



**MUSEE INTERNATIONAL
DE LA CROIX-ROUGE
ET DU CROISSANT-ROUGE**
17, AVENUE DE LA PAIX
CH-1202 GENEVE
WWW.MICR.ORG
TEL +41 22 748 95 11
FAX +41 22 748 95 28

MODEST

PORTRAITS AND STORIES OF WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST

*An exhibition produced by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum based on the photographic work of photojournalist **Alexandra Boulat**, co-founder of the VII Agency.*

**Temporary exhibition from 23 September 2009 to 24 January 2010
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, except Tuesdays – free entry**

SUMMARY

| | | |
|----|--|-------|
| 1. | Introduction | p. 2 |
| 2. | Why hold this exhibition? | p. 3 |
| 3. | The exhibition's route | p. 7 |
| 4. | The Koran and the Geneva Conventions | p. 8 |
| 5. | Women in war | p. 9 |
| 6. | The issue of the veil | p. 10 |
| 7. | Historical and socio-political contexts of the countries | p. 11 |
| 8. | About the exhibition | p. 16 |

Appendices:

- Leaflet
- CD-ROM containing:
 - press photos, captions and rights
 - the press dossier text

Contact:

Corinne Liardon
Public relations officer
Tel: + 41 22 748 95 01
Fax: + 41 22 748 95 28
E-mail: c.liardon@micr.org



1. INTRODUCTION

Modest

Portraits and stories of women in the Middle East: Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Jordan, Syria, Gaza and the West Bank

From one country to another the photographs taken by reporter **Alexandra Boulat** (1962-2007) show the world Muslim women live in, together with the differences in their status and the roles they play: war victim, refugee, political militant, academic, TV anchorwoman, teacher at the women's police academy or oriental baby-doll. These are portraits permeated by their subjects' everyday struggle to survive, stay healthy and feed and take care of their children.

Looking beyond the immediate family scene, the photographer also shows the political and social activity of those who decide to work at a profession, go out and vote and even involve themselves in extremist operations. The "modesty" of their way of life – underscored by the photojournalist's choice of title – is in marked contrast with their ongoing struggles.

Shot through with tragedy and hope, each of Alexandra Boulat's pictures tells a specific story, making us think about those struggles which are not always very far removed from those of other women around the world. At the same time they call into question the existence of a Muslim women's world reduced to the issues of the veil, arranged marriages and male violence, as Western stereotypes would have it.

2. WHY HOLD THIS EXHIBITION?

Modest is an exhibition of photographs showing women living in the Middle East, specifically in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Jordan, Syria, Pakistan, Gaza and the West Bank. In these countries, women struggle with day-to-day existences that are generally marked by war, by social and political changes that have significant repercussions on their roles in society, and by family relationships, which are characterised by a strong patriarchy. The photographs in this exhibition showcase the various struggles these women face.

The viewpoint of photographer Alexandra Boulat

One day in 2005, I decided to set off across the Middle East to tell the story of women. I chose to concentrate on women because this offers one of the best ways of understanding the world they live in and the various aspects of Islamic society. In this part of the world, where the concept of women's liberation is still little known, I had to abandon my western values to be more receptive and closer to these women and to what they had to tell and show me.

I met Afghan, Iranian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Syrian and Palestinian women, each in their respective countries. Women from every class of society. The aim of this project was to lift [metaphorically, author's note] the veil of these women from Muslim societies in a region undergoing economic and political crisis since the wars in Iraq, Gaza and Afghanistan. Victims of war in these countries and restricted by the religious and revolutionary institutions in Iran, the women of all the countries photographed are torn between their obligations to follow a strict moral code and the influence of the West. All the women that I photographed have their own story to tell, with grace or naivety and usually with the agreement of a man. From refugees to pilgrims, from suicide bombers to teenagers and oriental baby-dolls, they tell of their conditions, their rituals, their habits, their anger and their joy.

In this part of the world, family and honour are the only values. This is a journey across Islam, fundamentalism, war, domestic violence, education and youth.

