

Wednesday 18 May 2005:

Today is the third and last day of the conference. One session featured the head of the Urban Design Unit in Municipality of Gaza, Dr. Nihad Al Mughani, who spoke about how educational institutions in the Gaza Strip are inadequate for disabled children. His statistics proved shocking to me: the majority of our schools are not suitable for disabled children and the few that are suitable do not meet the international standards.

Dr. Abdelfatah Ezzain from Morocco presented their experience in establishing children clubs. I hope that we can have similar experience in Palestine. It was a field study about the clubs, how to establish them and how to be activated, from regular clubs to more participatory and in-formal education/activities.

The conference closed with the reading of recommendations. They were too general and I was hoping for more specific points.

The most interesting part of my day was when I went with other children groups to the Child City in Dubai.

I liked how much the city provides opportunities for children 3-12 years old to improve and develop their talents and skills. Even a 17-year-old like myself found it attractive and useful. They have a huge globe, and each country has a button. When I press the button, I can hear the language of the country, information about it, and the traditional song. Really, it was amazing to me.

I rode the bus on the way back with youth, from Palestine, Yemen and Egypt. It was an opportunity for all of us to have fun: we sang our favorite songs and told jokes. We enjoyed our time so much. I learnt a lot of things about their daily lives, their families, and how they live.

I can say that I will never forget the people I met in the past three days. We will miss each other.

In the evening, the same group went for shopping to the biggest shopping center in Dubai – the 1.2 million square foot Deira City Center. It is very big and you can find everything there. After shopping, we had dinner all together in the roof. We had very nice time there.

Thursday 19 May 2005:

It is the leaving day. We all gathered for farewell breakfast. Each one wrote some words to each other to remember. I was sad because I will miss all these nice people that I met during the three days in Dubai. I was astonished how we can meet people just briefly and yet never forget them. We agreed to stay in contact with each other.

At noon time, I got the taxi to the airport, where we spent about two hours waiting for the flight. I bought some gifts for my family at the huge Duty Free complex.

Once airborne we spent about four hours in the plane. At 7:30 in the evening, the plane landed in Cairo. After our passports were checked without any delays or problems, we took a taxi to the Hotel in order to have rest, because we planned to leave to Gaza on the same night.

Friday 20 May 2005:

At 2:00 a.m. we departed for Rafah. We arrived at 7:30am. It was a long trip to the border and tiring one but it was not the most tiring one of the trip.

The Egyptian part at the border was full of passengers. It was not organized very well, because everyone wanted to be the first to get into the first bus to the Israeli side. I managed to board the second bus at about 11:00 a.m. It was full of people: women, old people, and children. I noticed that the number of people were more than that normally allowed.

We spent about two hours in such uncomfortable bus because it took that long for the Israelis to open the gate for the bust to get into the Israeli side.

The trip across the border only took three minutes. Once across they asked us to leave everything and just carry our passports. They called my name and got into the hall. I delivered my passport to the passport check desk and waited for two hours without any reason. I did not know what to do and why I am still waiting. I noticed that the next bus arrived and the passengers checked their passports and left and I am still waiting. Finally, a man called my name and asked me to sit aside and asked me about a coffee machine that I bought from Dubai. He took every part of it aside and took it inside and kept asking me many questions. They spent one hour investigating the machine.

At about 16:00, I left the border, but I could not leave to Gaza immediately because Abu Holi checkpoint was closed. So I went to my friend house in Khan Younis, where I spent about four hours with her. At 20:45 I passed the check point to Gaza. At about 22:00 – about 20 hours after leaving Cairo - I arrived home. Despite the difficulties and long tiring day to me, it was very nice moment when I saw my parents and my family.