles. On the other hand it is important for the Bible Society in Egypt to remain

denominationally independent. Even if they have an Evangelical background, they do not officially belong to the Evangelical Church in Egypt. If they ever lost their neutrality, it would discourage Coptic customers.

Who uses other Bible translations?

Catholics in the Middle East have their own translation, which is also very good linguistically. But it is not so widespread since the highlight in the Catholic Church is more on liturgy and less on the Bible. Other translations are also in circulation through the influence of Baptists and Pentecostals in the Middle East. For example, there are attempts at translating Bible passages into a language which is intended to make the passages more accessible to Muslims. There are also attempts in Germany to proselytise Muslims. The money for this often comes from America.

What do you think about this?

Not much because it nourishes a persistent prejudice among Muslims that the Bible has been distorted through the many translations over the centuries. The belief in Islam is that the Holy Qur'an is only authoritative in Arabic. Translations into other languages are not recognised because they could distort the Word of God which was revealed in the Holy Qur'an right through to the last letter, or so Muslims believe. This belief gives many Muslims a feeling of superiority against us Christians since apparently we have distorted the Word of God as a result of so many translations.

Continued on p 10

Should the Van Dyck Bible translation therefore not be used as a standard when working with refugees in this country?

That would certainly be sensible but I do not think such a regulation would be possible. The free churches will use the material for proselytising since they receive it free of charge. This often stems from the USA and it is definitely not the Van Dyck translation. But it should at least become the standard for the regional churches. It would be good if all Arab-speaking refugees in Germany could receive the same Bible, no matter where they live. Why should we nourish a prejudice among Muslims unnecessarily? Anyway, its linguistic quality simply speaks for the Van Dyck Bible. Ultimately the Holy Qur'an is also written in a very high quality of Arabic.

Reverend Dr. Hanna Josua also heads Evangelical Pastoral Work for Foreigners as well as the Arab-speaking parishes in Stuttgart, Heilbronn and Singen. He has made several scientific studies about Van Dyck and his Bible translation.

Katja Dorothea Buck conducted the interview.

INFORMATION

The Van Dyck Bible



Cornelius Van Dyck (1818-1895)

The idea to translate the Bible into Arabic came from the American missionary Eli Smith who started the project in Beirut in about 1847. After his death, Cornelius Van Dyck, who was also a missionary from America, took over this work in co-operation with the Lebanese university scholar Boutros Al-Bustani – a Maronite Christian. By 10 March 1865, both the Old and New Testaments had been translated and printed. Since then, more than ten million copies have been circulated. The Van Dyck translation is the "authorised" version accepted by Coptic Orthodox and Evangelical churches in the Middle East. The original hand-written copy and the first edition are kept in the archives of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut.

A BIBLE THAT EVERYBODY READS

How the Van Dyck translation unites Christians in the Middle East

In view of the denominational diversity in the Middle East, it is by means self-evident that Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and Evangelical Christians use the same Arabic translation of the Bible. The Bible Societies in the Middle East have worked hard to use the Van Dyck Bible as a means of uniting Arabic speaking churches which would otherwise not relate to one another.

The Van Dyck Bible was published for the first time in Beirut in 1865. Over the years, it has become the "authorised" text of Arabic speaking churches (except for the Catholics) and since it was adopted as the main Bible of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt, it means that it is the most used Bible by Arabic speaking Christians worldwide. The Copts constitute half of all Christians of the Middle East.

In December 2014, in preparation for the 150th Anniversary of this Bible, the Bible Society of Egypt planned a celebration under the auspices of the Egyptian Council of Churches at the Coptic Cathedral in downtown Cairo. The event was a unique uniting factor for all Christian denominations in Egypt who sometimes do not work together as well as they should. Following this the Bible Society of Egypt planned similar events in a variety of major cities across the country. In many cases this was the first time Protestant, Catholics and Orthodox met together in a joint event in a particular city.

The Van Dyck Bible even unites Arab Christians living far away from Egypt. On



Anniversary celebrations in Cairo: Ramez Atallah (left) with representatives of the Greek Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Evangelical and Armenian Apostolic Churches.

Sunday May 22, 2016, all the Arabic speaking denominations in Los Angeles were represented at the 150th Celebration for this Arabic Bible at St John's Coptic Church under the auspices of Metropolitan Serapion of the Coptic Orthodox in Los Angeles. It was the first event in the history of Los Angeles where these different denominations joined together in celebration.

So while the Middle East is being torn apart by war and while in some cases we hear about lack of co-operation among Christians, the Bible remains the uniting factor of all Christians in the Middle East and especially in Egypt.

Ramez Atallah has been Director of the Bible Society of Egypt since 1990.

