

Spring  
2007

MBI Al Jaber ● Foundation  
*review*

## In this Issue

*Crossing the Desert to  
Connect Cultures*

*Empowering Women  
in Gaza*

*Alumni Updates*

*Supporting Debate about  
the Media*

*Travellers in Arabia  
'Brother Yasin' in London*



## Crossing the Desert to Connect Cultures

*The MBI Al Jaber Foundation recently contributed to the funding of the Connecting Cultures 'Desert Crossing' which was set up to promote inter-cultural dialogue between young people.*

On February 9th the teenagers set out on their 8-day journey across the Sharqiya Sands in the Sultanate of Oman. The group, who come from Britain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman, Pakistan and Fiji, walked 20km each day using camels for support and kept a diary of their experiences:

Everyone became friends on day one. We are trying to learn about each other's cultures. We are learning about leadership; working as a group; planning; communication and of course mutual understanding. All this helps us overcome the language barrier. I am learning a lot from everyone here. I will put it to good use in the school where I teach and with my boy scouts troop in my city of Jizan in Saudi Arabia'.

Waleed Gadry, Saudi Arabian

'After just three days in the desert my opinions and thoughts have changed from viewing this landscape as harsh and lifeless to seeing it as the vast, beautiful and majestic land that it is. It has become clearer everyday through discussion that in the things in life that count, one's values, goals and ambitions, we are all very much alike'.

James Danvers, Britain

Through wilderness expeditions, the Connecting Cultures initiative aims to enhance cultural awareness, and promote mutual and environmental understanding between the young people of Saudi Arabia, Great Britain and other nations. Our support for this project adds to the previous grant that the MBI Al Jaber Foundation gave in 2005 to support the Connecting Cultures Arctic expedition.

The MBI Al Jaber Foundation  
78 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2SJ  
United Kingdom

Tel: + 44 (0)20 7935 5859  
Fax: + 44 (0)20 7725 0997  
Email: [info@mbifoundation.com](mailto:info@mbifoundation.com)

[www.mbifoundation.com](http://www.mbifoundation.com)



**MBI AL JABER**  
Foundation

## Welcome to the latest Newsletter from the MBI Al Jaber Foundation

Welcome to the latest Newsletter from the MBI Al Jaber Foundation: as usual we highlight some of the Foundation's recent projects and activities and give you the chance to catch up with more of our Alumni.

You may have noticed we have changed our name to reflect more clearly our sole Patron and Chairman, His Excellency Sheikh Mohamed bin Issa Al Jaber. We have also updated our website, and you can find out more about the projects focused on in this Newsletter, and many others at [www.mbifoundation.com](http://www.mbifoundation.com).

We are committed to forging links between the Middle East and the wider world through educational and cultural activity and the projects you will read about on these pages reflect that. Our inspiration is our Patron, MBI Al Jaber, who believes that individuals can make a difference, and that education is the key to a better future for the world.



## Empowering Women in Gaza

*The Society Voice Foundation for Community and Civil Work, under Director MBI Alumnus Ibrahim Natil, is undertaking a project helping to empower women in Gaza.*

This MBI Al Jaber Foundation funded project has been established to train young women aged 18-25 in both the principles and techniques of socio-political participation, and in women's rights. In so doing, it aims to build and consolidate upon the knowledge and leadership qualities of 90 young women in political participation, legislation, and democratic governance.

Despite deteriorating conditions which have led to increased unemployment, poverty, and internal divisions in Palestinian society, this project gives young women the opportunity to take part in and stimulate democratic debate. This is achieved by organizing community campaigns and other activities. In coordination with 10 women's centres working with university students' councils, the trainees will undertake a series of special community activities such as training, summer camps, town hall meetings, discussions, and media outreach. The media outreach activity takes the form of production and broadcast of radio programmes, tackling important women's issues in society.

Society Voice Foundation is an NGO founded in 2001 to empower Palestinian civil society by designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating a series of community actions. It has three different offices in Gaza Strip and the West Bank city of Ramallah and its Director is MBI Alumnus Ibrahim Natil.

# Alumni Updates

## Alumni Updates

*The MBI Al Jaber Foundation has a diverse network of Alumni from Morocco to Iraq. Each one has been the recipient of a Foundation scholarship and is now contributing to their country or region. We receive regular updates from our Alumni – here's a selection:*



**Majida Awashreh (SOAS 2000/01) has been working with civil society in Palestine since 2003, first with the TAMKEEN project and currently with The German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ).**

“I am working as a project advisor for a new project entitled Local Councils and Civil Society Development Programme. It was launched in January 07 and hopefully it will go on until 2014. I'm proud to inform you that I'm the first local or international woman to assume such a high post in the GTZ Palestine office. Currently I am responsible for the management and coordination of two out of the 4 components: Advisory Assistance to Selected Local Government Units and Promotion of Collaboration between these and Local Civil Society Organizations.”



**Heba Mostafa (AUC 2002/04) has been lecturing at the American University in Cairo since 2006 and will be attending University of Cambridge to pursue her PhD in Architecture starting October 2007.**

“The opportunity to study at the American University's department of Islamic Art and Architecture has truly put me in an excellent position to develop my career. AUC has one of the most extensive Islamic Architecture programmes in the Middle East and I feel privileged to be a representative of both AUC and the MBI Al Jaber Foundation for the duration of my career.

The Foundation has had a deep impact on my personal and professional life and was instrumental in placing me in a position to get an acceptance to Cambridge University; an opportunity that I hope will benefit my field and country.”

