



L'ARCHE

SPECIAL REPORT

Crisis in Palestine





UPDATE

Building relationships of peace and belonging across differences, in a time of conflict.

The community leader of L'Arche Bethlehem explains how on October 7th, 2023 "... everything went upside down. All of a sudden, we found ourselves in active war." With conflict all around them, the dangers were real and present, and the community had to discern how to live this time.

It didn't take long to arrive at a clarity that the community must stay open and continue to live the mission of L'Arche despite the conflict. But they knew they did not have the resources to do it on their own. Fortunately, the international network of L'Arche friends and supporters around the world responded, providing the means necessary to carry on.

Thank you for this incredible support – we trust you'll see a small glimpse of the impact of this support throughout the following pages.

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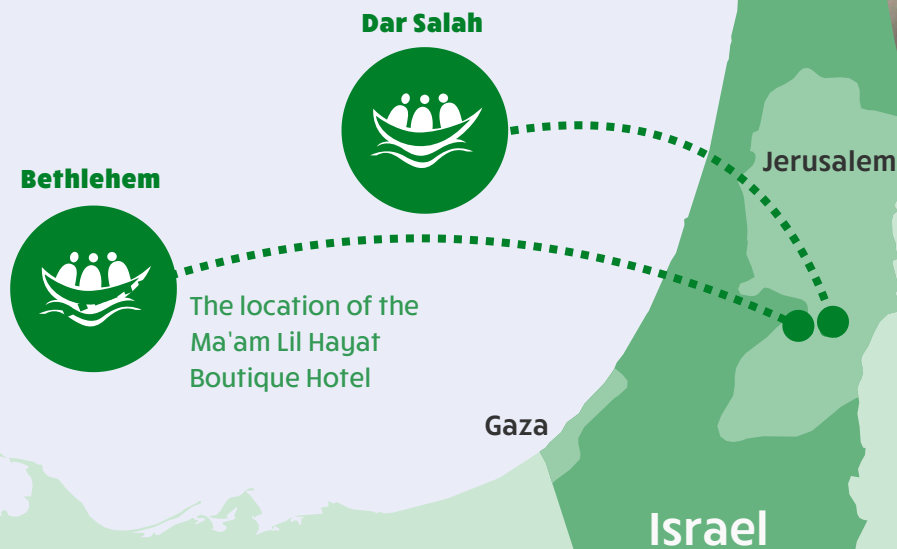
Mahera Ghareeb
Community Leader
L'Arche Bethlehem

Reminder of the mission

L'Arche Bethlehem has two branches, one in Bethlehem near the Church of the Nativity, and one in a village east of Bethlehem called Dar Salah.

They have worked in the region for over a decade to serve the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Together with partners, L'Arche is responding to the current humanitarian crisis with life-affirming work and strives so that no person or family is "left behind."

L'Arche Bethlehem is founded on a pedagogy of relationship that focuses on each person's gifts and not on his/her limitations. People with intellectual disabilities are welcomed and acknowledged as having rights and responsibilities, that is, as people who are not simply to be taken care of or assisted, but as full human beings who have something significant to offer to others.





“
We love to work side by side with
our friends and assistants.
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Participant
Day Program
L'Arche Bethlehem

Impact of Emergency Support

The days since October 7th, 2023, have been heavy. There is a tension in the air, and soldiers all around. People feel afraid to go out into the streets, particularly after dark. None the less L'Arche Bethlehem very quickly knew they must stay open and continue to meet together, for several reasons:



Safety of Core Members

Not all of the Core Members of L'Arche Bethlehem have supportive home environments. If L'Arche is closed, they have no where to go during the day and no one to look out for them.

This means they will likely find themselves wandering the streets. Several of the core Members are young men, and the soldiers would not necessarily perceive that they have an intellectual disability. They could very quickly find themselves in a conflict, and possibly get seriously hurt.



Haitham joined L'Arche Bethlehem 8 years ago, when he was 16 years old. Haitham has an intellectual disability. He and his siblings were orphaned and were living in a refugee camp just outside of Bethlehem. One of the assistants of L'Arche Bethlehem was living in the same camp and came to know him, and realized he was not receiving the care and support he needed.