THE MISSION OF BORDER CROSSERS

German Protestantism in Palestine in the 19th century

The present level of research hardly permits any conclusions to be drawn about how the local population in Palestine regarded the many German missionaries and settlers who arrived there in the 19th and early 20th centuries. On the other hand, the attempts at modernising the country triggered by the Germans at the time were readily accepted.

Originally, Protestants were not allowed to settle in Palestine, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire. This did not change until 1841 when the Anglo-Prussian Protestant Bishopric was established in Jerusalem. Contrary to the traditional missionary activities of the Catholic Church, the Germans introduced new methods which meant a modernisation boost for the whole country. There is no question that people in Palestine – the majority of them being Muslims – were eager to use the possibilities which German Evangelical missionaries offered in education and health care.

All the same, cultural exchanges in the proper sense of the word were subject to narrow limits. Besides numerous obstacles such as language and religion, the main problem was the expectation of acculturation held by the Reformed newcomers who measured the social realities of Palestine against their own, whether this was conscious or unconscious, clearly articulated or merely felt. An article written in the magazine "Die Warte" of the Württemberg Templars before the outbreak of World War I said the following:

"All the examples and successes of German and Israeli settlements have at most aroused the envy of the indigenous population without any general attempt to encourage any emulation."*

The Protestant side expected some sort of emulation and acknowledged the envy – there is no clearer way to express the expectations of many Germans in the Holy Land. More scientific studies are needed to determine the extent to which the expectation of acculturation on one hand was opposed by a more or less militant insistence on cultural independence and equality on the other. However the friction between Protestants from Germany and Arabs in Palestine was significantly diminished by two factors. Firstly, there were ultimately too few direct contacts and these were limited to the larger towns. Secondly, the (at least partially) shared animosities towards third parties brought Germans and Arabs together in opposition to a third party in the form of Judaism, which was gradually gaining in significance.

There are very few photographs which reflect the rapprochement between the cultures and they present only a limited view of the multifaceted coexistence between Germans and Arabs, for example the togetherness of people living in the German Evangelical mission which was called the Syrian Orphanage. The Arabs who worked there and the pupils who learnt there were modern border crossers between two cultures. These photos relate little about their opportunities or problems. Apparently they had to or wanted



Photos: Landeskirchliches Archiv

Female pupils at the Syrian Orphanage - above wearing traditional dress and below European clothes

workshops at the Syrian Orphanage showed that new ideas and modern methods (printed materials, industrialisation, etc.) gave new decisive impulses to the tradition-based societies in the East. In the end, these reforms opened up the local society to the modern age.

Dr. Jakob Eisler is a historian and works at the Archive of the Church of Württemberg in Stuttgart. He is acknowledged as the best expert in the history of the Syrian Orphanage. The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools appointed him honorary member a few years ago.

to relinquish Arab clothing in favour of European clothes and they tried to combine Eastern and Western ways of life.

Finally with the advent of Evangelical communities came methods of modern industrialisation to Palestine, whereas the Catholic Church continued to concentrate exclusively on the traditional processing of mother of pearl or olive wood in artisan work, as opposed to the activities of the Evangelical missions. In fact the

THE LONG PATH TOWARDS IDENTITY

The German and English roots of Protestantism in Palestine

The first Protestant missionaries in the Middle East originally wanted to convert Muslims and Jews, but their plan misfired. And the attempts to entice Catholic and Orthodox Christians were also a total failure. The success of the German and English mission can rather be seen in the modernisation of the country in the sectors of social welfare and education.

The lack of success of the mission on the one hand and the question of the mission churches becoming independent on the other gave rise to controversial discussions between indigenous and European Christians in Evangelical and Anglican parishes after World War I. On the German side the Jerusalem Society, the Kaiserswerther Diakonie and the Syrian Orphanage played a significant role here. On the British side the main players were the Church Missionary Society, the London Jews Society and the Anglican Bishopric with its Bishop in St George's Cathedral.

The relationship between the mission churches and their parent churches in Germany and the United Kingdom changed at the end of World War I and with the outbreak of Arab nationalism in the region. The Arab communities demanded more independence. On the German side, it was mainly Arab pastors who performed church work in the time just after the war, while the Germans were sent to camps as enemies of war by the British or were sent back to their home country.

However the German mission and

church authorities found it difficult to make concessions. They considered Arab Christians as immature and acted in a paternalistic manner, which caused fierce counter-reactions from the indigenous Protestants who threatened to join the Anglican church. The change from one Protestant mini-church to the next was not unusual for the times, which shows how fragile the church's identity still was in Palestine. Up to 1948, questions of confession were still closely linked to family loyalty, social incentives, identification and sympathy for church structures and leading personalities. At the beginning of the 1930s, the option of a unified Protestant Church was still under discussion, but this failed due to the over-institutionalisation of the many small churches which promoted their own interest and prevented reforms.

