

Newsletter 02/2013 (December)



Dear friends of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung,

The past days have been freezing cold in Palestine for everyone; however for many people – such as for almost all inhabitants of the Gaza Strip and the many Syrian refugees across the region – these days were more than just cold, they were catastrophic. This emergency, again, shows the urgent need for policy change, especially when it comes to Gaza and the blockade. The past year 2013 saw the anniversary of the Oslo Accords, which was an occasion to reflect on the failed process and possible ways ahead. I would like to draw your attention to our new edition of [perspectives](#) dealing with this topic and bringing together some of the most respected Palestinian writers and analysts.

This **fourth edition** of our newsletter will inform you about some of our work during the second half of 2013. I want to take the opportunity to wish you all a quiet – and warm – holiday season and a great start to the New Year 2014. May it be a more peaceful one!

Dr. René Wildangel, Director hbs Ramallah (Palestine/Jordan Office)

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Our Middle East Blog (in German) <http://heinrichvonarabien.boellblog.org/>

News from hbs-Ramallah office (Palestine-Jordan)

Visits and delegations

A group of [Green Youth members](#) from Germany visited hbs in Ramallah in October 2013. The group was introduced to hbs office Ramallah's work and met with hbs partner organization [Shashat](#) and one of Shashat's young directors. Furthermore the group was briefed at the [Negotiations Support Unit \(NSU\)](#) and discussed with NSU staff.

On 28 November 2013, hbs Ramallah hosted a group of senior **Parliamentarians of the State Parliament** of [Rhineland-Palatinate](#) (Rheinland-Pfalz) in our office for a round table discussion. Three representatives of hbs' partner organisations, Sahar Francis from [Addameer](#), Amal Khreisheh of [PWWSD](#), and Sami Khader from [MA'AN Development Center](#), provided the delegates with insights from their work in the fields of human rights, gender, and environment in Palestine and discussed with the visitors from Germany.

On October 29th the hbs office in Ramallah hosted a **debate with Palestinian civil society** representatives and [EU Special Representative for the Middle East peace process Andreas Reinicke](#). The EU has recently [announced](#) that the Mandate of the EUSR will not be extended.

Past Events and Activities

From the 20th October to the 20th December, [Shashat](#) held their 9th **annual women's film festival**. The festival was launched in Ramallah and in Gaza City. In accordance to Shashat's dedication to reaching under-represented communities, screenings took place across the West Bank including in Bethlehem, Hebron, Jabalia, Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, Tulkarem, Jerusalem and in three locations in the Gaza Strip, attracting thousands of viewers. Before the festival, a call for proposals on the theme of "garbage" had been announced, and out of the 19 applications received, the jury chose seven films by female filmmakers, four of whom are from Gaza and three from the West Bank. The theme was interpreted in a wide variety of ways including "cultural garbage" social garbage", "gender-related garbage" and "political garbage". Filmmakers were given training and production support, via a mentoring system whereby professional filmmakers were paired with emerging younger filmmakers.



1 Shashat opening in Ramallah

From October 20th to 24th, the [Third Regional Summer School](#) by the Heinrich Böll Foundation's offices in Ramallah, Beirut, and Tunis took place in Amman, Jordan. The workshop was jointly organized with the West Asia office of the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) and focused this year on **natural resources governance**. 21 young professionals from eight different countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa participated in introductory sessions on a variety of topics, such as decentralized resources governance, water resources management, and the relation between resource governance and the political transformations in the region since 2011. A focus of the Summer School was put on gender-sensitive policies and interventions with regards to natural resources, which were addressed through both a lecture and a field trip to one of IUCN's projects north of Amman. As in the last year, one of the workshop's main success factors was the composition of the group of participants who, besides their diverse regional perspectives, contributed to the lively discussions and group work with their experiences. Their heterogeneous backgrounds ranged from research and public institutions to private sector and environmental activism. The project aims to build and strengthen regional networks and participants will be connected to last year's alumni.



2 Third Regional Summer School Opening

From September 27th-28th, 2013 the [Institute for Jerusalem Studies \(IJS\)](#) held their **annual conference**, entitled *Prospects 25 Years after the Palestinian Declaration of Independence*. Uniquely, the conference was directly video linked to Gaza hosted by Palthink, thereby allowing discussions to take place between participants in Gaza and those in the West Bank. The conference was warmly received by the participants in Gaza, particularly as it was the only public event in the Gaza Strip to discuss the important theme of 20 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords. Speakers at the conference ranged from those involved in the Oslo negotiations, to political analysts, civil society activists and academics. The regional and international impact of the Accords, the role of the Palestinian Authority, the political, legal and economic affect of the Accords, and the potential for the Arab Spring to open new horizons in the region and new perspectives in the Palestinian struggle for self-determination were debated.

