

WALSALL KOBAR FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

Walsall Kobar Friendship Association was formed in 2007 with the aim of developing friendship and twinning links between Walsall and Kobar, a small town north of Ramallah in the Palestinian West Bank. We strive to enable individuals and groups to develop awareness and learn from each other's experiences and promote public understanding and support of the humanitarian issues relevant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We are members of a national twinning network and since 2007 numerous visits have been organised to and from Kobar. We arrange a programme of cultural events, public meetings and ongoing fundraising activities. The money raised helps to underpin our work, fund travel costs of visitors to Walsall and we also sell craft goods to support a women's cooperative in Kobar. Activities over the last year include:

Overview of our work in 2013

January 2013

- Annual General Meeting held at Palfrey Community Centre with a presentation from Naeem Malik from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign focusing on the Birmingham Veolia campaign.
- Presentation given to the 'Concern for Palestine' group in Lichfield.

February 2013

- Lessons focusing on the situation in Palestine taught at Joseph Leckie Secondary School.

March 2013

- The documentary film 'Going Against the Grain' shown to the Youth Group at Aisha Mosque.

April 2013

- A 10-day visit was made to Kobar and Ramallah by 6 members of the group (5 supporters from Stourbridge joined the visit to Ramallah and then visited a village near Qualqulia where they have developed a friendship link). 5 laptops were donated by Caldmore Primary School and taken to Kobar along with peace doves made at the Salaam Festival.
- The film '5 Broken Cameras' was shown at a public meeting at the Palfrey Centre.
- Presentations about Palestine and our links with Kobar were made to the Walsall Trades Council, a group of women from UKIM who were on a leadership training course and a group of students from Brunei at the Aisha Mosque.

May 2013

- Walk for Palestine – 5 and 10 mile charity walks on footpaths around Walsall.

June 2013

- A public report back following the visit to Kobar was given at the council House.

July 2013

- Garden Party held at the home of one of our members.
- Presentation given to Abu Bakr Boys' school

September 2013

- Money passed to Kobar Boys' and Girls' Secondary Schools to purchase the necessary technology to facilitate school twinning.

November 2013

- Child Prisoner Speaking Tour visited The Crossing at St Pauls in Walsall. The 2 speakers were welcomed in the Mayor's Parlour in the Council House by the mayor.
- The Silent Voices Photographic Exhibition showing everyday life in the village of Bil'in in the Occupied West Bank of Palestine as seen through the eyes of children who live there was shown at The Crossing at St Pauls in Walsall.
- Members attended the National Twinning Conference. This network is developing. Walsall Kobar has re-affiliated and contributed a panel to the national banner.

January – December 2013

- Liaison with Walsall Secondary Schools to help develop a link with Kobar Secondary Schools is on-going.
- Members have attended/supported Palestine solidarity events in Stourbridge, Stafford, Wolverhampton and Birmingham
- A representative from Walsall Kobar Friendship Association is now attending Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) meetings.

For the future we will continue our regular programme, build on our links with Walsall Schools and we plan to invite friends from Kobar to Walsall in 2014.

To find out more about what we do, about how to go on the mailing, to become a member and if you choose, get involved in the work of WKFA go to:

www.walsallkobar.org.uk or email the secretary on walsall.kobar@gmail.com