

## A brief overview of ReCap 2014

ReCap (abbreviation from Refugee Camp) is a project in West Bank, Palestine with a target group of medical students from the second year of studies and up. The project takes place for four weeks in August. During the first week of the project participants are educated about the arabic language and culture, the history of Palestine and the conflict on those territories. The following three weeks focus on spending time in the UNRWA medical clinics and the refugee camps. Mornings will be passed by in the UNRWA clinics and afternoons in the camps with different activities with children and adult locals.



ReCap 2014 was probably a bit different from the ones taking place before. There was a war going on in Gaza and the shadow of it could be felt everywhere. There were 12 participants chosen, but in the end, 6 places couldn't be filled and one of the remaining 6 was sent back from the border. So there were the five of us - a girl from England and boys from Ireland, Netherlands and Estonia. Although we were in the West Bank during the peak of the conflict, at no time did any of us feel unsafe. We still visited areas where there is often conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, but our hosts were excellent at keeping us safe and away from any potential danger during times of conflict.

We met as a group for the first time on a sunny afternoon outside Damascus Gates, the famous entrance into Jerusalem's old city. Some of the group had arrived in Israel early to travel. We quickly felt at home with Mhammad, our Recap co-ordinator and fellow medical student and soon we were on our way to our home for the following week in Abu-Dis, a palestinian town about 40 minutes east from Jerusalem. This city is home to Al-Quds University, one of Palestine's two medical schools, where we spent our first week learning about conflict, language and Palestinian culture.



We had an opportunity to experience the hospitality of local people already on the first night when a restaurant was opened up just because we hadn't had dinner and hosts wouldn't listen to us

telling them, that we can probably manage some other way. The following month would bring many invitations to meals at peoples homes (and we even happened to visit 2 weddings!). We were even invited one morning to share breakfast with a family in a refugee camp who none of us knew. The Palestinian people are among the most hospitable we have ever met.

The lessons and seminars on introductory subjects were a lot of fun (learning a language in group sessions tends to turn out quite funny at times) and we learned a lot.

After the first week we moved on to Bethlehem, where our hosts had organised a beautiful apartment for us. During the rest of the project most of our mornings would pass in the clinics/hospitals, where we were doing medical check ups with the General Practitioners, who normally see approximately 130 patients daily, drawing blood at the lab, helping out in the ER



(again, checking patients, assisting surgical procedures etc.) or some other departments depending on the interests of certain people. Some of the group spent time in paediatrics and obstetrics/gynaecology.

After lunch we would usually go to refugee camps. Our first impression of these was somewhat different from the picture we had drawn for ourselves in our minds. Rather than being tents on the field, the camps are urban areas with poor planning,

infrastructure and high population density. In the camps we would take a look around, talk to people about life and have different activities with the children (for example, play football or have different activities with the kindergarten children).

There was also some spare time to rest and travel. Our hosts did a very good job showing us the West Bank. We went to a number of various places and visited places such as a soap factory and a Samaritan village. We also rented a car for a few days to travel around northern Israel, the Golan Heights and to go by the Dead Sea.

All in all, it was an incredibly fun and interesting month. Living among the locals in a culture different from ours, seeing the conditions set upon them by



politicians and working at a hospital and medical system different from ours provided an experience and understanding of life one cannot get from books. This has given a fundamentally better ability to grasp and analyse the western media bias we are bombarded with on a daily basis. Palestine is truly a beautiful country with beautiful people.