On the 6th and 7th July 2013, our partner [Muwatin](#) held their **nineteenth annual conference**. This year the subject of the conference was the Arab Revolutions and Palestine. The conference was composed of six different panels with accompanying discussions and debates. Academics, activists and commentators presented papers on a wide range of aspects of the Arab Revolutions, including the demonstrations in Kuwait, social media activism in Egypt and the increasing sectarian conflict in Syria. Special focus was given to Palestine and the Palestinian cause in relation to the rapid changes occurring in the region. More information on the papers in Arabic can be found here: <http://muwatin.org/publications/Afaq/afaq2013/Afaq2013.pdf>

Between July and September, our partner [Meezan](#) installed a prototype of their “**Freedom Machine**” in Hebron, in cooperation with [Youth Against Settlements Group](#), and [Green Palestine for Rural Development](#). The Freedom Machine is a greenhouse unit that is placed on a building’s rooftop, which is able to simultaneously produce agricultural goods, feed fish and provide energy.



These three components work together within the confines of a typically neglected rooftop space, converting it into a productive area. Together with the local community, Meezan selected a highly symbolic location for their project, a rooftop in the immediate proximity of the settlement of Tel Rumeida. The settlers inside the city of Hebron, and specifically the settlers of Tel Rumeida are known for their aggressive and violent behavior, making it extremely hard for the Palestinian residents of the area to conduct even normal, everyday activities. The importance of the project became obvious as the construction of the Freedom Machine was conducted with immense community involvement. At the same time, Bashar – the initiator of the project – and everyone involved in the construction immediately became the target of regular harassment by both the settlers and the Israeli soldiers protecting those settlers. While this was of course an extremely negative side effect, it clearly showed that the location of the project was well chosen and obviously perceived as countering the ongoing displacement of the Palestinian residents of the area. A **video documenting the development of the project** is currently being produced by Palestinian filmmaker May Odeh and will be available online shortly.

In October, hbs' partner [Arini](#) organized a **ten-day workshop in Amman**. 29 participants from multidisciplinary backgrounds (architects, urban planners, curators and other) developed a multi-layered mapping of the area of Jabal Al-Natheef. This urban neighbourhood in the eastern part of Amman is one of the oldest and most crowded neighbourhoods of the city. The majority of its inhabitants are Palestinians who fled to Jordan during the Nakba in 1948. The workshop was led by Christoph Lueder and Alexandru Malaescu of London's Kingston University and the results of the study will be presented in form of a book in early 2014. You can find pictures and reports of the workshop on Arini's [tumblr](#)

Upcoming Events

In late January 2014 hbs will support the **4th Arab Blogger Meeting** taking place in Amman, bringing together practitioners, experts and the general public. The meeting will involve closed and public events. More information will be available shortly on our [website](#).

A Boell debate on the **"Red-Dead-Canal" project**, which had to be postponed in December 2013, will be held in early 2014. The project is celebrated as a **"historic agreement"** by some, but drew a lot of criticism by Palestinian NGO including our partner [Maan Development Centre](#).

In 2014 the hbs office in Ramallah will celebrate its **15th anniversary**. We will use the occasion to invite our friends and partners to a reception and to inform about our work.

Resources/ Miscellaneous

We **mourn** the loss of our partner and friend [Eyad Sarraj](#), who died on 17th December 2013 in Gaza. He was a Human Rights defender and founder of the [Gaza Community Mental Health Programme](#).

Hbs Palestine/Jordan [congratulated](#) **Raji Sourani**, founder of the [Palestinian Centre for Human Rights](#) to the Right Livelihood Award, commonly known as the Alternative Nobel Prize.

Hbs Ramallah together with the hbs offices in Beirut and Tunis has launched **two new issues of Perspectives**. While [No. 5](#) presents Palestinian Perspectives on the Oslo-process 20 years after, [No. 6](#) deals with the Syrian refugee crisis.

You can find recent articles released by our partner organization **Masarat – Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Thinking** [here](#).

As always, the **Wadi Hilweh Information Centre** provides excellent news and footage about the situation in Silwan and East Jerusalem in general on its [website](#).

[MA'AN Development Centre](#) produced a series of **short documentaries** which you can find on [MA'AN's youtube channel](#). The videos deal with issues like child labour on Palestinian and Israeli dump sites, the sewage problems in the Gaza Strip, the destruction of fertile agricultural lands, and the overuse of power generators in Gaza due to the electricity crisis.

Since the last newsletter, MA'AN has also issued five editions of its [environmental online magazine](#) in Arabic. You can find the latest issue here and all other editions through their [archive](#). The magazine's web layout has been redesigned during the year and the online publication now presents itself with a more image-heavy and accessible new look.

hbs Ramallah offers **internships** to students and graduates from Germany and elsewhere, for those with a strong interest in political and social development in the region and whose interests align with the hbs program. Our next call is for the period from **July through September 2014**. For further information please check our [website](#).

Hbs Palestine/Jordan's **website** will soon adapt to the new design as the Berlin office's new [main site](#), which is as always a major resource on international issues related to environment, gender and human rights (and other topics). Check out our new [website design](#) in early January.

Imprint:

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