

# Palestine: Back-to-School Program Supported 3,500 Students

Since last year, the stranglehold from Israeli occupation has tightened its grip on the embattled Palestinian territory even further. Around two-thirds of the population of the Gaza Strip, are now living below the poverty line and are increasingly dependent on international humanitarian assistance. Unemployment for both the West Bank and Gaza has exceeded 60%.

A recent survey shows that more than a quarter-million children in the Palestinian territory ranging in ages from six months to five years are suffering from chronic malnutrition. Lack of high quality protein and infant formula has left nearly 23% of children suffering from acute malnutrition, and approximately 20% of children between the ages of six months and five years of age are suffering from anemia. The last figures available for school-aged children not enrolled in an educational institution are for 1997. At that time, the statistics were

an astounding 12.3%! Surely, this number must be much higher after seven years of continued violence, where poverty forces children who should be in school to drop out and work as cheap labor to help sustain their families.

An education is a way out of poverty. In Palestinian families, it is also a source of pride. Sadly, years of war have taken their toll on the literacy rates among the Palestinian people. UNRWA figures show that an average of 30% of the population is illiterate.

The beginning of the school year is a financial drain for any family...especially for those who are desperately poor. They have a choice: use what little money they have to feed their family, or spend those precious pennies to educate their children.

Because an education is an essential issue, in August 2003 ZF worked in coordination with the Islamic Charitable Society in Hebron to supply \$10,000 worth of backpacks for the 2003-2004 school year. Filled with essential school supplies (notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, rulers, sharpeners, etc.), the bags were handed out to 3,500 needy children and orphans in Hebron.



Above: ZF student volunteers fill backpacks with school supplies.

Below: Orphans enjoy playtime at their new home.

Building of orphanage established by ZF in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

## Supporting Orphans Worldwide

### Pakistan: Establishing an Orphanage in Rawalpindi

There are so many children across the globe whose lives have been torn apart by the loss of one or both of their parents. The life of an orphan in a third world country is a life pre-destined for destitution and isolation...unless an organization like Zakat Foundation steps forward to support them.

With the blessing of Allah (swt), Zakat Foundation has been able to organize the Mohammadan School of Advance Learning, a school in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. To spare the emotions of the children enrolled, ZF refers to the institution as a "school", and not an "orphanage". The 22 orphans receive room, board, and an education at one of the best schools in the area, some three kilometers from the orphanage.

A van transports the students to and from the school daily, and for pleasure outings on alternate Sundays; however, the cost is a difficult burden for the orphanage to bear. In order to meet their immediate transportation requirement, the purchase of a small minibus is very necessary. After a great deal of bargain hunting, Zakat Foundation has settled on a bus manufactured in China, which will cost US\$12,000. ZF is actively seeking one, or more, benevolent contributors who can aid

us in the purchase of this bus. If you would like to help the orphans at the Mohammadan School of Advanced Learning, please contact us at [www.theZakat.org](http://www.theZakat.org) to make an online

donation, or call 1-866-499-6151. Every dollar you can give will bring a bit of comfort to the life of an orphan, and blessings from Allah (swt).

### Would You Sponsor an Orphan like Maram?

Maram is an 11-year-old orphan who, since the death of her father, struggles to survive in Hebron, Palestine. Through ZF's sponsorship her life has improved a great deal. Now she receives room and board, schooling, social and medical care, and new clothing during 'Eid. In a recent letter to her sponsor, Maram said, "I love you so much...you are like my father..."

#### How to Sponsor an Orphan

Zakat Foundation sponsors many orphans in several other countries such as Afghanistan, Chechnya, Ghana, Pakistan, Palestine, and Uganda.

So won't you please *fill out and mail the attached return envelope*, or check our website to choose other orphans awaiting your sponsorship? That one small action can change your life...and theirs.