Why hold this exhibition at the MICR?

After the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1863, the organisation carried out its first humanitarian operations in the Muslim world by assisting victims of the Eastern Crisis (1875-1878), which involved war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

In 2008, the ICRC's five largest operations in terms of expenditure included the 95.5 million Swiss francs spent in Iraq, 69.8 million in Afghanistan and 62.1 million in Israel, the occupied territories and the self-governing territories. Elsewhere, a conference on Islam and international humanitarian law was held on 29 and 30 November 2006 in Qom, Iran, with the links between international humanitarian law and Islam being one of the key concerns of the ICRC today.

Since it was established, international humanitarian law has granted women general protection equal to that enjoyed by men. Women experience war in a multitude of ways. They can actively participate in it as combatants, or be used as a target as a member of the civil population, purely because they are women.

The exhibition is part of the series of exhibitions looking at the issue of "photography and humanitarianism". Bringing current issues into focus is one of the Museum's objectives. Unlike the lean flow of television, fixed images encourage people to reflect on issues.

Why choose this title?

According to Robert's dictionary, the term "modest" refers to somebody "who is simple, without pomp or splendour, who does not attract attention, who acts with modesty, who has a sense of propriety, restraint, decency". The photographer Alexandra Boulat deliberately chose this title in recognition of the way in which these women are described. The contrast of this qualifying adjective with the struggles they face makes the latter all the more powerful.

Focus of the subject

The worlds shown in the photographs take us from the private and family sphere to women's social and political lives: a feeding mother, a female political activist and a woman rebelling against her family all pass before our eyes. Using the medium of photography to talk about women in the Middle East, and selecting the viewpoint of a western photographer, ensures an individual approach.

Exhibition partners

The VII Agency

The **VII Agency** derives its name from the number of founding photo-journalists who, in September 2001, formed this collectively owned agency. Designed from the outset to be an efficient, technologically enabled distribution hub for some of the world's finest photojournalism, **VII** has been responsible for creating and relaying to the world many of the images that define the turbulent opening years of the 21st century.

Alexandra Boulat, Ron Haviv, Gary Knight, Antonin Kratochvil, Christopher Morris, James Nachtwey and John Stanmeyer were joined in 2002 by Lauren Greenfield and in 2004 by Joachim Ladefoged. Eugene Richards joined in April 2006. Together they document conflict - environmental, social and political, both violent and non-violent - to produce an unflinching record of the injustices created and experienced by people caught up in the events they describe.

On September 9th 2001, **VII** announced its formation. On the following night, covering for the missed return flight of a colleague, James Nachtwey arrived at his Manhattan apartment close to the World Trade Center. The next morning, he photographed some of the most haunting pictures of the collapse of the towers, at the same time eloquently conveying the destruction of a way of life.

While the stark realities of the battlefield loom large, **VII** turns its gaze with equal intensity to more subtle forms of conflict and documenting the changes and development of society and culture worldwide. The work of Lauren Greenfield, particularly in her social documentary of youth culture and gender identity, adds a further perspective and depth to the work of the agency.

But this is not merely artfully captured, neutral observation; nor is it the doctrinaire elaboration of a political or social position. Each photographer is inspired by an array of often very different motivations, and it is from this breadth of reference that the agency draws its originality and strength. What unites **VII's** work is a sense that, in the act of communication at the very least, all is not lost; the seeds of hope and resolution inform even the darkest records of inhumanity; reparation is always possible; despair is never absolute.



Reminder:

From 16 March to 14 August 2005 (extended until 15 January 2006), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum played host to the exhibition entitled *WAR. The United States, Afghanistan, Iraq*, produced by the VII agency. Photographic work by Alexandra Boulat was on show at this exhibition.

Alexandra Boulat: Biography

Born in Paris on 2 May 1962, Alexandra Boulat studied graphic art and art history at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In 1989, after painting for ten years, she decided to follow in the footsteps of her father, Pierre Boulat, who spent 25 years as a photographer at *Life* magazine. She became a photojournalist, was represented by Sipa Press until 2000 and then, in 2001, co-founded the VII agency. Her news and features appeared in all the leading international magazines, but mainly in *National Geographic*, *Time* and *Paris Match*. Her work won her many awards.

