

AUSTRALIANS FOR PALESTINE

PO Box 2099
Hawthorn VIC 3122
Melbourne - Australia
Tel: 03 9818 5080
Fax: 03 9818 5009

info@australiansforpalestine.com
www.australiansforpalestine.com

MEDIA RELEASE 4 21 March 2007

Prepared by MM/AFP

Palestinian swim team makes its Australian debut

Providing a Voice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release No 4 – 21 March 2007

The 12th FINA world championships have provided five Palestinians with a rare opportunity to experience some well deserved relief from the war-torn streets of Palestine. The swimmers are in Australia for the first time and have arrived carrying the hopes of a nation suffering under brutal occupation. Hamza Abdo 16 and Fadi Awesat 18, both from Jerusalem and siblings Sami and Zakia Nassar, 18 and 20 respectively from Bethlehem along with Sadeq Damrah, 24 who now resides in the US (on a swimming scholarship) are all extremely excited about the swimming championships. The Israeli authorities denied a further two swimmers from Rafah in Gaza, who form part of the Palestinian swim team, the necessary permits to travel to Australia.

The opportunity to be able to compete on the world stage is a major achievement for the five. Chef de Mission Mr. Ibrahim Altaweel said that they were “extremely grateful” for the assistance of the local Palestinian community. Mr. Altaweel said that the sanctions imposed upon the Palestinian Authority by the international community as a result of last year’s election victory by Hamas have had “terrible” consequences. He went on to say that “we’re here to swim for Palestine, [but] we cannot forget what is happening back home”. The swim team and the 2 officials had to rely on the private sponsorships from the Australian Palestinian community to get to Melbourne. Head Coach Mr. Naser Toutanji said that some unexpected costs of travel have meant that “the swimmers have already spent their pocket money”.

The swimmers will compete in several disciplines over the course of the championships, the first of which will be Sunday March 25. All of the swimmers will be in the pool on Friday March 30.

The Palestinian community of Victoria will be holding a number of special events to honour the swimmers inaugural visit to Melbourne. An official welcoming for the swim team will also be held by the Head of the Palestinian Delegation to Australia HE Dr. Izzat Abdulhadi. The Chef De Mission or Head Coach can be contacted via this office for any further comments.

For further information contact:
Moammar Mashni 0419 999 773

END

