

Al Kamandjâti Association



Ramzi Aburedwan, embodiment of the first Intifada, in Al Amari camp in 1987.



Ramzi Aburedwan, Al Kamandjâti President, playing viola in front of the Wall in Abu Dis (Jerusalem) July 15th 2004 – Arnaud Brunet © Gamma



Music for all in Palestine



الكمندجاتي
Al Kamandjâti

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Outline

To reduce to rubble a people, it is tried not only to kill it physically but also to wipe out all the symbols that characterize it in the eyes of the whole world.

Palestinian resistance can and has to be multiple. To complete political actions, we must multiply practical achievements in Palestine. Al Kamandjâti proposes to carry out a cultural project directly inside the Palestinian occupied territories.

Al Kamandjâti's objective is **to set up music schools for Palestinian children - in favour of the most destitute ones - those living within the refugee camps, in partnership with Palestinian and international NGOs.**

To carry out its projects, the association organizes since 3 years:

➤ **in France**

- solidarity concerts and public debates,
- collections of musical instruments and teaching materials (music scores, music stands, CDs...).

➤ **in Palestine**

- music training workshops and concerts twice a year (February and August) in Palestine and since 2005, within the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.
- violin lessons since September 2004 for about thirty children within 3 Palestinian refugee camps located in Bethlehem,
- as from October 2005, music lessons, musical notation will take place in several camps and cities in Palestine.



Al Kamandjâti
الكمنجاتي

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To obtain photos of our activities, please contact Al Kamandjâti or Gamma agency (www.gamma.fr – photographer: Arnaud Brunet).

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Background history

October 2002:

Foundation of Al Kamandjâti (the violinist) in France by Ramzi Aburedwan, a Palestinian student at the music Conservatory of Angers (France).

February 2003:

“Musicians for Palestine” in Chabada auditorium (Angers).

France Palestine Solidarity Association initiates a charity event to launch the Al Kamandjâti project with the following artists: Titi Robin, Lo’Jo, Dal’Ouna, and El Horria.

Summer 2003:

During August, 1st session of musical workshops and concerts in Palestine with the participation of 15 Palestinian and French musicians.

October 2003:

“Voices for Palestine”: lecture delivered by Leila Shahid (General Delegate of Palestine in France) who came to sustain Al Kamandjâti, selection of testimonies of the musicians who travelled to Palestine, debate and a recital performed by the Dal’ouna group.

February 2004:

- “Musicians for Palestine”, 2nd version in Chabada (Angers). With the following artists: Baobab, Aïcha Redouane and Habib Amin, Dal’Ouna, Zel.

- 2nd session of music training workshops and performances in Palestine with 12 musicians.

May 2004:

“Music beyond walls” - Concert in Paris where about ten musicians performed Sephardic songs and classical works of Bach, Bériot...

Summer 2004:

25 Palestinian, French, German and Belgian musicians as well as 2 dancers took part in the 3rd journey in Palestine.

September 2004:

First Al Kamandjâti lessons began within three Palestinian refugee camps. About 30 children attended violin lessons and musical theory programmes with two Italian music teachers.

October 2004:

“Voices for Palestine” - testimonies and slide show related to July 2004 session in Palestine, a Dal’Ouna concert ended the revelry.

February 2005:

- “Musicians for Palestine” - 3rd edition in Chabada (Angers). Along with the other bands present, there was Oday, a young Palestinian singer from Al Fuwwar camp (Hebron).

- 4th workshops and concerts session within the refugee camps of southern Lebanon and the West Bank: 10 French and Palestinian musicians participated.

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April 2005:

“The Peace Bow” – documentary directed by William Irigoyen and Thierry Derouet, broadcasted on Arte TV channel, April 27th 2005.

Summer 2005:

5th workshops and concerts session in Palestine with 12 French and Palestinian musicians, with the collaboration of Oday, a young singer from Al Fuwwar camp, we met him during a workshop conducted in August 2003.

August 17th 2005:

Inauguration of the Al Kamandjâti Music School in Ramallah, located in a house dating back to the Ottoman times and rehabilitated by Riwaq (a Palestinian NGO working for the preservation of the Palestinian architectural heritage), in partnership with Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) and the Tamer institute and with the support of the Khalaf and Ghanem families.

This place will be employed for the music lessons at the beginning of the new academic year 2005 and will be used as well as the administrative office of Al Kamandjâti in Palestine.

October 2005:

Onset of music lessons in the Al Kamandjâti Music Centre located in Ramallah Downtown and in several Palestinian refugee camps.

October 2005:

Al Kamandjâti launches a programme of special musical sessions with the involvement of international and renowned musicians. Al Kamandjâti uses the unique talents and performance experience of the American internationally-known double bass virtuoso, storyteller, and composer: Mr. Richard Hartshorne (Dobbs) to bring music and laughter into venues that need more of both.