She covered news, conflicts and social issues, together with reportages on different countries and peoples. Among her many assignments were the war in ex-Yugoslavia – Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo – between 1991–99; the fall of the Taliban; Iraqis living under the embargo in the 1990s; and the coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003. Her focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict included a reportage on Yasser Arafat's family, and she covered Yves Saint Laurent's last collection in 2001. Other major assignments spotlighted Indonesia, Albania and the Berbers of Morocco. Her last project was devoted to Muslim women in the Middle East and Gaza.

Alexandra Boulat died suddenly on 5 October 2007.



The woman photographer, by Alexandra Boulat

Love of war
Love and hate
Getting nowhere
Courage and fear
Instinct and pragmatism
Passion
[...]

The woman photographer is the new craze for city journalists. Desperate for stories that will galvanise war-weary readers, polite little voices pop up from time to time on the phone: "I'd like an interview." The first time my reaction was positive, spontaneous. I was expecting relevant questions and maybe some interesting intrusions into my private life. But after accepting a number of these interviews I decided not to do them any more.

Simplistic, banal – hence a stand taken.
A life.
A woman. A novice at the start.
A reason: passionate commitment to a story.

The advantages – let me tell you once and for all: the big advantage is the lack of solicitude for women. The smile, the femininity? All bullshit – a man's considered just as charming.

Glamour? You must be joking. Same t-shirt for a week, hair a mess, 35 kilos of luggage, no jewellery, no makeup, moisturiser picked up at a newsstand along with your cigarettes. 22 hours alone in a single bed. Feeling pissed off every second day, or hysterical because of your monthlies. Out of deodorant. A last smoke before lights out, and the switch is at the other end of the room.

(protected by a fixer
engrossed on the phone with her mother
the stress of the job
sceptical looks from male colleagues)

[...] Forget being a woman, just be a photographer. Foreign, naive, passionate, but most of all committed.

I won't have contributed anything to the situations I photographed, except a smile and a pat on the back.

3. THE EXHIBITION'S ROUTE

Scenography in brief

When entering the room, visitors are immersed in two atmospheres conveyed by two colours. One evokes sand, a calm colour that best shows off the exhibits, while the other evokes the sky, and a tentative hope of struggle without violence. Heaven and earth and the duality of life thus guide the viewer.

The layout is intentionally very structured with walls at the centre of the space that create a sense of emptiness around them. This is to ensure all of the photographs are not seen immediately, but that they are examined individually enabling contemplation.

The photographs in the exhibition are shown around a verse from a Mahmoud Darwish poem entitled *The Seven Days of Love*. Visitors look at the photographs while following the lines of the poem. The poem was selected in order to structure the images in a poetic form, while giving the floor to somebody from a culture that is very close to that of the women photographed.

The poem

Wednesday: Narcissus

Her age, twenty-five women.
 Born as she wished to be, walking around her image
 in the water, as if it were another's.
 I need a night... to run within myself
 I need a love to jump over the tower...
 She drew away from her shadow,
 so lightening would pass between the two
 like a stranger passes through his poem...

Strophe Wednesday : Narcissus, from Mahmoud Darwish's poem "The Seven Days of Love", in *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?*, translated from the Arabic by Jeffrey Sacks, University Press 1998

The poet

Mahmoud Darwish, born 1942 in Birwa, near Saint-Jean-d'Acre, is widely considered one of the greatest contemporary Arabic poets. The author of many works, which have been repeatedly republished, he published an anthology of poems, *Au dernier soir sur cette terre* (The Last Night on this Earth), in 1994 with Actes Sud, then a story, *Une mémoire pour l'oubli* (A Memory for Forgetfulness).