**Muzna Ghalib Al-Qu'aiti (SOAS 2002/03) is a lecturer at Dar Al-Hekma College in Saudi Arabia where she inspires students to strive towards a greater understanding and awareness of other cultures through history and art.**

“I am a full time lecturer in the General Education Programme at Dar Al-Hekma College and teach both 'Contemporary World History' and 'Art Appreciation'. The students respond well to my teaching as my courses fill gaps in their education and generally give them a much needed and general overview of the topics concerned. I find it extremely rewarding and satisfying to have students who beforehand have a narrow minded view of the subjects yet later become passionate about it. It is pleasing when students come up to me after the summer vacation, telling me how they visited Versailles, the Louvre or any other corner of the world and understood it better because of my teaching, and found that there is so much more to history and art than meets the eye.”

## Alumni News

*The MBI Al Jaber Foundation Alumni forum is designed to enable our Alumni to exchange information and opportunities and to help them keep in touch with old friends and up to date with Alumni activities. We believe that our Alumni are our best resource and we aim to help them help both each other and the region. We are currently pursuing this approach by updating our website to make it more Alumni-friendly!*

Introducing new features of the MBI Al Jaber Foundation website:

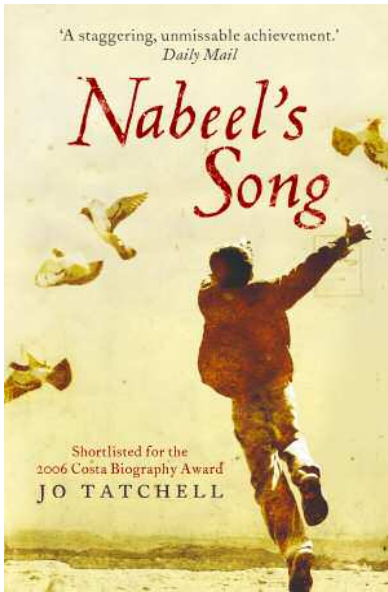
### Alumni Dissertation Library

Our Alumni have studied a wide range of disciplines at Postgraduate level. We are proud of our scholars, and are publishing their dissertations in order to highlight their achievements and to make this important body of work as accessible as possible.

### Alumni Forum

With the launch of the Forum, we hope to encourage our Alumni to share networking and business opportunities, post upcoming events, keep in touch with old friends and participate in discussions.

In addition to continually updating profiles in the Alumni Updates, we are featuring the Scholar's Diary by Ammar Humadi Al Naimi, who shares his experiences as an MBI Scholar and our Alumni Spotlight focusing on the activities of Alaadin Rady.



## ‘Brother Yasin’ in London

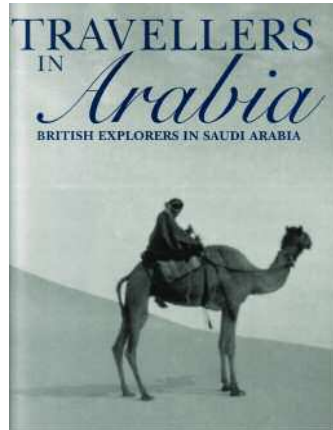
*University College London provides the setting for an evening with ‘the Poet of Baghdad: readings by Nabeel Yasin’, an event organised and sponsored by the MBI Al Jaber Foundation taking place in May 2007.*

Nabeel Yasin’s story is a fascinating one. In 1994, in exile from his beloved country, the ‘poet of Baghdad’ published a volume of poetry including Brother Yasin, (written in 1974 and published to great acclaim in Egypt and the Lebanon) and its follow-up, a work which reflected the experience of exile. The following year, a single copy of the work was smuggled into Iraq. The poems spread by stealth, involving considerable courage on behalf of those involved, and becoming part of a body of work that represented the silent fight against the regime. His story has been told by author Jo Tatchell under the title ‘Nabeel’s Song’.

The event at UCL marks Dr. Yasin’s first public appearance since his return to Iraq, and in addition to the readings the audience will have an opportunity to hear about his experience at first hand and meet the poet at the reception.

# The written word

## Travellers in Arabia



In 2006 MBI Al Jaber sponsored the book *Travellers in Arabia*, an important visual record of early British travellers in the Arabian Peninsula.

The book, commissioned by HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal and sponsored by MBI Al Jaber, is composed of material originally gathered for an exhibition in Curzon House, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in London. In addition to well-known figures such as H. St. John Philby and T.E Lawrence, the book profiles the contributions to the study and recording of the early Kingdom by lesser-known explorers, including some formidable females. Beautiful early

photographs and delicate watercolours form the illustrations, which also includes excellent maps and short accounts of their visits to the peninsula, alongside captions and commentaries by author Eid Al-Yahya.

In the forward for the book MBI Al Jaber explains his enthusiasm for the project, “It is a great pleasure to make this fascinating archive accessible to a wider audience through the publication of this book. Today’s world is changing at a rapid pace, and we must be mindful of preserving our history and traditions for future generations.”

## Supporting Debate about the Media

*In May 2007 the Foundation hosted a dinner to mark the London Middle East Institute conference on ‘The Pan-Arab and Western Media: An Unbridgeable or an Overstated Gap?’ at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*

The conference, sponsored by the Media Outreach Centre of the US Embassy in London, was designed to investigate the nature and magnitude of the alleged gap between the pan-Arab and western media. With the increasingly central role played by the media in shaping public opinion and impacting upon the strategies of political elites, public debate on such issues is vitally important.

Journalists discussed aspects of their respective coverage/analysis and contemporary Middle East issues. They did so in three panels, each organised around a specific issue – these panels enabled both participants and the audience to judge for themselves whether or not journalists approached such vital issues from deeply different perspectives.

Two briefer panels were devoted explicitly to the media, aiming to consider the key question of the gap between the pan-Arab and western press. Panellists included leading figures from the Arab and British press.

Discussion continued after the conference at a dinner hosted by the MBI Al Jaber Foundation.