Once he joined L'Arche he really flourished. He learned self-discipline and social manners. He now very much enjoys spending time with his friends in the community and is very capable to help in our felt production process.

A few years ago Haitham's sister got married, which means she is no longer available to take care of him. He lives near his brother, but his brother's job and other commitments means he is not available to help Haitham very much.

His L'Arche family now helps see to his personal needs. If L'Arche closed, he surely would be often alone, wondering the streets of the refugee camp, and in real danger. L'Arche cares too much for Haitham to let that happen!

1. Safety of Core Members... continued

Hasan is a 24-year-old determined young man from the village of Asakra, south of Bethlehem.

When Hasan was only 9 years old, a terrible accident befell him causing a life-altering injury and resulted in an imbalance in his brain. After the passing of his mother a few years ago, Hasan and his sister were left to fend for themselves.

Their everyday life is extremely difficult, and they both need support, particularly in this time of war.



Fortunately, Hasan has found a home at L'Arche! Muna, an assistant of L'Arche Bethlehem reflects:

"The presence of Hasan in Ma'an lil-Hayat is really important. At our community, he finds the needed care and attention and he is able to build friendships with the other core members. These friendships are vital in his life. Ma'an lil-Hayat is a lifeline for Hasan."

2. Supporting One Another

It is a very stressful and emotionally challenging time in Bethlehem right now.

Core members, assistants and friends of the community all feel the need to be together. The community organizes activities to help everyone decompress and create moments of joy, celebration and sharing meals.

Reem Mukarker is a regular member of the L'Arche Bethlehem day program. Her family explains the positive impact of the community on her personal well-being:

"The community of Ma'an (L'Arche Bethlehem) provides Reem with a place where core members can feel safe and secure away from tension and worrying. She loves to be with her friends.

Every day she wakes up full of energy and prepares herself to go to the center. When she doesn't go to the center she feels sad, upset and she becomes quite unhappy. When she goes she feels calmer and is able to concentrate for longer periods of time. She also now knows how to interact with others, thanks to the different events and activities that the community organizes and the positive role that the staff of Ma'an plays in her life.

We wish that the supporters of L'Arche would know that the presence of Ma'an Lil-Hayat and its staff is crucial in the life of Reem. The leadership and assistants of Ma'an consider Reem like a family member and even more!"



3. Providing Basic Needs

The war has had many severe effects on the economy in the West Bank and especially in Bethlehem, which already had one of the highest unemployment rates in Palestine.

Tourism in Bethlehem has declined by 100% leading to job losses and hotel closures. L'Arche Bethlehem was determined to continue to keep the assistants and staff of the community, so they in turn could provide for the basic needs of their families.

By staying in regular contact with core members the community can also stay aware and make sure the basic needs of everyone in the community are being met and they will step in to support when necessary.



Use of Emergency Funds:

When the conflict erupted, two of the main sources of local income for L'Arche Bethlehem were almost immediately cut off. All bookings in the guest house were cancelled, and all local avenues of selling their felt handicraft products disappeared. At the same time, local prices rose dramatically.

Emergency funds raised by friends and supporters around the world allowed the community to:

1.

Provide a daily meal for all the core members, food for special celebrations, and if necessary, additional basic needs of core members.



3.

Continue to purchase the wool from local shepherds, and other raw materials needed to complete the workshop handicrafts.



2.

Provide transportation fees to core members whose families cannot manage the cost, making sure there are no barriers to participation in the community life, which helps to keep everyone safe amidst the conflict.



5.

Pay the utilities (electricity, gas and water etc) necessary to operate in the building.



4.

Pay salaries of 13 assistants and staff, allowing them to provide for the basic needs of their families and stay with L'Arche.



L'Arche Bethlehem has been deeply touched by the care and support they have received from friends around the world.

For example, leading up to Christmas time the community received the most orders for felt handicraft products from international friends that they have ever had!

Thank You!

L'Arche is extremely grateful for the funds that have been raised to date by international friends and partners! This solidarity is essential to keeping the mission alive and active during this very difficult time. With no clear end in sight, please continue to partner with L'Arche Bethlehem to make sure people with intellectual disabilities are not "left behind" in this time of war.

Below is a short montage of how L'Arche continues to build bridges in times of conflict :

bit.ly/larche_palestine