4. THE KORAN AND THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Muslim world

After the foundation of the ICRC in 1863, the organisation carried out its first humanitarian operations in the Muslim world by assisting victims of the Eastern Crisis (1875-1878). Since then, the ICRC has been active in almost all conflicts where Muslim countries have been involved. For example:

- the Arab-Israeli wars since 1948,
- the Indo-Pakistani wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971,
- the various wars in Afghanistan from 1979 to the present day,
- the war between Iran and Iraq in the 1980s,
- the first Gulf War in 1990-91,
- the current conflicts in Iraq, the Palestinian occupied territories, Somalia and Sudan.

In 2008, the ICRC's five largest operations in terms of spending were in Sudan (CHF 109.9 million), Somalia (CHF 102.3 million), Iraq (CHF 95.5 million), Afghanistan (CHF 69.8 million), and Israel, the occupied territories and self-governing territories (CHF 62.1 million), making up half of the budget in the field.

International humanitarian law (IHL) and Islam

Links between IHL and Islam are one of the key concerns for the ICRC, which is working to establish what there is as universal in the two fields. In summary, the two doctrines agree on the sacred nature of life, human dignity, and the importance of showing compassion towards captured enemies. Protecting human life, property and dignity is a key part of the Islamic doctrine, which existed before IHL.

On conducting hostilities

IHL guarantees the protection of victims and eases their suffering in times of conflict. **IHL** has had to integrate modern methods of warfare and adapt to changing conflict situations (Additional Protocols – civil and arms).

Sharia governs Muslims' whole way of life, with religious, administrative and legal aspects, as well as instructions on the conduct of war. The sources of Islamic law are the **Koran** (the holy book) and **sunnah** (the tradition founded on the words and actions of the prophet Mohamed). This law has continued to evolve during the last 1400 years as a result of studies and consultations of Muslim dignitaries.

On the treatment of prisoners

IHL and Islam both advocate compassion towards captured enemies.

Sources:

- Jean-François Berger, "Le Coran et les Conventions de Genève" (The Koran and the Geneva Conventions), in La Tribune de Genève, 4 December 2006.
- Jean-François Berger, "Le droit islamique et les Conventions de Genève" (Islamic Law and the Geneva Conventions), International Review of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.
- Extract from the Islam and International Humanitarian Law Conference, Qom, Iran, 2006: Andreas Wigger, ICRC deputy director of operations, discussing the objectives of the forum.
- Hadia Nusrat (freelance journalist in Islamabad), "Le droit Humanitaire et l'islam" (Humanitarian Law and Islam), in the Review of the Red Cross and Red Crescent – speeches by Wahbeh Al-Zuhili (university in Syria) and Ameer Zemmali (adviser to the ICRC - Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols).
- www.icrc.org - The fundamental regulations of international humanitarian law.

5. WOMEN IN WAR

While the civil population is all-too-often the main target of hostilities, women are regularly the hardest hit. When men go to war, it is women who ensure the survival of the family and community.

Women as members of the population

Women and young girls are often the victim of countless acts of violence in armed conflict situations (sexual violence).

They suffer from a lack of food and other essential goods, while having to feed their often large families.

Limited access to medical care can have consequences for women's reproductive and physical health. Childbirth complications, the probability of which is undeniably higher in stressful situations such as war, can increase mother and child mortality and morbidity.

Women who participate in hostilities

Women actively participate in numerous armed conflicts around the world. Muslim women are increasingly playing a role in the global jihad. Some of these, motivated by the religious conviction of changing the situation of Muslims living under occupation, are recruited by Al-Qaeda and local terrorist groups suffering from the increased numbers of arrests and deaths among their male activists. Attacks by female combatants – also known as mujahidaat – claim more lives than those perpetrated by male jihadists. This can be attributed to the fact that people perceive it as less probable that such acts will be carried out by women, and that when they take place, the CNN shock factor of their attacks generates much more attention than bomb attacks carried out by men. The awareness generated by the instant media coverage may encourage other women to perpetrate similar attacks.