On the other hand, Anglicans, who act and think globally, had already decided at the turn of the century to allow mission churches to proceed down the road to independence and founded the "Palestine Native Church Council" (PNCC) as a representative body for all Arab co-workers in 1905. This led to growing self-confidence, even if it would still take many years before their own rights were actually granted in reality. On the German side, the "Palestinian Evangelical Parish of Jerusalem" was only founded in 1929.

But all in all, the two Protestant movements remained very small. If contemporary statistics are examined optimistically without adding transferred sympathisers as full members, the mission work of the Jerusalem Society, the Kaiserswerther

Diakonie and the Syrian Orphanage may have counted 1,000 Protestants, whereas the Anglicans had 3,500 indigenous members in their church. However, the success of the German and English mission churches did not lie in the number of souls converted but in the modernisation of the country in the fields of social welfare and education. Education, social responsibility and human rights are regarded to this day as the "trademark" of the Protestant churches in the region.

New options only came at the end of World War II, after the founding of the State of Israel and the ensuing Israeli-Arab war, the occupation of the West Bank by Jordan and the trusteeship of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) over parts of the former German territory. The LWF wanted to establish its own Evangelical Lutheran Church which was registered in Jordan in 1959 at the same time as the Anglicans. But it was only in 1976 that Faek Haddad

became the first Palestinian Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, and in 1979 Daoud Haddad was ordained as the first local Evangelical Lutheran Bishop. From the aspects of theology and church policy, both churches have been completely independent since then. But as many other small churches they need the financial and ecumenical backing of an international network.

Dr. Roland Löffler is head of the "Citizens and Society" desk at the Herbert Quandt Foundation.



Photo: Archives of the Regional Church in Stuttgart (Landeskirchliches Archiv)

A brass band just like in Germany – pupils from the Syrian Orphanage play chorals in the courtyard of the institution.

ORTHODOX CONTENT IN EVANGELICAL LIVERY

Evangelical approaches to renewal in the Coptic Orthodox Church

At first, Evangelical missionaries only intended to bring about a renewal within the Coptic Church. But once they changed their strategy and solicited Copts deliberately, that is when it came to a conflict. However it was impossible to stop the reformatory spirit.

The first Evangelical missionary in Egypt was F. W. Hooker who was sent by the Moravian Church in 1752. He made friendly contacts with the local church and intended to cause an awakening within the Coptic Church. There were no plans to set up a separate church. In 1825, the Anglican Church Mission Society (CMS) sent five German

missionaries from the Basel Seminary to Egypt: S. Gobat, J.R.T. Lieder, Th. Müller, W. Kruse and Ch. Kugler. They pursued a similar strategy in their work. In co-operation with the local church, they successfully opened several schools, but this was too little for the CMS. In 1850, Samuel Gobat (later Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem) came to the sober conclusion in retrospect that the extremely friendly relationships between the Evangelical missionaries and the Coptic Church were more of a hindrance to the success of mission work than a help. In future, the aim of mission should be deliberately convert and organise the mission into separate parishes.



Photo: Katja Buck

Every Saturday, young people from Cairo come to Sunday school.

The work of the CMS came to a halt. Nonetheless, J.R.T. Lieder stayed on in Egypt and stuck to the idea that it was possible to reform the Orthodox Church. He fostered close contacts with the young Patriarch Kyrill IV (1854-1861) who was regarded as the "Father of the reform" in the annals of the Coptic Church. On Lieder's advice, he founded four primary schools based on the European model, so heralding what was seen as a revolution in education in Egypt at the time. The first school for girls was also opened in Egypt.

In 1854, the American Presbyterian mission started up. It wanted to avoid the supposed "mistake" of the German and Anglican missionaries and aimed at converting Copts right from the start. This led to massive conflicts with the Coptic Church. The newly elected Patriarch Demetrius II (1862-1870) threatened Copts attending events organised by the missionaries with excommunication, ridiculed the writings of the missionaries, stopped children from attending missionary schools and in 1867, even sailed on a Khedive steamship with a military escort "to stamp out the heresy". Writings by the missionaries and Arabic translations of the Bible were burnt and children, teachers and priests who maintained contacts with the missionaries were publicly humiliated.

But this confrontation had precisely the opposite effect. Many educated Copts were angered by the treatment and insisted on sending their children to missionary schools since neither the church nor the state had anything similar to offer compared to the missionaries' activities in rural regions. Copts who actually wanted reforms only within their church were driven to the mission churches by the threat of excommunication.

