

Ma'an lil-Hayat / L'Arche Bethlehem Community

Administrative report

1.1.2022 - 31.12.2022

Core members:

- Number of core members in Bethlehem are 23 males and females, and 14 males and females in Dar Salah.
- Anwar El Batouzy from Bethlehem who was welcomed in 2019, passed away on the 11th of March due to a bus accident. We always thank God that he had the chance to join us and had the chance to be respected and to be loved for almost three years.
- Four new core members were welcomed during 2022, Malak and Sami in Bethlehem and Sabreen and Ayman in Dar Salah.

New Envoy for Palestine:

Mrs. Souzy Shenouda was appointed to be responsible for the community in Bethlehem/Palestine. She was able to visit the community in February 2022 with Rick Hatem who was responsible for Palestine for 2020 and 2021.

Another visit for the community was done by Mrs. Souzy in November 2022 for a week. During this second visit, Souzy worked together with the community “core members, board and assistants” in order to prepare the next mandate of the community. The process went very smoothly, all members enjoyed working together as a team and the new mandate was set for the next 2 years.

Local Board of directors:

The following new local board members were elected end of 2021:

- Flavia Andon – president
- Usama Awwad – vice president
- Marlen Abu Sa'ada – Secretary
- Rev. Ashraf Tannous – treasurer
- Abir Habash – member
- Dr. Yousef Musallam – member

- Nadine Sabat - member

A meeting once a month was held with the community leader to discuss all what is needed for the community.

The board president with the secretary were in touch with the community leader for urgent issues regularly.

Fundraising:

- A project proposal was submitted to the Arab Fund in the Emirates to build a third floor at the workshop building. When we moved to the smaller building in order to use the 3 story building for the Boutique Hotel, it was really a challenge and not an easy atmosphere to change the place of the workshops from a large place to a smaller one. The idea was to build another floor with additional rooms in order to be more adequate and better environment for work. The amount submitted was 100,000.00 US\$. But till now no answer.
- A project was funded through l'Arche International to help with the outreach project with an amount of 26,800.00 euros. This amount was spent for activities during 2021 + 2022.
- A project was funded through l'Arche International from L'Œuvre d'Orient with the amount of 5,000.00 euros to be spent during the year 2022 for trainings and formations for the team.
- End of 2021, FAI agreed to give us an amount of 220,000.00 Euros for the renovation of the three-story building to be used as a Boutique Hotel. The first installment of 172,000.00 was transferred to our bank account in November 2021, but was spent for the renovation works in 2022. The second installment of 40.000 Euros was transferred in 2022 to finish all the project activities besides the renovation works.

Ma'an lil-Hayat Boutique Hotel:

Renovation works:

We were lucky to receive generous donations from our faithful friends “FAI, L'Arche Canada and the Diocese of Köln (Cologne)” in order to make the renovation works needed for the building to be a Boutique Hotel with 11 double rooms and 1 single room.

The renovation process started in August 2021 after signing an agreement with the Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation for planning and supervising the renovation works taking into consideration that the building that was built in 1890 by the first architect in Palestine “Morus Nassar” and it is considered one of the ten most important heritage buildings in Bethlehem.



In February we welcomed our first visitors at the Hotel although there was still some works to be finished.

Eleven double rooms with private bathroom, 1 single room with private bathroom, a dining hall, a space for the reception, an appropriate kitchen and very beautiful garden were ready in June 2022 when the official opening ceremony was held under the care of the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and the Municipality of Bethlehem. A Brochure and a website boutiquehotel.larchebethlehem.org for the Ma'an lil-Hayat Boutique Hotel with a special logo were ready before the opening ceremony.



End of July 2022, we were able to register our Hotel on Booking.com and Airbnb when we started to welcome visitors from all over the world. And now our reviews on booking.com are excellent and nearly all our guests are more than happy from the service, food, location, staff and cleanliness.

Please find attached an administrative report for the work at the hotel during 2022

Relationships:

Pro Terra Sancta: an agreement was signed with Pro Terra Sancta to support the salaries of 2 core members working at the Hotel “Maram and Haitham”, and the Chef Hani who has problems

in hearing and speaking. An amount of 3000.00 Nis was paid monthly for October, November and December 2022 and will continue to pay for another three months in 2023.

Albergo Etico: A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Ma'an lil-Hayat/ L'Arche Bethlehem and Albergo Etico beginning of 2022.

Media:

We were very lucky when the **Agence France-Presse (AFP)** visited us after hearing about our hotel, many other TV and Radio stations filmed our core members working at the hotel after reading the article that was published by AFP.

[Welcome: Palestinians with disabilities out front at Bethlehem hotel](#)

[A Bethléem, un hôtel pour rendre visibles des Palestiniens handicapés](#)

فندق في بيت لحم يوظف معوقين بهدف إبراز دورهم في المجتمع

فندق في بيت لحم الفلسطيني يطاقم من ذوي الاعاقة

[Sky news](#)

سيدة فلسطينية تقوم بتوظيف عشرات الشباب الفلسطينيين من ذوي الهمم

"معا للحياة" أول فندق في بيت لحم يوظف موظفوه من ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة

Activities:

Daily program:

9:00 – 9:30 morning gathering

9:30 – 11:15 felt making

11:15 – 12:00 break

12:00 – 2:00 felt making

2:00 - 2:30 tidying the rooms and preparing to leave

The community is open from Monday till Friday. Saturdays and Sundays we are off. Every Monday a meeting for the team with the community leader was done for 2 hours. Once a month, one Saturday we have the monthly meeting, the community leader with the team where we discuss all what is needed for the core members, evaluating the previous activities and planning for next ones. These meetings play a very big role in building the team, prepare the activities and needs needed for the core members, the team, felt orders and the day to day needs.

