

## **Profile of Al Kamandjâti**

### **1° - Project Justification and Objectives of Al Kamandjâti**

The aim of the Al Kamandjâti Association is to set up music lessons for Palestinian children, in particular the most vulnerable, those living in the refugee camps. The main purpose of Al Kamandjâti is to create an environment where education and games are children's principal concerns.

### **2° - General outline**

I spent my whole childhood within Al Amari refugee camp in Ramallah, where my family emigrated in 1948. The first Intifada (1987-1992), violence and occupation marked my childhood, as that of most Palestinian children. Today I am a musician, President and founder of the Al Kamandjâti Association (which means "the violinist" in Arabic), a non-profit organization I founded in 2002 to promote music education among Palestinian youth, especially children, and strengthen their appreciation for Palestinian culture and identity. I think we cannot everlastingly wait for political decisions. We must work straight away with Palestinians to build a cultural life that used to be so fertile. Culture, arts and leisure activities are among the least known and recognized victims of the occupation and of the violence suffered by the Palestinians.

### **3° - Al Kamandjâti in France**

Following the Al Kamandjâti foundation, we worked straight away in order to organize cultural events with a simple objective: find financial supports and material utilities as well as moral encouragements to allow starting the music classes for the Palestinian children as soon as possible. Al Kamandjâti developed and still arising its own funding through the organization of concerts ("Musicians for Palestine" in Chabada-Angers...), festivals, public lectures and the collection of musical instruments and teaching materials (music scores, music stands, CDs...) provided by different donors (individuals, conservatories...).

### **4° - Al Kamandjâti in Palestine**

The association started organizing in 2003 public concerts and workshops for children, as well as to establish links with Palestinian associations and cultural centres. Moreover, and since then, the association organizes once a year in Palestine that kind of workshops with children from different refugee camps, villages and cities, providing young Palestinians with the opportunity to channel their energies, express their creativity, and develop their talents.

The music-training workshop key objective is to create links with the utmost number of children, to explain correctly the Al Kamandjâti project to the concerned populations, to work upstream with our Palestinian partners, to locate extra places where the music lessons will take place.

Al Kamandjâti organizes festivals (baroque music, Music Day, Percussion concerts) and regularly invites to Palestine international and renowned musicians such as Richard Hartshorne "Dobbs", Thierry "Titi" Robin and his musicians...

### **Al Kamandjâti Music Centre / Ramallah Downtown**

Since September 2005, Al Kamandjâti inaugurated a music centre in Ramallah, in a house dated back to the Ottoman times and rehabilitated by Riwaq Architectural Centre, with backing of Sida and in partnership with Tamer Institute, and with the support of the Khalaf and Ghanem families. Al Kamandjâti can now provide music lessons that are no more the privilege of a few, making a lot of children participate to pedagogical programs, with instruction in violin, viola, cello, contrabass, flute,

clarinet, trumpet, saxophone, piano, guitar, oud, bouzouki, ney, oriental and occidental percussions, singing, musical appreciation and musical notation. Al Kamandjâti provides there music lessons to more than 120 pupils.

#### **Al Kamandjâti Outreach Programmes**

Al Kamandjâti Association is also ensuring music training in Deir Ghassana, Beit Rima and Deir Estiah villages, in Jalazoun, Qalandiah, Al Amari camp, Azza and Ayda refugee camps and in the Old City of Jerusalem reaching more 200 than children.

#### **5° - Al Kamandjâti in Lebanon**

Al Kamandjâti also carries out since February 2005, once a year, music training workshops and concerts in the refugee camps in Lebanon, with about ten French musicians.

#### **6° - Al Kamandjâti further plans**

Al Kamandjâti is committed to expand its programmes. The organization wants to branch out beyond music workshops and concerts, to form youth choirs, youth-led orchestras, and activities for all inhabitants of the refugee camps, villages and cities in Palestine and Middle East, young and old.

When I started, it was but a dream... I did not even dare to talk about it until the other children asked me. I was amazed by their enthusiasm and by the support of the people I met along the way, all over the world. I was moved by their sincere desire to contribute to improve the lives of the children of this tortured land. Their attitude was very encouraging, and made me feel optimistic about the future of Palestine. We have now started the Al Kamandjâti project, and we have seen how important it is to give children the opportunity to take part in the construction of the cultural future of Palestine. That is the best guarantee that our identity will be preserved.

Artists have a particular responsibility to promote social change. Therefore, Al Kamandjâti needs International and local partners working in partnership with it to succeed in its goal to guarantee pluralism and a flourishing creativity that will develop the vitality of the Palestinian civil society.