This unique programme matches the 3 approaches of the realm of music: workshops, concerts and master classes (exchanges between music beginners and professional performers).

They are a chance for young children to meet a creative artist up close.



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Description of the association and objectives

Al Kamandjâti is a French non-profit organization (set up under the French 1901 Association Act) created in October 2002 and recognized as a Palestinian organization since September 2004. Al Kamandjâti was founded by Ramzi Aburedwan, originate from Al Amari camp (Ramallah), he is a renowned musician and a former student of the Conservatory of Angers (France).

The aim of the Al Kamandjâti Association is to set up music schools for Palestinian children – in particular the most vulnerable: those living in the refugee camps (Al Amari, Al Jalazoun, Qalandiah, Ayda, Balata, Askar, Shu'fat...).

Children are the first victims of the occupation. The main purpose of Al Kamandjâti is to create an environment where education and games are children's principal concerns.

Ramzi's trajectory should not remain an exception.

Learning music could be an escape valve to those children, who live under very harsh conditions, and make them believe in a better future.

The music schools will offer them the chance to both discover their cultural heritage and open themselves to the outside world. In addition, they will have a chance to explore their creative potential.

In the current situation, working with the children is the best investment: the future of the region (and the possibility of peace and justice in Palestine) depends on them. Because today's children are tomorrow's adults.

The musical activities we hope to provide will allow these children to have a better understanding of others as well as of their culture. Those activities contribute to creating bonds between peoples of different cultures, bonds that are a powerful vector for tolerance and openness to the world. Through cultural exchanges, peoples get to know each other. Undoubtedly, culture can be the foundation to a lasting peace.

Music is a universal language. Through it, Palestinians can transmit their culture and promote their identity.

Al Kamandjâti is now working at several refugee camps of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon. The Association has developed numerous partnerships with already-established cultural institutions. This project cannot be carried out without them; all the energies should be pooled to be more efficient.

In order to be able to carry out its projects, Al Kamandjâti organizes solidarity concerts and fundraising campaigns (to obtain cash donations and subsidies from individuals and organisations) and collects musical instruments.

Due to the support of many partners (Foundations A.M. Qattan Foundation, France Libertés, Palestine Avenir, delegation of the European Commission in Jerusalem, Riwaq Centre, Sida, Tamer institute, Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, Khalaf, Ghanem and Aburedwan families...), thanks to its members and donors, thanks to the children and their families, the association is currently handling several projects.

“When you grab the hand of a child and introduce him to a musical instrument, you recognize the right of every child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts,” says an Al Kamandjâti musician.

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Activities in France and in Palestine

Activities in France

- Concerts and Lectures

Concerts as well as theatrical performances are organized in various cities: Angers, Paris, Aubagne, Bagnolet, Lille, "Escales Festival" in Saint Nazaire, London (Social European Forum)... Since February 2003 and once a year, the association organizes a huge solidarity event in Angers (i.e. background).

Being back from musical sessions, Al Kamandjâti organizes an evening performance « **Voices for Palestine** ». During these encounters, we broadcast our documentary « It is not a gun », realized during the August 2003 session.

- Fund raising and collections of musical instruments

To lead its project to accomplishment, Al Kamandjâti requests from his partners (stringed-instrument makers, orchestras and conservatories) and solicits from different state-run organisms a financial involvement and a material participation that will permit to cover the school fees of his pupils (by collecting music instruments, music scores, music stands, teaching materials).

For example, a two-ton container of music instruments (plus 15 music stands, 100 kg of music scores and 600 CDs) arrived in Palestine, August 16th 2005.

- Creation of a website: <http://www.alkamandjati.com/>

Actions in Palestine

- Music training workshops and concerts

Twice a year, Al Kamandjâti carries out music training workshops and performs concerts for the children living in camps, villages and cities in Lebanon and in Palestine.

The programme is always established in collaboration with the cultural centres and our local partners; for instance, August 2nd 2005, the performers joined in activities organized in partnership with Riwaq centre. These workshops and concert gathered together children and inhabitants of 6 villages of the northern West Bank: Asira, Sabastia, Beit Imrin, An Naqura, Al Bathan and Burqa.

- Music lessons

Over the course of the school year 2004/05, about 30 children attended violin lessons and musical theory programmes, within Ayda, Azzah and Deheisha camps (Bethlehem), thank to two Italian music teachers and to our Palestinian partners Al Rowwad, Handalah and IBDA.

- Inauguration of the first Al Kamandjâti centres in Ramallah

Within the newly built Palestine Avenir Foundation centre (organization that helps children suffering from blood diseases), Al Kamandjâti will have a large hall for rehearsal and concerts. With the sustain of Riwaq, SIDA and with support of the Tamer institute and the Khalaf and Ghanem families, we opened up a Music School located in a house dating back to Ottoman times. Al Kamandjâti employs these premises for the music courses and his administration and contributes by doing so to the conservation and the promotion of the Palestinian heritage.