This only changed when lay people in the Orthodox parishes started up similar activities to those in the mission churches. In 1930, Orthodox students set up an Orthodox "Sunday school movement" which became the engine to drive reforms forward. In the 1950s, they ordained the first pioneers as monks, priests and bishops. The reform had arrived in the hierarchy. Orthodox contents were combined with Evangelical activities. Old Coptic traditions were revived.

To this day, the strong relation to the Bible, the emphasis on individual piety and social work, the type of activities and the use of modern communications among Copts reveal their connections to Evangelical mission churches. What started out as the basic intention of Evangelical missionaries, i.e. to revive the Orthodox communities, ultimately reached its goal although by roundabout routes and in a totally different way than the missionaries had hoped. But the price for this was that Egyptian Christianity was once again split in denomination.

*Wolfram Reiss is Professor for
Theology at the University of Vienna.
In his dissertation he describes
in detail the renewal in the
Coptic-Orthodox Church.*

FROM CONFRONTATION TO COEXISTENCE

Reformation was an enormous challenge for Orthodoxy

Did Reformation have an impact on the Greek Orthodox Church in the Middle East? This question has not only a theological background since many Protestants in the Middle East today have their origins in Greek Orthodox families.

The Reformation doctrine first came in 1823 with the beginnings of American missionary work in the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. Their work led to discord between Protestants and Orthodoxy. Peaceful relations only returned gradually. One of the main reasons for the tensions between the two denominational groups was proselytism, the deliberate enticement of Greek Orthodox Christians by Evangelical missionaries, which resulted in the foundation of new Protestant churches in the Middle East. On the one hand, after failure of missionary work to reach the Jews and the Muslims, they concentrated their efforts on Eastern Christians (Catholic and Orthodox) disregarding the theological heritage of the East which at that time was undergoing a period of stagnation and inertness. On the other hand those who joined the Reformation in the East perceived their own Orthodox churches as immersed in inscrutable traditions and the Word of God as lost in the obscurity of doctrinal and sumptuous liturgical practices.¹

Of course an important contribution of Reformation was the founding of schools, colleges and theological seminaries in the Ottoman Empire. Also the translation of the Bible into Arabic, in the year 1865, mainly through the work of Cornelius Van

Dyck with the collaboration of some local scholars from Lebanon was made possible. This allowed the accessibility of the Bible for the common people. Similarly, freedom of conscience, religious liberty, freedom of opinion and love in action were introduced by Reformation. All this contributed in a form or another to the reformulation and the renewal of Greek Orthodoxy in the Middle East in the twentieth century.

It is important, however, to remark that the "neo-Patristic revival" promoted particularly by the Russian Orthodox émigrés in the first half of the twentieth century had contributed greatly to Orthodoxy in the Middle East. This movement emphasised the need to return to the Fathers of the Church and to "patristic spirit", the spirit which is open to "Hellenism". Hence, the tradition of the Greek Church Fathers was considered as the foundation for Christian faith and life, as it could bring spirituality – as a way of life – and theology together. Moreover, the Patristic tradition was naturally universal and open to different expressions of divine Mystery.

Hence, it is my contention that the Orthodox revival in the Middle East could be perceived as having echoed both the 'neo-Patristic revival' and the contribution of Reformation in the region. The first served as theological foundation, while the second contributed to put theology into practice through its emphasis on education, social action and the right of common people to read the Bible for themselves.

This renewal, with its two elements, has been demonstrated through the founda-

¹ See both articles: George Khodr, "We Have Made Important Steps" and Habib Badr, "The Orthodox and the Evangelical Missionary Movement: A Critical Reading" in *The Orthodox and the Evangelicals in the Arab Levant: Historical Reading and Future Horizons [in Arabic]*, (Beirut: University of Balamand, 2006).



Ecumenism today: At the new Greek Orthodox Church of Broummana (Lebanon) Rev. Rami Wanoun talks to a group of Evangelical theology students about the people in his parish.

tion of the Orthodox Youth Movement MJO – Mouvement de la Jeunesse Orthodoxe – in the year 1942. The Movement became an inspirational corner stone for several ensuing renewal movements in the Orthodox Church of Antioch. This renewed Orthodoxy aspired to bring the tradition of the Early Fathers of the Church and the critical method for the study of the Bible into a congruous unity. In this way Orthodoxy could be reformulated and ecumenically oriented so that it could meet Protestantism not as an adversary but as the Other who encounters Orthodoxy as a dialogue partner. The legacy of the great Reformers of the sixteenth century handed down to Reformation today is to continuously remain on the path of reformation and this entails the

willingness to be formed and re-formed through encountering the Other.

Dr. Sylvie Avakian is systematic theologian at the Near East School of Theology (NEST) and is currently working as guest lecturer at the University of Tübingen.

