

September 2021, Bethlehem

Dear Friends of Tent of Nations in the Netherlands,

I hope this message finds you well and in good health amid these challenging times. Here in Palestine, the political situation is becoming more difficult following the latest events. The continuous expansion of Israeli settlements across the West Bank and the construction of the wall, left the Palestinians with little hope for a better future. The tunnel is becoming darker and darker, and the light is slowly disappearing. We are moving towards an unclear future pushing mainly the young and educated Palestinian generation to leave and look for a better future somewhere else. Where do we go from here, is there still some hope?! A question that remains without an answer.

### **Facts on the ground**

The Israeli settlements surrounding the Tent of Nations/Nassar farm are expanding. From sunrise until sunset, we hear the noises of trucks, bulldozers, and concrete lorries changing the landscaping and building homes on Palestinian land for new Israeli settlers. The continuation of the settlement's expansion is making it more difficult if not impossible for the Palestinians to have their own state.

### **Re-registration process – legal struggle**

Our land re-registration process is still on hold. Our lawyer has officially informed the military authority on Tuesday, September 7th that he will be appealing within three days to the Supreme Court to push the military authority to complete the process of re-registration. Within two days, the military authority responded and set December 13th of this year to continue with the process of re-registration. We hope that this date will not be pushed back. We are very thankful for all of our friends who stood by our side, and make a difference by putting pressure on people with influence. We are very appreciative of your solidarity and support on our long journey for justice.

### **Other challenges**

This year has been very challenging for the Tent of Nations. We have experienced high-scale damages on the farm caused by some locals from the neighbouring village who claim that part of our land belongs to them. We are still traumatized by the recent outbreak of the fire, which was intentionally started. Over 1000 trees were burned entirely, among them were 200 producing almond trees, which brutally affected our almond harvest this year and caused us to lose 80% of the yearly production. We have also lost 350 grape trees to the fire, another 250 grape trees were damaged by locals in February, and some grapes were stolen in August three weeks before the harvest. We had about 15% of grapes left from the total amount the farm is normally producing. Unfortunately, we did not have enough to make wine this year, so we decided to make grape syrup instead. We have also lost 450 olive trees to the fire, about 50% of the yearly production. This is not looking good for our olive harvest this October. Another big loss!

On the other hand, the fig harvest this year was very good, the trees produced many figs. We ate some, we gave some away, we dried some, and the rest was used for making jam.

### **Hope for the future**

It was hard for us to stand up again after these incidents, but we decided to rise from the ashes and replant more trees as a sign of hope for the future. We started to repair the burnt plots and already planted 170 new grape trees. We developed an irrigation system to water those trees twice a day pumping out the water from the cisterns. We still have to water them daily until the first rain comes, hopefully in November. Thanks must go to our friends who are contributing to repairing the damages caused by the fire and to replanting new trees. We hope to plant more trees before the end of this year.

### **Solar system**

Despite the current circumstances, we continued to develop the infrastructure on the farm. We are still facing some issues with our Solar System. We have successfully installed a 24 set of new batteries, but the system is not producing at its full capacity, which leaves the batteries unable to be fully charged. After examining the situation, electrical engineers informed us that there is a problem with one of the inverters that needs to be replaced. Some solar panels need also to be changed, and the whole system needs to be upgraded. It is a big project, we hope to be able to do that before the winter season.

### **Visiting delegations**

In the last few months, the Tent of Nations hosted visiting groups and delegations who came to learn about our story of *Sumud* (steadfastness). In January, we welcomed the Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem along with a small delegation. In March, we welcomed the UK Consul with a small delegation from the UK consulate in Jerusalem. In April, we welcomed the Swiss Consul with a delegation from the Swiss Consulate in Ramallah and a small delegation from the German Consulate in Ramallah. In May, we hosted the Dutch Consul with a small delegation. In June, we hosted a group of 25 people from Germany working on German Development projects and other NGOs in Ramallah. During the month of July, we had 14 Diplomats from the European Consulates come for a briefing about the Tent of Nations. We also welcomed local groups from the Bethlehem area, teachers, and young people from refugee camps. We were also very happy to host local and international volunteers on the farm. Even in the mid of the Corona crisis, those volunteers were determined to help us, which was a source of strength for us and a reminder that we are not alone in this struggle. Some stayed for one day and others between two and three weeks. We hope to host more volunteers to help with our olive harvest, which is approaching.

### **Sharing our story**

Our path is full of obstacles, but we need to keep looking forward. We hope to empower more people through the message of Tent of Nations and to encourage them to share it with others. We hope to invite more people to come and see and go back home and tell the story of what they have seen in their own creative ways; whether through writing, photographs, short videos, documentaries, music, research, or organising visual tours.

### **Continue our journey**

We are determined to continue this path of Sumud (Steadfastness) without giving up. We know the burden is heavy to carry, but still, we need to look forward and focus on our vision. Thank you for accompanying us on this narrow path and for all your support and solidarity. And the journey continues with faith, love, and hope in action.

Blessings and Salaam,  
Daoud Nassar