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Association leader: Ramzi Aburedwan

Al Kamandjâti President is named Ramzi Aburedwan.

Ramzi Aburedwan was born in Bethlehem (Palestine) in 1979. He spent his infancy and childhood in Ramallah, in Al Amari refugee camp. The beginning of his early youth was marked by the first Intifada (1987-1992).

In 1997, chance had it that Ramzi met Mohamed Fadel – a Palestinian professor of music and refugee in Amman, Jordan. He had organized a music workshop in collaboration with the Music Conservatory in Ramallah and funding from the French Consulate in Jerusalem. Mohamed Fadel's goal was simple: introduce a group of children and adolescents to music. This encounter was his first contact with the viola, the instrument that has since become an intimate part of his life.

A second, decisive encounter set him on the path that has evolved as his life's work of helping refugee children to better their lives through music. He had the chance to play for Peter Sulski, violist and professor of music in London, who was in the Middle East auditioning students of all backgrounds for a summer music workshop at Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music in New Hampshire (USA). Ramzi was selected to participate in 1997, 1998 and 1999 and was thus the Palestinian representative of the Middle East at these festivals.

His diligence paid off when François Hetsch, professor of viola in Paris and in Angers auditioned him and selected him to receive a state funded scholarship in France. In June 2005, he obtained a gold medal in viola practice.

Since September 2005, Ramzi is teaching viola in the Conservatory of Music in Ramallah, he allows also many children to attend music classes in the Al Kamandjâti Music Centre while he will go on with his musical training and he will continue to organize diverse cultural and artistic activities in Palestine and Europe.

Ramzi Aburedwan, Al Kamandjâti's founder has declared, "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."

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Press releases

Al Kamandjâti was subjected to many articles, including those published in the Figaro magazine (August 21st 2004), Al Quds (August 2003, July 2004), Le Soir (August 2005), Pùblico (August 2005)...

Press release written July 16th 2005 and published by “This week in Palestine” (August 2005 issue)

Palestinian culture: a heritage to protect and transmit

Culture, arts and leisure activities are among the least known and recognized victims of the occupation and of the violence suffered by the Palestinians. Children are the first victims of the occupation. Since its creation, the aim of Al Kamandjâti is to set up music schools for Palestinian children, in favour of the most destitute ones - those living within the refugee camps.

Artists and musicians have in their hands a powerful instrument: Music, whose language is universal. Music is a powerful vector for tolerance and openness to the world. Thus, it becomes a kind of duty, a sort of responsibility for a performer. “When you grab the hand of a child and introduce him to a musical instrument, you recognize the right of every child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts,” says an Al Kamandjâti musician.

Al Kamandjâti, create music schools in Palestine

Al Kamandjâti's story mingles with the one of Ramzi Aburedwan. Ramzi grew up in the Al Amari camp, where his family has lived as refugees for over fifty years as the result of the creation of Israel in 1948. Today, Ramzi is a renowned musician, is President of the Al Kamandjâti association, a non-profit organization he founded to promote music education among Palestinian youth and strengthen their appreciation for Palestinian culture and identity. Translated from Arabic, Al Kamandjâti means “violinist.” Established in 2002, the association runs music-training workshops for Palestinian youth living in refugee camps, villages and cities in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Southern Lebanon, performs concerts in Palestine and across Europe, and reaches thousands of people every year.

Establishing Roots in Palestine

Ramzi Aburedwan declares that when he began to play music, Al Kamandjâti was a dream and now it is about to turn into reality thanks to the Palestinian children and thanks to the help of hundreds all over the world. Al Kamandjâti is committed to expand the program and it is collaborating with local and international cultural NGOs including the A.M Qattan Foundation, Palestine Avenir Foundation, Riwaq centre, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Tamer Institute, Said National Conservatory of Music, the European Commission, France Libertés, the Khalaf, Ghanem and Aburedwan families... Al Kamandjâti will need more than ever International 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.

The third Al Kamandjâti summer programme is intensive:

- Inauguration of the first Al Kamandjâti centre in Ramallah, located in a house dating back to Ottoman times and renovated by Riwaq (Palestinian NGO working for architectural conservation). Al Kamandjâti will employ these premises for the music courses and its administration. Al Kamandjâti will open up another centre in Ramallah, thanks to the Palestine Avenir Foundation. This place features a large hall and rehearsal areas for concerts and percussions education, as well as a location for a musical library and for the stringed-instrument makers.
- From July 28th to August 19th, French and Palestinian musicians will conduct workshops and concerts in Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem, Tulkarem, Nazareth, Hebron... These activities should permit to around 2 000 children to discover music.
- Onset of music lessons in September 2005 in several Palestinian refugee camps.

Please see www.alkamandjati.com for more information or contact us at info@alkamandjati.com

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