IMPRESSED BY THE CHILDREN

A look back at ten months voluntary service

When young people set off on their way to a voluntary year abroad, they leave with many questions on their minds. But when they return, they often have even more questions but then they have also gained many new experiences. Dominik Klein was a volunteer at the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) in Amman.

I arrived at the Schneller school without any great expectations. Of course I had seen a few pictures before I left and formed my own image in my mind. I should have realised it would be totally different than I imagined. In my mind the children were shy and afraid, but in reality they were open and full of the joy of life. In my mind the children were obedient and ambitious, but in reality each had his own ideas. And learning was not exactly their favourite pastime. The last point in particular gave me many a sleepless night during the first week or so. And all I wanted to do was to teach the children that education is the best way to escape poverty! But the majority of my 10th graders still do not know how to ask someone how old they are in English, even after repeating the class 11 times.

With time, I learnt how to deal with all this. After all, my work focused on providing a good childhood to children from a variety of difficult backgrounds. The fact that most of the people living in Jordan speak practically no English does not mean they cannot lead a normal life. One person's fulfilment may even be to work as a taxi driver. And someone else's dream job may be to become a carpenter.

But nearly everyone has the desire of later going to Europe or North America. It is still difficult for me now to judge how realistic these people see their chances.

What perked me up every day were the children's smiles as they played on the swings or played football or their pride after successfully finishing any kind of manual work. I was very impressed by the way the children looked after each other and each child was simply respected even though he may not always be very easy to get along with.

It made me a little sad when various people spoke about the school's flourishing past and then I looked at the condition of some of the rooms or other areas on the grounds. I very much hope that the Schneller school will find its way back to its old strength very soon since the children and adolescents really deserve it!

What questions am I bringing with me from my time in Amman? There are too many to list here. What will happen to the society which is torn between extremely conservative standards in but at the same time there is a strong desire to imitate Western lifestyles? What is the future of the country surrounded by war and countries with weakened economies? What will the country look like if I should ever return to visit the Schneller school and travel such a wonderful country a second time (and I sincerely hope to do so)? And finally two questions that are of particular concern to me: what will happen to Scheller? When will defined structures finally be re-established? And what will happen to the children who I

looked after almost every day for just under a year?

It is difficult for me to evaluate the answers which I found at the TSS. The many impressions I gained from my work there, from trips and encounters with various people and from everyday life have left me with images, suspicions and realisations which all help me to find answers to my questions and to formulate my opinion on various topics.

Finally there remains the question of what changed me. To answer that, I first have to find out how I have changed. The best people to judge that are my family and friends whom I am seeing again after such a long time away. But what certainly changed me is living in a very foreign culture and a poor region. The many outings and trips I went on gave me new perspectives just as much as the many new

encounters I had - whether it was with the boys I worked with every day or with the taxi driver I only met once and never saw again.

Looking back I can say it was the right decision to apply for voluntary service and to complete my stay in Jordan. In the end, I did the right thing to choose the Sch-neller school.

Dominik Klein



The TSS volunteers of the year 2015/2016: Alexandra Schanz, Dominik Klein and Anne Ruck (from left to right)

LEARNT TO APPRECIATE FREEDOMS IN GERMANY

Personal evaluation after ten months at the Schneller school in Amman

"My time at the Theodor Schneller School will definitely stay with me all my life," writes Alexandra Schanz, looking back at the time she spent at the TSS in Amman. "I learnt so much and in hindsight I am very grateful for every positive and negative experience I made."

What changed me were the encounters with the people, either in talks or the time I spent with my girls and pupils at the TSS, its staff, that is to say my "colleagues" for the ten months, and of course the unexpected meetings with people on the street.

I grew very fond of the pupils at the TSS and I will really miss them. For such a young age, my girls have gone through a lot and in addition they still have to find their assigned place in society. Every girl has a personal fate behind her. When violent, alcoholic fathers rape their mothers before the eyes of their daughters, then this is the burden which the girls have to bear - for me that's unimaginable. But seeing them laugh, dance and sing was the most beautiful thing that happened in my work and it made me very proud.

The question what will become of the girls will occupy my mind for a long time to come. Perhaps I'll find an answer one day. At the beginning, I often asked myself why my girls have no vision of the future. The parents have a very great influence over their children for a long time after their childhood. That often leaves very little room for personal goals and paths. It

is my dearest hope that many of the girls will manage to break free from their traditional roles and not "just" get married, become a housewife and mother. How will a woman's role change in the next 20



Photo: Schanz

Alexandra Schanz with two children on the playground of the TSS.

years? Will women then have equal rights?

