



Dear friends and supporters,

We hope that you are doing well!

The situation in Palestine and especially in Gaza is frightening, to say the least. We are following with great concern the events as they are unfolding minute by minute. Here in Bethlehem, we have observed a general strike and our public life has come to a halt. Streets everywhere are almost empty and we fear that the war in Gaza might spill into the West Bank. Checkpoints around Bethlehem are also closed and barriers separating Bethlehem from the rest of the West Bank are blocked.

Unfortunately, the current situation is directly affecting our work both at L'Arche Bethlehem community and the Ma'an Lil-Hayat Boutique Hotel. Since yesterday, the majority of our core members couldn't come to Ma'an as their parents are understandably worried about sending their children during these troubled times. Moreover, the bus driver who brings the core members to the community has not been able to come to Bethlehem as he lives in an area that is blocked by the Israeli army.

In October, we were expecting to receive many international groups in our Boutique Hotel and we were hoping that with the hotel revenue we would pay off a large portion of our financial obligations. Since Sunday, however, we started receiving cancellations from tour operators and individual tourists who were planning to visit Bethlehem this month. At the moment, our Boutique Hotel is sadly empty and closed.

As Christmas is just around the corner, we are counting on participating in bazaars locally and abroad, but if the situation gets worse we will not be able to partake in any event. Moreover, if a solution is not reached soon, we will not be capable of receiving any orders or shipping them for that matter.

We ask you, our dear friends and supporters, to keep us in your prayers!

Sincerely,

Mahera Ghareeb  
Community Leader

Bethlehem, October 11, 2023