Displaced women

The majority of refugees and displaced people in the world are women and children. Generally carrying only a few items and separated from their loved ones, they depend on the support of the local population in the region where they are displaced, and on the help of international and non-governmental organisations. They live in camps and are often vulnerable as they have to shoulder all responsibilities by themselves. Displaced women rarely enjoy the privacy needed to ensure their personal hygiene and maintain their dignity.

The protection of women and international humanitarian law

(IHL)

Since it was established, IHL has granted women the same general protection as that enjoyed by men. Generally, it recognises the importance of providing women with special protection according to their specific needs. This protection is stated in the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 on the Protection of Victims of War and the two Additional Protocols of 8 June 1977.

Source:

Women and war – an overview, ICRC, 30-9-2000
www. <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/57JQQ3>

6. THE ISSUE OF THE VEIL

This symbolic item is the subject of numerous debates and has become so polemical that merely discussing it means committing to an ideological standpoint or a social or civilizing project. It even seems that it is sometimes given the power to summarise the relationship between the Muslim world and the West all by itself (Zouari, 2002).

In the Muslim world, it is strongly connected to the concepts of **faith, virtue** and **authenticity**. In the West, it is linked to questions of **secularism, equality, freedom** and even **Human Rights**.

The veil in the Koran

The fundamental question that seems to arise with all of these debates is the following: does the Koran stipulate that the veil must be worn or not? And if it does, what are the precise terms?

There is no precise and unequivocal response to this question (Zouari, 2002). **The term hijab comes from the Arabic verb hajaba which means “to hide” and more specifically, “to conceal from sight”**. It thus refers to any obstacle placed before an object or being to hide it from view. It is most frequently used in this very general sense in the Koran, which makes its interpretation particularly difficult.

According to Leïla Babès (2004), the discourse whereby the veil is a religious obligation and divine order is a recent one: it first appeared in the 1970s with the propagation of the fundamentalist discourse which, according to liberal intellectuals, employs the hijab as a symbol of female inferiority. According to the author, none of the three verses of the Koran used by fundamentalists to justify their position can be the basis of any religious practice. They are all part of a precise historical and sociocultural context where patriarchal customs dominated.

The paradoxes of the veil and the clash of cultures

History also shows that these verses have not always been applied. Periods of “veiling” and “unveiling” have followed one another. In addition, history is marked with numerous episodes where **women themselves have demanded the right to wear the veil** in the name of a political position, a breakaway from the **family or tradition**, or a confirmation of identity **in the face of the West**. **Wearing the veil** allows women to be actively involved in our world's affairs and to act in the name of God and not their husband. They can thus free themselves from patriarchal structures while avoiding male protestations. As such, across the Muslim world, women who consider themselves feminists and believers readily wear the veil, but demand the abandonment of a chauvinistic reading of religious texts, sexual equality and the end of violence and discrimination towards women. This type of behaviour can sometimes be difficult to understand for Westerners, for whom the exterior signs of “liberation” appear to be the only ones they interpret as valid proof (Zouari, 2002). The definition of liberty also varies from one culture to another. In the West, the concept of liberty is linked to a kind of supremacy of the individual, while Muslim women can feel free without cutting community links.

The debate began in **France** with what is known as the “Creil Affair”, named after the school where in 1989, three teenagers were told to remove their veils or face exclusion from the school. The event marked the beginning of a lively debate that continues today and that has slowly spread across many European countries, where the veil is seen as an obstacle to integration.

Sources:

Fawzia Zouari, 2002, *Le voile islamique (The Islamic Veil)*, Lausanne: Editions Favre SA
 Leïla Babès, 2004, *Le voile démystifié (The Veil Demystified)*, Paris: Bayard

7. HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXTS OF THE COUNTRIES

Iran

Key dates

- 1925-1979: Pahlavi dynasty
 - 1925: Crowning of Reza Khan
 - 1941: Crowning of Mohammad Reza Shah
 - 1977-1979: Islamic revolution
- 1979 onwards: Islamic republic:
 - 1979: Ayatollah Khomeini becomes the Supreme Leader of the Revolution.
 - 1980-1988: Iran-Iraq War
 - 1989: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei succeeds Ayatollah Khomeini
 - 1997: Death of Ayatollah Khomeini
 - 1997: Mohammad Khatami becomes president of the Republic
 - 2001: Re-election of Khatami
 - 2005: Election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
 - 2009: Re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

Demographics and education

In the mid 1980s, Iran introduced a birth control policy that has led to a huge reduction in the fertility rate. This stood at 1.71 children per woman in 2006, compared to 6.2 in 1986. The average life expectancy is 70.9 years.