Not yet being accepted as a woman very much left its mark on me and it was a hard struggle for me. I certainly won't miss hearing comments such as "You're too young to do this or that". I've learnt to really appreciate my freedom as a woman in Germany - the freedom to do what I want. To go jogging, wear the clothes I want, decide for myself and choose the things I want to do.

The working atmosphere at the TSS is very good - a lot of attention is paid to the team working smoothly. Understanding the language was difficult at the beginning because my colleagues spoke no English and I couldn't speak any Arabic. Because of cultural differences, for example problems were not addressed openly but were only mentioned between the lines, I found co-operation very difficult as a result.

To get to know the country and its people I went on trips around Jordan with the other volunteers and visitors. The encounters with people were the moments which typify Jordan for me. Nowhere else do people give me their mobile number so spontaneously and tell me I can call if ever I have a problem. Nowhere else does a Bedouin explain to my worried mother that I am now a Jordanian and that three million Bedouins will protect me. And nowhere else is a shop assistant prepared to go with me to all the shops until I have found what I am looking for.

Jordan still shows traces of the former colonialism and my lack of understanding has grown about why the Western world has to interfere so often in the affairs of other countries. Perhaps democracy simply does not fit in the Middle East? Or the Near

East? Near to what – or East of what? This is where the Europeans demonstrate their arrogance and it raises questions in me.

It doesn't matter how difficult this year was in Jordan, I am thankful for the experiences and impressions I received. I will take a little bit of the Jordanian attitude to life with me. It makes me view German society more critically – does it always have to be this performance model? And the continuous pressure to perform? In Jordan I learnt you cannot plan life. It usually happens in a completely different way than you planned. Things are the way they are. And sometimes that's the way it should be.

Alexandra Schanz

INFORMATION

If you are interested in applying for voluntary service at the TSS, you will find more information on the Ecumenical Voluntary Programme on the website of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS):

www.ems-online.org/weltweit-aktiv/oekumenisches-freiwilligenprogramm/

Volunteers also report about their experiences in blogs which are also on the EMS website.

**EYVP ECUMENICAL
YOUTH VOLUNTEERS PROGRAMME**





The new director of the TSS, Reverend Dr Khaled Freij (right) next to him Archbishop Suheil Dawani, Reverend Dr Uwe Gräbe and Reverend Klaus Schmid from the EVS

KHALED FREIJ IS THE NEW DIRECTOR OF THE TSS

Amman (EVS/EMS). "I am delighted that the two and a half year interim period has now come to an end," declared the Anglican Archbishop Suheil Dawani at his residence in Amman (Jordan) on Sunday afternoon, 19 June). After numerous solicitations and applicant interviews in the past few years brought no success in finding someone to fill the post, it seemed appropriate that the new director should be a familiar face. From the start, Reverend Khaled Freij had assumed the role of spokesman on several occasions for various interim governing bodies and had worked as "acting director" in addition to his full post as pastor in Zarka. During this time, he immersed himself more and more into the matter and also became a reliable partner to the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) and the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS).

Reverend Khaled Freij is now fully available to take up his duties as director of the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) and will also take up residence in the director's house on the school site as soon as possible. Freij takes on a difficult post. After the management crisis of the past two and a

half years, it must now be decided what staff is required for what duties at the TSS and what salaries will be paid for which duties. Workshops and training courses which are no longer functional will have to close. Later, new training courses tailored to the Jordanian market will reopen. What is urgently needed is to start long postponed renovations and to totally re-landscape the outer grounds. It is intended to reduce a structural financial deficit and at the same time guarantee the core activity of the TSS, namely to continue providing children on the fringes of society with a good education and a loving home.

Klaus Schmid, Chairman of the EVS, and Jürgen Reichel, General Secretary of the EMS, assured every possible support to the newly appointed director and the Anglican church leadership. Khaled Freij himself is looking forward very much to working together with the German partners. After the younger of his two daughters has been making good progress in German classes, Reverend Khaled and his

wife Rana decided to register for German courses with the Goethe Institute six months ago. The first successes can already be heard without a doubt!

EMS CONTINUES TO SUPPORT SYRIAN REFUGEES

Hofgeismar (EMS). The international Executive Board of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) passed a resolution to continue its commitment to Syria at its meeting in Hofgeismar in June. Syrian refugees in the Middle East may continue to expect support from the EMS Fellowship in the years 2017 to 2019.

The crucial factor was the report from the Lebanese Reverend Dr. Habib Badr, who supervises the joint Syrian projects for the EMS and the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS). He wrote that help was in the right place for the Evangelical preschool newly established in 2014 in the Syrian town of Kafroun, for the courses for Syrian refugee women in the Lebanese Bekaa valley and for the grants provided to Syrian children at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS).

