

**Galilean Nights Event ID:** gn141

**Number of telescopes:** 8

**Number of organisers:** 30 Sirius members

**Number of attendees:** 600 during both nights

**Event photos:** <http://www.flickr.com/photos/44420345@N04/>

#### **Event Report:**

Our Association entered the Galilean Nights activities with vigor and passion, motivated further by the fact that till the very end of the GN only one other Algerian site registered beside ours. Our resolve was bolstered by the new acquisition of three medium sized telescopes in a country where its importation and moving around are restricted as they are considered as "sensitive" material.

We initiated a vigorous media campaign through the press and the local radio and organized a series of lectures and workshops in preparation of the evening sighting.

Everything was set so that we could have a successful public event at the Emir AbdelKader Mosque plaza during both the 24th and 25th of October. It is the second largest Mosque in the African continent, and is situated on high ground yet away from city light and quite close from center city.

#### Calling in the National TV

Emboldened by a great public response on the first night, we contacted the national public TV (ENTV) so as to cover the second night since we expected an even higher turn out thanks in particular to the messages which were broadcasted periodically on the local FM radio reaching several Eastern states, and mentioning the great cosmic sighting which hundreds of people witnessed the night before at that very location.

To our great disappointment, the sky was overcast that night for most of the evening. Even the patchy openings in the clouds we were hoping from the meteo bulletin didn't occur as the sky remained homogeneously clouded for the whole evening with some showers.

How to handle a swelling public pouring from everywhere eager to see what "Galileo has seen through his telescope of his making", like we announced it through our various ads? And what to show to the TV team which came to cover live action never mind the weather?

#### Activating Plan B:

Luckily we had a task force of resourceful young members who planned for a Plan B, and which turned out to be as successful (well let us say almost!) than if the evening sighting occurred. It consisted of collective skymap reading sessions with a very engaging and eager public. The 300 and more copies printed that night went out fast. All this while projecting the starry sky on the Mosque walls through a video projector, thanks to some night sky planetarium programs. I doubt that wall mosques were ever used that way!

#### The "Telescope Alley » under cover inside a Mosque

Furthermore, the mosque majestic arches in front of one of the entrances created a unique ambiance and was turned into a "telescope alley » in addition to an exposition hall so that people of our association could explain to them the functioning of the telescope as well as the basic facts about the Universe.

#### Happy ending

The Plan B worked beyond our wildest expectations. We had hundreds of satisfied visitors that night. They came to see the wonders of the night sky; they saw instead action and learned about the night sky more than they bargained for: great educative entertainment and for many the joy of a TV appearance on National TV news. It is expected that some 8 millions viewers throughout Algeria saw the news segment devoted to it. The heroes of the day were in particular a family of five which came all the way from Sedrata a city close to the Tunisian border, and an old man who came from the far away coastal city of Béjaia as they heard the GN program over radio, just to watch an Autumnal cosmic show. It turned out to be a projected show but a grandiose one with thirty or so pleasant animators devoted to provide to gracious public a glance to Galileo's dream in spite of the weather. The fairy setting of the majestic Mosque with a horizon delineated from most sides by the bright city skyline added a special dimension to this cloudy yet animated Galilean night.