Following the 1979 revolution, Shiite Islam precepts also reshaped the education system. While illiteracy has dropped considerably, a lack of funds and the long war against Iraq have prevented the application of a law making school obligatory until the age of ten.

Source:

Encarta: http://fr.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567300/Iran.html

Iraq

Key dates

- 1958: Overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy and seizure of power by Karim Qasim. Proclamation of the republic
- 1963: Overthrow of Qasim. General Abdul Salam Arif is proclaimed president
- 1968: Overthrow of Arif. General Hassan al-Bakr is named head of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). Radicalisation of the regime and strengthening of links with the USSR
- 1979: Saddam Hussein succeeds president al-Bakr and breaks away from the Communist Party
- 1980-1988: Iran-Iraq War
- 1990-1991: Gulf War
- 2003: Start of the American and British offensive and fall of Saddam Hussein
- 2005: Legislative elections, Shiite Nouri Al-Maliki becomes Prime Minister



Demographics and education

In 2008, the Iraqi population was estimated to stand at 28.2 million. The fertility rate is very high (3.97 children per woman) though the infant mortality rate is also rising, due to poor living conditions and the deteriorating sanitary situation.

While education is free and compulsory for a six-year primary period, just 55% of young people aged 12 to 17 went to school in 1990. In 2005, the literacy rate stood at 41%.

Source:

Encarta: http://fr.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567303/Irak.html

Afghanistan

Key dates

- 1963: Deposition of Prince Mohammed Daoud Khan by Zahir Shah who proclaims the first Afghan Republic
- 1979: The Soviet army invades the country and places Babrak Karmal in power
- 1989: Withdrawal of Soviet troops. Mohammad Najibullah succeeds Karmal
- 1992: Fall of Najibullah and start of the civil war
- 1994: Beginning of the Taliban's rise to power, led by Mullah Mohammed Omar
- 2001: Start of the American and British offensive and fall of the Taliban
- 2002: Hamid Karzai is elected head of state
- 2004: First presidential election in the country's history, with Hamid Karzai victorious

Demographics and education

The population of Afghanistan has risen from 15 million in 1979, to over 32 million in 2008. It is difficult to establish precise figures due to the years of conflict that have triggered major humanitarian crises, marked in particular by significant population displacements. Life expectancy is just 44.2 years and the infant mortality rate (155‰) is high. Living and sanitary conditions are among the worst in the world.

In 2000, the literacy rate stood at a mere 36.3%. The country has received aid from the international community following the fall of the Taliban, to reconstruct school buildings and to restart the education system.

Source:

Encarta: http://fr.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569370/Afghanistan.html



Jordan

Key dates

- 1953-1999: Reign of King Hussein
 - 1967: Six-Day War
 - 1973: Yom Kippur War (Arab-Israeli War)
 - 1994: Israel-Jordan peace treaty
- 1999-...: Reign of King Abdullah II

Demographics and education

In 2008, the Jordanian population was estimated to be 6.2 million. The fertility rate is 2.47 children per woman, people aged under 15 make up 43% of the total population, with those 65 or over accounting for just 4.1%. Life expectancy is 78 years.

In 2005, 92% of the population was literate and 35% of college-age young people were attending educational institutions. The country is home to three universities and several specialist higher education institutions.

Source:

Encarta : http://fr.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761552293/Jordanie.html

Syria

Key dates

- 1963: Military coup that brings the Baath party to power
- 1967: Six-Day War
- 1961: Hafez al-Assad acquires the presidency
- 1973: Yom Kippur War
- 1999: Re-election of Hafez al-Assad
- 2000: Death of al-Hassad. His son, Bashar, succeeds him

Demographics and education

Syria boasts a population of 19 million. The Syrian population is characterized by its dynamism, with a strong natural growth rate and an average of 3.21 children per woman.