"The programme for single mothers in the Bekaa valley is a great success. Most of the mothers who attended the courses were then able to earn a living and pro-

vide for their children themselves," said Badr. The courses were also a great learning success. "The participants learnt to open themselves to experiences made by people of another faith. The courses are an excellent way to implement our overall programme for peace education in the region," he said, quoting Rev. George Haddad, Director of the JLSS in Lebanon.

"Over the next three years, we need about 800,000 Euro for our work in Syria and in Lebanon," said Rev. Jürgen Reichel, EMS General Secretary. "We appeal to everyone who wants to contribute to hope in the Middle East to make donations. As a result of the decision made by the Mission Council, we have committed ourselves to improving the living conditions of refugees on site and help them realise that a future is possible in the region. Now we are relying on the generosity of church parishes and individual donors."



At a ceremony to celebrate the end of the school year last June, the children received their reports at the preschool in Syria.

FOUNDATION ACHIEVES GOOD RESULTS



Funds from the Schneller Foundation will go to replacing the roof of another boarding home.

Stuttgart (EVS). In 2015, the *Schneller Foundation – Education for Peace* received a good 25,000 Euro in endowment contributions. The interest accrued was 54,858 Euro. The foundation fund of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg, which man-

ages the money of the Schneller Foundation, has achieved results that are above the so-called benchmark with an average interest rate of 2.6 percent. In 2015, the total assets of the Foundation amounted to 2,216,427 Euro.

The Board of Trustees decided that 35,000 Euro of the 44,094 Euro available as project funds at the end of 2015 would be distributed to the following projects. 10,000 Euro will go to a project at the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) to support children and educators in their daily educational work. 22,000 Euro are earmarked to replace the roof of a boarding home at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS). And 3,000 Euro will be used for unforeseeables. After nearly all of the funds were provided for technical projects in the previous year, the Board was unanimous that this year the projects funded should benefit the children directly.

INVITATION TO ATTEND THE 2016 SCHNELLER FESTIVAL

The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) convenes this year's annual general meeting in Stuttgart-Vaihingen. Besides all EVS members, all the friends of Schneller work are cordially invited

on Sunday, 13 November 2016.

The festive day starts with a worship service at the Dreieinigkeitskirche (Church of the Holy Trinity) at 10 am. Stuttgart's city **deacon, Sören Schwesig**, has accepted to deliver the sermon. And the EVS has managed to win **Professor Heiner Bielefeldt**, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, to give a lecture in the afternoon.

All EVS members will receive a written invitation, the agenda and directions nearer the date.



EVS Evangelical Association
for the Schneller Schools

SECURING THE FUTURE

SUPPORT THE SCHNELLER SCHOOLS IN THE LONG TERM WITH AN ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTION.

The Schneller schools support Christian Peace Education in the Middle East. For more than 150 years, the name of Schneller has stood for untiring commitment to the education of children and young people in tolerance and peace. The two Christian schools are open to all children, no matter what religion they belong to. They offer a place of security and dependability. The *Schneller-Stiftung – Erziehung zum Frieden* was instituted in 2007 to ensure that this work can continue in the long term irrespective of economic downturns. An endowment contribution works in the long-term, as opposed to donations which are used immediately. Endowments become part of the foundation's assets. Only the interest is used directly for the work of the Schneller schools.

Do you want to support the Schneller Foundation? Then please contact us. By the way, the money you give the Foundation is tax deductible. If you wish to make a large endowment payment we advise you to consult a notary or a tax consultant first. An endowment can be made in the form of a legacy or an inheritance. An endowment is ideal for preserving your own life's work beyond your lifetime or to honour the work of a relative.

Schneller pupils fondly remember their time at the schools. With your help children from broken homes will still be able to gain a sustained perspective for their future lives in many years to come as a result of the Schneller schools. Make your contribution to securing peace in the Middle East.

Give children the gift of the future!

Your contact for questions relating to the Foundation:

Reverend Klaus Schmid,
EVS President,
evs@ems-online.org

Reverend Dr. Uwe Gräbe,
EVS Managing Director,
graebe@ems-online.org



**EVS Evangelical Association
for the Schneller Schools**

THE MOST AFFECTED ARE THE FIRST TO BE FORGOTTEN

People with intellectual disability in Palestine

People with intellectual disability encounter many types of crises on a daily basis. Crises can happen within themselves, in the family, in the community, as well as within the economic and political realms of their country. In Palestine people with disabilities suffer more under the occupation than the rest of the population.

In Palestine many people with intellectual disability are not given the space to exercise their right to access education, training and rehabilitation. Therefore it is more of a struggle to understand themselves and the context within which they are living. Many families are ignorant of the needs of their intellectually disabled children. They lack information and do not understand the rights of persons with intellectual disability so their behaviour towards them is full of pity, regrets and blaming, wishing that everything was otherwise.