Celebrations:

We always look for any occasion to make a celebration out of it besides our daily routine. We celebrate each one of the members' birthday individually where we insist the attendance of the family members to be part of the celebration.

On the 5th of December, we had our community night with all members of the community. We chose to do this celebration in Dar Salah as the place there is wider and more appropriate. Our Christmas tree was lit with all our thanks and wishes for the future. We had dinner all together that was a donation from a local family.

On the 22nd of December, we had our Christmas celebration that was done in Dar Salah. The lunch was donated from a friend of the community and the Christmas presents were also a donation from the Bible College in Bethlehem. We went all shopping in order to choose the presents we wanted for our friends.

We also had the chance to be part of three Christmas celebrations as we were invited by three different local organizations. "YMCA, Al Quds University and Santa Home".

Felt making:

Both branches in Dar Salah and Bethlehem, part of their time "core members with assistants" is spent to produce felt items from the sheep wool that is bought from the women farmers in the villages of the outskirts of Bethlehem.

The felt items are sold in the local shops like Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Ein Karem. Besides selling abroad to churches, L'Arche communities and some other shops and friends in the USA, France, Canada, Australia, Germany and Scotland.

In order to sell our products, last year we were able to participate at three Christmas markets in Jerusalem and 2 Christmas markets in France. The community of Aix En Provence invited us to participate at their Christmas market, they were ready to welcome three of our members who stayed at the community and they also covered the flight tickets.

Then the three members were invited to participate in Trosly at the Christmas Market there. The community provided the accommodation with all expenses.

Our sales for the year 2022 were 320,000.00 NIS which is 91,428.00 Euro. This covered around 38% of our expenses for the whole year.

It is true that by selling our felt products, we help the community financially and help the community to cover part of the sales, but above that is that we tend to help the core members to raise their self-esteem and let them feel like all family members who can do something useful in their lives. Also we change the idea of the families about their children that they are productive and can do something useful and beautiful.

Picnics:

One day picnic to Jericho on the 19th of May 2022 with all members of the community as well as the mothers of the Core members. This was paid by the outreach project.

One day picnic to Solom pools twice a year for all members of the community with the students from Al Quds Open University.

All members were invited to be part of a camp for three days from the 28th of July until the 30th of July with other three organizations working with people with disabilities from the Bethlehem area. It took place at Murad Resort village in the Bethlehem area.

We were able to get permissions from the Israeli military forces in order to go camping to Tabgha at the Sea of Galilee. We stayed there from the 1st of August until the 5th of August, all core members with the assistants of Ma'an lil-Hayat. 6 German volunteers joined us to help us during our stay. The expenses of this camp were a donation from the DVHL organization in Germany.

We had the chance to swim, play, go to a restaurant and have fun together.



Miscellaneous Activities:

De LooPERS dance2gether with the YMCA Rehabilitation center in Beit Sahour invited us to be part of the Inclusive Dance show for people with and without disabilities. Ayat, Bilal, Waleed and Reem were able to take the training with the German trainers and were part on stage on the 29th of July where so many people attended from the local society.



All members of Ma'an lil-Hayat were able to be part of the Marathon that took place in Bethlehem in March 2022. The participants were from local and international organizations as well as individuals.



An agreement was signed with a Palestinian special psycho drama theatre to do 5 sessions for 10 of our core members twice a week. Then they were able to perform on stage at the Dar Al Kalima University in October 2022.

Trainings and formations:

In June 2022, L'arche International organized a formation about safe guarding that was held in Alexandria/Egypt for the Middle East communities. Elen, Nadine and Mahera were able to participate.

Ahmad, Elen and Sahar participated in a camp for people with disabilities in Germany. All expenses were a donation from the German Organization for the Disabled. The camp was for two weeks in July 2022.

Our core member Maram with Ahmad, Mahera and Amal went for an exchange visit to Italy for one week in October 2022. They were able to visit three projects for Albergo Etico in three different cities.

This exchange visit was covered by the FAI organization.



Our assistant Yousef was able to be part of the Together in the Mission formation that was held in Trosly in April 2022. This was covered by L'Arche International.

Students, Volunteers and visitors:

We were able to welcome 16 students to do their training course from 2 different local universities "AlQuds – University and AlQuds open university"

Three volunteers, Michael from the USA and Olga from Russia but living in Bethlehem as well as Mirvat who is a sister of the little sisters of Jesus used to come to help us during the year 2022.

Due to our location which is near the Nativity Church and the old city of Bethlehem, we are lucky to welcome so many guests coming from all over the world. Some of them took an appointment informing us of their visit and some just dropped by as they found themselves very near the community.