Under 15s represent a little under half of the population, while people aged 65 and over are in a very small minority (3.3%). The average life expectancy is nearly 80 years.

Primary education is free and compulsory, while the literacy rate stood at 78.4% in 2005.

Source:

Encarta : http://fr.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569233/Syrie.html

Pakistan

Key dates

- 1958-1969: Military dictatorship under General Ayub
- 1969: General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan becomes president
- 1971-1977: Civil government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto
- 1977-1988: Military regime of Muhammad Zia Ul-Haq
- 1988-1999: An uncertain democracy:
 - 1988: Ghulam Ishaq Khan is named president and Benazir Bhutto is named Prime Minister (the first female in an Islamic state to hold this position)
 - 1990: Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif succeeds Benazir Bhutto
 - 1993: Return of Benazir Bhutto
 - 1997: Return of Nawaz Sharif
- 1999-2008: Regime of Pervez Musharraf
- 2007: Assassination of Benazir Bhutto
- 2008: Restoration of the democracy with the election of Asif Ali Zardari

Demographics and education

With 167.8 million inhabitants according to the 2008 census, Pakistan is one of the world's most populated countries. The population is young (49% are under the age of 15), the average life expectancy is 64, and the infant mortality rate is 67‰.

The first five years of primary school are free and compulsory, though the literacy rate and percentage of children in full-time education remain very low.

Source:

Encarta: http://fr.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761560851/Pakistan.html

Palestinian Territories

Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip is a strip of narrow land located in the south-west of Israel, named after its main city, Gaza. With the West Bank, it makes up the Palestinian Territories.

Key dates

- 1967: Six-Day War and start of the Israeli occupation
- 1987: Intifada against the Israeli occupation
- 1994: The new Palestinian National Authority, led by Yasser Arafat, takes control of Gaza. Israeli troops withdraw from the Gaza Strip in July.
- 2000: Second Intifada
- 2005: All Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip are evacuated by the Israeli army
- 2007: Hamas takes control of the entire territory of Gaza



Demographics

The population is estimated at around 1.3 million (2004), though this figure is the subject of debate between Palestinians and Israelis. It is a very densely populated area, with very high demographic growth. The majority of the population is made up of refugees living in overpopulated camps

West Bank

Key dates

See Gaza Strip

Demographics and education

In 2004, the population was estimated to be around 2.3 million, though it should be pointed out that it is particularly difficult to establish demographic data in this area due to the major political issues faced. The Palestinian population is characterised by very strong natural growth, despite a very high infant mortality rate, which is a result of insufficient sanitary infrastructures and poor access to healthcare and drinking water.

Traditionally, schooling has been seen by Palestinians as a weapon against the Israeli occupation. As such, around 86% of Palestinians aged over 14 are literate. However, the Israeli-Palestinian war continues to severely limit access to education.

Sources:

Encarta: http://fr.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_101500210/Gaza_bande_de.html

Wikipedia: http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bande_de_Gaza

Encarta: http://fr.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761557747/Cisjordanie.html



8. ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

General information

Open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, except Tuesdays

Shop – Restaurant

From Cornavin train station: bus 8 (towards OMS Appia), Appia stop

Disabled access

Visits

Guided tours for groups

Information and reservations

Tel. +41 22 748 95 06

Free guided tours (without registering)

Sunday 4 October, 1 November, 6 December 2009 and 17 January 2010 at 2.30 p.m.

A range of events are planned around the exhibition

See the full programme at www.micr.org

School services

Visits for teachers:

Monday 28 September at 5 p.m. and Wednesday 30 September 2009 at 12.30 p.m.

Writing days:

Friday 15 January and Thursday 21 January 2010 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Educational routes

Information and reservations:

Tel. +41 22 748 95 06

www.micr.org/edu