There are however, also families who are more aware of the rights of their children to education, rehabilitation, and training and strive very hard to make life easier for their children. However, they are encountered with a very complicated Palestinian social structure that has minimal services for persons with intellectual disability, lack of professional medical diagnosis, lack of access to education, transportation, health care and employment opportunities and so they remain isolated.

People with intellectual disability are perceived as incapable, non-trainable and a burden. They are often verbally, emotionally and sexually abused, which bother very few people and for which no legal system exists to hold the abusers responsible. This is a major issue that must be tackled at grassroots level. Even if the Palestinian Law stipulates that 5% of staff in any institution must be persons with disability, most governmental and non-governmental institutions avoid the implementation of the law. Yet if they ever think of hiring, they tend to hire persons with minor or less severe disabilities, leaving persons with intellectual disability even less privileged to find jobs.

Persons with intellectual disability are widely forgotten and overlooked in Palestine. The pretext is always that "budgets are lacking, it is not the right time for addressing the needs and rights of persons with disability, and we will see what can be done". Yet, people with disability and relevant institutions defending their rights believe otherwise: "If there is a will, there is a way".

Unfortunately we cannot ignore the consequences of the Israeli Occupation on Palestinian persons with intellectual disability. Since persons with intellectual disability are living within the same context, they are victims of the daily realities and challenges which others around them are facing. Many times they have been abused, imprisoned and shot by the Israeli army because they have not understood what the soldiers are asking for.

At the Star Mountain Rehabilitation Centre we see that constantly. Almost every day I am approached by one of the students who wants to share with me what happened to him or her and his family the night before. "Yesterday night, the soldiers arrested my father. They destroyed everything in our house. They took him. I am very sad," said one person to me recently. Or, "We could not sleep last night, the soldiers were shooting in our street. Then they entered our house and mixed everything together. The house is a mess. I was so scared." Another person told me, "I did not get a permit to enter Israel. I really wanted to go to the trip to Tabgha."

Many more such stories occur from which not only persons with disability suffer, but also their families, caregivers and rehabilitation workers at the Centre. Star Mountain's bus driver who transports

the children and youth to and from their homes approached me more than once by saying, "I drove through the shooting near the Bet El Israeli Settlement. The children were choked with tear gas. Bullets were flying around us."

Wherever the crisis is taking place, people with intellectual disability are one of the social categories most affected and are the first to be forgotten in any developmental plan.

Ghada Naser is Director of the Star Mountain Rehabilitation Centre of the Moravian Church in Abu Qash near Ramallah (Palestine).



Photo: Star Mountain

The rehabilitation centre fights for the rights of people with disability.

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE EVS.

IMPRINT

The "Evangelischer Verein für die Schneller-Schulen e.V." (Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools, EVS) supports and accompanies the work of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School in Lebanon and the Theodor Schneller School in Jordan. Its special task is to offer needy children a school education and vocational training at the Schneller Schools.

In its publications and events, the EVS provides information about churches and Christians in the Middle East. **The Schneller Magazine is published four times a year and can be subscribed free of charge.** Speakers for lectures on topics featuring the work of the schools can be booked from the EVS Secretariat.

If you want to become a member of the EVS, we will be glad to send you an application for membership. The annual minimum fee for individuals is Euro 25 and Euro 50 for companies and organisations. By making a donation to the Schneller Schools, you are supporting the work of a recognised charitable welfare and social organisation.

*Vogelsangstraße 62
70197 Stuttgart
Tel.: 0711 636 78 -0
www.evs-online.org*



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Address: Vogelsangstrasse 62
D-70197 Stuttgart, Germany
Tel.: +49 711 636 78 -39
Fax: +49 711 636 78 -45
E-mail: evs@ems-online.org
www.evs-online.org
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Schneller Schools in the Middle East:
Pastor Ursus Waldmeier,
Rüt mattstrasse 13, CH-5004 Aarau
PC Account: 40-11277-8
IBAN: CH05 8148 8000 0046 6023 2
info@schnellerschulen.org
www.schnellerschulen.org

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Vogelsangstr. 62 | 70197 Stuttgart
Tel.: 49 (0) 711 636 78 -39/ -37
Fax: 49 (0) 711 636 78 -45
Email: evs@ems-online.org



Donations to the EVS:

Evangelische Bank eG,
Bank code 520 604 10, Account no. 407 410
IBAN: DE59 5206 0410 0000 4074 10
BIC: GENODEF1EK11

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We look forward to your support of the work of the Schneller Schools.

Please visit us on the Internet at www.evs-online.org



The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22



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