



Newsletter

September-December
2023





Message from Community Leader



Dear friends,

With all the pain and suffering that we are living in Palestine, particularly in Gaza, we still have high hopes and wishes that this coming year would be a year full of peace, love and justice instead of fear, terror and the mourning of our people who are bombed every day.

The year 2023 was not an easy one for Ma'an lil-Hayat in particular. We faced a lot of financial challenges and difficulties since the beginning of the year. We counted on the income of our Boutique Hotel to cover part of our expenses and it was true that in the beginning of the year, our Boutique Hotel witnessed great success especially in the months of March, April and May, which is considered a high season in our area. Then we were waiting for October to come for the very good reservations at the hotel and the high season for selling our felt items. With all what is happening in Palestine and like all sectors that depend on tourism in the Bethlehem area, everything was closed! Both our hotel reservations and felt orders were sadly canceled.

At our two daily programs, it was one of our priorities to keep our doors open, we tried and succeeded to live day-by-day as normal as possible so that we could meet all together at Ma'an lil-Hayat. It is true that some days we had to close but in general, it was very important to be together at Ma'an lil-Hayat.

I am taking this opportunity on behalf of all the members of Ma'an lil-Hayat to thank all our faithful friends from far and near, to thank L'Arche International as well as L'Arche communities for their help and solidarity. Without you being beside Ma'an lil-Hayat we would not have made it and kept our doors open and going on.

Mahera Nassar Ghareeb
Community Leader



Activities

In October, Ma'an lil-Hayat community held a meeting to discuss and adopt its safeguarding policy and code of conduct with its employees and assistants.

The meeting was an opportunity to blow off some steam and talk about the current emotional state that the employees of Ma'an live in, especially that the community could feel the effects of the political situation in Palestine on their own lives.

The staff were divided into groups and were given time to answer questions about the safeguarding policy that was adopted. A time of discussion was then opened, where the staff and assistants were able to express their input and feedback regarding the principles of the code of conduct.



In December, Ma'an lil-Hayat organized a community day on the occasion of the holidays. The two branches of L'Arche Bethlehem had the chance to get together and enjoy the company of each other. A couple of days earlier, the core members and the assistants drew the names of each other to become someone's secret Santa. They also went shopping to buy gifts for everyone in the community.

After lunch, the community headed to the garden of Ma'an lil-Hayat Boutique Hotel and exchanged gifts.





Situation during the war

Since the 7th of October, the normal and peaceful life of Ma'an lil-Hayat community has unfortunately been interrupted by the difficult news and images coming out of the Gaza Strip. One could say that the community continues to experience the direct effects of the war on Gaza.

Throughout this period, we have observed many strikes in the Bethlehem area, which affected the attendance of our core members. A general fear could be felt in the air! Our core members are very aware of the situation and on many occasions they converse with us about what is happening around them. Some of them are upset about Gaza and what is happening to the children there and others are praying for the end of the war, so that they could live normally and peacefully.

We have also seen the temporary closure of our Ma'an lil-Hayat Boutique Hotel, which is a project that was specifically implemented to support the community financially. In October, we were expecting to welcome many international groups to the hotel, but slowly we started to receive cancellations. The closing of the hotel led to two of the working staff being out of a job.

Christmas this year was surely different in Bethlehem. Festivities were canceled and celebrations in churches focused on liturgies and the meaning of Christmas. At Ma'an, we decided to organize a community day on the occasion of the holidays. This day was much awaited by the core members where lunch was planned for the entire community followed by the exchange of gifts.

We are still living a difficult time in Bethlehem and all of Palestine. We are always praying for justice for our people, for the liberty they deserve and the peace that they yearn so much for.





Assistant Spotlight

Amera, this year Ma'an lil-Hayat celebrated its 14th anniversary of presence in Bethlehem. How do you feel about that as one of the founding members of L'Arche Bethlehem?

I'm really proud to be one of the founding members of L'Arche Bethlehem. Throughout those 14 years, I have grown up together with the core members in a really special place, the Holy Land, living with strong people full of love and hope.

In 2016, Ma'an's second branch was founded in Dar Salah village. Could you tell us a bit about it and how important is it for the village?

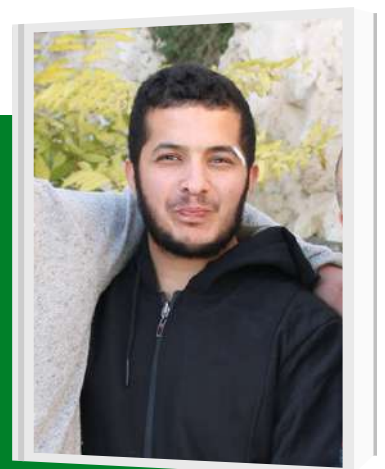
Establishing this branch was considered as a hope to some of my people who couldn't reach the main branch in Bethlehem. Now the center is attended by 14 young people with intellectual disability from Dar Salah and the adjacent villages of Ubeidiya, Mazmourya and Beit Sahour. Dar Salah branch is characterized by its members and location that oversees the city of Jerusalem as well as the fact that the wool that Ma'an uses in its production comes from this village.

I would like to express my deep gratitude for the wonderful team that I work with whose dedication and commitment contribute to the advancement of the community and its core members.



Core member Spotlight

Meet Hasan! Hasan has been with Ma'an lil-Hayat community for 4 Years. In spite of the many difficulties that Hasan faces, he is determined to keep coming to L'Arche Bethlehem, as the community provides him with a safe haven and a place where he can develop friendships with other core members.





Thoughts of our core members

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I'm really sad about Gaza and what is happening to the children there. I hope that we can live in peace soon.

- Yasmine -

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I hope that we can live in peace so that we can be happy and live normally like other people.

- Reem -

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I feel saddened by what is happening to the people in Gaza, Jenin and all of Palestine. I always pray for their families.

- Hasan -

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Thank you

Ma'an lil-Hayat would like to give thanks to all those who had supported the work of the community, whether it was through ordering our felt ornaments or directly donating. A special thank you goes to L'Arche International and all L'Arche communities for standing by us and following closely the situation of our community in the last three months.